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The Complete HITLER

*A Digital Desktop Reference
to His Speeches and Proclamations
1932-1945*

HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations

VOLUME I

HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations

1932–1945

Volume I 1932–1934

Volume II 1935–1938

Volume III 1939–1940

Volume IV 1941–1945

MAX DOMARUS

HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations
1932–1945

THE CHRONICLE OF A DICTATORSHIP

VOLUME ONE
The Years 1932 to 1934



BOLCHAZY-CARDUCCI PUBLISHERS

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
MARY FRAN GOLBERT

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Abbreviations

BA	= Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
BDM	= Bund Deutscher Mädel
BVP	= Bayerische Volkspartei (Bavarian People's Party)
DAF	= Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front)
DNB	= Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (German News Bureau)
DNVP	= Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party)
DVP	= Deutsche Volkspartei (German People's Party)
FHQ	= Führerhauptquartier (Führer Headquarters)
Gestapo	= Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
HJ	= Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
HQu	= Hauptquartier (Headquarters)
HStA	= Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich
IMT	= International Military Tribunal, 1945–1949
KdF	= Kraft durch Freude ("Strength through joy")
KPD	= Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
NS	= Nationalsozialistisch (National Socialist)
NSBO	= Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation (National Socialist Factory Cell Organization)
NSDAP	= Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
NSFK	= Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Air Corps)
NSK	= Nationalsozialistische Parteikorrespondenz (National Socialist Party News Agency)
NSKK	= Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (National Socialist Motorized Corps)
OSAF	= Oberster SA Führer (Supreme Commander of the SA)
Pg	= Parteigenosse (Party comrade)
PL	= Politischer Leiter (Political Leader)
PO	= Politische Organisation (Political Organization)
RAD	= Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labor Service)
RGB1	= Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette)
RSHA	= Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Central Office for Reich Security)
RK	= Reichskanzlei (Reich Chancellery)
SA	= Sturmabteilung (Nazi storm troops; brown shirts)
SD	= Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, the SS intelligence agency)
SPD	= Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SS	= Schutzstaffel (Nazi elite guard; black shirts)
StA	= Staatsarchiv
TU	= Telegraphenunion (Telegraph Union)
VB	= <i>Völkischer Beobachter</i> (Nationalist Observer)
WTB	= Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro (Wolffs Telegraph Bureau)

PREFACE

This publication of the speeches and proclamations of Adolf Hitler is the final product of records I compiled during the years 1932 to 1945 and supplemented by sources and publications made available after World War II.

Such in-depth study of materials documenting the very recent past—and at such an early date—may first appear unusual for a historian who had, until then, specialized in the nineteenth century. There are, however, certain parallels between the two fields. My own avid interest in English history led me to concentrate my scholarly research on Napoleon I and Wilhelm II. When, in 1932, Adolf Hitler became the most important political figure in Germany, I became interested in his public words for, in terms of foreign policy, they reminded me of these two historical predecessors. There could be no doubt that this man—once in power—would perforce come into marked conflict with the western world, above all with Great Britain. Hence I began to collect all of Hitler's speeches, interviews, proclamations, letters, and other statements available, convinced that they would one day be of documentary value, should this demagogue be allowed to pursue his course.

During my university studies and as a journalist, I had the opportunity to travel widely in Germany from 1932 to 1939 and to gain a close view of many significant aspects of the Third Reich. I personally heard Hitler speak and was able to interview public figures who had direct contact with him. In this way I was able to witness for myself Hitler's astonishing power and influence as an orator. The enthusiasm his speeches prompted was not confined only to easily-aroused mass audiences but also infected—perhaps even more strongly—individuals belonging to Germany's leading circles.

At that time I was aware that Hitler's arguments were most persuasive with the German people and with people in neighboring countries

or those who had some link to the German mentality and culture. Members of the Anglo-Saxon nations were unimpressed by Hitler's oratory, just as were the Soviets and Japanese, although they did make certain concessions to Hitler for diplomatic and tactical reasons. My own observations of the events and the comparisons I drew with historic parallels soon taught me how to accurately and soberly assess both the real and alleged accomplishments of the Third Reich and to anticipate the reactions they would elicit abroad.

I became a particularly attentive and critical listener, studying the various phases and methodology of his oratory and making my own notes of key phrases either during his speeches or shortly thereafter. Thus I was able to immediately spot changes and deletions in texts of the speeches subsequently published.

As a soldier from 1939 to 1945, I no longer had the opportunity to personally attend speeches and visit mass rallies. However, this was less of a handicap than might have been expected, for Hitler's public appearances became increasingly infrequent during World War II, and the few speeches he did deliver were broadcast on the radio. When I had leave, I updated my collection and supplemented it with such military orders, proclamations and directives as were available to me. After 1945, I was able to further complement the documents I had compiled with archive material.

Friends and fellow historians at home and abroad urged me to publish the collection in the form of a day-to-day chronicle, accompanied by a detailed commentary providing the historical background. This would then serve to make the most anomalous and terrifying phenomenon of our century more accessible and comprehensible and—by revealing the sharp contrast between the Führer myth and reality—act as a corrective to an incomplete or false interpretation of the Nazi regime.

Much research on the history of the Third Reich has perhaps viewed its subject in too complicated a fashion. The initiator and driving force behind the fatal events was Adolf Hitler. While he did not necessarily reveal his innermost thoughts, he never made any significant distinction between what he poured forth before mass audiences and what he said in more intimate circles. He readily disclosed most of his views to the public eye, albeit not always at the same time he took action. The advantage in studying his public statements lies in their authenticity, for memoirs and even personal records are inherently prone to error.

The present study is confined to the years 1932 to 1945—but not only for reasons of length. Inarguably, many of Hitler's speeches in the years

preceding 1932 also present interesting and valuable sources of information, but his activities as a minor party leader and failed putschist are of lesser importance for German and European history. He did not become a major factor until he began gaining influence and exercising power, first as leader of the largest party in Germany, then as head of government, head of state, and supreme commander of the German armed forces. This decisive epoch commenced with Hitler's dramatic struggle for control of the government in 1932 and ended with the total collapse of his foreign and military policies in 1945.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who, by their inspiration and their assistance, have promoted the publication of this work. First of all, I would like to thank Professors Hugh Trevor-Roper (Baron Dacre of Glanton), Oxford; Alan Bullock, Oxford; Fridolin Solleder, Erlangen-Nuremberg; and Hugo Hantsch, Vienna for their encouragement and support. I would further like to thank the following for their expert assistance: Professor Heinz Lieberich, Munich, Director-General of the Bavarian State Archives; Hofrat Gebhard Rath, Vienna, Director-General of the Austrian State Archives; and Dr. Fritz de Quervain, Bern, head of the Swiss Military Library.

I am especially indebted to the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, particularly to Secretary-General Helmut Krausnick, Professor Thilo Vogelsang and Dr. Anton Hoch; the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, particularly to Director Karl G. Bruchmann and former Colonel G.S. D.H. Teske (Bundesarchiv, Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau); the Staatsarchiv, Nuremberg, the Staatsarchiv, Munich and the Monacensia-Division of the Munich City Library; the Stadtarchiv, Würzburg; the Würzburg University Library; the Stuttgart Military Library; and the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, Freiburg im Breisgau.

A debt of gratitude is owed to my assistant, Dr. Gerhard G. Drexler, Würzburg, who not only spent years with me working through the voluminous material and reading the proofs, but who also, as a member of the young generation, contributed his valuable assistance in keeping the commentary succinct and to the point. My particular thanks are due to my wife, Gertrud, for her interest and patience throughout.

Notes on the English Edition, Volume I

In 1987, the fourth edition of the hardcover set was published in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The broad international attention and unanimous acclaim the study has received as one of the standard reference works on the history of the Third Reich has necessitated that an English edition be made available, particularly since the majority of the original sources contained therein—speeches, proclamations, public statements, etc.—have not been accessible to date in English. The occasion of the translation was used to do minor revision and updating work on the commentary.

By virtue of this edition, a wider range of historians and all those interested in the phenomenon of the Third Reich are now afforded an opportunity to follow and study the events of the years 1932 to 1945 in Germany on the basis of previously unavailable documentation and to thereby gain a new perspective on this much-researched field.

Above all I thank my son, Wolfgang, and his partners, the publishers in Great Britain and the United States, as well as all those involved in accomplishing this project. I am particularly indebted to the translator, Mary Fran Gilbert, for the courage she has demonstrated in taking on such a demanding task and for her professional and objective approach to the material. Special thanks are also due to the technical editor, Gabriele Kamprad, for her careful and painstaking collation of the translation with the original. Finally I express my thanks to Hanne Henninger, Christiane Wachtel, Uwe Laubender, Andrew Bird, and Susannah Kennedy for their contribution to the project.

I am happy to see the English edition materialize and pleased to have been able to lend my support to its genesis and evolution.

Würzburg, November 1989

Max Domarus

INTRODUCTION

Hitler's Personality

Manner and Mental State

Prominent figures on the rise to power or in the act of seeking aggrandizement have frequently employed the spoken word to attain their ends. They have chosen this vehicle because it not only facilitated their ascent, but also satisfied their passion for public speaking. They were intoxicated by both the applause of their audiences and by the demonstration of their power of suggestion and the potential influence they could exert. The history of mankind contains various examples of this phenomenon.

In retrospect, Napoleon I and William II are particularly illustrative cases in point for their respective eras at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The speeches and proclamations of the Emperor of France, for example, which were first published at a relatively late date,¹ undoubtedly convey the most forceful impression of his personality. The German Kaiser's public addresses appeared in published form prior to World War I² but were eclipsed when war broke out. They had, however, been instrumental in nurturing a false impression of the international distribution of power in the minds of the German people.

Adolf Hitler's speeches and proclamations played a considerably more formative role in the rise and fall of the so-called Third Reich.³ The greater part of his theories and plans were expounded in public, and these statements rarely deviated—if at all, only in a chronological sense—from those he made to the few persons with whom he was intimate.

Politicians and statesmen can be granted the privilege of discussing certain topics comprehensively in a private sphere without instantly weighing each phrase as an expression of persona—and public—conviction. Thus the remarks of such personages made within a limited circle cannot be considered unequivocal evidence of their actual intentions.

While records of Hitler's private conversations⁴ are no doubt interesting and revealing, the fact that these reports are second-hand means that they are inevitably flawed by the absence of the verbatim wording and tainted by the possibilities of error and misinterpretation—a product of the unavoidable subjectivity inherent in such studies. Conversely, Adolf Hitler's public speeches⁵ and proclamations ring true; they are his own words, and there is no doubt as to their documentary authenticity. Regardless of the circumstances and political necessities which led to their genesis, Hitler judged it fitting to make them available to the public in the form and at the time cited. It is the commentator's duty to place them in a historical perspective.

Adolf Hitler was born on April 20, 1889 in Braunau am Inn (Upper Austria), the son of the minor customs official Alois Hitler and his wife Klara, née Pölzl. Following the collapse of the German Empire in November 1918, he resolved to become a "politician,"⁶ and on January 30, 1933, he became Chancellor of Germany. Even prior to this date, thirteen million eligible voters had cast their ballots for him in the hope that he would bring about a better political and economic future.

This insignificant member of the petty bourgeois class, a mere corporal in World War I, rose to become the sole head of government, German head of State, and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He deprived his domestic political opponents of power across the board, filling key public offices with his loyal party-liners. In an open breach of the Treaty of Versailles, he called a new national conscription army into existence, then shifted his attention beyond Germany's borders. Without firing a single shot, he annexed Austria and the Sudeten German territories as part of the National Socialist Reich,⁷ exploiting the peoples' right of self-determination to his own ends and finally procuring the stamp of international approval for his actions.

When Hitler used force to invade and annex Poland, the Western Powers put their foot down and declared war. The German dictator had neglected to provide for this contingency, and it ultimately was to seal his fate. With the powerful German Army, he was still able to conquer a number of weaker countries and invade the Soviet Union, and the swastika flag he had designed flew intermittently from North Africa to the North Pole and from the Atlantic to the Caucasus while he was in power. However, nothing could avert the ultimate consequence which had been mapped out from the very onset. Hitler had started a war he could not finish; he and his politics suffered a total collapse. When the

sum of his prophecies and foreign policies had been proven false, he chose to shoot himself on April 30, 1945 in the Reich Chancellory bunker, leaving behind devastation in Germany and Europe unparalleled in the history of mankind. After his death, high-ranking staff branded him a murderer on millions of counts.⁸

In both his private and public life, Hitler cultivated the image of a hero and superhuman being: bursting with energy, of great foresight, never erring, ever courageous, intrepid and endowed with a profound sense of purpose. Was this his real personality?

Before Hitler launched his career as a political agitator, he exhibited little evidence of being extraordinary. As a boy, he had been interested solely in doing and learning what he liked, early enjoying the role of “ringleader,”⁹ although this certainly was not a consequence of any striking individuality on Hitler’s part.

Even in the course of the years he spent in Vienna¹⁰ and Munich¹¹ as a young man, he did not exhibit behavior which would have made him stand out among his peers, but was introverted and moody. He retained his childhood aversion to systematic application and regular work. Consequently, he was incapable of assuming a normal profession and, given the frequently disagreeable daily demands of a household, even less inclined or able to establish a homestead or marry. Only dire necessity drove him to enter service as a bricklayer’s laborer and a painter and to market his handdrawn postcards.

He preferred dreaming of “great” times, i.e. times marked by the upheavals of war and revolution, and found it depressing that the Germany and Europe of the early 20th century seemingly no longer afforded any room for events of extraordinary import. His public addresses before German youth as Führer and Reich Chancellor repeatedly revolved around the memory of his own pathetic and miserable youth, when he had never been allowed to experience anything “great.” Conversely, he stressed how lucky modern youths could consider themselves, having been endowed with his generous gift of “great” times.

In Vienna, the young Hitler avidly followed the chauvinistic speeches and utopian programs of the *Alldeutschen*¹² and the anti-semitic agitation of crank eccentrics¹³ albeit without taking any active part in their doings. It was only within his own circle of acquaintances that he was fond of voicing loud support for nationalistic theories. All things considered, however, he in no way stood out from his fellow workers

or the other lodgers at the hostel for the homeless where he roomed. At that time, he was only one of many political ruminators ranging from the café intellectuals to the völkisch apostles who preached the coming of a Greater German Reich and blamed the Jews for every misfortune ever suffered by the German people.

Hitler had nothing but disdain for the “völkisch St. Johns,”¹⁴ condemning them as weaklings able to defend themselves only with “spiritual weapons.” Hitler was, of course, anything but a heroic personality himself; all those who came into contact with him prior to World War I unanimously described him as a reserved man who seemed more insecure and awkward than self-confident or in any way superior. Handwriting samples have served to further document that he was essentially a pessimist and a doubter, prone to vacillation. His lifelong pathophobia and his later fear of potential assassins were also characteristic. Similarly, the manner in which he postponed his military service in Austria, opting instead to leave for Munich,¹⁵ is not necessarily indicative of a pronounced martial nature. Moreover, this decision was also influenced by his contempt for the declining “Danubian Monarchy.”

The fact that Hitler proved a good soldier¹⁶ and demonstrated a certain amount of courage in World War I does not qualify as evidence to the contrary, but illustrates that he had the willpower, when he applied himself, to accomplish feats above and beyond the scope of his natural disposition.

When he judged a task worthwhile or sensed imminent danger, Hitler undeniably commanded extraordinary energy reserves and was powered by a veritably supernatural force. Like a second self, this force stood behind him, later propelling him from speech to speech, from plan to plan, and from victory to victory; ultimately, it plunged him into ruin.

It remains an open question whether this “force” originated in his subconscious or can be interpreted in psychopathological terms; Hitler himself believed in a mission from a supernatural sphere.¹⁷

Hitler’s own staff and followers as well as his political opponents at home recoiled in the face of his sinister, compelling energy—the almost demonic force he exuded. Even the few assassins who rose against him did not dare to challenge him openly, hiding instead behind the anonymity of a bomb.

When he was in a good mood and among people he liked, Hitler could be charming, witty and gracious. But whenever the demon “willpower” arose in him, he struck his pose and took on the role he felt

called upon to play before history and the German nation—or merely before the altar of his own dogmas. The sentimental muser then metamorphosed into a cruel despot, more ruthless than a person with a basically brutal disposition could ever have been.

At times like these, Hitler cast off his irresolution and worked himself up to personify ‘inalterable determination’ (*unabänderliche Entschlossenheit*). In a similar fashion, Hitler, the chronic pessimist and doubter, could embody—and project—unbounded optimism.

Even in his last days, he was capable of instilling a sense of confidence in many German listeners—albeit a confidence totally lacking any foundation in reality and amounting to nothing but a figment of his imagination. He acted his part somewhat overdramatically, but nonetheless with such vehemence that he convinced not only those around him but himself as well that his emotional outbursts were genuine. Yet in such moments, the slightest interruption—the appearance of a stranger, an unexpected remark—would suffice to disconcert him. Then, instead of countering with a magnanimous gesture or a quick-witted retort, he would be betrayed by the uncertainty in his expression, and his only reply would more often than not be an embarrassed stock phrase.

As a rule, he needed to rehearse important speeches and his public performances on the political stage. Thus prepared, he was able to appear convincing, whether he was inspecting a guard of honor at the front, shaking a king’s hand, or acting the part of children’s favorite and ladies’ man.

Hitler was plainly not “normal” within the bourgeois sense of the term. Even as a child he had lacked the ability to apply himself with any consistency; later, he found it difficult to hold a steady job and lead a well-ordered life. For the most part, his attitudes and habits were in open or disguised conflict with those of his environment. Eminent physicians who came into contact with him termed his character as being that of a psychopath,¹⁸ confirming in their findings the reports of those who witnessed his fits of temper and abnormal behavior.¹⁹

It is nonetheless difficult to pass conclusive judgment, for Hitler consciously acted the part of a madman on selected occasions and could quite convincingly feign outbursts of rage. This conduct was designed to lend his speeches added emphasis or impress and intimidate his visitors. As soon as they had taken their leave, he, who had only shortly before foamed at the mouth in frenzy,²⁰ was then instantly able to ap-

pear calm and normal. Now and then he even expressed amusement over the scene he had just succeeded in bringing off.²¹ Hitler viewed himself as exempt from commonly accepted standards, believing himself to be one of the heroes of world history, the likes of whom were “bestowed” upon mankind only rarely in the course of millennia, and he frequently intimated in his speeches that he was a “genius.”²² Among those “individuals of stature in world history” whose roads to greatness need not be obstructed by moral considerations were Hegel, Alexander the Great, Caesar, and Napoleon. Hitler was actually able to match and even surpass these men in his hunger for power, his cruelty, in his unquenchable thirst for conquest, and his almost pathological underestimation of facts and eventualities.

Considered from this vantage point, one can doubtless label Hitler a lunatic. But this does not perforce mean that he was mentally ill to such an extent that he was incapable of thinking and acting clearly and consistently.

The mental condition of these “individuals of stature” throughout world history who, in the course of their doings, generally caused undue suffering to their contemporaries, is described perhaps most accurately by the English historian Arthur Weigall. In his work *Alexander the Great*, he takes the following stance on the question of Alexander’s soundness of mind:²³

The question of his sanity has often been discussed by scholars; but I take the view that while many of his actions, such as his march across the Gedrosian desert, were so insensate that he may well be described colloquially as a “lunatic,” he was not actually mad, nor can the apposite references to him as the “Macedonian Madman” be taken literally. In any assembly of men—in a regiment of soldiers, for example—there is usually some dare-devil whom we loosely describe as a lunatic; in any army in wartime there is some general who uses up his men in a way which is criticized as insane; in any realm of adventure there is some foolhardy hero, who, we say, is crazy; in any gathering of statesmen there is some rash visionary whose ideas are too grand to be thought sane; in any group of intellectuals there is some eccentric genius who may be described with no unfriendly intent as being “as mad as a hatter”; in any religious body there is some fanatic who, without real reproach, may so be termed; in every age and every society there is some abnormal man with a mission who, often because his views are so disconcerting to the complacently sane, is named either in vexation or in admiration a lunatic. In all these senses Alexander was a lunatic; and, indeed, the fact seems to have been recognized, for towards the end of his life he was identified with the god Dionysos, who was definitely the divine lunatic made mad by his father Zeus.

This characterization could readily be applied to Adolf Hitler.

Some of his contemporaries uphold the opinion that Hitler, enfeebled by various illnesses, underwent a steady mental deterioration in his later years.²⁴

In a physical sense, there is indeed evidence of a certain decay (stomach pains, insomnia, tremors, etc.), although his external posture revealed only slight changes toward the end of the war: his shoulders caved in somewhat; his tendency to stoop grew more pronounced; his hair turned grey. However, these physical disorders and signs of aging in no way infringed upon his mental powers. Newsreel shots through March 1945 showed him in the then-familiar poses: smiling and greeting the public, giving Hitler Youth boys a paternal pat on the back, etc.

In the end, Hitler's appeals, telegrams and other official statements breathed the same spirit which had pervaded them from the very beginning: he had retreated not an inch. Adolf Hitler was no more insane in April 1945 than he had been in the year 1919.

Were one to attempt to discern symptoms of mental illness in his public statements, one might well cite Hitler's gigantomania and arithmomania, obsessions far exceeding the normal scope of like quirks. In nearly every major speech, Hitler produced random arrays of the oddest figures. Tens of thousands of party comrades, for instance, were cited; hundreds of thousands of Volksgenossen or prisoners, millions of peasants and workers, millions of tons of foodstuffs, sunken holds, or bombs dropped; billions of letters dispatched, etc. *ad infinitum*.

Although fond of revelling in figures of such magnitude, he also regarded smaller numbers as sufficiently impressive to warrant endless repetition, e.g. the "seven men" who founded a movement, "thirteen years of struggle and thirteen million followers," "twenty-one replies to Roosevelt" (designed to surpass Wilson's Fourteen Points, at least numerically), etc.

Only in a marginal sense did this *idée fixe* originate from a knowledge of real numerology or the causal relationships between specific dates, Fate, numbers and so-called coincidences.²⁵

The demagogue Hitler doted on figures, adding to and subtracting from columns and sums for their own sake alone. One had the impression that Hitler positively intoxicated himself with the sheer sound of the figures, using them as a stimulant and attempting to hypnotize his listeners into a state of rapture with his litanies. But more often than not, Hitler's juggling with figures was thoroughly pointless, for the numbers alone proved nothing; moreover, the real figures added up much differently.

Closely linked to the question of Hitler's mental state is the problem of his soundness of mind. Taken in a certain sense, no criminal is normal, for his thoughts, reactions and deeds do not conform with those norms fixed by law and convention. Systematically disposing of all internal restraints recognized and respected by what are regarded as normal members of human society, Hitler silenced the voice of his conscience, albeit gradually and with perceptible initial hesitation. Ultimately, however, it is always the initial act in a criminal career which requires the most effort, while ensuing steps become progressively easier.

Hitler cold-bloodedly murdered his own comrades and followers on June 30, 1934 merely because, in his view, they obstructed his path to power; thus it comes as no surprise that he was unable or unwilling to use more moderate methods in dealing with his real opponents or those he regarded as such. He believed himself to be the sole judge of right and wrong.

The principle, "Whatever benefits the German Volk [i.e. Hitler] is right," which was openly propagated during the Third Reich, set the stage for the free reign of criminal instincts. In times of war, moreover, this way of thinking necessarily brought with it particularly harrowing consequences. How could one expect that Hitler, markedly reluctant as he was to comply with laws in times of peace and unscrupulous about violating them when circumstances were opportune, would be willing to abide by legal norms in wartime? It is a sorry fact that the most gruesome consequences of Hitler's self-styled concept of what was right became evident in the course of World War II.

Until then, he had oppressed and persecuted only his political opponents in Germany; now, in order to save his "racially valuable" soldiers from dying in vain, he felt justified in literally exterminating (*ausrotten*) entire "enemy" peoples and races—his openly declared intention.

However, the War represented merely the final phase of a course set as early as 1933–34. Even at this initial stage, Hitler had viewed himself as exempt from all legally established rules, regardless of whether they were designed to preserve the Constitution or curb criminal behavior. Numerous laws promulgated by Hitler's cabinet in 1933 far exceeded the scope of the Enabling Act and were clear infringements of the Constitution, e.g. the Governor Law and the Party Law. Even an alleged national emergency would not have constituted sufficient grounds for the slayings carried out on June 30, 1934 at Hitler's orders, let alone justified their commission. This crime was nevertheless declared, in a

post facto national law; to have been “legal.”²⁶ It is worthy of note that there is no official record, even from this early era, that Hitler was ever called upon to account for such actions or even reprimanded in anyway.

One cannot dismiss this fact by reasoning that Germany was governed at the time by a dictatorship tolerating no resistance. There were still quite enough opportunities to register protest or to resign, both within and outside of the cabinet, without risking life and limb.²⁷ The truth of the matter is that Hitler had already convinced Germany's prominent figures that everything he did was within his given rights, even if his actions conflicted with the laws in force.

This conviction was held not only by his party comrades, whom he had early inoculated with these dogmas, but also by non-National Socialist cabinet and Reichstag members and even Reich President von Hindenburg. With his outstanding powers of rhetoric, Hitler had succeeded in mesmerizing even high-ranking, well-educated Germans of flawless personal integrity to such an extent that they gave him *carte blanche*—and did so in a country which takes great stock in the letter of the law.

It has been said that Hitler had a “sixth sense,” that he could, for instance, actually sense when danger was looming and adjust his behavior so as to extricate himself at the last minute. Needless to say, this concept of Hitler as “supernaturally” endowed cannot stand up to scrutiny. The circumstances surrounding the events in which he allegedly escaped imminent danger by some mysterious means were in fact by no measure extraordinary. His behavior on these occasions was normal, and he made no changes in his itinerary—something he certainly would have done had he anticipated any real threat.

No one can seriously claim that Hitler's “supernatural” powers were so keen that, for instance, the mere fact of his presence was sufficient to deactivate a hidden bomb.²⁸ In the light of reason, there remain only three such incidents which appear to be accompanied by unusual attendant circumstances:

1. Hitler's flight over the Baltic on November 6, 1933, in which the plane lost its bearings. Allegedly, Hitler suddenly ordered the pilot to change course by 180 degrees against the pilot's will, thus rescuing the aircraft from certain destruction.

2. Hitler's conduct at his speech on November 8, 1939 in Munich. He left the Bürgerbräukeller earlier than scheduled; half an hour later, a bomb exploded there.

3. Hitler's deliverance from the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944 in the Führer Headquarters *Wolfsschanze* (Wolf's Lair) in East Prussia.

The real circumstances surrounding these incidents are as follows:

Case 1: The legend of Hitler's aeronautic adventure on November 6, 1933²⁹ was based upon a report by the English journalist Ward Price,³⁰ who was not personally present at the incident but gathered his information from reports of those close to Hitler. The aircraft's pilot, Hans Baur,³¹ tells a completely different—and by no means mysterious—story.

The plane lost its orientation as a result of limited visibility and malfunctioning radio direction finding. Due to the length of time already spent in the air, Hitler feared that the plane might have passed Schleswig-Holstein and already be flying over the North Sea. Baur decided to set his course south in search of land; when he sighted a city on the coast, he made a futile attempt to decipher its name on the railway station sign. Hitler, however, recognized a meeting hall where he had once spoken and was thus able to identify the place as Wismar. That was the sum of his contribution toward “rescuing” the plane.

Case 2: It is an undisputed fact that Hitler vacated the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich half an hour earlier than planned on November 8, 1939. But his actions on that date indicate that the detonation of the bomb could easily have been nothing other than a bogus assassination attempt staged with Hitler's knowledge. This interpretation is lent further credence by a number of other peculiarities evidenced not only in Hitler's behavior but in that of the SS as well.³²

Case 3: There is nothing supernatural about the fact that Hitler was bending over a table to study a map on July 20, 1944 when the Stauffenberg bomb exploded. He certainly had no idea that an explosive would detonate under the table at that moment! Moreover, he did nothing on July 20 prior to this attempt on his life which deviated from his usual routine.

It warrants mention that the conference took place that day in a barracks in which the force of the explosion would necessarily have caused less damage than in the underground bunker which was closed for repair work at the time. Failing to consider this factor was the would-be assassin's mistake; Hitler's escape was thus not the result of any counteraction he had taken in wise anticipation of the danger.

Furthermore, Hitler was not the only survivor of the explosion: of a total of 21 persons present, only four suffered mortal injuries. Afterwards, he naturally exploited his “salvation” of July 20, 1944 for propa-

ganda purposes, insisting it had been a miraculous act of Providence; however, this case offers as little evidence as the others for his supposed “supernatural” ability to sense danger in the offing. He once claimed that he had “provided for every eventuality from the start,”³³ but the facts of history prove the opposite: his pronounced lack of foresight in foreign policy is only one example.

By contrast, in regard to matters of domestic policy Hitler was constantly on his guard. Unwilling to tolerate the slightest display of power outside his own sphere of influence, he nipped many developments in the bud which, left on their own, might have grown to present a threat. These moves were not, however, motivated by anything faintly resembling supernatural inspiration; they were the result of sober calculation on his part.

From 'Artist' to 'God-man'

Hitler took pleasure in describing himself in conversation as an artist even when his thoughts were occupied with matters of a completely different nature, such as in the last days of August 1939, when he was attempting to explain German policy in Poland to the British Ambassador.³⁴ In *Mein Kampf*,³⁵ Hitler narrates in detail his youthful aspirations to become a painter, a career cut short by his failure to pass the entrance examinations to the academy in Vienna.³⁶ He was barred from studying architectural drawing as well, for he lacked a middle school diploma.

These failures served only to intensify his desire to become an architect. The obstacles to this route lay both in financial considerations and in his strong aversion to any type of methodical application requiring attention to detail.

Without means from the very beginning, he had no choice but to earn his living some way or another. He was not happy working as an unskilled construction laborer, and during this time he began to paint postcards, as a "beginning artist and watercolor painter,"³⁷ as he referred to himself, and to sell his attempts or have them sold in inns. Later, when he was a soldier and no longer needed to concern himself with the problem of earning his daily bread, he sketched and painted watercolors for his own enjoyment. His subjects were mainly landscapes and milieu scenes of occupied France.

It must be conceded that Hitler did have a certain talent for watercolors. While the products of these artistic efforts are not overwhelming, there is nothing repulsive about them, notwithstanding claims to this effect.

Similarly, the desire to mirror his own greatness and the greatness of the German Volk in gigantic monuments was not the sole motivation for his propensity for architecture. There is little doubt that Hitler could have made a passable architect had he devoted his intelligence and extra-

ordinary willpower to this end. He had a genuine sense of proportion and favored, in his architectural plans, the classicistic forms which characterized Munich's cityscape in the 19th century. The paintings he later commissioned and sponsored reflected the naturalist style of that period as well. It was one of his pet ideas to erect a huge art gallery in the city of Linz, where he had gone to school. This plan occupied his thoughts even on April 29, 1945, when he was drawing up his last will and testament.³⁸

"I think I am one of the most musical people in the world," Hitler once noted in jest to the English journalist Ward Price,³⁹ claiming to have heard Wagner's *Meistersinger von Nürnberg* a hundred times.

Hitler's affinity for Richard Wagner went beyond purely musical considerations. He was at least as impressed by the concepts of heroic saga, mystic mission and redemption manifested in the master's works as by the self-assurance of a man whose only self-willed epitaph was his own name and who deemed that the veneration of mere men could not even approximate a true appreciation of his genius.⁴⁰ All the same, Hitler did exhibit a bent for music. Claims that, aside from Wagnerian operas, he attended only Lehar's *Lustige Witwe*, are unsubstantiated. While it is true that he whistled melodies from this and other operettas to himself when in a good mood,⁴¹ he was equally fond of attending operas by Verdi, Puccini and Mozart. Less enthralling to him were orchestral and chamber arrangements, but at official functions or in small circles he nevertheless listened to them without becoming bored.

These interests in painting, sculpture, architecture and music constitute the sum of Hitler's cultural leanings. Although he did occasionally attend theater performances, he was never able to develop any liking or real comprehension of German literature, philosophy or the humanities in general. At most, he accepted the ideas of Nietzsche, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Oswald Spengler, but only insofar as they appeared to lend support to his theories of power and struggle. Spengler instantly fell out of his favor when, upon Hitler's seizure of power, he ventured to voice doubts as to the future development of National Socialism.⁴² The sole intellectual discipline which held any attraction for Hitler was technology. He was interested primarily in motorization, roadbuilding and the construction of fortifications, armaments and other military aspects of technological science.

Hitler's personal library was pitiful, a fact even his secretaries noticed,⁴³ for it was confined to technical manuals and popular-science

volumes of a general nature. Although he claimed to have read an “infinite number of books”⁴⁴ during his time in Vienna, his reading was in general haphazard and hasty, and the bulk consisted primarily of political and pseudohistorical volumes with a nationalistic slant. The idea of literature as a valuable and significant source of education for the intellect as well as for one’s *Weltanschauung* were alien concepts to one as autodidactic as himself. His tremendous powers of retention and recall enabled him to store whatever he had read and reproduce it whenever a fitting opportunity arose. His speeches illustrate the skill with which he could adjust style and content like a chameleon to suit his respective audience.

In his opinion, the spoken word or the printed record of an oral proclamation completely eclipsed the impact of the “written word” in books. Not surprisingly, Hitler’s own works *Mein Kampf* and *Zweites Buch*⁴⁵ were tedious in comparison to his oratory. Notwithstanding the fact that millions of copies of *Mein Kampf* were printed, the book itself had no widespread impact. Not even his closest staff actually read it, let alone any significant number of his lesser party comrades. And even those of his followers who claimed to have applied themselves to the volume, admitted, if pressed, that they had not proceeded much further than the descriptions of Hitler’s youth in the opening chapters.

The speeches on art and culture which he delivered faithfully at the party conventions in Nuremberg and art exhibitions in Munich left much to be desired. With pedantic verbosity he characteristically held forth at length, attempting to instill in his remarks the character of ageless wisdom. He personally detested modern art, holding it to be “degenerated” (*entartet*), and did not hesitate to make a virtue—and a law—of his private dislike, ordering that this style be banned and artwork exhibiting it be confiscated by the state.⁴⁶ Hitler loathed “intellectuals,” scorning them and castigating their human weaknesses, their arrogance, their penchant for finding fault, and their lack of heroism—all the while instinctively sensing that, if anyone, it was most likely to be intellectuals who would not succumb to his power and would be more discriminating with regard to his hysterical nationalistic slogans, which, in the sober historical perspective, very soon proved to be a miscalculation and a utopian vision.

Hitler’s battle against intellectual critics and the “upper class” persisted throughout his rule. Again and again he directed his tirades against these groups in helpless rage, never managing to bring them completely under his control.⁴⁷ His railings included the following:

One thing I cannot bear: people whose sole activity consists of criticizing the activities of others.⁴⁸

I want to differentiate here between the Volk, i.e. the healthy, full-blooded mass of Germany loyal to the Volk, and a decadent, so-called high society, unreliable because only conditionally linked by blood. It is sometimes casually referred to as the "upper class," being, however, in reality no more than the scum produced by a societal mutation gone haywire from having had its blood and thinking infected by cosmopolitanism.⁴⁹

When I take a look at the intellectual classes we have—unfortunately, I suppose, they are necessary; otherwise one could one day, I don't know, exterminate them (*ausrotten*) or something—but unfortunately they're necessary. So when I take a look at these intellectual classes and imagine their behavior and take a closer look, in comparison to myself, and to our work, then I almost get scared. For since I have been politically active and particularly since I began to lead this Reich, I have experienced only successes. And all the same, this mass is floating around, often in such a positively repulsive, nauseating way. What would happen if we ever suffered a defeat? It is a possibility, gentlemen. Can you imagine how this race of chickens would act then, given the chance?⁵⁰

The open animosity Hitler had for intellectuals was more than merely the resentment of the half-educated man in the face of the trained thinker—it was a virtual admission of his own inadequacy.

Hitler had conceived of his lifelong goals as early as 1919 and rigidly adhered to them until his death, regardless of how glaringly they clashed with reality. On matters of principle, i.e. in respect to these preconceived ideas, he was unwilling to accept even the best advice and staunchly refused to pay the slightest attention to the existence of other views or to irrefutable facts not consistent with the standpoints he had adopted in 1919.

In order to comprehend his aims and the manner in which he attempted to achieve them, one must bear in mind Hitler's theory of the "Man at Thirty." He upheld the conviction that a man could change his views on the world only prior to that age; thereafter, these would become irrevocable, and there would be no necessity to "learn anything anew." At most, only minor additions might be made to the existing structure. He summed up his feelings on this point as follows:⁵¹

It is my conviction that, in general, aside from cases of exceptional talent, a man should not become publicly involved in politics before his thirtieth year. He should not do this because as a rule, until this time, a general platform is being constructed from which he then examines the various political problems and ultimately determines his own position on them. Only after arriving at this Weltanschauung and the resultant constancy of his own point of view in regard

to the questions of the day should or may he, now at least inwardly matured, take part in the political leadership of the general public.

Even a thirty-year-old will, in the course of his lifetime, have much more to learn, but this will be merely to supplement and fill out the frame given him by the Weltanschauung he has adopted. In principle, his learning will no longer consist of new materials, but rather of supplements to his basic philosophy, and his followers will not be forced to stifle the anxious feeling that they have been misinformed by him prior thereto; on the contrary: the visible, organic growth of the Führer will give them a sense of satisfaction, for his learning is a reinforcement of their own theories. This, in their eyes, is proof that their views hitherto have been correct.

A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung as such because he has recognized it to be false only then acts decently if, upon realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final consequence. In such a case, he must, at the very least, forego the public exercise of any further political activities. Because he was once mistaken in his basic beliefs, it is possible that this could happen a second time.

These remarks also explain Hitler's fear of having to admit even a single mistake, a fear which would accompany him throughout his life, for under no circumstances would he have been willing to draw the "consequence" he himself proposed.

Hitler had reached the milestone of thirty in 1919, and all of the ideas he had conceived of and judged correct prior thereto were to endure as his incontrovertible basic principles. Remaining within this logic, Hitler claimed that he had, in the course of the preceding years, laid a "philosophic foundation of granite," and asserted, "in addition to what I once created, I have had to learn little, and needed to change not a thing."⁵² *Mein Kampf* was the forum for his fixed views on the world, valid for all time. Not only did he intend never to amend them; he intended to make them reality one step at a time.

Refusing to the very last to retreat an inch from these preconceived ideas, he adamantly rejected even first-hand reports if they did not appear to confirm his opinions.

I have only been able to score these successes ... because I have never allowed weaklings to talk me out of or lead me away from an opinion I had once formed and ... because I have always resolved under any circumstances to respond to a necessity once recognized.⁵³

What was his premise for this peculiar theory of the "Man at Thirty"? It would be safe to assume that its roots lay in the Bible. Christ had begun teaching only after he had reached the age of thirty, and considering that Hitler perceived himself a heaven-sent Messiah, he doubtless believed

to have come of age for this role at thirty. Furthermore, his participation in World War I from 1914 to 1918 concluded shortly before the end of his thirtieth year, and he may well have regarded this experience as a last anointing prior to taking on his mission in a new life untainted by human fallibility.

In respect to Hitler's views on religion, it should be noted that he was baptized and raised as a Roman Catholic, and the attitudes instilled in him early on had a lasting impact upon his thinking. He greatly admired the colossal organization of the Catholic Church and was impressed by both the psychic power it exercised over its followers and the strict and devoted adherence to dogmas it practiced. Although he did not abide by the Church's commandments, he remained personally attached to Catholic ways of thinking even into the initial years of his rule. As late as 1933, he still described himself publicly as a Catholic.⁵⁴ Only the spreading poison of his lust for power and self-idolatry finally crowded out the memories of childhood beliefs, and in 1937, he jettisoned the last of his personal religious convictions, declaring to his comrades, "Now I feel as fresh as a colt in the pasture."⁵⁵

In his speeches, Hitler nonetheless continued to invoke "God," "the Almighty" and "Providence" (*Vorschung*), doing so not merely as a means to an end or in a blasphemous sense. He actually believed in a god, but it was not the same God who has been worshipped by the peoples of this planet for millennia as the preserver and protector of all life: it was even less the God whose highest commandment requires one to love one's neighbor.

The god in whom Hitler believed was the peculiarly German god whose name was inscribed on the belt buckles of both the old and the new German Army.⁵⁶

It was the god who "let iron grow" and wanted "no slaves," who therefore armed the Germans with "saber, sword and spear."⁵⁷ Hitler once noted to the English journalist, Ward Price:⁵⁸

I believe in God, and I am convinced that He will not desert sixty-seven million Germans who have worked so hard to regain their rightful position in the world.

On another occasion, he stressed in a public speech:⁵⁹

I, too, am religious; that is, religious deep inside, and I believe that Providence weighs us human beings, and that he who is unable to pass the test of Providence but is destroyed by it has not been destined for greater things.

Hitler's god sat enthroned somewhere above the clouds, looking down and taking note of whether the Germans were indeed united, strong and truly willing to persevere; he sent down test upon test in which the Germans were to demonstrate their firmness and resolution. And were they to prevail, this god would finally bestow upon them—the best Volk—the crown of supremacy over all other people in fulfillment of Geibel's prophecy, "And the essence of what is German shall one day heal the world."⁶⁰

This was to culminate in the establishment of a tremendous, utopian Reich, comparable to a new Atlantis, in a world ruled by super-human Aryans, the legitimate heirs of the Holy Grail. Hitler exposed this National Socialist aim not only in his inner circle,⁶¹ but stated it unequivocally in *Mein Kampf*:⁶²

A state which is dedicated, in this age of racial poisoning, to cultivating its best racial elements, must one day become master over the earth.

This objective bears a striking similarity to the drive for world supremacy Hitler so often ascribed to the 'International Jewry' in his book.

Hitler believed in his mythical god with unshakable fervor and was firmly convinced that this being had chosen him from among the millions of German soldiers of World War I as the best, the most unyielding and the most courageous of all, the one man capable of raising Germany from out of its humiliation to new glory, destined to ultimately redeem the entire world. Thus the Reich Hitler had created, having once passed the scrutiny of Providence, would never again wane. He stated on various occasions:

I believe that it was also God's will that from here [Austria] a boy was to be sent into the Reich, allowed to mature, and elevated to become the nation's Führer.⁶³

I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker.⁶⁴

When I look back on the five years behind us, I cannot help but say: this has not been the work of man alone. Had Providence not guided us, I surely would often have been unable to follow these dizzying paths.⁶⁵

The Almighty will always help those who help themselves.⁶⁶

God formed this Volk, and it has become what it should according to God's will, and according to our will, it shall remain, nevermore to fade!⁶⁷

Work such as ours which has received the blessings of the Omnipotent can never again be undone by mere mortals.⁶⁸

God helped us.⁶⁹

Where will and faith so fervently join forces, Heaven cannot withhold its approval.⁷⁰

Hitler construed "faith" to mean none other than the German Volk's faith in himself. He declared:

German Volk, I have taught you to have faith, now give me your faith!⁷¹

What has happened in these past weeks is the result of the triumph of an idea, a triumph of will, and even a triumph of persistence and tenacity, and above all it is the result of a miracle of faith, for only faith could have moved these mountains. I once went forth with my faith in the German people and took up this immeasurable struggle. With faith in me, first thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and finally millions have followed after me.⁷²

His many victories and triumphs were, he felt, visible proof sent down from this god, confirmation that he was on the right path; every danger he withstood and surmounted became yet further evidence of divine approval. In each decision, he was guided by the will of Providence.

His own doubts he drowned out by claiming absolute infallibility. He deemed his judgment irreproachable, not only in respect to the present and the future (he had, it will be remembered, "provided for every eventuality from the start"), but also in view of the past. In his speeches, Hitler was always able to find or manufacture some mysterious reason explaining that even glaringly inaccurate prognoses and false decisions had, in retrospect, been right after all. Toward the end of his rule, this insistence upon his own flawlessness was to become increasingly grotesque as the gulf between what he had predicted and what had come to pass grew more unbridgeable with each passing day.

The image of the God-man which Hitler wished to personify was, of course, incompatible with human fallibility, making him anxious to conceal from the German people anything which he construed as a weakness.

For example, Hitler never appeared in public wearing eyeglasses; nor did he ever allow any pictures of him wearing them to be published.

He also took great pains to ensure that no details of his scarce love affairs leaked out to the public. Except for a chosen few, the Germans at large were kept in ignorance, first hearing, for instance, the name of Eva Braun⁷³ only subsequent to Hitler's death. The God-man Hitler fancied himself to be was a more or less sexless creature, above and beyond the paltriness of human emotions and passions. His heart belonged not to the female sex, but exclusively to the German Volk. A

superior entity of this kind therefore would have no need of hedonic pleasures or stimulants. He held that this monastic being should partake neither of alcohol nor tobacco and even denied himself the consumption of meat.

While Hitler did not take the precept of sexual abstinence all too seriously and was unable to completely dispense with wearing glasses despite his use of oversized letters (1 cm) on the so-called *Führermaschine* typewriter, he did abstain quite strictly from alcohol, tobacco and meat.⁷⁴ There is, however, speculation that these last habits were in truth manifestations of his hypochondriac pathophobia. The projected image of the ascetic is further incompatible with Hitler's frequent use of the stimulating drugs increasingly administered to him by his personal physician, Dr. Theo Morell, from the late 1930's onward.⁷⁵

The God-man, in Hitler's view, also comprised the court of final judgment, the supreme judge endowed with a veritably supernatural authority comparable to that which Christ once bestowed upon Peter ("Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven").⁷⁶ The God-man therefore had a divine right to determine the fate of all Germans; the fate of non-Germans hardly qualifying for his consideration. Whomever he deemed worthy of death was destined to die. Conversely, whomever he deemed worthy to live was allowed to do so and even—given good behavior—granted special privileges.

According to Hitler's view of the world, the devil incarnate who represented a threat to the divine plan and designed to rob the German people of their rightful reward was Jewry. Infiltrating every corner of the world, it existed for the sole purpose of draining the peoples of the world economically, of corrupting their moral integrity and bringing about their physical destruction.

The Jews, as Hitler presented it, were particularly bent upon destroying the German people. Every enemy of Germany and—since Germany and Hitler were synonymous—every opponent of the Führer was deemed Jewry's accomplice, whether these parties were Freemasons, Bolsheviks, gypsies, or members of a foreign race. To ban this evil was to "fulfill the work of the Lord," as Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*.⁷⁷ The dictator was indeed adept at drumming up credence for such beliefs: "Providence has preordained me to be the greatest liberator of humanity"⁷⁸—he ultimately had taken on the role of Savior himself.

Political Aims

‘Patriotism’

In the main, Hitler’s political aims involved foreign affairs. He viewed his domestic policies as the necessary prerequisites for a “strong” foreign policy, i.e. mere tools for concentrating power in a single hand.

From the time of his youth, Hitler had been accustomed to equating his own personal happiness with Germany’s welfare and power. He took the collapse of the imperial regime and the military defeat of 1918 to heart, perceiving Germany’s fate as a personal injustice to himself. Upon hearing the news of the surrender, he wept bitterly.⁷⁹

Hitler was not alone in feeling that a world was falling apart at the end of World War I. Many Germans had deluded themselves into believing in a strong and unconquerable Germany and this illusion was blasted in the face of harsh reality.

Just as Hitler categorically refused to admit a mistake or assume the slightest responsibility for any errors on his part, he made no attempt to understand the catastrophe of 1918 in terms of the imperial government’s own policies or as a result of poor judgment in regard to Germany’s military and economic potential; moreover, he simply chose to disregard the enemy’s sheerly overwhelming numerical superiority. Instead he believed the reasons for the defeat lay in betrayal and in the doings of secret forces, among them the Jews and the Freemasons. Those directly to blame, in his opinion, were the German politicians who had signed the Armistice, although in reality they had had no control over Germany’s political and military leadership. Hitler became a zealous advocate of the *Dolchstoßlegende* (the “legend of the stab in the back”⁸⁰), and vowed to become a politician so that he might finally wreak revenge upon the Social Democrats and the Marxists. He labelled them the “November Criminals,” making public threats that he would bring them to court when he seized power and “let their heads roll.”⁸¹

When he finally took office as Reich Chancellor after fourteen years of domestic “struggle,” he was unable to prosecute the guilty parties as planned for the simple reason that there had been no “November Criminals” and the imperial army had not been “stabbed in the back.” But other heads began to roll: the heads of those who were not willing to submit to Hitler’s rule.

In the initial years of Hitler’s government, his patriotism proved somewhat onesided, in essence nothing other than a vehicle for his own display of power. When all was said and done, he was thoroughly indifferent to the fate of the German people, viewing them merely as the instrumental Volk which played a subordinate and narrowly defined role in his despotic drama. If they refused to acquiesce and resisted his plans, he was determined to use brute force, and stated so quite openly.⁸²

We perceive in this historical evidence of Teutonism the unconscious mandate vested by Fate: to unite this stubborn German Volk, if necessary by force. That was, in terms of history, just as necessary then as it is necessary today.

Above all, in the course of World War II the German dictator unhesitatingly sacrificed millions of Germans for the mere sake of proving his “perseverance” theory. Accordingly, the “last battalion” on the battlefield would be “a German one.”⁸³ Hitler once declared, “I believe I have a right to say that, had Fate put me at the helm [in 1918], this collapse would never have come about.”⁸⁴ In World War II he did in fact stand at the helm, but he steered Germany into a political and military catastrophe far graver than that of 1918. In 1945 he not only had no intention of allowing himself to be “beaten to pieces for this German Volk,”⁸⁵ he was not even willing to bear the same burden he had foisted upon the shoulders of his fellow countrymen, as he had promised.⁸⁶

Today I am as willing as I was before to make any personal sacrifice. [—] Germans should not be asked to make any sacrifices I myself would not make without an instant’s hesitation!

He was even less willing to assume the responsibility for how he ran the government, let alone allow the German people to “crucify” him: a retaliation he had proposed should he ever fail. Of his various vows in this vein, he kept not one. They included the following:

German Volk, give us four years, and I swear to you, just as we, just as I have taken this office, so shall I leave it.⁸⁷

The German Volk shall then form its judgment, take its decision and pass sentence upon me, and then, for all I care, it can crucify me if it finds that I have not done my duty.⁸⁸

If ever I were to err here, or should the Volk ever be of the opinion that it cannot agree with my actions, then it may have me executed. I will calmly stand firm.⁸⁹

No action will take place for which I will not vouch with my life, as this Volk be my witness.⁹⁰

I wish to bear the entire responsibility.⁹¹

We are responsible for that which we shall one day leave behind to those who shall come after us. For Germany must not end with us.⁹²

Hitler would never assume this highly touted responsibility to the German people but would abruptly take his leave by pressing a trigger when the sum of his foreign policies and military operations proved a grave miscalculation.

The suffering of the German people interested him only insofar as he was able to turn it to a profit at home or abroad. When he himself had caused the hardships, they were declared an unavoidable sacrifice which had to be made for the glory of Germany.

Mussolini, the senior among the European dictators of the time, reacted differently to defeat, accepting his dismissal in 1943—when Italy's imminent collapse was evident—and refraining from appealing to the Italians to continue fighting for the regime. He had remained human. The "God-man" Hitler, however, showed no mercy for the German people.

"Were I given the gift of continents, I would still prefer being even the poorest citizen of this Volk,"⁹³ he declared, but his sole objective, to which everything else was subordinated, lay in the exercise of naked power. As a 'German,'⁹⁴ he was initially confined to establishing his supremacy in his own country. But he doubtless would have attempted to realize his visions of unbounded power in any other nation offering prospects of success. He would not, for instance, have been averse to using France as a base for the international empire of the future, for Hitler believed himself capable of motivating the French to comparable, if not even greater accomplishments than those of the Germans. Particularly characteristic of this attitude is a remark he made in 1933, when he exclaimed, "If I were Propaganda Minister for France—poor Germany!"⁹⁵

Three years later, he went so far as to deny any aspirations to military supremacy, stating:⁹⁶

I can only say that my ambition is directed toward other triumphs. [—] It is my ambition to establish a memorial to myself within the German Volk. But I am also aware that it would be better to erect this memorial in peacetime rather than in times of war. My ambition is aimed at creating the best possible institutions for training our Volk. It is my will that we in Germany have the greatest stadiums; that our road network is expanded; that our culture becomes elevated and refined; I want our cities to become beautiful; I want to put Germany at the top in every field of human cultural life and cultural aspiration. That is my ambition!

The memorial Adolf Hitler erected to himself “within the German Volk” bears no resemblance to this vision.

Anti-Semitism

In Germany, one is occasionally confronted with the opinion that Hitler's rule was basically a good thing—he had only gone too far in persecuting the Jews and starting the war.

This viewpoint does little justice to reality, however, for both the holocaust of the Jews and the outbreak of the war were no more than the—albeit ghastly—end sum of Hitler's politics and particularly the logical consequences of his foreign policy. Moreover, the final form each of these aspects took did not match Hitler's original plans, or at least he had envisioned a different chronology of events.

In his public and private speeches prior to 1939, Hitler had not announced in so many words his intention to annihilate all Jews, nor had he disclosed the means he would use to do so. Even during the War when his machinery of destruction was running at top capacity, he confined his remarks on a massacre of the Jews to threats within the scope of his foreign policy, knowing only too well that such an openly propagated program of extermination was certain to meet with resistance from the majority of the German people and the bulk of his party followers.

Anti-Semitism had existed in Germany for centuries—at times open, at times latent—serving always as tinder when the flames of revolution and war swept the country, and often erupting into pogroms and other similar forms of persecution. However, these were phenomena not peculiar to Germany alone, but in evidence to greater and lesser degrees in many other European countries. One of the more obvious causes for such hostility lay in the fact that many—and naturally above all the orthodox—Jews were, in terms of daily life, a group apart: easily isolated as the alien and incomprehensible “other” due to a different physiognomy, distinctive dress, and a foreign cultural heritage characterized by traditions and habits in contrast to their environment.

The Dutch historian Louis de Jong⁹⁷ has argued conclusively that in wartime a person need only have an outer appearance differing from that of the normal citizen to be suspected, with no further substantiation, of being a spy and a traitor or to fall prey to the lynch-law of an aroused mob in search of a scapegoat. In both World Wars, countless members of almost all of the European peoples were arrested, persecuted and even killed as spies, traitors, enemy collaborators, etc.—although they were completely innocent, and had aroused suspicion only by their appearance.

Throughout the course of centuries, anti-Semitic tendencies had been reinforced in the German population by government measures, such as segregation of the Jews in ghettos, restrictions on their gainful employment, and other special and discriminatory laws. They were barred from certain civil servant posts and military careers, and this form of social injustice persisted even into the First World War.

The two Christian churches in Germany had made it a practice of brandmarking Jews as the heathens who had nailed Christ to the cross. The devil as depicted in Christian publications more often than not exhibited Jewish facial features.

One of the few professions open to the Jews from the very beginning was that of banking. Jews were more generous in granting credit than the other banking institutions, often providing funds to customers who had long been declared unworthy of credit. Yet, when Jewish bankers demanded repayment plus interest and initiated the standard enforcement measures, they were rewarded with ill-repute and decried as profiteers and sharks.

When the Jews were finally granted admission to academic professions in the 19th and 20th centuries, German lawyers, physicians, journalists, etc. were suddenly confronted with the competition of large numbers of Jewish colleagues. As long as the economy remained intact, this did not present a problem. But when the crises of the 1920's and 1930's hit, the cry arose in academic circles that the Jews should be ousted or their numbers in these fields limited to their percentage in the population as a whole.

At the time National Socialism was beginning to take hold, it was widely held that the Jews were responsible for every mishap in Germany from the early Middle Ages to the 20th century. By 1918 at the latest, anti-Semitism was playing an integral and open part in nationalist circles and parties throughout the country. The extremist right-wing Freikorps, returning home from the Baltic, established the swastika—which had

been in existence for millennia⁹⁸—as a popular symbol of anti-Semitism in Germany. In Austria, the swastika was first introduced as an Aryan symbol by Guido von List at the beginning of the 20th century. He and Lanz von Liebenfels, the founder of the *Ordo Novi Templi* and editor of the *Ostara* pamphlets, formed the core of a mystical anti-Semitic movement in Vienna, which had a major influence on Hitler and during the formative phase of National Socialism.⁹⁹

Anti-Semitism and the Germanic cult were closely related to esoteric doctrines. These less tangible roots of National Socialism remained largely hidden from the public eye, notwithstanding the penchant for the occult displayed by Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler and the National Socialist ideologist, Alfred Rosenberg. Hitler, too, had been exposed to secret sciences, and in more intimate circles he occasionally remarked on the esoteric goals of National Socialism.¹⁰⁰ As was the case with other leading National Socialists, Hitler upheld ties to the Thule Society in the early 1920s, which cultivated a *völkisch* and anti-Semitic image but whose inner circle was devoted to the study of the occult.¹⁰¹

Hitler's own antipathy toward the Jews was a combination of innate dislike, construed hatred and vague racial ideas preconditioned by the doctrines of Gobineau and Houston Steward Chamberlain. In reality, neither he nor any members of his family had ever had any unfavorable experiences with Jews. Hitler even wrote that, in his youth, he had been outraged by anti-Semitic remarks and got along well with his Jewish peers.¹⁰² This changed when he was first confronted with immigrants from Galicia with their curls and black kaftans: he regarded these Jews as alien creatures, and they aroused his aversion. Had there been a larger percentage of blacks in Germany, this race would also certainly have prompted his response of innate, primitive antagonism. The gypsies, another people which did not disguise its different cultural traditions, met with nearly the same fate as the Jews during the Third Reich.

Every subject with which Hitler could find fault in Vienna served only to aggravate his hostility toward Jewry: the internationally-oriented Marxist organizations, the parliament, the press, and modern art.

When he further concluded from the anti-Semitic tracts circulating at the time and the invective he witnessed at pseudopolitical meetings that the Jews allegedly upheld an organization which surreptitiously ruled the world and planned to undermine Germany's international standing,¹⁰³ he made of his suspicions a holy crusade: the Jews were indeed to blame for Germany's tragedy and the catastrophe of 1918. They were

none other than devils in disguise, and combatting them was but doing the work of the Lord. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler conjured up an apocalyptic vision of this satanic world conspiracy:¹⁰⁴

If, with the aid of his Marxist creed, the Jew triumphs over the peoples of this world, then his coronation will be the dance of death for humanity, and this planet will once more drift through the ether devoid of human life, as it did millions of years ago. Eternal Nature is relentless in avenging transgressions of her laws.

Hence I believe I am acting in accordance with the wishes of the Almighty Creator: *by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*¹⁰⁵

At the time Hitler and his infant NSDAP were beginning to play a role in the Germany of the 1920's, his anti-Semitic slogans were not taken seriously by the bulk of the population. Phraseology of this type belonged, as a rule, to the basic vocabulary of the various *völkisch* and nationalistic groups which flourished at the time.

After Hitler took power, a practical solution to what was regarded as the Jewish problem was promised. Both the German people and the National Socialists entertained such solutions as, for instance, removing Jews from public office, curbing their influence in the economy and, as a last resort, bringing about their emigration from Germany. The application of pinprick tactics was to render staying in Germany so difficult for Jews that they would soon resign of their own volition and leave the country. "Out with the Jews!" was the refrain of one National Socialist fight song, and this was also the aim presented first to party members and then to the German people as Hitler's ultimate goal. For years there was talk about shipping the Jews to some obscure location such as the island of Madagascar. And while this type of forced emigration would have been unjust and hard, it would not have been the first time in the history of mankind—nor in the short space of the early 20th century—that similar events had taken place; one need only recall the deportation of 1.5 million Greeks from Asia Minor following the war between Turkey and Greece in 1922. In any case, this fate would by no means have been comparable to the massacre and extermination Hitler ultimately practiced on millions of Jews during the Second World War.

From the very onset, he did not seriously consider evacuating the Jews as a viable alternative. Initially, Hitler wanted to continue to utilize this group as the enemy personified.¹⁰⁶ Later, he had a further motive: exploiting the Jews as hostages within the scope of his foreign policy and as a means of exerting pressure on foreign countries. His belief in

the existence of a secret Jewish world government was genuine, as is evident in his various remarks to this effect in *Mein Kampf*. In fact, Hitler held so fast to his conviction of the strong lobby of “International Jewry” on Western governments that he actually expected them to react favorably to his policies of expansion to the East. It was his firm belief that Jews worldwide would successfully bear down on the governments to exhibit restraint in dealing with Germany in the hope of saving the ‘Jewish hostages’ if he threatened to annihilate them.

As is illustrated in this work, the actions taken against German Jews on April 1, 1933 and November 9–10, 1938 were motivated by foreign policy considerations¹⁰⁷ and similarly, the mass extermination program put into practice from 1941 to 1945 grew out of the same logic.

As early as March 29, 1933, Hitler had declared:¹⁰⁸

However, *Judentum* must realize that a Jewish war against Germany would hit *Judentum* in Germany itself with full force.

And on January 30, 1941, he had stated:¹⁰⁹

I would not like to forget the point I made previously on September 1, 1939 before the German Reichstag.¹¹⁰ That is, that if the Jews should succeed in plunging the rest of the world into a world war, then the entire Jewish race will have played out its role in Europe.

As 1941 came to an end, bringing with it—despite Hitler’s prophecies—neither the defeat of the Soviet Union nor peace with England, he once more hoisted the blame upon the Jews and promised retaliation:¹¹¹

I predicted on September 1, 1939 before the German Reichstag and I am careful to refrain from rash prophecies—that this war will not end the way the Jews would have it, namely with the extermination of all European and Aryan peoples, but the result of this war will be the annihilation of the Jewish race.

These were reprisals Hitler had announced early on. Ultimately, he made good his threats, ordering his SS henchmen to liquidate millions of Jewish men, women and children. The success he had hoped to achieve—i.e. the willingness of the West to make peace on his terms—had failed to materialize and left him with the consequences of yet another irrational estimation of reality.

Domestic Policy

The German people as a whole generally expressed as little interest in Hitler's foreign policy aims as in his anti-Semitic slogans. One must bear in mind that his domestic policies were instrumental in persuading the populace to elect him.

Circumstances played into Hitler's hands in the years 1920 to 1923, when postwar misery, inflation and economic ruin had shattered Germany, and once more ten years later, when the world depression had taken its toll and there were millions of unemployed.

In the interim years of economic prosperity, Hitler made little impact. His ideas were dismissed as the folly of a failed putschist and eccentric, a fact best illustrated in the election results of 1928, in which the National Socialists won only twelve seats in the Reichstag. Two years later, on September 14, 1930, their number skyrocketed to 107, to increase on July 31, 1932 to a total of 230 deputies—an election in which thirteen million Germans cast their ballots for Adolf Hitler.

At the time, Reich Chancellor von Papen had declared, "Herr Hitler, you are only here because there is a crisis!" Hitler countered in a public assembly with the words, "if good fortune were here, I would not be needed, and I would not be here, either!"¹¹²

What was Hitler's persuasive cure for the ailing times? What was behind the domestic goals he used to mesmerize millions of Germans? An ostensible answer to this question lies in the 25 points comprising National Socialist policy at home and abroad which Hitler expounded in the Munich Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus on February 24, 1920.¹¹³ However, Hitler himself set no great stock in this party program, a fact he frankly admitted in *Mein Kampf*.¹¹⁴ The main thing, so he argued, was that the 25 points had been declared "inalterable." The form in which they were later to be put into practice was contingent upon the provisions passed for their implementation. In fact, however, numerous

points were never tackled after Hitler's seizure of power, among them many domestic policy programs as, for instance, the abolishment of large department stores. The item professing belief in positive Christianity, to cite another, had most likely been a purely rhetorical claim from its very inception.

In his speeches, Hitler rarely mentioned the official party program with the noted exception of his intention to abrogate the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain, which received all the more attention.

For his battle on the home front Hitler had another, more tangible program in store. He propagated the belief that the source of all misfortune suffered by the German Volk lay solely in its lack of unity. The population, he contended, was split into classes, stations, religions, parties, etc. and thus hindered from fully developing its inherent potential. The movements of Nationalism and Socialism and their respective adherents represented two warring factions. It was his main objective to join these forces, and he predicted, "On that day when both ideas are molten into one, they will become invincible!"¹¹⁵ Democracy as a form of government was doomed to extinction, he expounded, for it put only weaklings in power. Parliaments were nothing but talking shops; their longwinded debates made swift and reasonable decisions impossible. A single, authoritative will was called for. *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Wille* was the only feasible solution. The system which had been governing Germany since 1918 was, in his eyes, composed of traitors (the so-called "November Criminals") and "fulfillment politicians" in the thrall of the enemy: incompetent, inferior weaklings across the board. Were this system not eliminated without delay, the sorry fate of the German Volk would be sealed, and it would ultimately drown in "Bolshevist chaos." From a modern vantage point, these ideas may well appear wild and absurd, but in the troubled years of the early 1930's, they seemed to hit the nail on the head in Germany.

Just as the German governments of the Weimar Republic were not, contrary to Hitler's unfair accusations, responsible for the economic plight of the time, they were similarly in no position to eliminate or even relieve it. Moreover, they were not even capable of placating the public by adequately explaining that the international economic situation would improve of its own accord as it had in 1923 and thus relieve the suffering, at least in a psychological sense.

As of 1930, the Social Democrats no longer took an active part in politics and restricted their activities to tolerating bourgeois cabinets. The party had become sterile, and it is a fact that many of the leading

Social Democrats of the time cared less about alleviating the misery at large than protecting their positions and status in the face of the surging ranks of National Socialists. They did not even consider once more climbing the barricades to defend the rights of the working people; instead, they gladly deserted their posts on July 20, 1932 on the occasion of von Papen's coup in Prussia, just as they were willing to step back in the spring of 1933 under Hitler in exchange for their retirement pensions.

Empowered by Article 48, Reich Chancellor Heinrich Brüning of the Center Party was free to rule with an iron hand—an unsatisfactory state of affairs for a government purporting to be a democracy. His “emergency decrees” did not suffice to bring unemployment under control. Brüning held the opinion that Germany must “starve itself into shape,” but his deflationary measures served only to aggravate the situation. By repeated and drastic cuts of up to more than twenty percent in civil servant salaries, pensions and retirement payments and by reducing government spending, he succeeded not only in provoking the rage of the powerful civil service sector and the middle class; to compound matters, the buying power of the people had been sharply reduced, resulting in a stagnation of the German economy as a whole. Increasing numbers of factories were forced to shut down, and farmers were hard put to sell their produce and ultimately sunk into debt. Hitler stood out of the direct line of fire and prophesied that, unless he was given the chance to rule the nation, matters were certain to worsen steadily.

Hitler's economic program was the exact opposite of Brüning's. With a sovereign disregard to money—a trait he also exhibited in his private affairs—he categorically refused to consider the objections of orthodox economists to his measures, insisting that it was ridiculous to back up German currency with gold or foreign exchange funds:

Neither gold nor foreign exchange funds, but work alone is the foundation for money!¹¹⁶

The salvation of our Volk is not a financial problem; it is exclusively a problem of utilizing and employing the available work force on the one hand and exploiting available soil and mineral resources on the other. The Volksgemeinschaft does not subsist on the fictitious value of money but on actual production, which gives money its value. This production is the primary cover for a currency, not a bank or a vault full of gold! And when I increase this production, I am actually increasing the income of my fellow citizens; if I decrease production, I decrease income, regardless of what salaries are being paid out.¹¹⁷

In Hitler's view, Germany had at its disposal sufficient workers, raw materials and foodstuffs to solve its economic problems on its own. His slogan was, "*Deutsche Arbeiter, fanget an!*" ("German workers, begin!").¹¹⁸

The millions of Germans unemployed at the time were suffering less from material need—particularly as unemployment aid preserved them from the worst—than from the fact that they did not know what to do with their time and loitered aimlessly on streetcorners and squares. A popular newspaper quip had it that the cry for work was louder than the groans of the slaves in ancient Rome.

Hitler had a remedy: he invited the unemployed to join his SA formations. There they would find what they were lacking: something to do and an ideal they could fight for. He elevated himself to their savior, declaring that he had given them a new faith and a new hope, and allowed himself to be worshipped like a god by his storm troopers. Perceptive of the more primitive instincts of the masses, he generously accommodated the German people's affinity for disciplined behavior, uniforms, decorations, parades, and military spectacles.

Not surprisingly, the number of Hitler's supporters grew proportionately to economic need: on July 31, 1932, their forces amounted to thirteen million Germans, i.e. approximately 37 percent of the voting public. Nearly the entire *Mittelstand*, (middle-classes and petite bourgeoisie) including most civil servants, cast their votes for Hitler, as did the peasants (excepting those who were staunch Catholics) and naturally the right-wing extremists, the Freikorps and the bulk of the retired officers. Of the workers, only those voted for Hitler who wanted a radical change in the existing power structures at any cost and, depending upon the situation at the moment, supported either the Communists or the National Socialists.

In spite of all his oratorical efforts, Hitler did not succeed in swaying the organized Social Democratic workers to support his rise to power. Although his arguments were not completely unjustified, he was unable to make any headway with this group by claiming that the higher echelons of the SPD and the trade unions (i.e. the *Bonzen*—"big shots"—as they were pejoratively referred to at the time) were taking little interest in the workers' plight. The SPD adherents countered with the equally not unwarranted argument that they had always been betrayed in the past and always would be in the future. They preferred "being betrayed by their own kind," as a popular slogan put it. Hitler also did not fare well with members of the Center Party before he took

power, for they were under the close guardianship of the clergy, the majority of whom rejected Hitler, albeit not for reasons of foreign policy.

This lack of success with Center and SPD voters did not discourage Hitler: they could wait until after he seized power. At the time, he was more interested in persuading as many right-wing and Communist voters as possible to join his ranks with the aim of overcoming the fifty-percent hurdle.

Communism and *Reaktion* were the only two potential adversaries Hitler took seriously. The Communist methods impressed him; he admired their conformity to one will, their obedience to a single command and their readiness to fight their enemies in the streets if necessary. Bolshevism itself he dismissed as a primitive philosophy, perhaps just right for the Russians he so despised. Any further critical debate on its precepts he considered a waste of time:

Communism is not a higher evolutionary stage, but the most primitive basic form of shaping peoples and nations.¹¹⁹

It is an ideology founded in a fear of one's neighbor, in a dread of somehow standing out, and is based upon a spiteful, envious cast of mind. This code of regression to the primitive state leads to cowardly, anxious acquiescence.¹²⁰

Hitler had a simple recipe for contending with Communism: brute force, a method with which he achieved great success in Germany.

As he saw it, Communism presented no danger whatsoever. On the contrary: the more Communists there were, the easier it was for him to intimidate the bourgeoisie and the reactionaries with the bogey of an impending Bolshevik revolution.

Personally, he believed that the "primitive" German Communists had neither sufficient force nor intelligence to stage a successful rebellion in the critical years between 1930 and 1932, although he would not have begrudged the "Reds" a certain amount of success in doing away with the "upper ten thousand" and the "worthless Philistines" plaguing Germany. He declared quite openly:¹²¹

Had Communism really intended nothing more than a certain purification by eliminating the rotten elements from among the ranks of our so-called upper ten thousand or our equally worthless Philistines, one could have sat back quietly and looked on for a while.

In the turbulent years following World War I, the Communists did, in fact, launch several attempts to overthrow the government, such as those in Munich, Saxony and the Ruhr District. The bourgeoisie still shuddered to think of the attendant horrors, the slaughtering of hostages

and other acts of violence, although today it is difficult to determine which atrocities were worse: those committed by the Communist insurgents or those of the extreme right-wing Feme and the rampaging *Soldateska*. However, the period from 1930 to Hitler's takeover held no real danger of a Bolshevik coup. Moreover, Communist voters never made up more than seventeen percent of the population.¹²² And this, Hitler argued, had been his doing. He threatened that, were the NSDAP not finally allowed to take power, his following would desert en bloc to the ranks of the KPD, and the country would be plunged into what he described as Bolshevik chaos.

With the aid of this sophistry, he ultimately prevailed in convincing the reluctant German Nationalists, the reactionary Junkers, the leaders of industry, and the generals of the Reichswehr that it was imperative that he be placed at the head of government. Finally, made weary by financial need and the surfeit of successive elections, the German people could no longer resist the cry, "Put Hitler in power, and bad times will end!"

Hitler had outlasted his reactionary opponents, but now he was called upon to demonstrate whether he could really provide the "work and bread" he had promised in dozens of speeches. And Hitler did prove that his economic theory was indeed the more effective, at least in the short term, given the circumstances at the time. A few months after he had seized power, unemployment figures dropped sharply; soon they ceased to be significant. Some observers have claimed that the increasing orders Hitler gave to the armament industry constituted the sole reason behind this accomplishment, but in those first decisive years, this factor played only a minor role. It is more correct to say that he boosted all sectors of the economy. Building owners were forced to have their dilapidated properties repaired; the construction industry was given work. The building of streets and bridges was commissioned; motorization was accelerated. Although the bulk of these measures consisted of government-commissioned jobs, private enterprise was also stimulated. Millions regained their means of existence. The farmers expressed their satisfaction with the new "autarky program." The workers were prospering, earning well and even receiving public acclaim for their efforts and being sent on vacations by the recreational organization *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through joy).

This miracle was naturally accomplished with the aid of the money press, using the method of excessive creation of currency by the so-called *Mefo-Wechsel-System* devised by Hitler's "financial wizard,"

Hjalmar Schacht.¹²³ By simultaneously enforcing strict price controls, the Reich Government seemed able to finance arms production while bolstering the German mark even after gold coverage had been abandoned and foreign exchange control instituted. However, these artificial achievements were short-lived. The damage done to the currency in financing unrestrained arms production was knowingly accepted as unavoidable, for, as the gambler Hitler trusted, victorious campaigns would bring about a solution before the camouflaged inflation would break out.

All the same, Hitler did demonstrate a certain talent for economic policy in the years following his takeover and this fact alone would have earned him recognition from the German people and toleration from the rest of the world. But Hitler planned to go down in history as much more than a politician with a keen grasp of economic realities: he wanted to exercise power—power over Germany, and power over the world.

He might have been satisfied with the position of power he had achieved in Germany by 1933. For, in addition to the thirteen million Germans who had voted for him in 1932, now both the Social Democratic workers and the adherents of the Center Party pledged him their support in considerable numbers.

In light of the National Socialist manipulations of the votes obvious since the election of November 12, 1933, it is difficult to accurately ascertain the percentage of Hitler's following in 1933; however, it unquestionably exceeded fifty percent.

But to Hitler, all this was not enough. His lust for power was so great that he was unwilling to allow anyone else even the slightest political influence. He used every opportunity—above all, every genuine or construed crisis—to eliminate persons who had fallen into his disfavor, thereby misappropriating their privileges himself or seeing to it that these were played into the hands of loyal adherents. He used this recipe within his own party, in government, and later in the armed forces. Even during the war, Hitler never ceased his efforts to enlarge the sphere of his domestic power.

When the SA threatened to mutiny in 1930, Hitler dismissed its leader, the retired Captain Pfeffer von Salomon,¹²⁴ declaring himself "Oberster SA Führer" (OSAF) and the devoted Ernst Röhm,¹²⁵ a retired Captain, its new Chief of Staff. When Gregor Strasser,¹²⁶ Head of Political Organization, advocated a policy of alliance with Schleicher,¹²⁷ Hitler branded him a traitor and proceeded to take over the leadership of the entire party organization.

In 1941, when Rudolf Hess¹²⁸ disappeared to Britain, Hitler personally took over his vacated position and called upon the servile Martin Bormann¹²⁹ to assume the leadership of the Party Office. When Reich President von Hindenburg was hovering near death in 1934, Hitler made certain of one thing—he alone would succeed the Old Gentleman as Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.¹³⁰

When Reich Minister of War von Blomberg¹³¹ opposed Hitler's wishes in 1938, the Führer assumed his functions without further ado and simultaneously put the unpopular Commander in Chief of the Army, Freiherr von Fritsch,¹³² to the sword. When in 1941 the German Army failed to take Moscow, Hitler used Field Marshal von Brauchitsch¹³³ as a scapegoat, dismissing him in order to take on the post of Commander in Chief of the Army himself.¹³⁴

In 1942, Hitler had the Reichstag empower him to dismiss any judge he chose and take on the function of Supreme Judge (*Oberster Gerichtsherr*). When the Commander of the Replacement Army (*Ersatzheer*), Friedrich Fromm,¹³⁵ adopted an ambivalent attitude on July 20, 1944, Hitler placed him under arrest and appointed in his stead the loyal Reichsführer SS, Himmler.¹³⁶

Hitler's thirst for power knew no bounds, and he was continually on his guard against those who refused to recognize his absolute supremacy. His control was so complete that there is little or no doubt that Germany could not have liberated itself from this dictatorship during Hitler's lifetime.

Had the dictator not ultimately become the victim of his own foreign policies, neither the people, the churches, the Armed Forces, nor the National Socialist Party would ever have succeeded in removing him from his seat of power.

After his death, Hitler's empire would have collapsed not unlike that of Alexander the Great. For all his talk of the future *Führerstaat*, racial selectivity, etc., he naturally could not bring himself to train or even name a genuine successor, fearing that he might thereby risk sacrificing some—no matter how small—part of his power.

Foreign Policy

When Hitler turned thirty in 1919, he already had a clear picture of his foreign policy plans and refused to the end to relinquish or revise these aims. He had set forth his concepts in *Mein Kampf* for all time:¹³⁷

The demand for a reestablishment of the 1914 borders is a political absurdity. The borders of 1914 mean nothing at all for the future of the German nation.

In face of this, we National Socialists must keep an unshakable hold on our political aims, namely of securing the land and soil rightfully belonging to the German Volk on this earth. And this action is the only one which, before God and our German posterity, would allow an investment of blood to appear justified.

In this context, I must attack most sharply those *völkisch* penpushers who pretend to perceive in such an acquisition of soil a “violation of sacred human rights.”

Thus we National Socialists are intentionally closing the chapter on the direction which foreign policy took in our pre-war period. We are taking up where we broke off six centuries ago. We are stopping the endless stream of Germans moving to the south and west of Europe and setting our sights on the land in the east.

Hitler’s plans could hardly have been fixed more clearly, but the pseudo-historical deliberations in which they were embedded reveal the naivete characteristic of his foreign policy as a whole.

Except in respect to the *Völkerwanderung*, the myth of an “endless stream of Germans moving to the south” has no basis in fact. The only—admittedly meager—support for the idea of German expansion to the west lies in Bismarck’s campaign of 1870–71 and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. It would be more correct to speak of a French drive towards the east and to the Rhine.

In contrast, the German drive to the east was indeed a reality which had not slumbered in the six hundred years Hitler so flippantly

dismissed. The conquests of the Teutonic Order marked the beginning of an *Ostpolitik* consistent with that of the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs which persisted up to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918.

But what did Hitler care about the facts of history? He was determined to realize his foreign policy goals at any price. The only debatable question was whether Germany's military potential sufficed to execute his expansionist plans, and how the West would react to his crusades. In regard to the latter point, Hitler had long devised a solution. "In Europe there will be only two allies for Germany in the foreseeable future: England and Italy," he had predicted in *Mein Kampf*.¹³⁸

Hitler's foreign and military policies actually did have a common denominator, for they were all ultimately aimed at the establishment of a new German continental imperium stretching to include the entirety of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union all the way to the Ural Mountains. And to put this plan into effect, he needed alliances with Great Britain and Italy, followed by war with the Soviet Union. This was a program of positively Napoleonic dimensions, and the attempt to translate it into action ended no differently than the Corsican's plans had 130 years before.

It seems difficult to comprehend why Hitler should have believed his goal for German hegemony in Europe was anything but foolhardy illusion so shortly after William II had failed with his claim for world supremacy and in his colonial and naval policies. World War I had conclusively shown that the world was not willing to tolerate expansionist policies on the part of Germany or Austria, not even in the Balkans. It had further established that Germany's military power fell drastically short of being able to match the united forces of the Western Powers. However, German statesmen—and first and foremost Hitler—turned a deaf ear to these so obvious lessons of the First World War.

The discussion on *unbewältigte Vergangenheit* which has been carried on in West Germany for some time deals with the question of failing to come to terms with the past, whereby, the "past" in this context refers to the Third Reich and the catastrophe of 1945. However, this term might apply more accurately to the German attitude between the two World Wars. The majority of the German population, above all the influential bourgeoisie, was taken completely by surprise at the defeat of 1918 and was unable to fathom that the German Army, touted for decades as invincible, could have been forced to surrender.

The statesmen and generals responsible did their utmost to hide the real reasons behind the military catastrophe from the German people.

A legend was called to life blaming the defeat on a “stab in the back of the German Army.”

On the other hand, the measures taken by the Allies after 1918 were neither wise nor justified. Independent of the perspective one takes, they were half-measures at best, and bore the seed of new conflicts. The ill-chosen borders to Germany's east are a case in point, for while they were not actually the immediate cause for the outbreak of war in 1939, they did constitute a major factor. Other problematic points included the military and economic clauses in the Treaty of Versailles and the occupation of the Rhineland. An added burden was the attitude of certain Western circles which indirectly promoted the reactionary parties in Germany for their own gain while obstructing the work of the genuinely pacifist governments of the Weimar Republic.

In the minds of many Germans, Hitler among them, there was no doubt that the catastrophe of 1918 was a result not of any numerical or technical supremacy on the part of the Allies, but of treason in their own ranks.

Hitler spoke of the “laurel wreath” which had been “craftily snatched from the German soldier in 1918”¹³⁹ and became a spokesman for the unity theory:¹⁴⁰

As long as the German Volk was unified in history, it has never been vanquished. It was only the disunity of the year 1918 which led to the collapse.

Hitler honestly believed that the German front had been broken also by virtue of the enemy propaganda dropped behind the lines. He put no stock in the basic lesson which the history of war has taught to all peoples: the military resources constitute the single crucial factor, and they depend in turn upon the number and quality of the available troops, upon the capacity for producing arms and upon the store of foodstuffs. Exhortations to hold out and even new weaponry can, at best, prolong a war, but they cannot influence its outcome.

Hitler also chose to ignore another basic insight which has been reinforced by the events of history: propaganda is effective only with one's own people or vis-à-vis dependent or inferior states; it is powerless in the face of equally strong or superior peoples.

The foreign policy concepts Hitler adopted in 1919 were inconsistent with reality in respect to both Great Britain and the Soviet Union. And they were his inevitable ruin: his view of history was distorted and he refused to correct it.

He once claimed:¹⁴¹

There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance, to the effect that one explains afterwards: I didn't notice that or I didn't take it seriously.

These words were Hitler's self-pronounced death sentence: persisting in his erroneous assumptions of 1919 could never change reality, and the hard facts caught up with him in the end.

In terms of his preconceived notions of foreign policy, an alliance between Germany and Italy seemed most feasible. Such a tie could be reinforced by drawing parallels in history—not only the alliance which Bismarck had entered into with Cavour's young Italy, but also the close relations between Italy and Germany during the Holy Roman Empire. However, Hitler was less interested in historical precedents than in the simple fact that the manifestation of Fascism and the phenomenon of Mussolini presented themselves as sufficient grounds for an alliance.

In contrast, Hitler's completely unrealistic fantasy of a possible Anglo-German alliance was void of any basis in fact or history. The alliances which had been established in the past—for instance, that between Great Britain and the House of Habsburg during the War of the Spanish Succession, or that between Britain and Prussia during the Seven Years' War—had been formed not as the basis for a new German expansionist drive, but for the sole purpose of defeating France.

In Hitler's opinion, the Hohenzollerns would have been well-advised to have formed an alliance between imperial Germany and Great Britain, using the latter as protection to the rear for conquering new *Lebensraum* in the Soviet Union. He wrote in *Mein Kampf*:¹⁴²

If one's goal were more land in Europe, this could only be accomplished, broadly speaking, at Russia's expense, meaning that the new Reich [of 1871] would once again join the march on the road of the Teutonic Knights of old, to gain by the German sword sod for the German plough and daily bread for the nation.

For this kind of policy there could be but one ally in Europe: England.

These words suffice to illustrate that the German dictator—as the majority of his countrymen—had no understanding of the British mentality, British history or British statecraft. What did impress him were the British wars and concentration camps, for Hitler conceived of power purely as brute force. In contrast to his ideas, British statecraft propagated a healthy balance: in times of peace, it instilled in the populations of those countries dominated by Britain a sense of individual satisfaction, while during wartime it awakened the will to demonstrate undivided solidarity with the mother country.

As a consequence of World War I, Hitler harbored a strong feeling of hatred for France and viewed it as dependent upon Great Britain. Were Britain to become a German ally, France would be checkmated in any case.

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler mentioned the United States only seldom and in passing. He was nevertheless aware that the United States was closely allied with Britain and reasoned that, were he to win over the latter, he would simultaneously win over its closest ally. The converse sequence, i.e. that war with England would mean war with the United States, apparently did not occur to him. So great was his obsession with the idea of an Anglo-German alliance that he strictly ruled out the possibility of war with Britain.

There was absolutely no historical basis—and there were no logical arguments whatsoever—for the assumption that Britain would support or even tolerate a German drive against the Soviet Union; it was purely a figment of Hitler's imagination. But it was a theory he did not hesitate to propound over and over again for the sake of his listeners and, above all, himself.

Hitler perceived himself as the great simplifier and once stated: "Our problems seemed complicated ... But I simplified the problems and reduced them to the lowest common denominator."¹⁴³

Applied to his foreign policy, this meant that he simply projected concepts of domestic German policy onto international relations, believing to have thus untied the Gordian knot. The Soviets, for instance, he equated with the "primitive" German Communists, holding that they could be quashed with brute force.

The British he placed in the same pot with the backward German Nationalists: once successful, they had now become incapable of rousing themselves to any firm stand. In Hitler's ill-considered opinion, they were best brought into submission—or out of the way—by being either reminded of their common "Germanic-Anglo-Saxon" past" instilled with fear of the Bolshevik threat, or simply left to their own frivolous devices. It was not worth the trouble to fight them, for they would ultimately fold on their own. In light of these views, it is not surprising that Hitler could boldly state, "I do not doubt for a second that we will procure our vital rights outside the country in exactly the same way as we were able to lead it onwards within."¹⁴⁴

Even during the Second World War, he boasted, "I am firmly convinced that this [external] battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally!"¹⁴⁵

From their very beginnings, Hitler's attempts to convert his *idée fixe* of an alliance between Germany and Great Britain were nothing but grotesque. True to his theory of identical procedures in his "struggles" at home and abroad, he accorded the British the same treatment as he had the German Nationalists in the past, comparing them with the "Hugenbergers."¹⁴⁶

When Chamberlain visited Germany three times in 1938, Hitler sincerely believed he was meeting with the equivalent of a German Nationalist privy councillor.

Speaking to a gathering of German generals, he stated, "These insignificant worms, I came to know them in Munich."¹⁴⁷ And at a public rally in 1942, he pronounced, "The English have simply been ossifying for too long."¹⁴⁸

Hitler made a habit of snubbing British statesmen, and his offers to form an alliance were the height of insult. He would slap them in the face, as François-Poncet once aptly noted,¹⁴⁹ and at the same time make a pretense of offering them his hand in friendship.

Hitler was puzzled over England's manifest lack of interest in becoming a part of the German *Gleichschaltung*. Moreover, they surprisingly declined to accept his "generous offer" (*großzügiges Angebot*) to protect the British Empire with his very own divisions. Addressing a visitor from Sweden in 1939, he demanded: "Herr Dahlerus, you know England so well, can you give me any reason for my perpetual failure to come to an agreement with her?"¹⁵⁰

While Hitler's consternation over such matters by no means moved him to reconsider his rigid preconceptions, Great Britain's declaration of war on September 3, 1939, did jar him into speechless shock for several minutes, according to reports of the interpreter Paul Schmidt.¹⁵¹ Britain's unexpected step struck a deathly blow to the very roots of his theories on foreign policy and, as such, would have prompted any normal-thinking statesman to step down immediately—at the very least. It had certainly not been Hitler's intention to wage war with England; his primary interest lay merely in conducting a small-scale conquest of Poland. He was completely taken aback when Great Britain actually sounded the call to arms.

However, a few hours later he had regained his composure—and his hold on the view that an alliance with England continued to be a possibility. During the entire course of the war, he thus staunchly refused to take any vigorous action against Britain which might unnecessarily irritate his prospective future ally.

He upheld the belief that he need only pursue his other goals, above all the conquest of the Soviet Union, to bring the British to their knees and to the realization that Hitler was the only ruler in the world to whom they should pay homage—just as Hugenberg, von Papen and von Hindenburg had done by allowing themselves to be persuaded that Hitler was Germany's savior.

If all else failed, he would only have to conjure up the bogey of Bolshevism once again—as he had at home—to bring his reactionary opponents in the West into line.

The attack on the Soviet Union which Hitler launched midway during the war with England originated not only in his old and cherished hope of one day taking over this enormous territory in the East, but also in the irrational hope that the western world would look up to him as its champion in the fight against Bolshevism.

The German newspapers from June 23, 1941 created the impression that the entire world, including the United States, warmly welcomed Germany's treatment of the Soviet Union, and that Britain was certainly no exception. Little did the German dictator suspect that the British welcomed a much different aspect of Germany's endeavors in the East. It was not difficult for them to surmise how much bloodletting this foray would cost the Germans. Even if Hitler were to succeed in conquering the Soviet Union, he would be so weakened as to make it easier for the Western Powers to defeat him in return.

Hitler's hope of overtaking the Soviet Union with a single sweep revealed itself to be a tragic fallacy. His concept of the primitive Russians who were most easily crushed by brute force—just like their supposed counterparts, the German Communists—proved a glaring underestimation. What had been demonstrated in the aftermath of the French Revolution once more became apparent: changes in the world outlook of a regime have no influence upon the willingness of a country's populace to protect itself and its country. Bolshevik Russia defended itself against Hitler's armies just as bitterly as the Czarist regimes had withstood the invasions of Charles XII and Napoleon I. Even the brutal tactics Hitler demanded of the German Wehrmacht were to no avail in accomplishing his goals of capturing Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad and forcing the Russian Army to capitulate.

The course of the war ran contrary to Hitler's prophecies in every way and in respect to Germany's friends as well as foes. He had once ridiculed the policy of the German Empire vis-à-vis its allies, stating:¹⁵²

At that time, a few semblances of states grown old and impotent were drummed together and the attempt was made, using this junk destined for destruction, to show a bold front to an enterprising world coalition.

But the allies he mobilized during World War II did not differ markedly from these “semblances of states”: the Hungarians as well as the Finns to whom they were related; the Croats and the Bulgarians; the Romanians, the Italians, and ultimately the Japanese. Hitler was not even capable of persuading his allies to regard all of Germany’s enemies as their own foes as well.¹⁵³

It became evident that German power politics made an impression only upon the weak Balkan peoples and, to a limited degree, upon Italy. There it seemed that Hitler’s theories on forming alliances might well prove true. Initially, Mussolini had shown extreme reserve in response to Hitler’s attempts to curry his favor. However, his reserve thawed when, during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, he unwillingly became dependent upon Germany and was increasingly forced to be an audience to Hitler’s torrent of words. Being an impulsive Italian, the Duce was impressed by the disciplined conduct of the German military and party organizations. So enthused was he by the German goosestep at his visit to Munich and Berlin in 1937 that he immediately introduced it as the “Passo Romano” in his own country. Mussolini—a loquacious man of his own accord—was so fascinated by Hitler’s oratorical talent that he was soon converted to a patient and interested listener. Given sober consideration back in Italy, some of the German ruler’s ideas were less persuasive, and Mussolini only reluctantly agreed to the Italo-German military alliance of May 22, 1939, known as the Pact of Steel.

Hitler’s first disappointment dawned only a few months later: in violation of its obligations as laid down in the Pact, Italy refused to side with Germany when war broke out, insisting on remaining neutral. When it did enter the war in 1940, it soon became evident that this had more negative than positive consequences for Germany. After three years of warfare, Italy collapsed in 1943 and Fascism disappeared without a trace. Mussolini was happy to have escaped with his life, but Hitler had the Italian leader brought to Germany in order to preserve the appearance of an intact alliance.

Hitler’s irrational preconceptions on foreign policy had been proven false across the board, from the alleged Jewish world government and the potential for an alliance with Great Britain and Italy, to his plans for easy conquest and annihilation of the Soviet Union. However, he refused to acknowledge defeat until the foreign enemies he himself had

made had occupied nearly his entire Reich and were literally knocking at the door of the Reich Chancellory. It was not Hitler's prophecy that his warfare abroad would end "not a whit differently" from his domestic struggle—but Churchill's predictions that came to pass:¹⁵⁴

And when the final signal is given, the whole circle of avenging nations will hurl themselves upon the foe and batter out the life of the cruellest tyranny which has ever sought to bar the progress of mankind.

It would be wrong to claim that Hitler's war and foreign policy goals met with unanimous approval and support within the Party, the State and the Army. Even the staunchest chauvinists and militarists strove for a reestablishment of the borders of 1914 and, at the utmost and if circumstances were conducive, the annexation of the coal-mining areas of Brie, the Baltic States and the Ukraine. The German people were, for the most part, extremely cautious and skeptical of any measures which could lead to war, for the shock of World War I was still too vivid.

Hitler, well aware of this, took care in his speeches not to state his military objectives in any certain terms, and sought instead to blur and disguise his intentions. Even as late as 1939–1940, he circumvented the term "war" in official legislation and directives, preferring to speak in euphemisms, citing for instance a "special task force" (*besonderer Einsatz*), police actions, etc.

To the Germans who attempted to warn Hitler of the unavoidable consequences of his fateful foreign policy, he pointed out that he had attained his domestic goals despite all predictions and warnings to the contrary and would thus similarly prove right with his ideas on this external struggle, a mere counterpart to his internal triumph. Speaking publicly in 1937, he had declared:¹⁵⁵

I have no desire to concern myself with those who know only the one well-worn objection to all major decisions: "It won't work." [—] I do not need to assure you that a man who has succeeded in rising from an unknown soldier of the World War to the leader of the nation will also succeed in solving any problems to come. May no man doubt my determination to put plans once conceived into action, no matter how.

By 1938–1939 and, at the latest, with the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia, it had become apparent even to the uninitiated where Hitler's course was headed. But it was already too late for any legal action; his position within Germany had become unassailable. In 1933, he had sworn never to relinquish control of German government during his lifetime.¹⁵⁶ Before switching what he called his "train of govern-

ment” onto the steeply declining track of war, he had meticulously dismantled every brake which could have brought it to an emergency halt. Hence with an ever-increasing tempo Hitler raced onward toward destruction and ruin. A few of the passengers attempted to leap to safety, but few succeeded. The first to abandon the train was Fritz Thyssen;¹⁵⁷ another was Rudolf Hess.

The extent of the catastrophe could have been checked had one of the men riding the “train of government” possessed the courage to stand up to the mad engineer face to face, take over the helm and turn the course of the train and the tide of events.

But there was no such man to be found in Germany.

The Methodology of Hitler's Oratory

Even prior to World War 1, Hitler had cherished hopes of appearing on the public stage as an orator. The possibility of exercising power by means of the spoken word always held a strong fascination for him.

Reinhold Hanisch, one of Hitler's acquaintances from the Vienna hostel for the homeless, reports:¹⁵⁸

One evening, Hitler happened to go to a movie theater—a rare occasion—in which Kellermann's *Tunnel*¹⁵⁹ was being shown. There is a public speaker in the film who throws the working masses into turmoil with his speeches. Hitler was beside himself. The impression was so strong that he spoke of nothing except the power of oratory for days.

It was not the film alone which impressed Hitler, but also the novel upon which it was based. Apparently he bought it shortly thereafter. A great part of the vocabulary Hitler later built into his own speeches was doubtless drawn from this source.

The language Kellermann used to describe events of fantastic import and persons of extraordinary magnetism left its mark, above all the bold superlatives and the ultimate flourish, "of all time," which grew to become one of the dictator's favorite expressions.¹⁶⁰ The actors in Kellermann's story captivated Hitler's attention as much as the rhetoric. Mac Allan, the main character in the book, is a small-time engineer, able to carry through the idea for building a tunnel—a plan initially ridiculed as folly. He invents an amazingly strong steel drill and, bursting with energy, devotes himself to the task of burrowing a tunnel under the Atlantic. His oratorical genius enables him to win over the giants of finance, convince reluctant industrial magnates, and instill in the construction workers the belief that the tunnel rightfully belongs to the people; he is able to overcome every crisis by his circumspect action in emergencies and succeeds in completing the "gigantic" project within twenty-five years' time.

This was the kind of hero Hitler longed to be. In his case, the power of oral persuasion would not be lacking if similarly "gigantic" projects could be found.

S. Woolf, who came from a lower-class background but memorized an enormous number of details and had them constantly at his fingertips, was another character in the story who certainly also commanded Hitler's admiration, even though he was a Jew.

In any case, Hitler began training his memory and learning facts by rote with which he later impressed technical and military experts. Contempt for money and mistrust of the militia, later characteristic of Hitler's attitude, are also reflected in the themes of Kellermann's novel. When Hitler launched his political career in 1919, there appeared to be little chance that he would ever achieve the political power to which he aspired. He had neither assets nor any schooling to speak of; he could claim neither influential friends nor membership in any powerful organizations within a party or a given social class. Nonetheless, he had two reasons to believe himself capable of mounting the steep ladder to political success. One reason lay in the chaotic circumstances gripping Germany in the wake of its total defeat in World War I and in the transition which had taken place in the system of government after 1918. Only when chaos reigned both at home and abroad were the people perhaps sufficiently receptive to the ravings of an unknown agitator. Astute in his estimation of the masses, Hitler did everything—in the years preceding his accession to power—to prevent calm from setting in. He supported every action at home designed to hinder the respective government, while at the same time endeavoring to thwart any stabilization abroad. The second asset Hitler intended to exploit in his bid for power was his extraordinary talent for public speaking. Well he knew how dangerous a weapon demagogical speech could be in times of turbulence; in *Mein Kampf*, he had elaborated upon this theme *in extenso*:¹⁶¹

However, the power which has always started the great religious and political avalanches in history has been, from time immemorial, none but the magic power of the spoken word.

Above all the broad masses of a people have always been subject to the force of oratory. And all great movements are national movements, are volcanic eruptions of human passion and inner emotions, aroused either by the cruel goddess of need or by the torch of the spoken word hurled into the masses, and not soda-sweet outpourings of aestheticizing literateurs and drawing-room heroes.

A change in a people's fortune can be prompted only by a storm of burning passion, but he alone can arouse such passion who harbors it within him. This passion alone can bestow upon him whom it has chosen the words which, like the blows of a hammer, are capable of opening the gates to a people's heart.

Hitler ridiculed the “helpless stammerings of someone like Bethmann-Hollweg”¹⁶² and wrote:¹⁶³

The oratory of a statesman to his people is not something I judge by the impression it leaves upon a university professor, but rather by the effect it has on the people.

Hitler did succeed in proving, in his domestic climb to power, that a gifted orator can indeed harness the support of a people muddled by times of confusion and chaos. However, events have also shown that the weapon of oratory can become blunted or useless when brandished in foreign politics against an equally strong or superior opponent. Indeed, it can even be turned against the aggressor.

Hitler admired the speeches of Anglo-Saxon statesmen during World War I, above all those of Lloyd George, rating them as “psychological masterpieces for influencing the soul of the masses,”¹⁶⁴ and completely overlooking the military and political power from which these speeches drew their force.

Similarly, Hitler was firmly convinced that the Western Powers had conquered the German Army in 1918 not by numerical superiority and better weaponry, but with handbills and other types of propaganda. He also held the opinion that Wilson had won international recognition primarily for the elegant wording of his Fourteen Points. In reality, the united forces of the Western Powers stood behind this program, and without them, even a man like Wilson—whom Hitler dismissed as a “would-be world savior”¹⁶⁵—was powerless.

When Hitler attempted to repeat the success of his domestic oratory on the stage of foreign politics after taking power, it soon became evident that he was every bit as ineffectual with his outpourings as Bethmann-Hollweg had been with his “helpless stammerings.”

However, nothing could have been further from Hitler’s thoughts in 1919 at his first appearance at a public gathering in the small Hofbräuhauskeller in Munich, where he was exhilarated by the impact of his oratory. He describes this, his first experience as a demagogue, in *Mein Kampf*:¹⁶⁶

What I had before simply sensed inside, without really knowing it, was now proven by reality: I could speak! After thirty minutes, the people in the small room were electrified, and the enthusiasm was first expressed in the fact that my appeal to the willingness of those present to make a sacrifice resulted in a donation of three hundred marks. [—]

However, the success of this first major gathering was also significant in another way. During my many years of military service, I had become acquaint-

ed with a great number of loyal comrades who now gradually began to join the Movement due to my persuasion. They were all energetic young men, accustomed to discipline and raised, throughout their service, on the principle: nothing is impossible, and if there is a will, there is always a way.¹⁶⁷—

Thus Hitler set upon the path of rhetorical rabble-rousing, with varying degrees of success depending upon the situation. If times were bad, he spoke to full houses; if matters were stabilizing, his eloquence was powerless to shake the masses out of their complacency. Trusting nonetheless in his luck, Hitler initially put his powers of oratory to the test not in front of mass audiences, but before small, select and influential circles and organizations. On January 30, 1933, he achieved his goal and became Reich Chancellor.

During the fourteen years he strove for political power at home, he had only once relied upon means other than his persuasive public speaking. Intending to repeat the success of the Fascist “March on Rome,” he launched his own German variation on November 8, 1923. While he was initially able to win over those holding power in Munich at the time—General State Commissar Gustav von Kahr as well as the officers responsible for the Reichswehr and police—as soon as he turned his attention to other affairs and relaxed his hold upon them, they began to waver, released from the spellbinding power of his oratory, and ultimately resumed their responsibilities to the lawful government in Berlin. Hitler had learned a lesson he would never forget: German generals were not revolutionaries in any sense of the word. They preferred, as the Kapp Putsch had also illustrated,¹⁶⁸ to adhere to the lawful regime—even if they detested it—rather than follow a revolutionary, even if the latter’s goals coincided with their own. In later years, after he had become Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Hitler exploited these tenets of the German military for his own purposes, which cost German soldiery its reputation and was to take many a German general to the gallows after the lost war.

Hitler subtly tuned his speeches to suit the audience he was addressing. Although his remarks rarely varied in content, he enjoyed giving them a local flavor and expressing them in an idiom peculiar to his listeners.

When speaking before intellectuals, professors or university students, for instance, he employed the convoluted and abstract style en vogue in such circles.

In many of his speeches, he made extensive use of uncommon words and phrases of Latin and Greek origin, and he did in fact use them

correctly. Apparently he believed they sounded impressive and established a sense of familiarity with experts present in the audience. His command of difficult forms of address and ceremonial titles was as perfect as that of a diplomatic chef de protocol.

In the years 1932 and 1933, when considering it useful, Hitler pronounced the initial “st” separately as “s” and “t” as though he were from Hanover or Hamburg and had never heard of the German sound shift. His use of set phrases and anomalies was calculated to favorably impress Northern German listeners, and it apparently did not miss its mark. When he addressed Southern Germans, there was no need for such artifice for he usually spoke an idiom resembling to Bavarian German. Adolf Wagner, Gauleiter in Munich, spoke with a similar intonation and was hence regularly appointed to read Hitler’s opening address at the Nuremberg Party Congresses, while Hitler himself sat behind the lectern among the high-ranking party functionaries and listened to his speaking “double.”

Hitler’s natural voice was rather highpitched. Particularly when he commenced a speech, he forced his voice into a lower range to make it sound more resounding and masculine. In other situations he intentionally allowed his voice to become shrill and overstrained for dramatic effect. He even took the opportunity of dictating his speeches to rehearse the accompanying accents at great volume, and occasionally his voice carried throughout the building. Uninitiated persons within earshot were caught by surprise and assumed he was admonishing his assistants.

This constant modulation naturally took its toll on his vocal cords, and in 1935 he had to undergo surgery.¹⁶⁹ Following the operation, performed by Professor Dr. von Eicken, Hitler feared for some time that he might lose his voice, but the ailment proved temporary and his fears groundless.

In moments of excitement, Hitler’s voice often took on a threatening, subdued tone; he rolled his “r’s” harshly and punctuated his speech with idiosyncratic pronunciations. His intonation became monotone, his phrasing a series of volleys. This manner of speaking was particularly pronounced when Hitler extolled outstanding feats of National Socialism, Germany’s far superior weaponry and similar supposed accomplishments, i.e. when he spoke on martial subjects or indulged in his penchant for megalomania. Then he appeared in an autosuggestive, trancelike state—regardless of whether he was delivering a public address or speaking to an audience of one.

Certain figures of speech peculiar to Hitler have given rise to the claim that he spoke incorrect and distorted German. This is, however, an unfounded allegation, for the phrases in question belong to the Austrian idiom which Northern Germans in particular are likely to find alien.¹⁷⁰ Had he, in fact, consistently spoken bad German, neither the German industrial magnates, the German diplomats nor the German generals, etc. would have been so taken by his oratory. There is no doubt that his rhetoric and his command of even the finer nuances of the German language were exceptional.

To determine the specific methodology used in each speech, Hitler first considered the external parameters of the situation: the time, the place, the temperature of the hall, etc. In *Mein Kampf*,¹⁷¹ he explains how significant, for instance, the time of day can be in terms of a speech's impact. He felt that it was psychologically less advantageous to speak in the morning than in the late afternoon or evening when the mental resistance of his listeners had ebbed. The "twilight of the Catholic churches," the "mysterious magic of the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth," and similar local settings were more conducive, he found, to manipulating the masses.

He viewed oratory as "a wrestling match between two diametrically opposed forces,"¹⁷² and concluded:

The outstanding oratorical art of a commanding Messianic figure will more easily succeed in winning over for a new cause people whose powers of resistance have already been weakened in the most natural way—than those who are still in full possession of their spiritual and mental resilience.

It was the calculated aim of each of his major speeches to break this "resilience" in his audience. The first part of his usual 90-to-120-minute speeches—some lasted up to several hours—was dedicated to long-winded narrative abounding with endless historical or pseudophilosophical deliberations designed to tire his listeners and, like hypnosis, break down their mental resistance. When they had become dulled and lethargic, he bombarded them in the second half of his speech with demagogical phrases, nationalist slogans and the like in order to "electrify" them, goading them on to ever more thunderous applause and indiscriminating mass response.

In his "party narrative,"¹⁷³ the initial phase of each of his longer speeches, Hitler literally commenced at Genesis, Chapter 1, Verse 1, tracing the annals of the Party from its inception in 1919 through the

struggles of its early years and up into the present in minute detail and including every tangent of its triumphs as a party and a force in the nation to be reckoned with.

In using this method of captivating the attention of his audience, Hitler once again made use of a custom he had borrowed from the Catholic Church, where the sermon is preceded by a lengthy reading from the Bible. In his opinion, the stereotypical repetition of well-known texts transported his listeners into a mild state of trance, making them more receptive to new information to follow. Hitler spoke slowly and in measured words in this first part of his speeches, almost hesitantly and ponderously, not unlike a lecturing professor. Then, when he moved into the second part, the tempo of his speech took on increasing speed while he pushed the pitch of his voice to its limit.

Even the most agitated theatrical gestures and fervent dramatic phrases appearing to burst forth spontaneously were, more often than not, carefully cultivated and practiced techniques. Both Hitler's valet, Heinz Linge, and his friend and photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, witnessed the dress rehearsals for such performances,¹⁷⁴ in which Hitler stood before a mirror reflecting a full-length image and recited the speech sentence by sentence, all the while observing his reflection. He studied his every movement, his every facial expression. He repeated the sentences and gestures until he was satisfied with his performance. Occasionally he turned to his friends and asked, "Am I good, Hoffmann?" or "Does it ring true, Linge? Do you think I can step before the crowd now?"

In view of such sober speculation and calculated technique, Hitler's speeches might be judged to have been nothing other than cheap comedy—laughable and grotesque charades. But this would neither serve to explain their enormous impact and almost magical effect nor do justice to the facts. Hitler was a natural actor, i.e. he actually became the role he wished to act. In fact, he came to believe what he said, or at least created that impression upon Germans and, in part, upon foreigners—not unlike a great character actor capable of evoking tears of sadness or putting the fear of God into his audience.

Hitler was actually capable of working himself up into a state of intense agitation which left him completely exhausted. His rhetorical talent far surpassed that of any other National Socialist party leader. Even Goebbels, whose role in the Third Reich is greatly overestimated today both in Germany and abroad, did not come near rivalling Hitler's talent

as an orator. Goebbels claimed of himself that he was capable of “playing on the psyche of the people as if it were a piano,”¹⁷⁵ but in reality the sparks his speeches ignited never grew into any real flame. Although he was able to arouse a non-critical crowd, he did not understand the art of calling forth real enthusiasm. Goebbels was a successful propagandist only when he received his directives from Hitler or was enthralled by his Führer’s ideas. The bulk of the people recognized that Goebbels’ own arguments were often mere figures of speech, doubtless presented with a certain amount of pathos but flawed by a lack of conviction on his part.

This was definitely not true of Hitler. His charismatic personality and oratory struck a genuine resonance within the German people. In the initial years of his rule, his speeches met with enthusiastic applause, and later, when his theatrical ravings, unrestrained outbursts of temper and loud-mouthing invective became disagreeable even to the indiscriminating masses, it was fear of the demon that made even these specimens of histrionic oratory outwardly successful. The English journalist Ward Price early recognized Hitler as the first German “demagogue since Luther.”¹⁷⁶

While Hitler perceived of oratory as a “wrestling match,” he did ensure that his was the better position from the onset. True discussion and debate were ruled out, both in personal conversation and in the setting of a public meeting. He could not stand criticism, he once exclaimed,¹⁷⁷ and the interjections of hecklers were a thing he abhorred. As he himself admitted,¹⁷⁸ the SA, his *Sturmabteilung*, originally served the sole function of doling out blows to hecklers and forcibly evicting anyone disrupting Hitler’s performance. Only when absolute silence reigned could he exert his spellbinding power upon his audience.

Only on one occasion did Hitler take part in a debate in the Reichstag—on March 23, 1933.¹⁷⁹ Then, too, he called out to the Social Democratic deputies who interjected their comments (as was common parliamentary practice): “Would you please let me finish, I didn’t interrupt you, either!” The impromptu speech Hitler made on this occasion convinced doubters that he did in fact compose his own speeches and did not require a prompter. When the Social Democrat Wels delivered his unexpected declamation against the Enabling Act, Hitler made a few notes on a piece of paper and then dismissed Wels and his arguments so thoroughly as to move even the skeptical Privy Councillor von Hugenberg to avid enthusiasm.

Hitler can be viewed in many ways, but certainly not as a bad speaker or one who needed an intellectual crutch to formulate well thought-out

speeches. He even declined using the official drafts of government speeches drawn up by his staff of which several are on file at the Federal Archives in Koblenz,¹⁸⁰ at the most drawing from statistical material compiled in them. Schacht's remark that Hitler had never uttered a rash or ill-considered word and had "never made a mistake or a slip of the tongue,"¹⁸¹ may apply to many private discussions, but not to his speeches as a whole.

Occasionally, Hitler became carried away by the dramatic torrent of his own rhetoric and later regretted certain language as having been too strong. Hence when he became Chancellor, he insisted upon checking all speeches before they were published, and he modified or deleted such wording. However, this was only infrequently the case. In general terms, the reprints of his speeches in the *Völkischer Beobachter*¹⁸² and the reports of the official German news agency (Deutsches Nachrichtenburo, DNB) constituted verbatim accounts of what he had said. This also applies, with few exceptions, to the special editions of certain speeches published (in pamphlet form) at a later date by the NSDAP's official party publishing house, Franz Eher Nachf., in Munich.

During World War II, Hitler doubtless would gladly have withdrawn or erased certain of his past statements and slogans. To cite a case in point, posters containing a "Proclamation to the Soldiers on the Eastern Front" issued on October 2, 1941¹⁸³ had to be taken down by special commandos a few weeks later. The text had announced the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union, and every soldier at the German eastern front was acutely aware of how premature this announcement was.

It was characteristic of Hitler to speak only if he had real or alleged triumphs of which to boast. In the wake of defeats or after having initiated measures capable of arousing public antipathy, he shrouded himself in silence and, instead of delivering the expected or even fervently hoped-for speech, he issued a written proclamation, thus avoiding any direct contact with the public.

It is for this reason that his public speeches grew more and more infrequent in the course of the Second World War. Only once was he forced to deliver an address after he had suffered a devastating defeat: on November 8, 1942, when the landing of the Allied Forces in North Africa coincided with his traditional commemorative speech on the occasion of the Munich Putsch in 1923.¹⁸⁴ Predictably, the speech he delivered that day numbers among his weakest. The portentous event weighed heavily in the hall and preoccupied the thoughts of the older party comrades; they even occasionally forgot to applaud at the places

in Hitler's speech which normally would have prompted an automatic response.

One might have expected Hitler to refrain from comment on the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, for it did prove that strong opposition pervaded even into the ranks of those closest to him. He chose instead to interpret his escape as a sign from Divine Providence, a triumph tantamount to a miracle, and interrupted long months of silence to report the news of his "victory."¹⁸⁵ Demonstrating by this public appearance that he had survived unscathed was only secondary to his pose of triumph.

When speaking in smaller circles or to his friends, Hitler made use of the same techniques he employed when addressing public gatherings: he made certain that he was given undivided attention and complete silence, initially tiring his listeners with repetition and circumlocutory narrative, and then striking the tone he had chosen from his repertoire: sentimental reminiscence, incensed anger, plaintive self-pity, or fanatic fervor.

Ward Price, who witnessed Hitler's behavior in countless situations, wrote in 1938: "When more than two people are present, even though they are of his most intimate circle, there is no general discourse. Either Hitler talks and they all listen, or else they talk among themselves and Hitler sits silent."¹⁸⁶

So great was Hitler's oratorical power over many Germans that, even into March and April of 1945, he was still capable of instilling new faith in normally quite level-headed people in a situation which was devoid of hope. Albert Forster, Gauleiter in Danzig, reported to the chancellory bunker in March of 1945 in despair that 4000 Russian tanks were approaching Danzig. The German tanks available could not halt their progress. Forster consulted with Hitler and returned in a completely altered state of mind. "He told me that he will save Danzig," he cried, "so there can be no doubt about it!"¹⁸⁷

Colonel General Ritter von Greim, whom Hitler had dispatched to Berlin after Göring had been dismissed, arrived at the chancellory bunker on April 26, 1945 completely demoralized, as his pilot Hanna Reitsch reports.¹⁸⁸ When he emerged from Hitler's room, he was convinced of the possibility of a German *Endsieg*. Hitler had painted a rosy picture of the dismal situation and subsequently appointed von Greim Field Marshal and Commander in Chief of an air force which effectively no longer existed.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that Hitler's speeches mainly impressed those Germans who were witnessing his performance for the first time or for whom the spectacle was a rare occasion. Even the highest-quality blade will dull with repeated use, just as the most beautiful melody can become unbearable when heard too often.

Grand Admiral Erich Raeder noted before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg that Hitler's arguments lost much of their impact with those who were forced to hear them frequently and even daily,¹⁸⁹ particularly during the course of World War II. The generals at the Führer Headquarters, who came to know Hitler's tirades nearly by heart, had no qualms about nodding off to sleep during his monologues unless, of course, Hitler's remarks were directed at themselves.¹⁹⁰ Foreign visitors to Germany¹⁹¹ were struck by the fact that, during Hitler's most frenzied outbreaks when he ranted like a madman, his closest advisors—Göring, Ribbentrop and others—looked on in utter indifference or gazed out of the window.

Hitler's attempts to repeat the oratorical triumphs he had scored within Germany in the scope of his foreign policy and to impress foreign statesmen by impassioned delivery and radio speeches were completely ineffectual when parried by representatives of comparable or superior nations.

Behavior with which he could humble Schuschnigg, Hácha, Horthy, and many of the politicians from the Balkans, and convince Mussolini and Ciano, was useless when practiced upon the British, American and Russian statesmen. Hitler's oratorical art made as little impact on Chamberlain, Churchill, Halifax, and Henderson as on Roosevelt and Sumner Welles. And even the "enthusiastic" newspaper articles published by Lloyd George and Lord Rothermere on their respective visits to see Hitler were in reality nothing more than amused, ironic commentaries.

When Hitler received Molotov in 1940, his raptures on a fantastic future did not evoke a like response from the Russian, who kept steering the discussion back to topics in the present which were more to the point.¹⁹² Even Franco, who was indebted to the German dictator for his military support in the Spanish Civil War, remained immune to Hitler's impassioned rhetoric in 1940 in Hendaye and persisted in upholding his policy of neutrality.¹⁹³

The years 1932 to 1938—during which Hitler brought Germany under his control and set up the Greater German Reich—were studded with triumphs; the years 1939 to 1945—during which he struggled with

the same means to bring the world under his control—were pierced by defeat upon defeat. The contrast between what Hitler had prophesied and what actually came to pass grew increasingly stark, and the speeches he delivered as a blow to foreign powers ultimately worked against him.

The wild threats with which Hitler intended to force the British into submission during World War II had nearly the opposite effect. Churchill declared as early as November 1939:¹⁹⁴

“If words could kill, we should be dead already. But we are not disturbed by these blood-curdling threats. Indeed, we take them as a sign of weakness in our foes.”

The BBC adopted the practice of broadcasting segments of Hitler's speeches and contrasting his allegations with the true facts. The difference was a fatal one for Hitler. He had attempted to measure the world in terms of domestic German standards, and this basic miscalculation ultimately brought about his ruin.

Remarks on the Structure of this Work

Adolf Hitler's speeches and proclamations are products of his own creation, the unerring first-hand documentation of his career as a politician, head of government, head of state, and supreme commander of the German armed forces. They record his rise during the years 1932 to 1938 and trace his fall during the years from 1939 to 1945. In and of themselves, they represent an impressive history of the Third Reich.

All of Hitler's words either cited or mentioned in this work—speeches, proclamations, interviews, telegrams, correspondence, etc.—are referenced throughout according to their respective source.

Significant statements are reproduced verbatim. Routine speeches and proclamations, among them campaign speeches, addresses on the occasions of the annual Party Congress, May Day, Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Day, etc., are reproduced in full or in the form of lengthy excerpts only the first time they were held. The subsequent annual reiterations are quoted only insofar as they deal with new information or ideas, while the remainder are presented in summary form. Addresses constituting mere repetitions of prior speeches are cited only as to source. The "party narrative," the circumlocutory and predictable introduction to many speeches, has generally been deleted.

Such abridgement was unavoidable, for otherwise the publication of these speeches, particularly for the eventful years 1932 and 1933, would have exceeded a reasonable scope and necessitated sacrificing clarity. It can nonetheless be said that none of Hitler's public remarks which played a significant role in the course of events have been omitted.

Dashes enclosed in brackets following a section of a speech signify that further—inconsequential—comments on the same topic have been omitted. Brackets within a quote contain remarks by the author consisting of explanations designed to aid comprehension, corrections of grammatical errors, and occasional exclamation marks drawing attention to particularly preposterous claims on Hitler's part.

Quotations taken from the *Völkischer Beobachter* are based exclusively upon the Munich and/or Southern German editions unless reference is explicitly made to the Berlin or Northern German editions.

Descriptions of audience response—frequently a part of *Völkischer Beobachter* accounts and DNB reports—have generally been omitted or included merely in part. Only Hitler's speech before the Industry Club on January 27, 1932 and the debate between Hitler and Wels in the Reichstag on March 23, 1933 contain a complete record of the applause and jeers as cited in the Eher pamphlet and, respectively, the stenographic minutes of the Reichstag session.

Awareness of the historical background is required to place the speeches and proclamations in perspective; this is facilitated in the detailed commentary provided parallel to the original documentation. The footnotes provide further information and explain the roles of various important persons cited.

The materials are presented chronologically and divided into years. Each year is prefaced by a brief summary of its most important events. In order to facilitate the task of locating individual speeches, proclamations or footnote references, each page is headed by date. Volume IV closes with a comprehensive index of topics, persons, and places, as well as a glossary.

The division of the work into two major sections (Volumes I and II: 1932 to 1938; Volumes III and IV: 1939 to 1945) is based upon a logic inherent in the course of Hitler's career. The years 1932 to 1938 were the seven years of Hitler's triumph. He scored victory after victory during this time, albeit confined almost exclusively to the domestic front. The years 1939 to 1945 marked his gradual decline. The dictator had grossly overestimated his capacity to master conflicts with foreign powers, first on the diplomatic level and then in the form of a full-scale war. His initial successes proved but Pyrrhic victories, serving only to expedite his ultimate defeat.

THE YEAR 1932

Major Events in Summary

The year 1932 marked the climax of Hitler's domestic struggle. To a certain extent, the events of these twelve months reflect the entire course of his endeavors to gain control of German government since 1919. Thus the year 1932 as mirrored in this work is an accurately drawn miniature of the fourteen years of struggle for power which preceded it.

There were three alternative paths which could lead Hitler to the power he so coveted. The first possibility was a violent coup, which would, in all probability, necessitate bloodshed and an open confrontation with the armed forces of the Reichswehr and the police—a path which Hitler was hesitant to take now and had attempted to avoid at his putsch in November 1923. Nevertheless, he kept this possibility in mind as a last resort and had made certain preparations for it during this major year of struggle, 1932.¹

The second path was that of legal accession to power by means of a plebiscite, i.e. by achieving an absolute majority or a "right-wing majority" in the Reichstag and the Landtage (State Diets) or else with the election of a National Socialist Reich President. Under normal circumstances, the Weimar Constitution provided for the latter only every seven years.

In both cases—either a right-wing majority in the Reichstag or the election of a National Socialist Reich President—nothing could have prevented the legal constitution of a cabinet chosen by Hitler.

The year 1932, given Hitler's rhetorical prowess, appeared to fulfill all of the prerequisites for this solution: domestic chaos had reached a peak due to the worldwide economic crisis; six million unemployed were demanding work and bread. The *Mittelstand*, the civil servants, and the peasants were less than satisfied with the German Government. The Reich President and the Reich Chancellor had been governing since 1930 with what amounted to dictatorial powers by virtue of Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution and had nevertheless been unable to alleviate the economic oppression.

No less than fifteen election campaigns in 1932 (two presidential elections, two Reichstag elections, nine Landtag elections, and two local

elections) were dominated by Hitler's demagogical talents, which were *sans pareil* at the time. He was nonetheless able to score only partial successes in relatively small Länder. In the more decisive elections, the requisite 50% of the votes cast eluded his grasp despite his tireless efforts and unrivaled oratorical campaigns. The third path to power led, in the current figure of speech, through the "back door." It was essential to exert sufficient influence on both the private and public counsellors of the Reich President in the circles of the aristocracy, the Reichswehr, and the economy to such an extent that they would, in turn, attempt to sway the Reich President to institute a presidential cabinet under Hitler composed of ministers enjoying his personal confidence.

This path, which ultimately took Hitler to his goal, also gave him ample opportunity to make use of his powers of oral persuasion. He who had long been the butt of ridicule as a small-time party leader and failed putschist had become socially acceptable by 1932. The Reich President received him several times. Ministers in and out of office, leaders of industry, former generals, and active officers of the Reichswehr met to confer with him; party leaders from the German Nationalists to the Center made appointments to see him. Some were attempting to consolidate their forces with his; others to pacify him with insignificant ministerial posts. As the "drummer"² of the national uprising, he had served their purpose well; now they wanted to exercise the power he had gained.

But Hitler outplayed them all. Under the very eyes of the Government, he had established a "state within a state" with his National Socialist Party and now declared publicly that he and the NSDAP were the true representatives of Germany, and not the existing Reich Government. His Reichsleiters and Gauleiters conducted themselves as though they were Reich Ministers and District Presidents. Countless party "offices" (Agrarian Policy Office, Army Policy Office, Labor Service Office, etc.) made public statements on the events of the day and interfered with genuine "official" matters. Hitler dispatched his own observer—former General Franz Ritter von Epp—to the Disarmament Conference in Geneva.

In 1932 he issued a proclamation to the German peasants admonishing them to finish harvesting their crops in good time.³

The "Reich Press Chief" of the NSDAP conducted press conferences as though he were the press chief of the Reich Government. Uniformed men of the SS, the *Schutzstaffel*, assumed the task of erecting roadblocks at mass meetings and rallies as though they were the regular police. Tens

and even hundreds of thousands of SA men in uniform made spectacular performances of marching and parading in the former German garrison towns. Their formations⁴ were numbered after the former imperial army troops.

When Hitler later acceded to power, he did not hesitate to appoint his party friends to the same positions in State which they had held within the Party, with the exception of the SA, as would become dramatically evident in 1934.

When attending negotiations in Berlin in 1932, Hitler resided at the Kaiserhof Hotel across the street from the Chancellory. He intended that those in power there see that he was really standing “ante portas” and hear the cries of the many thousands from the Wilhelmsplatz demanding Hitler’s *Machtergreifung*.

Asked by a journalist whether one might indeed witness a march on Berlin à la Mussolini, Hitler replied: “Why should I march on Berlin? I’m already there!”⁵

In reality, Hitler was not as certain of victory as he pretended to be. He knew very well that, were he not successful in exploiting the extraordinary circumstances of the year 1932 (i.e. the economic and political crises and the presidential and parliamentary elections), his accession to power would become a thing of the distant future. By the end of 1932, the worst of the world economic crisis had passed, the unemployment rates had already begun to decline, and there were endeavors in Lausanne and Geneva to close the chapter on the Treaty of Versailles and the reparations.

To some of Hitler’s voters, the struggle for power had already taken too long: they would no longer cast their ballots for him. Party leaders here and there began to lose heart and became restless. Hitler declared at that time: “If the Party ever falls apart, I will take a gun and end it all in a minute.”⁶

But Hitler mastered these crises. His talent for oratory and his persistence won out. In the end he was able to persuade not only his vacillating party comrades but also those in power at the time—above all Papen and Hindenburg—that he alone was able to lead Germany onwards to an age of new greatness.

The triumph Hitler achieved over his domestic opponents in 1932 continued to affect him throughout his lifetime. He believed himself capable of attaining his foreign-policy goals by using the same methods and expected that the outcome of this second struggle would not deviate “by a hair’s breadth” from the first.⁷

Report and Commentary

1

It was Hitler's habit to begin the new year with a proclamation to his National Socialist supporters, a practice he upheld until 1945. Originally, the proclamation was coupled with a New Year's command to the fighting formations of the SA and SS, the HJ, etc.; from 1935 on, this was replaced by the order of the day to the soldiers of the Wehrmacht. Hitler's New Year's proclamations adhered more or less to a standard pattern: enumeration of the enormous successes of the preceding year and the pronouncement of even greater victories for the year to come. The ominous figures naturally played an important role, whereby their accuracy was of lesser importance.

In the New Year's proclamation for 1932, which follows verbatim,⁸ Hitler maintained without hesitation that his following had swelled to 15 million. In point of fact, however, the most successful election of the year 1932, the Reichstag election of July 31, had brought him no more than 13.7 million ballots.

*New Year's Proclamation to the Party.*⁹

National Socialists!

The twelfth year of our Movement's struggle has come to an end. Thanks to the colossal loyalty of all our fellow fighters, thanks to their sense of duty and sacrifice, the victory march of the National Socialist German Workers' Party can continue this year as well. We all know one thing: in 1931 our Movement became the largest party in Germany. Tremendous external victories are visible evidence to all of this fact.

When six and a half million German adults elected 107 of our trusted deputies to the German Reichstag on September 14, 1930, for the first time the whole world saw rent apart the web of lies with which the internal growth of our Movement has been outwardly veiled for years. Even the lies and slander were forced to halt their workings: a victory had been wrought which lies could not erase. Admittedly, only a few short weeks later, those professional political

perverters of the truth had regained their footing and recovered from the initial shock to the extent that their brazen old game of lies could begin anew. They made an attempt to persuade themselves and the world that only a “temporary illness” of the German Volk could be the cause of our success. The Party—according to them—had reached its climax and would now plunge into abrupt decline.

Party Comrades! You have witnessed how Fate and the facts have once again proven our official political prophets to be liars. The year 1931 has pinned victory upon victory to our National Socialist flags. In spite of the flood of lies, misrepresentations, and slander which I had predicted, the masses of our adherents have grown enormously in this year’s elections. Germany is in the process of becoming National Socialist at a rapid pace. The elections in Bremen, Hamburg, Oldenburg, Anhalt-Dessau, Mecklenburg, Hesse, and Württemberg have brought about a continuous increase in the greatness and significance of our Movement. However, these external victories, no matter how exhilarating they are, would be worthless were they not ultimately accompanied by a comparable internal growth within the Party.

Party Comrades! You should gauge the magnitude of our Movement’s growth by the following: on September 14, 1930, our Party had 293,000 members. Today, on January 1, 1932, membership has already exceeded the 800,000 mark.

By January 1, 1931, approximately 100,000 men had joined our SA and SS organizations. Today, on January 1, 1932, there are far more than 300,000. The number of our adherents already exceeds 15 million!

This is a victory march unparalleled in the history of our Volk.

This numerical growth corresponds to the unique internal expansion of our organization.

Today Bolshevism and its Marxist-Centrist-Democratic helpers are faced with a gigantic front of awakening Germany!

Were it not for the pact which the Center and the middle classes have entered into with Marxism as a result of their inner relatedness of character, there would be no red, anti-Christian Germany today.

Therefore they are the accursed accomplices of Bolshevism.

Just as a figure like Bismarck once rightfully described liberalism as the pacesetter of Social Democracy, Democracy and the Center are today the pacesetters of Bolshevism and thus the parties who are mainly to blame for our misfortune. One merely external demonstration of the greatness of our National Socialist Organization is the establishment of the “Braunes Haus” as central Reich Office. In February of last year, the move was made from the offices in 50 Schellingstrasse to the newly acquired building in the Brienner Strasse. Despite extensions and modifications, today this building is already much too small. A new building is on the rise, another is in the planning stages, and yet another structure neighboring the Braunes Haus has been occupied since December. Not until 1931 was it possible to enlarge Organization Department II.

This has led not only to the increased conquest of the worker in the city, but also to the winning of the peasant.

The National Socialist German Workers' Party is a party not only of city dwellers; today it is also already the largest German peasants' party.

Its policy of balancing and reconciling the individual ranks of life, of unifying all Germans for the great political lifework of our Volk, impresses its mark more strongly upon its own composition with each passing month.

The inner stability of our Movement and the absolute rightness of the thoughts as well as the foundations of its organization revealed themselves perhaps most clearly when called upon to overcome all of our adversaries' attempts, by way of internal disturbances, to fragment the party of German resurrection they so abhor.

The rejoicing with which our enemies welcomed every apparent indication of inner rebellion in our Movement was just as great as their bitter disappointment: the Party has come out of every test stronger than before. The year 1931 is the most convincing evidence of all!

National Socialists! Today you see this evolution clearly behind you. May you set your sights from there on the future. The time is approaching when the world will face a decision which comes about only once in millenniums.

The bourgeois parties view what happens in the world through their own eyes. Small and shortsighted as they are, they suppose the manifestations of the environment to be powers similar to their own. Even now, they have not yet recognized in Bolshevism the destruction of all human cultures but perceive it to be a perhaps still "interesting experiment of a new desire on the part of the State." They are totally unaware that today a thousand-year-old culture is being shaken to its very foundations; they have no conception of the fact that, if Bolshevism ultimately triumphs, it will not merely mean that a few miserable bourgeois governments will go to the devil, but that irreplaceable historic traditions will come to an end as well. Yes, and that furthermore a turning point in the development of humanity will inevitably be the end result in the worst meaning of the word. Bolshevism's triumph means not only the end of today's peoples, their states, their cultures, and their economies; it also means the end of their religions! This world shock will result not in freedom, but in barbarous tyranny on the one hand and a materialistic brutalization of man on the other!

As so often before in the history of peoples, Germany's fate this time will again be of decisive importance for the fate of all. If the flags of the red stultification and brutalization of humanity (*Menschheitsverdummung und Menschheitsvertierung*) should ever be hoisted over Germany, the rest of the world will share the same lot.

For seventy years, disreputable bourgeois parties in Germany have exhausted the power of the national idea and, to a large degree, left our Volk at the mercy of Marxism. For seventy years the parties of democracy and, in their wake, the strictly Christian Center Party, have helped to corrupt our Volk by practicing sodomy with the forerunners of Bolshevism.

Today they are clinging with a reprehensible thirst for power to a regime which would no longer belong to them if their own significance alone were any measure.

Were the National Socialist Movement to cease existing today as a counterbalance to Marxism, Germany would be Bolshevik tomorrow.

But what is Fate's will? If there was any deeper meaning underlying the events of last year, then it can only be that it is Fate's own will that a clear line is drawn.

We can see how the verse from the Bible which recognizes both the hot and the cold but damns the lukewarm to being spewn forth is coming to fruition in our Volk. The middle will be smashed and shattered. The compromises will come to an end. Today international Bolshevism is faced with the German nation under National Socialism. The Almighty Himself is creating, out of His own merciful will, the prerequisite for the salvation of our Volk; in allowing the lukewarm middle to be destroyed, He intends to give us the triumph.

National Socialists! We now enter upon the new year in the conviction that it will be the most difficult year of the struggle of our Movement.

A glance behind us shows countless sacrifices. As long as we comprised a small party, we were entitled to perceive in our own sacrifices the magnitude of the obligation for our actions. Now that Providence has granted us such great successes, the extent of our duties to Germany lies in the magnitude of the sacrifices which our Volk has taken on in the course of its historical evolution. We are fighting not for the victory of one party, but rather for the preservation of our Volk.

In view of the magnitude of these sacrifices and this task, we cannot expect that the way which lies ahead will be easy!

Men of the National Socialist Movement! SA and SS Comrades! I repeat the demands I made last year:

Men of my National Socialist Movement! I am not demanding that you do anything illegal, I am not requiring anything which would bring your conscience in conflict with the law, but I do demand that you follow me loyally on the path which the law permits and which my conscience and my insight require, and that you join your fate with my fate.

It will be a purgatory of slander, lies, misrepresentations, terror, and suppression through which our Movement must pass!

Our opponent fears retaliation for the inordinate number of crimes he has perpetrated upon our Volk. Hence no trick or deed is beyond him in his determination to prevent the victory of our Movement.

National Socialists! Expect it from the very beginning, and nothing will surprise you. Then you will overcome everything.

The path from seven men to fifteen million was more difficult than the path from fifteen million to the German nation will be.

As we once had the audacity to believe in our gigantic goal and its realization, let us today have the courage, like a knight without fear and without reproach, to withstand hell, death and the devil and choose the way to victory and freedom. National Socialists! Each of you shall be proud to be attacked by our adversaries in 1932!

He who is not attacked by the Marxist falsifiers and the Centrist liars and their press is useless to Germany and worth nothing to our Volk!

Struggle through to the realization that our enemies today are left with only one means of fighting: lying; and gauge from this the necessity of a community welded together for better or worse.

January 1, 1932

Comrades! Let us march into this new year as fighters with the goal of leaving it as victors.

Long live our glorious National Socialist Combat Movement!

Long live our eternally beloved German Volk!

Deutschland erwache!

Munich, January 1, 1932

Adolf Hitler

New Year's Command¹⁰ to the SA, SS, HJ, and the NSKK

The year 1931 strengthened and consolidated the Movement's units combined under the command of the Supreme SA Leadership both internally and in terms of numbers.

The army of Brownshirts has multiplied many times over.

The Movement has had to bear a high number of casualties. Forty-six were killed for the honor and freedom of the Volk; 4,804 were wounded. We wish to commemorate them foremost in loyalty and gratitude.

The victims were not killed in vain. The blood of the fighters shall give the sprout new energy.

Comrades, I thank you at the threshold of the new year for everything you have accomplished in the past year full of renunciation and sacrifices.

I wish to express my unqualified recognition of all the leaders and men of the SA, SS, HJ, and NSKK.

Proud of the accomplishments of 1931, you may enter the new year with cheerful confidence.

You are the hope of the German Volk.

Be worthy of your mission!

Der Oberste SA Führer: Adolf Hitler

Pursuant to the Weimar Constitution, the Reich President, who was to be elected directly by the people, had a term of seven years. The Field Marshal of World War I, Paul von Hindenburg, had been elected in 1925 as a candidate of the right-wing parties. In 1932, he was nearly 85 years old, which meant that under normal circumstances he would not have been considered for a further term. In any case, the right-wing parties which had chosen him as their leader in 1925 did not approve of his manner of governing, for he was more or less loyal to the Constitution. However, the Social Democrats and—even more so—the Center suddenly clung to him in 1932. Reich Chancellor Heinrich Brüning (Center) was using Article 48 to govern in an authoritarian fashion as Hindenburg's presidential chancellor and could hardly have remained in office given a different President. But the Social Democrats feared that new elections could result in even more ballots for the National Socialists or even in the election of a National Socialist Reich President.

One possible solution to this problem was a parliamentary maneuver: all of the parties, with the exception of the Communists, would pass

a resolution in the Reichstag by a two-thirds majority which would extend President Hindenburg's term in office for national reasons.

For this purpose Hitler was sent a polite invitation to attend negotiations in Berlin in early January 1932. The Reich Government believed that Hitler would be so naive as to consent to the extension of Hindenburg's term and forfeit this magnificent opportunity to launch a tremendous speechmaking campaign. Although Hitler was certain from the onset that none other than he could be considered as candidate for the NSDAP, he nevertheless accepted the invitation and proceeded to Berlin. The Party's press agency circulated the following account on January 8, 1932:¹¹

On Tuesday, January 5, Adolf Hitler was requested by telegraph to travel to Berlin for talks with Reich Minister of the Interior Groener. The leader of the National Socialists conferred with Reich Chancellor Brüning and Reich Minister of the Interior Groener on the evening of Wednesday, January 6 and yesterday afternoon, January 7, on the subject of the Reich President election.

Adolf Hitler reserved comment to the Reich Chancellor in order to first inform the parties of the national opposition of his opinion.¹²

Hitler subsequently failed to enlighten Brüning and Groener, who told the press that the talks had been held "on friendly terms."¹³ He first travelled to Lemgo to speak there on January 8 at the Lippian municipal election. It was, he declared to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, "the most monumental election rally the land of Arminius had ever seen."¹⁴

On January 9, Hitler was back in Berlin, where he once again conferred with Brüning and Reich Minister Treviranus for one hour. A further conference with Privy Councillor Alfred Hugenberg¹⁵ followed in the afternoon. The discussions with the national opposition (German Nationalists and Stahlhelm), which had formed what was called the "Harzburg Front"¹⁶ with Hitler as early as October 1931, were continued on January 11 in the Kaiserhof Hotel and concluded with a rejection of an extended term "due to doubts as to its constitutionality," in spite of State Secretary Meißner's previous personal visit to Hitler.¹⁷

On January 12, Hitler addressed the following letter to Reich Chancellor Brüning:¹⁸

Berlin, January 12, 1932

Dear Herr Reichskanzler!

On January 6, 1932, Reich Minister of the Interior General Groener informed me that there were plans to extend the presidency of Field Marshal von Hindenburg by parliamentary measures or to reelect the Reich President by a

January 12, 1932

two-thirds majority. Reich Minister of the Interior Groener requested my Party's view on this contemplated action.

I have the privilege of informing you, Herr Reichskanzler, that the National Socialist German Workers' Party, with all respect for the person of the Reich President, is not in a position to support this proposal. On behalf of the National Socialist Movement, I thus refuse our consent. I will inform you, dear Herr Reichskanzler, of the constitutional, foreign policy, domestic, and moral reasons which have prompted us to take this view in a detailed statement to be dispatched without delay.

With my assurance of respectful esteem, I remain, Herr Reichskanzler, faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

The "detailed statement" of reasons promised by Hitler was given to mining on January 16, 1932 by Göring. The lengthy letter¹⁹ was written in the style of a painstakingly exact constitutionalist who simply saw no way of departing from the letter of the law and approving of an extension to the President's term by resolution of parliament. Brüning made the mistake of answering this empty, albeit long-winded document. Now Hitler was in his element: he branded Brüning as a national opportunist who had not voted for Hindenburg in 1925 but now intended to exploit him as a shield for his own political machinations.

Hitler's open letter to Brüning of January 25, 1932 (in reply to the latter's letter of January 23, 1932) read as follows:²⁰

In respect to your remarks, Herr Reichskanzler, concerning the political reasons which force me as Führer of the National Socialist Movement to reject your attempt, with all due respect to the person of the Field Marshal von Hindenburg, I may note as follows:

You perceive in the arguments which we have to show for our rejection of your proposal a lack of objectivity and a motivation due solely to party politics, while conversely claiming for yourself the exclusive right of being motivated by vaterländisch (patriotic) and other similar standpoints. Herr Reichskanzler, may I then take the liberty of posing the following question:

Seven years ago, at a time when the Center was fighting Hindenburg's election to Reich President with every means available and the Field Marshal's rival candidate was truthfully anything but an "historic figure," did you or did you not cast your ballot for Herr Marx, motivated by the same *vaterländisch* or party political reasons? Or did, in your opinion, the interests of the *Vaterland* speak against Hindenburg at that time and only now speak for him?

Herr Reichskanzler, you are of the purely personal opinion that today your parliamentary attempt is a necessary act in terms of national politics, and I am of the conviction that the most important thing to be done in these terms is the elimination of the present system.

In your letter you write that you must, as a "tax to truth," disagree with my "theories" by pointing out the facts.

Herr Reichskanzler, I have reread your letter perhaps a dozen times now but have searched in vain for these "facts"; apparently they have been omitted. You say that, from a "patriotic point of view," you find it quite striking that I attribute the main cause of distress in Germany to the political conditions resulting from our parties. Herr Reichskanzler! Fürst Bismarck, who indisputably represented a patriotic standpoint as well and for this very reason was so dreadfully showered with hate and reproach by the Center, had the exact same opinions, particularly in respect to the parties—the same ones which constitute your basic support, Herr Reichskanzler—in viewing party politics as the main causes of distress in Germany.

Then you write—also with little regard to the "facts"—that, in what is "almost the general opinion," one of the "external factors" for our misery is the Treaty of Versailles which, with its political and economic-financial injustice and unreasonableness, has given rise to distress in both Germany and the world.

Quite right, Herr Reichskanzler! But a Treaty of Versailles would never have come about had not the Center, the Social Democrats and the Democrats, the parties who support you, undermined, destroyed and betrayed the old Reich—if not in fact prepared, carried out, or at least accepted and covered up for the revolution. I, for one, Herr Reichskanzler, have never regarded the Treaty of Versailles as a possible foundation for the life of our Volk or the success of the economy, but the parties supporting you have, by signing this Treaty, at least pretended that its performance was within the realm of the possible. In order to "preclude any confusion in history," I may note that I, and not you, was the first person in Germany to take a stand against this Treaty in countless mass rallies. However, the merciless handling of this Treaty which, in your view, destroyed every attempt at rebuilding Germany in the first five years, would have been completely impossible had not certain "German" parties given their consent to each act of blackmail, ignominy and disgrace.

Hence I am disregarding neither "the external circumstances" nor the "state of affairs" which they have created; rather, I am holding those parties responsible who, through their doings, either created these circumstances or at least encouraged them. Just as Bismarck was once forced to overcome the old liberal party in order to weld Germany together, so must your parties, Herr Reichskanzler, be annihilated in order to save Germany.

Herr Reichskanzler! You talk about "well-informed men in all countries" and attempt to play them off against us. Do you intend perhaps to cite the opinions of these "experts," who talked the German Volk first into taking the Dawes Plan and then the Young Plan by prophesying that we and the rest of the world would benefit as a result of these "treaties"? Herr Reichskanzler, we, and not your experts, have accurately prophesied the developments. I am willing at any time to confront the "opinions" of your "experts" with our warnings at that time before the entire German Volk. Seldom have opinions of government experts been proven wrong by the facts in such a dreadful fashion. Today's catastrophe, Herr Reichskanzler, is one we have been predicting for years, and

for this reason we were decied by you and your parties as “dreamers posing a threat to state security.”

Herr Reichskanzler! If you say that a different Reich Government would have to continue on the paths you have taken, I grant you, seen from your vantage point, the necessity of such an attitude: just as a military commander, regardless of how many defeats he has suffered, is still convinced that another would not have done any better. But history has shown that there is indeed a difference, in a situation which is desperate as it is, whether someone like the Herzog von Braunschweig is commanding the army or someone like Gneisenau. In conclusion, you admonish us to consider that successes in foreign policy are only attainable by means of the unanimity with which the nation supports its negotiators.

Herr Reichskanzler! Certainly there was a time when it was the obligation of every decent human being to support those who preserved the interests of Germany which were defended on the battlefield at that time. But in that most terrible age, the very parties upon which you depend today did not follow this doctrine in the least!

Today the main thing is to finally snatch the soul of the nation for the most “patriotic of interests” from these saboteurs of the German power of resistance. You cannot expect us, Herr Reichskanzler, to cover up for the Young Plan, the implementation of which your parties celebrated as a decisive step forward, while we recognized it as madness from the very start. And you cannot expect today that a genuinely responsible German give his unqualified approval to measures which, as the sum of human and historical experience has shown, can only bring further disaster upon a people. I do not doubt for a second, Herr Reichskanzler, that if Frederick the Great, Freiherr vom Stein or Bismarck had been damned to observe the politics of the last thirteen years as normal citizens, they would not be members of your Centrist-Democratic-Marxist club; they would be in the national opposition.

Your actions, Herr Reichskanzler, are dictated by conscience; ours by insight. Perhaps your conscience gives you the energy to continue on your desperate way, but we are inspired by the will to elevate reason and courage to reign over our German life in place of the servile policy of illusionism and the international slogan-slinging doubletalk of the past thirteen years.

I further take the liberty of expressing my astonishment that you, Herr Reichskanzler, choose not to see the difference between purely informatory talks, which you had with me and concerning which I have consequently refrained from comment, and the suggestion—upon which the Party as such should pass a resolution—to go along with a parliamentary action at a time when National Socialists throughout Germany are being brutally deprived of their civil rights: you have only to think of how National Socialist civil servants are treated in Prussia, think of the official acts of suppression, the suspicions, and persecution of all sorts being exercised against National Socialism; think of the many hundreds of honest fighters of my Movement who have been killed; remember, too, that the Reich with its ban on National Socialists gaining employment even as simple dock workers promotes the campaign of persecution against National Socialism!

The fact that you, Herr Reichskanzler, do not wish or are unable to comprehend my astonishment at being enlisted to take part in a parliamentary act of this kind in view of these circumstances is nothing but an indication of how fundamentally your thinking differs from mine.

Herr Reichskanzler! You regard it as your given right to believe that no one else could have done better than you have. But then do not deprive us of the right to be convinced that no government could have done worse than yours.

Munich, January 25, 1932

Braunes Haus

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's speeches in January 1932 were predominantly concerned with Germany's general economic and political situation but did not yet contain any indication of his decision to campaign for the office of Reich President. First he had to lay the groundwork.

On January 14, he composed a written dedication²¹ to the newly-founded NS Party press agency. On January 16, he submitted a declaration to the Lower Court of Berlin-Moabit in the libel suit filed against him by former SA leader Captain Stennes for defamation as a police spy.²² Hitler was acquitted. On January 17, he delivered a speech to National Socialist students at the Berlin tennis courts,²³ and on January 23, addressed 7,000 party comrades in Munich (Zirkus Krone).²⁴

Hitler pulled off a major coup on January 27. Introduced by the industrial magnate Fritz Thyssen, he spoke before the Industry Club in Düsseldorf. As at nearly all major speeches in 1932, he was attired in a dark-blue, double-breasted suit with a black tie.

Most of the captains of industry gathered at Düsseldorf witnessed Hitler's oratory for the first time, and most of them were unquestionably opposed to him at the commencement of his two-and-a-half-hour address. They mistrusted the NSDAP—its very name hinted of Socialism—and expected at best a crude rendering of party propaganda.

Although Hitler essentially expounded the same themes he treated in his mass rallies, the skeptical leaders of industry soon fell prey to his oratorical skill.

Here Hitler again utilized his standard method of tiring his audience. For one and a half hours he held forth on lengthy "philosophical" explanations of the alleged causes of the world crisis, on the values of the individual and the Volk, on the principles of struggle and achievement, on the *Herrensin*n (concept of domination) in economics and politics, etc. When he had reached the conclusion that all of his listeners, including those who were antagonistic, were thoroughly confused and hence incapable of any intellectual resistance, he proceeded to the more

tangible passages and confronted his now highly receptive audience with the imminent threat of Communism. At this point he began juggling with figures and percentages. He claimed point-blank that fifty percent of the German population had Bolshevik leanings; the question was how to create a strong and healthy Germany under these circumstances.

Soon he began to cite nationalistic slogans to his awakening audience. The World War, he claimed, had been lost due to the spiritual aberration of Marxism. Only the *Machtstaat* (totalitarian state) could combat the disease in the economy. It was essential for Germany to maintain an army of eight million reservists. A single supreme command should govern the state, just as in the army or, even better, in a company! He himself had been a mere nameless German soldier "with a very small zinc number on his breast"; today he and his Party comprised the German Volk's only remaining assets. And even if he were only the drummer of national Germany, this in itself would be a great statesmanlike deed.

The means for Germany's recovery were "the restoration of a healthy, national, powerful body politic, intolerant and relentless against those who do not acknowledge the vital interests of the nation and otherwise open to friendship and peace with anyone who wants friendship and peace."

These closing words brought Hitler tumultuous, long drawn-out applause. But this was not all: he was granted access to German industry's *Nibelungenschatz*, a secret fund for combatting Bolshevism. This meant that the Party's strained financial situation was restored to good order for the approaching presidential election. As Goebbels noted,²⁵ it was improving "from day to day."

Hitler addressed the Industry Club in Düsseldorf verbatim as follows:²⁶

If today the National Socialist Movement is regarded in many circles in Germany as being opposed to the business world, I believe the reason for this lies in the fact that we formerly adopted a position in respect to the events which determined the development of today's situation differing from that of the other organizations which play a significant role in public life. Today our views still differ in many points from those of our opponents.

It is our conviction that the misery is due not only and not primarily to general world events, for this would more or less exclude, from the very onset, the possibility that an individual people might better its situation. Were it true that the German misery is necessarily due solely to a so-called world crisis²⁷—a world crisis on the course of which we as Volk naturally can exercise no influence or only an insignificant amount of influence—then Germany's future could only be described as hopeless. How should a state of affairs change for

which no one bears the blame? In my opinion, the view that the world crisis alone is to blame leads, in the long run, to a dangerous pessimism. It is only natural that the more the factors giving rise to a certain state of affairs are removed from an individual's sphere of influence, the more that individual will despair of ever being able to change this state of affairs. The gradual result will perforce be a certain lethargy, an indifference, and ultimately, perhaps despair.

For I believe it is of primary importance to break with the view that our fate is determined by the world. It is not true that the final cause of our misery lies in a world crisis, in a world catastrophe; what is true is that we have slipped into a general crisis because certain mistakes were made here from the very beginning. I cannot say: "The general view is that the Peace Treaty of Versailles is the cause of our misfortune." What is the Peace Treaty of Versailles other than the work of man? It is not something which has been burdened or imposed upon us by Providence. It is the work of man for which, quite naturally, once again men will have to be held responsible, with their merits and with their faults. If this were not so, how would man ever be able to do away with this work at all? It is my opinion that there is nothing which has been caused by the will of man which cannot in turn be changed by another man's will.

Both the Peace Treaty of Versailles as well as all of the consequences of this Treaty are the result of a policy which was perhaps regarded as being correct, at least in the enemy nations, some fifteen, fourteen or thirteen years ago; seen from our vantage point, it can only be seen as fatal, even though it was still supported by millions of Germans a mere ten years or less ago and only today stands revealed in its utter impossibility. Hence, I must conclude that there is some implicit blame for these events in Germany as well if I want to believe at all that the German Volk can still exercise some influence toward changing these conditions.

It is, in my opinion, also false to claim that today's life in Germany is determined solely by considerations of foreign policy; that the primacy of foreign policy today controls the whole of our domestic life. It is naturally possible for a people to reach a point where factors of foreign policy exclusively influence and determine its domestic life. But let no one say that this circumstance is either natural or was intended from the onset. Rather, the important thing is for a people to lay the necessary groundwork to alter this state of affairs.

If anyone tells me that foreign politics are the foremost determining factor in the life of a people, then I must first ask: What do you mean by "politics"? There are a number of definitions: Frederick the Great said: "Politics is the art of serving one's State with every means." Bismarck stated: "Politics is the art of the possible"—based upon the concept that everything within the realm of possibility should be done to serve the State and, in the subsequent transition to the concept of nationalities, the nation. Yet another considers that this service to the people can be effected by peaceful as well as military means, for Clausewitz said: "War is the continuation of politics, albeit with different means." Conversely, Clemenceau believed that peace today is nothing other than the continuation of the battle and the pursuit of the battle aim, although, once again, with different means. In short: politics is and can be nothing other than the realization of the vital interests of a people and the practical waging of

its life-battle with all means available. Thus it is quite clear that this life-battle has its initial starting point in the people itself, and that at the same time the people is the object, the value in and of itself, which is to be preserved. All of the functions of this body politic should ultimately fulfill only one purpose: securing the preservation of this body in the future. Therefore I can neither say that foreign policy is of primary significance, nor that economic policy has priority. Naturally a people will require an economy in order to live. But this economy is also only one of the functions the body politic requires for its existence. Primarily, however, the most essential thing is the starting point itself, namely the people in and of itself.

One should not say that foreign politics are of prime importance in determining the path of a people; rather, one must say that, first of all, it is the people, with its own intrinsic value, with its organization and training in this value, which marks out its own path within the world around it. I should not say that foreign policy is capable of changing the value of the people to any significant extent; rather, I must say: each people must wage the battle to safeguard its own interests and can only wage a battle which corresponds to its innermost nature, its value, its capabilities, the quality of its organization, etc. Naturally, foreign policies will in turn exercise their retrospective influence. We ourselves have experienced it: what a difference there is in the reactions of the individual peoples to foreign policies! The reaction is determined by the inner state of mind, by the inner value, by the inner disposition, by the capabilities of each individual people. Thus I can ascertain that, even if the basic value of a nation is constant, shifts in the inner organization of the life of this nation can suffice to give rise to a change in its attitude to the external world.

Therefore it would be wrong to claim that foreign policy shapes a people; rather, the peoples control their relations to the rest of the world respective to the forces inherent in them and respective to their education in the utilization of these forces. We can be quite certain that, had a different Germany stood in the place of today's Germany, the attitude to the rest of the world would also have been appreciably different. However, presumably the influences of the rest of the world would also have manifested themselves in other ways. Denial of this would mean that Germany's destiny could no longer be changed, no matter which regime is governing in Germany. The roots underlying such a belief and the explanation for it are obvious: assertions that the destiny of a people is determined solely by foreign countries have always been the excuses of bad governments. Weak and bad governments throughout the ages have made use of this argument in order to excuse their own failures or those of their predecessors; the failures of their entire tradition-bound, predetermined course; and in order to claim from the very beginning: no one else in my position could have done otherwise. For what could anyone do with his people against conditions which are firmly established and rooted in the rest of the world, with a people which is then naturally regarded as a fixed value as well?

My view in this respect is another: I believe that three factors essentially influence the political life of a people.

First of all, the inner value of a people, which is passed down from one generation to the next as inheritance and genotype—a value which only suffers

any change when the carrier of this inheritance, the people itself, changes in terms of its genetic composition. It is a certain fact that individual character traits, individual virtues and individual vices always recur in peoples as long as their inner nature, their genetic composition, does not undergo any essential change. I can see the virtues and vices of our German Volk in the Roman authors just as clearly as I perceive them today. This inner value, which determines the life of the people, can be destroyed by nothing save a genetic change in its very substance. An illogical organization of life or an unreasonable education may interfere with this value temporarily. But in this case, merely its outward effects are obstructed, while the basic value in and of itself continues to exist as it has before. This is the great source of all hope for the recovery of a people. Here lies the justification for believing that a people which, in the course of thousands of years, has exhibited countless examples of the highest inner value cannot suddenly have lost this inborn, genetically transmitted value from one day to the next; rather, that this people will one day again bring this value into play. Were this not the case, the belief of millions of people in a better future—the mystic hope for a new Germany—would be incomprehensible. It would be incomprehensible how this German Volk, depleted from eighteen to thirteen and a half million people at the end of the Thirty Years' War, could regain the hope of rising again by means of industriousness and efficiency, how hundreds of thousands and finally millions belonging to this utterly crushed Volk could once again be seized by the yearning for a new form of government. It would be inconceivable, were there not a certain unconscious conviction in all of these individuals, that a value was present in and of itself which manifested itself time and time again throughout the millenniums, perhaps repressed and hindered in its effectiveness at times by bad leadership, bad education, bad organization within the State—but which in the end always struggled its way through—presenting to the world over and over again the wonderful spectacle of our Volk rising anew.

I said that this value can be corrupted. In particular, however, there are still two other inwardly related phenomena which we can observe again and again in periods of national decline.

One of these is the substitution, in democracy, of a levelling, numerical concept for the value of the individual. The other is the negation of the value of the people, the denial that there is diversity in the natural abilities, achievements, etc. of the individual peoples. In fact, each of these two phenomena is mutually dependent upon the other or at least exerts an influence on the other's development. Internationalism and democracy are inseparable concepts. It is only logical that democracy, which negates the special value of the individual within the people and puts in its place a general value, a numerical value, must proceed in this same way in respect to the life of the peoples, and there it degenerates to internationalism. It is maintained, in a general sense, that peoples have no innate values; rather, at most, there may be manifestations of temporary differences as a result of education; but there is no essential difference in value between Negroes, Arians, Mongolians, and Redskins. This view, which constitutes the basis of our entire international body of thought today, is so far-reaching in its consequences that ultimately a Negro will be able

to preside at the sessions of the League of Nations; it leads perforce in turn to the further consequence that, within a single people, in the same way, any differences between the value of individual members of this people will be particularly disputed. In this way, of course, any existing special ability, any existing basic value of a people can, for all practical purposes, be made ineffective. For, with this view, the greatness of a people is not the sum of all its achievements, but rather ultimately a sum of its outstanding achievements. Let no one say that the image which is conveyed as the first impression of the culture of mankind is the impression of its overall achievement. This entire structure of culture, down to its foundations and in each of its building blocks, is nothing other than the result of creative talent, the achievement of intelligence, and the industriousness of individuals. The greatest results are the great crowning achievement of individual geniuses endowed by God; the average results are the achievement of men of average ability; and the total result is undoubtedly a product of the application of human working power towards the exploitation of the creations of geniuses and talented men. But this naturally means that, when the capable minds of a nation—who are always in the minority—are given a value equal with all the others, this must result in subjugating the genius to the majority, in subjecting the ability and the value of the individual to the majority, a process which is mistakenly called the rule of the people. This is not the rule of the people, but in fact the rule of stupidity, of mediocrity, of half-measures, of cowardice, of weakness, and of inadequacy. The rule of the people is rather when a people allows itself to be governed and led in all areas of life by its most capable individuals who are born for the task, than to allow all areas of life to be administered by a majority which, by its very nature, is alien to these areas.

In this way, however, democracy will, in practice, result in cancelling out the real values of a people. This is one of the reasons why peoples with a great past slowly forfeit their former status from the very point onwards when they submit to unlimited democratic rule by the masses; for the existing and potentially outstanding achievements of the individual in all areas of life are then practically ruled ineffective, thanks to being subjected to rape by numbers. But this means that such a people will gradually lose not only its cultural and not only its economical significance, but also its significance as a whole. In a relatively short time, it will no longer represent to the rest of the world the value it once did. And this will necessarily be accompanied by a shift in its ability to safeguard its interests in respect to the rest of the world. It is not inconsequential whether a people embarks on a period such as, for instance, 1807 to 1813 under the leadership of the most capable individuals who are granted extraordinary authority, or whether, in a similar period, such as 1918 to 1921, it marches under the leadership of parliamentary mass madness. In the one case, one observes that the inner rebuilding of the life of the nation has led to the highest achievements which, though certainly founded in the value of the people, are only then capable of being manifested; while in the other case even the value which already exists no longer manifests itself. Yes, things can proceed to the point when an unquestionably industrious people, in whose lifetime apparently very few changes have taken place—particularly in respect to the efforts of individu-

als—loses so much in terms of its overall achievement that this achievement is no longer of any significance to the rest of the world.

But there is yet another factor involved: namely, the view that, having already denied the value of the individual and the particular value of a people, life on this planet must not necessarily be maintained through conflict—an opinion which, perhaps, might be of no import had it only become implanted in individual minds, but which has appalling consequences because it is slowly poisoning an entire people. It is not as though these types of general changes in the *Weltanschauung* are confined to the surface or involve purely intellectual processes. No, in the long run they affect the very roots, influencing all of the expressions of a people's life.

I may cite an example: you, Gentlemen, are of the opinion that the construction of the German economy must be based upon the concept of private property. Then again, you can only maintain the idea of private property if it appears to be somehow founded in logic. This concept must draw its ethical justification from the insight that it is a necessity dictated by nature. It cannot, for instance, be motivated solely by the claim: "It has been this way until now, and therefore it must continue this way." For—in periods of great upheavals in the State, of movements of peoples, and of transitions in thought—institutions, systems, etc. cannot only remain unaffected because they have existed previously in the same form. It is characteristic of all truly great revolutionary epochs in the history of mankind that they pass over, with unparalleled ease, forms which have become sacred only with time or which only apparently become sacred with time. Thus it is necessary to justify these types of traditional forms which are to be preserved in such a manner that they can be regarded as absolutely necessary, and as logical and right. In that case, I must say one thing: private property is only morally and ethically justifiable if I assume that men's achievements are different. Only then can I say that, because men's achievements are different, the results of those achievements are also different. But if the results of men's achievements are different, then it is expedient to leave the administration of these achievements to men to an appropriate degree. It would be illogical to assign the administration of the fruits of an achievement connected to one individual to the next best, less capable individual or the whole, for these latter individuals have already proven, by the simple fact that they themselves have not performed the achievement, that they cannot be capable of administering the resulting product. Therefore one must admit that, from an economic point of view, men are not equally valuable, not equally significant in every area from the onset. Having admitted this, it would be madness to claim that, while there are doubtless differences in value in the economic sector, there are none in the political sector! It is nonsense to base economic life on the concept of achievement, of personal value and thus practically on the authority of the individual, while denying this authority of the individual in the political sphere and substituting in its place the law of the greater number—democracy. This will inevitably slowly cause a gulf between the economic view and the political view which one will attempt to bridge by assimilating the former to the latter—an attempt which has indeed been made, for this gulf has not remained pure, empty theory. The concept of the equality

of values has meanwhile been raised to a system not only in the political but also in the economic sector. And not only as an abstract theory: no, this economic system thrives in gigantic organizations—yes, today it has already seized the huge territory of an entire State.

I am, however, incapable of regarding two basic ideas as being the possible foundation for the life of a people for any length of time. If it is correct to assume that human achievements are different, then it must also be correct that the value of man in respect to the creation of certain achievements is different. But then it is absurd to attempt to apply this only in respect to a certain sphere, in the sphere of economy and its leadership, but not in the sphere of leadership in the life-struggle as a whole, namely in the sphere of politics. Rather it is only logical that, if I acknowledge the unequivocal recognition of particular achievements in the sphere of economy as the prerequisite for any higher culture, then politically I must similarly grant priority to the particular achievement and thus to the authority of the individual. If, on the other hand, it is asserted—by none other than the economic sphere—that no particular abilities are required in the political sector, but that absolute uniformity reigns here in respect to achievement, then one day this same theory will be transferred from politics to the economy. Political democracy, however, is analogous to Communism in the economic sector. Today we find ourselves in an age in which these two basic principles are in conflict with each other on every border and have already penetrated the economy.

One example: the practical activity of life is rooted in the significance of the individual. This is gradually becoming threatened by the rule of numbers in the economic sector. There is, however, one organization in the State—the Army—which cannot be democratized in any way whatsoever without surrendering its very essence. One proof that a *Weltanschauung* is weak is when it is inapplicable to all areas of life as a whole. In other words: the Army can only exist if the absolutely anti-democratic principle of unconditional authority from above and absolute responsibility from below are maintained, while in contrast, democracy means, for all practical purposes, complete dependency from above and authority from below. However, the result is that in a State in which the whole of political life—beginning with the community and ending with the Reichstag—is built upon the concept of democracy, the Army must gradually become an alien body, and an alien body which is bound to be perceived as an alien body. To democracy, it is an alien idea, an alien *Weltanschauung* which inspires this body. An internal struggle between the advocates of democracy and the advocates of authority is the inevitable consequence, a struggle we are now experiencing in Germany.

One cannot expect that this struggle will suddenly come to a standstill. No, the opposite is the case: this struggle will continue until the nation ultimately becomes immersed in either internationalism or democracy and thus falls prey to a complete dissolution; or else creates a new and logical form for its inner life. It follows that education in pacifism must of necessity affect even the most insignificant of individual lives. The concept of pacifism is logical if I proceed on the basis of a general equality between peoples and human beings. For what other sense could there be in struggling? The concept of pacifism, translated

into practical reality and in all sectors, must slowly lead to the destruction of the drive for competition, of the ambition to bring forth particular achievements of all types. I cannot say: in politics we will become pacifists, will rid ourselves of the notion that it is necessary to protect life by means of conflict—but in economics we wish to remain keen competitors. If I eliminate the idea of struggle as such, it is of no significance that it still exists in isolated areas. In the end, political decisions will determine individual achievements. You can build up the best economy for fifty years on the basis of the principle of authority, on the basis of the principle of achievement; you can construct factories for fifty years; you can amass wealth for fifty years—and in three years of inadequate political decisions you can destroy all the results of these fifty years. (*Chorus of assent*). This is only natural, because political decisions spring from a different root than constructive economic decisions.

In summary, I see two principles starkly opposed: the principle of democracy which, wherever its practical results are evident, is the principle of destruction. And the principle of the authority of the individual, which I would like to call the principle of achievement, because everything which mankind has achieved until now and all human cultures are only conceivable given the rule of this principle.

The value of a people in and of itself, the type of inner organization through which this value is to be made effective, and the type of education are the starting points for the political action of a people and thus the foundations for the results of this action.

Do not go so far as to believe that a people which has deprived itself of its values to the extent the German Volk has would have fared better in former centuries, whether there was a world crisis or not. When a people chooses the path which we have chosen—practically for the past thirty or thirty-five years, but officially for the past thirteen—then it can end nowhere else but where Germany is today. The fact that evidence of the crisis has spread throughout almost the entire world is understandable when one considers that the development of the world has today progressed to an extent, and mutual relations have been reinforced in a manner, which seemed scarcely possible fifty, eighty or one hundred years ago. But it would nevertheless be wrong to believe that this process is only conceivable now, in the year 1932. No, the history of the world has witnessed similar things more than once before. Whenever particular relations between peoples have led to situations being created accordingly, the disease of these peoples has necessarily spread and influenced the overall situation.

It is, of course, easy to say: we prefer to wait until the general situation has changed. That is impossible. The situation which you see before you today is surely not the consequence of some revelation of God's will, but the result of human weaknesses, human errors, human fallacies. It is only natural that, first of all, these causes must be transformed and thus mankind committed to an internal transformation, before one can count on a change in the situation.

This follows from a single look at the situation of the world today: we have a number of nations which have created for themselves an outlook on life based upon their inborn superior value, which bears no relation to the *Lebensraum*

they inhabit in densely populated areas. We have the so-called white race, which has, in the course of some thousand years since the collapse of ancient civilization, established for itself a privileged position in the world. But I am incapable of comprehending the economically privileged supremacy (*Herrenstellung*) of the white race over the rest of the world if I do not view it in the closest of connections to a political concept of supremacy which has been peculiar to the white race as a natural phenomenon for many centuries and which it has upheld as such to the outer world. You can choose any single area, take for example India: England did not acquire India in a lawful and legitimate manner, but rather without regard to the natives' wishes, views, or declarations of rights; and she maintained this rule, if necessary, with the most brutal ruthlessness. Just as Cortés or Pizarro demanded for themselves Central America and the northern states of South America not on the basis of any legal claim, but from the absolute, inborn feeling of superiority (*Herrengefühl*) of the white race. The settlement of the North American continent was similarly a consequence not of any higher claim in a democratic or international sense, but rather of a consciousness of what is right which had its sole roots in the conviction of the superiority and thus the right of the white race. If I imagine things without this frame of mind which, in the course of the last three or four centuries of the white race, has conquered the world, then the fate of this race would in fact be no other than that, for instance, of the Chinese: an immensely congested mass of people in an extraordinarily restricted territory—overpopulation with all its inevitable consequences. If Fate allowed the white race to take a different path, it was because this white race was of the conviction that it had a right to organize the rest of the world. Regardless of what external disguise this right assumed in a given case—in reality, it was the exercise of an extraordinarily brutal right to dominate (*Herrenrecht*). From this political view there evolved the basis for the economic takeover of the rest of the world.

A famous Englishman once wrote that the characteristic feature of English policy was this miraculous marriage of economic acquisitions with political consolidation of power, and conversely the political expansion of power with immediate economic appropriation: an interaction which becomes inconceivable the moment one of the two factors is lacking. I know, however, that the view is held that one can also conquer the world economically. But this is one of the greatest and most terrible fallacies there are. Let the English confine their struggle for India to economic means; let England relinquish in full the attitude with which it once acquired India, an attitude which helped to preserve India for England throughout the many rebellions and the long and bloody battles in the middle of the last century—and you will see what happens: the English factories will not hold India, they will come to a standstill because the spirit of old England, the spirit which once laid the necessary groundwork for these factories, has been lost!

Today we are confronted with a world situation which is only comprehensible to the white race if one recognizes as indispensable the marriage between the concept of domination in political will and the concept of domination (*Herrensinn*) in economic activity, a miraculous consensus which left its mark on the whole of the past century and in the consequences of which the white

peoples have, in part, undergone a remarkable development: instead of expanding in a territorial sense, instead of exporting human beings, they have exported goods, have built up a worldwide economic system which manifests itself most characteristically in the fact that—given that there are different standards of living on this earth—Europe, and most recently, America as well, have gigantic central world factories in Europe, and the rest of the world has huge markets and sources of raw materials.

The white race, however, is capable of maintaining its position, practically speaking, only as long as discrepancies between the standards of living throughout the world remain. If today you were to give our so-called export markets the same standard of living we have, you would witness that the privileged position of the white race, which is manifested not only in the political power of the nation, but also in the economic situation of the individual, can no longer be maintained.

The various nations have now—in accordance with their innate natural abilities—safeguarded this privileged position in various ways, perhaps England most ingeniously, for she has consistently tapped new markets and immediately anchored them in a political sense, so that it is quite conceivable that Great Britain—assuming its mental outlook remains unchanged—might develop an economic life more or less independent of the rest of the world. Other peoples have not attained this goal because they have exhausted their mental powers in internal *weltanschaulich*—formerly religious—battles. During the great period when the world was partitioned they were developing their capacities internally, and later they attempted to participate in this world economy; but they have never created their own markets and gained complete control of these markets.

When Germany, for example, began to establish colonies, the inner conception, this entirely cool, sober, English concept of colonization, had already been replaced in part by more or less romantic ideas: the transmission of German culture to the world, the spread of German civilization—things which the English viewed as far-removed during the colonial period. Thus our practical results failed to meet our expectations, aside from the fact that the objects of our endeavors were, in part, no longer capable of fulfilling our lofty and romantic hopes, particularly since the white race has slowly increased to such numerical proportions that the preservation of these gigantic population figures appears guaranteed only if the economic world market potential is secured. Thus, in reality, one part of the world is absolutely dependent upon maintaining a situation which we Germans as democrats and members of the international League of Nations have long since rejected in an intellectual sense. The result is obvious: competition forced the European peoples to an ever-increasing improvement in production, and the increasing improvement in production led to a steady economizing in the labor force. As long as the tapping of new international markets kept pace, the men who had been dispensed with in agriculture and later in the trades could be transferred to the new lines of production without further ado, so that we now perceive the characteristic features of the last century in that primarily men were being eliminated in agriculture and entering the trades; later, in the trades themselves, more and

more people fell victim to rationalization in the methods of production and then, in turn, found new opportunities to earn a livelihood in an expansion of the branches of production. But this process was conceivable only as long as there was a constant increase in available sales potential, a potential which had to be as large as the increase in production.

The situation in the world today can be summed up as follows: Germany, England, France, and also—for non-imperative reasons—the American Union and a whole series of smaller States are industrial nations dependent upon the export business. After the end of the War, all of these peoples were confronted with a world market practically empty of commodities. Then the industrial and manufacturing methods, having become particularly ingenious during the War in a scientific and theoretical sense, pounced on this great void and began to restructure the factories, invest their capital and, as the inevitable consequence of the invested capital, to increase production to the utmost. This process was able to work for two, three, four, five years. It could have continued to function if new markets had been created which corresponded to the rapid increase and improvement in production and its methods—a matter of primary importance, for the rationalization of the economy leads, from the beginning of the rationalization of basic economy, to a reduction in the human work force, a reduction which is only useful if the workers who have been dispensed with can easily be transferred in turn to other branches of industry. But we see that since the World War there has been no substantial increase in the number of markets; quite the opposite, they have shrunk in number because the number of exporting nations has slowly been increasing; for a host of former sales markets have themselves become industrialized. We see, however, a new major exporter—the American Union, which today has perhaps not manifested itself all-powerfully in all sectors, but certainly in individual areas—can count on advantages in production which we in Europe do not and cannot possibly possess.

The last and most serious phenomenon we observe is the fact that, parallel to the gradual growth of confusion in white European thinking, a *Weltanschauung* has seized hold of a part of Europe and a large part of Asia which threatens to actually tear this continent out of the framework of international economic relations—a phenomenon which German statesmen even today pass over with an astonishing lack of regard. For instance when I hear a speech which stresses: “It is necessary that the German Volk stand together!”, then I am forced to ask: does one really believe that this standing together today is nothing but a question of good political will? Do they fail to see that a gulf has already grown in our midst, a gulf which is not the mere figment of some people’s imaginations, but rather whose spiritual exponent today forms the basis for one of the largest world powers? That Bolshevism is not only a mob ranting about in a few streets in Germany, but a world view which is on the point of subjecting to its rule the entire continent of Asia and which today, in the form of a State, stretches almost from our eastern border to Vladivostok?

Here the matter is presented as though these were only the purely intellectual problems of isolated visionaries or ill-disposed individuals. No, a *Weltanschauung* has conquered a State and, starting from there, will slowly

shatter the whole world and bring about its collapse. Bolshevism will, if its advance is not halted, expose the world to a transformation as complete as the one Christianity once effected. In 300 years people will no longer say: this is a new idea in production. In 300 years people might already know that it is almost a new religion, though based upon other principles! In 300 years, if this movement continues to develop, people will see in Lenin not only a revolutionary of the year 1917, but the founder of a new world doctrine, worshipped perhaps like Buddha. It is not true that this gigantic phenomenon could simply, let us say, be thought away in today's world. It is reality, and must of necessity destroy and overthrow one of the basic requirements for our continued existence as the white race. We observe the stages of this process: first of all, a decline in the level of culture and, with it, of receptivity; a decline in the level of humanity as a whole and thus the breaking off of all relations to other nations; then the construction of an independent system of production with the aid of the crutches of capitalist economy. As the final stage, an independent system of production to the complete exclusion of the other countries, which, as a matter of course, will one day be faced along their borders with the most serious economic competitor.

I know very well that gentlemen in the Reich Ministry of Defense and gentlemen in German industry will counter: we do not believe that the Soviets will ever be able to build up an industry genuinely capable of competition. Gentlemen, they would never be able to build it solely from Russian, from Bolshevik natural resources. But this industry will be built from the resources of the white peoples themselves. It is absurd to say: it is not possible to build an industry in Russia using the forces of other peoples—it was once possible to equip an industry in Bohemia with the help of Germans. And one more thing: the Russia of old was already in possession of a certain amount of industry.

If people go on to argue that the methods of production will never by any means be able to keep pace with us, then do not forget that the standard of living will more than compensate for any advantages we have due to our methods of production. (*Hear, hear!*)

We shall, in any event, witness the following development: Bolshevism will—if today's way of thinking in Europe and America remains as it is—slowly spread throughout Asia. Whether it takes thirty or fifty years is of no consequence at all, considering it is a question of Weltanschauungen. Christianity did not begin to assert itself throughout the whole of southern Europe until 300 years after Christ, and 700 years later it had taken hold of northern Europe as well. Weltanschauungen of this fundamental nature can manifest their unrestricted capacity for conquest even five hundred years later if they are not broken in the beginning by the natural instinct of self-preservation of other peoples. But even if this process continues for only thirty, forty or fifty years and our frame of mind remains unchanged, then, Gentlemen, one will not be able to say: what does that have to do with our economy?!

Gentlemen, the development is obvious. The crisis is very serious. It forces us to economize in every sector. The most natural reduction is always made in human labor. The industries will of necessity rationalize more and more; that means increasing their productivity and reducing the numbers of their work

forces. But when these people can no longer be given places in newly tapped professional fields, in newly tapped industries, this means that, in time, three people's accounts must be opened: the first is agriculture. Once people were economized from this basic account for the second account. This second account was the trades, and later industrial production. Now, in turn, one is eliminating men from this second account and pushing them into the third account: unemployment. In doing so, one is putting on a disgraceful show of glossing over reality. It can be best put by saying that those without a means of existence are simply regarded as "non-existent," and thus superfluous. The characteristic feature of our European nations is that gradually a certain percentage of the population is proven superfluous in terms of statistics. Now, it is quite clear that the requisite maintenance of this third account is a burden thrust upon the other two. This increases the tax pressure, which in turn requires a further rationalization of the methods of production, further economization, a further increase in the third account.

In addition, there is the battle for world markets being waged today by all European nations with the consequence that this battle naturally affects prices, which again leads to a new wave of economizing. The final result, which can hardly be foreseen today will, in any case, be decisive for the future or the downfall of the white race and, above all, of the peoples who are greatly hampered in establishing inner economic autarky due to their territorial limitations. The further consequence will be that, for instance, England will reorganize her domestic market and erect customs barriers for its protection, high ones today and even higher ones tomorrow, and all other peoples who are in any way capable of doing so will take the same steps.

In this sense, all those who claim that Germany's hopeless position is particularly indicative of our distress today are right. At the same time, however, they are wrong in seeking the distress only in external causes, for this position is of course not only the result of external developments, but of our inner, I would almost say, aberration, our inner disintegration, our inner decay.

Let no one say that we National Socialists do not understand the necessity of dealing with momentary damage. But one thing is certain: every type of distress has some root or another. Thus it does not suffice—regardless, Gentlemen, of what emergency decrees the Government issues today—when I doctor around on the periphery of this distress and attempt from time to time to cut away the cancerous tumor; rather, I must penetrate to the agent, the origins. In this connection it is of relatively little significance whether this generative cause is discovered or eliminated today or tomorrow; the essential thing is that, without its elimination, no cure is possible. It is wrong to reject a program covering twenty or thirty years today on the grounds that we cannot wait that long—a tuberculosis patient does not care if the treatment his physician has recommended to cure his illness lasts three or more years. The essential thing is that no purely external remedy, even if it is quickly applied and momentarily alleviates his pain, is capable of eliminating the disease as such. We can observe this in an absolutely classical form in the consequences of our emergency decrees. Again and again the—admittedly honest—attempts are made to somehow improve and combat an impossible situation. You see that every attempt,

in its final consequence, leads exactly to the opposite: to an increase in the very phenomena one is trying to eliminate. In this connection I am willing to leave out what is, in my opinion, the greatest problem at this moment, a problem which I would like to describe not only as a purely economic one, but also a *völkisch* problem in the truest sense of the word: that of unemployment.

What one sees are only six or seven million people who are not engaged in the process of production; and one regrets, from a purely economic standpoint, the loss in production which this causes.

But, Gentlemen, one fails to see the mental, moral, and spiritual effects of this fact. Do they really believe that such a percentage of the national work force can lie idle for even ten, twenty, or thirty years without this idleness exercising any mental effect, without it leading inevitably to a spiritual change? And do they believe that this will have no significance for the future?

Gentlemen, we know from our own experience that Germany lost the War due to a mental aberration whose consequences are today evident practically everywhere. Do you believe that, once seven or eight million people are barred from taking part in the national process of production for ten or twenty years, these masses can perceive of Bolshevism as anything but the logical *weltanschaulich* complement to their actual, practical economic situation? Do you really think that one can choose to disregard the purely mental side of this catastrophe without it one day becoming reality, an evil curse following the evil deed?

If the German distress could be alleviated by means of emergency decrees, then all of the major legislators in the past centuries would have been bunglers; for they attempted, under similar circumstances, to regenerate the body politic in order that, with the aid of this newly created source of strength, they might implement new and healing resolutions. What the current German Government wants is of no significance at all, just as it is of no significance what the German economy wants or desires. The important thing is to realize that we are presently once more in a situation which has already previously arisen in the world a number of times: a number of times in the past, the volume of certain types of production grew to exceed the parameters of demand. Today we are experiencing the same thing to the greatest possible degree: if all automobile factories existing in the world now were employed one hundred percent and working one hundred percent, then one could replace the entire stock of motor vehicles within four and a half or five years. If all locomotive factories were employed one hundred percent, one could easily renew all of the locomotive parts in the world within eight years. If all of the rail factories and rolling mills of the world were employed one hundred percent, one could, perhaps in ten or fifteen years, lay the entire network of tracks in the world today once more. This applies to almost all industries. One has achieved such an increase in productive capacity that the present market potential no longer bears any relation to capacity. But when Bolshevism as an ideology tears the continent of Asia out of the human economic community, the prerequisites for the employment of these gigantically developed industries will no longer exist to nearly the same extent. Then we will find ourselves industrially in approximately the same stage in which the world has found itself several times before in other areas. It

has happened several times before, for instance, that the tonnage of sea-going vessels was much larger than the amount of goods requiring carriage. Several times before certain economic groups have thus been subjected to severe crises. When you read history and study the ways which have been chosen to rectify this situation, then you will in short always find one thing: the amount of goods was not adjusted to fit the tonnage, the tonnage was adjusted to fit the amount of goods—in fact not by voluntary economic resolutions on the parts of the shipowners, but rather by decisions of power politics. When a politician or an economist objects and says to me: that may have once been the case between Rome and Carthage, or between England and Holland or between England and France, but today it is business that decides; all I can answer is: that is not the spirit which once opened up the world to the white race, which also opened to us Germans the way into world economy. It was not the German economy which conquered the world, followed by the evolution of Germany's power; but in our case, too, it was the power-state which created the basic conditions for ensuing prosperity in the economy. (*Hear, hear!*) In my view, it is putting the cart before the horse to believe today that Germany's position of power can be recovered using business methods alone instead of realizing that a position of power constitutes the prerequisite for an improvement in the economic situation as well. That does not mean that the attempt should not be made today or tomorrow to combat the disease which has seized our economy, notwithstanding the fact that it is not possible to hit the focus of the disease with the first blow. But it does mean that each such external solution ignores the root of the problem, the fact that there is only one basic solution.

It rests upon the realization that the collapse of an economy always has as its forerunner the collapse of the State and not vice versa; that a prosperous economy cannot subsist if it is not backed by the protection of a prosperous, powerful State; that there would have been no Carthaginian economy without a Carthaginian fleet and no Carthaginian trade without the Carthaginian army; and that, in our modern age—when things get rough and the interests of peoples clash—it is natural that an economy cannot exist unless the all-powerful, determined political will of the nation is standing behind it.

Here I would like to enter a protest against those who simply dismiss these facts by claiming: the Peace Treaty of Versailles is, "in what is almost the general opinion," the cause of our misfortune. No, this is certainly not "almost the general opinion," but solely the opinion of those who share the blame for its having been concluded. (*Applause*)

The Peace Treaty of Versailles is itself nothing but the logical consequence of our slowly increasing inner, mental confusion and aberration. We happen to find ourselves in an age in which the world is approaching extraordinarily difficult mental conflicts which will thoroughly shake it up. I cannot avoid these conflicts by simply shrugging my shoulders in regret and—without clearly realizing their causes—saying: "What we need is unity!" These conflicts are not phenomena born merely of the ill will of a few individuals; rather, they are phenomena ultimately having their deepest roots in the facts of race.

If Bolshevism is spreading in Russia today, then ultimately this Bolshevism is just as logical for Russia as Czarism was before it. It is a brutal regime ruling

over a people which, were it not led by a brutal government, could in no way be maintained as a State. But if this world outlook should spread to us as well, we must not forget that our Volk, too, is composed racially of the most diverse elements, that we thus of necessity must perceive in the slogan "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" much more than a mere political battle cry. In reality, it is the expression of the will of men who, in their natures, indeed do possess a certain kinship with respective peoples of a low level of culture. Our Volk and our State were also once built up only through the exercise of the absolute *Herrenrecht* and *Herrensinn* accruing to the so-called Nordic people, the Arian race elements which we still possess in our Volk today. Therefore whether or not we can find our way back to new political strength is only a question of regenerating the German body politic in accordance with the laws of an iron logic.

The claim that inner *weltanschaulich* unity is of no significance can only be made by a man who is a specialist in one area or another and therefore no longer has an eye for the real living forces which shape the nation—a statesman who never gets out of his office and busies himself in his bureaucratic ivory tower, in thousands of hours of negotiations and meetings, with the latest effects of the crisis, without discovering the major causes and with them the major decisions required for their removal. It is quite clear that, by issuing a decree, I can easily take a position today on any of the various aspects of public life. But take a look at what effect this position can have on the practical side of life! There is no organization existing in the world today which does not have as its foundation a certain unanimity of purpose. One cannot conceive of an organization which does not view certain basic questions which arise repeatedly as requiring an absolutely unanimous recognition, affirmation or solution. This applies even to the smallest organization there is—the family. No matter how competent a man or a woman may be, if certain, necessary, basic questions are not affirmed equally by both in their common union, then their competence will not be able to prevent their union from becoming a source of perpetual strife and their external life from ultimately failing due to this inner discord. Man can only fully develop the force of his activities in one direction, and the main question for the people as a whole is the direction in which this force is to be guided. Should it direct itself outwards, or should it turn inwards? It must turn inward at that point when the attitude toward a certain problem is not completely unanimous; otherwise the individual will already have become the enemy of his neighbor, who effectively constitutes his environment. It is not a matter of indifference whether or not an association has and recognizes a set of basic principles. No, the decisive factor in judging any human organization is the strength of the inner relation, a strength which is based upon the recognition of certain guiding general principles.

In the life of peoples, external strength is determined by the strength of the internal organization, but the strength of the internal organization in turn depends upon the stability of common views on certain basic matters. What good is it if a government issues a decree to save the economy when that nation, as a living thing, itself has two completely different attitudes towards the economy? One part says: "The prerequisite of the economy is private property," while the other claims: "Private property is theft." Fifty percent believe in one

principle, fifty percent in the other. You may object by saying that these views are pure theory—no, this theory is of necessity the basis for practice. Was this view mere theory when, in November 1918, the Revolution broke out as a consequence and shattered Germany? Was that a completely insignificant theory which, above all, was of no interest to the economy? No, Gentlemen! I believe that such views must, if they are not clarified, inevitably tear apart the body politic, for they are not simply confined to theory. The Government talks about the “*vaterländisch* way of thinking,” but what does “*vaterländisch* way of thinking” mean? Ask the German nation! One part supports it, while the other declares: “Vaterland is an inane bourgeois tradition and nothing more.” The Government says: “The State must be saved.” The State? Fifty percent regard the State as a necessity, but the sole desire of the other fifty percent is to crush the State. They are conscious of their role as a vanguard not only of an alien national attitude and an alien national concept, but also of an alien national will. I cannot say that this is only based on theory. It is not mere theory when fifty percent of a people at the most are willing to fight, if necessary, for the symbolic colors, while fifty percent have hoisted a different flag representing a State which is not their own but lies outside the borders of their own State.

“The Government will seek to improve the morals of the German Volk.” Which morals, Gentlemen? Even morals must have some basis. What appears to you to be moral appears immoral to others, and what seems immoral to you is for others a new morality. The State says, for instance: “Thieves must be punished.” But countless members of the nation counter: “One must punish the owners, for ownership itself comprises theft.” The thief is glorified more than anything else. One half of the nation says: “Traitors must be punished,” but the other half holds: “Treason is a duty.” One half says: “The nation must be defended with courage,” and the other half regards courage as idiotic. One half says: “The basis of our morality is religious life,” and the other half sneers: “The concept of a God does not exist in reality. Religions are merely the opium of the people.”

Do not ever think that once a people has been seized by these conflicts of Weltanschauung one can simply circumvent them by means of emergency decrees, that one can delude oneself into believing that there is no need to take a stand on them because they involve things which concern neither the economy, nor administrative life, nor cultural life! Gentlemen, these conflicts affect the power and the strength of the nation as a whole! How can a people actually constitute a factor of any significance abroad when, in the final analysis, fifty percent are Bolshevik-oriented and fifty percent nationalistic or anti-Bolshevik-oriented? It is conceivable that Germany can be turned into a Bolshevik State—it will be a catastrophe—but it is conceivable. It is also conceivable that Germany can be turned into a national State. But it is inconceivable that a strong and healthy Germany can be created if fifty percent²⁸ of its members are Bolshevik-oriented and fifty percent are nationalist-oriented! (*Hear, hear!*) We cannot get around solving this problem! (*Animated applause*)

If today’s Government declares: “But we are industrious, we are working, this last emergency decree cost us so and so many hundreds of hours of sessions” (*amusement*), then I do not doubt what they say. That does not,

however, mean that the nation will become even the slightest bit stronger or more stable; the process of inner decay will continue unceasingly on its inevitable course. But the consequence to which this path will finally lead is something you then again can see only if you take a very large mental leap: once, as the first prerequisite for the organization of our Volk on a large scale, Germany had a *weltanschaulich* foundation in our religion, Christianity²⁹ When this *weltanschaulich* foundation was shaken, we see how the strength of the nation turned away from external things and toward the internal conflicts, for the nature of man forces him, as a matter of inner necessity, to seek a new common foundation at that point at which the common *weltanschaulich* foundation is lost or attacked. These are then the great ages of civil wars, religious wars, etc.—conflicts and confusions in which either a new *weltanschaulich* platform can be found and thereupon a nation erected anew, a nation which can turn its strength outwards, or in which a people becomes split and falls into ruin. In Germany, this process ran its course in an absolutely classical form. The religious conflicts meant a withdrawal of the entire German strength inwards, an internal absorbing and exhausting of strength and thus automatically a gradual increase in an attitude of no-longer-reacting to major world events in foreign countries, while these meet with a completely passive people, because at the same time this people has inner tensions which urgently require a solution.

It is incorrect to say: world politics and the world situation alone determined Germany's fate in the sixteenth century. No, our internal situation at that time played a helping role in shaping the image of the world which later caused us so much suffering: the partitioning of the world without Germany.

In a second, really magnificent example from history, this process is repeated: in order to replace the lacking religious unity—for both religions are finally frozen fast, neither is now capable of overcoming the other—a new platform is found: the new concept of the State, first of legitimist character and later slowly passing to an age of the national principle and colored by it. It is on this new platform that Germany once more unites; and, piece by piece, with this unification process, a Reich which had fallen into decline as a result of the old confusions automatically and once more lastingly increases its strength in the external world. This increase in strength led to those days in August 1914 which we had the proud good fortune of experiencing firsthand. A nation which apparently had no internal differences and thus was able to channel its entire strength outwards! And in scarcely four and a half years, we see the process reverting. The inner differences become visible, they slowly begin to grow, and gradually the external strength is crippled. The inner conflict once more takes on urgency; in the end comes the collapse of November 1918. In reality, this means nothing other than that the German nation was once more investing its entire strength in inner conflicts—externally, it was relapsing into complete lethargy and powerlessness.

But it would be quite mistaken to believe that this process was confined only to those days in November 1918. The *weltanschaulich* disintegration set in at the very time when Bismarck was powerfully uniting Germany. Citizens and proletarians began to take the place of men from Prussia, Bavaria,

Württemberg, Saxony, Baden, etc. In place of a many-facetted disintegration, which is overcome politically, the classes begin to split, leading ultimately to the same result. For the remarkable feature of the former disintegration of the State was that Bavarians would, under certain circumstances, tend to cooperate more readily with non-Germans than with Prussians. That means that relations with the outside were regarded as more feasible than relations with one's own German Volksgenossen. Exactly the same result is coming about now by means of the class division. Once again a mass of millions has ceremoniously declared that it is more willing to take up relations to men and organizations who think similarly and have a similar outlook but are members of a foreign people, than to enter into relations with men of its own Volk who are of the same blood but think differently. This is the only explanation for the fact that today you can see the red flag with the sickle and hammer—the flag of an alien sovereign power—waving over Germany; the fact that there are millions of people to whom one cannot say: “You, too, are Germans—you, too, must defend Germany!” If these men were willing to do this as in 1914, they would be compelled to renounce their Weltanschauung; for it is thoroughly absurd to believe that Marxism would have been converted to the national cause in 1914. No! The German worker, with an intuitive realization, turned away from Marxism in 1914 and, contrary to his leaders,³⁰ found his way to the nation. (*Lively applause*) Marxism itself, as concept and idea, knows no German nation, knows no national State, but knows only the Internationale!

I can thus state one fact today: no matter what the legislature does—particularly by means of decrees and most of all by means of emergency decrees—if Germany is unable to master this inner division of outlook and Weltanschauung, then no amount of legislative measures will be able to prevent the ruin of the German nation. (*Hear, hear.!*) Indeed, do not believe, Gentlemen, that in ages in which peoples have fallen into ruin as demonstrated by history, the governments were not governing! At the same time Rome was slowly disintegrating, the governments were certainly active. Yes, I would almost like to say that the rapidity with which a legislative machine functions seems to me to be almost proof of the disintegration of a *Volkskörper* (body politic). (*Hear, hear.!*) One merely attempts to veil the existing inner division and the degree of disintegration from the outside world by means of the legislative rotary machine. Today the situation is no different. And do not believe that any government would ever have admitted that its work was not conducive toward saving the nation. Each of them naturally protested against the view that its activities were not absolutely necessary; each was convinced that no one else could have done it better than itself. You will never, in the history of the world, find a general who, no matter how high the number of battles on his debit account, was not convinced that no one could have done better than he. (*Amused laughter*) But the essential fact will always remain that, in the end, it is not immaterial in the least whether the Herzog von Braunschweig or Gneisenau is commanding the army; whether a system confines its attempts to save the nation to emergency decrees or whether a new mental outlook inspires a Volk inwardly and leads it back to life, back to being a vital, living factor, and away from being the dead object of legislative machinery.

(*Animated applause*) It is not immaterial whether, in the future, you simply attempt to bring the most obvious manifestations of the crisis under control in Germany by means of a legislation more or less trimmed with a border of constitutionality, or whether you lead the nation itself back to internal strength.

And when this system³¹ objects and says to me that there is no time left for that now—it is true, *meine Herren*, that far too much time has been wasted on unproductive work, far too much time has already been lost. One could have initiated the regeneration process in 1919, and in the past eleven years Germany would have undergone a different external development. For it was only possible to impose the Peace Treaty upon us in the form chosen because at the time it was being drawn up, Germany had totally ceased being a factor of any weight whatsoever. (*Hear, hear!*) And the results of this Peace Treaty took on those forms we know and have experienced only because, in all these years, no Germany with any kind of definite and perceptible will of its own existed. Thus we are not the victims of the treaties, but rather the treaties are the consequences of our own mistakes; and I must, if I wish to improve the situation at all, first change the value of the nation again. Above all, I must recognize one thing: it is not the primacy of foreign politics which can determine our actions at home, but rather the character of our actions at home that determines the character of our successes in foreign policy, yes, and even our very objectives. (*Hear, hear!*)

I may cite two examples of this from history: firstly, Bismarck's idea of a conflict between Prussia and the House of Habsburg, the construction of a new Empire by ousting Austria, an idea which never would have become reality had not—before the attempt was made to put it into action—the instrument been created with which the political objectives could have practically been turned into reality. It was not the political situation which forced Prussia to decide to reorganize its Army; rather, the reorganization of the Prussian Army which Bismarck far-sightedly carried through against the resistance of parliamentary madness first made the political situation possible which came to an end in Königgrätz and established in Versailles the Empire which, because it gradually came to be founded on other principles, was later once more destroyed and partitioned in the very same chamber at Versailles.

And vice versa: if today a German government attempts, along the lines of Bismarck's ideas, to take the path of that age and, perhaps as forerunner of a German policy of unification, attempts to establish a new *Zollverein*, a customs union, then formulating this aim is not the important thing, but rather the important thing is what preparations one undertakes in order to make the implementation of this aim possible. I cannot formulate an aim which, supported by the press campaign of one's own papers, is understood throughout the world to be a political aim of utmost importance unless I secure for myself the political means which are absolutely essential for the implementation of this type of plan.

And the political means—today I can no longer view them as limited—can lie only in the reorganization of an army. Ultimately, it is completely irrelevant whether Germany has an army 100,000 or 200,000 or 300,000 strong; the main thing is whether Germany has eight million reservists whom it can transfer to

the army without heading toward the same *weltanschaulich* catastrophe as that of 1918.³² (*Hear, hear!*)

The essential thing is the formation of a political will of the entire nation; this is the starting point for political action. If this formation of will is guaranteed in the sense of a willingness to commit oneself to some national objective or other, then a government that is supported by this formation of will can also choose those paths which one day may lead to success. However, if this formation of will does not take place, every power in the world will test the chances of such an undertaking on the strength of the means at its disposal to back it. And one will surely be aware of the fact that a government which rouses itself to exhibit such a great national show externally but is, internally, dependent upon the shifting forces of Marxist-Democratic-Centrist party views, will never be capable of really fighting to carry through this plan to the very last. (*Hear, hear!*) Let no one say: this is simply a case in which all are standing together as one man. This standing together of all as one man can only then be attained when all share one single opinion. The phrase "March divided, fight united" exists only in terms of the army because in an army with a single supreme command, the order to march divided is followed in exactly the same way as the order to fight united, because both stem from one and the same root of command. But I cannot simply allow armies to run around side by side as complete strangers and then expect, upon some signal which a high-and-mighty government deigns to give them, that they will suddenly harmonize wonderfully and initiate a joint maneuver. (*Hear, hear!*)

That is impossible! And it is simply impossible for the further reason that, ultimately, the catastrophe lies not so much in the existence of different points of view, but rather foremost in the fact of the State's licensing these differences.

If today they wish to hurl the worst accusation at me as a National Socialist, then they say: "You want to bring about a decision in Germany by violence, and we must oppose that. You want to one day destroy your political opponents in Germany! We, on the other hand, stand for the precepts of the Constitution and must thus guarantee all parties their right to exist." To that I have only one reply: translated into reality, this means: "You have a company. You must lead this company against the enemy. Within the company there is complete liberty to form a coalition." (*Amused laughter*) Fifty percent of the company have formed a coalition based upon love and defense of the Vaterland, the other fifty percent based upon a pacifist Weltanschauung; they reject war as a matter of principle, demand the inviolability of freedom of conscience, declare it to be the highest and only virtue we have today. (*Amused laughter*) But if it does come to a fight, they want to stand together. (*More amused laughter*) But should one man—insisting on freedom of conscience—desert to the enemy, then the absurd situation would arise where you would have to place him under arrest and punish him as a deserter, while completely forgetting that you actually have no right to punish him. A State which allows the view to circulate—with license from the State—that treason to the Vaterland is a duty; which tolerates that large organizations calmly state: it will be our task to put a simple stop to any military action in the event of war—what right does that State have to punish a traitor to the Vaterland? Of course it is only incidental that such a State itself carries the

madness of this view ad absurdum, for the man who would otherwise have been branded a criminal now will become a martyr for one half of the nation. Why? Because this same State, which, on the one hand, declares the theory of treason to one's country an ethical and moral theory and protects it, has the audacity, on the other, to imprison a person who attempts to transpose this view from the sphere of theory into practice.

Gentlemen! All this is impossible, completely impossible, if one at all believes that a people, in order to survive, must direct its strength outwards. But take a look at the situation today: seven or eight million employed in agriculture; seven or eight million employed in industry; six or seven million unemployed! Consider that, in all human probability, nothing at all will change in this respect, and you will be forced to admit that Germany as a whole cannot survive in the long run—unless, that is, we find our way back to a truly extraordinary, newly-shaped political strength working from within but having the capacity of making us effective once more vis-à-vis the outside world.

For it does not matter at all which of the problems of our *völkisch* life we wish to attempt to solve: if we wish to maintain our export trade, then here as well the political will of the nation as a whole will one day have to take a serious stand to prevent us from being thrust aside by the interests of other peoples. If we wish to build up a new domestic market or if we wish to solve the problem of our *Lebensraum*: whatever the case, we will always need the collective political strength of the nation. Yes, even if we want to be valued merely as allies—beforehand we must make Germany a political power factor. But that will never be achieved by bringing a proposal before the Reichstag that negotiations be initiated for procuring a few heavy batteries, eight or ten tanks, twelve aircraft, or, as far as I'm concerned, even a few squadrons—that is entirely irrelevant! Throughout the history of peoples, technical weapons have undergone continual changes. But what had to remain unchanging was the formation of will. It is the constant factor and the prerequisite for everything else. Should it fail, no number of weapons can help. On the contrary: if you were to summon the German Volk to a levée en masse and place weapons at its disposal for this purpose—tomorrow the result would be civil war, not a fight against the external world. Practical foreign politics can no longer be implemented with today's body politic. Or do you believe that Bismarck would have been able to fulfill his historic mission with today's Germany, that the German Empire would have emerged from this state of mind?

In stating this, I am still a long way from confronting today's system with the claim that one should, for instance, remain silent and inactive in the face of individual incidents; rather, my claim is that an ultimate solution is only possible when the internal disintegration in terms of classes is overcome once more in the future. When I say this, I am not being a pure theoretician. When I returned to the homeland in 1918, I was faced with a situation which I, just as all the others, could have accepted as a given fact. It is my firm conviction that a large part of the German nation was of the unequivocal opinion in those November and December days of 1918, and even in 1919, that were Germany to continue on its path in terms of domestic policy, it would be heading rapidly towards its downfall in terms of foreign policy. In other words, the same opinion I held.

There was only one difference. At that time I said to myself: it is not enough to merely recognize that we are ruined; rather, it is also necessary to comprehend why! And even that is not enough; rather, it is necessary to declare war on this destructive development and to create the instrument necessary to do so. (*Bravo!*)

One thing was clear to me: the world of the parties up to that time had shattered Germany, and Germany was broken by this. It is absurd to believe that the factors whose existence is inseparably bound up in history with Germany's disintegration can now suddenly be factors in its recovery. Each organization becomes not only the personification of a certain spirit; in the end, it even symbolizes a certain tradition. If then, for example, associations or parties have almost made it a tradition of retreating in the face of Marxism for sixty years, I do not believe that, after the most horrible defeat, they will suddenly break with a tradition which has become second nature to them and transform their retreat into an attack; what I do believe is that the retreat will continue. Yes, one day these associations will go the way of all organizations which suffer repeated defeats: they will enter pacts with the opponent and attempt to attain by peaceful methods what could not be won by fighting.

Granted, given a cool and considered view, I did have to say to myself in 1918: certainly it is a terribly difficult course to present myself to the nation and form a new organization for myself. Actually, it would naturally be much easier to enter one of the existing formations and attempt to overcome the inner gulf dividing the nation from there. But is this at all possible in the existing organizations? Does not each organization ultimately have in it the spirit and the people who find satisfaction in its program and its struggle? If an organization has, in the course of sixty years, continually retreated before Marxism and finally one day simply capitulated like a coward, is it not then necessarily filled with a spirit and with people who neither understand nor are prepared to take the other path? Is it not so that the opposite is true, that in such an age of confusion the future will simply consist of once again sieving through the body politic which has fallen into disorder; that a new political leadership will crystallize from within the Volk which knows how to take the mass of the nation in its fist and thereby avoids the mistakes which led to downfall in the past? Of course I had to say to myself that the struggle would be a terrible one! For I was not so fortunate as to possess a prominent name; instead, I was nothing but a German soldier, nameless, with a very small zinc number on my breast. But I came to one realization: if, beginning with the smallest cell, a new body politic did not form in the nation which could overcome the existing "ferments of decomposition,"³³ then the nation as a whole would never itself be able to experience an uprising. We have practically already experienced it once. It took more than 150³⁴ years until Prussia, the germ cell of a new Empire, arose out of the old disintegrated Empire to fulfill its historic mission. And believe me: the question of the inner regeneration of a Volk is no different in the least. Each idea must recruit its own people. Each idea must step out before the nation, must win over the fighters it needs from its midst and must tread alone the difficult path with all its necessary consequences, in order to one day achieve the strength to change the course of destiny.

Developments have proven that this reasoning was right in the end. For even if there are many in Germany today who believe that we National Socialists are incapable of constructive work—they are deceiving themselves! If we did not exist, Germany today would no longer have a bourgeoisie. (*Hear, hear!*) The question, “Bolshevism or no Bolshevism” would long have been decided! Take the weight of our gigantic organization—this greatest organization by far in the new Germany—off the scales of national events and you will see that, without us, Bolshevism would already tip the scales now—a fact best evidenced by the attitude which Bolshevism has toward us. It is a great honor to me when Herr Trotsky calls upon German Communism today to cooperate with the Social Democrats at any price because National Socialism is to be regarded as the only real danger to Bolshevism. And it is an even greater honor for me because in twelve years, starting with nothing at all and in opposition to the overall public opinion at the time, in opposition to the press, in opposition to capital, in opposition to the economy, in opposition to the administration, in opposition to the State: in short, in opposition to everything, we built up our Movement, a Movement which can no longer be eliminated today, which exists, on which one must have an opinion whether one wants to or not. (*Cheers of approval*) And I believe that this opinion actually must be quite clear to anyone who still believes in a German future. You see before you an organization which does not only preach the theory of the realizations I characterized as being essential at the beginning of my speech, but which puts them into practice; an organization filled with the utmost national sentiment, based on the idea of the absolute authority of leadership in every field, on all levels—the only party which has, in itself, totally overcome not only the international idea but the democratic idea as well; which, through its organization, acknowledges only responsibility, command and obedience and which thus for the first time integrates into the political life of Germany a phenomenon of millions united in upholding the principle of achievement. An organization which fills its followers with an unrestrained aggressive spirit (*Kampfsinn*); for the first time, an organization which, when a political opponent declares: “We take your behavior to be a provocation,” is not satisfied to suddenly withdraw, but brutally enforces its own will and hurls back at him: “We are fighting today! We will fight tomorrow! And if you regard our meeting today as a provocation, then we’ll hold another one next week—and will continue until you have learned that it is not a provocation when the German Germany professes its will! And if you say, “You may not go out on the streets”—we will go out on the streets in spite of it! And if you say, “Then we will beat you”—no matter how many sacrifices you force us to make, this young Germany will always march again, it will one day completely win back the German streets, the German individual. And when people reproach us for our intolerance, we are proud of it—yes, we have even made the inexorable decision to exterminate Marxism in Germany down to its very last root. We made this decision not because we are pugnacious—I, for one, could imagine a life made up of nicer things than being chased through Germany, being persecuted by countless decrees, standing constantly with one foot in prison, and having no right I can call my own in the State. I could imagine a better fate than that of fighting a battle which, at least

in the beginning, was regarded by everyone as a mad chimera. And lastly, I believe that I also have the capability of taking on some sort of post in the Social Democratic Party, and one thing is certain: had I placed my capabilities at its service, today I would presumably even be fit to govern. But for me it was a greater decision to choose a path along which nothing guided me but my own faith and an indestructible confidence in the natural powers of our Volk—which are certainly still present—and its significance, which will one day of necessity once more manifest itself, given the right leadership.

Now a twelve-year struggle lies behind us. We did not wage this battle in purely theoretical terms or put it into practice only in our own party; rather, we are also willing to wage it on a large scale at any time. If I reflect back to the time when I founded this association together with six other unknown men, when I spoke before 11, 20, 30, or 50 people, when, in the space of one year, I had won 64 people over to the Movement, when our small circle expanded steadily—then I must confess that that which has come about today, when a stream of millions of German Volksgenossen flows into our Movement, represents something unique, standing alone in German history. For seventy years the bourgeois parties have had time to work. Where is the organization which could compare itself to ours? Where is the organization which could point out, as ours can, that if necessary, it can bring 400,000 men out on the streets, men who carry within them a sense of blind obedience, who follow every order—as long as it is not against the law? Where is the organization which has achieved in seventy years what we have achieved in barely twelve—with means which were so improvised that one would almost have to be ashamed to confess to the opponents how pitiful the birth and growth of this great Movement once was.

Today we are at the turning-point in German destiny. If the present development continues, Germany will one day of necessity result in Bolshevik chaos; however, if this development is brought to an end, our Volk must be sent to a school of iron discipline and gradually cured from the preconceptions of both camps. A hard lesson, but one which we cannot avoid!

If one believes that the concepts of “bourgeois” and “proletarian” can be conserved, then one is either conserving German impotence and thus our downfall, or one is ushering in the victory of Bolshevism. If one is not willing to abandon these concepts, then it is my conviction that a recovery of the German nation is no longer possible. The chalk line which the Weltanschauungen have drawn for peoples throughout the history of the world has more than once been the death line. Either the attempt to reshape a body politic hard as iron from this conglomerate of parties, associations, organizations, world outlooks, arrogance of rank, and class madness is successful, or else Germany will perish once and for all for lack of this inner consolidation. Even if another twenty emergency decrees were sent to hail down on our Volk, they would be unable to alter the main course leading to our ruin! If one day the way which leads upwards is to be found again, then first of all the German Volk must be bent back into shape. That is a process no one can escape! It does no good to say: “The proletarians are the only ones to blame for that!” No, believe me, our entire German Volk, every single class, has more than its share of the blame

for our collapse; some because they willed it and intentionally tried to bring it about; the others because they looked on and were too weak to prevent it! In history, failure weighs just as heavily as the intention or the deed itself. Today no one can escape the obligation to bring about the regeneration of the German *Volkskörper* by means of his own personal contribution and integration.

When I speak to you today, then it is not with the aim of moving you to cast your ballots or inducing you to do this or that for the party on my account. No, I am presenting an outlook to you here, and I am convinced that the victory of this outlook constitutes the only possible starting point for a German recovery; at the same time it is also the very last asset which the German Volk possesses. I have heard it often said by our opponents: "You, too, will be unable to master today's crisis." Assuming, Gentlemen, that that were the case. Then what would that mean? It would mean that we were approaching an appalling age and would have nothing with which to counter it but a purely materialistic attitude on all sides. The crisis, however, would be experienced a thousand times more strongly as a purely materialistic matter, without some ideal having been restored to the Volk. (*Animated applause*)

People so often say to me: "You are only the drummer of national Germany!" And what if I were only the drummer?! Today it would be a greater statesmanlike deed to drum a new faith into this German Volk than to slowly squander away the one they have now. (*Cheers of approval*) You take a fortress and subject it to the harshest of privations: as long as its garrison can envision salvation, believes in it, hopes for it—it can bear reduced rations. Completely remove from the hearts of these people their last faith in the possibility of salvation, in a better future, and you will witness how these people suddenly come to view reduced rations as the most important thing in their lives. The more they are made conscious of the fact that they are mere objects of trade, mere prisoners of world politics, the more they will turn exclusively to material interests, like any prisoner. Conversely, the more you lead a people back to the sphere of ideal faith, the more it will come to regard material distress as a less exclusively determinant factor. The most tremendous proof of this has been our own German Volk. Surely we never want to forget that it waged religious wars for 150 years with an enormous sense of devotion, that hundreds of thousands of people once left their own plot of land and all their worldly goods for the sake of an ideal and a conviction! We never want to forget that for 150 years there arose not a single ounce of material interest! And then you will comprehend how tremendous the power of an idea, of an ideal, can be! And only in this light can one understand that today hundreds of thousands of young people in our Movement are willing to risk their lives to combat the opponent. I know very well, Gentlemen, that when National Socialists march through the streets, and the evening is suddenly pierced by commotion and racket, then citizens draw open their curtains, look out and say: "My night's rest has been disturbed again and I can't sleep. Why do the Nazis always have to agitate and run around at night?" Gentlemen, if everyone would think that way, then one would have one's peace at night, but citizens would no longer be able to go out on the streets today. If everyone would think that way, if these young people had no ideal to motivate them and propel them forwards, then of course they would gladly

manage without these nocturnal battles. But let us not forget that it is a sacrifice when today many hundreds of thousands of SA and SS men of the National Socialist Movement climb onto trucks every day, protect meetings, put on marches, sacrifice night after night and return only at daybreak—and then either back to the workshop and factory or out to collect their pittance as unemployed; when they buy their uniforms, their shirts, their badges, and even pay their own transportation from what little they have—believe me, that is already a sign of the power of an ideal, a great ideal! And if today the entire German nation had the same faith in its calling which these hundreds of thousands have, if the entire nation possessed this idealism—Germany would stand differently in the eyes of the world today! (*Animated applause*) For our situation in the world results, in its devastating effects for us, only from the fact that we ourselves underrate German strength. (*Hear, hear!*) Only when we have revised this disastrous assessment can Germany make use of the political possibilities of once more—if we look far into the future—placing German life on a natural and sound foundation: either new *Lebensraum* and the expansion of a large domestic market or the protection of German economy against the outside by deploying accumulated German strength. The labor resources of our Volk, the capabilities are there, no one can deny our industriousness. But first the political foundations must be laid anew: without them, industriousness, capability, diligence, and thrift would ultimately be of no avail. For an oppressed nation is not capable of allocating the profits accruing from its thrift to its own welfare; rather, it is forced to sacrifice them on the altar of blackmail and tribute.

Thus, in contrast to our official³⁵ Government, I regard the vehicle for German recovery not as being the primacy of German foreign policy, but rather as being the primacy of the restoration of a healthy, national and powerful German body politic. It was in order to accomplish this task that I founded the National Socialist Movement thirteen years ago and have led it for the past twelve years; and I hope that it will also accomplish this task in days to come, that it will leave behind it the best reward for its struggle: a German body politic completely regenerated from within, intolerant against anyone who sins against the nation and its interests, intolerant against anyone who will not acknowledge its vital interests or opposes them, intolerant and relentless against anyone who endeavors to destroy and subvert this *Volkskörper*—and otherwise open to friendship and peace with anyone who wants friendship and peace! (*Tumultuous, long, drawn-out applause*)

2

Hitler had made good use of January 1932, but the parties of the Weimar Republic (Social Democrats, Center, and the German State Party) had not been idle in the meantime: they had reached consensus and jointly nominated Hindenburg as their candidate for the election to Reich President.³⁶

Hitler bided his time. According to Goebbels' diary,³⁷ he made the decision on February 2 to run for the office of Reich President. However, this was merely the date on which he disclosed his intentions to Goebbels. As early as January 30, a cry had rung out from the gallery at an NSDAP rally in the Berlin Sportpalast demanding: "Hitler should be Reich President!" Predictably, the *Völkischer Beobachter* made a great issue of this incident.³⁸ Hitler had obviously already begun to popularize his candidacy. The two speeches he delivered in Berlin on February 9 and 10 also served this purpose: there he spoke before 15,000 Berlin SA men in the Sportpalast³⁹ and, the following day, before Berlin SS, HJ and student formations in the same arena.⁴⁰

The official announcement of Hitler's candidacy was delayed. First he intended to exploit the propaganda value of the question of his citizenship. In 1925 he had surrendered his Austrian citizenship, fearing that he might be deported back to Austria as an undesirable alien. As a result, he was now a "stateless person."⁴¹

On the other hand, it is highly probable that, had he filed an application for citizenship during the 1920's, Hitler would have been turned down, for—at the very least—those Länder governed by the Social Democrats would have raised their objections.

The Weimar Constitution stipulated that candidates for the office of Reich President were to be German citizens. Recorded evidence of Hitler's cautious initial attempts to obtain citizenship date back to 1929, and it is safe to assume that he already entertained plans to run for

president at that time if, for instance, premature elections were to prove necessary due to the death of Hindenburg, who was already over eighty. Hitler sent out feelers to Dr. Stützel (BVP), Bavarian Minister of the Interior, via Wilhelm Frick⁴² and the National Socialist deputy, Dr. Buttman, to ascertain whether an application for naturalization would have any chance of success. The Bavarian Council of Ministers deliberated on the matter,⁴³ and Stützel gave a negative reply.

According to German law⁴⁴ there was another way to obtain citizenship: by being appointed a civil servant. When Dr. Wilhelm Frick became the first National Socialist Minister in Thuringia in 1930, he immediately sought to effect Hitler's naturalization through these channels and drew up a document appointing Hitler *Gendarmeriekommissar* (Gendarme Commissar) in Hildburghausen. Although Frick later claimed that the appointment had been made without Hitler's knowledge, it is difficult to believe that this is true and that Hitler, enraged at such an offer, even "tore up" the document. It is much more probable that Hitler kept the document in his desk in case of emergency: should Hindenburg suddenly die and new elections be scheduled, it might no longer be possible, even in a Land under National Socialist rule, to obtain citizenship at short notice in time to run for office. And in this case Hitler undoubtedly would have made an appearance, armed with the Thuringian document to prove that he had been a German citizen since 1930. However, in 1932 he considered it opportune to make no further ado of this matter but to choose more official channels to achieve his goal. At that time, only one German Land was governed with the participation of National Socialists: Brunswick.⁴⁵ Evidently, this Land was destined to become the scene of Hitler's forced naturalization.

However, Hitler felt that this act required a preparatory propaganda campaign, particularly since the 1930 attempt at procuring citizenship had just circulated in the press. Dr. Frick had been forced to declare in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on February 10⁴⁶ that he had made the proposal in question only because Stützel had declared that any application Hitler filed would have been to no avail.

The same issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter* contained the text of a speech delivered in Leipzig by the Chief of Police in Berlin, Grzesinski (SPD). He was quoted there as saying that, in his opinion, it was a disgrace that Hitler was not chased out of Germany with a dog whip.⁴⁷ In contrast, the National Socialist newspapers en masse lamented throughout February that it was a shame to deny Hitler—the old front-line soldier, the national pioneer—the right to hold German citizenship.

On February 12, the German National People's Party issued a statement in support of Hitler's naturalization.⁴⁸ Two days later, Hitler took the opportunity presented at a convention of party leaders in Munich for the Gau of Munich and Upper Bavaria to accuse the Social Democrats of being responsible for refusing to grant him citizenship. On February 14, he stated:⁴⁹

Miracles have taken place. Field Marshal von Hindenburg is presently being made out to be the only possible candidate for the presidency by Crispian, Barth and company.⁵⁰ These are the fruits of our educational efforts; I would not ever have thought that the Social Democratic Party would become so patriotic, so militaristic. The results of our educational efforts are also evident in other areas: the acute sense which the Social Democratic Party has today for what is national and what is non-national, for what is German and what is non-German; for what is native and what is alien; for which side of the border one is born on ... this acute sense which somehow does not really seem to fit in with its international outlook ... this, too, is a result of our educational efforts.

On February 15, when Hindenburg had declared his consent to run for office, i.e. to being reelected, Hitler issued the following proclamation to the NSDAP:⁵¹

Munich, February 15

National Socialists!

As a final attempt to rescue the disastrous Weimar system, the parties of the black-red coalition, who are hopelessly in the minority, have decided to propose Field Marshal von Hindenburg's reelection to the office of Reich President. In this way the policy of collapse, which received its final justification in the Young Plan⁵² and the emergency decrees, is to be carried on. National Germany will reply in the only way possible:

the National Socialist Movement must, true to its fight against the system, reject this candidacy. The hour of settling with the November Men has thus arrived. We regret that Field Marshal von Hindenburg was moved to allow his name to be misused in this fight.

Adolf Hitler

Still, Hitler refrained from announcing his own intention to run for office. Before doing so, he wanted to drum up more popular support in the ranks of the workers and peasants.

For this purpose he delivered a speech in a Düsseldorf machine works on February 16, addressing an alleged 26,000 workers. This move was designed to compensate for the somewhat negative impression which word of his speech at the Düsseldorf Industry Club had created among the working force three weeks earlier.

On the same day, Hitler called upon all Germans to secure the 1932 harvest.⁵³ This appeal bore the title, "The German Harvest of 1932 in Danger," and read as follows:

NSK Munich, February 16

An Appeal from the Führer

The precondition for the independence of the German State is the possibility of being able to provide sufficient food for the German Volk from native German soil. The German agriculture and horticulture industry, if intact, is in a position to guarantee the vitally necessary self-sufficiency of the German Volk's food supply. The present system has left German agriculture and German horticulture to hopeless decay. Overindebted and in spiritual despair, the German farmers and gardeners no longer know where to look for the means to till the fields in the spring as usual; considerable reductions in the amount of seed are already being contemplated. But this gives rise to the danger that the harvest will be insufficient in 1932 and thus will prevent the vitally necessary self-sufficiency of the German Volk's food supply. The impoverished German Volk is no longer in a position to raise the foreign currency necessary to procure the foodstuffs abroad which would be lacking given an insufficient harvest.

German Volksgenossen, German Farmers and Gardeners! This must not be allowed to happen; it is your patriotic duty to prevent a catastrophe from happening with the harvest.

Thus I call upon all Germans to regard the task of safeguarding the German harvest of 1932 as their foremost duty. Anyone who endangers the orderly spring tilling by any means whatsoever and attacks the German farmer or gardener from behind; or anyone who fails to till his land correctly with only his own self-interest in mind is committing treason against the German Volk. German industry, the trades, and business have a bounden duty to make all sources of aid available and to enable the agriculture and horticulture industries to safeguard the harvest for 1932.

I declare on behalf of the National Socialist Movement that a forthcoming National Socialist Government will grant special protection—even continuing after the harvest—to all measures taken now by farmers and other parties designed to effect the spring tilling in an unrestricted fashion. A National Socialist Government will also conduct an investigation of all compulsory auctions of agricultural property which has been effected since the bank catastrophe on July 13, 1931. This is the most elementary of obligations in the National Socialist view of the State, in which the preservation of the German peasantry as a source of regenerated blood for the Volk as well as the safeguarding of its food supply are the highest laws of life. National Socialism rates the laws of life of the Volk higher than the interests of international finance which have led to the destruction of all of the natural foundations of the German Volk and the German economy.

I expect each and every party comrade and German-minded person, in particular the German farmers and gardeners, to now do his duty in respect to safeguarding the endangered crops.

Adolf Hitler

Already Hitler's words sounded like those of a head of state! Regardless of how grotesque this appeal was, it was in fact effective. The overwhelming majority of German peasants became Hitler's followers in 1932. On February 22, Hitler finally allowed Goebbels to announce his candidacy at an evening rally of the NSDAP in the Berlin Sportpalast. The news was followed by shouts of "Heil" lasting several minutes.⁵⁴ "The people are standing up and cheering and calling out and laughing and crying all at once," Goebbels wrote in his diary.⁵⁵

On February 25, Hitler's naturalization was effected in Brunswick. The official notice read as follows:⁵⁶

Brunswick, February 26

The Führer of the NSDAP, Adolf Hitler, has been appointed Regierungsrat (senior executive officer) in the Brunswick legation in Berlin with immediate effect. Adolf Hitler has thus become a German citizen. His certificate of appointment was signed in the afternoon of Thursday by the Brunswick Minister-President Kuchenthal and Minister Klagges.

The somewhat dubious means by which Hitler had become a German citizen were not regarded by the National Socialists themselves as improper in the least. Indeed, they were pleased at having "put one over" on the Reich Government and that, by means of this incident, the public had been made aware of a loophole through which citizenship could be procured—and probably had been even before Hitler conceived of the plan.

Hitler was by no means averse to now campaigning against Field Marshal von Hindenburg. This became evident as early as the first speech Hitler delivered after the announcement of his candidacy. On February 27 he addressed a rally of 25,000 in the Berlin Sportpalast.⁵⁷ Following the standard long-winded introduction, his "party narrative," he stated:

The fact that today's *Vorwärts* writes in its appeal to the Social Democratic Party: "Beat Hitler!" makes me proud. There is nothing I want more than to have a good fight with you, and then Fate shall take the scales in its fist and weigh which side has more sacrifices and more will and more determination, yours or ours. I know your slogans.

You say: "We will stay on at any price," and I say to you: "We will overthrow you no matter what!"

And no matter what action you might take against it, no matter what your writings, lies or slander, it will come to nothing!

And if you say that now finally I am personally standing in the arena of this battle, that's true: I believe that now the decision is nearing, and I would be too proud and too self-confident to perhaps march in the second rank. On the

contrary: I am happy that I can now fight with my comrades, one way or another. And if you now believe you can wear us down with threats, that is where you are wrong! Feel free to threaten me with the dog whip. (*Thunderous jeering*) We shall see whether or not the whip is still in your hands at the end of the fight. The thirteenth of March will be a day of fighting for us, and I believe that this fight, my Volksgenossen, will reap the reward it deserves. Thirteen years of struggle, thirteen years of persistence, thirteen years of determination cannot have been in vain.

I believe in Divine Justice. I believe that it has defeated Germany because we had become faithless, and I believe that it will help us because we now once again profess our faith.

I believe that the long arm of the Almighty will withdraw from those who are seeking merely alien shelter.

We once served the Field Marshal obediently as our Supreme Commander; we honored him and desire that the German Volk continues to see in him the leader of the great struggle. It is because this is our wish and because this is our desire that today we view it as our duty to call out to the old Field Marshal:

Old man, we hold you in too great a reverence to be able to tolerate that your being supported by the very ones we wish to destroy. As much as we regret it, you must step aside, for they want the fight, and we want it, too.

And I believe that this battle will end with the victory of those who have really earned the victory, earned it through their fight, through their sacrifices and their commitment, through their persistence and determination, through their faith and the great ideals which inspire them.

Hitler brought up his heavy guns in a letter addressed to the Reich President himself on February 28. He objected to the ban on the Berlin NSDAP newspaper, *Der Angriff*, to Berlin Chief of Police, Grzesinski, who had wanted to chase him out of Germany with a dog whip; to the fact that two different yardsticks were being applied to the election campaign and thus interfering with it, etc. He closed with the words:⁵⁸

Herr Generalfeldmarschall! Do you believe it is worthy of your name, on the one hand, to allow your personal honor as a candidate for the presidency to be protected by a tangled mass of emergency decrees and legislative provisions, while on the other hand leaving your rival for office as fair game to the mercy of the lies and slander of party politics?

What do you intend to do, Herr Reichspräsident, in order to restore to this battle, which also involves you personally, the principles of chivalry?

The letter was delivered to Hindenburg by messenger at noon on February 28. Its contents were publicly disclosed a short two hours later at an NSDAP press conference held at two o'clock that afternoon. The next day Hitler began his election campaign through Germany, at this stage still traveling by car, in the course of which he spoke in the following cities:

- March 1: Hamburg (Sagebiel);⁵⁹
- March 2: Stettin (Exhibition Hall);⁶⁰
- March 3: Breslau (Jahrhunderthalle);⁶¹
- March 4: Leipzig (Meusdorf Park);⁶²
- March 5: Bad Blankenburg;⁶³
- March 6: Weimar (Market Place);⁶⁴
- March 6: Frankfurt am Main (Festhalle);⁶⁵
- March 7: Nuremberg (Luitpoldhain);⁶⁶
- March 8: Stuttgart (Stadthalle);⁶⁷
- March 9: Cologne (Messehalle);⁶⁸
- March 10: Dortmund (Westfalenhalle);⁶⁹
- March 11: Hanover (Stadthalle).⁷⁰

If one lends credence to the admittedly exaggerated reports of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Hitler spoke before approximately 500,000 people in the course of this campaign. His listeners waited patiently inside and in front of the meeting halls. Hitler frequently arrived hours after the stated time (there were, for instance, delays of four hours in Breslau and two hours in Stuttgart). This was due in part to traffic problems caused by bad weather conditions but also motivated to a certain extent by the intention that, having waited so long, the audience would be more receptive to the speech which then came.

In Hanover Hitler learned that the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Carl Severing, had issued a circular to the police throughout Prussia, warning them to be prepared for putsch attempts of the radical parties, in particular of the National Socialists, which might follow the presidential election. Hitler realized immediately that, should the election turn out unfavorably for him, measures would be taken against the Party and in particular against the SA—as was in fact the case after the second ballot. In order to reduce this threat, he issued the following statement to the press:⁷¹

Hanover, March 11

The system, now at the brink of collapse, is attempting to maintain its position at the last minute by spreading rumors of plans to stage a putsch. These attempts are so stupid that no one can possibly take them seriously. The National Socialist Movement today has less reason than ever before to abandon the legal path it has taken and on which the system will be forced to its knees. All of the rumors circulating to the effect that the NSDAP is planning a putsch are false and to be seen as typical signs of our opponents' election campaign.

Adolf Hitler

In Hanover, Hitler also had a conference with the American journalist H.R. Knickerbocker,⁷² to whom he stated that he would receive no fewer than twelve million votes on March 13, election day, and that Hindenburg would receive no more than twelve million votes.

The *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* published the following account of the interview:

The American journalist Knickerbocker had a conference with Hitler in Hanover on Friday.

In respect to the election, Hitler declared that he would receive no fewer than twelve million votes. It was impossible, he stated, for one of the candidates to receive the absolute majority of the votes on the first ballot. The decision would therefore be made on the second ballot, and Hitler had no doubt as to its outcome.

In reply to the journalist's question as to what would happen when he became Reich President, Hitler declared:

The moment he was elected to the office of Reich President, Brüning would resign. He would even have to do so if he (Hitler) received thirteen million votes on the first ballot. Then an interim government would have to take the place of the present Cabinet until the outcome of the election became final.

The moment he assumed the office of Reich President, a Reichstag election would be announced in order to bring about a Reichstag which accurately reflected the will of the Volk.

By no means would he immediately revoke all of the emergency decrees issued by Brüning's Government, nor would he announce that the Treaty of Versailles was to be torn in two. The emergency decrees and the Treaty of Versailles had created a state of affairs which could not be changed by simply revoking the emergency decrees and tearing up the Treaty. These decrees would be revoked when something else had been created to take their place, and the Treaty of Versailles would be over and done when a different treaty was drawn up at another conference.

In other words, Hitler was thoroughly optimistic—but not without reason, for numerous prominent public figures had declared their support for his candidacy. Fritz Thyssen, the industrial magnate on the Rhein, voiced the thoughts of many leading figures when he stated:⁷³

"I am voting for Adolf Hitler because I know exactly who he is and am firmly convinced that he is the only one who can and will snatch Germany back from the brink of disaster and ruin."

In the course of 1932, Hitler was to convince many more of Germany's leading figures to adopt this view.

However, March 13, 1932 was a bitter disappointment for the NSDAP. The evening before, National Socialist newspapers⁷⁴ had proudly proclaimed: "Tomorrow Hitler will be Reich President," and

most of the Party's supporters shared this conviction. The election results showed 18.65 million votes for Hindenburg, 11.34 million for Hitler, 2.55 million for Duesterberg (nominated jointly by the Stahlhelm and the DNVP), and 4.98 million for the Communist Party's candidate, Thälmann. Although Hindenburg had not received an absolute majority, his lead was so large as to preclude any chance of Hitler's being elected on the second ballot.⁷⁵ The Party was totally demoralized. But Hitler recovered immediately and issued the following appeals that same night:⁷⁶

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

The first campaign battle is over! In the face of a united effort by all the other parties, despite the harshest suppression and obstruction of our propaganda by the authorities, the National Socialist Party has nearly doubled its electorate in less than a year and a half.

Today we have risen to the undisputedly largest party in Germany by far. Our opponents fought with an unparalleled flood of lies, slander and misrepresentations. The parties marching united against us have sunk from 21.4 million to 18.6 million; we, in contrast, have risen from 6.4 to 11.3 million. The German Nationalists and the Stahlhelm have maintained their prior standing. What we have not completely succeeded in doing in this election campaign must be finished in the coming one.

National Socialists!

By our own efforts, we have once more attracted more than five million votes from the German Volk to our cause. The offensive against the united Centrist and Marxist front must now be resumed immediately with the most drastic means possible. I know, Party Comrades, that you have made great sacrifices in this battle. Still I demand that you instantly commence the battle for the second ballot. Not a day must be lost! I have already announced in my speeches that, no matter how the election ends, the fourteenth of March will see us back at work. And regardless of how great and intensive these efforts of the past weeks have been, they will and must increase still further!

If the voters of the entire national front recall the dictates of the moment, we must still be capable of tearing loose the few million lacking Volksgenossen from the perverted front of our opponents and lead them to our Movement.

I know that my speakers are tired now. I know that my SA and SS men have many sleepless nights behind them; I know that the political leaders, just like the leaders of the SA, have accomplished supernatural deeds in the past few weeks. But today there must be no mercy. Just as I am instantly reassuming my work, I expect from all of you that you increase your efforts without hesitation and, if necessary, double them. True to the task we see clearly before us, our propaganda will be subjected to a new test! The orders for the continuation and intensification of the fight are being issued to the organizations this very night.

Party Comrades!

Through our energy and tenacity, we have grown from seven men to a force of currently 11.3 million! Counting the other national forces, we now total approximately 13.8 million. We must be capable of tearing the lacking two and a half million away from the opposing front and lead them to where they belong.

The goal is clear, the sacrifices which were made in the past serve only to reinforce the necessity of this struggle. We owe it to all those who placed their confidence in us to give our utmost and our very last to pin the victory to our flag.

The first round of this election is over; the second has begun today. This battle is one I will personally wage.

Munich, March 13, 1932

Adolf Hitler

Comrades in the SA and SS! Hitler Youth! NSKK!

A difficult struggle lies behind you! I have personally come to know your sacrifices and your efforts. Thanks to them, the Party has now become, in an incomparable ascent, the strongest political movement in Germany by far. But a second and greater struggle now lies before you! Once more this system has demonstrated its ability to temporarily maintain itself by means of lies and deception, by abusing all public institutions and using terror and bans. Thus the battle against the system must recommence immediately. The fourteenth of March marks the beginning of the struggle for the decisive second ballot. Our task is: tear loose at least two and a half million voters who have been led astray from the Centrist and Marxist front and lead them to our national front. We have grown from seven men to a force of nearly eleven and a half million today. If all the party comrades and all of the comrades in the SA, SS, Hitler Youth, and NSKK fulfill their duty fanatically, we will also accomplish this task! As much as you may require a rest, the approaching fight, the most difficult of all, forces me to demand that you make the most difficult sacrifices. Our offensive shall commence immediately. The propaganda is now to be continued for four weeks with the utmost intensity. On April 10, no matter what it costs, this goal must be attained! Our comrades, who have made such great sacrifices and in the end even gave their health and their lives, have a right to demand the utmost commitment from us as well. A National Socialist who has recognized his opponents does not loosen his grip during his offensive until, in the end, they have broken down! The reward lies only in the ultimate victory!

Munich, March 13, 1932

Adolf Hitler

Of the many speeches and proclamations Hitler made in 1932, these appeals were doubtless the best and most effective. He was able to remobilize his adherents, who had sunken into deep depression, and lead them on into a new election campaign which, despite the hopelessness of his position, brought him two and a half million new voters.

In 1932, Hitler had not yet become the “divine Führer” of his later years, when he believed he could not afford to make mistakes. He confessed that he had miscalculated in his prognosis of the first ballot.

On March 15, he traveled to Weimar in order to comply with the Social Democrats’ demand that he testify before the parliamentary investigating committee of the Thuringian Landtag concerning Frick’s attempt at obtaining citizenship for him in 1930.⁷⁷

Hitler more than welcomed such opportunities to speak before people who did not usually attend his rallies. On this occasion he again delivered a lengthy propaganda speech, picked his opponents’ accusations to pieces and projected the image of an impeccably legal-minded man who had, in 1930, torn Frick’s certificate of naturalization into shreds in Gera.⁷⁸

On the same evening, he took advantage of a rally of 5,000 party members in the Weimar Goethehalle to once more make a laughing stock of the investigating committee.⁷⁹

I do not know if it was a yearning to make fools of themselves or a yearning to receive their daily allowances which was the main motivation of this investigating committee. Generally speaking, it is no great honor to behold these illustrious opponents with which fate has unfortunately blessed us. It would be better if one were faced with worthy fighters and not this stuff, this nature’s run of the mill.

All things considered, Hitler was probably correct in stating that he had no opponents of any real stature; on the other hand, it would certainly not have been “better” for him had he in fact had them. During World War II he believed that he could abuse and make fun of his opponents abroad in the same way. In 1941 and 1942 he declared that it was regrettable that he always had mere “washouts” to deal with.⁸⁰ But these opponents soon showed him who had the upper hand.

However, on March 15, 1932, Hitler’s rhetorical escapades were a great success. He continued his Weimar speech with the remark that the Social Democrats’ fear of him had been the sole reason for Hindenburg’s campaign success.

I really did not believe it possible that the great “socialist, revolutionary liberators of the people,” the Social Democrats—down to the last man—and even a large part of the KPD would really vote for Hindenburg in the election. We openly confess that we deceived ourselves on this count. I was aware of the fact that the gentlemen are afraid of me. But that the gentlemen were so afraid of me and that they were scared so stiff that they turned out down to the last man—that I did not expect. Actually, we can all be proud of that. After a struggle

of barely twelve years, we have performed this miracle: that they have such an utter respect for a movement and, I am proud to say, for one man, that they abandon principles and pledges and memories and traditions to take up the single cry: It's every man for himself.

If I then turn my gaze to the unequal weapons with which we had to fight: on the one hand the large and powerful representatives of the State—Ministers, Chancellors, of course only in their capacity as civil servants, not as agitators or, much less, as candidates; when I take a look at the imbalance of arms, with the radio, the cinemas, and the power to prohibit everything which is really convincing on the other hand; and when I see the other side at the mercy of this terror; and when I further reflect on this admirable number of opponents: the Center, the Bavarian People's Party, the German People's Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Reichsbanner, the Iron Front, all of the unions, the Christian unions, the free unions, the "völkisch" organizations such as the DHV⁸¹—if you take a look at this whole bunch of parties, associations and organizations, then I can be proud that, confronted with this whole jumbled-up mixture, we National Socialists alone summoned up 11.3 million, and now, in a barely thirteen-year-long fight, compared to these "venerable remains" of times past, we have, after all, been able to raise—from nothing—the largest German party which has ever existed. I know very well that this or that person from the ranks of those who do not know me and do not know us has perhaps thought: "Now they'll have had enough."

My Volksgenossen! I may make one pledge to you here: throughout my entire life, I have always said that, for me, no one day will ever mark the end of the struggle, but rather that the following day the struggle will continue. And above all, I can promise you one thing: I have sunk my teeth into my opponent and you will not be able to shake me loose from this opponent. And as I have attacked today, so will I attack again tomorrow, and the day after once more. You would have to kill me before you will get me to loosen my grip on this enemy of Germany.

However, he had to be patient for the time being, for the Reich Government, hoping to check the flow of Hitler's feared oratory, had imposed a truce (*Burgfriede*) until noon of April 3. No election rallies were allowed prior to this date. However, Hitler had other ways to focus public attention on himself in the interim. The above is characteristic in style and content of Hitler's campaign speeches for the second ballot in the presidential election on April 10, 1932.

On March 17, he published a statement on the raids by Severing's police in Prussia and protested against the house searches being conducted in SA lodgings.⁸² On March 19, he spoke at the Reichsführer convention of the NSDAP in Munich.⁸³

On March 24, Hitler published a telegram protesting against the ban on 25 National Socialist newspapers which had been imposed in connection with the police action taken by Severing.⁸⁴

On March 26, he addressed an appeal to subscribers and readers of the National Socialist press.⁸⁵

The actual election campaign had been reduced to less than a week—April 3 to 8—by means of the truce imposed by the Reich Government. Party leaders were prohibited from making radio speeches; only members of the Government and state dignitaries were allowed access to the microphones. If Hitler intended to use his own talent for oratory, his strongest and hitherto most successful instrument of propaganda, he was forced to resort to extraordinary measures. He chartered a plane⁸⁶ and was thus able, in a single day, to speak at four to five of the rallies scheduled by the NSDAP in the largest and most important German cities. He wanted to be heard by millions. Although ultimately a total of only one million people attended the rallies, as one can conclude from the respective accounts in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the program in and of itself was undoubtedly an enormous physical and rhetorical achievement.

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Punctually at 12:00 noon on April 3 (the end of the truce), Hitler launched his speechmaking offensive with a campaign speech in Dresden (at the Reick Cycle Track).

At the same time he issued a proclamation ("manifesto") to the German Volk for April 24.⁸⁷

On the same day, he made election speeches in Leipzig (Exhibition Grounds), Chemnitz (Südkampfbahn), and Plauen.⁸⁸

On April 4, Hitler spoke in Berlin (Lustgarten), Potsdam (Luftschiffhafen), and twice more in Berlin (Sportpalast and Friedrichshain).⁸⁹

On April 5, Hitler landed at the airport of the Free City of Danzig and there reviewed the SA troops. On this occasion, he received a welcome from Danzig police officers. This same day, Hitler delivered speeches in Elbing (Fabrikhalle) and Königsberg (Haus der Technik). In addition, the SA marched up at the Wrangel Barracks in Königsberg in his honor.⁹⁰

Hitler made a stopover in Berlin on April 6. There he collected reports on the Prussian police action taken against the SA which, as became clearly evident, had been initiated with the consent of the Reich Minister of the Interior and of Defense, Groener, and which was tantamount to a ban on the SA. Hitler, however, was already organizing his counteraction through "subterranean" channels, via Röhm, to Schleicher, who maintained close relations to the son and adjutant to the Reich President, Colonel Oskar von Hindenburg, and the State Secretary, Otto Meissner.

In view of the house searches, Hitler also felt it was necessary to protect his Chief of Staff, Röhm, and above all to conceal the latter's homosexual tendencies or refute respective claims as slander.⁹¹

Hence he published the following statement on behalf of Chief of Staff Röhm:⁹²

April 6, 1932

For quite transparent reasons, the rumor has been circulating frequently during the campaign that I am planning to dismiss my Chief of Staff. In this respect I may explicitly state once and for all: Lieutenant Colonel⁹³ Röhm is now and will remain my Chief of Staff after the elections. Not even the dirtiest and most disgusting smear campaign, which does not stop at misrepresentations, violations of the law or abuse of office and which will be lawfully atoned for, can change this fact.

Berlin, April 6, 1932

Adolf Hitler

On April 6, Hitler delivered campaign speeches in Würzburg (Frankenhalle), Nuremberg (Festhalle), and Regensburg (in a tent outside the city limits).⁹⁴

On April 7, Hitler published a statement concerning an allegedly forged bill from the Kaiserhof Hotel which the SPD press had published as proof of his extravagance.⁹⁵

On the same day he made a campaign speech in Frankfurt am Main (Festhalle) and stressed his financial independence in the following remark:

It may be that I am the only politician who is not employed by his party. I have placed my salary as senior executive officer in Brunswick at the disposal of the Brunswick State Bank to be distributed among disqualified unemployed.⁹⁶

Hitler left Frankfurt for Darmstadt and declared at a campaign rally there the same day:⁹⁷

When I prophesied six million unemployed one year ago, I was laughed at and made out to be an irresponsible agitator. I have been proven right in my theory that the loss of liberty leads to loss of work.

On April 7, Hitler also spoke at an election rally in Ludwigshafen (Exhibition Hall).⁹⁸

On April 8, he ignored stormy weather conditions and flew from Mannheim to Düsseldorf to deliver a speech there (Cycle Track). The same day he also spoke in Essen (Cycle Track) and Münster in Westfalia (Münsterhalle).⁹⁹

According to a decree of the Reich Government, no events were to be scheduled for April 9. But Hitler had arranged effective verbal propaganda for this day: a great number of leading figures declared their support of his candidacy on April 9. Even Crown Prince William of Prussia made the following contribution to Hitler's publicity campaign:¹⁰⁰

April 10, 1932

Abstention at the second ballot of the presidential election is incompatible with the concept of the Harzburg Front. Because I believe that it is absolutely essential that the national front stand united, I will vote for Adolf Hitler on the second ballot.

Oels Castle, April 2, 1932

Wilhelm, Crown Prince

The outcome of the second ballot on April 10 was as follows: Hindenburg 19.3 million, Hitler 13.4 million, and Thälmann 4.9 million votes. Duesterberg and Winter¹⁰¹ had not run.

Although Hindenburg had achieved an absolute majority, Hitler was the real winner on the second ballot (36.7 percent of the votes). He had succeeded in recruiting a further two million new voters in what had appeared to be a hopeless situation. Not only did he receive most of the votes of those who had formerly cast their ballots for Duesterberg (German Nationalists and Stahlhelm), but also a substantial number of the Communist voters. In 1932, many radical workers and unemployed swayed between Hitler and the KPD, as was evidenced in the elections still to come that year.

Hitler proudly issued the following appeals to his adherents on April 10:¹⁰²

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

You have fought a great and difficult battle. I knew that your loyalty is unshakable. Still I must thank you for your tremendous faith, your willingness to make sacrifices, and your diligence!

In spite of all the acts of suppression and persecution, our Movement has won a new victory through you which justifies it in regarding itself as a vanguard of national liberty and thus of the national future. Tomorrow the new struggle will begin. I know that you will continue to be the best guard of the German Volk in the future.

On April 24, we will once more pit ourselves against our opponents. And at one point in time the day must and will come on which we shall carry our flags to the last victory.

Munich, April 10, 1932

Adolf Hitler

Men of the SA and SS! My Leaders!

A difficult task lies behind you. We owe a new great victory to your courageous protection and your untiring diligence. I am immensely proud to be your Führer.

Munich, April 10, 1932

Adolf Hitler

To the Leaders of the Organization and the Propaganda Department of the National Socialist Movement! Party Comrades and Leaders!

The victory of April 10 obliges me to thank all those who, by their efforts, have created the necessary foundations in the organization, our propaganda

and the press. The confidence which thirteen and a half million Germans have placed in our Movement is not only the highest reward for work well done, but also the most weighty obligation for the future.

The National Socialist Movement cannot rest until the goal of the national liberation of Germany has become reality. Millions of German mental and manual workers, millions of German peasants are expecting our fight to continue!

The work begins tomorrow, April 11, for the difficult battles to come.
Munich, April 10, 1932

Adolf Hitler

Hitler had every reason to be satisfied with the election results of April 10.

Brüning and Groener believed that they, too, had scored a success, but they were deceiving themselves. While it was true that Hindenburg had been elected, the economic and political problems remained unsolved. Brüning's doctrinaire policies of deflation had only worsened the already disastrous economic situation, and his efforts to bring about equality of rights for Germany abroad and in military terms, and to remove the burden of reparations had not yet reaped any results. These were to fall to his successors. Domestically, the impression had arisen that the Reich Government was much less interested in alleviating the general crisis than in using every imaginable stratagem to prevent the NSDAP—which had become the strongest party—from taking over power.

Brüning and his ministers could produce no tangible evidence of success, and it was only a matter of time before they would fall. Misjudging their true situation after the presidential election, Brüning and Groener wrongly assumed themselves to be strong enough to strike a decisive blow to the NSDAP. On April 13, they induced the Reich President to sign a decree "toward securing the authority of the State" pursuant to Article 48.¹⁰³ The first paragraph of this decree pronounced that "all paramilitary organizations" of the NSDAP (SA, SS, etc.) were disbanded with immediate effect. The chief of the ministerial office, General von Schleicher, had shrewdly refused to have any part of this decree.¹⁰⁴

Its wording could not have been more unwisely chosen. The NSDAP was not the only party with "paramilitary organizations"; the SPD, for instance, had its own uniformed militant associations, the Reichsbanner and the Iron Front.

Hitler immediately seized upon this point. On the same day he issued the following appeal:¹⁰⁵

April 13, 1932

National Socialists, Party Comrades, former men of the SA and SS, former members of the NSKK and the Fliegerstürme!

Now you know why I attempted to prevent the black and red parties from campaigning for the office of president. As a prelude to the elections in the Länder, General Groener has disbanded the SA and the SS. However, the Reichsbanner and the Iron Front were found to be politically valuable and thus not banned.

Party Comrades, I understand your feelings. For years now, faithful to my orders, you have adhered to the legal path to gain political power. During this time, you have undergone the most cruel persecution and torture. Hundreds of comrades have been killed, many thousands have been wounded. The cowardly murderers and perpetrators are, for the most part, nonetheless free to go their ways. For any attempt at self-defense, countless numbers of you were sent to jail or even to the penitentiary. In spite of the horrible misery which has been inflicted upon you, too, through the fault of the parties in power today, you have remained upright and honest Germans.

You have marvellously fulfilled Seume's prophecy that one day the poorest sons of our Volk will be its most loyal citizens.¹⁰⁶

I know what General Groener, Herr Braun, Herr Severing, Herr Grzesinski, Herr Stützel, Herr Brüning and company want, and you know it, too. Our answer to this new act of desperation on the part of the system will not be to party; it will be to strike.

The 24th of April will be the day of retaliation. Toward this end I recommend to you, my former comrades of the SA and SS, the following:

1. From now on you are only party comrades.

2. As party comrades, you fulfill your duty by voluntarily devoting yourselves more than ever before to the political campaign work in the sections and *Ortsgruppen* (local groups) as party comrades.

Do not give those presently in power any reason to cancel the elections under any pretext whatsoever.¹⁰⁷ If you fulfill your duty, General Groener's blow will fall back upon him and his confederates a thousand times over from the force of our propaganda.

Do not lose faith in the future of our Volk, in the greatness of our Vaterland, and in the victory of our cause, which is to serve both. I will give my utmost for this fight, and hence for Germany. You shall follow me. In spite of General Groener: as long as I live, I belong to you, and you belong to me.

But on April 24, may it please a righteous Providence to bless our fight for liberty and justice. Long live our National Socialist Movement, long live Germany!

Berlin, April 13, 1932

Adolf Hitler

This proclamation had an immediate effect. By April 15, the Reich President had dispatched a letter to Groener.¹⁰⁸ In a rather harsh tone, Hindenburg wrote that he had been informed in the interim that similar organizations were maintained by the other parties, and he was forced to insist that they receive equal treatment. However, the last thing

Brüning and Groener could afford was a ban of the Reichsbanner. Ultimately, Hindenburg's letter constituted the death sentence for Groener's political career. Right-wing circles in Germany had frequently been annoyed by Groener in the past. In November 1918, as Ludendorff's successor, he had been forced to discuss the significance of the oath of allegiance with William II, evoking strong disapproval. In 1930, in his capacity as Reich Minister of Defense, he had allowed normal policemen to arrest Reichswehr Lieutenants Ludin and Scheringer and First Lieutenant Wendt on suspicion of having been involved in National Socialist propaganda activities—a faux pas for which the officers' caste could not forgive him. And now, in the opinion of the military, he had gone so far as to weaken the military power of the Reich by banning the SA.

It seems astonishing that Groener did not realize the gravity of the situation. As Reich Minister of Defense, he must have been well aware of the close relations between the SA and the Reichswehr which had been developing at least since fall of 1931 and which now, for instance in East Prussia, had become particularly close. Since there was practically no chance at the time that general conscription could be reinstituted in Germany, the concept of militias enjoyed great popularity in Reichswehr circles as well, and the attitude toward the SA was by no means as negative as it would become two years later under Hitler's influence. In any case, following the ban on the SA, Hitler could now simply wait for the end of both Groener and Brüning.

On April 14, he granted the Berlin correspondent of the *Evening Standard* an interview on the background of the ban¹⁰⁹ and then commenced his second airborne campaign throughout Germany with his sights on the Landtag elections scheduled for April 24.

Hitler started on April 16 with speeches in Augsburg (Sängerhalle), Donauwörth (Donauhalle), Rosenheim ("Deutscher Kaiser" Hall), Schlossberg bei Rosenheim (Sailerkeller), Traunstein (Turnhalle), and Miesbach (Hofbräuhaus).¹¹⁰

On April 17, Hitler applied to the Government in Brunswick to institute disciplinary proceedings against him based upon allegations published by the *Berliner Tageblatt*. The paper had claimed that he had made a statement to the foreign press to the effect that pressure from France had been the underlying cause for the SA ban.¹¹¹

On April 18, he held campaign speeches in Beuthen, Görlitz and Breslau (Jahrhunderthalle).¹¹²

On April 19, he paid a visit to East Prussia, viewed the Tannenberg Monument and delivered speeches in Allenstein, Willenberg and Lyk.¹¹³

In Lyk he paid a special compliment to his audience, declaring:

I do not believe there is another Land in Germany with the faith Mazovia has. Since I am not able to stop everywhere, I have resolved to come to Mazovia for a week after the end of the Oldenburg election¹¹⁴ to make up for what I unfortunately have had to miss today.

On April 20, his birthday, Hitler received the congratulations of his party friends in Königsberg and then proceeded by plane to attend the election rallies scheduled for that day. He spoke in Halle (Race Track) and in Kassel and Marburg in huge tents which had been erected for the masses attending the rallies.¹¹⁵

On April 21, he spoke at one such gathering in a tent in Bad Kreuznach, proclaiming to thunderous applause:

We are uniting the German Volk. The picture presented by this tremendous rally you see here today is one which is repeated before my very eyes four times a day. We can proudly say that we are the largest unification movement the German nation has ever known.

Hitler delivered similar speeches this same day in Koblenz (Stadium) and Trier (Sängerhalle).¹¹⁶

Campaign rallies in Frankfurt an der Oder (Stadium),¹¹⁷ Neuruppin (Schützenplatz)¹¹⁸ and Berlin (Sportpalast)¹¹⁹ followed on April 22.

The Landtag elections on April 24¹²⁰ did, in fact, result in a substantial increase in National Socialist mandates. In the largest Land, Prussia, the NSDAP became the strongest party by far. However, only in Anhalt¹²¹ did this suffice for a right-wing majority. It had not been possible to penetrate more deeply into the ranks of voters supporting the Social Democrats, the Center, and, respectively, the Bavarian People's Party.¹²² On the other hand, the peasants and the *Mittelstand* had cast their ballots predominantly for the NSDAP.

At least Hitler was in a position to issue a proclamation of thanks to his party comrades on April 24.¹²³

Hitler had a meeting with Schleicher in Berlin on April 28.¹²⁴ The next day he composed a general statement of gratitude for the birthday wishes he had received,¹²⁵ and on April 30 he filed suit against the outcome of the presidential elections at the Reich Canvassing Court.¹²⁶ He demanded that the election be declared null and void due to various, however insignificant, cases of obstruction. In view of Hindenburg's considerable margin, the action had no chance of success, but Hitler had resolved to let no opportunity pass in 1932 which might attract the attention of the public to himself and put his name in the headlines of

every newspaper, regardless whether the context was positive or negative.

Now things quieted down for a few days. Early in May, Hitler traveled to the Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden to stay at the country house which he had purchased in 1925.¹²⁷ As early as May 8 he was back in Berlin for another conference with Röhm, Schleicher, and others who enjoyed Hindenburg's confidence.¹²⁸ Apparently it did not require much persuasion on Hitler's part to convey to his fellow interlocutors that it was time to dispose of Brüning and Groener.

Groener did make another feeble speech before the Reichstag on May 10, but his days were clearly numbered. On May 13, he was induced to tender his resignation as Reich Minister of Defense. He retained the office of Reich Minister of the Interior, which he held, at any rate, only as "caretaker." In essence, Groener's fall meant that Brüning's was certain to follow. The only thing lacking was a formal ground, which Hitler soon provided. As mentioned above, elections to the Landtag in Oldenburg had been scheduled for May 29, and Hitler lost no time in launching a new speechmaking campaign; the undertaking had every promise of a particularly noteworthy success, for the population there consisted chiefly of peasants.

After Hitler had imparted his "instructions" to the newly-elected Prussian Landtag deputies in the Prinz Albrecht Hotel in Berlin on May 19,¹²⁹ he repaired to the scene of the Oldenburg election. On May 20, he delivered initial speeches in Birkenfeld and Idar-Oberstein, villages in the Oldenburg exclave of the Hunsrück mountains.¹³⁰

He then proceeded to the fishing village of Horumersiel on the coast of the North Sea. Here he established a headquarters from which he intended to win over the population of Oldenburg in an oratorical offensive. He spoke on May 22 in the city of Oldenburg at a rally (Race Course);¹³¹ on May 23, he was in Rüstringen,¹³² on May 25 in Rodenkirchen,¹³³ and on May 26 in Delmenhorst (Schützenhof).¹³⁴ This same day he visited the Reich Navy's cruiser *Köln* in Wilhelmshaven and penned the following dedication in the ship's guest book:¹³⁵

With the hope of being able to help in rebuilding a fleet worthy of the Reich.
Adolf Hitler

Two campaign speeches in Kloppenburg (Markthalle) and Bad Zwischenahn (Maschinenhalle)¹³⁶ followed on May 27.

Hitler did not wait for the outcome of the elections in Oldenburg but left immediately for Mecklenburg-Schwerin, where Landtag elections

were scheduled for June 5. There he stayed with the National Socialist landowner Granzow in Severin and held a speech at a rally in Rostock (Alte Rennbahn)¹³⁷ as early as May 28.

May 29 was a black day for Brüning. President Hindenburg had returned to Berlin from a two-week sojourn at his estate Gut Neudeck in East Prussia with the conviction that the smouldering government crisis needed to be solved once and for all. On May 29, he demanded that the Reich Chancellor enlarge his Cabinet by adding right-wing members. Even if Brüning initially believed himself capable of persuading Hindenburg to reconsider, the outcome of the election in Oldenburg that same day settled the matter. Hitler had come away from the polls with nearly half of the electorate (49 percent). The deputies of the NSDAP held 24 of the 46 mandates and hence the absolute majority in the Oldenburg Landtag. Previously, there had been right-wing governments with a strong National Socialist constituency in a number of Länder (Thuringia, Brunswick, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Anhalt), but the outcome of this election was unique. There was no doubt that the next Landtag election in the rural Land of Mecklenburg-Schwerin the following Sunday would produce similar results. Under these circumstances, Brüning was forced to tender his resignation on May 30.

As his successor Schleicher had chosen Franz von Papen, a relatively unknown deputy of the Center Party and member of the *Herrenklub*,¹³⁸ Reich Minister of the Interior was to be Freiherr von Gayl from East Prussia. Schleicher himself assumed the Reich Ministry of Defense. The other ministers were experts in their fields, and several were to remain in office for years afterward under Hitler (von Neurath, Schwerin von Krosigk, Eltz von Rübenach, Franz Gürtner).¹³⁹

Hitler received a telephone call in Mecklenburg summoning him to Berlin; he delayed the speech scheduled for May 30 in Waren and appeared, in the company of Göring, before the Reich President that afternoon. Hindenburg asked him whether he would tolerate the new Cabinet. It appears that, having been given satisfactory assurances in respect to the dissolution of the Reichstag and to lifting the ban on the SA, he consented. But how long would he tolerate the new Government? One week? One month? In his eyes, Papen's Cabinet was an interim cabinet with the sole purpose of clearing away the last obstructions to his own accession to power. By no means was he willing to support this Government beyond the new elections to the Reichstag, which he expected to result in a right-wing majority. If Hindenburg and Papen had envisioned this toleration any differently, they had no one to blame but

themselves. Hitler's personal mouthpiece, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, commented with unusual restraint as early as June 3:¹⁴⁰ "The publication of the Party's position in respect to the new Cabinet and its measures will be forthcoming when appropriate." For the time being, the Government's main priority was to bring about a dissolution of the Reichstag and reinstate the freedom to demonstrate "for the NSDAP which has been unutterably suppressed in the past."

In the meantime, Hitler returned to Mecklenburg in order to reassume his interrupted campaign speeches. On May 31, he spoke in Wismar,¹⁴¹ on June 2 in Güstrow,¹⁴² and on June 4 in Waren.¹⁴³

On June 4, Hitler also met with Schleicher at a country manor in Mecklenburg to discuss once again the demand that the Reichstag be dissolved; the Cabinet naturally was disinclined to take up this matter. Hitler had even drawn up a memorandum on the subject, which he then, however, no longer needed to submit.¹⁴⁴

On June 5, Hitler scored another victory at the polls. In Mecklenburg-Schwerin he again received nearly half of the ballots. His party achieved the absolute majority in the Landtag there, holding 30 of 58 mandates. Hitler's party friend Granzow became Minister-President.

4

On June 5, Hindenburg signed the order to dissolve the Reichstag on the grounds that it “no longer reflects the political will of the German Volk subsequent to the outcome of the elections to the Landtage of the German Länder which have taken place in recent months.”¹⁴⁵

Hitler had had his way, but he met with a new setback on June 6. Pursuant to the Constitution, new elections were to be scheduled no later than sixty days from the dissolution. Hindenburg scheduled the election¹⁴⁶ for the last possible Sunday: July 31, 1932. The Government hoped to be able to make such visible progress in these two months that the wind would be taken out of Hitler’s sails and he would by no means be capable of attaining an absolute majority in the coming polls.

Hitler undoubtedly would have preferred an immediate election. There was a feeling of victory among his adherents, for Brüning had been overthrown and the entire “system” had suffered substantial damage. But what slogans should he use to carry him through a lengthy campaign, not to mention the considerable costs involved? Popular opinion already had it that the “Cabinet of Barons” had been constituted at Hitler’s request or at least with his consent. As long as it was merely a short-term solution, this might have been acceptable. However, if the reactionary Government held office for months on end, it might have been regarded as a permanent solution, and this was difficult to reconcile with the socialist demands of the NSDAP, at least in an outward sense. Now that the government system Hitler had fought so avidly was eliminated, logically he could not, at least for the time being, dismiss von Papen’s Cabinet as a gallery of rogues. The only alternative left was to concentrate his rhetoric on the specter of Communism, seek bloody confrontations with Communists on the streets as effective factual support for the claims he uttered, and combat the non-National Socialist Governments at the Land level.

The Reichsleiters and Gauleiters to whom Hitler presented his new propaganda concept on June 9 and 10 at a convention in Munich were less than enthusiastic, and Hitler saw himself compelled to require, as a precautionary measure, that the NSDAP Reichstag candidates swear allegiance to him personally at this time.¹⁴⁷

In addition, the progress of current proceedings before the Landgericht of Munich in the Abel perjury case, which concerned the NSDAP's position on South Tirol and foreign monetary grants, was not favorable. Hitler, who usually transformed courtrooms into forums for his propaganda, was driven into a corner and refused "to give any more answers at all to Jewish lawyers."

The court sentenced him to a fine of 1,000 RM, 200 RM of which were due to refusal to give evidence.¹⁴⁸

However, he hoped to find a more receptive audience in the Hessian election campaign. The Landtag there was to be elected on June 19, even though the last election had taken place only six months before. Adelung's Social Democratic caretaker Cabinet was still in office.

Hitler held his first speech in the Hessian campaign in Worms (Stadium)¹⁴⁹ on June 12 and afterwards left to fly to Berlin for a meeting with Papen on June 13 in the apartment of Herrenklub member Werner von Alvensleben, where he vehemently insisted that the SA ban still in force be lifted.¹⁵⁰

Late in the afternoon he was back in Mainz to deliver a speech at the Sport Grounds there.¹⁵¹ More speeches followed on June 14 in Alzey,¹⁵² June 15 in Darmstadt,¹⁵³ June 16 in Offenbach (Sports Grounds),¹⁵⁴ and June 17 in Giessen (Festhalle).¹⁵⁵

In the interim, Papen had hurried to comply with Hitler's request that the SA ban be lifted and the rights to assemble and to demonstrate be reinstated. A respective decree was signed by the Reich President on June 14.¹⁵⁶

On June 18, Hitler published the following decree reinstituting the SA:¹⁵⁷

I hereby order that the SA be reinstituted and assign this task to the Chief of Staff, Ernst Röhm. For the time being, I confirm that the Gruppenführers will remain in those sections and areas in which they were appointed prior to the disbanding of the SA. The SS will be reinstituted by Reichsführer H. Himmler. All of the organizational orders of the former SA shall be valid for now as a framework. They will be reissued shortly. Any further implementation provisions will be decreed by the Chief of Staff.

Adolf Hitler

The SA columns began to march towards the end of the Hessian election campaign. Election day on June 19 did not, however, result in an outcome as straightforward as had been the case in Oldenburg and Mecklenburg. A considerable proportion of Hesse's population consisted of blue-collar workers, and the new Landtag was respectively comprised of 35 right-wing deputies (32 of them from the NSDAP) and 35 deputies from the other parties. It was impossible to form a right-wing government. But what had failed in Hesse was to succeed in Thuringia, where Hitler had also felt that new elections were requisite. On June 19, Hitler was addressing 2,000 party leaders in Weimar gathered for a general roll call there. He stated:¹⁵⁸

The Party is now involved in a series of the most difficult election campaigns. They have ended victoriously one after another. Now we see that a Reich Government has even lifted its ban on uniforms and the SA. I believe that all of this is necessary. I believe it is necessary, that no German Reich Government can or will completely fulfill the nation's hopes, but rather that these will only be fulfilled when the power and control is taken over by the Movement which has created the prerequisites for it.

I know that there are some Länder and some parties which believe themselves capable of combatting the tremendous development of our Movement from their own positions. But you can go home knowing for certain now that I am one of those people who are able to observe things and developments with ice-cold objectivity. I also believe that I have excellent nerves, and I am not about to lose control. But this calm does not mean that we will swallow everything without any will of our own. We will fight with all legal means available in order to defend our right. However (*continuing in a much louder voice*), if anyone in Germany believes that he can stabilize injustice by violating the Constitution, he will soon see our other side. We are fighting strictly in accordance with the law and, in this lawful fight, will use every means to knock down those who break with legality. They will never again break this Movement, for today this Movement is Germany.

Typically enough, Hitler then announced the dissolution of the Thuringian Landtag, which did not come about until July 15, prompted by a cabinet crisis there.

It would make me happy if here, of all places, a major victory could be won, because the Thuringian Landtag needs a new election again, too. That is the parliamentary fate which the gentlemen in power bestowed upon themselves with the Weimar Constitution. I am convinced that, just as in Mecklenburg and Oldenburg, our flag will fly alone in Thuringia.

On June 22, Hitler issued the following proclamation on the Reichstag election:¹⁵⁹

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

Ten election campaigns lie behind us. Ten times we have fought against our opponents' united front. Ten times we have won unprecedented victories! The year 1932 will one day be immortalized as the year of the most difficult sacrifices and struggles, but also as the year of the greatest victories and successes.

The fact that National Socialism is Germany's largest party today can no longer be denied by anyone. Nevertheless, a new wave of suppression and persecution is now hitting us. The bloodiest terror practiced by the murdering scum of the Communist underworld is combined with continued breaches of the law and the Constitution committed by the Center and the Social Democratic Party in those Länder in which these parties are still in power.

In Prussia, the Center jointly attempted, with the SPD, to secure the continued existence of the black-red rule by means of manipulations;¹⁶⁰ in Bavaria, this same Center, using a forged Landtag protocol, prevented our entire Party from representing the interests of our voters. 1,270,000 people have been robbed of their constitutional rights solely as a result of this trickery.

At the same time, thanks to the fourteen years of sloppy management by these very parties, the Reich and the Länder are facing political and economic bankruptcy.

As the responsible leader of the National Socialist Movement, I must therefore refuse to make any kind of pact with these parties today.

In view of the fact that the necessary assumption of exclusive responsibility in Prussia by the NSDAP has been made impossible by the manipulations of the former Prussian government parties, National Socialism would have to enter into a coalition with a party which is practicing a most intolerant persecution and oppression of our Movement throughout the Reich.

But we would rather do without ministers before we surrender our honor or our principles.

Germany and Prussia will not be saved by trickery and compromises, but rather only by exhibiting strength of character.

Today the Center does not yet believe in the purpose of the most recent elections and the mission of our Movement. We will get them to understand this faith by July of the year 1932 at the latest.

Party Comrades! See to it now that the election campaign on July 31 becomes a decisive battle. The victory on this day must also serve to finally break the power of the black-red parties in Prussia and in the Länder. And that without compromises.

God willing, we will then have created on August 1 the prerequisites for forming governments, above all in Prussia, which will both do justice to historic tradition as well as be capable of accomplishing the gigantic tasks of the present.

Munich, June 22, 1932

Adolf Hitler

Hitler now began his own preparations for the new election campaign. On June 24, he addressed the reinstituted SA and SS formations in Munich (Zirkus Krone);¹⁶¹ he delivered a speech on June 28 at a

convention of Gauleiters and SA leaders in Munich,¹⁶² and spoke on July 3 at a meeting of 15,000 SA men in the Dante Stadium in Munich.¹⁶³ In each speech he issued warnings that the caretaker Government in Bavaria should refrain from any further obstruction of the SA and be wary of separatist plots.

The first genuine campaign speeches aimed at the election on July 31 were held on July 6 in Bad Tölz¹⁶⁴ and July 7 in Landsberg (Exerzierplatz).¹⁶⁵

A meeting at the Obersalzberg followed on July 9¹⁶⁶ and an election speech in Berchtesgaden on July 10.¹⁶⁷ Subsequently Hitler set off for a "Freedom Flight over Germany." For the first time that year, he donned a uniform for the occasion.¹⁶⁸

A colossal speechmaking program had been scheduled. Encouraged by his successes in the presidential and Landtag elections, he believed that a further intensification of his speechmaking activities at several rallies per day would bring, if not the absolute majority, then at least 40 to 45 percent of the ballot. However, this expectation proved false. In any case, he placed more value on the direct contact with the people afforded by such mass rallies than upon the mass communication available by radio. Although for years he had objected to being, as he claimed, illegally denied access to this medium, now that it was available as a potential instrument of propaganda, he declined to exploit it, leaving the microphones to Gregor Strasser and Goebbels.¹⁶⁹

Prior to the commencement of the election campaign, Hitler nonetheless made a phonograph record of a speech so that his voice at least could be heard where he was not able to conduct campaign rallies in person. He preferred this recorded speech, complete with a backdrop of excited masses, to a simple radio broadcast, in which he would have been merely one of many spokesmen for the various parties. The recording was extolled in the July 15th edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* as "the first Adolf-Hitler record" and bore the title, "Appeal to the Nation,"¹⁷⁰ The arguments used in it are typical of Hitler's campaign speeches in the first half of 1932:

The great time of decision has now arrived. Fate has allotted those in power today more than thirteen years to be tested and proven. But they hand down their own worst sentence, in that they themselves confess to the failure of their efforts by the type of propaganda they use today.

Once it was their desire to govern Germany better in the future than in the past, and they are forced to observe that the only real product of their attempts at government is that Germany and the German Volk are still alive. In the

November days of '18 [1918], they solemnly pledged to lead our Volk and in particular the German worker into a better economic future. Today, after they have had nearly fourteen years to keep their promise, they cannot cite a single German professional group as witness for the quality of their actions.

The German peasant has become impoverished; the *Mittelstand* is ruined; the social hopes of many millions of people are destroyed; one third of all German men and women of working age is unemployed and thus without income; the Reich, the communities, and the Länder are overindebted; finances are in a muddle across the board; and all the coffers are empty!

What more could they possibly have destroyed? The worst thing, though, is the destruction of the faith in our Volk, the elimination of all hopes and all confidence. In thirteen years they have not succeeded in mobilizing in any way the powers slumbering in our Volk; on the contrary!

Out of their fear of the awakening of the nation, they have played people off against one another: the city against the country, the salaried workers against the civil servants, those who work with their hands against those who work with their brains, the Bavarians against the Prussians, the Catholics against the Protestants, and so forth, and vice versa.

The activism of our race was entirely consumed at home; outwardly, only fantasies remained: fantastic hopes of a cultural conscience, a law of nations, a world conscience, ambassador conferences, the League of Nations, the second Internationale, the third Internationale, proletarian solidarity, etc.—and the world treated us accordingly.

Thus Germany has slowly disintegrated, and only a madman can still hope that those forces which first caused this disintegration might now bring about the resurrection. If the present parties seriously want to save Germany, why have they not done so already? Had they wanted to save Germany, why has it not happened? Had the men of these parties honestly intended to do so, then their programs must have been bad. If, however, their programs were right, then either their desire cannot have been sincere, or they must have been too ignorant or too weak.

Now, after thirteen years, after they have destroyed everything in Germany, the time has finally arrived for their own elimination. Whether or not today's parliamentary parties exist or not is of no consequence; what is, however, necessary is that the German nation be prevented from falling completely into ruin.

Therefore it is a duty to vanquish these parties, for in order to secure their own existence, they must tear the nation apart over and over again.

For years they have persuaded the German worker into believing that *he alone* could save himself. Fooled the peasant for years by claiming that only *his* organization would help him.

The *Mittelstand* was to be snatched from the jaws of ruin by parties of the *Mittelstand*; the economy by the parties of business. The Catholic was forced to seek his refuge with the Center, the Protestant with the Christian Socialist People's Service. In the end even the houseowners had their own political representation, just as did the tenants, the salaried workers, and the civil servants.

However, these attempts at breaking the nation down into classes, ranks, professions, and confessions and at leading it piece by piece to the economic good fortune of the future have now failed completely.

Even on the day our National Socialist Movement was founded, we were already governed by the conviction that the fate of the German individual is inseparably bound up with the fate of the entire nation.

When Germany disintegrates, the worker will not flourish in social good fortune and neither will the entrepreneur; the peasant will not save himself then; nor will the *Mittelstand*.

No, the ruin of the Reich, the disintegration of the nation, means the ruin and the disintegration of all!

Not a single confession and not a single German tribe will be able to escape sharing the same lot.

Even on the day our National Socialist Movement was founded, we had already long been certain that it was not the proletariat which would be victor over the bourgeoisie, and not the bourgeoisie which would be victor over the proletariat, but that international big finance must ultimately become the sole victor over both. And that is what has come to pass!

Recognizing this disintegration, thirteen years ago I took a handful of people and formed a new movement which in its very name is to be a proclamation of the new *Volksgemeinschaft*.

There is no such thing as socialism which does not have the power of the spirit at its disposal; no such thing as social good fortune which is not protected by—and even finds its prerequisite in—the power of a nation.

And there is no such thing as a nation—and thus no such thing as nationalism—if the army of millions who work with their intellects are not joined by the army of millions who work with their fists, the army of millions of peasants.

As long as Nationalism and Socialism march as separate ideas, they will be defeated by the united forces of their opponents. On that day when both ideas are molten into one, they will become invincible!

And who will deny that, in a time when everything in Germany is falling apart and degenerating, when everything in the business world and political life is reaching a standstill or coming to an end, a single organization has experienced an enormous and miraculous upturn?

With seven men I began this task of German unification thirteen years ago, and today over thirteen million are standing in our ranks. However, it is not the number that counts, but its inner value!

Thirteen million people of all professions and ranks—thirteen million workers, peasants, and intellectuals; thirteen million Catholics and Protestants; members of all German Länder and tribes—have formed an inseparable alliance. And thirteen million have recognized that the future of all lies only in the joint struggle and the joint successes of all.

Millions of peasants have now realized that the important thing is not that they comprehend the necessity of their own existence; rather, it is necessary to enlighten the other professions and walks of life as to the German peasant, and to win them for his cause.

And millions of workers have similarly realized today that, in spite of all the theories, their future lies not in some “Internationale” but in the realization on the part of their other Volksgenossen that, without German peasants and German workers, there simply is no German power.

And millions of bourgeois intellectuals, too, have come to the realization of how insignificant their own illusions are if the masses of millions comprising the rest of the Volk do not finally comprehend the importance of the German intellectual class.

Thirteen years ago we National Socialists were mocked and derided—today our opponents’ laughter has turned to tears!

A faithful community of people has arisen which will gradually overcome the prejudices of class madness and the arrogance of rank. A faithful community of people which is resolved to take up the fight for the preservation of our race, not because it is made up of Bavarians or Prussians or men from Württemberg or Saxony; not because they are Catholics or Protestants, workers or civil servants, bourgeois or salaried workers, etc., but because all of them are Germans.

Within this feeling of inseparable solidarity, mutual respect has grown, and from this respect has come an understanding, and from this understanding the tremendous power which moves us all.

We National Socialists thus march into every election with the single commitment that we will, the following day, once more take up our work for the inner reorganization of our body politic.

For we are not fighting merely for the mandates or the ministerial posts, but rather for the German individual, whom we wish to and shall join together once more to inseparably share a single common destiny.

The Almighty, Who has allowed us in the past to rise from seven men to thirteen million in thirteen years, will further allow these thirteen million to once become a German Volk. It is in this Volk that we believe, for this Volk we fight; and if necessary, it is to this Volk that we are willing, as the thousands of comrades before us, to commit ourselves body and soul.

If the nation does its duty, then the day will come which restores to us: one Reich in honor and freedom—work and bread!

Hitler’s new speechmaking campaign was launched on July 15 in East Prussia with two addresses in Tilsit and Gumbinnen.¹⁷¹ Speeches in Lötzen, Ortelsburg, Osterode and Riesenburg followed on July 16.¹⁷²

The following day Hitler spoke at a mass rally in Königsberg.¹⁷³ All told, in the course of these three days his words reached more than 200,000 people. From Königsberg he sent a telegram of protest to Hindenburg, Papen, Schleicher, and Reich Minister of the Interior Freiherr von Gayl, objecting to the harassing behavior of a police officer toward the SA when its divisions marched in Königsberg.

On July 19, Hitler delivered a campaign speech in Schneidemühl before a crowd of 40,000.¹⁷⁴ The same day he addressed an election rally

in Cottbus.¹⁷⁵ There he also conferred with Rbhm, Göring, and Goebbels¹⁷⁶ on the appointment of a Reich Commissar in Prussia. Hitler proceeded by plane to Stralsund the same day to speak there before tens of thousands. However, bad weather conditions forced the plane to make a stopover and Hitler did not arrive at the rally until 2:00 a.m. He nonetheless delivered his twohour address to a drenched but patient gathering of followers.¹⁷⁷

On July 20, Hitler visited the giant flying boat ‘Dornier Do X’¹⁷⁸ at the harbor in Warnemünde and then boarded his plane for SchleswigHolstein.

His first speech was delivered in Kiel (Festhalle); then he flew to Hamburg, spoke at the Viktoria Sports Field, and proceeded to Lüneburg for another rally.

Hitler’s last speech of the day was delivered late in the evening at the Weser Stadium in Bremen, where he stated:¹⁷⁹

For me it will be easier to answer before history for the destruction of thirty parties than for those who founded them.

Shortly before Hitler had landed in Bremen, he had given the crowds gathered in the Weser Stadium an effective demonstration of his Promethean qualities. He had instructed the pilot to circle over the stadium in the dark night sky with the cabin illuminated. The result was an eerie, otherworldly scene, and many in the audience were left with the impression that Hitler had actually descended to earth as a sort of god. What had been conceived as mere fantasy by Benson in his book, *The Lord of the World*,¹⁸⁰ seemed to become reality.

July 20, 1932 was also a special day for Chancellor von Papen. The election campaign had been marked by a number of bloody confrontations between National Socialists and Communists, above all in Prussia.¹⁸¹ Hitler demanded that the Reich take action against the Social Democratic Government under Braun, arguing that he was ostensibly no longer able to maintain law and order. On July 20, with the aid of Article 48, Papen had Hindenburg appoint him Reich Commissar for the Land of Prussia in order to “restore public safety and order”¹⁸² and was thereby granted express authorization to dismiss the members of the Prussian State Ministry from office. A state of emergency was proclaimed for Berlin and Brandenburg and the executive power transferred to the Reich Minister of Defense or rather, at his orders, to the Commander of Wehrkreis III, Lieutenant General von Rundstedt.¹⁸³ A few Reichswehr officers and troops sufficed to remove the Prussian Minister-President,

Otto Braun; Minister of the Interior, Carl Severing; Berlin Police Chief, Grzesinski; his second-in-command, Weiss; and the head of the Schutzpolizei, Heimannsberg—all staunch Social Democrats—from office, i.e. to arrest them in their chambers. Several Oberpräsidenten and police chiefs in the Prussian provinces were declared dismissed from office. Things quieted down, and the military state of emergency could be lifted by noon of July 26.

It appeared that von Papen was fulfilling Hitler's every wish. However, July 20 had revealed a fundamental difference between Hitler and von Papen's Cabinet.

It was Hitler's desire to have the caretaker Government in Prussia dislodged so that he could take over the Prussian Government constitutionally in some way or another, if necessary by means of a coalition with the Center.

On the other hand, the reactionary Reich Government planned to turn the temporary measure taken on July 20—which, according to the Constitution, was to be upheld only until public safety and order had been restored—into a permanent institution. The existence of two governments in Berlin, i.e. the Reich Government and, from 1919 onwards, the Social Democratic Prussian Land Government, had long been a thorn in the side of conservative circles in Germany. They preferred the constellation which had existed in imperial Germany but which was now prohibited by the Constitution, namely that the Reich Government be identical to the Prussian Government. It soon became evident that von Papen, whose office as Reich Commissar for the Land of Prussia should actually have expired when the state of emergency was lifted, by no means contemplated relinquishing power in Prussia. This constituted an open invitation for a coup d'état.

On July 20, a dangerous course had been set—a course which constituted a threat not only to the continued existence of the Weimar democracy, but also to Hitler, who had based his tactics on constitutional premises. The question now was whether Hindenburg would be amenable to further steps taken by the Papen Government in violation of the Constitution, e.g. the elimination of the Reichstag.

For the present, Hitler's fate was hinged upon the outcome of the Reichstag election on July 31. He avidly resumed his speechmaking campaign, delivering addresses on July 21 in Hanover, Braunschweig, and Göttingen;¹⁸⁴ on July 22 in Liegnitz, Waldenburg, Neisse, and Gleiwitz;¹⁸⁵ on July 23 in Zittau, Bautzen, Dresden, Leipzig, and Dessau;¹⁸⁶ on July 24 in Elberfeld, Duisburg, Gladbeck, Bochum, and

Osnabrück;¹⁸⁷ on July 26 at the Kyffhäuser Monument, in Erfurt, Gera, and Hildburghausen;¹⁸⁸ on July 27 in Eberswalde, Brandenburg, and Berlin (Grunewald Stadium);¹⁸⁹ on July 28 in Aachen, Cologne, Frankfurt am Main (Festhalle), and Wiesbaden (Sports Grounds);¹⁹⁰ on July 29 in Reutlingen, Neustadt an der Hardt, Freiburg im Breisgau, and Radolfzell;¹⁹¹ and on July 30 in Kempten, Bayreuth, Nuremberg, and Munich.¹⁹²

The outcome of the election on July 31 brought bitter disappointment for Hitler: in spite of his enormous efforts and untiring oratory, he had received only a few votes more than on the second ballot in the presidential election of April 10. Although the NSDAP was the strongest party (230 deputies) with a constituency of 13.7 million ballots (37.3 percent of the votes), the German Nationalists had obtained only 2.1 million votes (37 deputies), thus putting a right-wing government out of reach. The block comprised of Social Democrats and the Center stood strong; all the more so since these voters felt they had been singularly rebuffed by von Papen's Cabinet. The Communist mandates increased from 77 to 89.

It had become evident that, in spite of Hitler's consummate rhetoric, he was unable to attract the majority of the voters to his cause. The dream of seizing power legally by means of plebiscites had evaporated.

The only victory on this July 31 was the outcome of the Landtag election in Thuringia, which had afforded the possibility of instituting a right-wing government under National Socialist leadership.

The proclamations Hitler delivered to his adherents on the election outcome of July 31 were terse and weak:¹⁹³

To the Party:

A great victory has been won. The National Socialist German Workers' Party has now risen to become by far the strongest party of the German Reichstag. This development, standing unique in the history of our Volk, is the result of tremendous efforts, of constant persistence. This greatest triumph of our Movement does not mean that anyone should be given thanks; rather we all are called upon to do our duty of taking up and continuing the struggle with renewed and increased strength.

Adolf Hitler

To the Men of the SA and SS, and to the Members of the NSKK and HJ:

A tremendous victory has been won. Many comrades have made it possible with the most difficult sacrifices. The dead signify a sacred duty for us to now resume the struggle for Germany's liberation all the more.

Adolf Hitler

There was a single ray of hope left to Hitler: perhaps the Government would seek a reconciliation with him after all or propose a parliamentary compromise with the NSDAP, the German Nationalists, and the Center.

Von Papen's Cabinet was not wholly satisfied with the outcome of the election. The Chancellor had entertained the hope that his initial measures toward alleviating the economic crisis and his—albeit undeserved—success at the Conference of Lausanne (final installment of three billion marks for reparations) would also have a positive bearing on the election results for the German Nationalist Party. He had also believed that the Center voters would more readily cast their ballots for a former deputy of the Center Party—i.e. himself. But annoyed by what they viewed as Brüning's elimination and Hindenburg's disloyalty, they were by no means willing to vote for a disloyal renegade such as von Papen.

On the other hand, the Government viewed the election results, which had given a clear majority neither to the right nor to the left, as a confirmation of their own mandate to form an all-party presidential cabinet. Hence they were resolved to stay in power; indeed, even more so because von Papen, this charming Catholic and former Captain of the Uhlans,¹⁹⁴ had succeeded in winning Hindenburg's special favor.

The general feeling was that no particular consideration need be taken of Hitler. If he insisted, he could be given the office of Vice Chancellor.

According to the Constitution of the Reich, the Chancellor alone determined policy. There were no provisions granting a "Vice Chancellor" any amount of influence; he was merely to act as a "deputy chancellor" who could only then exercise any power when the Chancellor was absent or incapacitated by illness. This post was normally assumed by the senior minister or one of the other ministers in the Cabinet. But even in this case, policy decisions were made by the Chancellor. Von Papen's intention in creating a special ministerial post for a "Vice Chancellor" was to placate the National Socialists, should they join the Cabinet, with an illustrious-sounding but ineffectual post. The Reich Government believed Hitler was so naive that he would stumble into this trap. It is the irony of fate that von Papen of all people, the very person who had wanted to shelve Hitler in the powerless position of Vice Chancellor in 1932, was later to be named Hitler's own "Vice Chancellor."

The first few days in August were spent in exploratory talks. Hitler met with Schleicher on August 15¹⁹⁵ and informed him of his claims in

respect to forming the Government. His principal aims were quite clear: he wanted the positions with the greatest concentration of power—the Chancellorship and the Ministry of the Interior. In the Länder in which National Socialists were involved in the Government (Thuringia, Brunswick, Anhalt, Oldenburg, and Mecklenburg), the NSDAP had laid claim to and been awarded these posts. Only in those Länder in which they did not constitute the strongest coalition party had they permitted, for the time being, the other right-wing parties to designate the head of government. However, the post of Minister of the Interior and the Police had gone to the NSDAP without exception. On a national scale, little influence was attached to the position of Reich Minister of the Interior, for he had no police forces under his control. Only with the emergency decree of February 28, 1933 was the Reich Minister of the Interior granted significant powers.

Hence these two posts—the Chancellorship and the Ministry of the Interior—comprised Hitler's minimum claims. His interest in the other offices remained, for the time being, less pressing.

It was false, however, to assume that the head of the strongest party in the Reichstag would relinquish his claim to head the Government: this would have meant an enormous loss of image he could not afford in the eyes of his followers.

Schleicher, the smooth tactician, refrained from uttering any definitive statement on the demands of the National Socialists. Hitler returned to the Obersalzberg and left further negotiations in Berlin to his Chief of Staff, Röhm.

Rumors of disputes within party leadership began circulating throughout the country. As was later discovered, Gregor Strasser had been overly ambitious to assume a ministerial post.¹⁹⁶ Hitler's denial of August 10 was characteristically shrewd: it served also to disclose his current whereabouts, thus robbing the Reich Government of the excuse of having delayed negotiations with him because he could not be located.¹⁹⁷

Fictitious accounts are momentarily circulating in the press as to a "fragmentation" within the leadership of the National Socialist Party and the "opposition" which is allegedly being brought to bear against me by individual leaders, Dr. Goebbels, Gregor Strasser, etc. These reports are too silly to even require a denial.

I desire here only to make it known that I am not presently in Berlin at a new "headquarters" in the Badensche Strasse, but have been in the Bavarian mountains with Dr. Goebbels and the other leaders of the Movement since the end of the election campaign.

Curious reporters will find out soon enough which decisions the Party has made for the future.

August 10, 1932

Adolf Hitler

The claim made by the correspondent for the English newspaper *News Chronicle*, Davenport, to the effect that he had interviewed Hitler had already been denied in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on August 5.¹⁹⁸

In Berlin, Röhm continued to explore possibilities. On August 11, Hitler decided to travel to Berlin himself. It is not clear whether he was summoned by the Reich Government or went of his own volition.¹⁹⁹ In any case, a decision had to be made, for pressure from the Cabinet was mounting as well.

Hitler arrived with Röhm at the Reich Ministry of Defense at 10:00 a.m. on August 13 to meet Schleicher. There it quickly became evident that there was no intention of making Hitler Chancellor, and the subsequent conference with von Papen in the Reich Chancellory only served to make clearer that no change was being contemplated.

Negotiations had already failed. The *Kölnische Zeitung*, partial to Papen, received the following telegram at midday from its correspondent in Berlin:²⁰⁰

Today Hitler declared at his discussion with the Reich Minister of Defense that he was forced to adhere to his claim to the office of Chancellor as leader of the largest German party. It is known that it was the Chancellor's intention to grant the National Socialists two and, if necessary, three seats in the Reich Government; the newly instituted office of Vice Chancellor and the Ministry of the Interior. The office of Vice Chancellor is to be connected to the post of Prussian Minister-President.²⁰¹ For the time being, it is not clear whether Hitler himself or one of his trusted party comrades²⁰² is to assume the office of Vice Chancellor. In the following meeting with the Reich Chancellor, Hitler continued to uphold his claim to the leadership of the Reich Government and rejected all other proposals.

In the opinion of persons involved, the negotiations have now all but failed. It is expected that neither the present pause in negotiations nor Hitler's visit to Hindenburg will suffice to change this state of affairs. Thus Hitler's talk with Hindenburg, which is scheduled for this afternoon, is now regarded as having merely formal significance.

The *Kölnische Zeitung* quite accurately described the situation at noon on August 13. Also acutely aware of the state of affairs, Hitler no longer wanted to see Hindenburg at all.²⁰³ However, the Reich Government placed great value on Hitler's visit, intending to compromise him before the Reich President for having broken his promise to tolerate the Cabinet.

State Secretary Meissner telephoned Goebbels' apartment at 3:40 p.m. in order to ascertain Hitler's whereabouts and, under the false pretense that no decision had yet been made, lured him to the Wilhelmstrasse. Hitler was received by Hindenburg at 4:30 p.m. in the presence of von Papen and Schleicher. Naturally there was no question of inviting Hitler to become Chancellor; instead he was made to feel singularly unwelcome and, still standing, was censured by Hindenburg for claiming for himself "complete power"²⁰⁴ and admonished to conduct any opposition in a chivalrous manner.

Hitler, who had hardly been given the chance to say anything at all, was ushered out onto the street within a matter of minutes. The situation was obvious: von Papen and Schleicher had taken him for a ride! Not only in front of Hindenburg, but in front of the general public as well, he had been found unfit for the office of head of government. The party he held responsible for this humiliation was—certainly not without some justification—Schleicher, for he had been the one with whom Hitler had held so many confidential talks in the preceding months. He swore to take bloody revenge as soon as the occasion afforded.²⁰⁵

The following official account was published of Hitler's reception by Hindenburg:²⁰⁶

On Saturday afternoon, Reich President von Hindenburg received the leader of the NSDAP, Adolf Hitler, in the presence of Reich Chancellor von Papen in order to discuss the political situation and the question of reconstituting the Reich Government.

The Reich President inquired whether Hitler was personally willing to enter a government headed by Reich Chancellor von Papen along with other suitable figures in the NSDAP. Herr Hitler replied in the negative and demanded that the Reich President assign to him the full leadership of the Reich Government and the entire state authority.

Reich President von Hindenburg firmly rejected this proposal, citing as a reason that he could not answer to his conscience and his duties to the Vaterland if he assigned the entire power of the Government exclusively to the National Socialist Movement, which was determined to make one-sided use of same. He regretted that Herr Hitler did not feel able to adhere to the statements he himself had submitted prior to the Reichstag elections to the effect that he would support a Reich Government which enjoyed the confidence of the Reich President.

The talks concluded with a serious exhortation by the Reich President to Hitler to conduct NSDAP opposition, which he had announced, in a chivalrous manner and to remain conscious of his responsibility to the Vaterland and to the German Volk.

In the morning, prior to the Reich President's reception, a conference had taken place between the Reich Chancellor and Herr Hitler. In the course of this

talk, the Reich Chancellor had offered to propose Herr Hitler as Vice Chancellor in the present Government and furthermore to entrust important political and departmental ministries to several other figures in the National Socialist Movement, thereby granting this movement influence²⁰⁷ on the leadership of the state proportionate to its size.

The Press Office of the NSDAP Reich leadership published the following statement:

On Saturday the Führer was asked to attend discussions with Reich Chancellor von Papen and, subsequent thereto, with Reich President von Hindenburg. In reply to the question proposed to him as to whether he and the Party were willing to join von Papen's Government, the Führer declared: We are determined and resolved to assume the entire responsibility for German politics in every way if the definitive leadership of the Government is entrusted to us in exchange. If this is not the case, the National Socialist Movement can assume neither a part of the power nor a part of the responsibility; in particular, it is out of the question for the Party to enter von Papen's Government. However, since Reich President von Hindenburg has refused to entrust the National Socialist Movement with the leadership of government, the negotiations were broken off without any conclusions having been reached.

The measures to be taken now in order to continue the struggle of the National Socialist Movement shall be disclosed in a meeting of the leaders to be held this week. The Führer had left Berlin by Saturday evening.

A statement will be forthcoming from the NSDAP in respect to the official communiqué on the interchange between Hitler, Hindenburg, and von Papen, which contains several not insignificant errors.

Regardless of how unfavorable the decision of August 13 appeared, it did place Hitler in a position to announce political war against von Papen's Cabinet. That same day he took respective action. The most pressing task consisted of placating and sending home the SA men—who had expected Hitler to assume power—and award them the promised "work and bread," so that the Government was not given any excuse for imposing a new ban on the SA or taking even harsher action against the Party. Thus he immediately gave Röhm the order to announce that the SA was to be given two weeks' vacation. The Chief of Staff disposed of this task in a quite ingeniously worded proclamation.²⁰⁸ In contrast to Strasser, Röhm proved his loyalty to Hitler when difficult situations arose. There are no grounds to believe that Röhm or the SA had planned a coup in summer or fall of 1932 without Hitler's consent. The Stennes Crisis²⁰⁹ of 1931 was over, and Hitler had the SA completely under control.

The NSDAP's statement in response to the Government's official communiqué on Hitler's meeting with Hindenburg on August 13 was

published in the form of an interview which Hitler granted to a “representative” of the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*²¹⁰ on August 16. The interview read as follows:

Question: is it true that, after the talk with Reich Chancellor von Papen, you did not wish to see Reich President von Hindenburg? Why did you then allow yourself to be moved to comply with Hindenburg’s request for a visit after all?

Answer: As long as the present Reich Government has not resigned, the Reich Chancellor bears the responsibility for politics. This also applies in the event that a reorganization of the Cabinet is planned and the head of the Government is the one who is endeavoring to bring about that reorganization. Only at that point when the Government resigns does the responsibility fall upon the Reich President to then—if the Constitution is at all valid—institute the formation of a new government in accordance with it. I regard bringing in the Reich President in the course of forming a government as an instance of shifting the responsibility from the shoulders of the Reich Chancellor to the shoulders of the Reich President.

Incidentally, I did not travel to Berlin of my own accord. I was summoned. The Reich Government suggested to me that a new government be formed which as Führer of the National Socialist Movement I was forced to reject in the form proposed. I stated the requirements under which the National Socialist Party would be prepared to join the government. I was informed by the Reich Chancellor personally that these conditions had been rejected by the Reich President from the start. Thus I had even less reason to pay this visit, for I had not in any way attempted to force myself upon the gentlemen in Berlin.

Thus I stated that, in my view, the responsibility for the failure to reorganize the government was naturally to be borne by Reich Chancellor von Papen; that therefore it was out of the question for me to visit Hindenburg; and that I would only be willing to pay a visit to the Reich President if he had not yet made a final decision but rather desired to become acquainted for the time being with the various positions. However, as it was to become evident, this was not the case. The decision of the Reich President had already been made.

The fact that I nonetheless went to see the Reich President was due only to a message relayed by telephone to Minister Frick from the State Secretary of the Reich Chancellery, once more to the effect that the Reich President had not yet made such a decision. In reality, fifteen minutes earlier the Reich Chancellery had confirmed to the press the actuality of the decision of the Reich President, which had already been made, noting at the same time that my visit was to be accorded merely formal significance and could no longer have any affect.

The Reich President himself then also declared that his decision had already become final!

Question: Is it true that you abstained from presenting your position to Hindenburg?

Answer: It is correct that I abstained from presenting my position to Hindenburg, for the curious method I just described which was used to persuade me to visit Reich President von Hindenburg, coupled with the fact of

the Reich President's final verdict, gave me no cause to make repeated use of the arguments I had already expounded to the responsible political leader.

Question: Herr Hitler, your Party scored a sensational victory in the Reichstag election. Never before has a party of comparable size existed in Germany. In every other country it would be a matter of course that the leader of the largest party be assigned the task of forming a new government. Why, in your opinion, doesn't Herr von Papen take the logical steps?

Answer: Certainly, in Germany it used to be normal that the leader of the largest party was given the task of forming a cabinet. More recently, though, statesmanlike capabilities appear to be determined no longer by the largeness but rather by the smallness of the parties. Since we National Socialists have become a large force, any politician who wants to become a master among these masters must either have ruined a party or, what is even more effective, no longer have any party at all behind him. Politics is thus no longer the art of the possible, but has become the art of the impossible. Incidentally, the Movement does not owe its present size to the patronizing support of traditionladen figures in our political life who are dying off. Therefore it will not draw its strength in future from these sources either.

Question: Herr Hitler, how do you think von Papen's Government will be capable of working if it can no longer count on the patient and passive behavior of the strongest party in Germany?

Answer: My dear Sir, you will have to address that question to Herr von Papen. For my part, I know in which way I and my Movement will continue fighting.

Question: In your opinion, what consequences will it have for developments in Germany if von Papen's Government does in fact continue to hold the reigns for some time?

Answer: I approached von Papen's Government, the members of which I had, for the most part, never met, as I have approached and will approach every government calling itself a national government. I will support or tolerate it at least as long as I can perceive in its governmental practice a strengthening of the national front and a weakening of the Marxist front. As soon as measures taken by the Government cause the national side to falter and the international side to be stimulated, I will reject it, regardless of which men are involved. Basically, it is my conviction that every government which does not have a solid *weltanschaulich* footing in a fundamental movement of its Volk must and will fail.

The governmental practice of the current Reich Government will, in my view, lead to chaos.

Question: Is it correct, Herr Hitler, that you have announced that the NSDAP will conduct the most rigorous opposition to von Papen's Government?

Answer: The National Socialist Movement is going into opposition against the current Reich Government. Just how rigorous this opposition is, will be determined by the size of the damages which would be incurred in the absence

of an opposition. In this connection, the elections of July 31 have already clearly shown the direction in which von Papen's Government with the men presently in office will and must lead. Even a dictatorship is only conceivable when it represents the will of the Volk or has every prospect of being acknowledged in the near or foreseeable future as representing the will of the Volk. But I know of not a single dictatorship in world history which has succeeded in completely transforming itself into a new and recognized type of state which has not evolved out of a *Volksbewegung*.

Question: Don't you think that it would be better for the NSDAP to have one bird in the hand rather than two in the bush?

Answer: *Nein*. I will never give away a birthright for a song. In matters of principle, I would rather take on any fight and any persecution than ever be untrue to myself or the Movement. I believe that, in this degenerated and unprincipled age, it is important to show people that a movement is pursuing the goal it has set unerringly and unalterably, without consideration to momentary advantages or disadvantages to its leading figures. One cannot require heroism from a nation when its political leaders are ready to make any, even the cheapest compromise. This is tantamount to cultivating, from the top downwards, that spirit of lack of dignity in a Volk which then, even in the last fateful questions, regards an act of submission as being a "bearable" compromise.

Question: How did the leaders accompanying you in Berlin react to your decision?

Answer: My leaders would never have understood me had I acted any differently. Even if I make a hundred mistakes in practical matters, they would forgive me more easily for that than were I only once to deny the honor of the Movement or the principles of our struggle. Today more than ever before, they are behind me as a single man.

Question: Herr Hitler, how do you think your decision will be taken by the members of the NSDAP?

Answer: The members of the Party and my followers have heard from my own mouth a hundred times that I will never make compromises which are unbearable for the Movement. They know that I am willing at all times, if necessary, to give my life for the Movement. They know that hundreds of thousands of our comrades are doing the same thing and that thousands are making serious sacrifices. All that would be pointless if now suddenly the Movement could be lent out for a program other than its own. You ask what the party comrades and followers think? When I left Berlin that night, a large crowd of people surrounded my car and called out to me. I only remember two of the sentences, which I wish our banners would bear for all time: "Don't give in!" and "Stand firm!"

Question: How many acts of terrorism are being committed against your party comrades? According to my information, at the beginning of the year alone they numbered thousands. What does the Movement contemplate doing in order to protect its adherents from the daily acts of terrorism against the National Socialists still taking place under von Papen's Government?

Answer: The acts of terrorism practiced by the Marxist parties against our Movement now number tens of thousands. The number of dead is more than 300;²¹¹ the number of injured last year was more than 6,000, but in the seven and a half months of this year, this figure has already exceeded 8,200.

Countless comrades have been crippled and will remain so for the rest of their lives. In the past, our governments and the press—if I leave out very few papers, of which yours is one—have never taken any interest in these matters. At the most, if a National Socialist defended himself in order to save his life, he was made out to be the aggressor in the end and even sentenced on top of it. In this regard, I am not counting the terrible acts of persecution against the Party by the police which have, in a single city—namely Dortmund—finally been punished in court and thus been acknowledged as having taken place. On the day of the election, without warning, one of these red murderers slashed the throat of one of our comrades with a razor in broad daylight in Königsberg, for no reason at all. The poor man died a wretched death. The press, which normally makes a fuss about every single villain, took hardly any notice. Though, mind you, the bourgeois newspapers and the governments instantly came awake when calls for revenge came from the cup now filled to overflowing with indignation and wrath! Now that the party comrades who are in permanent danger of being killed have finally begun to retaliate, the value of human life has suddenly been discovered, but they do not now join forces against the red plague of murderers, no: they join forces against the “general political acts of terror.”

You ask what we contemplate doing to stop this?

There is such a thing as a right of self-defense, and we will not be talked into giving it up for long by the stupid clichés of “law and order.” This pitiful bourgeois prattle will not bring my dead comrade back to life, will not make a cripple healthy again, will not do any good to the injured. The National Socialist Movement has fought legally to the utmost, but unless this butchering soon comes to an end, I will be forced to decree a right of self-defense to the party comrades which will then—let there be no doubt—instantly do away with these red Cheka methods.

I may add that, at times like these throughout history, police regulations have always failed. No further proof is necessary to show that the situation in Germany today is no different.

Question: What do you view as the next steps for your Party?

Answer: The Party is fighting for power. Its steps are determined by the fighting methods of our opponents,

Question: Your Movement is not seriously regarded anywhere as reactionary or unsocial. How can it be that, despite this, the parties which are most rigorous in attacking von Papen's Government as the “Cabinet of Barons” for being reactionary and unsocial, today welcome the fact that this government is not being replaced by a National Socialist Government, i.e. by men who come from all classes of the Volk?

Answer: Oh, you are quite mistaken! Certain right-wing circles call us Bolsheviks, and the Bolsheviks in turn claim that we are reactionaries, barons,

big-business capitalists, slaves of industry, and God knows what else. The fact that the enemies of the German Volk both at home and abroad are happy that no reorganization will take place in the Government is a great honor for the Party. The fact that they sigh in relief that I have not become Chancellor is a great honor for me. The Marxist enemies of Germany at home know, after having betrayed the German Volk for years, that the National Socialist Movement will in fact honestly look after the German working man. The bourgeois reactionaries know that we will replace their policy of weakness with a policy of national strength. Both suspect that the age of class and rank conflict is coming to an end and that the unity of the German Volk will once more be restored to it on the platform of National Socialist thought.

Hitler repeated these arguments once more in an interview with a representative of the American news agency Associated Press²¹² and, asked whether one might indeed witness a march on Berlin à la Mussolini, he replied:

Why should I march on Berlin? I'm already there! The question is not who will march on Berlin, but rather who will march out of Berlin. The SA will not take part in an illegal march.

Hitler also expounded his position at a convention of party leaders in Munich (Reichsadler Hotel) on August 15²¹³ and met with no contradiction. He had declared an open war against von Papen's Cabinet. Now all he needed was an opportunity to effectively demonstrate this to his followers and the entire Volk. This arose on August 22, when a special court in Beuthen set up by von Papen's Government passed a death sentence on five National Socialists who had beaten a Polish Communist from Potempa to death.

With the Reich President's decree of August 9,²¹⁴ von Papen had introduced capital punishment for politically motivated manslaughter. Special courts were instituted to pass judgment in such cases, and fate would have it that National Socialists were the first to be tried by such a court. The motives behind the killing of the Communist Pietrzuch, who was regarded as a Polish insurgent,²¹⁵ were by no means clear, and it has not been established that they were even political. But who cared about the life of a Polish insurgent? Von Papen at any rate could count on the entire Right to react to this type of justice with righteous indignation, particularly since the defendants could not have been aware of the capital punishment decree at the time of the crime. Hitler, however, chose to address the following telegram to his condemned comrades:²¹⁶

My dear comrades! In view of this outrageous *Bluturtd* (unjust death sentence), I feel bound to you in unreserved loyalty. From this moment onward,

your freedom is a question of our honor. It is our duty to fight a government under which this is possible!

Adolf Hitler

He also issued the following appeal:²¹⁷

National Socialists! Germans!

In November 1918, Marxism attacked and destroyed the old Empire in a cursed revolt, aided and abetted by the cowardice and weakness of bourgeois politicians. Ever since this atrocity, Germany's misery has been unutterable. The counterpart to the terror of the November Criminals at home was the ensuing terror of our opponents from abroad.

While the bourgeois politicians subscribed to the new system in pitiful obsequiousness, if not at least drawing back from it in cowardice, our National Socialist Movement alone has taken up the fight for our Volk's everlasting rights to live.

Ever since, we have been pursued by the hatred of those very parties which, in the name of Marxism, have from the beginning always used violence and terror as standard weapons in class conflict. Their pre-war slogan, "*Und willst du nicht Genosse sein, so schlag ich dir den Schädel ein*"²¹⁸ has been upheld since the revolution with appalling frankness as a natural right and even recognized by bourgeois bureaucrat-governments. The fact that we National Socialists were not willing to surrender our constitutional rights of freedom of speech and freedom to demonstrate was interpreted as a "provocation of the proletariat" and thus as justification for our persecution.

For fourteen years the public authorities of this system have, more often than not in a scandalously one-sided fashion, rebuked not the oppressors, but rather forbidden the oppressed, time and time again. Uncounted are the sacrifices which young Germany, possessing no other representation but the National Socialist Movement, has been forced to make for its ideals.

More than 300 massacred—one could literally say, butchered—party comrades number among our dead martyrs. Tens of thousands and even more tens of thousands have been injured, and some will be crippled for the rest of their lives. The bourgeois constitutional state and the yellow bourgeois press barely took any notice. Only when the cup began to run over and the terror of the red bands of organized murderers and criminals became unbearable did von Papen's "National Government" rouse itself to take instant action. We have now become acquainted with the first evidence of their national will. On nearly the same day on which the murderers and tormentors of our party comrades in Ohlau escaped with mild sentences, although we suffered two dead and 27 seriously injured, the courts of Herr von Papen's Government sentenced five National Socialists to death. German Volksgenossen! Whoever of you harbors sentiments for the fight for the honor and freedom of the nation will understand why I refused to join this bourgeois Government. The courts of Herr von Papen will ultimately sentence many thousands of National Socialists to death. Did they really believe that they would be able to cover up this action, an action which is struck with blindness and challenges the entire Volk, with my name

as well? The gentlemen are mistaken! Herr von Papen, I will have nothing to do with your bloody objectivity, I wish for victory for national Germany and annihilation for its Marxist destroyers and corrupters. But I am not suited to be the hangman of the national freedom fighters of the German Volk.

With this deed, our standpoint in respect to this national Cabinet has been mapped out once and for all. Whatever agony upon agony the Heavens above us may send, our Movement will still come to terms with this Government which executes our fellow fighters. Herr von Papen can feel free to set up such blood tribunals to pass judgment on our Movement. The power of the national uprising will come to terms with this system as surely as it will eliminate Marxism in spite of these attempts to save it. In view of this most atrocious of unjust death sentences, there is all the more reason for us to have only one single mission in life: to fight, and fight once again!

We shall liberate the word "national" from the grip of an objectivity whose real innermost essence is inflamed by the judgment passed in Beuthen against national Germany. Herr von Papen has thus engraved his name in German history with the blood of national fighters. The seed which will nevertheless bear fruit from this will be one which can no longer be appeased by punishment. The fight for the lives of our five comrades begins now.

Adolf Hitler

This was the tone Hitler most enjoyed using when dealing with his opponents. The consideration he had shown to von Papen and Schleicher in the preceding three months was no longer necessary. Indeed, he was now free to brand the present rulers—as he had the "system" governments before them—as sounding the nation's death knell. They would be wise to refrain from carrying out the judgment of Beuthen.

Silesian SA leader Edmund Heines,²¹⁹ who had been present when the judgment was pronounced, had called out in a loud voice from among the spectators attending the trial: "The German Volk will pronounce other judgments. The judgment of Beuthen will become the starting signal for the German awakening!" Hitler dispatched Chief of Staff Röhm to visit the convicted men in prison in Beuthen. Thousands of National Socialists demonstrated for days on the streets of Beuthen and Breslau, shouting: "Down with Papen's Government."

The Reich Government had no desire to risk a civil war for the sake of a Polish insurgent, and thus commuted the death sentences to life imprisonment.²²⁰ It had underestimated Hitler and was noticeably shaken by the ferocity of his threats.

It suddenly became evident that, having broken with Hitler, the Cabinet enjoyed little popular support, particularly in view of Papen's emergency decree of June 14 which had drastically reduced social benefits. In the new Reichstag, the Government would be faced with

opposition across the board, from Left to Right, from the Communists, the SPD, and the Center, to the National Socialists. Its only certain support would come from the scattering of German Nationalists' and the German People's Party.

On August 29, von Papen and Schleicher attempted to reach a compromise in talks with Hitler in Berlin, but to no avail. Brüning also met with him there the same day.²²¹ Now that Brüning had fallen, the Center was no longer averse to a coalition with the National Socialists. At a gathering of 230 NSDAP Reichstag deputies who, on August 29, had congregated in Berlin in order to swear the oath of allegiance to their Führer,²²² Hitler once again broached the subject of the judgment of Beuthen, stating:

I refuse to comprehend how five National Socialists can be sent to the guillotine for the sake of a Polish insurgent who once fought against our German brothers in Silesia. Here I am not being objective, but subjective. Whoever struggles and lives, fights and, if it has to be, dies for Germany has every right; and whoever turns against Germany has no rights at all.

Alluding to rumors that the Reich Government planned to dissolve the Reichstag even before any voting took place, he continued:

Our position differs from that of our opponents in that we say: it is perhaps possible to govern without a Reichstag, but one cannot govern without the Volk. The only person capable of governing is that person who grows forth out of the Volk and knows this Volk. The system governing today must fail due to the total absence of any living bond with the Volk.

On August 30, the newly-elected Reichstag assembled and began its work by receiving a statement submitted by the Communist Chairwoman by Seniority, Clara Zetkin. The German Nationalists were not in attendance. The 230 National Socialists in uniform, who had formerly made it a custom of heckling Marxist speakers, maintained silence. They were determined to demonstrate that this Reichstag functioned well, and they did not wish to give rise to any excuses for its dissolution. Subsequently, Hitler's candidate, former Captain Hermann Göring,²²³ was elected Reichstag President with the votes of the NSDAP, the Center, the German Nationalists, and the DVP. Thus, the National Socialists now presided over one of the important offices in the Reich, for the head of parliament was empowered to intervene on various occasions, to approach the Reich President directly, etc. The palace of the Reichstag President now became an important base in Hitler's continuing struggle for power.

5

On September 1, Hitler spoke in public for the first time following a one-month pause,²²⁴ addressing a gathering of 20,000 in the Berlin Sportpalast. After sharply attacking von Papen's government and the Herrenklub, he once more condemned the judgment of Beuthen.

In view of the latent tension and the possibility of a violent confrontation, he found it expedient to utter a statement of sympathy on behalf of the Reichswehr and to describe the use of armed forces in domestic conflicts as detestable.²²⁵

The Government declares that it is the one holding power; thus we confess: for us, the Army of the Reich does not exist for the protection of the government, but for the protection of the Volk. We would take care of this Army as never before, not only in a material, but also in a spiritual sense; we would place it upon a platform which every German could look up to without worry. And when the regiments march by, every German would say, full of pride: those are our soldiers, the German Volk's regiments. If a political regiment relies solely on the bayonet, it abuses the most valuable possession we have in Germany.

In respect to the Government's threat to repeatedly dissolve the Reichstag, Hitler stated:

As far as we are concerned, a hundred times! We shall nevertheless be the victors. I will not lose control. My will is unshakable, and I can hold out longer than my opponents.

Hitler passed the time until the next session of the Reichstag on September 12 with a series of speeches and rallies.

On September 2, he held a meeting with the Party's leaders in Berlin.²²⁶

On September 3, he delivered an address in Berlin at the funeral of SA member Gatschke, where he stated:

Our dead will not have died in vain.²²⁷

An address to party leaders from the Gau Mittelfranken in Nuremberg followed on September 4.²²⁸ Hitler's fears of a coup were not unfounded. The German Nationalists openly discussed the possibility of dissolving the Reichstag without scheduling a new election. Hindenburg, however, was averse to such experiments, wishing to uphold the Constitution. Only in an extreme emergency would he consent to dissolve the Reichstag. Hence, von Papen had no choice but to make do without a dissolution, and he was sufficiently optimistic to believe that his economic program, which contained a number of National Socialist ideas, would win the votes not only of the German Nationalists and the DVP, but those of the Center and even the National Socialists as well. But his hopes were crushed by Hitler's violent rejection in a public address in Munich (Zirkus Krone) on September 7:²²⁹

The hour is only ostensibly favorably disposed towards those in power today. The gentlemen in office believe that the German Volk is enduring for their sake alone and has only one fervent desire: "Dear God, please do send us the old Excellencies of 1914 again!" They really believe that this German Volk and in particular that part which we have organized and snatched from despair has no other hope than to finally fall under the leadership of the Herrenklub. They are mistaken! In the meantime we have worked for thirteen years, and by no means do we owe our successes to chance.

We have adhered strictly to legality and have gradually become the determining factor in Germany. And now that it is no longer possible to govern constitutionally without us, suddenly these same gentlemen are stating that the Constitution and parliamentarianism have become obsolete; that the party system must be done away with. A new age has dawned, they say, in which these outmoded phenomena must be swept away.

Well, if a new age is really coming, then we want new heads, too; then you can get out! In this case as well, one cannot fill old bottles with new wine.

The new age has already come, and we welcome its arrival: the new age is the new German Volk which we have created!

No, I am only holding to the pledge I was forced to make. We want to rule strictly in compliance with the Constitution. Mind you, we will amend the Constitution some day, too, but we will amend it in a strictly constitutional manner! One has only to look at the Government's new economic program. It will serve to rescue not the German Volk, but at most a few banks!

But strangely enough, these gentlemen seem not to view the product of our work as so vulgar that it is not worth plundering piece by piece. Piece by piece our work is being exploited now ... letter by letter, word for word, but not the contents! Today these gentlemen boldly declare: "Who do the National Socialists think they are, presuming to take on this position?" Oh yes, in 1919 and 1920, then it was possible to "presume to take on a position"! Then one had only to begin with nothing, to work hard and slave away. Today we say: there are two types of nobility: one you are born with, and the other you achieve!

To thunderous applause, Hitler pointed down to the arena, where SA and SS columns stood in close ranks.

There stands the nation's new nobility! These are the men who fought and struggled for thirteen years for the freedom of their Volk!

If Herr von Papen believes today that half of the National Socialist Party no longer stands behind Hitler, but rather behind him, the only thing I can say is: dear Herr von Papen, please call a halt! You are not even capable of speaking well enough to persuade the Party to come to you; you would have had to practice for at least thirteen years! Now, I know for certain that you, Herr von Papen, made an appearance in our party office in Berlin only three months before you took office and asked: what ideas and plans does the National Socialist Party have? But you cannot learn that in three months, you know, especially if you only ask once! When people try to accuse me of identifying myself with murderers, I say: no, but I identify myself with my comrades! The men convicted in Beuthen are my comrades, because they fought with us for Germany. And for me, comradeship does not end if someone takes a false step!

The five convicted men have now been granted a "reprieve"—their sentences have been commuted to life imprisonment. Do they really believe that it will take that long until we rise to power in Germany? [—] And I can assure these gentlemen now: we will rise to power!

My picture is hanging in the cells of each of the convicted men. And I should be the one to betray them? [—] Whatever they have done wrong is something we will one day clarify; we will be fair judges, and they will submit to our judgment. But we will then also make certain that these things cannot happen again—not by inventing draconian punishments, but in that we remove elements such as the Polish insurgent Pietrzuch!

Poland has expelled more than 900,000 Germans.²³⁰ How many Poles has Germany ever expelled?

Do you think that I would sell the Movement for a few ministerial posts? Do you think that I am wooing for a title? One day it will stand in my will that nothing but "Adolf Hitler"²³¹ shall be inscribed on my tombstone. I am making my own name the title I bear. Even Herr von Hindenburg cannot bestow a title upon me. I am not wooing for any title, I am only striving for leadership!

And if people say today: you are not entitled to leadership! Fine, I will take up the gauntlet, you highborn *Herrschaften*!

I have never waited for others to begin the offensive; I myself initiate the attack. If the others say that the Constitution has become outmoded, we say: the Constitution has only now begun to have a purpose! By virtue of it, the German Volk is getting a chance to speak for the first time in fourteen years. We want to take up the fight and want to see whom the Volk heeds: the order of Herr von Papen, "Everyone, about face!" or our command, "Young Germany, forward march!"

In this Munich speech, Hitler also made a point of the difference in age between himself and Hindenburg, doing so in a manner which evoked little public approval. He declared:²³²

There is one advantage I have over my most illustrious opponent: the Reich President is 85 years old, and I am 43 and feel fit as a fiddle.

I also have the conviction and the certain feeling that nothing can happen to me, for I know that Providence has chosen me to fulfill my task. My will is tough, unrestrained, and unshakable. And by the time I am 85 years old, Herr von Hindenburg will be long gone. Our turn will come.

Whatever the Government chooses to do, whether it dissolves the Reichstag or not, is of no concern to us National Socialists. In the long run it will not work to govern with bayonets and the Reichswehr.

In a subsequent interview with the Paris newspaper *Oeuvre*²³³ he stated:

I should negotiate with von Papen? Never, as long as I am alive. I was the one who helped von Papen up out of the dark, where he should have stayed! What value do I place on a title? I am constantly in danger of falling victim to an assassination. And you think I should place any value on getting hold of a ridiculous vice chancellor portfolio?

I am independent in every way. I do not need money. I earn enough with my books, at least more than I can spend. I have not changed my views. I want all or nothing, and if the Reich President decides to have me summoned once again, I will use exactly the same language to him.

On September 10, Hitler spoke for the first time to representatives of the Center who had congregated in the palace of the Reichstag President, the residence of Hermann Göring. Although no specific arrangements were made regarding a possible coalition, Hitler's eloquence and appearance visibly impressed his listeners.²³⁴

Von Papen planned to present his government program at the Reichstag session scheduled for 3:00 p.m. on September 12. However, he was prevented from doing so, for the Communist deputies believed that von Papen already had the dissolution order in his pocket and would read it at the close of his speech. Deputy Torgler²³⁵ thus moved that immediate votes take place on the repeal of von Papen's emergency decree of September 4, which allowed, among other things, salary cuts up to 20 percent, and on the KPD's motion of no confidence.

Had the voting taken place immediately, von Papen would have been placed in a difficult position, for he had not yet procured the dissolution order from the Reich President. However, Frick moved for a thirty-minute recess in order to discuss the changed circumstances with Hitler, who was across the street in the palace of the Reichstag President. Von Papen as well needed these thirty minutes in order to obtain the dissolution decree. There was barely enough time to secure Hindenburg's signature under the text, which was written by hand on normal paper.

When the session resumed, Göring—acting on Hitler's instructions²³⁶—immediately initiated the voting, ignoring von Papen's request to take the floor. Von Papen had the red folder containing the dissolution order in his hand and finally laid it on the table in front of Göring. The outcome of the vote showed 512 ballots (NSDAP, Social Democrats, Communists, and the Center) against von Papen, 42 (DNVP, DVP) in his favor, and five abstentions.

Göring then declared that the dissolution order, which he had read in the interim, was invalid because it had been counter-signed by a government which had been brought down. This, however, was an error, for even if the vote had taken place in the absence of the dissolution order, the Reich President was nonetheless in a position to issue the order and have it counter-signed by the caretaking government still in office. However, there is doubt as to the constitutionality of the reasons cited for the dissolution, i.e. the danger that the Reichstag might repeal the emergency decree of September 4, 1932. It was the constitutional right of the Reichstag to decide on such matters, and it was to suffer no interference.

The Reichstag accepted the decree of dissolution, and Hitler held a meeting with the Party's leaders in Berlin on September 13, attended not only by the former NSDAP Reichstag deputies, but also by the National Socialist Ministers in the Länder Governments. He introduced a new slogan for the approaching election campaign, "the social freedom fight, which is inseparable from the freedom of the nation."²³⁷ A similar speech was held before the SA and SS roll call in Munich (Zirkus Krone) on September 15.²³⁸

In an interview granted to the London *Daily Mail*,²³⁹ Hitler also upbraided von Papen for his government's economic program: it could succeed only in subjecting the Volk to even more hardship.

I can assure you that those in power, should they attempt to treat the Volk the way it was treated prior to the French Revolution, can be certain of one thing: namely that they will provoke a revolution which will be perhaps even more violent than the French Revolution was.

It was not yet clear whether an election to the Reichstag would in fact take place. According to the Constitution, it would have to be scheduled for no later than the sixtieth day following the dissolution.

In these tense days in September, it was thoroughly conceivable that the Government might commit a flagrant breach of the Constitution. For this eventuality, Hitler had threatened resistance, i.e. an open rebellion. A map of Germany at the time shows how the Länder governed by the

National Socialists (Mecklenburg, Brunswick, Anhalt, Thuringia, and Oldenburg, with the exclaves in the Hunsrück mountains and near Lübeck) constituted isolated areas within a territory otherwise dominated by von Papen.

Undoubtedly, these parts of the country could easily emerge as centers of the rebellion, particularly considering that the local police would not only tolerate armed marches of the SA and SS but would also actively participate in an uprising. As early as September 20,²⁴⁰ the *Völkischer Beobachter* published photographs of joint war-like maneuvers of the National Socialist police force and the SA and SS formations in Mecklenburg. On the other hand, it was questionable whether these civil-war troops were capable of conducting successful operations against the forces of the Reichswehr and the Prussian police. Since the experiences of 1923, Hitler had cautiously avoided actually resorting to such conclusive measures; instead, he preferred using them as a means of pressure, just as he later directed that ineffectual preparations for an invasion of the Channel coast be made in 1940 for the sole purpose of exerting pressure on the British Government. In 1932, this type of tactic was effective. The Government recoiled in the face of a possible coup and ordered a new Reichstag election on September 20.²⁴¹ Once again, as in the July elections, the last possible date had been scheduled—Sunday, November 6—in order to curb Hitler's propaganda potential by a long election campaign and, if possible, use the time allotted to increase popular support for von Papen's Government.

Hitler was not so easily discouraged. At 7:00 a.m. on October 2 he addressed the Hitler Youth in Potsdam at a *Reichsjugendtag* (Reich Youth Convention);²⁴² on October 3, he spoke at a convention of the NS *Frauenschaft* in Munich²⁴³ and on October 6 at a Reich propaganda convention of the NSDAP in Munich,²⁴⁴ where he announced his final instructions for the election campaign and stated:

We will fight for November 6 as though it were a matter of life and death. I am looking forward to the fight with absolute confidence. The battle may begin. In four weeks we shall come out of it as winners. In the Reichspräsidentenpalais, the unanimous realization will be made that the National Socialist Movement has arrived, it is here and will never disappear.

There are only two possibilities: either it will be given power or denied power, and in the latter case those now in power will be overcome by the force of this Movement.

On October 11, Hitler launched a new tremendous speechmaking campaign comparable in magnitude to his "Flights over Germany" in

April and June. He opened this campaign with a speech in Günzburg, where he declared:²⁴⁵

Herr von Papen was of the conviction that his emergency decree for the stimulation of the economy would bring brilliant results by November 6, and thus he scheduled the date for the Reichstag election sixty days after its dissolution. And I was of the conviction that the nation would see in these sixty days that this effort at “stimulating the economy” was the greatest feat of bungling and patchwork one can imagine. I was of the conviction that one question would be answered before even four weeks had passed, namely the question why I refused to enter this Cabinet on August 13. This will be decided on November 6.

It was not, however, the opponents in question who reproached me for refusing to join the Cabinet; it was the so-called “friends” in the bourgeois camp. At this point, I might ask with the same justification: how was it that you dared to invite me to join this Government?

Did you really believe that I worked for thirteen years to deliver the result of this work to the mercy of political lunacy? And it would have been lunacy had I staked everything on one horse, long aware that it was unfit for the race. Influence was one thing I would not have had in the Cabinet, but the responsibility was something they would have graciously surrendered.

I have no qualms about assuming the responsibility, and I mean the entire responsibility, but I do have qualms about assuming it in areas where I have no influence. If Fate had chosen those forces which today thirst for power to be Germany’s leadership, it would be a crime to resist. However, I do not believe that Fate could have chosen these men, because otherwise they would have made an appearance earlier. It is not possible for someone who was a silent member of the Center Party until five months ago²⁴⁶ to then one day suddenly become the “brightly enlightened leader” to the Third Reich. I did not fight Marxism in order to erect a different class regime in its place. I have stood before millions of German workers in these thirteen years and have struggled for their support. But I did not fight to betray them now in the end.

Above all, my opponents are mistaken about my tremendous resolve. I have chosen my path, and I will adhere to it until the end. Whether or not I gain power is not as important as the fact that I carry out what I have promised. Similarly, the Party is not for sale and cannot be bought from me. Do not make the mistake of believing that I would lend out this Movement even for a second or allow others to use it for their work.

By November 5, Hitler had repeated this speech with constantly new variations no less than 45 times on his tour of Germany.

He spoke in Nördlingen on October 11²⁴⁷ and delivered a speech in Pocking (lower Inn valley) on October 12, attacking von Papen’s Government with the following words:²⁴⁸

Either they govern as we wish—then we will bear the responsibility—or they do not govern as we wish—then the others bear the responsibility. I do not

believe in any regime which is not anchored in the Volk itself. I do not believe in an economic regime. One cannot build a house from the top, one must begin at the bottom. The foundations of the State are not the Government, but rather the Volk. And my answer to the bourgeois parties and politicians who have been sleeping since November 1918 while National Socialism has been working is this: now your time is up, now it's our turn.

When Herr von Papen says: "Herr Hitler, you are only here because there is a crisis," my answer is, "Yes, and if good fortune were here, I would not be needed, and I would not be here, either!"

On October 13, Hitler spoke in Gunzenhausen, Nuremberg (Luitpoldhain), and Weiden.²⁴⁹ On October 14, he delivered campaign speeches in Hof and Selb.²⁵⁰ In Hof he declared:

I hold the Reich Chancellor [von Papen] to be neither competent nor capable, nor chosen to help the German Volk.

In the other case [Hindenburg], it should not be said that I am mocking old age. However, that is the way it is: just as every old peasant must one day pass down his farm, so must every old statesman pass down his Reich.

On October 15, Hitler spoke in Coburg on the occasion of the ten year anniversary of the SA's march on Coburg and was given the freedom of the city.²⁵¹

On October 16, while still in Coburg, Hitler composed a lengthy open letter to Papen which took up nearly four of the oversized newspaper pages in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.²⁵² This epistle was a retort to a speech von Papen had delivered to the League of Bavarian Industrialists (Bayrischer Industriellenverband) which had apparently irritated Hitler. He accused the Chancellor of misguided economic policy which was fostering a new breed of class hatred. The slated constitutional reform was, Hitler railed, tantamount to creating a new doctrine of divine right. Furthermore, the Government was guilty of practicing outmoded naval policy and, he went on to say, the German-French military alliance von Papen was allegedly striving for was unwise in respect to England. Hitler closed with the words:

And another thing, Herr von Papen, you are perfectly free to live in your world. I am fighting in mine! It is a blessing to know that my world is the world of a community of millions of German mental and manual workers and German peasants who, although most of them come from humble origins and a many times more humble poverty, wish to be the most faithful sons of our Volk, for they fight not only by lip service, but with thousandfold suffering and countless sacrifices for a new and better German Reich.

Adolf Hitler

On October 16, Hitler campaigned in Schweinfurt (tent on the Schützenplatz) and in Würzburg (Ludwigshalle).²⁵³ In the capital of Lower Franconia, he stated:

I do not believe that the struggle will ever really come to an end. Just as the peasant must till his field year after year, so must a statesman till his Volk over and over again. I see nothing burdensome, nothing forced in this struggle, but something very natural and necessary, and I am looking forward to duelling with these gentlemen.

On October 17, Hitler spoke in Königsberg (Haus der Technik) and stated:²⁵⁴

What I am striving for is power, not some title. I do not need remuneration from the State. From the start and for all time, I relinquish any claim to salary from the State. I want only the power.

If we do one day achieve power, we will hold onto it, so help us God. We will not allow them to take it away from us again.

On the same day Hitler delivered further speeches in Tilsit and Insterburg,²⁵⁵ and on October 18 in Elbing (Maschinenhalle).²⁵⁶

Silesia was scheduled for October 19. Hitler first spoke in Oppeln and then in Breslau's Jahrhunderthalle,²⁵⁷ where he declared:

If people ask me today. "Well, Herr Hitler, why didn't you board the train [to join the Government]?" I reply: I did not board the train because I did not intend to get off again afterwards. I did not take a seat in a train which will certainly jump the rails. And if people talk about the determining influence I was allegedly to be given, the question is, why was I not allowed to board the locomotive? When I once enter the Government, I do not intend to leave it.

On October 20, Hitler proclaimed at a campaign rally in Sonnenfeld:²⁵⁸

I cannot be offered any title in this Republic which would be better than my name. I am and will always remain a child of the Volk. It is for this Volk I have fought throughout all these long years, and I will continue fighting for it. And it is for this Volk I would let myself be beaten to pieces if necessary.

Campaign speeches in Halle (tent), Magdeburg (Stadthalle), and Stendal (Seehalle) followed on October 22.²⁵⁹

On October 23, Hitler delivered speeches in Zwickau (tent), Eisenach (Fürstenhofsaal), and Weimar (Weimarahalle);²⁶⁰ on October 24, he spoke in Köslin and Stettin (Messehalle).²⁶¹

The following day he visited Pasewalk, where he had been stationed in the reserves' sick bay in 1918. It was here that he had resolved "to become a politician," and he stated in his speech there on October 25:²⁶²

I might have perished like millions of my comrades. I took my life back from Providence as a gift and swore to myself to dedicate this life to the Volk. And I will adhere to this until my dying breath.

Further speeches on October 25 were delivered in Anklam and Rostock.²⁶³

This same day, von Papen suffered a critical defeat before the Constitutional Court. The President of the Reichsgericht, Dr. Bumke,²⁶⁴ pronounced that the measures taken on July 20 in Prussia could only be regarded as temporary and were to be restricted mainly to matters of police authority. A number of rights were restored to Braun's Government (representation in the Reichsrat, etc.).

On October 26, Hitler spoke in Schwerin and Bad Schwartau (this latter rally was held in place of one scheduled for Lübeck which had been prohibited by the Senate of the city).²⁶⁵

On October 28, further speeches followed in Bremervörde and Altona (Exhibition Hall).²⁶⁶ A rally slated for the same day in Neumünster (Schleswig-Holstein) was cancelled because the tent had collapsed.

On October 29, Hitler took the part of Prince August William of Prussia²⁶⁷ against accusations made by the Stahlhelm, issuing the following statement:²⁶⁸

The leadership of the Stahlhelm has deemed it necessary to attack and abuse our Party comrade Prince August William of Prussia for the fact that he has taken his place among the ranks in a movement of millions composed of those who have, by their efforts, created the one and only foundation for an uprising of the Volk.

This pitiful attempt has served to make the Prince, whose selfless efforts toward bringing about a German *Volkserhebung* are known to us all, particularly dear to the hearts of us German men. The future *will* provide the best reply to this piece of villainy.

On October 29, Hitler moved on to speak in Oldenburg (Ziegelhofsaal) and Aurich;²⁶⁹ on October 30, he stood before crowds in Dortmund and subsequently in Essen (Exhibition Hall),²⁷⁰ where his speech was transmitted by cable to Wesel, Kleve, Mörs, and Geldern. On the same day, he also spoke in Cologne.²⁷¹

On November 1, campaign speeches in Pirmasens (Festwiese) and Karlsruhe (tent) followed.²⁷²

November 2 found Hitler in Berlin (Sportpalast with four parallel events).²⁷³ His presence was designed to stress the alliance which the Berlin National Socialists had earlier formed with the Communists. Berlin's NSDAP endorsed a strike at the Berlin transportation company

called by the Communists, thus demonstrating to the capital of the Reich the truth of Hitler's claim, i.e. that, were he not given power, the disappointed masses would turn to Communism.

In 1939 Hitler was to employ this same tactic in respect to his alliance with the Soviet Union, evoking fear and panic in the Western Powers. On November 3, 1932, Hitler spoke at campaign rallies held in tents in Hanover and Kassel.²⁷⁴

On November 4, Hitler declared at a rally in Ulm (Markthalle):²⁷⁵

Go ahead and show the German worker for once, Herr von Papen, how he and his family are supposed to live on 70, 80, or 90 marks a month.

The Reichstag election campaign closed with speeches in Munich (Exhibition Grounds), Augsburg (Stadtgarten), and Regensburg (Sängerhalle) on November 5.²⁷⁶

At the end of this third "Flight over Germany" campaign, Hitler presented a signed portrait to the Lufthansa pilot Hans Baur with the following dedication:²⁷⁷

To the magnificent pilot of D 1720, Captain Baur, in grateful memory of the three "Flights over Germany."

With kindest regards,

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's indefatigable speechmaking bore fruits in this campaign as well.

When the ballots were counted on November 6, the National Socialists had lost slightly more than two million votes and 34 seats. However, this was not nearly the number von Papen and his supporters had expected.

In spite of the disappointment of many of his voters who had felt that the march into the Third Reich was proceeding too slowly, Hitler had held his own with 11.7 million votes (33.1 percent). With their 196 deputies in the Reichstag, the National Socialists continued to comprise the strongest party by far. The NSDAP had lost 15 seats to the German Nationalists, who had now increased their own mandates from 37 to 52, and 11 seats to the Communists, who were now represented in the Reichstag for the first time with a force of 100 deputies elected by slightly more than 17 percent of the voters. The other losses were attributable to non-voters. The SPD and the Center suffered from the decrease in voter turnout.

Parliamentary government without the NSDAP was an impossibility. Von Papen's Government still had the backing of only 10 percent of the

population. The Communists had obviously scored their gains from disappointed NSDAP voters who now hoped for a radical change through the KPD. Hitler could be satisfied: his Bolshevist nightmare was taking on more tangible outlines.

As a result, compared to his remarks on July 31, Hitler's proclamations on the outcome of this election were proud and confident.²⁷⁸

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

The most difficult fight in the history of our Party now lies behind us.

A tremendous attack against the Movement and the rights of the German Volk has been driven off!

Von Papen's Government—despite the most outrageous promises, despite the use of all conceivable means of force, despite the deployment of the greatest of all propaganda vehicles, the radio, of nearly the entire press, etc.—has suffered a crushing defeat.

The German National People's Party, which was strongly devoted to the Government's cause, totals, with its adherents, not even 10 percent of the German Volk. Ninety percent reject it!

It is clear to us what this election outcome means: continuation of the fight against this regime to its ultimate removal!

The coming weeks and months will be our best ally in this fight! They will not only increase the insight of our Volk as a result of the growing financial distress; they will also strengthen the realization that our National Socialist warning that von Papen's regime and the bourgeois parties experiencing a revitalization through this Government are driving Germany further and further toward Bolshevism is correct.

Even this election has been proof! Solely this Hugenberg-Papenish reaction is to blame for the fact that today for the first time one hundred Bolshevists are taking their places in the German Reichstag!

I hereby establish the motto for the Movement's stand just as clearly as I did after the first ballot in the presidential election. It is:

Ruthless continuation of the fight until we have prevailed over these opponents—some open, some disguised—of a true resurrection of our Volk! No compromises whatsoever and not a single thought is to be wasted on any kind of agreement with these elements!

I thus give the following orders for the continuation of this fight:

1. All organizational work on the internal building up of the Party shall be of secondary importance behind the single task of strengthening our propaganda to the utmost.

2. All party offices shall immediately institute all measures toward introducing the new propaganda campaign.

3. Before this regime and the parties covering up for it are not defeated unto destruction, there will be no negotiating!

I will issue the detailed implementation provisions for carrying out this order within the current week.

Munich, November 6, 1932

Adolf Hitler

November 6, 1932

Men of the SA and SS!

I may thank all leaders and men of the SA and SS for the tremendous efforts in this, the most difficult fight of our Movement to date. I know with how much sacrifice and grief, with how many sorrows and privations you have had to fight.

I know that you yourselves are convinced that you have made a superhuman effort. I know that many are now yearning for a rest.

I can understand that, but I cannot allow it.

We all believe that we have done our utmost. We must overcome our own inclinations and do even more. For the fight must and will be continued until our opponents are indeed destroyed in the end. Therefore I direct as follows:

In closest cooperation with the political propaganda leadership of the party, the SA and the SS shall immediately resume work and, with it, the fight.

Munich, November 6, 1932

Adolf Hitler

To the Leaders of Party Organization and Propaganda

I hereby thank the Amtswalters of the Party, the National Socialist Frauenschaft, and the Hitler Youth as well as all speakers and editors for the tremendous effort which has just been made.

The fight to prevail over our opponents will be resumed immediately. Respective instructions will be issued within the current week.

Munich, November 6, 1932

Adolf Hitler

6

At first glance, the November 6 results appeared to reflect a success for von Papen, considering the gains of the German Nationalists and the losses of the NSDAP. However, this illusion was soon to be shattered: the new Reichstag would doubtless revoke von Papen's emergency decrees, just as its predecessor had done.

Hindenburg admonished the Chancellor that things could not proceed in this fashion and that he must secure for himself parliamentary support. For better or worse, von Papen was forced to once again establish contact with the parties.

He first wrote to Hitler, although the latter's treatment of the Chancellor during the campaign had been anything but gentle. The tone of von Papen's letter of November 13 was quite polite:²⁷⁹

The Reich Chancellor
to Herr Adolf Hitler, Munich
Dear Herr Hitler,

Berlin, November 13, 1932

When the Reich President appointed me to head the government on June 1, he assigned the presidential cabinet I was to form the task of achieving as broad as possible a concentration of all national forces.

At that time, you most warmly welcomed the Reich President's decision and consented to lend your support to such a presidential cabinet. When we also commenced putting this concentration into practice within the presidential cabinet after the election of July 31, you took the view that it would only be possible to unite these national forces under your leadership.

You know how much effort I have invested in the many talks toward finding a solution in the best interests of the country. But for reasons known to you, the Reich President was of the conviction that he was forced to reject your claim to the office of Chancellor.

Since then, the political battle positions taken by the national forces in relation to each other have brought about a situation which can only be regarded, from a patriotic viewpoint, with the greatest regret. As a result of the November 6 election, a new situation has arisen, thus recreating a new

November 13, 1932

opportunity to unite all national forces. The Reich President has now assigned me the task of ascertaining, in talks with the leaders of the individual parties in question, whether and to what extent they are willing to support the implementation of the planned political and economic program of the Reich Government. Although the National Socialist press has written that it would be a naive undertaking were Reich Chancellor von Papen to attempt to negotiate with those persons under consideration for the national concentration and that he would deserve the following reply: "There will be no negotiations with von Papen," I would nonetheless regard it as a breach of my duties and would be unable to reconcile it with my conscience were I not to approach you in accordance with my request. I have gathered from the press that you uphold your claim to the office of Chancellor, and I am also aware of the extent to which the reasons against this which led to the decision of August 13 continue to exist; in this context I do not need to assure you once again that my person is of no consequence here. However, I am of the opinion that the leader of such a large national movement whose services to the Volk and the country I have always acknowledged, in spite of the criticism these warranted, should not deny the presently responsible leading German statesman a discussion on the situation and the decisions to be made. We must attempt to forget the bitterness of the election campaign and place the interests of the country which we both serve above all other reservations.

Because I have a number of pressing engagements connected with official visits of the Reich Government to Saxony and Southern Germany throughout the next week, I can be at your disposal on Wednesday or Thursday of the coming week.

With the greatest respect, I remain, dear Herr Hitler, faithfully yours,
Papen

In this letter, the Chancellor hinted for the first time that, were a compromise to be reached, he himself (i.e. his remaining in office) was no longer the *conditio sine qua non* he had been on August 13.

Von Papen's position was weakening steadily, and he began to realize that not he, but Hitler would be called upon to save Germany.

Well aware of this, Hitler kept the tone of his November 16 reply relatively mild.²⁸⁰ His main interest lay in recording any future negotiations in writing so that he could not be duped into repeating the fiasco of August 13.

The Reich Chancellor von Papen
Dear Herr Reichskanzler,

November 16, 1932

The request which you addressed to me on November 13 to discuss the situation and the decisions to be made prompts me to reply, after careful consideration, as follows:

In spite of all of the reservations, I do endorse your view, Herr Reichskanzler, that I should not deny the "presently responsible leading German

statesman" a "discussion on the situation and the decisions to be made." However, the nation certainly expects more from such a discussion than a purely theoretical treatment of the hardships and troubles which are its present concern. Furthermore, I have so often disclosed my views on this subject both orally and in writing that you, Herr Reichskanzler, are most certainly acquainted with them. The usefulness of a general discussion of this nature would therefore appear to me to be extremely limited, and its possibly damaging consequences all the more serious. Millions of our Volksgenossen will expect positive results from such a conference if it does take place and they are informed of it. And they have every right to do so. Mere discussions of the situation will help no one. Thus I currently hold that such a talk would only be effective if it is clear from the start that the result will not be negative. For this reason I feel obligated to inform you, my esteemed Herr Reichskanzler, of four items which constitute the prerequisites for such an exchange of ideas.

Item 1: I am not in a position to appear at an oral interchange, but must request that, if such an exchange of ideas is indeed desired, this be effected in writing.

The experiences of oral discussions which have taken place to date before witnesses have shown that both parties' powers of recollection did not result in the same report of the meaning and the contents of the negotiations. You write at the beginning of your letter that you, Herr Reichskanzler, had received the assurances of the NSDAP to support the presidential cabinet in order to bring about "as broad as possible a concentration of all national forces." The fact is, in response to a remark that the Cabinet could be reorganized after the elections, I stated in the presence of Captain Göring that I would not even demand this were the Government to do justice to its national task.

I immediately rejected a proposal relayed to me at that time to submit a written declaration of toleration, stressing that this, of course, was completely out of the question.

It was impossible, I stated, to demand that I issue a *carte blanche* for gentlemen who were, in part, personally and in any case politically unknown to me. The economic and political measures instituted by this Cabinet even within the first six weeks served to justify my cautious reserve!

How easily oral discussions can give rise to mistaken views is also borne out in the claim which you yourself, Herr Reichskanzler, have made on various occasions, i.e. that I had demanded complete power at that time, when in fact I had only made claim to the leadership.

You yourself were to have been Foreign Minister in the new cabinet. General Schleicher, who enjoys the particular confidence of the Reich President, was to be Reich Minister of Defense, and aside from the post of Reich Minister of the Interior and two or, at the most, three ministries completely without political significance, everything was to be occupied either by men already in office or by men to be chosen on the basis of talks with the parties in question. Now you, Herr Reichskanzler, misinterpreted our more than modest demand to such an extent that I, made wiser by these experiences, am no longer willing to deviate from the single sure method, i.e. dealing with such questions in writing. I am all the more forced to do this because I am, in any case,

powerless in the face of the so-called official versions. You, Herr Reichskanzler, have the possibility of informing the German Volk of your own views on a conference not only by means of the radio, which you have monopolized for your own purposes, but in addition by forcing them upon the readers of my own press by imposing certain conditions. I am completely defenseless against such actions. Thus should you, Herr Reichskanzler, be willing to engage upon talks in consideration of the other three items, I may request that you transmit your views and, if applicable, your questions to me in writing; I will then reply in like fashion.

Item 2: It only makes sense to engage in such an interchange if you, Herr Reichskanzler, are willing to enlighten me prior thereto to which extent you actually feel and regard yourself solely responsible as the leading German statesman. Under no circumstances am I willing to allow myself to be subjected again to the method of August 13. In my eyes, it is not permissible for the "responsible leading statesman" to divide his responsibility in any given instance of responsibility. In this connection I base my view on the passage in your letter in which you yourself once more talk of reasons which had led to the decision of August 13 and which continue, you state, to exist, whereby you again add that your person is of no consequence here! Herr Reichskanzler, I may once and for all state the following: I feel myself fundamentally responsible, as the leader of the National Socialist Movement, for the political decisions of the Party as long as I am its leader; conversely, you, too, are fundamentally responsible for the political decisions of the Reich leadership as long as you are Reich Chancellor. It was out of this conviction that I requested on August 13, in view of the failure of our talk, that you assume the responsibility yourself and not burden it upon the Reich President.

I explained to you that, as a consequence of your assurance that it was impossible to comply with our demands due to reasons allegedly attributable to the Reich President, I naturally was forced to refuse to even call on him.

I told you that, as long as a Reich Chancellor bears the political responsibility, this same person is also obligated to cover for his sovereign, whether this be a king or a president. In reply to your question as to my own concept, I suggested to you that an official communiqué be issued to the effect that a meeting had taken place regarding a reorganization of the Reich Government attended by you, Herr Reichskanzler, and myself as the leader of the National Socialist Movement, and that same had been inconclusive and therefore been discontinued. In view of the fact that I had previously taken part in an election to Reich President as a competitor, it did not seem right to me, particularly in consideration of the mass of millions of my own followers, to allow the Reich President himself to make an appearance in the event that I was to be rejected as a person—which was to be expected at the time.

You were the responsible leading politician in the Reich, and particularly in this case, in my opinion this was all the more reason for you to have assumed the responsibility. Unless your conscience would not have allowed this—but then you would have been obliged to resign. Unfortunately, you could not be moved to take on that share of the responsibility accruing to you. I bore my own share.

Instead, your chancellory resorted to a ruse and thereby succeeded—contrary to my own wishes and the assurance you had given me—in luring me to nonetheless attend a talk with the Reich President.

Perhaps the fact that you knew the results in advance sufficed, in your view, to relieve you of any responsibility; at any rate, the matter did not bring about my downfall, but the 85-year-old Reich President was drawn into public controversy as a consequence and burdened with a heavy responsibility! I would not like to witness a repeat performance. Thus I am only willing to engage in such a written exchange of ideas on the German situation and the alleviation of our distress if you, Herr Reichskanzler, are first willing to establish your sole responsibility for the future.

Item 3: I request, Herr Reichskanzler, that you inform me which purpose the integration of the National Socialist Movement is actually to serve. If you wish to win me and hence the National Socialist Movement over to—as you write in your letter—support the political and economical program planned by the Reich leadership, then any written interchange on this point is irrelevant, if not to say futile.

I cannot and do not wish to pass any judgment on what the Government regards as the program of its choice, because even after the most painstaking reflection, this program has never become quite clear to me.

However, if it is a matter of continuing the measures taken to date in domestic, foreign, and economic policy, then I must decline any and all support on the part of the National Socialist Party, for I hold these measures to be, in varying degrees, insufficient, badly thought-out, completely useless—and even dangerous. I know that you are of a different opinion, Herr Reichskanzler, but I regard the practical efforts of your Government even at this point as having, to say the least, been proven ineffective.

Item 4: Herr Reichskanzler, in your letter you state that November 6 created a “new opportunity to unite all national forces.” I must confess to you that the meaning of your suggestion fully escapes me. I am of the conviction that this opportunity has naturally worsened as a result of the dissolution of the Reichstag on September 12, for the consequence, on the one hand, is an outrageous proliferation of Communism, while on the other it means a revitalization of the smallest of splinter parties totally devoid of any practical political impact.

Thus the formation of any type of supporting platform anchored in the German Volk is only conceivable in respect to the parties if one includes the German Nationalists and the German People’s Party. The plan of including the SPD, which you are apparently contemplating, is one I reject from the start. However, as you are well aware, Herr Reichskanzler, before the election the leader of the German Nationalist People’s Party branded, in the most unequivocal of terms, any cooperation with the Center as treason against the nation and a crime against the nation. I do not believe that Herr Privy Councillor Hugenberg could suddenly become so unprincipled as to do something after the election which he had condemned so vehemently before it. Thus your attempt, Herr Reichskanzler, appears unclear and hence just as much a waste of time as it is futile, until you are in a position to inform me that Herr Hugenberg has now come to think differently.

November 16, 1932

I must regard these four items, Herr Reichskanzler, as my requirement for an exchange of views, i.e. a written interchange. It is up to you to consent or refuse.

In conclusion, I may assure you, Herr Reichskanzler, that I am not filled with any subsequent bitterness as a result of the campaign. In the thirteen years of my struggle for Germany, I have had to bear so much persecution and so many personal attacks that I have in fact slowly learned to place the great cause which I serve above my own pitiful self. The only thing which fills me with bitterness is having to stand back and watch how, under your less than lucky touch in guiding the State, Herr Reichskanzler, day by day a national asset is wasted away, an asset in whose creation I own an honest share, as German history is my witness. This waste of national hopes, national faith, and national trust in a German future is what fills me with pain and grief; although it also steels my own resolve to unshakably insist upon the demands which, in my view, are the only ones which can overcome our crisis.

With the greatest respect, I remain, dear Herr Reichskanzler, faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

In this letter, Hitler landed a few blows to von Papen in return for his behavior on August 13 and in respect to his government program, which, "even after the most painstaking reflection, never became quite clear." As a whole, however, the letter was moderate in tone and closed with the remark that Hitler harbored no "subsequent bitterness" toward von Papen.

In any case, it was Hitler's opinion that von Papen needed to be removed from office in order to rule out the possibility that he might once again behave arrogantly toward Hitler. This intention was made clear in a short postscript which he added to his letter to von Papen:

Since I have been informed that General von Schleicher was made acquainted with the contents of your letter, Herr Reichskanzler, I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of this letter to him as well.

Von Papen was forced to announce the resignation of the Cabinet on November 17. Hitler, the Center, and the Social Democrats had all refused to grant him parliamentary toleration. Schleicher had even commenced opposition within the Cabinet itself.²⁸¹

On November 19, Hitler was received by Hindenburg. This time he succeeded in being able to speak to the Reich President in private. All of the disrupting factors which had plagued him since his first visit in October 1931 had now been swept away. Hitler was finally able to speak in a language which impressed the weathered patriot and military man in Hindenburg.

If the President initially believed that Hitler might, at most, be considered for the post of Vice Chancellor, after the conference he was amenable to the idea of Hitler as Chancellor of a parliamentary government.

When Hitler had taken his leave, Hindenburg remarked to State Secretary Meissner: "It seems as if the man is gradually coming to reason."²⁸² The following official communiqué was issued in respect to the meeting:

In the conference which took place on Sunday, November 19, between the Reich President and Herr Adolf Hitler, Herr Hitler stated that he would only place his Movement at the disposal of a cabinet of which he himself was head. Furthermore, he expressed hopes that talks with the parties would allow him to find a basis upon which he and a government he would form could procure an Enabling Act from the Reichstag. Therefore the Reich President felt obligated to attempt to form a majority government under Hitler's leadership.

On November 21, Hitler was received once again by Hindenburg. True to his pledge to record all negotiations in writing, he handed over the following document to the Reich President:

Esteemed Herr Reichspräsident,

From notices in the press and a confirmation given to me by State Secretary Meissner, I have learned of Your Excellency's intention to officially request me to enter into negotiations with the other parties without a new presidential cabinet first being formed. I hold this request to be so important that, in the interest of the authority of the name and the wishes of Your Excellency as well as in the interest of the so imperative salvation of the German Volk, I am substantiating my views on this matter in writing.

For the past thirteen years, I have been combatting the parliamentary system. In it I perceive an inoperable method of forming a political will and expressing the political will of the nation. Prompted by unrelenting propaganda on my part and the part of my staff, this conviction has since become common property to many millions of German people. They thus welcome the fact that Your Excellency has made the decision to do justice to this new realization and carry out a restructuring of the leadership of the State. In order to prevent this new leadership from ending in a catastrophe, it must have a constitutionally admissible starting point and grow to become a real representative of the will of the nation within a reasonably short time. Hence an inner, living relationship must be established between it and that part of the German Volk which already constitutes a sound basis. It is your task to further increase this percentage in an organic sense to gradually come to encompass the entire nation. If this is not done, the result will be a dictatorship supported solely by bayonets and thus exclusively dependent upon them. If inner causes do not bring about the collapse, it will arise at the first instance of pressure from abroad. The consequence can be none other than Bolshevism. Therefore, foreseeing

the fall of von Papen's Government from the experiences of the first six weeks, on August 13 I represented the opinion that this task could only be accomplished successfully by assigning this mission to the National Socialist Movement. For reasons which should not be mentioned here, Your Excellency, Herr Reichspräsident, believed that you had no choice but to reject my proposal at that time.

Now, after six months in power, von Papen's Cabinet—as I prophesied—has fallen into an irretrievable isolation at home and Germany has fallen prey to the same isolation abroad. The results of the attempt to save our economy and eliminate unemployment have, in varying measure, been unsatisfactory and imperceptible. The social misery is horrendous. General trust has sunken to zero. The Bolshevization of the broad masses is making rapid progress.

If a new government were to take on this terrible political, economic, and financial inheritance today, its activities could only be accompanied by success if it unites a great authority from above with a correspondingly great power from below.

Having been summoned to Berlin once more by Your Excellency as the leader of the National Socialist Movement to aid in alleviating this, the most severe crisis of our Volk, I must state that this can only be done, according to the best of my knowledge and belief and in my opinion, if the Movement and I are accorded the position necessary to fulfill this task and to which the Movement is entitled in view of its strength and numbers. For the harsh necessity of placing Germany above the parties will only then be recognized when, as a factor in negotiations, the strongest movement is given, from the very onset, that authority which Your Excellency has granted to all holders of presidential power to date. With due respect to justice and fairness, this claim is no less valid. The National Socialist Movement would bring to any government a total of 196 mandates—two thirds of the number of deputies required for a legal assumption of power.

I can pledge my firm decision to Your Excellency that, were I to propose and head a presidential cabinet given the approval of Your Excellency, it would be equipped with all of the constitutional prerequisites for the lasting and productive work required to lend new heart to our politically and economically ruined Volk.

Thus I may address only one single request to Your Excellency: that I be given at least that power and authority given to the men before me who were not able to contribute as much as I can to the great value of the power and the significance of the name of Your Excellency. For if I am forced by the Constitution to enlist other parties in order to legalize the activities of the coming Government, I do, Herr Reichspräsident, at least bring with me the largest party of all. My own name and the existence of this, the greatest German movement, are security, but they must be destroyed if our deployment leads to an unfavorable outcome. However, in such a case, Herr Reichspräsident, it is not a military dictatorship that will follow us, but Bolshevik chaos.

If, on the other hand, there be plans to return to the pure parliamentary forms of past government, then in my opinion these plans should be disclosed openly to Your Excellency. In such a case, I may most humbly request that I be

allowed to take the liberty of pointing out the consequences of such a decision. I would most deeply regret this.

In summary, I may request Your Excellency to grant consideration to these, my reasons, and to dispense with any such attempt to solve the crisis.

In this letter, Hitler listed his three alternative solutions to the current government crisis: a presidential cabinet, a majority government, or a military dictatorship. The latter he perceived as a distinct possibility under Schleicher and thus concentrated his warnings on this eventuality. Naturally, his preferred solution was his own nomination as presidential chancellor; however, he wished to convey that he would also be willing, albeit somewhat grudgingly, to attempt a majority government.

Hindenburg had also laid down his own aims in writing, and when the two parted, the President declared amicably that his door was always open to Hitler. An official account of this visit was published as well.

At his second meeting on the morning of Monday, November 21, the Reich President issued a declaration to Herr Adolf Hitler which was worded as follows:

‘You know that I support the idea of a presidential cabinet. I conceive of a presidential cabinet as one which is to be led not by a party leader, but by a non-partisan man, and that this man be a person who enjoys my particular confidence. You have declared that you would only place your Movement at the disposal of a cabinet which you, as leader of the Party, would head. If I follow your thoughts in this respect, then I must insist that such a cabinet also has a majority in the Reichstag. For this reason, I bid you as leader of the largest party to determine whether and under what conditions you would have a secure and workable majority with a definite common practical program, were you to take over government leadership.

‘I may request your answer by Thursday evening.’

In compliance with Hitler’s wish, the Reich President laid down the following requirements for the formation of a government and a majority, which he proffered to Hitler in writing:

‘1. *Objectively speaking*: the establishment of an economic program; no return of the dualism Reich-Prussia; no limitation of Article 48.

‘2. *Personally speaking*, I reserve my final consent to the list of ministers. As international representative of the Reich and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, it is my personal responsibility to determine who shall fill the posts of the Foreign Office and the Reich Ministry of Defense.’

Hitler accepted these two documents with the remark that he would relay his answer to the Reich President in writing.

Hitler had made decisive progress on November 19 and 21. He had his foot in the door of the Reich President’s palace. It was now up to him to continue exerting unrelenting pressure until the entire structure collapsed.

Apparently, Hitler had little real motivation to become Chancellor in 1932. The winter was approaching; unemployment would certainly rise; weather conditions ruled out the institution of short-term employment programs. Furthermore, if he took power now, Schleicher would still be lurking in the wings and, with him, the danger of a military dictatorship. It appeared more feasible to first force Schleicher out onto the political stage and to then seize power in spring 1933, after Schleicher had made his exit. The fact that the President had granted Hitler two audiences and assigned him the task of forming a government greatly enhanced Hitler's public prestige. Coasting on this success, he believed he could afford to stall. Schacht stated in an interview at that time:²⁸³ "There is only one person who can become Reich Chancellor today, and that is Adolf Hitler. If Hitler does not become Chancellor now, he will in four months. Hitler can wait." Hitler's main and only concern lay in making the other side responsible for the failure of negotiations which he had, in fact, himself intended. He soon devised a way of doing so: at that time, the Weimar Constitution was already undermined to such an extent that the responsible statesmen no longer even realized when they were violating constitutional rules.

Hindenburg's conditions—i.e. no reinstatement of the dualism between the Reich and Prussia and his reservation to make the appointments to the Foreign Office and the Reich Ministry of Defense by virtue of his position as international representative of the Reich and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces—were unquestionably at variance with the Weimar Constitution. Grotesquely enough, Hitler was the most strident advocate of the Constitution in 1932, exhibiting real expertise in adhering to its precepts.

Thus he composed a letter to State Secretary Meissner on November 21 requesting that he be told which form of government the Reich President in fact preferred.

Berlin, November 21, 1932

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Filled with the great responsibility of this difficult time, I have undertaken to carefully check the request which I received today from the Reich President. After thorough discussion with leading men in my Movement and in other sectors of public life, I have first of all come to the following conclusion:

A comparison of the two documents, i.e. on the one hand the request transmitted to me and, on the other, the required conditions, reveals a contradiction in a number of items which, to me, appears irreconcilable. Before I take a stand on this, a stand upon which my final decision would depend, I may ask you, Mr. Secretary, to ascertain the opinion of the Reich President and inform

me which form of government the Reich President desires and has in mind in this case. Does he envisage a presidential cabinet with a secure parliamentary toleration as required by the Constitution, or does His Excellency desire to see a parliamentary cabinet with the reservations and limitations relayed to me, which, by virtue of their very character, can only be maintained—and thus guaranteed—by an authoritarian leadership in the State?

Mr. Secretary, if you critically compare the two documents, taking into consideration the requirements of constitutional law as well as the constitutionally anchored position and thus responsibility of a parliamentary government, you yourself will perceive the significance of clarifying this basic point. I would like to add that Reich Chancellor Brüning was and has remained one of the party political leaders of the Center and nonetheless became presidential chancellor in his second Cabinet. I have regarded myself not as a “party leader,” but simply as a German, and it was with the sole aim of delivering Germany from the pressure of Marxism that I founded and organized a Movement which is alive and effective far beyond the borders of the German Reich. The fact that we entered the parliaments is due only to the Constitution, which forced us to tread the path of legality. I myself have consciously kept my distance from any type of parliamentary activity.

The difference between my own view and that of von Papen’s Cabinet in respect to the possibility of an authoritarian leadership in the State lies solely in my requirement that same be anchored in the Volk. To bring this about with legal means is my most fervent wish and my foremost aim. With the utmost respect, I remain yours very truly,

Adolf Hitler

State Secretary Meissner answered the questions posed by the leader of the NSDAP in the following letter:

November 22, 1932

Dear Herr Hitler,

I am most honored to reply to your letter of yesterday at the request of the Reich President.

The Reich President sees the respective distinguishing characteristics of a presidential cabinet and a parliamentary government as follows:

1. A presidential cabinet—born in times of distress and failure of the Parliament—will, as a general rule, pass the requisite government measures without the prior consent of the Parliament on the basis of Article 48 of the Constitution. Thus its absolute powers are drawn first and foremost from the Reich President, and in principle, it only requires Parliament to sanction or tolerate these measures. A parliamentary government must submit all proposed bills to the legislative bodies for deliberation and approval prior to their passage; thus its absolute powers are drawn exclusively from a given parliamentary majority.—As a result, the head of a presidential cabinet can only be a person who enjoys the particular confidence of the Reich President.

2. A presidential cabinet must be conducted and constituted in a non-partisan sense and adhere to a non-partisan program approved by the Reich

President. As a general rule, a parliamentary government is formed by the leader of one of the parties in a position to form a majority or a coalition; it is comprised of members of these parties; and it essentially pursues goals upon which the Reich President has only limited and indirect influence.—Accordingly, the head of a party, and at the same time, the head of a party who claims exclusiveness for his own movement, cannot be the head of a presidential cabinet.

3. When he was first appointed, Reich Chancellor Brüning formed a pronouncedly parliamentary cabinet with the parties' support which only then was gradually converted to a type of presidential cabinet when the Reichstag was no longer capable of functioning as a legislative body and Herr Brüning had won the full confidence of the Reich President. The various changes in his Cabinet during his term in office were brought about first and foremost in compliance with the wishes of the Reich President to project an outward manifestation of this transformation of his Cabinet to a presidential cabinet in the persons of the ministers, and to avoid the impression of a rule by the Center by making respective personnel changes. Naturally a parliamentary government under your leadership could also develop into a presidential cabinet in a similar fashion in the course of time.

4. Von Papen's Cabinet was a true presidential cabinet which only resigned because it was unable to procure a majority in Parliament to approve of and/ or tolerate its measures. Hence a new presidential cabinet would only then constitute an improvement were it able to eliminate this flaw and simultaneously possessed the qualities of von Papen's Cabinet (non-partisan leadership and constitution without a party program, enjoying the particular confidence of the Reich President).

5. In view of these deliberations, dear Herr Hitler, the request addressed to you by the Reich President can only be that of forming a parliamentary majority cabinet. The Reich President arrived at this decision after his talks with the party leaders had shown that it would be possible to form a majority in the Reichstag for a cabinet under your leadership and you yourself were confident in your conference on November 19 that you could create a majority for a government you formed and procure an Enabling Act from the Reichstag for your government. The "prerequisites" for the formation of such a government which the Reich President cited in response to your question are not in conflict with a parliamentary solution. In keeping with the governmental practice which he and his predecessors in office have consistently upheld, the Reich President has imposed certain basic demands upon each cabinet to date; in other respects, the conferences which the Reich President has held with the various party leaders have served to show that there is no fundamental opposition to these demands. Nonetheless, in the event that one of the prerequisites for forming a government of which the Reich President has informed you should prove to constitute a decisive obstacle to procuring a stable majority, this should be the subject matter of the requested report on the outcome of your deliberations.

With the utmost respect, I remain yours very truly,

Dr. Meissner

Upon receiving this letter, Hitler was free to draft his regrets, citing the most meticulous constitutional deliberations he could find. Objectively speaking, his observations were indeed closer to the truth than not, for there actually was only one possible way of establishing an authoritarian government according to the Constitution: by means of an Enabling Act passed by the Reichstag.

Hitler's letter to State Secretary Meissner of November 23 read as follows:

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I may take the liberty of replying to your letter of yesterday as summarized in the following three points:

A. I object to your definition of the meaning and character of a presidential cabinet as follows:

The claim that a presidential cabinet can be more non-partisan than a parliamentary cabinet is disproven first of all by the type of evolution such a cabinet undergoes and secondly by the limitations of its capacity to function as well as by the respective method applied. If a presidential cabinet is forced to govern by virtue of Article 48, then this cabinet requires—as you yourself have admitted—if not the prior consent, then all the more the subsequent approval of a parliamentary majority. This parliamentary majority will always be expressed in terms of parties, given our constitutional life as a whole. Thus it is equally dependent upon a majority in the parties themselves as a parliamentary cabinet. Hence a statesman heading such a cabinet must either enjoy or gain the confidence of the majority of the Reichstag just as much as he requires, as a matter of course, the confidence of the Reich President. Incidentally, a recent judgment of the Constitutional Court confined the application of Article 48 to quite specific cases²⁸⁴ and limited periods, which means that the fulfillment of government obligations in general can no longer be based solely upon this Article. Thus in future, it will be the task of a chancellor who—under the pressure of the crisis and the decisions to be made in respect to it—regards the cumbersomeness of parliamentary procedure as a dangerous check to secure for himself a majority for an Enabling Act limited in terms of use and restricted in terms of time. The potential success of such an attempt will be all the greater, on the one hand, the more authoritarian the position of this man is; conversely, it will be all the more difficult, depending upon how much weight the parliamentary power he already has at his disposal carries.

It is of no consequence whether a government program appears to be partisan or non-partisan. Rather, the essential thing is that the program is right and that it leads to success. I protest against the position that a program which is right in and of itself cannot be implemented because it constitutes the property and body of thought of a certain party and therefore must be rejected by a presidential government which, of necessity, must maintain its non-partisan role. However, since it is a general rule that programs will always attract people who then unavoidably manifest themselves in groups as parties, it follows that in the future only those programs could be implemented which—

in order to maintain the non-partisan role—are not backed by any adherents. How a parliamentary majority can be brought about to tolerate such a program is a puzzle to me, and it was also in attempting to solve this same puzzle that Herr von Papen failed.

On the other hand, I have stated that I reject this type of leadership because it inevitably leads nowhere and, at the most, can resort only to the bayonet as its final defense. I have, in addition, upheld the conviction that, given the prerequisite of the Reich President's confidence, I, if anyone, would be most capable of avoiding such a catastrophe, for after all, my Party already has two thirds of the number of deputies required for toleration at its disposal. The step from 200 to 300 deputies will be easier than the one from 50 or 60 to 200.

B. You inform me, Mr. Secretary, that the Reich President now desires a one-hundred-percent parliamentary solution. This means that I am first to agree upon a program with the parties, proceed to find a majority, and then initiate the formation of a government in a purely parliamentary sense on the basis of this majority. First of all, I must note at this time that I should have been assigned this task prior to September 12, 1932. It certainly would have been easier to accomplish at that time!²⁸⁵

However, it cannot be accomplished at all if the assignment of this task is linked to conditions which hinder its accomplishment. For if the course to be taken is a strictly parliamentary route, then no requirements can be imposed other than those given in the Weimar Constitution itself.

Accordingly, the first priority is a parliamentary majority (Article 54), both in terms of assigning the task of forming the government and of putting together a cabinet for the government's program. Other requirements can only then be imposed to the extent that same are compatible with the Constitution.

Due to the fact that the Reich President appoints the Reich Chancellor and the Reich Ministers, he naturally has the last word in respect to the list of ministers. However, the requirement that appointments to the Foreign Office and the Reich Ministry of Defense are at the sole personal discretion of the Reich President is not compatible with Article 53 of the Constitution. The Foreign Minister and the Reich Minister of Defense can only be appointed on the recommendation of the Reich Chancellor. This is the only way it is possible to lay down the guidelines for policy at home and abroad for which, after all, he bears the responsibility to the Reichstag pursuant to Article 56. This is not altered by the fact that the Reich President is the international representative of the Reich; that he enters into alliances and other conventions with foreign powers on behalf of the Reich; that he accredits and receives envoys (Article 45); and that he exercises supreme command over the whole of the Reich's Armed Forces (Article 47). The Constitution (Article 50) requires that all orders and decrees of the Reich President—in respect to the Armed Forces as well—must be counter-signed by the Reich Chancellor or the competent Reich Minister in order to be valid.

Establishing an economic program, ruling out the reinstatement of the dualism between the Reich and Prussia, no limitations on Article 48—these are all conditions which the Reich President is only entitled to impose, given a cabinet based upon a parliamentary majority, in accordance with the provisions

of Article 68 et seq., i.e. by way of legislation. If you are now stating, Mr. Secretary, that every cabinet has been subjected to certain basic demands in keeping with the governmental practice which the Reich President and his predecessors in office have upheld to date, I may reply as follows:

1. Never before in this sense and to this extent;

2. Never before was Germany's catastrophic situation comparable to the present in domestic, foreign or economic terms, and thus the full authority of a Reich Chancellor was never needed as badly before as it is now; and

3. I may nonetheless point out that at no time have such grave incursions been made into the parliamentary system of government as under Herr von Papen's presidential cabinet, and I am now asked to submit these subsequently to the parties for parliamentary finding, i.e. toleration and approval. To parties which have fought these same measures to the utmost out of an instinct of self-preservation! And all that at a time in which the position of these parties is made even stronger by the fact that it is said, first of all, that I do not possess the particular confidence of the Reich President and secondly, that I am to proceed on the strictly parliamentary coalition course!

C. You write, dear Mr. Secretary, that the preliminary discussions with the other party leaders have already served to indicate their willingness to agree to these reservations. In any case, Mr. Secretary, these statements have not been laid down in writing. The talks which Reichstag President Göring has held with the other parties (before the Reich President had assigned this task to me) have revealed the opposite. Commentary in the official party correspondence of one of the parties required to form a majority coalition (the Bavarian People's Party) is also indicative of this view. The promise that I would inform the Reich President of the reasons, should my negotiations fail, does nothing to change the fact that one would simply—and rightly—conclude that I was unable to accomplish a task I had taken on.

The resultant consequences for the National Socialist Movement and thus for the German Volk as a whole only stand to reason. I have made a most sincere effort to weigh the task and the conditions over and over again, but I have nonetheless come to the conclusion, just as my entire staff has done, that this task cannot be accomplished given its inherent contradictions. Thus I have refrained from establishing contact with any of the parties, and I may therefore request that you, Mr. Secretary, might be so kind and convey the following highly deferential message to His Excellency, the esteemed Herr Reich President:

I cannot accept the task assigned to me on Monday, the 21 st instant, by the Reich President due to its inherent impracticability, and thus I may return same to the hands of the Reich President.

In view of the hopeless situation of our Vaterland and in view of the ever-increasing misery and the obligation of each and every German to do his utmost to prevent the Volk and the Reich from becoming mired in chaos, I would nevertheless like to place the National Socialist Movement with the faith, the power and the hope of German youth at the disposal of the venerable Reich President and Field Marshal of the Great War. Thus, completely dispensing with all of the terms which lead only to confusion, I may propose the following positive action:

1. The Reich President shall instruct me to submit, within forty-eight hours of receiving his request, a short program containing the measures to be taken in terms of domestic, foreign, and economic policy.

2 Subsequent to receiving approval for this program, I shall submit a list of ministers to the Reich President within a further twenty-four hours.

3. In addition to retaining other ministers from the present Government, I will propose to the Reich President that General von Schleicher, whom I know to enjoy the Reich President's personal trust, be appointed to the Reich Ministry of Defense and Freiherr von Neurath be considered for the Reich Foreign Ministry.

4. The Reich President shall then appoint me as Reich Chancellor and confirm the ministers in office which I have proposed and he has approved.

5. The Reich President shall assign to me the task of fulfilling the constitutional requirements for the work of this cabinet and shall, for this purpose, grant me those powers which have never before been denied even parliamentary chancellors in such critical and difficult times.²⁸⁶

6. I pledge that, fully devoting my person and my Movement to the cause, I will sacrifice myself for the salvation of our Vaterland.

Thanking you, dear Mr. Secretary, for transmitting this message, I remain with the utmost respect, faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

On November 23, Hitler conferred once more with General Schleicher with the knowledge of the Reich President.

Hitler and Schleicher, both aspiring candidates to the chancellorship, each preferred to allow the other priority, hoping that he would soon prove himself incapable, thus enabling the remaining candidate to present himself as the only possible solution. Schleicher described himself as "the last man the Reich President has."²⁸⁷ Although a brilliant tactician himself, Schleicher had met more than his match in Hitler.

Because of his refusal to form a parliamentary cabinet, Hitler was in a position to force Schleicher to become Chancellor. Hence he was careful to refrain from making any concessions at this conference and adhered to his prior standpoint.

Indeed, he had nothing to lose. What could Hindenburg do? He would hardly consider reappointing von Papen, and even if he did, one knew what to expect.²⁸⁸ Perhaps Hitler's mention of General von Schleicher in his letter of November 23 as someone who "enjoyed the Reich President's personal trust" had been meant as a hint to the Old Gentleman to appoint this man to the job.

It did not take long for Hindenburg—or rather Meissner—to reply to Hitler's letter. The State Secretary wrote to Hitler on November 24 as follows:

November 24, 1932

Dear Herr Hitler,

I am honored to reply to your letter of yesterday at the instructions of the Reich President as follows:

1. The Reich President understands from your reply that you see no chance of success for the formation of a parliamentary majority government and thus are returning to him the task he had assigned to you. In respect to the grounds you cited for your refusal, the Reich President would have me note that, in view of the remarks of the leaders of the Center and the Bavarian People's Party and also in view of your own remarks in the discussion of November 19, he was led to assume the opposite, i.e. that it was in fact possible to form a majority in the Reichstag. Moreover, the Reich President is even less able to recognize an "inherent contradiction" in his request in view of the fact that my explanatory letter of November 22 explicitly pointed out the possibility of a further consultation should one of the prerequisites mentioned by the Reich President prove to be a decisive obstacle to your negotiations.

2. The Reich President thanks you, Herr Hitler, for your willingness to assume the leadership of a "presidential cabinet." However, he does not believe that he could justify it to the German people if he granted presidential powers to the leader of a party which has repeatedly stressed its exclusive character and which has taken a predominantly negative stance in respect to himself as a person as well as in respect to the political and economic measures he deems requisite. Under these circumstances, the Reich President must fear that a presidential cabinet headed by you is bound to develop into a party dictatorship with all its respective consequences, leading to an extreme aggravation of the antagonisms within the German people; and the fact of having brought this about would be something for which he could neither take the responsibility before his oath nor before his own conscience.

3. Now that, to the deep regret of the Reich President, you have categorically refused both in the conferences with him to date and in the discussion you had yesterday with the Reich Minister of Defense, General von Schleicher, held with the Reich President's knowledge, to take any part within or outside of a new government, regardless under whose leadership this government may be, the Reich President no longer expects any positive results from further written or oral discussions on this question. Irrespective of this, the Reich President would like to repeat the statement made to you in the last discussion on Monday that his door is always open to you and he will always be willing to hear your views on the questions of the day; for he does not wish to relinquish the hope that, with time, it will be possible to win you and your Movement to cooperate with all of the other constructive forces in the nation. With the greatest respect, I remain dear Herr Hitler, faithfully yours,

Dr. Meissner

Hitler had expected an answer along these lines. Apparently, Hindenburg was not overly disappointed in Hitler's maneuver. He would not have welcomed a parliamentary majority government, and perhaps the fact that Hitler was so adamant in insisting on a presidential cabinet

increased the Old Gentleman's respect for him: it was a concept which, after all, had been Hindenburg's idea in the first place. In any case, the fact remained that he had assured Hitler his door would always be open to him.

The duplicating machines in Hitler's office were already operating at maximum capacity to copy the entire correspondence and rush it to the press before the Wilhelmstrasse could do so.²⁸⁹ First Hitler quickly dictated a closing letter to Meissner, for he naturally wanted the last word in this political farce.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

There are a few final observations I must make upon receiving your letter containing the Reich President's rejection of my proposal for solving the crisis.

1. I did not say that I felt there was no chance of success for the attempt to form a parliamentary majority government; rather, I described it as an impossibility as a result of the conditions attached to it.

2. I pointed out that, if conditions were in fact imposed, these necessarily had to be compatible with the Constitution.

3. I did not insist upon the leadership of a presidential cabinet, but submitted a proposal for solving the crisis of the German Government which has no connection with this term.

4. As opposed to others, I have constantly stressed the necessity of a constitutionally admissible cooperation with the representation of the Volk and explicitly pledged that I wished to work exclusively in accordance with these legal requirements.

5. Not only did I not demand a party dictatorship; just as in August of this year, I continue to be willing to conduct negotiations with all of the other parties in question in order to establish a foundation for a government. These negotiations were doomed to failure because it was intended regardless to maintain von Papen's Cabinet as a presidential cabinet at any cost.

It is thus not necessary to desire to win my cooperation with other constructive forces in the nation, for I have already done everything humanly possible in that respect this summer, in spite of great animosity. However, I refuse to perceive this presidential Cabinet as a constructive force. And until now, I have been correct in my assessment of the actions of this Cabinet and the failure of this Cabinet's actions.

6. As a result of this realization, I have also continued to warn against an experiment which will ultimately lead to naked violence and must fail because of it.

7. Above all, I was not willing and will never in future be willing to place the Movement I have created at the disposal of interests other than those of the German Volk. In this respect I feel responsible to my conscience, to the honor of the Movement I head, and to the existence of millions of Germans who have, as a result of the recent political experiments, been led only deeper into impoverishment.

In other respects, I may ask you to convey as always my sentiments of utmost devotion to His Excellency the Reich President.

With the greatest respect, I remain faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

Using a somewhat less deferential tone, Hitler issued the following proclamation to the Party on November 25:²⁹⁰

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

Following merely a brief observation of the actions of von Papen's Cabinet, I prophesied what, according to my insight and conviction, would be the results; now they have come to pass.

When Herr von Papen promised to reduce the unemployment figure by two million by the onset of winter; when he pretended to alleviate the economic misery; when he pledged that he would solve the problems at home and abroad—countless Germans were instantly filled once more with trusting confidence. I issued a warning then, and I was more than right to do so. The economic misery has not lessened, unemployment is rising, Bolshevism is spreading throughout Germany, the isolation of the Reich in the rest of the world is almost complete.

Never before has a cabinet in Germany held as much power, but never before has a government failed as has this small, exclusive class of our Volk.

Today millions of the followers of our Movement will be inwardly grateful to me for not allying the Party which contains the last reserve of German faith, German power, and German hope with this ill-fated political and economic amateurism.

I will be even less able to do this in future.—I know that this Government will continue its disastrous work. At the moment, I cannot prevent this. But one thing I will prevent, as long as I live, is that our only Movement be abandoned to this regime.

They summoned me to Berlin to take part in remedying the government crisis but wanted all along to do nothing but save von Papen's Cabinet and subject me to a repeat of August 13. We National Socialists would once more have been given the honor of polishing this Government's dulled finish by being allowed to contribute one or two National Socialist Ministers. I then took the stand which I had to take as the leader of our Movement.

Germany is what we want to save, not von Papen's Government!

Because this time I took precautions to avoid a repeat of August 13, I was requested to bring about a parliamentary solution which had been rendered an impossibility from the very start by virtue of the conditions attached to it as a precaution. I nonetheless decided, in view of the great distress of our Volk, to make an offer which might clarify the interior motives of all those involved.

The offer was rejected—thus, I believe, exposing the objective of the Reich President's advisors.

Hence I may repeat today what I already stated on the evening of the election: this system must be broken in Germany, or else it will break the German nation.

Thus the struggle will continue, and he who has followed the path this Cabinet has taken from June to today with both eyes open knows who must and will be the victor.

Adolf Hitler

The next two days, Hitler spoke with Hugenberg and other leaders in the Party.²⁹¹ On November 27, he delivered another campaign speech in Weimar in view of the approaching local elections in Thuringia. There he stated:²⁹²

The Reich President has been in power for seven years now. The results of his work lie before us. I do not know how long they think this can go on. Another seven years? It is possible that the advisors who counsel the Reich President will still be there then, a last, tiny island in the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin. But by then the German Volk will have gone to waste, and I see no reason why an entire nation should perish for the sake of such advisors.

I did not force myself upon the gentlemen in Berlin. But if they do summon me, then I demand that they only impose conditions upon me which are absolutely worthy of a man who wants and in fact is to assume such a responsibility. But one may only assume the responsibility if one can justify to one's own conscience the conviction that one is really able to accomplish the task, given the powers linked to this position.

That which they think they can offer me today is something for which no one can accept the responsibility.

Now a new cabinet will come; a cabinet with a few external modifications, but the same spirit. And in a few months the end will be worse than the beginning is today. Then the hour will come when they will have to turn to us a third time.

Hitler expressed similar thoughts in an interview with a representative of the *London Daily Express*.²⁹³

On November 29, Hitler received a message in Munich from Schleicher, summoning him to Berlin. Hitler chose instead to travel to Weimar for the Thuringian campaign.²⁹⁴ He was willing only to receive an intermediary from Schleicher and was careful to demand that an officer was sent this time.

On December 1, a Lieutenant Colonel Ott²⁹⁵ came to the Elephant Hotel in Weimar and informed Hitler of Schleicher's intention of assuming the chancellorship. Hitler subjected the Lieutenant Colonel to a nearly three-hour long monologue,²⁹⁶ in which he elaborately expounded his various objections to Schleicher's appointment and explained his alleged fears that this would put the Reichswehr in an exposed position. Naturally, Hitler was not so naive as to believe that his flow of words would prevent Schleicher from taking office; in fact, he had no qualms about Schleicher's becoming "Winter Chancellor." His

address to Ott constituted a carefully thought-out step in a larger plan to alienate the leading officers of the Reichswehr from Schleicher and to inform them of the political aims he would realize after acceding to power. This plan had priority over the Thuringian election campaign, particularly after Schleicher was appointed Chancellor on December 2. Although Hitler did deliver a number of speeches there (in Greiz and Altenburg on December 1,²⁹⁷ in Gotha and Jena on December 2,²⁹⁸ and in Eichsfeld and Sonneberg on December 3²⁹⁹), he then proceeded to Berlin and, on December 4, composed a voluminous letter to Colonel von Reichenau, Chief of Staff of the First Division in East Prussia.³⁰⁰

Using the specific situation in East Prussia in respect to military policy as an excuse, he dwelt for pages on domestic and foreign policy in Germany and the necessity of an “inner, mental armament.” After criticizing the Reichswehr’s contacts with Russia,³⁰¹ he arrived at the crux of the matter, namely Schleicher:

I hold General von Schleicher’s present cabinet to be particularly unfortunate because the very person at its fore must of necessity be even less able to comprehend this question than any other. This problem of the inner, mental armament of the nation cannot now—just as it never could before—be solved by an army, but rather only by a *Weltanschauung*. Allowing the army [to] become involved in this task makes it appear biased to the eyes of many just as, conversely, this serves, to the eyes of the masses, to compromise the task itself. For neither the police nor the military have ever destroyed *Weltanschauungen*, much less built up *Weltanschauungen*. However, without a *Weltanschauung*, no human structure can be maintained for any length of time. *Weltanschauungen* are the social contracts and the foundations required to build up large-scale human organizations. Therefore, in contrast to our statesmen today, I perceive the German tasks of the future as the following:

1. Overcoming Marxism and its consequences to the point of total extinction. Establishment of a new unity of spirit and will in the Volk.
2. Universal spiritual, moral and ethical armament of the nation on the basis of this new *weltanschaulich* unity.
3. Technical armament.
4. Organizational registration of the power of the Volk (*Volkskraft*) for the purpose of national defense.
5. Attaining legal recognition in the rest of the world for the new situation which has already been brought about.

Not surprisingly, this type of program would greatly impress Reichswehr officers. Hitler closed his letter on the following note:

(...) East Prussia can only be saved if Germany is saved. It is plain that Schleicher’s new Cabinet will once more delay and impede this one and only possible deliverance [namely Hitler’s accession to power].

Hitler reserved a few further blows to Schleicher for the initial sessions of the new Reichstag on December 6 and 7.

First of all, however, the National Socialist deputies were infused with a dose of Hitler's rhetoric and sworn in. In his speech on December 5, Hitler also remarked upon the outcome of the local Thuringian election the day before. Compared with the election of July 31, the NSDAP had once again suffered losses. Hitler denied any real loss of votes, drew statistical parallels and claimed:³⁰²

The more the events press for a decision, all the more sacrifices are called for in the fight. The only thing that matters in this fight is who leads the last battalion onto the battlefield.

Parallel to these remarks, Hitler stated during World War II:³⁰³

The war can last as long as it wants—but the last battalion on the field will be German!

This type of thinking may have been appropriate at home, for the NSDAP was, in fact, the largest of all parties in Germany; however, it was purely utopian when applied to a war, even on the basis of sheer numbers. When the Germans were down to their last battalion, their enemies still had entire armies at their disposal.

The newly elected Reichstag convened for the first time on December 6. This time Hitler had made certain that his party nominated the chairman by seniority: the 82-year-old General von Litzmann, known as the "Lion of Brzeziny."³⁰⁴ At a time when the highest-ranking German statesmen were generals, Hitler could demonstrate that he suffered no disadvantage: he, too, could produce generals if needed. The tough old soldier Litzmann was an enthusiastic admirer of Hitler and offered to be of assistance,³⁰⁵ certainly with the best of intentions, in any way he could.

Litzmann's address to the Reichstag was an indictment of Hindenburg for having vested his unqualified confidence in men like Hermann Müller, Brüning and von Papen, but having rejected Hitler. He accused the Reich President of attempting to evade the curse of history for having driven the German Volk to despair and placed it at the mercy of Bolshevism, while all the time the savior (Hitler) had been standing by.

With the support of the Center and the Bavarian People's Party, Göring was then elected president in spite of the nay-votes of the Communists, the Social Democrats, and the German Nationalists. In his maiden speech, Göring expressed the deep regret of the National Socialists that the appointment of the Reich Minister of Defense as

Chancellor had made the Reichswehr into a bone of political contention. Following these two insults to Schleicher, Hitler scored a further point against the new Chancellor on the second day of the Reichstag's session. Pursuant to Article 51 of the Constitution, the Chancellor was the representative of the President until new elections took place. If Hindenburg were to die, Schleicher would be Chancellor, President and Minister of Defense in one, which virtually amounted to military dictatorship.

In order to prevent this, Hitler had a National Socialist draft bill introduced providing that, in future, the President of the Reichsgericht³⁰⁶ was to represent the Reich President. During the debate, a German Nationalist deputy, von Freytag-Loringhoven, objected and proposed that the Reich President be granted the right to appoint his own representative in a political last will and testament.

However, this was rejected, and the NSDAP's motion was passed with a two-thirds majority. Only the Communists and the German Nationalists had voted against the bill.

Hitler made a mental note of Freytag-Loringhoven's idea and utilized it at Hindenburg's death in 1934 and when drawing up his own will in 1945, although in both instances he violated the Constitution and the bill of representation passed at his own instigation in 1932.

The National Socialists used a loophole in the standing orders to delay the motion submitted by the Communists for a vote of no confidence against Schleicher's Cabinet and then declared a recess before it could be discussed. Hitler wanted to sit back and watch Schleicher fidget through the winter months in office. The NSDAP and the KPD together had an absolute majority in the Reichstag: they could pass a vote of no confidence any time they chose—and when Hitler decided the time was right. Everything appeared to be in good order. But then the bomb Schleicher had planted went off.

Like every presidential chancellor, the new man in office was forced to seek a tolerating majority in the Reichstag. He had approached the Center, the Social Democratic unions and, because he could not come to terms with Hitler, he had also turned to Strasser in the hope that he might be able to win the support of at least some of the National Socialist deputies for his government program.

Strasser had met with Schleicher on December 3 without Hitler's consent and discussed the question of joining the Cabinet as Vice Chancellor. Gregor Strasser was a queer fish. Politicizing apothecary that he was, he would have fit better in a bourgeois party, but there he

would probably have had little chance of success. His political and economic ideas³⁰⁷ represented a conglomeration of notions taken from a wild cross-section of programs, and he constantly changed them to suit the situation. Strasser had risen within the Party to become *Reichsorganisationsleiter* (Head of Political Organization) and he undoubtedly did possess organizational talent. He also enjoyed a certain following in the upper party echelons, but only as long as Hitler was absent. Strasser had never completely understood that only one person—namely Hitler—made decisions in the National Socialist Party. The fact that Strasser believed he might become a minister under Schleicher without Hitler's consent demonstrates how little he fathomed the man and his Party. Ultimately, he paid for this mistake with his life.³⁰⁸

As though he were a member of a bourgeois association, Strasser composed a letter to Hitler on December 8, after having exchanged some words with him, in which he resigned from all of his party posts. Apparently he expected Hitler to recall him immediately and plead with him on bended knee to resume his duties. He completely failed to realize what a sacrilege he had committed by resisting Hitler's will.

Hitler, on the other hand, had realized all too well that Strasser's behavior indicated a severe crisis both within the Party and in public opinion. After the loss of the election, a series of further signs of disintegration seemed to indicate that the Party's course was on a rapid decline. Initially, Hitler slumped into such a depression that he even stated to Goebbels:³⁰⁹

If the Party ever falls apart, I will take a gun and end it all in a minute.

But he soon recovered. At his instructions, the Reich Press Office of the NSDAP issued the following statement:³¹⁰

With the Führer's permission, Pg. Gregor Strasser is granted sick leave for the next three weeks. Any further conjectures in this connection are incorrect and have no basis in fact.

Then he recalled his persuasive powers of oratory and convened a gathering of the National Socialist deputies to the Reichstag and all available Gauleiters and party inspectors at the palace of the Reichstag President. He had resolved to take the sentimental route this time and delivered a one-hour talk in which, almost in tears, he narrated the sad account of the profound disloyalty of which he had been made a victim. If one can believe eyewitness reports, he went so far as to threaten suicide if he was not sworn absolute loyalty and blind obedience on the

spot. The speech was a tremendous success: every single person present hastened to raise his hand to pledge unswerving loyalty to Hitler. Strasser was totally stripped of his following. Even his closest friend, Gottfried Feder, renewed his vow of loyalty to Hitler.³¹¹

The *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following report of the scene:³¹²

The Führer then delivered an address to the parliamentary party which closed with the observation that the power and strength of the NSDAP lay first and foremost in the loyalty, in the solidarity unto death, upon which any attacks would certainly be dashed to pieces.

Göring stated that not only the leaders and deputies of the NSDAP, but the entire Movement as well were rallying around their Führer with moral support in this hour. The entire Party then spontaneously formed a circle around the Führer and gave him thunderous ovations. Every single member of the Party felt the need to make a personal solemn vow of loyalty to the Führer. Furthermore, the Reichstag party formally submitted the unanimous statement that they stood solidly behind their Führer, Adolf Hitler.

At the same time, the *Völkischer Beobachter* also published declarations of loyalty from all Gauleiters and Landesinspektors, the NSDAP deputies in the Prussian Landtag, the SA and SS with Chief of Staff Röhm, Gottfried Feder and others.

Hitler had succeeded in creating a rhetorical masterpiece in his sentimental speech of December 9, and he made effective use of this type of bathetic appeal once again two years later³¹³ when a crisis split the Reichswehr and the SS.

Just as he had exploited the SA crisis in fall of 1930,³¹⁴ 'Hitler similarly capitalized on the Strasser affair to enhance his own absolute power within the Party. Then he had taken on the post of *Oberster SA Führer*, *OSAF* (Supreme Commander of the SA) and appointed Ernst Röhm Chief of Staff; now he took over the political organization himself and nominated the devoted Robert Ley as leader of staff. The respective announcement was issued on December 9:³¹⁵

Decree

1. From today onwards until further notice I am assuming the leadership of political organization.

2. I hereby appoint the former Reichsinspekteur II, Robert Ley, as my leader of staff for political organization.

3. On Wednesday, December 13, I will issue new guidelines and orders respective to the appeal of November 6, 1932 toward bringing about an increase in the Movement's power.

Berlin, December 9, 1932

Adolf Hitler

Berlin, December 9, 1932

Adolf Hitler

Hitler wasted no time in launching a new speechmaking campaign designed to erase the bad impression the Strasser crisis had left throughout the country. The very next day found him at the microphones, albeit at internal party rallies, for the Government had declared a truce until January 2. However, this did not constitute any real hindrance, for the press made certain that Hitler's words met with an adequate response in the public.

On December 10, Hitler stated before 15,000 *Amtswalters* (party officials) in Breslau (Messehof):³¹⁶

The Movement has a right to be in power, and I will never sell this right. You will not be able to find anyone in our Movement who will sell it for less. This Movement stands unshakable in German history as firmly as a rock in the ocean.

The speculation that the Movement is disintegrating is not called for. Yesterday the NSDAP crushed the false hopes of our opponents in Berlin. The Movement stands fast and unshaken.

Even if our opponents may have defeated us in terms of figures at the last Reichstag election, we will pay them back next year with interest and compound interest. I believe that we will confront the gentlemen in March once more in an open battle.

On December 11, Hitler spoke at Amtswalter conventions in Dresden (Zirkus Sarrasani), Chemnitz (Kaufmännisches Vereinshaus), and in Leipzig (Zoo), where he announced:³¹⁷

I am the one who has fixed the price of the Movement. No one will offer it at less than that. But if anyone should ever be found to do so, he would be lost in the Party within an hour and would have no Movement behind him. We will not allow ourselves to be lured into the den of intrigue where the others are experts at the game.

Time will not wear me down. Certainly we lost thirty seats, but in the meantime our opponents have lost two governments! And the new Cabinet will not last any longer. We will regain those thirty seats. Our supply of recruits is larger than theirs, and I will place this task first and foremost and without any consideration to myself.

On January 2 the *Burgfriede* will be over, and on the third we will be back in the thick of the fight.

There was no need to mention Strasser's name, for it was obvious to whom he was referring.

On December 15, Hitler announced the dissolution of various party posts and offices. His aim in doing so was to crush Strasser's political apparatus and obliterate every trace of his work.

On December 16, Hitler spoke to the NSDAP in the Prussian

Schleicher had attacked due to the remarks he had directed against Hindenburg. Hitler's retort to Schleicher's programmatic radio speech of December 15 was: "*Ist das alles?*" Schleicher's era, just as those preceding it, was destined to be but a short episode in the history of the nation.

We have the youth; we have greater courage, a stronger will, and more tenacity. What else do we need to win?

On December 17 and 18, Hitler delivered speeches on the same topic at further Amtswalter conventions in Halle, Magdeburg, and Hamburg.³¹⁹

He stated in Halle:

Today we are the strongest political party in Germany. If our opponents are really serious about reaching agreement, then I ask them: why have you not, my advocates and patrons in the bourgeois camp, allowed [me] the power which you would not have hesitated to grant to any SPD *Bonzen* (big shots) to date? I will not allow myself to be treated worse than "the organizers of treason."

Do you believe that it would have been more advantageous for our Movement had we been torpedoed together with von Papen? I have never perceived Reich Government as the Verdun of the Western Front. It is not our job to do things like put ruined states back in order and then allow ourselves to be kicked for it in the end. We have already experienced that, for example in Thuringia. I protest most strongly against the accusation that we have only made mistakes. Had my work consisted of nothing but mistakes, how could seven men have turned into a Movement of millions?

I will never be able to act like any arbitrary party leader who one day turns up at a college lecture because his business has gone bankrupt. I am not fighting in order to make concessions, and much less to capitulate.

On December 20, Hitler denied reports published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the *Vorwärts*.³²⁰

The December 19 edition of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and other newspapers reported that I stated to the Amtswalters in Halle that I had "punished" Gregor Strasser; that I had been particularly lenient in the first conflict with the Strasser brothers; and that now the punishment must be all the more severe. The reports go on to say that, when I then had each of the Amtswalters solemnly swear eternal obedience to me, a fight broke out and the opposition forced its way into the hall.

This report in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* is pure fabrication from beginning to end. I did not touch upon the Strasser case in any way whatsoever. The name Gregor Strasser was not mentioned. It goes without saying that the "opposition" did not force its way into the hall, and it follows that no fighting (*Prügelei*) took place; it could well have been, however, that the police cleared rampaging Communists off the streets.

Adolf Hitler

For a fact, Hitler regarded the Strasser affair as a closed case. He added the postscript on June 30, 1934.

The year 1932 was coming to an end, and Hitler's struggle for power was also nearing its close. During the preceding twelve months, he had succeeded in eliminating nearly all of his opponents: first Groener, then Brüning, then von Papen. Schleicher, although a dangerous adversary, was isolated and would fall sooner or later. The Communists had become fair game on public streets. The despised Social Democratic rulers in Prussia had lost their influence. The politicians of the Center, ousted from their key positions, were now willing to accept Hitler's chancellorship. A wedge had been driven into Hindenburg's dislike for Hitler. Von Papen had been forced to learn, from the lessons of August to November, that it was no longer possible to accomplish anything without Hitler and that he therefore had to be given his way.

When von Papen left the chancellory, Hindenburg—with tears in his eyes—gave him a portrait signed “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden.”³²¹ In reality, he did not lose this comrade at all. Von Papen continued to live in the Reich Chancellor's quarters and came and went at the Reich President's as he chose. It would not take long for Hindenburg to realize that it was now necessary to turn to Hitler. The fruits of the “struggle” were ripe for harvesting. And it was high time for Hitler to reap his crops: the world economic crisis was coming to an end, and in Geneva Germany had been granted military equality on December 11. The chaos at home and abroad could not last much longer.

At times, Hitler himself had doubted whether his domestic struggle would be successful. The fact that he did triumph in the end filled him with a sense of satisfaction from which he drew the rest of his life. It served as a recurrent theme in his speeches, particularly during the Second World War. In reality, this “triumph” had caused him more than a great satisfaction: it had been tantamount to a genuine psychological fixation which brought with it lasting consequences for his later deeds and decisions.

While Hitler had occasionally confessed in 1932 that he, too, was capable of making mistakes, his surprising domestic success instilled in him the conviction that he would always be right in the end. Any thought he contemplated, any goal he set was programmed to become reality, just as his tremendous undertaking of gaining power in Germany had proven possible. Regardless of the extent to which people might entertain doubts as to the feasibility of Hitler's ideas, regardless of how strongly the entire world opposed them—in his opinion, the year 1932

had proven that he was absolutely incapable of erring, for Providence had decreed that he should always be right. This December of 1932, the *Gottmensch* Hitler had been born.

Later he once stated that he had “used up his best years”³²² in vying for power within Germany. This was certainly not the case in terms of his physical condition, for his vitality showed no indication whatsoever of lessening from 1933 onwards. One might, however, speculate that the price he paid in the course of 1932 was his last morsel of foreign policy sense—if ever he had had such a thing to start with.

The consequences which Hitler drew from the events of 1932 demonstrated that he had completely lost contact with reality. He believed that he need only treat the Russians as he had treated the German Communists, and the British as he had the German Nationalists, and world power would simply fall into his hands as a result.

The year 1932 is not only the key to Hitler’s ascent to power, but also to his foreign and military policy, which he based upon the principle: “I hold the firm conviction that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged at home!”³²³

THE YEAR 1933

Major Events in Summary

On January 30, 1933, Hitler finally achieved the success he had been denied throughout the year 1932: he was made Reich Chancellor and head of a presidential cabinet.¹ Unlike his two predecessors, Papen and Schleicher, he was able to secure a majority in parliament by insisting upon new Reichstag elections. The experiences of the preceding months had shown that the support of the Reich President alone was not a sufficiently reliable basis for governing the country. However, as Hitler had pledged repeatedly in October 1932,² he was determined, come what may, not to relinquish control of the government he had finally taken over.

To “take power swiftly and with a single stroke,”³ was his declared goal. The post which Hitler had assumed was that of responsible leader of German politics as defined by the Weimar Constitution. And now that he was in power, he intended, without further delay, to set aside those parts of this same Constitution which limited the scope of his power and granted other public figures and groups a basis for claiming their own constitutional rights and exercising political influence.

“We will amend the Constitution in a strictly constitutional manner,” Hitler had still claimed in 1932,⁴ warning his opponents to refrain from seizing power by force or violating the Constitution. In practice, he now proved rather lax in observing constitutional rules. Indeed, there was little reason to abide by the law, for his predecessors had already demonstrated the extent to which Article 48 could be exploited to defeat the Constitution’s own purposes.

The decree of the Reich President toward “Restoring Order to the Government in Prussia” (*Herstellung geordneter Regierungsverhältnisse in Preussen*), promulgated on February 6,⁵ constituted one such flagrant breach of the Constitution and moreover an open contravention of the judgment of the Constitutional Court of October 25, 1932. Hitler was careful to have this decree—which dissolved the Prussian Landtag—counter-signed by Papen: one of the few cases in which Hitler allowed Papen to act as his proxy in exercising the functions of Reich Chancellor. The next step was the “Decree for the Protection of the Volk

and the State" (*Verordnung zum Schutz von Volk und Staat*) promulgated on February 28.⁶ Not only did this law provide that, if law and order were jeopardized, all of the articles of the Weimar Constitution could be rescinded (e.g. inviolability of the individual and the home; privacy of postal communications, etc.); moreover, the Reich Government (in reality, the Reich Minister of the Interior) was delegated the right normally held by the Reich President alone to appoint Reich Commissars in the German Linder and assume the authority vested in public offices. After March 5, Hitler made respective use of this possibility in all those Linder not governed by the National Socialists.

The next breach of the Reich Constitution followed on March 12, 1933. Article 3 provided that the colors of the Reich be black-red-gold. Hindenburg and Hitler decreed on March 12⁷ by virtue of an edict of the Reich President that the black-white-red and the swastika flag were to be hoisted jointly "until the question of the Reich colors has been definitively settled."

With the majority required to amend the Constitution, the Reichstag passed the "Law for Removing the Distress of Volk and Reich" (*Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich*) on March 24 ("Enabling Act")⁸ which provided that, in future, the Reich Government was to be empowered to enact laws and the Chancellor, not the President, was to draw up and promulgate new legislation. The Constitution could be amended by government decree insofar as the amendment did not concern the institutions of the Reichstag or the Reichsrat as such. Allegedly, the rights of the Reich President were to remain inviolate, but alone the fact that it was now the Reich Chancellor who drew up legislation substantially limited the President's powers. Furthermore, whereas the question of succession to the office of Reich President had been anchored in the Constitution, the Enabling Act contained no respective guarantees.⁹

Two new laws passed by the Reich Government deprived the Länder of power: the "First Coordination Law of Länder and Reich" (*Vorläufiges Gesetz zur Gleichschaltung der Länder mit dem Reich*) of March 31¹⁰ vested the legislative power of the Landtage in the Land Governments and established the former in the same proportions as those resulting from the Reichstag election of March 5. The "Second Coordination Law of Länder and Reich" (*Zweites Gesetz zur Gleichschaltung der Länder mit dem Reich*) of April 7¹¹ introduced Reich Governors (*Reichsstatthalters*) in all of the Länder who were empowered to appoint the Land Governments. In Prussia, the largest Land, Hitler personally assumed

the office of Reichsstatthalter. This served to abolish the Reichsrat as well, the local government which was allegedly to remain inviolable pursuant to the Enabling Act.

The next step was the elimination of trade unions, political parties and leagues. The union offices had already been closed on May 2, and on May 10 Hitler decreed the formation of a new National Socialist organization for the workers, the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, DAF (German Labor Front), and appointed Robert Ley as its head.

The Communist Party had participated one last time in the election of March 5. However, the elected deputies were prohibited from taking office. A law passed on May 26 seized the assets of the KPD. While the Communist Party was not officially prohibited, the Social Democratic Party was abolished by decree on June 22. The assets of the SPD and the Reichsbanner had already been seized on May 10.

On June 21, the German National Fighting Leagues (*Kampfverbände*) were dissolved. A section of the Stahlhelm was integrated into the SA and the rest placed under Hitler.

On June 27, the German National People's Party (DNVP; participated in the 1933 elections as "Kampffront Schwarz-Weiss-Rot") dissolved; Hugenberg resigned as Reich Minister.

The remaining parties announced their own dissolutions in short succession: the German State Party (former German Democratic Party, DDP) on June 28; the Christian Socialist People's Service (Christlich-Sozialer Volksdienst, CSV) and the German-Hanoverian Party (DeutschHannoversche Partei) on June 30; the Party of People's Justice (Volksrechtspartei, VRP) on July 1; the German People's Party (DVP) and the Bavarian People's Party (BVP) on July 4; and the Center Party on July 5.

On July 14, Hitler passed a law stipulating that the National Socialist German Workers' Party constituted the only political party in Germany and that any attempt to establish a new party was punishable with penal servitude of up to three years.¹²

Hitler could have been well pleased with his success in having taken power "swiftly and with a single stroke." But subsequent developments showed that he was in no way satisfied with what he had achieved and continued his inexorable labors to expand his power.

By comparison, his methods were much more lax in the economic sector. He granted the economists and departmental ministers a relatively free hand while strictly prohibiting any currency manipulation. The long accumulated energy of German labor quickly regained its momentum in Hitler's economic program of repairing buildings,

constructing roads, boosting private enterprise with government commissions, promoting motorization, etc. This and the waning Depression united to ban quickly the economic misery which had plagued Germany for so many years. The majority of the Germans, who had long been victimized by poverty, were thus quite satisfied with Hitler's government and paid little attention to his legislative measures to eliminate dissenting political parties and suppress political opponents.

Abroad, the developments inside Germany were naturally viewed with concern. The foreign press openly criticized Germany's evolution to a one-party system or, more precisely, to a dictatorship under Hitler.

Infuriated by this criticism, Hitler decreed a boycott of all Jewish businesses in Germany. He regarded a measure of this sort as an appropriate means for bringing pressure to bear on his foreign opponents, and its success seemed to justify his expectations.¹³

The Concordat with the Vatican, concluded on July 8, not only helped Hitler to move the Center Party to proclaim its dissolution but also strengthened his position abroad.¹⁴

On the other hand, he desired to avoid any consolidation in Germany's foreign policy. Domestic chaos had brought him to power; chaos abroad would, so he hoped, allow him to attain his foreign policy goals. If the world or, more specifically, the League of Nations accepted Germany's claims for equality, revision of the Treaty of Versailles, etc., he would no longer be able to make demand upon demand, armed with the demeanor of injured innocence which he used to justify both his aims and his methods.

Hitler was thus assiduous in his efforts to put into practice the equality of rights for Germans resolved by the Major Powers on December 11, 1932. On October 14 he kept the promise made in his foreign policy speech to the Reichstag on May 17¹⁵ and declared Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference.¹⁶ As usual, he succeeded in killing two birds with one stone. He had long been irked by the Reichstag elected on March 5, for it still contained deputies of the German Nationalists, the Center Party, etc., albeit as guests of the NSDAP. Now he had the Reichstag dissolved, allegedly in order to procure the people's stand on a possible withdrawal from the League of Nations. Of course a plebiscite would have served this purpose just as well, if not better.

But Hitler wanted a Reichstag composed solely of National Socialists, and this he achieved in the new elections of November 12. 1933 was a successful year for Hitler in every way. Unlike Mussolini, he was not

forced to either fight for the absolute domination of his party or to negotiate with the Vatican for compensation.¹⁷ Within a few short months, Hitler was able to take over every major position of power with the exception of Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. But in order to achieve this, he had had to spend five times as long combatting much stronger resistance until he, like Mussolini, ultimately became Head of Government.

Report and Commentary

1

In his “New Year’s Proclamation to the National Socialists and Party Comrades,”¹⁸ following the usual recapitulation and forecast, Hitler stressed that under no circumstances would he retreat from his previous demands concerning a formation of the government.

Today, more than ever, I am determined to the utmost not to sell out our Movement’s right of the firstborn for the cheap substitute of a participation in a government devoid of power. That protest of the astute that we should come from inside and through the back door and gain gradual success is nothing but the same protest which bade us, in 1917 and 1918, to reach an understanding with irreconcilable opponents and then to debate with them peacefully in a League of Nations. Thanks to the traitors from within, the German Volk surrendered itself to this advice. The Kaiser’s lamentable advisors believed that they should not oppose him. But as long as the Almighty gives me life and health, I will defend myself to my last breath against any such attempt and I know that, in this resolve, I have the millions of zealous supporters and fighters of our Movement behind me who did not hope, argue and suffer with the intention of allowing the proudest and greatest uprising of the German Volk to sell its mission for a few ministerial posts!

If our opponents invite us to take part in a government like this, they are not doing it with the intention of slowly but surely putting us in power, but rather in the conviction that they are thus wresting it from us forever!

Great are the tasks of our Movement for the coming year. But the greatest task of all will be to make it as clear as possible to our fighters, members, and followers that this Party is not an end in itself, but merely a means to an end. They should realize that the organization, with all its greatness and beauty, only has a purpose, and thus the justification to exist, when it is the eternally unforbearing and belligerent herald and advocate of the National Socialist idea of a German Volksgemeinschaft to come!

Everything which this Movement calls its own—its organizations, whether in the SA or the SS, in the political leadership, or the organization of our peasants and our youth—all of this can have only the single purpose of fighting for this new Germany, in which there will ultimately be no bourgeoisie and no more proletarians, but only German *Volksgenossen*.

This is the greatest task with which our Volk has been confronted for more than a thousand years.

The movement which accomplishes this task will engrave its name for all eternity in the immortal book of the history of our nation.

Thus in the face of the red flood, the dangers in the East and France's eternal threat; in the midst of need and wretchedness, misery and desperation, we, my party comrades, SA and SS men, National Socialist peasants and National Socialist youth, shall clench our fists even more firmly about our banner and, with it, march into the coming year.

We shall be willing to sacrifice and fight, and would rather pass away ourselves than allow that Movement to pass away which is Germany's last strength, last hope, and last future.

We salute the National Socialist Movement, its dead martyrs and its living fighters!

Long live Germany, the Volk and the Reich!

Munich, December 31, 1932

Adolf Hitler

In this New Year's message, Hitler cited the peasants in the same breath with the SA and the SS. Indeed, the peasants were his largest asset at that time, comprising the bulk of his voters.

In a lengthy address¹⁹ held on January 3 at a Convention of the NSDAP on agricultural policies in Munich, Hitler underlined the special significance of the peasantry for the National Socialist Movement. With a certain amount of bluntness, he proclaimed that the theory of *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) applied not to domestic, but rather to foreign policy. Here he was referring to the acquisition of new land and soil which he had propagated in *Mein Kampf*. On January 3, Hitler declared in part as follows:

The fulfillment of the fundamental idea of national policy reawakened by National Socialism which is expressed in the theory of *Blut und Boden* will be accompanied by the most thorough and revolutionary reorganization which has ever taken place.

Our demand for strengthening the basic racial principles of our Volk, which this term signifies and which at the same time includes safeguarding the existence of our Volk in general, is also the determining factor in all of the aims of National Socialist domestic and foreign policy.

Once we have succeeded in purging and regenerating our Volk, foreign countries will very soon realize that they are confronted with a different Volk than hitherto.

And thus the prerequisites will be given for putting our own land and soil in thorough order and securing the life of the nation on our own for long years to come. The development in world economics and politics which automatically leads to an increasing blockade against our exports in international markets makes a major, fundamental transposition an absolute necessity. Even if today's rulers shut their eyes to this fact, the chronic cause of our grave

economic need and appalling unemployment is nevertheless an indisputable reality. Either we eliminate this cause and accomplish the required reorganization with vigor and energy in good time, or fate will bring it about by force and destroy our Volk. If we succeed in putting the basic principle of *Blut und Boden* into practice at home and abroad, then for the first time we, as a Volk, will not be tossed at the mercy of events, but rather will then master circumstances on our own.

Just as the peasant who sows each year must believe in his harvest without knowing whether it may be destroyed by wind and weather and his work remain unrewarded, so must we too have the political courage to do what necessarily must be done—regardless of whether success is already in sight at the moment or not. The German peasant in particular will understand even more of our National Socialist struggle in future than hitherto. But if the German peasant, the foundation and life source of our Volk, is saved, then the entire nation will once again be able to look ahead to the future with confidence.

On January 4, two politically significant conferences took place in Germany: one in Berlin and the other in Cologne.

In Berlin, the aged Reich President conferred with Gregor Strasser, to whom he had been introduced by Reich Chancellor von Schleicher. It appears that Hindenburg formed a quite good personal opinion of Strasser. But what was he to do with this renegade Reichstag deputy who had lost all support since his break with Hitler?

The conference—and its sequel on January 11—produced no tangible results. Hindenburg and Schleicher could not make up their minds whether or not to appoint Strasser Vice Chancellor.

In Cologne, Hitler and von Papen met at the home of banker Kurt Freiherr von Schröder²⁰ on January 4. Hitler had kept this meeting secret from most of his Unterführers, choosing only his secretary, Rudolf Hess, the Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler, and his economic advisor, Wilhelm Keppler, to accompany him.²¹ Keppler, who was incidentally also to play an instrumental role in the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, had arranged the conference.

It would be false to assume that financial matters were discussed at the Cologne meetings attended only by Hitler, von Papen and Schröder. Hitler despised money and regarded it as beneath his dignity to discuss financial problems. He had enough followers who relieved him of making such distasteful requests. Upon hearing Hitler speak, a great number of affluent Germans opened their wallets of their own accord to donate to the lofty national causes he espoused.

The three partners to the talks in Cologne discussed other matters, namely when and how Hindenburg could be moved to appoint Hitler Reich Chancellor. Freiherr von Schröder had already made a lauded

contribution toward this end in November by forwarding to Hindenburg a memorandum, drawn up by leading German economists, which decidedly supported Hitler's chancellorship.²²

Von Papen, who had experienced Hitler's animosity at first hand from August to November 1932, had since dismounted his high horse and was now willing to acknowledge Hitler's leadership. His dealings with Schleicher may have accelerated this change of attitude. It is nonetheless quite possible that Schleicher was not favored with a single word at the discussions.

The joint communiqué issued by Hitler and Papen on January 5, after news of their conference in Cologne had leaked to the press, read as follows:²³

In response to the false conjectures widely circulated in the press concerning the meeting between Adolf Hitler and the former Reich Chancellor von Papen, the undersigned hereby state that the discussion was exclusively limited to questions regarding the possibility of a major national and political united front, and that in particular the respective views of the parties on the Reich cabinet presently in office were not discussed in any way, as the talk was of a general nature.

Hitler's contribution to the subject matter discussed at this meeting is most clearly evidenced by the speech he gave on the same evening, i.e. January 4, in Detmold, marking the start of the election campaign to the Landtag in Lippe, for—as we have seen—his remarks in political negotiations differed little from his proclamations in public rallies.

He stated in Detmold as follows:²⁴

What brought the National Socialist Movement into being is the yearning for a true community of the German Volk which inspired our nation's best for centuries. This Movement gives us something we cannot express in words, but rather only sense, and it is something we know must be done.

Fate has given us the great task of eliminating the disunity of the German Volk, the roots of its misfortune. Simple emergency decrees passed down from above by means of legislation cannot remedy this plight. The important thing is not that today those in the Wilhelmstrasse imagine that they are governing the National Socialists; what counts is who has conquered the German individual. If today I were given the alternative of becoming Reich Chancellor but not being able to win more workers than hitherto, or on the other hand, not to rule but to win over millions of new working people to the nation within the course of the coming months, I would say: "Keep the government, I am reaching for the Volk! Sooner or later, with this Volk, I will surely unlock the door to the Wilhelmstrasse!"

When we fight for the German individual, we are doing it not with the ultimate goal of securing his vote, but rather because we want to reeducate him

and move him to take on the great fateful task of uniting as a Volk and thus liberating the nation.

Yet the Movement can only fulfill this one great mission if it uncompromisingly exterminates the things which tear our Volk apart. And when the bourgeoisie run our Movement down and ask, "Why do you attack the bourgeoisie as well as the Marxists?" then my answer to them is: Because there would be no Marxists, and would never have been any, had the bourgeois parties not existed previously.

The bourgeois parties would be happy to have only a fraction of the faith, idealism and sense of sacrifice our Movement calls its own. Where would the bourgeoisie be today were it not for this brown army, this brown bulwark, this brown wall!

My opponents have had a generation's time. At least they should refrain from criticizing me. I have worked for thirteen years, spent thirteen years in struggle or in prison for Germany and have created the Volksgemeinschaft of this Movement. What have my critics—who also could have taken on these tasks—accomplished in this same space of time?

All that is good in the ideas of our opponents in power today was stolen from us, and whatever is not from us is not even deserving of criticism. Schleicher's government will be a continuation of Papen's government and will end where Papen's government ended.

I have refused to become a minister without portfolio not because I shy away from the responsibility, but rather because that path does not lead to the goal. In any case, it certainly would have been easier to stand before a microphone every four weeks and read off what an entire ministry has accomplished.

And when people say to me that I should have entered the government and come to power through the back door, then I can only say that I have never learned how to play behind the scenes and I never want to learn it!

I will never allow myself and the Movement to be fobbed off with half-measures, and if they say: then we'll dissolve once more. Do it! It doesn't bother us! It is in any case the German individual we have to fight for.

Neither can the threat of exhausting the voters scare us. In the end, it makes no difference what percentage of the German Volk makes history. The only important thing is that we are the last ones who make history in Germany!

And by the way, when they talk about decline, they should not deceive themselves: the wave will return! The Movement will continue to present its ideas to the people over and over again until they are under our spell.

We will not tire and will continue resolute on our path until the finish. In the end, with our faith, our sacrifice, and our willpower, we will triumph after all.

And thus this election will also take us one step further on the road which leads us upwards to the liberation of Germany!

Hitler's remarks to the effect that he had never learned to "play behind the scenes" and never even known the desire to do so appears rather curious in light of the secret conference he had held with Papen

only shortly before. But the main emphasis of both the Detmold speech and his statements in Cologne lay in the sentence: "The [National Socialist] wave will return!"

November and December 1932 doubtlessly brought an ebb in the flood of National Socialist votes, and Hitler's opponents—including Schleicher—were already gloating in anticipation of what they felt to be the certain decline of the NSDAP.

Hitler's discussions in Cologne alone could not have brought about a change in the political situation: a change required obvious proof of his unbroken popularity and a new advance on the part of the NSDAP.

Hitler was determined to turn the Lippe election results of January 15 into a decisive criterium, similar to the Landtag election in Oldenburg on May 29, 1932, which was to tip the scales and oust the Chancellor.

Tireless as always in election campaigns, for the next ten days Hitler spoke in every corner of the small Land of Lippe-Detmold. In Leopoldshöhe and Örlinghausen he stated on January 5:²⁵

I believe in the triumph of our Movement, because I believe in the future of Germany. Those in power today have projects and plans but not the strength to realize them. I, on the contrary, have laid the groundwork and forged the weapon for the future. The future belongs to whoever wins over and reorganizes the Volk.

Each unsuccessful attempt to break up the Movement by internal strife only proves once again the hardness and iron determination of our community. We were not invited to join the government so that the Movement could accomplish its goals, but rather so that the others could accomplish their goals in spite of the Movement.

I choose not to take the back way, but to step out, freely and openly before the Volk. The men at the top will lose cabinet after cabinet against us until they are forced to give way, not from behind, but from ahead.

We are fighting constantly and everywhere, at every corner, every hour of the day! What is happening now is not the uprising of Germany, but rather an attempt to misuse the uprising of Germany.

A Reich is coming, born of the power of this Movement, and the signs of this coming Reich will be the signs of the Movement.

On January 6, Hitler spoke in Augustdorf and Horn,²⁶ on January 7 in Calldorf and Hohenhausen, and on January 8 at the Schwalenberg Castle.²⁷ In an interview that day with his press chief, Otto Dietrich, Hitler emphasized that any new government would have to include himself as Chancellor. At the same time, he once more confirmed his discussion with Papen:²⁸

Question: The crux of the public attacks and propaganda of your opponents aimed at the very fact of your political leadership appears to revolve around the recurring claim that your consistent opposition to even the present governments—which are in fact endeavoring to gain your support—is rooted in an attempt by you and your Movement to avoid assuming responsibility in the State. Does this argument have any basis in fact?

Answer: No! The fact that our opponents can still afford to make claims of that type is only conceivable as a result of the lack of political training on the one hand and the unfathomable forgetfulness of our intellectual classes in particular on the other. In point of fact, my demand was none other than the transfer of personal responsibility to the NSDAP. However, this naturally requires that the Party then be given the leadership it deserves. To expect me to assume responsibility for what others do is simply ridiculous. The present powers-that-be would never have dared to set a trap like this for the Social Democrats, for instance, and we will show and educate these gentlemen that we too are to be treated decently. Incidentally, I made a simple but straightforward proposal to the Reich President in November for solving the German crisis. If, at that time, the Reich President believed—thanks to the advice of those around him—that he could not answer for giving me the responsibility, then today these men are also responsible for the sad consequences and all the misery which must be suffered by the German Volk due to this refusal.

Question: Is the oppositional press correct in claiming that you, Herr Hitler, have sought contact with Herr von Papen? What is your position particularly in response to the claim that you had attempted to establish a connection via Herr von Papen to the powers in heavy industry allegedly backing him?

Answer: It is obvious that I have not attempted to establish contact with Herr von Papen. But it is equally obvious that I do not allow anyone to dictate with whom I may speak or not speak. I am a politician and shall, if I regard it as expedient, have any talks I choose. I have no intention of letting the rags of any Reich Chancellor who happens to be in office tell me what to do. Germany's heavy industry is a part of the German economy. For that reason I do not need to make "contact" with it any more than with any other economic group. And when a politician like myself has to reckon with all existing factors, he cannot simply charm them away. However, if ever I feel the need in future to take up special contact with any economic group, I certainly do not require a special advocate. National Socialism is also a factor whose existence cannot be ignored. All that gossip and overblown fuss in the press because of the Cologne talks is merely the product of a guilty conscience and the fear resulting from it.

Question: How do you rate the chances for success of the program providing work for the unemployed (Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm) developed by Schleicher's government, the implementation provisions of which have now been disclosed?

Answer: Such programs do not exist for their own sake. Thus I refrain from any judgments on those types of problems and will rather judge only their effects on the German economic crisis in general. But the measures taken by Schleicher's cabinet will not eliminate this crisis.

On January 9, Hitler delivered another campaign speech in Lage (Lippe)²⁹ and then drove to Berlin. The official reason was cited as a visit to the new office buildings of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the paper had been appearing in Berlin as well since January 1 (Berlin and Northern Germany editions). In reality, however, Hitler's presence in Berlin was designed to document once more that he was at the very threshold of power, and it did in fact provoke a great deal of gossip. Schleicher's uncertainty increased daily.

On the return trip from Berlin to the Lippe election campaign, Hitler gave another interview with Otto Dietrich:³⁰

Question: The gutter press in Berlin has been circulating new rumors by the hour regarding your temporary stay in Berlin. Now that your alleged visit with the Reich Chancellor as the reason for your visit has been proven a mere invention of this same press, the papers are now fabricating stories about money problems of the NSDAP, about a Swedish loan, for the Party negotiated in Berlin, and more of the same. What was the real reason for your trip to Berlin?

Answer: My visit to Berlin had been planned for more than two weeks to make use of my one-day break in the Lippe election campaign. Aside from the talks with the Reichstagspräsident Göring and other leading party comrades, its main purpose was a tour of the office buildings and a visit to the editors of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Since newspapers friendly to the present government have already told their readers—yesterday, to be exact—about important clandestine talks which supposedly took place in the evening, I will disclose the location of this “conference.” At the time in question, I was at the opera, once more enjoying a marvelous performance of Verdi's *La Traviata*. I might also note that the positively hysterical preoccupation with my personal doings exhibited by a certain Berlin newspaper is the best indication of the real position which the NSDAP has, contrary to the claims made by this very press.

Question: Who, in your opinion, are the men behind this press campaign?

Answer: I believe that the government press office in Berlin is the source of this political drivél.

Question: People with sharp ears have been writing and saying lately that you, Herr Hitler, are willing to drop your well-known basic demands for taking over the government due to “fear of a dissolution of the Reichstag and new elections.” The reason for this is cited as the claim that the NSDAP is presently in a difficult and tactically unfavorable position. Do you intend to make a statement regarding this question?

Answer: Jawohl. Those allegations are equally stupid and ridiculous inventions. I have so often explained my basic attitudes in regard to the formation of government in depth that the Berlin rags seem to be the only ones with memories short enough to have forgotten them. But it does serve to shed a revealing light on the position of the government. It is not the National Socialist

Party which is in trouble, but rather Schleicher's cabinet. What I prophesied in November has finally come to pass. Thus there is no need for me to fear new elections—the *Herrschaften* will see for themselves on January 15—the government is the one who should be anxious. At any rate, the present cabinet will not accomplish its goal, but I will accomplish mine.

On January 11, Hitler gave another election speech in Lemgo (Lippe), noting:³¹

We will enter the government as soon as we are given both responsibility and leadership! And when they say to us that we will not succeed, then why is it that, when I visit Berlin, the entire Jewish press is as excited as if a comet had crashed to earth?

The struggle goes on! We shall triumph!

On January 12, further campaign speeches in Lipperode and Bad Schlangen followed.³²

In the midst of Hitler's preparations for taking over power, the leader of the SA Gruppe Franken, Wilhelm Stegmann, could no longer wait, and announced his support for radical and illegal methods.

Hitler addressed this party comrade, who lived in Schillingsfürst, in the following telegram on January 12:³³

Because you have chosen to disregard the personal warning I gave you and once again gravely violated the interests of the Party, I hereby not only confirm your dismissal from office previously pronounced by Chief of Staff Röhm, but moreover strip you of your rank as further punishment.

On January 13, Hitler published a statement against the "flood of lies" disseminated by the press:³⁴

In the last few days, the press well-disposed toward the government of the Reich has systematically publicized a flood of untrue allegations about the NSDAP and myself. Among other things, it is alleged that current NSDAP party revenues do not cover current expenditures;

that, for this reason, West German industrialists had also made an "attempt at negotiating" between the former Reich Chancellor Herr von Papen and myself;

that I was willing to accept the political demands of the industrialists in exchange for money;

that I was attempting to procure money from the government in exchange for pledging to tolerate Schleicher's cabinet; and that I had taken out a loan with a Swedish banker by the Jewish name of Markus Wallenberg of four million Reichsmark for myself or the NSDAP in exchange for corresponding securities and political promises.

All of these allegations are completely fictitious and fabricated from beginning to end.

Adolf Hitler

On January 13, Hitler gave election speeches in Barntrup and Blomberg (Lippe), and on January 14 he spoke in Bad Salzuflen.³⁵

The elections to the Landtag in Lippe-Detmold brought the desired results: compared to the election of November 6, the NSDAP fared better at the polls, receiving 38,000 votes to the 33,000 in November and thus 39.6% of the electorate. The Communists lost votes. Thus a right-wing government was able to be formed.

In spite of Lippe's insignificant size, it could not be denied that the NSDAP, the "brown wave," had once again swelled in proportion. The voters who had swayed between the NSDAP and the KPD had obviously once again turned to Hitler.

Hitler's arguments to the effect that he alone could avail to build a dam against Bolshevism had apparently been confirmed once more in Lippe.

Right-wing circles including Hindenburg were similarly impressed by the election results, which seemed to make a right-wing majority a distinct possibility in the Reich as well.

In the following days, Hitler took pains to reinforce this impression. On January 15 and 16 he spoke to the SA and Gauleiter Conventions in Weimar,³⁶ interpreting the Lippe election results on January 16 with the following words:

Whether one achieves triumphs or not and to what extent one achieves them—that is determined, given the right aims, exclusively by the will to triumph and the diligence and labor invested in this triumph. Lippe is proof!

The example of Lippe was also later exploited as proof that Hitler would win the Second World War: he had the willpower needed to triumph.

On January 18, Hitler once more met with Papen for a conference in Berlin.

Hitler had planned a major demonstration for the 22nd of January in memory of the late *Kampfbred* (fight song) composer and SA Sturmführer Horst Wessel, which was to impress upon the Reich capital that his fighting formations, the SA and the SS, were so strong and fear-inspiring that they could march unhindered through the 'red' quarters of Berlin, past the Karl Liebknecht Haus (the Communist headquarters) and across the Bülowplatz.

Everything went according to schedule. There were no serious disruptions to the rank and file of the 35,000 SA men marching through the streets. Following the parade, a memorial ceremony was held at Horst

Wessel's grave at the Nikolai Cemetery, where Hitler made the following remarks:³⁷

Every Volk which struggles to the fore from utter misery and defeat to cleanse and liberate itself also produces vocalists who are able to put into words what the masses bear in their innermost hearts. It is thus that the powerful *Volksbewegung*, the Movement of Germany, has also found the voice able to express what the men in rank feel. With his song, which is sung by millions today, Horst Wessel has erected a monument to himself in ongoing history which shall prevail longer than stone and bronze.

Even after centuries have passed, even when not a stone is left standing in this great city of Berlin, one will be mindful of the greatest German liberation movement and its vocalist.

Comrades, raise the flags. Horst Wessel, who lies under this stone, is not dead. Every day and every hour his spirit is with us, marching in our ranks.

At 6:30 p.m. on the same day, January 22, Hitler spoke before capacity crowds at the Berlin Sportpalast, delivering an address to the party officials (Amtswalters).

In a certain sense this speech warrants special note, for Hitler had also scheduled a private conference for the evening of January 22 with the son of the Reich President, Colonel Oskar von Hindenburg.³⁸

For this reason, Hitler consciously created the impression at the Sportpalast that he had already assumed office and was drawing up plans for the first measures to be instituted. He characterized himself as nothing less than the man who had succeeded in perfecting the time-honored concept of the Prussian Land. At the same time, he did not hesitate to concede that even he could err and make mistakes. However, it was to be the last time he made such an admission in public. He stated in part as follows:³⁹

Today we see more clearly perhaps than ever before the necessity of the existence of the Party and the National Socialist Movement which has become an integral part of German history. When descent, tradition and conceit rip human beings apart, a political will must somehow reunite them.

The accomplishments of this Movement to date consist of no more than what Prussia did long ago after the decline of the old German Empire: to counter the fragmentation of life in Germany in myriad groups, associations, and parties once more with one great unified will of the nation.

This mission of establishing a new platform, upon which every German who has the will to devote himself to his Volk may tread, has been assigned to our Movement and, in fourteen years of struggle, it has already been accomplished to a large extent, and we shall finish it.

It is our great goal to build a foundation guaranteeing the life of our Volk for many centuries to come.

An immense project which we must accomplish on our own, an immense task, for our structure must be a structure for the centuries. Anything great requires struggle, and the path to freedom is a path of struggle. Resistance is there to be broken.

One can steel one's own strength only by combatting the opposition's resistance, and it is only in overcoming this resistance that the justification for our final victory lies. It is essential that our government establish a regiment deeply rooted in the Volk itself and not floating in the clouds and forging plans which can never become reality.

Only when the unity between leadership and following has been reestablished and has evoked the power which lies deeply rooted in the *völkisch* soil, will a regiment be capable of performing great tasks.

But when one is fighting such a heroic battle for the inner uplifting of a Volk, then a steadfastness is required in the face of all those who, blinded by the questions of the day, believe they can find another way which is easier and leads more quickly to success.

We should not be led to believe that tactical dodges can replace principles. Steadfastness—that is primarily the job of the leaders; particularly at crucial moments, it is the leaders who must personify the conscience of the nation, its past and its future.

They must not then give way, not be cowardly nor stoop to motivate their cowardice with empty words. At moments such as these, the leaders must force themselves to make a heroic decision and break the neck of defeatism.

However, when an organization chooses to perform the most difficult tasks, it must make certain that the will of the Volk is expressed in a single voice. A movement can only feel itself called upon to accomplish the greatest of things when it inscribes above its door the words:⁴⁰

Party comrades, national comrades, when you enter here, you must fuse your will with the will of millions of others, then you must merge with this great will. You must become a man and entrust yourself to a leader.

Even I can err and make mistakes, but the decisive point is who has the fewest errors to show in the end. I have chosen this task because I would never in my life have been capable of choosing anything else and never will choose anything else, because it is natural for me that this is my life's work, and with it I either rise or fall.

I will never burden my party comrades with any labor or sacrifice which I would not be willing to shoulder myself, if necessary, be it a prison sentence or be it life itself.

In all probability, these were the same reflections which Hitler presented to Colonel von Hindenburg on the evening of January 22. It is likely that he also pledged his eternal gratitude to the Hindenburg line should the Old Gentleman appoint him Chancellor. And in view of the so-called *Osthilfe* scandal,⁴¹ this was doubtless important. But Hitler would hardly have proceeded so blatantly that one could accuse him of using "a mixture of bribes and blackmail."⁴²

The two men conferred alone at the residence of Joachim von Ribbentrop⁴³ in Berlin-Dahlem. Hindenburg's State Secretary, Dr. Otto Meissner, was also invited, and Göring imparted to him highly confidential information concerning the planned government of the national front. The National Socialists demanded the office of Chancellor, the Reich Ministry of the Interior (for Frick), and a further ministerial post (for Göring).

The other right-wing parties were to be given access to all of the other ministries, and respective appointments were to be made by the Reich President. It is incomprehensible why the State Secretary suddenly found the demands of the National Socialists "moderate" and judged them to be a "concession."⁴⁴ The Nazis wanted the most significant and powerful ministries, and Hitler's demands had not changed from those of November and August of 1932.

After the speeches and conferences on January 22, Hitler could afford to sit back and watch the situation develop. On January 23, he held another conference with Schacht at the Kaiserhof Hotel and delivered a two-hour address on the present political situation to the leaders of the Berlin SA and SS.⁴⁵

In the evening he stepped to the podium before a conference of Amtswalters in Frankfurt an der Oder (Schützenhaussaal) and declared:⁴⁶

The rootlessness and disunity of the present government's economic policy is only a reflection of its own ideological rootlessness and disunity. What I am accusing them of is the fact that their actions are so perfectly unsystematic and haphazard.

We have the Volk behind us, but they are backed merely by their own conceit. Wiping out centuries of rotten tradition and prejudice is a larger task than forming a new government. The mission which Providence has assigned to the National Socialist Movement is that of elevating Germany once more.

If we once again succeed in making Germans out of proletarians and the bourgeoisie, then Germany's future is secure. And if, in light of this goal, I judge a certain government to be fitting, then I will create this government, and no other! I do not believe in advances! It has to be an honest game in which we give the others our strength and, in exchange, they give us the corresponding power.

When people tell me that we would have risen to power in three months at any rate [albeit without holding the Chancellorship in the government], then I answer: then I would rather wait these three months. Have no illusions about the ironclad structure of our Party.

I know that the army of 100,000 under my leaders is as loyal to me as I am loyal to the Movement.

This Movement possesses perseverance, steadfastness, straightforwardness, determination, and boldness. We have once again taken our flag in our fist to continue the struggle with more energy than before on the way to the *Endsieg*.

Schleicher's downfall could only be a matter of days. With the votes of the National Socialists, the Center and the Bavarian People's Party, the Reichstag Council of Elders (*Ältestenrat*) resolved on January 20 to convene the Reichstag on January 31. This date—at the latest—marked Schleicher's downfall, for a vote of no confidence was a certainty. Schleicher was aware of this, particularly as the German Nationalists had declared their opposition to him on January 21. Thus he attempted, on January 23 and 28, to procure an order of dissolution from Hindenburg. His efforts were to no avail.

Events took the course which had been predetermined for weeks: faced with Hindenburg's stance, Schleicher was forced to announce his resignation on January 28. Hindenburg instructed von Papen to clarify the political situation. That Sunday (January 29) was spent in compiling a new list of ministers.

The rumor that Schleicher had planned a putsch using the Potsdam garrison to march against the Wilhelmstrasse⁴⁷ served to accelerate the formation of a new government and to summon Lieutenant General Werner von Blomberg, Commander of Military District (Wehrkreis) I in East Prussia and delegate at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva, as the new Reich Minister of Defense to report to Berlin immediately. He was sworn in even before the other cabinet members on January 30.⁴⁸

Hitler's demands regarding cabinet membership were met. Hindenburg declared his confidence in Hitler on the morning of January 30. There was only one hurdle yet to be overcome: the new Reichstag elections, for which he required Hugenberg's consent. Hitler was determined to insist on this point, even at the expense of losing the entire government formation. Hugenberg knew what a new election would mean: it would give Hitler the decisive—if not absolute—majority and make him independent of the Reich President. In the presence of the entire staff of ministers, Hitler addressed Hugenberg at length and gave his word that this cabinet would remain together for all time. Hitler kept the Reich President waiting twenty minutes beyond the time scheduled for swearing in the cabinet. Finally, under pressure from von Papen as well, Hugenberg succumbed.⁴⁹ Hitler had prevailed.

Now that the worst was over, Hindenburg's blessing could be obtained. After Hitler, all of the other ministers swore the prescribed

oath. Subsequently, the new Reich Chancellor made a short speech to Hindenburg regarding the national aims of the cabinet and his intention to reestablish normal procedures of parliamentary government.⁵⁰

The public was officially notified as follows:⁵¹

The Reich President has designated Herr Adolf Hitler as Reich Chancellor and made the following new appointments to the Government upon his request: Former Reich Chancellor von Papen as Vice Chancellor and Reich Commissar for the Land of Prussia;

Freiherr von Neurath as Reich Foreign Minister;

Former Minister of State and Member of the Reichstag Dr. Wilhelm Frick as Reich Minister of the Interior;

Lieutenant General Freiherr von Blomberg as Reich Minister of Defense;

Graf Schwerin von Krosigk as Reich Minister of Finance;

Privy Finance Councillor and Member of the Reichstag Alfred Hugenberg as Reich Minister of Economy and for Food and Agriculture;

Franz Seldte as Reich Minister of Labor;

Freiherr von Eltz-Rübenach as Reich Minister of Postal Services and Reich Minister of Transportation;

President of the Reichstag Göring as Reich Minister without portfolio and Reich Commissar for Air Traffic;

Reich Minister Göring was appointed Prussian Minister of the Interior;

Reich Commissar for Programs for the Unemployed Gereke has retained his post;

Appointment to the Reich Ministry of justice remained subject to alteration.

The Reich Chancellor took up negotiations on Monday with the Center and the Bavarian People's Party.

The first cabinet meeting took place at 5:00 p.m. that afternoon.

Hitler had made a smart move in appointing National Socialist Walther Funk⁵² as Press Chief of the Reich Government on January 30, 1933. Funk was a native of East Prussia and had been editor-in-chief of the conservative *Berliner Börsenzeitung* for ten years. He was well acquainted and on familiar terms with Reich President von Hindenburg. As Press Chief of the Reich Government, it became his appointed duty to report to the Reich President on the current political situation. Funk's words carried just as much if not more weight than von Papen's with Hindenburg.

Much has been said and written concerning the cabinet Hitler formed on January 30, 1933 and its constitutionality. Even today, there

is little consensus regarding this government, and the views range from its characterization as a "coalition cabinet," a "duumvirate" and a "presidential cabinet."

However, contemporaries' impressions of what Hitler's cabinet was or may have been are less important than the actual constitutional character of this body.

The government was by no means a coalition government in the parliamentary sense of the word. The National Socialists, the German Nationalists and the Stahlhelm had indeed united to form a "government of national concentration" or, respectively, of "national uprising," as it was officially termed.⁵³ However, only the National Socialists and German Nationalists—not the Stahlhelm—were represented in parliament as parties. In the Reichstag elected on November 6, 1932, the National Socialists and the German Nationalists did not have the absolute majority required for a parliamentary coalition government.

A duumvirate, i.e. a government in which two men, in this case the Reich Chancellor and the "Vice Chancellor," would both exercise the same powers, was a constitutional impossibility. Article 56 of the Weimar Constitution provided that the Reich Chancellor alone was to determine the principles of policy.

The cabinet formed on January 30, 1933 was, in essence, a presidential cabinet⁵⁴ in the truest sense of the term.

From the very first hour, Hitler had enjoyed the confidence of the Reich President, as any presidential chancellor must. As early as November 1932, he had made it clear that he would only assume the post of Chancellor if given the President's vote of confidence and the same powers granted to Brüning and von Papen.⁵⁵ He would never have been willing to enter the government on January 30, 1933 unless these conditions had been met.

What are the characteristics of a presidential cabinet? The laws were not promulgated by the Reichstag, but rather took effect by means of "emergency decrees" issued by the Reich President pursuant to Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution and counter-signed by the Reich Chancellor and the respective departmental minister. This is indisputably a mark of the cabinet Hitler formed on January 30, 1933. One look at the *Reichsgesetzblatt* of 1933, Part I, shows that dozens of laws of all types were promulgated between January 30 and the enactment of the Enabling Law on March 24, 1933 by emergency decree of the Reich President, counter-signed by Chancellor Hitler and the respective departmental minister. Even after the Enabling Act had been passed, laws

were enacted—for the last time on March 30, 1933⁵⁶—with the aid of such emergency decrees.

On a parliamentary basis, Hitler could have become Chancellor as early as November 1932. At that time, Hindenburg had been willing to assign him the task of forming a government, for Hitler headed the largest party in the Reichstag. Hitler refused, however, because every single law would have had to be approved by parliament. Moreover, he would have become dependent upon the Center Party.

Hitler was to attempt to convince the Reichstag to tolerate the cabinet he had formed on January 30. In essence, however, this demand constituted a normal condition to which every head of a presidential cabinet had been subjected (Brüning, Papen, and Schleicher). Each of his predecessors had initially regarded such a toleration as possible but then failed nonetheless due to lack of parliamentary support.

Hitler was the first presidential chancellor who immediately took up the task of obtaining a majority in parliament. Although he had the confidence of the Reich President, he knew from the experience of his predecessors that this could change quickly. Under the circumstances prevailing at the time, he could have achieved parliamentary support or toleration by the Center and the Bavarian People's Party, but he regarded this as too unstable, considering that the support of the Center would doubtlessly be short-lived.

Hitler wanted to be absolutely certain: in spite of Hugenberg's initial resistance and by ignoring the Center's willingness to negotiate, he forced new Reichstag elections. What had been denied Schleicher, i.e. the dissolution of the Reichstag, was granted the Reich President's new intimate friend, the presidential chancellor Adolf Hitler.

Hitler knew the Weimar Constitution better than his co-players and adversaries. Thus there was no need for him to make good his publicly declared intention of stepping down from the government controls.

Von Papen's position in the new cabinet was just as insignificant as the Constitution had intended it to be. The Weimar Constitution did not provide for a "vice chancellor" wielding any significant influence, but rather merely for a "deputy chancellor," who only had any real function when the Chancellor was incapacitated by illness or absent. The post was usually filled by the senior minister or one of the other ministers in the cabinet. But even then, political leadership was the responsibility of the Reich Chancellor. Only in the summer of 1932, when the question of allowing the National Socialists to participate in Reich Government arose, did von Papen conceive of instituting a ministerial post solely for

the office of “vice chancellor,” the holder of which would exercise no significant influence in the ongoing process of government, but who would, at least, bear a decorative title.

It is the irony of fate that von Papen of all people, the one who had wanted to shelve Hitler in the powerless position of vice chancellor in 1932, was now allotted this position under Hitler.

Von Papen had the strictly constitutional role of “deputy chancellor” and was allowed, during Hitler’s few absences from January 31 to March 30, 1933, to counter-sign a number of the Reich President’s emergency decrees. His alleged right to be present at every report made by the Chancellor to the President was, if at all anchored in writing, without any constitutional significance whatsoever.

Hitler was in no way obligated to take von Papen with him every time he visited the Reich President. The Weimar Constitution did not provide that the Reich Chancellor required a nursemaid; this would, of course, have been ridiculous. In any case, von Papen seems to have made little use of his purported “right” to be present at Hitler’s reports. In view of his enthusiasm for Hitler, at least in the first few months following the *Machtergreifung*, he most probably would not have dared to interrupt Hitler, much less attempted to influence or sway the Reich President in Hitler’s presence.

On January 30, von Papen was also appointed Reich Commissar for Prussia; this position, however, was surrounded by controversy.

By virtue of the coup of July 20, 1932, the lawful authority of Braun, the Minister-President of Prussia, had been sharply curbed. The Constitutional Court (*Staatsgerichtshof*) had reversed a number of these measures in its judgment of October 25; a further trial was still pending. In essence, the Reich Commissar’s functions were limited to the Prussian police, and these happened to be the same functions which were to be exercised by Göring according to the minister list of January 30. Thus von Papen had little say in Prussia and Hitler, by dissolving the Prussian Landtag by force, ultimately secured that Göring, and not von Papen, was given the post of Minister-President in Prussia.⁵⁷

No amount of quibbling about the nature of the cabinet formed on January 30, 1933 can change the fact that Hitler was given the decisive position of power, namely the leadership of the Reich Government, a position for which he had fought nearly fourteen years. Hitler and all of his followers were convinced from the first day that the Third Reich had come into being on January 30, 1933.

On this very first day, January 30, Hitler issued the following proclamation:⁵⁸

National Socialists! My Party Comrades!

A fourteen-year-long struggle, unparalleled in German history, has now culminated in a great political triumph.

The Reich President von Hindenburg has appointed me, the Führer of the National Socialist Movement, as Chancellor of the German Reich.

National leagues and parties have united in a joint fight for the resurrection of Germany.

The honor witnessed by German history of now being able to take a leading part in fulfilling this task I owe, next to the generous resolve of the Field Marshal, to your loyalty and devotion, my party comrades.

You followed me on cloudy days as unerringly as in the days of good fortune and remained true even after the most crushing defeats, and it is to that fact alone we owe this success.

Enormous is the task which lies before us. We must accomplish it, and we shall accomplish it.

Of you, my party comrades, I have only one major request: give me your confidence and your devotion in this new and great struggle, just as in the past, then the Almighty as well will not deny us His blessings toward reestablishing a German Reich of honor, freedom and domestic peace.

Berlin, January 30, 1933

Adolf Hitler

The news of Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor evoked a positive ecstasy of joy among the many millions of National Socialists throughout Germany on the afternoon and evening of January 30. For three and a half hours, SA, SS and Stahlhelm formations in Berlin marched through the Wilhelmstrasse by torchlight, passing Hindenburg and Hitler, who waved and watched the hundreds of thousands of men filing by from the windows of their chambers.

Not only Berlin, but every major German city staged a similar spectacle. For millions of Germans, a better age seemed to be dawning. For long years they had hoped for this day and so often, apparently so close to their goal, been disappointed. Now that their Führer had seized power, there would be an end to all want.

It should be noted here that, of the millions of Hitler's adherents, a substantial number were idealists. They actually believed Hitler when he stated that Marxist parties were to blame for the entire economic misfortune which gripped the country. They were of the firm conviction that, in serving in the SA and other party organizations, they were serving their Vaterland. Many of Hitler's followers in this period had for years made sacrifices for their ideas; they had suffered oppression,

professional setbacks and dismissals, and had often risked their lives for the national goals Hitler supposedly advocated. Even granted a certain amount of exaggeration in the statistics of the party press, a good number did in fact sacrifice life and property and served sentences as political prisoners. There were, of course, disreputable elements among the ranks of the National Socialists prior to 1933 and those who used violence after the *Machtergreifung*. They were unable to withstand the temptation which lurks wherever power is exercised.

However, the bulk consisted of idealists who had been blinded by Hitler's nationalistic speeches, and they were most disappointed and affected by his unrestrained politics of power and war. They had followed Hitler in trusting confidence, but he exploited them ignominiously.

There were still a few credulous believers among those who became members of the Party between January 31 and April 30, 1933, but there were also many opportunists—called the *Märzgefallene*—who were maneuvering for positions. Those who joined after the four-year membership ban had been lifted in 1937 did so either out of fear that their careers might suffer or because they were unable to comprehend the developments which had, by that time, taken on a quite distinct shape.

The men of the SA and NSKK had the least advantages, for, from 1934 onwards, they regarded their service as a national duty or rather as a reserve duty training exercise; at the same time, they neither solicited nor were given much public recognition. The SS, however, evolved to become an exclusive organization which Hitler reserved for his secret goals.

2

Typically enough, the first declaration Hitler drew up as new Reich Chancellor and responsible leader of German politics at home and abroad was addressed to Austria. On January 31, he sent the following telegram to the Austrian Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss:⁵⁹

Called upon by the Reich President to head the German Government, I hasten to convey to you, Mr. Chancellor, my warmest wishes for the welfare of our German brothers in Austria.

Dollfuss replied the same day:

May I, Herr Reichskanzler, respectfully request that you accept my sincere thanks for the kind notification of your calling to the head of your Reich Government. While most warmly thanking you on behalf of Austria for the best wishes for our welfare, at the same time may I reciprocate with my heartfelt wishes for the welfare of the entire German Volk.

Hitler's speech in Munich on "National Socialism and Art" which had been scheduled weeks in advance for January 31⁶⁰ now had to be cancelled due to his new position in Berlin. His most pressing task at the moment was to outwit the Centrists who were willing to take part in a coalition government. Had Hugenberg caused further difficulties because of the dissolution of the Reichstag, Hitler would have had no choice but to allot to the Center Party the vacant post of Minister of justice in exchange for a temporary toleration in the Reichstag.

As things stood, however, Hitler's January 31 conference with Monsignor Ludwig Kaas, the leader of the Center Party, was a mere matter of form. Kaas dared to confront Hitler afterwards with a few questions concerning the Government's labor program, and this moved Hitler to promptly announce to the cabinet that it was impossible to reach any consensus with the Center.

On February 1, Hindenburg signed the decree dissolving the Reichstag, "now that the formation of a working majority has proven impossible."⁶¹

Franz Gürtner, Minister of Justice up to that time and a longtime patron of Hitler,⁶² was reconfirmed in office.

However, Hitler addressed a letter to the leader of the Center Party in which, clothed in his convoluted style, he coupled insult and injury with his best wishes for close personal relations with the Prelate.⁶³

Berlin, February 1, 1933

My dear Monsignor,

Yesterday I took note of your letter with great interest. The purpose of the conference was to determine whether, and under what conditions, the Center Party would be willing to grant the new Reich Government of National Concentration a working term limited to one year free of the vicissitudes of parliamentary obstruction.

I felt this was necessary, for I perceive this government to be the last and only chance to ward off, by constitutional means, the danger of degeneration of the Volk and Reich.

I believe that I understood you correctly, my dear Monsignor, in concluding from this conference that the Center is presently of the opinion that the current composition of the cabinet fails to provide a sufficiently broad base for its own direct participation in the Government.

In your letter, my dear Monsignor, you pose so many extremely specific questions that detailed answers could only serve any purpose if and when the fundamental condition, i.e. whether or not one can count on this one-year-term for the undisturbed work of the Reich Government, is clarified in advance.

However, this is not the case. Thus I have gathered that a respective binding promise or similar guarantee of the last constitutionally possible prerequisite today for productive work cannot be given on the part of the Center.

Thus, at the moment, there is no need for any further discussion on the points which you, my dear Monsignor, have cited. A discussion of the points cited without the result I have requested would, in the final analysis, lead to a fruitless as well as—on my part—unwelcome embitterment. For nevertheless I dare to continue hoping even today that, if not now, then perhaps at a not too distant point in time an expansion of our front toward eliminating the impending domestic dangers in our Volk could take place.

Due to the fact that, to my chagrin, I am therefore unable to conclude from your letter any clear statement on the question of a guaranteed term for the work of the new government which I regard as a prerequisite; and due to the fact that time is of the essence and I wish, before God and my conscience, to use any and all opportunities to make it possible that the new government can take on its work of saving the nation within the framework of the Constitution, I see no other choice but to suggest to the Reich President that he himself address one last appeal to the German Volk.

February 1, 1933

In the hope and with the request that the personal contacts established with your party friend Dr. Brüning and yourself, my dear Monsignor, will not be broken off for this reason,

I remain yours faithfully,

Adolf Hitler

Late in the evening of February 1, at 10:00 p.m., Hitler spoke for the first time in a radio broadcast. He dressed in his dark blue suit and black tie, as had been his practice in 1932 on the occasion of important speeches.⁶⁴

Hitler read his first proclamation as German head of government, a Proclamation of the Reich Government to the German Volk:⁶⁵

More than fourteen years have passed since that ill-fated day when, blinded by promises at home and abroad, the German Volk lost sight of the most valuable assets of our past and of our Reich, its honor and its freedom, and thus lost everything. Since those days of treachery, the Almighty has withheld His blessing from our Volk. Dissension and hatred have made their way into our midst. In the profoundest distress, millions of the best German men and women from all walks of life watch as the unity of the nation vanishes and dissolves in a muddle of political and egotistical opinions, economic interests and differences in Weltanschauung.

As so often before in our history, Germany has presented a picture of heartbreaking disunity since that day of revolution. We were never given the promised equality and fraternity, and we have lost our liberty. The disintegration of the unity of spirit and will of our Volk at home was followed by the disintegration of its political standing in the world.

Imbued with burning conviction that the German Volk entered the great fight in 1914 without a thought to any guilt on its part and filled only with the burdensome care of having to defend the Reich from attack and preserve the freedom and the very existence of the German Volk, we see in the shattering fate which has plagued us since November 1918 merely the product of our disintegration at home. However, the rest of the world as well has been shaken no less by major crises since then. The historical balance of power, which once played no small part in bringing about an understanding of the necessity for internal solidarity of the nations, with all its positive economic consequences, has been done away with.

The insane conception of victors and vanquished destroys the confidence between nations and with it world economy. But the misery of our Volk is appalling! The starving millions of unemployed proletarians in industry are being followed by the impoverishment of the entire *Mittelstand* and artisan professions. When this disintegration ultimately reaches the German peasants, we will be confronted by a catastrophe of unfathomable dimensions. For not only will a Reich disintegrate at the same time, but also a two-thousand-year-old inheritance of valuable, the most valuable assets of human culture and civilization. The warning signs of this approaching disintegration are all about us. In a single gigantic offensive of willpower and violence, the Communist

method of madness is attempting to poison and disrupt the Volk, which is shaken and uprooted to its innermost core, with the aim of driving it toward an age which would be even worse in relation to the promises of today's Communist spokesmen than the period we have now left behind us in relation to the promises of those same apostles in November 1918.

Beginning with the family and ranging through all of the concepts of honor and loyalty, *Volk und Vaterland*, culture and economy, all the way to the eternal foundation of our morality and our faith: nothing has been spared by this negating, all-destroying dogma. Fourteen years of Marxism have ruined Germany. One year of Bolshevism would destroy Germany. The richest and most beautiful cultural areas of the world today would be transformed into chaos and a heap of ruins. Even the suffering of the last decade and a half could not be compared to the misery of a Europe in whose heart the red flag of destruction had been hoisted. May the thousands of wounded, the innumerable dead which this war has already cost Germany serve as storm clouds warning against the coming tempest.

In these hours when we were overcome by a powerful anxiety as to the existence and the future of the German nation, the aged leader of the World War appealed to us men in the national parties and leagues to fight under him once more as we had at the front, this time at home, in unity and loyalty for the salvation of the Reich. The venerable Reich President has allied himself with us in this noble sense, and therefore we shall vow to God, our conscience and our Volk as national leaders that we may resolutely and steadfastly fulfill the task thus conferred upon us as the National Government.

The inheritance we have taken on is a terrible one.

The task which we must accomplish is the most difficult ever posed to German statesmen within the memory of mankind. But our confidence is unbounded, for we believe in our Volk and in its imperishable virtues. Peasants, workers, and bourgeoisie must all join together to provide the building blocks for the new Reich.

The National Government will therefore regard it as its first and foremost duty to reestablish the unity of spirit and will of our Volk. It will preserve and defend the foundations upon which the power of our nation rests. It will extend its strong, protecting hand over Christianity as the basis of our entire morality, and the family as the germ cell of the body of our Volk and State. It will reawaken in our Volk, beyond the borders of rank and class, its sense of national and political unity and its resultant duties. It will establish reverence for our great past and pride in our old traditions as the basis for the education of our German youth. Thus it will declare a merciless war against spiritual, political and cultural nihilism. Germany must not and will not drown in anarchistic Communism.

It will replace turbulent instincts with national discipline as the guiding rule of our life. In doing so, it will devote great care to those institutions which constitute the true guarantors of the power and strength of our nation.

The National Government will perform the immense task of reorganizing the economy of our Volk with two great four-year plans:

Salvation of the German peasant in order to maintain the food supply and thus the basis of life in our nation.

Salvation of the German worker in an enormous and all-embracing attack on unemployment.

In fourteen years, the November parties have ruined the German peasantry. In fourteen years they have created an army of millions of unemployed. The national government will, with iron determination and unshakable persistence, implement the following plan:

Within four years the German peasant must be rescued from impoverishment.

Within four years unemployment must be finally overcome.

At the same time, this will lay the groundwork for the recovery of the rest of the economy.

The National Government will couple this gigantic task of reorganizing our economy with the task and accomplishment of reorganizing the Reich, the Länder, and the communities, both in administrative and fiscal terms.

Only then will the concept of a federal preservation of the Reich become a full-blooded, real-life certainty.

The concept of a compulsory labor service and the settlement policy number among the cornerstones of this program.

Securing daily bread, however, also includes the performance of social duties for the sick and the aged.

In an austerity administration, promoting employment, maintaining our peasantry, as well as exploiting individual initiative also give the best guarantee for avoiding any experiments which would endanger our currency.

In terms of foreign policy, the National Government regards preserving the right to live and thus regaining the freedom of our Volk as its highest priority. By being resolute in bringing about an end to the chaotic state of affairs in Germany, it will assist in restoring to the community of nations a state of equal worth and thus, however, also a state with equal rights. The Government is impregnated with the immensity of the duty of advocating, together with this free and equal Volk, the preservation and maintenance of a peace which the world needs today more than ever before.

May the understanding of all others assist us in fulfilling this, our most sincere wish, for the welfare of Europe, and more, for the welfare of the whole world. As great as is our love for our army as the bearer of our arms and the symbol of our great past, we would be happy if the world, by limiting its own armaments, would never again make it necessary for us to increase ours. However, if Germany is to experience this political and economic revival and conscientiously fulfill its obligations to the other nations, one decisive step is required: overcoming the Communist infiltration of Germany.

We men of the Government feel that we are responsible to German history for reestablishing the great and orderly body politic and thus finally overcoming class madness and class struggle. It is not any one class we look to, but rather the German Volk, its millions of peasants, bourgeois and workers, who will together either overcome the problems of these times or succumb to them. Resolved and true to our oath, we will thus—in view of the present Reichstag's inability to support this work—ask the German Volk itself to take on this task we call our own.

Reich President von Hindenburg has called upon us and given us the order to use our own unity to restore to the nation the chance for recovery.

Thus we now appeal to the German Volk to take part in signing this deed of reconciliation.

The Government of the National Uprising wants to work, and it will work. It was not this government which led the German nation into ruin for fourteen years; this government wants to lead the nation to the top once more.

It is determined to pay the debt of fourteen years in four years.

But it cannot make the work of reconstruction dependent upon the approval of those who are to blame for the collapse.

The Marxist parties and their fellow travellers have had fourteen years to prove their prowess.

The result is a heap of ruins.

Now, German Volk, give us four years, and then pass judgment upon us!

True to the order of the Field Marshal, we shall begin. May Almighty God look mercifully upon our work, lead our will on the right path, bless our wisdom, and reward us with the confidence of our Volk. We are not fighting for ourselves, but for Germany!

This was the first time a large segment of the German public outside the National Socialist Movement heard and read one of Hitler's proclamations.

The bourgeoisie, which had witnessed Hitler in the non-Nazi press to date as an uneducated ribald and proletarian agitator, was visibly impressed. Many Germans, however, refused to believe Hitler capable of such a proclamation and suspected that his advisors had written the text. It proved a fatal error from the very start that those in power in Germany failed to take accurate stock of Hitler's personality. People believed that he was incompetent and totally unintelligent; they assumed his oral and written remarks to be the work of others and believed him to be under the influence of certain Unterführers or industrialists and obscure backers.

Thus it must be stressed yet again that Hitler had no need for outside assistance in writing speeches and letters. He even refused to make use of the customary drafts of government proclamations prepared by his staff, but rather consistently used his own words. Since 1919 he had allowed no one to correct, much less influence, his preconceived ideas. Goebbels, Göring, Hess, Ribbentrop, Strasser, and Röhm had no influence whatsoever on this man, as little as did, subsequently, Raeder, Dönitz, Blomberg, Keitel, Jodl, Brauchitsch, Rommel, or any of the other German generals, politicians or diplomats. Hitler was never at the receiving end; he was the one who influenced others. Thus it is only characteristic of this trait that a great number of the party leaders,

diplomats and generals held completely different personal views of the problems of the day than Hitler did and that, when Hitler had spoken with them, they subordinated their own views and adopted his in the belief that Hitler's opinions were most likely the better of the two.

It is absurd to assume that von Papen drafted the Reich Government proclamation of February 1, 1933.⁶⁶ One must bear in mind that Hitler had been doing nothing else but composing these types of proclamations and speeches for years.

The proclamation of February 1 is thoroughly consistent with his style.⁶⁷ In any case, prestige considerations would never have allowed him to accept any draft other than his own. He wanted to demonstrate to the cabinet members from the very first that his word was now the only one which carried weight.

Hitler expressed his gratitude to his party comrades for their congratulations in the following announcement:⁶⁸

On the occasion of my appointment to Reich Chancellor, I have received countless congratulatory wishes from my party comrades. Unfortunately, I am not able to thank each and every one, so I may take this opportunity to express my warmest thanks to all of my loyal party comrades.

Berlin, February 1, 1933

Adolf Hitler

Subsequent to Hitler's seizure of power and the National Socialist celebration rallies, a number of bloody clashes occurred in Berlin and other areas of the Reich in which a number of National Socialists were killed or injured. Although Hitler welcomed these incidents, he wanted to delay police action against the Communists and his other adversaries in the hope that this might encourage them to engage in even more flagrant breaches of law and order.

Thus he issued the following proclamation on February 2:⁶⁹

Party Comrades! Men of the SA and SS!

Thirteen years long you have followed me with a discipline seldom witnessed.

The Communist murder organization has been agitating against the national uprising for days.

Keep calm! Preserve order and discipline! Do not allow yourselves to be confused into ignoring my order by spies and provocateurs! The hour for crushing this terror will come.

Adolf Hitler

On February 2, Hitler issued a set of guidelines for the approaching Reichstag election campaign to the party leadership in Berlin.⁷⁰

On the same day he introduced himself as the new Reich Chancellor to the Reichsrat, the representation of the German Länder, and held the following speech:⁷¹

We have taken on the task of government in perhaps the most difficult period in German history. It requires a strong belief not to succumb to doubt in such an hour, but rather to look ahead to the future with confidence and hope. Three factors make up our motivation: first of all, we have confidence in the strength and the industriousness of the German Volk; secondly, we are confident in the capabilities of this Volk and its ingenuity which has, throughout history, repeatedly found ways to survive; lastly, in spite of all the crises and catastrophes, we see before us German soil, German land. And if past generations were able, in defiance of the vicissitudes of fate, ultimately to create from these three sources of strength this great Reich we once witnessed, then it must be possible, and the new government is convinced of this, it must be possible for us as well to nurture this same greatness from these same roots and one day create it anew.

In doing so, we do not only want to use these eternal foundations as the basis for our *völkisch* existence; we also naturally want to use all of the accomplishments and traditions developed in the course of recent history as our basis. We prefer not to see these accomplishments and traditions only in the isolated areas of culture or economics, but naturally in the field of our civic life as well. We do not want to disregard the building blocks which many centuries of German history have created for this Reich; on the contrary: we do not, for instance, want to make the mistake of regulating and centralizing everything which can be regulated and centralized, but rather wish to keep in mind that only those things are to be accomplished uniformly which are absolutely necessary. We would be grateful to be able to count on the assistance of the Länder; we do not want lip-service, we want real support; and we are determined to do everything possible in return, in order to maintain the viability of these historic building blocks of the German Reich. This will become all the more possible the more the Reich and the Länder join forces in the great realization of the urgent need of our time. I myself come from the south, am a citizen of a Northern German State, but I regard myself as a German and live in German history. I do not want to blindly ignore the great and historic deeds and accomplishments of this history but on the contrary, wish to respect everything which past generations have accomplished, including the historical formation of our nation, in the hope that so many more coming generations will also respect what it is we propose to accomplish.

In closing, the Reich Chancellor asked the Reichsrat members for their cooperation in the manner required, so his words, "from all of us in the times of need." Hitler's noteworthy reference to the fact that he came from the south but was a citizen of a Northern German State⁷² admittedly did not suffice to convince the members of the Reichsrat of his federalistic attitude. The body he had addressed was composed, in

the majority, of Social Democrats and members of the Center Party, for the old Prussian cabinet under Braun still presided and the Länder in southern Germany did not have right-wing governments.

The Social Democrat and Ministerial Director Arnold Brecht thus replied to Hitler's speech in his capacity as the deputy of Prussia and felt obliged to remind the Chancellor to adhere to the Constitution, to demand that a constitutional government be reestablished in Prussia, and to lecture Hitler on the causes of unemployment.

Hitler chose not to make any further comment and actually offered his hand when taking his leave from the Social Democrats; inwardly, he was seething and vowed to do away with this Reichsrat as soon as possible. The *Völkischer Beobachter* commented on the session with the headline: "Brecht tries to teach Hitler a lesson!"⁷³

To change the composition of the Reichsrat, new elections to the Prussian Landtag were required; this would enable a right-wing government to take power. Hitler regarded this reelection as a necessity at any rate due to von Papen's post as Reich Commissar.

As early as February 2, the National Socialists in the Prussian Landtag had, according to Hitler's instructions, introduced a motion for the dissolution of the Parliament. The motion did not pass, for the Center naturally felt no urge to relinquish its own key position in this Parliament.

The same reasons caused the failure of another attempt on Hitler's part to make progress in Prussia. The Prussian Constitution provided that a Landtag could be dissolved by a majority resolution of a so-called "triumvirate" composed of the Minister-President (Braun, SPD), the President of the Landtag (Kerrl, NSDAP), and the President of the Staatsrat made up of deputies from the Prussian provinces. This last office was held by the Mayor of the City of Cologne at that time, Konrad Adenauer (Center Party), who naturally voted with Braun to defeat the National Socialist Kerrl and quash the dissolution. Force was the last and only resort. By means of the decree of the Reich President toward "Restoring order to the Government in Prussia" of February 6⁷⁴ which not only constituted a violation of the Constitutions of both the Reich and Prussia, but also contravened the judgment of the Constitutional Court of October 25, 1932, Minister-President Braun was divested of any authority he still exercised and this authority transferred to Reich Commissar von Papen.

In this case Hitler was gladly willing to step back and allow Papen to sign the notorious decree as "deputy to the Reich Chancellor." If ever the matter were taken before the Constitutional Court, which was, after

all, a possibility, then Hitler would doubtlessly have dumped the responsibility on Papen. Although Braun did in fact file suit with the Constitutional Court, proceedings were delayed until the elections on March 5, and Braun's emigration that same day completely changed the constellation. Together with Kerrl, von Papen dissolved the Prussian Landtag. It was the only significant act he accomplished as Reich Commissar for the Land of Prussia in the months from February to April.

But the necessities of domestic policy had not distracted Hitler from his long-term military and foreign policy aims. In order to reach these goals—i.e. acquiring new territories in the East, establishing a Greater German Reich and eliminating France by entering into alliances with England and Italy—he most of all required the aid of the Reichswehr.

On February 3, Hitler made a speech to the Commanders of the Army and the Navy at the Berlin apartment of the Chief of Army Command, Infantry General von Hammerstein-Equord, in which he outlined his general principles. The *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following report of this event:⁷⁵

On the occasion of an invitation from the newly appointed Minister of Defense, Werner von Blomberg, Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler took the opportunity to speak to a major gathering of the highest-ranking Reichswehr officers on the subject of his political aims. Reich Minister of Defense von Blomberg had convened all of the high-ranking generals and representatives of the Navy to this first official contact between the Reichskanzler and the Wehrmacht Command. The Reichskanzler gave a detailed speech on the political situation and the coming developments in Germany which the new Reich Government proposes to bring about.

This meeting is particularly important in light of the new chapter in politics opened on January 30. It demonstrated the close ties between the policy of the new government and the duties of the Wehrmacht, whose key role in preserving the external security of the German Volk will, under the new government, play a more manifest role than hitherto.

Hitler's remarks were reported only in summary form, but their substance was quickly disseminated by those who had heard the speech. No obligation to maintain secrecy had been imposed.⁷⁶

On February 3, Hitler told the Reichswehr generals, as he often did subsequently, that the Army would remain the sole bearer of arms in the Reich; that he by no means envisioned fusing the Army with party formations such as had been done in Italy by the Fascist Militia. The will to fight had to be reinforced with all available means, while Marxist and pacifist views were to be exterminated. Hitler's primary aim was to repeal the Treaty of Versailles and its restrictions on the German military.

He also declared that he would invest every penny he could spare in the Army.

No German head of government after 1918 had made the Reichswehr such an attractive proposition. Thus it comes as no surprise that even those officers who had viewed Hitler with skepticism hitherto were enthusiastic about his views and suppressed any misgivings they might have had.

The promises Hitler made to the Generals in the first few days following his seizure of power were, in fact, put into practice step by step: the elimination of all restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles; the reintroduction of general conscription; the reinstatement of the General Staff; a new Air Force; battleships for the Navy; heavy artillery and tanks for the Army; and the elimination of any and all limitations on military spending imposed by national or international authorities.

When Hitler later granted promotions and freely distributed decorations and money, he succeeded in creating among the Generals devoted paladins who were even willing to tolerate patiently the former corporal's unjust accusations, rude insults and schoolmasterly reprimands without a word of contradiction.

Hitler required not only the support of the Reichswehr, but backing from England and Italy as well. On the same day he spoke to the German Generals—February 3—he therefore granted a number of interviews with English, American and Italian journalists.

Here his remarks were naturally more cautious. He demanded that he first be given four years' time; only then could a balance be drawn on the work he and his government had accomplished. With the air of an honest man he proclaimed that no one wanted peace more than he himself and the German Volk.

The first journalist ushered in was the representative of the *Giornale d'Italia*, which published the interview in an evening edition that same day⁷⁷ In the interview, Hitler stressed the necessity of friendly relations between Germany and Italy.

Italy as well demands recognition of its right of existence. For this reason, both nations are, from their very natures, in the same position and striving for the same goals. Thus it is that much easier to come to a consensus regarding the solution of the major questions concerning both peoples. Everything will be done from the German side which is requisite toward bringing about such agreement.

Hitler closed by hailing the Italian nation, to whose ideals his own were, as he stated, closely related.

The subject matter of the press conference held with representatives of the English and American Press was summarized in an interview with the Associated Press.⁷⁸

First of all, the Chancellor pointed out that the leftist parties had had a completely unrestricted hand for fourteen years.

"Just look at the outcome today," he exclaimed to us. "Give us four years, the constitutional term for a Reichstag, and then let the country pass judgment on us."

In reply to a request for an explanation of the Government's Four Year Plan, Reich Chancellor Hitler stated: "I am glad that you have asked this question. Had I wanted to deliver a propaganda speech for my party, I would have been able to guarantee that unemployment will disappear by March 15 and that agriculture will be restored to its former position by May 1. However, I am more honest than most of my opponents are and have therefore made no such promises. It is impossible to set the ship of government on the right course so quickly. That requires time. Four years is all I ask."

The Chancellor added with a smile: "Don't forget that I am persistent, I have strong nerves. Were I not filled with determination, I would not be standing here before you today."

Following this short conference, a number of correspondents from the English and American press were received, to whom the Chancellor declared:

I hope that the world is aware of what is happening in Germany. There can be no compromise here. Either the red flag of Bolshevism will be planted before long, or Germany will find its way back to its own. I appeal to the world press not to pass premature judgment on the events happening now. I ask that you judge the new government on the basis of its accomplishments and regard these accomplishments as a whole and not pick them apart into isolated fragments.

The Chancellor added special emphasis to these remarks and continued in a louder voice:

I have been described as a man who holds bloodthirsty, inflammatory speeches against foreign states, and the world is now astounded at my moderation. Gentlemen, I have never held an inflammatory speech. On the contrary: my speeches, even those I held ten or twelve years ago, testify to this. Anyone who, like myself, knows war also knows how much energy war consumes. One can only surmise what a future war might bring. Thus no one wants peace more than I do, more than the German Volk does. However, we must insist that we are given rights equal to those of the other nations and are allowed to take our fitting place in the world, just as any American would demand the same for his own country. I cannot imagine that any other patriot would think differently regarding his country than we do regarding ours. Naturally my own interest lies with Germany.

On February 5, Hitler—attired in his brown shirt—attended a funeral service for SA Sturmführer Maikowski and Senior Police Officer Zauritz in the Berlin Cathedral. Both men had been shot in political riots following the torchlight procession of January 30.

Afterwards he flew to Munich and, upon his arrival, issued the following announcement:⁷⁹

Munich, February 5

The Reich Press Office of the NSDAP announces as follows:

Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler landed in Munich at nightfall on a flight from Berlin. The Führer is visiting Munich primarily for personal reasons, and, in addition, to prepare the election to the Reichstag. As is known, the leadership of the National Socialist Movement will also remain in Munich in future. Adolf Hitler, who also has an extraordinary personal attachment to Munich, will maintain his actual residence here.⁸⁰

Incidentally, the Führer receives no salary as Reich Chancellor; due to the fact that he earns his own income as a writer, he has waived claim to his salary as Reich Chancellor.

Hitler had announced his intention of waiving his salary claim prior to his seizure of power.⁸¹ Given German bureaucracy, it proved quite difficult, as it had the year before in Brunswick, to reroute the money for other purposes.

One interview which Hitler gave to the reporter from the *Daily Mail*, Colonel Etherton, met with disapproval upon its publication; Hitler thereupon had the following “authentic text” published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.⁸²

Berlin, February 13

On February 6, the Reich Chancellor granted an interview to the English Colonel Etherton, who was acting as a representative of the *Daily Mail* and other associated organs of the press.

However, the interview which had been given to Colonel Etherton in writing after the conference was not published in the *Daily Mail* on February 12, but in the *Sunday Express*, in a completely distorted version containing arbitrary changes and additions, which had neither been brought to the attention nor received the approval of the competent German authorities. Evidently, the writer used fragments from a former interview and falsely attributed other remarks to the Reich Chancellor.

We hereby publish the text of the interview, which began with Colonel Etherton’s question to the Reich Chancellor as to his views on disarmament. The Reichskanzler: “Every German Government is naturally of the opinion that disarmament is worth striving for with all our might—not some kind of disarmament bogged down in restrictive clauses, but rather an honest and forthright one.

"The solution of this difficult problem depends mainly upon how the Anglo-Saxon peoples, i.e. the British and the Americans, view this question and how much they really plan to work to make disarmament a reality.

"For Germany's part, it has made its contribution to the solution of this problem not only in theoretical terms: it has actually disarmed a gigantic army to such an extent that only a disproportionately small force remains."

In reply to the question of what the Reich Chancellor thinks of the Treaty of Versailles, he stated:

"The Treaty of Versailles is a misfortune not only as regards Germany, but also as regards other peoples. It is an unfortunate mistake to want to divide the world into victors and vanquished; the attempt to make such a division undermines mutual trust among peoples, which also pervades the economy, an area which has been done the greatest injustice by virtue of this Treaty; in regard to the chances for improving this miscalculated Treaty, we are combatting all damaging differences of opinion between the nations which it has brought about.

"Certainly one can differentiate, shortly after a war, between the victors and the vanquished, but this can never, ever serve as a basis for a world order.

"I believe that we are not alone in crying out for a revision of the Treaty of Versailles, that one day the whole world will join in this cry. In any case, every German Government will demand that the injustice provided for in this Treaty is righted."

In answer to the question as to how the Reich Chancellor believes France will react to these endeavors, the Chancellor replied that, at present, he is still hoping that Paris will also recognize how untenable the Treaties of 1919 are.

Asked to comment on the continual French armament, Reichskanzler Hitler stated: "I believe not only we, but the other states as well, are surprised at the amount of money the French have at their disposal for which they seem to have no purpose. We demand that the existence of every nation be secured to the extent required by its environment. For our part, we also have the right to demand this as laid down in the records of the League of Nations, and we will demand it.

"The situation as it is today has never before existed in history. Even in 1814, when the allies united against the imperious attempt to force Europe to subject itself to French domination, although they crushed Napoleon's rule, no one insisted that France be branded as forever vanquished and stripped bare of all its rights."

Asked about the so-called "Polish Corridor," the Reich Chancellor noted that, in his opinion, this constituted a particularly grave injustice to the German nation.

In regard to the problems of Communism, he added in closing that this was not a question involving a foreign state, but rather the manifestation of an infiltration which presented a domestic problem. He was of the opinion that Communism must be overcome, and exterminated in Germany in order to facilitate peaceful development and allow the German nation to flourish once more.

On February 8, Hitler was back in Berlin to speak before the leaders of the German press.⁸³ He wanted to win their approval for the new restrictions on the right of freedom of assembly and freedom of the press which he had just imposed with the “Emergency Decree for the Protection of the German Volk” (*Notverordnung zum Schutz des deutschen Volkes*) of February 4,⁸⁴ and thus was more than gracious.

He and the Reich Government were in no way interested in gagging the press, he declared. However, the Reich Government must be able to expect the press to concede that the new men in power had the good intention of doing their best for *Volk und Vaterland*. Hitler launched on an excursion through history and recapitulated faulty judgments on the part of the German press in the period from 1859 to 1871 and in regard to Richard Wagner. His interest now, so he stated, lay in protecting the current press from making similar errors. At the end of his speech, however, he changed his tune and declared that extremely drastic measures were called for against those who wilfully attempted to harm Germany [i.e. Hitler].

As has been evidenced, the initial week following Hitler’s advent to power was so packed with all sorts of activities that Hitler had been unable to indulge in his favorite pastime, i.e. speaking to the masses.

However, he more than made up for this now by attending numerous rallies.

On February 10, Hitler spoke for the first time as Reich Chancellor at the Berlin Sportpalast, the scene of so many of his appearances during the ‘time of struggle.’

It was there he had for years blamed the “November Criminals” for Germany’s misfortune. He had been the most zealous advocate of the “stab-in-the-back” theory, according to which those men who had taken over the government in November 1918 following the military collapse of the Empire had robbed the German Army of their victory. In reality however, the Supreme Command of the Imperial Army, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, had been the ones who—as early as September 1918—had demanded an armistice within 24 hours, recognizing that the German Army could no longer withstand the enemy’s attacks. By that time, the question of how long the German front could hold out against the united world powers was only a matter of simple arithmetic.

Hitler had warned the “November Criminals” that, when he took power, he would “let their heads roll.”⁸⁵ Now that he had become Chancellor, it might have been interesting to see which alleged “November Criminals” he would prosecute. But in this first speech after January 30—

and in all subsequent speeches—it became evident that he would do nothing of the sort, for the “November Criminals” had been only an opportune figment of his imagination.

Hitler concentrated on new grievances: the chaos the Weimar parties had left behind after fourteen years in office, and the “crime of inflation,” a theme which was certain to elicit applause from the entire audience. The inflation which had plagued Germany after the First World War was generally regarded as a fraud, and the German people led to believe that they had been robbed of their hard-earned savings by an obscure group of exploiters, Jews and enemy aliens. Even today, many are still unaware of the fact that war, due to loss of production and the disruption of money values, is perforce accompanied by a currency devaluation which affects both victors and vanquished, although the vanquished are naturally hit harder by the blow to their economy. This phenomenon did not occur for the first time after World War I; it has been manifested after every war since the introduction of monetary currency.

Those listening to Hitler in the Berlin Sportpalast and throughout Germany (every radio station broadcast the speech) on this February 10, 1933 naturally had no idea what Germany would be like twelve years later. They were still impressed by Hitler’s recapitulations of the past and prophecies for the future. Following the obligatory “party narrative,” the long-winded recapitulation of the period of struggle since 1919, he turned to rail against the economic policies of the Weimar system parties:⁸⁶

Then they committed the crime of inflation, and after this rampage on the part of their Minister Hilferding, a ruinous usury set in.

Outrageously exorbitant interest rates, which should never have been allowed to go unpunished in any state, are now part and parcel of the “social” Republic, and this is where the destruction of production begins, the destruction wreaked by these Marxist theories of economics as such, and moreover by the madness of a taxation policy which sees to the rest; and now we witness how class upon class are collapsing, how hundreds of thousands, gradually driven to despair, are losing their livelihoods; and how, year after year, tens of thousands of bankruptcies and hundreds of thousands of compulsory auctions are taking place. Then the peasantry starts to become impoverished, the most industrious class in the entire Volk is driven to ruin, can no longer exist, and then this process spreads back to the cities, and the army of unemployed begins to grow: one million, two, three, four million, five million, six million, seven million; today the number might actually lie between seven and eight million.

They destroyed what they could in fourteen years of work, and no one did anything to stop them.

Today this distress can perhaps be best illustrated by a single comparison. One Land: Thuringia. Total revenues from its communities amount to 26 million marks. This money must suffice to defray the costs of their administration and cover the maintenance of their public buildings as well as everything they spend for schools and educational purposes. This money must cover what they spend on welfare. A total of 26 million in revenues, and welfare support alone requires 45 million.

That's what Germany looks like today! Under the rule of these parties who have ruined our Volk for fourteen years. The only question is, for how much longer? Because of my conviction that we must begin with the rescue work now if we do not want to come too late, I declared my willingness on January 30 to make use of the Movement—which has meanwhile swelled from seven men to a force of twelve million—toward saving the German *Volk und Vaterland*.

Our opponents are asking about our program.⁸⁷ My national comrades, I could now pose the question to these same opponents: "Where was your program?" Did you actually intend to have happen what did happen to Germany? Was that your program, or didn't you want that? Who prevented you from doing the opposite? Surely they do not intend to now suddenly recall that they bear the responsibility for fourteen years. However, we shall both remind and reproach them and thus make certain that their conscience may not rest, that their memory does not fade.

When they say, "Show us the details of your program," then my only answer is this: any government at any time would presumably have been able to have a program with a few concrete points. But after your fine state of affairs, after your dabbling, after your subversion, the German Volk must be rebuilt from top to bottom, just as you destroyed it from top to bottom! That is our program! And a number of great tasks tower before us. The best and thus the first item on our program is: we do not want to lie and we do not want to con. This is the reason why I have refused ever to step before this Volk and make cheap promises. No one here can stand up against me and testify that I have ever said that Germany's resurrection was only a matter of a few days. Again and again I preach: the resurrection of the German nation is a question of recovering the inner strength and health of the German Volk.

Just as I myself have now worked for fourteen years, untiringly and without ever wavering, to build this Movement; and just as I have succeeded in turning seven men into a force of twelve million, in the same way I want and we all want to build and work on giving new heart to our German Volk. Just as this Movement today has been given the responsibility of the leadership of the German Reich, so shall we one day lead this German Reich back to life and to greatness. We are determined to allow nothing to shake us in this conviction.

Thus I come to the second item on our program. I do not want to promise them that this resurrection of the German Volk will come of itself.

We are willing to work, but the Volk must help us. It should never make the mistake of believing that life, liberty and happiness will fall from heaven. Everything is rooted in one's own will, in one's own work.

And thirdly, we wish to have all of our efforts guided by one realization, one conviction: we shall never believe in foreign help, never in help which lies

outside our own nation, outside our own Volk. The future of the German Volk lies in itself alone. Only when we have succeeded in leading this German Volk onwards by means of its own work, its own industriousness, its own defiance, and its own perseverance—only then will we rise up, just as our fathers once made Germany great, not with the help of others, but on their own.

The fourth item on our program dictates that we rebuild our Volk not according to theories hatched by some alien brain, but according to the eternal laws valid for all time. Not according to theories of class, not according to concepts of class. We can summarize our fifth item in a single realization:

The fundamentals of our life are founded on values which no one can take away from us except we ourselves; they are founded on our own flesh and blood and willpower and in our soil. *Volk und Erde*—those are the two roots from which we will draw our strength and upon which we propose to base our resolves. And this brings us thus to our sixth item, clearly the goal of our struggle: the preservation of this Volk and this soil, the preservation of this Volk for the future, in the realization that this alone can constitute our reason for being. It is not for ideas that we live, not for theories or fantastic party programs; no, we live and fight for the German Volk, for the preservation of its existence, that it may undertake its own struggle for existence, and we are thereby convinced that only in this way do we make our contribution to what everyone else so gladly places in the foreground: world peace.

This peace has always required strong peoples who strive for and protect it. World culture is founded upon the cultures of the different nations and peoples. A world economy is only conceivable if supported by the economies of healthy individual nations.

In starting with our own Volk, we are assisting in the reconstruction of the entire world in that we are repairing one building block which cannot be removed from the framework and structure of the rest of the world.

And another item reads: because we perceive our highest goal to be the preservation of our Volk, enabling it to undertake its own struggle for existence, we must eliminate the causes of our own disintegration and thus bring about the reconciliation of the German classes. A goal which cannot be achieved in six weeks or four months if others have been laboring at this decay for seventy years. But a goal which we always keep in mind, because we shall rebuild this new community ourselves and slowly eliminate the manifestations of this disintegration. The parties which support this class division can, however, be certain that as long as the Almighty keeps me alive, my resolve and my will to destroy them will know no bounds. Never, never will I stray from the task of stamping out Marxism and its side effects in Germany, and never will I be willing to make any compromise on this point.

There can be only one victor: either Marxism or the German Volk! And Germany will triumph!

In bringing about this reconciliation of the classes, directly and indirectly, we want to proceed in leading this united German Volk back to the eternal sources of its strength; we want, by means of an education starting in the cradle, to implant in young minds a belief in a God and the belief in our Volk. Then we want to resurrect this Volk on the foundation of the German peasants, the

cornerstones of all *völkisch* life. When I fight for the future of Germany, I must fight for German soil and I must fight for the German peasant. He renews us, he gives us the people in the cities, he has been the everlasting source for millenniums, and his existence must be secured.

And then I proceed to the second pillar of our national tradition: the German worker—the German worker who, in future, shall no longer and must no longer be an alien in the German Reich; whom we want to lead back to the community of our Volk and for whom we will break down the doors so that he, too, can become part of the German Volksgemeinschaft as one of the bulwarks of the German nation. We will then ensure that the German spirit has the opportunity to unfold; we want to restore the value of character and the creative power of the individual to their everlasting prerogatives. Thus we want to break with all the manifestations of a rotten democracy and place in its stead the everlasting realization that everything which is great can originate only in the power of the individual and that everything which is to be preserved must be entrusted once more to the ability of the individual. We will combat the manifestations of our parliamentary and democratic system, which leads us to our twelfth item—restoring decency to our Volk. In addition to decency in all areas of our life: decency in our administration, decency in public life, and decency in our culture as well, we want to restore German honor, to restore its due respect and the commitment to it, and we want to engrave upon our hearts the commitment to freedom; in doing so, we desire to bestow once more upon the Volk a genuinely German culture with German art, German architecture, and German music, which shall restore to us our soul, and we shall thus evoke reverence for the great traditions of our Volk; evoke deep reverence for the accomplishments of the past, a humble admiration for the great men of German history.

We want to lead our youth back to this glorious Reich of our past. Humbled shall they bow before those who lived before us and labored and worked and toiled so that they could live today. And we want most of all to educate this youth to revere those who once made the most difficult sacrifice for the life of our Volk and the future of our Volk. For all the damage these fourteen years wrought, their worst crime was that they defrauded two million dead of their sacrifice, and these two million shall rise anew before the eyes of our youth as an eternal warning, as a demand that they be revenged. We want to educate our youth to revere our time-honored army, which they should remember, which they should admire, and in which they should once more recognize the powerful expression of the strength of the German nation, the epitome of the greatest achievement our Volk has ever accomplished in its history.

Thus this program will be a program of national resurrection in all areas of life, intolerant against anyone who sins against the nation, but a brother and friend to anyone who has the will to fight with us for the resurrection of his Volk, of our nation.

Therefore I today address my final appeal to my Volksgenossen:

On January 30, we took over government. Devastating conditions have descended upon our Volk. It is our desire to remedy them, and we will succeed in doing so. Just as we have eliminated these adversaries despite all the scorn, we shall also eliminate the consequences of their rule.

To do justice to God and our own conscience, we have turned once more to the German Volk. It shall now play a helping role.

It will not deter us should the German Volk abandon us in this hour. We will adhere to whatever is necessary to keep Germany from degenerating. However, it is our wish that this age of restoration of the German nation be associated not only with a few names, but with the name of the German Volk itself; that the government not be working alone, but that a mass of millions come to stand behind this government; that the government have the will, with the aid of this backing, to fortify us once again for this great and difficult task. I know that, were the graves to open today, the ghosts of the past who once fought and died for Germany would float aloft, and our place today would be behind them. All the great men of our history, of this I am certain, are behind us today and watch over our work and our labors.

For fourteen years the parties of disintegration, of the November Revolution, have seduced and abused the German Volk. For fourteen years they wreaked destruction, infiltration, and dissolution. Considering this, it is not presumptuous of me to stand before the nation today and plead of it: German Volk, give us four years' time and then pass judgment upon us. German Volk, give us four years, and I swear to you, just as we, just as I have taken this office, so shall I leave it.

I have done it neither for salary nor for wages; I have done it for your sake! It has been the most difficult decision of my life. I dared to make it because I believed that it had to be.

I have dared to make this decision because I am certain that one cannot afford to hesitate any longer.

I have dared to make this decision because it is my conviction that our Volk will finally return to its senses and that, even if millions might curse us today, the hour will come in which they will march with us after all, having recognized that we really wanted nothing but the best and had no other goal in sight than serving what is, to us, most precious on earth.

Hitler was brazen enough to claim that it had been "the most difficult decision of his life" to become Reich Chancellor—although he had 'struggled' for fourteen years for nothing other than this very post! As a matter of fact, however, he frequently proclaimed in subsequent years that one thing or another had been "the most difficult decision of his life."⁸⁸

In his speech, Hitler cited program item no. 1 as "We do not want to lie and we do not want to con!" As long as things are going well, it is, of course, not difficult to tell the truth. However, when Hitler's star began to wane in the Second World War and the difficulties refused to end, he conned his way through no less than other governments had done before him and led the people to believe that there was still some way out, quite cognizant of the fact throughout that the situation was hopeless. He even lied in this speech on February 10 when he promised:

“German Volk, give us four years, and I swear to you, just as we, just as I have taken this office, so shall I leave it.”

This oath was nothing but perjury, for he had declared in October 1932: “When I once enter the government, I do not intend to leave it”⁸⁹ or “If we do one day achieve power, then we will hold onto it, so help us God.”⁹⁰

It was out of the question that Hitler would submit to the judgment of the people or much less consider stepping down four years later—or in 1945. Throughout 1937, a year in which Hitler would have had nothing to fear from the people’s judgment, not a single plebiscite or election took place, although he had declared a few short months before his ascent to power: “Just as the peasant must till his field year after year, so must a statesman till his Volk [by means of plebiscites].”⁹¹

Hitler had something special in mind for the closing of his speech on February 10, 1933. He ended his address, which had lasted for several hours, by paraphrasing the Protestant version of the Lord’s Prayer,⁹² evidently with the design—as a Catholic—of impressing the Protestants:

For I cannot divest myself of my faith in my Volk, cannot disassociate myself from the conviction that this nation will one day rise again, cannot divorce myself from my love for this, my Volk, and I cherish the firm conviction that the hour will come at last in which the millions who despise us today will stand by us and with us will hail the new, hard-won and painfully acquired German Reich we have created together, the new German kingdom of greatness and power and glory and justice. Amen.

It appears that Hitler took pains to earn the title of “Nazi Padre” (*Nazi-Feldprediger*) bestowed upon him by the Social Democratic press years before.

On February 11, Hitler made an appearance of a completely different nature. Festively attired in a cutaway coat, he inaugurated the opening of the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition on the Kaiserdamm in Berlin. It was the first time a Reich Chancellor had opened an exhibition of this sort, and the magnates of the automobile industry were flattered by the honor. Their satisfaction increased when Hitler presented himself not only as a respectable and responsible statesman but as a knowledgeable expert on motorization as well.

His speech commenced with a lengthy perspective on the evolution of the various means of transportation in general and Germany’s outstanding contribution to this field in particular.

Proceeding to more practical questions, he declared:⁹³

As I am today given the honor of speaking to you at the request of the Reich President, my dear Gentlemen of the [automobile] industry, I would not want to neglect conveying to you my opinion regarding what I believe to be necessary toward promoting what is probably today's most important industry.

1. Separation of the state motor traffic syndicate from the present realm of transportation. The automobile, by its very nature, is more closely affiliated with the airplane than with the railroad. Automobiles and airplanes have a common basis in the motor industry. Without the development of, for instance, the diesel engine for motor traffic, it would have been practically impossible to lay the necessary groundwork for its utilization in aviation.

2. Gradual reduction of the tax burden.

3. Institution and implementation of a large-scale roadbuilding program.

4. Promotion of sports events.

Just as the horse and cart once burned their trails and the railroad built its required track network, so must motorized traffic be supplied with the requisite roads. In the past, one attempted to measure a people's standard of living in terms of track kilometers; in the future, road kilometers for motorized traffic will replace this yardstick.

These are momentous tasks which are also part of the program for the reconstruction of the German economy!

Now I would like to thank you on behalf of the Reich President and the Reich Government for everything you have accomplished in the meantime on your own initiative. We are able to view this attractive exhibition today thanks to three factors which I would like to recall here:

You businessmen and leaders of industry and commerce have possessed the boldness not to abandon the struggle even in these troubled times, but to take up the fight against the foreign automobile industry, which is, in part, so much better situated.

But I would also like to thank the countless German designers and technicians whose genius is creating wondrous works of human invention. It is regrettable that our Volk is rarely given the opportunity to become acquainted with these nameless men who, by designing our cars, not only make hundreds of thousands of individuals happy, but have also opened up new and comfortable means of transportation for millions across the board of motorized traffic.

And I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to that great army of our German workers, whose industriousness and ability and tremendous conscientiousness in their work makes it possible to transform technological ideas into machines which can be described as real masterpieces of precision as well as aesthetic beauty.

Lastly, I wish to commemorate the German Volk. May it, as well, fully appreciate the work, industriousness and genius of so many efforts. May it here, as well, revere its German masters of brains and brawn, and may it never forget that many tens of thousands of our Volksgenossen are without work and have the right to expect that the entire Volk remember these comrades and, out of solidarity with their need, recognize their brotherhood with German workers.

With this hope, I hereby with proud confidence declare this Automobile Exhibition on behalf of the Reich President open to the public.

Following this successful speech to the heads of the auto industry, Hitler changed back to his brown uniform and flew to Kassel for a speech celebrating the inauguration of the Adolf Hitler Haus on February 11. In essence, he repeated the remarks he had made in the Sportpalast the day before in a somewhat revised form and added:⁹⁴

The age of international solidarity is over. The national solidarity of the German Volk will take its place!

On February 12, Hitler attended a memorial ceremony in Leipzig commemorating the 50th anniversary of Richard Wagner's death; he did not, however, make any remarks on the occasion.

On February 14, Hitler received representatives of the entire National Socialist press in the Reich Chancellory and outlined what he expected of them, namely:⁹⁵

The education of the entire German press to perceive of service to the Volk as its governing principle, from which the press derived the justification for its very existence as a public facility.

In the place of irresponsible sensationalism and angling for popularity, which unfortunately continued to dominate a major part of Germany's press even today, the German press was to establish as its future goal a genuine means of expression and a true reflection of German life and spirit.

He would, the Chancellor stated, support the German press in accomplishing these great tasks, which unfortunately had frequently been subordinated to other interests by a major part of the press today, just as he would, in regard to the type of journalism which abused its freedom to operate in a public scope for anti-national agitation or tolerated and covered up for these types of elements in its own ranks due to misconceived solidarity, bring those feelings to bear which this type of journalism deserved.

On the same day, Hitler instructed an assembly of SA and SS leaders in Berlin as to the particulars of their role in conducting the election campaign.⁹⁶

On February 15, Hitler addressed associations of war victims (*Kriegsopferverbände*) at a reception in the Reich Chancellory and declared that he would "tackle the problem of victims of war at its very roots."⁹⁷

That evening he continued his election campaign in Stuttgart. Württemberg was still governed by the Center Party, and Hitler was keen to settle accounts with its head, President Bolz, as a standin, so to speak, for the entire Center. Bolz had issued a statement rejecting Hitler's new government on the grounds that he, Bolz, supported freedom. Now Hitler replied to him in the heart of Stuttgart:⁹⁸

I can understand when a State President judges that the hour has come for a confrontation with the new age. I am gladly willing to excuse the less than objective phrases which were used in this context, for it is not difficult to understand the internal uneasiness and nervousness of this man, of this representative of days past. Thus I would like to refrain from replying in kind; I prefer to answer objectively and dismiss each charge step by step.

In reply to State President Bolz' accusation that we have dealt in nothing but empty words for twelve years, I may state:

It was not we who were in power for these twelve years, but rather the State President's party. The Volk will certainly have realized by now which side was voicing these empty phrases. Twelve years constitute conclusive evidence; otherwise the others would not have joined us. In these long years of rule by the State President's party, we have witnessed disintegration in every single sector.

It astounds me that a representative of the Center is trying to tell us something about freedom. Did our Movement not go through an outrageous chain of suppression and gagging for thirteen years at the hands of those who address us like this today? Was that freedom, when our Movement was punished and suppressed for its national aspirations? When our fighters were thrown into prison, when the shirts of our SA men were ripped off their backs, when our press was ruthlessly prohibited and when we were made to suffer everything else in these thirteen years? Those who made no mention of our freedom for fourteen years have no right to talk about it today. As Chancellor I need only use all those means once used against the friends of the nation. I need only use one law for the protection of the national state, just as they made a law for the protection of the Republic back then, and then they would realize that not everything they called freedom was worthy of the name.

And when these parties claim today that at least a gradual improvement had been in the offing, all I can say is that this did not come about because of them, but rather because this young Movement had come to life. If there is a people in Geneva who is well-disposed to us today, it is not they, but we who are to thank for initiating this development. Today they say that Christianity is in danger, that the Catholic faith is threatened. My reply to them is: for the time being, Christians and not international atheists are now standing at Germany's fore.

I am not merely talking about Christianity; I confess that I will never ally myself with the parties which aim to destroy Christianity. Fourteen years they have gone arm in arm with atheism. At no time was greater damage ever done to Christianity than in those years when the Christian parties ruled side by side with those who denied the very existence of God. Germany's entire cultural life was shattered and contaminated in this period.

It shall be our task to burn out these manifestations of degeneracy in literature, theater, schools, and the press—that is, in our entire culture—and to eliminate the poison which has been permeating every facet of our lives for these past fourteen years.

And were their policies in the economic sector Christian policies? Was the inflation which accompanied their rule supposed to be a Christian undertaking?

Were the destruction of the German economy, the impoverishment of the artisan class, the collapse of the farms, the unrelenting increase in unemployment, all of which we witnessed for fourteen years, acts of Christianity?

And when today you say: we need a few more years to change this situation, then I answer: no, now it is too late for you to change things. You had fourteen years, during which the heavens gave you all the power you needed to demonstrate what you were capable of. You have failed on every count: your work has wrought only one long string of horrible aberrations.

When today we are told that we have no program, my answer is:

For two years now this other Germany has subsisted on burglaries from our store of ideas.

All of the plans for providing work for the unemployed, for labor service, etc.—they are not the work of State President Bolz; they come from our program of reconstruction from which they have been extracted, thus making their implementation outside of the framework of the program a complete impossibility. I repeat that our fight against Marxism will be relentless, and that every movement which allies itself to Marxism will come to grief with it. We do not want an internal war between brothers, and we regard as our allies all those wishing to join in our work of reconstruction. But let there be no doubt of one thing: The time of international Marxist-pacifist infiltration and destruction of our Vaterland is over.

On March 5, the German Volk is called upon once more to make its own decision. It shall decide whether it wishes to relive the last fourteen years, or march with us into a future we shall form with the power which lies within us. I am willing to extend my hand to anyone who wishes to help us, even to those who have been blinded hitherto.

I will refrain, in this campaign, from using funds allotted for combatting crime, although I would have more reason to do so than the others.

But together with my allies, I am determined to not allow Germany under any circumstances to revert to the rule of the recent past.

Germany must never again and shall never again fall back into the hands of those who have been its undoing.

Hitler made it very clear in this speech that, should the election on March 5 fail to result in a majority for his cabinet, “under no circumstances” would he resign; on the contrary, he would take action against the remaining Länder Governments of the Weimar regime. “The day will come when even Herr Bolz will be forced to step down,”⁹⁹ he declared in Stuttgart on February 15. However, he did not have this passage printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.

On February 16, Hitler was back in Berlin; on February 17, he delivered a campaign speech in the Dortmund Westfalenhalle.¹⁰⁰

On February 18, Hitler attended conferences in Munich, and on the following day he once again held a campaign speech, this time in the Cologne Exhibition Hall.¹⁰¹

On February 20, Hitler addressed leading industrialists assembled at the Reichspräsidentenpalais in Berlin for a change.¹⁰² Here he again left no doubt that the results of the March 5 election would have no impact whatsoever on the direction German Government had taken.

In the next few days, Hitler once more granted interviews to foreign journalists. To the representative of the *Budapest Hirlap* he disclosed that the NSDAP would capture at least three million votes in the March 5 election.¹⁰³ However, mindful of his false prognosis regarding the first round of presidential election in 1932, he added:

But in any case the figures are of no interest to me, our victory is a certainty, an absolute certainty.

Hitler relayed his greetings to the “brave and chivalrous Hungarian nation” and stressed the friendly relations between the two countries and the similar fate of Germany and Hungary after the World War.

In his interview with Louis P. Lochner of the Associated Press,¹⁰⁴ Hitler also made a point of noting Germany’s friendly attitude toward America and voiced his support for the redemption of private foreign debts. He went into depth on the problem of the militia, stating as follows:

The compulsory labor service to which we aspire has nothing in common with a militia. A militia should serve as a form of national defense. The concept of compulsory labor service originated in the catastrophic economic need and its resultant unemployment. Compulsory labor service is designed primarily to prevent hundreds of thousands of our young workers from helplessly degenerating on our streets. However, providing a general education in the world of work will also help to bridge the gap between class differences. As a National Socialist, I regard a general compulsory labor service as a means of providing an education in respect for work. Our young people should learn that work ennobles man.

In the year 1919, Germany suggested that we be given permission to establish a militia. At that time, we were required to establish a professional army with a compulsory twelve-year term of conscription. Thus Germany has no reserves with military training worthy of mention. Now people have suddenly begun talking about abolishing the professional army and installing a militia. It is my feeling that this is only happening in order to distract from the real core of the issue. Not the type of defense system, but rather the question of equal rights is decisive. If this question is settled, general and reasonable disarmament worldwide will become a possibility; for no one will be willing to claim that the world is made to suffer from the fact that Germany has only a ridiculously small professional army and no militia at all.

The world is made to suffer from the fact that the Treaty of Versailles provides for the concept of two different types of rights to be established for all

eternity. This ridiculous division of the nations into victors—who have a right to exist—and vanquished—who have a lesser right to exist—is untenable and leads to general mistrust and in turn to an added strain on military armaments. Personally, we could not care less which systems of defense the other nations choose to implement.

Professional armies, for all we care; but we do care whether one nation has a force of 100,000 without reserves, while another, together with its allies in case of war, has a force of over twelve million. And we do care whether one nation has been disarmed of all technical weapons while another has at its disposal the most modern offensive weapons available and is thus more than ten times superior.

The Treaty of Versailles stipulated that we were to disarm—not so that a discussion about defense systems would take place thirteen years later, but so that other peoples would be in a position to disarm as well. We have been waiting for this disarmament now for more than ten years.

While Hitler himself sharply attacked the Center Party by “settling accounts” with Bolz in Stuttgart, he frowned upon similar assaults on the Center being made by his party comrades. He knew that this might all too easily result in a disastrous conflict with the Catholic Church, for he had not forgotten the lessons of the *Alldeutsche* in Austria and Bismarck in Prussia. In addition, he did not yet know how long he would need the Center. Thus he issued the following proclamation to the Party:¹⁰⁵

National Socialists!

Provocative elements are attempting, under the guise of the Party, to discredit the National Socialist Movement by disrupting and breaking up Center Party assemblies in particular. I expect all National Socialists to distance themselves from these designs with utmost discipline. The enemy who must be felled on March 5 is Marxism! It is against Marxism that we must concentrate our entire propaganda and thus the entire election campaign.

If, in the course of this campaign, the Center chooses to support Marxism by attacking our Movement, then I will attend to the Center in any given case and party these attacks and settle the matter.

And another thing: do not attend our opponents’ assemblies, but instead contribute to making our own assemblies tremendous demonstrations of the awakening nation!

National Socialists! You have prepared the German *Erhebung* for the past fourteen years, you must complete it today!

Berlin, February 22, 1933

Adolf Hitler

On February 24, Hitler held another major election speech at the Munich Exhibition Grounds, after having spoken shortly before at festivities celebrating the anniversary of the Party in the Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus which were attended by 2,000 old party comrades.¹⁰⁶

The “party narrative,” an elaborate recapitulation of the evolution of the NSDAP from seven men to a movement of millions, naturally took up a major portion of the speech. Then Hitler proceeded to comment on a peculiar remark made by Councillor of State Schäffer¹⁰⁷ in Forchheim on February 22 to the effect that any Reich Commissar appointed to Bavaria would be arrested at the border.

Even if there are people who believe they need to threaten to draw a Main Line,¹⁰⁸ this matter is neither Bavarian nor South German; but rather a single party’s politics. These politics no longer exist—on the contrary: if ever the attempt to broach this question is repeated, Bavaria will be the one to shatter and destroy it.

And you might take note of one thing: I myself am, given my forefathers, my birth, and my descent, a genuine Bavarian. For the first time since the Reich was founded, Bismarck’s status has been placed in the hands of a Bavarian.¹⁰⁹

I hold myself responsible, as God is my witness, that nothing which has been entrusted with this status will ever again fall into ruin.

The last segment of Hitler’s speech in Munich was devoted once again to his claim that he would submit his government to the judgment of the people and refrain from building himself a villa in Switzerland and opening a bank account there; that he would even allow the Volk to crucify him were it dissatisfied with him.

When today the opponents say, how can it be that you have control of the government? I could reply, how can it be that you are still around? I know that, in Germany today, there exists the possibility of having a majority in the negative sense of the word. But no combination is better for positive work than the one we have now. If others wish to join in this work—be our guests; I have not withheld my consent. However, if anyone says to me in one and the same breath: I would like to take up with you, but I reserve the right to take up with Marxism, too; then I have to say: No!

And above all: I will not allow myself to be ‘tolerated’ by other parties! I will answer to the German Volk, not to the parties!

In four years I will once more lay myself open to Germany and the German Volk whom the others have driven to ruin. The Volk shall then form its judgment, take its decision and pass sentence upon me, and then, for all I care, it can crucify me if it finds I have not done my duty. I did not take this post for my own personal advantage or in order to secure any personal benefits for myself. I have put this promise into practice countless times, and this will also be the case in future. I will never build myself a villa in Switzerland or open a bank account there! I will stand by my Volk and be willing to answer to it once more after these four years. I will stand with the Volk and am grateful for any assistance.

However, it is my wish that this Volk help itself in this task, so that one day it may not be said that only one or only a handful fought for German freedom,

but rather: in the end, the Volk joined the great struggle and put its faith in it and its trust and marched with the others and assisted in turning a time of wretchedness and misery and need into a time of freedom and glory after all, so that this Germany, a Germany of disintegration and shame, indeed once again became what we once knew and what we want our children to come to know one day.

Do your duty! In doing so, you are assisting in bringing back that Germany we once took on from our fathers! We must make up for yesterday's misdeeds! It is our task to make certain that the pages in German history which cite and bear witness to our disintegration are torn in half by our hands and that one day German youth will experience the new Reich. From need and misery and wretchedness and depravity shall arise a new German Reich of which we can be proud, and which has given us the freedom to give our people their daily bread and thus peace on earth!

Hitler closed his speech with this histrionic flourish, a mixed bag of phrases taken from the Lord's Prayer and the angel's message to Bethlehem, but this time he omitted the final touch, the "Amen" he had added on February 10 in Berlin. He knew his limits in the Catholic city of Munich. On February 25, Hitler held a further campaign speech in Nuremberg.¹¹⁰

As of February 27 he was back in Berlin. The fifth of March was nearing steadily. After the election, Hitler planned to take immediate action against the non-National Socialist Länder Governments. He already had the draft of an emergency decree set aside for the occasion, which would allow him to appoint Reich Commissars without having to call upon Hindenburg in each case.

The decree giving Hitler a free hand was the "Decree for the Protection of the Volk and the State," to be enacted in the event of Communist acts of violence. As early as February 2, he had hinted at his intentions in a proclamation to the SA:¹¹¹

The hour for crushing this [Communist] terror is coming.

On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag building went up in flames,¹¹² and on February 28, Hindenburg signed the prepared emergency decree.¹¹³ It was short and to the point, suspending all of the Articles of the Weimar Constitution which could be rescinded in states of emergency,¹¹⁴ instituting the death penalty for crimes of high treason, conspiracy to assassinate, and similar plots, and authorizing the Reich Government to assume the powers of any Supreme Land Authority. This authorization was definitely of the greatest importance for Hitler. The other measures could, for the most part, have been derived from prior

statutory regulations—particularly considering that Göring held authority over the Prussian police and had appointed tens of thousands of SA and SS men as auxiliary police on February 25. He had also filled the most important posts—Oberpräsident and Chief of Police—with loyal National Socialists. The Social Democratic holders of these offices offered as little resistance to Göring as they had to Papen's dismissals from office on July 20, 1932. They were satisfied to retain their pensions.

On February 28, Hitler sent the following letter to the Commissar of the Reich for the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, Reich Minister Göring:¹¹⁵

In yesterday's dastardly attack on the Reichstag building bearing the signature of a criminal Communist hand, the prompt action of the Berlin Fire Department, the circumspect direction of its leadership, and the self-sacrificing duty performed by individual firemen aided in averting, within the space of a few hours, the immediate danger of the complete destruction of the building and in holding the fire in containment.

It was also the active initiative of the police which made it possible to go about the work of extinguishing the fire without disruption and to conduct a successful investigation into the crime.

I am glad to take this opportunity to extend my special thanks and my warmest appreciation to all those who took part in the rescue operation, and I request that you, Herr Minister, bring this gratitude to the attention of the Berlin Fire Department and Police.

Adolf Hitler

On March 1, Hitler made his report on the political situation to the Reich President. He also received a delegation from the National Socialist workers' organization, the *Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen-organisation*, NSBO (National Socialist Factory Cell Organization), and declared in his address¹¹⁶ that the elimination of Marxism was of vital importance for the life interests of German workers.

He judged this reminder appropriate in light of the arrests of "Marxist" KPD and SPD working class leaders which had been taking place since February 28, allegedly in order to counter an imminent coup on the part of the Communists. Subsequently, Hitler rejoined the election campaign. He spoke on March 1 in Breslau in the Jahrhunderthalle.¹¹⁷ This was followed by speeches in Berlin (Sportpalast) on March 2¹¹⁸ and Hamburg on March 3.¹¹⁹

Hitler's March 4 speech in Königsberg¹²⁰ was broadcast on the radio as well. Throughout Germany, marches and torchlight processions were held on this "Day of the Awakening Nation," culminating in the loud-speaker transmission of Hitler's speech.

February 28, 1933

To the customary “party narrative” and the settlement of accounts with the parties of the Weimar Republic, Hitler added the following words:

In the end, we do not live for ourselves alone; rather, we are responsible for everything which those who lived before us have left behind, and we are responsible for that which we shall one day leave behind to those who must come after us. For Germany must not end with us.

3

The election results of March 5 showed gains for the NSDAP amounting to 5.5 million voters, and the Party received 43.9% of all votes cast (44.5% of the seats in parliament); the Kampffront Schwarz-Weiss-Rot (DNVP) received approximately 8%.

Although Hitler had not achieved an absolute majority, he had brought about a right-wing majority which made his government independent of the Center Party. For the first time since 1918, the German Reichstag contained a right-wing majority, and for the first time a presidential cabinet had secured the absolute majority in parliament. The seats in the Reichstag elected on March 5 were allocated as follows (the figures in parentheses reflect the results of the Reichstag elections on November 6, 1932):

NSDAP	288	(196)
SPD	120	(121)
KPD	81	(100)
Center	73	(70)
Kampffront SchwarzWeissRot (DNVP)	53	(52)
Bavarian People's Party	19	(20)
German People's Party	2	(11)
Christian Socialist People's Service	4	(5)
German State Party	5	(2)
German Peasants' Party	2	(3)
Thuringian Agrarian League	—	(2)
German Hanoverian Party	—	(1)
Total	647	(583)

Hitler had taken nineteen mandates from the Communists and around twelve from the smaller right-wing parties. However, he did not score a major breakthrough with the traditional voters of the Weimar

parties (the SPD, the Center together with the Bavarian People's Party, and the German State Party). Thus the substantial gains on the part of the NSDAP came from the ranks of non-voters who had previously abstained from politics. They had perhaps long been attracted to Hitler but doubted that he would ever come to power. Furthermore, those who had swayed between the NSDAP and the KPD chose to cast their ballots for Hitler this time.

Any amendments to the Constitution and passing a respective Enabling Act would, of course, require the support of the Center and the Bavarian People's Party. Even though elected KPD deputies would be prevented from assuming their mandates, the right-wing parties were unable to achieve the requisite two-thirds majority (378 of 566 votes without the KPD; 432 of 647 including the KPD). Thus the cooperation of the Center and the BVP was required, and therefore the KPD deputies could have been allowed to take office if all that was at stake was the Enabling Act.

However, by taking over the KPD votes in both the Reichstag and the Prussian Landtag, Hitler secured the absolute majority for the NSDAP. At any rate, he intended to abolish all of the parties except his own in the long run, and began now with the KPD.¹²¹

The election results of March 5 constituted a thorough success for Hitler. He hardly could have expected to receive more votes. Contrary to his usual habit, he refrained on this occasion from issuing a triumphant proclamation to his party comrades, the SA, and the SS. He preferred giving his SA and SS forces the opportunity to stage revolutionary-styled operations throughout the country—to hoist swastika and black-white-red flags on public buildings, to arrest undesirable persons, and to take revenge upon previous rulers who had been particularly harsh in their treatment of NSDAP members. It was only to be expected that violence and brutality would accompany these crusades. When people who have been oppressed, whether in Germany or any other country of the world, are suddenly given power without any binding restrictions, excess is the inevitable product. This power is abused, in that the former suppressors are made victims, with victims becoming, at times, even more cruel masters.

Hitler was well aware of this, but remained unconcerned. At the time he was preoccupied with installing Reich Commissars in all of the non-National Socialist Länder. Frick took care of this by issuing the simple order to comply with the Emergency Decree for the Protection of the Volk and the State of February 28. Hamburg's Reich Commissar was

appointed on the evening of that March 5. On March 6, Bremen, Lübeck, and Hesse followed; on March 8, Schaumburg-Lippe, Baden, Württemberg, and Saxony; and on March 9, Bavaria.

If it had once been believed abroad that there would be active resistance to Hitler's cabinet and its measures from Bavaria, this now proved to have been wishful thinking. In spite of all the words lost to the contrary, Bavaria had consistently complied with the wishes of the Reich Government since 1871 and never officially supported separatist activities.

In 1923, Otto von Lossow, Reichswehr Commander in Bavaria, had requested directives from Berlin as to how he should counter Hitler's putsch attempt. He was told: "Crush it!" In 1933, the Reichswehr Commander in Bavaria—more specifically, his Chief of Staff, Colonel Wäger¹²²—asked Berlin how Bavaria should react toward Reich Commissar General von Epp. The reply was: "Keep the Reichswehr off the streets!" The only difference was that now, in 1933, Hitler was Reich Chancellor instead of the upstart rebel he had been in 1923.

Neither in Bavaria nor in any other Land had there been the slightest resistance to the appointment of the Reich Commissars. Hitler was thus finally able to issue the triumphant proclamation which was still outstanding to his adherents on March 10:¹²³

Party Comrades! Men of the SA and SS!

A tremendous upheaval has taken place in Germany! It is the fruit of the most difficult of struggles, the most dogged persistence, and of the utmost discipline.

Unprincipled characters, mostly Communist spies, are attempting to compromise the Party with individual actions which are not in any way related to the great task of the national uprising and can only damage and belittle the accomplishments of our Movement. In particular, there are attempts to bring about a conflict between the Party, or Germany, and foreign countries by harassing foreigners in cars flying foreign flags. Men of the SA and SS! You must apprehend such creatures yourselves immediately and call them to account for their actions; you must turn them over to the police without delay, regardless of who they may be.

As of today, the National Government has the executive power over all of Germany in its hands. This means that the national uprising will continue to be carried out methodically and under control from above. Only in instances when these orders meet with resistance or when, as was the case in the past, surprise ambushes are made on individual men or marching formations, should this resistance be immediately and thoroughly broken. Harassment of individuals, the obstruction of cars, and disruptions to business are to be put to an absolute stop.

Comrades, you must make sure that the National Revolution of 1933 does not go down in history as a counterpart to the revolution of the *Rucksack Spartakisten*.¹²⁴ And one more thing: never let yourselves be distracted for one second from our watchword, which is the destruction of Marxism.

Berlin, March 10, 1933

Adolf Hitler

Hitler made reference in this proclamation to the Communist provocateurs who had allegedly infiltrated the SA. He was thus able to dismiss attacks led by party comrades or members of the SA as “Communist” disruptions. If it was not the Jews, then it was the Communists who were the source of all evil.

On March 11, Hitler once more delivered a campaign speech, this time for the local election in Prussia scheduled for March 12. He spoke at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds and, after repeating his standard tirade against the Marxist parties, declared as follows:¹²⁵

We have now been in power for six weeks, and in these six weeks we have driven the Germans onward to an enormous effort. And now we face a new election. This will be the last one for many years to come. It is no coincidence that, in these few weeks, unemployment in Germany has receded. It is the miracle of growing faith. The strength which Germany needs to survive its struggle for existence will return, and from this strength will come justice and honor and with them, one day, freedom.

The German nation will find its way back to its own by combining its efforts; but we will bear one thing in mind: nothing in this world is free. And so we shall fight and work.

Hitler began preparing the next step on his way to autocratic rule: the introduction of a new national flag—the swastika. In order to make the Reich President amenable to the breach of the Constitution which this entailed,¹²⁶ the black-white-red flag of the Empire had to be given equal status with the swastika, at least for the time being, as new Reich flags. As a gesture designed to express how much the National Socialists apparently respected the old black-white-red banner, on March 10 Hitler issued the following order to the Party regarding the *Volkstrauertag* (Day of National Mourning)¹²⁷ two days later.¹²⁸

As the soldiers of the old Army once gave their lives for the black-white-red flag of the old German Reich, we wish to honor them on this day by allowing only this flag, which was their banner then, to fly from all the public buildings of the Reich. It is the flag of the old Army and the World War.

Our swastika is the flag of the National Revolution and the national uprising.

Berlin, March 10, 1933

Adolf Hitler

The expression “national uprising” (*nationale Erhebung*) was now replaced by the more colorful “National Revolution” as the official term. Later, this was in turn to become the “National Socialist Revolution.”

At the activities held on the *Volkstrauertag* in Berlin on March 12 (memorial performance at the National Opera, laying wreaths at the war memorial *Unter den Linden*, and a marching salute of the Reichswehr), Hitler, in a pose of deepest reverence, consistently gave precedence to the Reich President. He had every reason to be grateful to Hindenburg, who had actually penned his signature on the decree promoting the swastika and the black-white-red flag to national flags.

At the close of the ceremonies, Hitler made the following radio announcement to his party comrades and the German Volk, issuing this decree which, to many, came as a great surprise:¹²⁹

On behalf of the Reich President I announce to the German Volk the following decree of the Reich President:

‘On this day, on which the old black-white-red flag flies at halfmast throughout Gennany in honor of our war dead, I hereby decree that, from tomorrow onwards and until the question of the Reich colors has been definitively settled, the black-white-red and the swastika flag are to be hoisted jointly. These two flags unite the glorious past of the German Empire with the powerful renaissance of the German nation. United shall they personify the power of the State and the inner solidarity of all the national circles within the German Volk. The military buildings will hoist only the Reich war ensign.

Berlin, March 12, 1933

The Reich President: von Hindenburg’

With this decree, the Reich President has, of his own doing, directed that, until a definite decision has been made, the flag of the national uprising shall fly henceforth on the public buildings and buildings of state—side by side with our memorable, honorable and traditional flag, the flag of the German Empire.

National Socialists who are listening to me in this hour, men of the SA and SS!

Thus this marriage constitutes visible external evidence of the triumph of the National Revolution. It must fill all of us in this historic hour, when we have just returned from ceremonies for our dead comrades, with both a feeling of deep gratitude for the magnanimous decision of the Field Marshal, and with proud satisfaction.

Our fourteen-year struggle for power has now come to its visible, symbolic close. Now it is up to us to make sure that, from now on, this power can no longer be shaken by any means whatsoever.

As your Führer, and on behalf of the Government of the National Revolution, I hereby call upon you to support the honor and thus the dignity of the new regime in the manner required to ensure that it will also one day prevail in German history with honor and dignity. And this day, the day on

which all executive power was passed to the hands of national Germany in a symbolic sense as well, marks the beginning of the second stage of our fight.

From now on the struggle for purging the Reich and establishing order in it will be methodical and controlled from above.

Thus I command you to exercise the strictest and blindest discipline from now on. There must be no more isolated operations from now on. Only in those instances when the enemies of our national uprising resist our statutory decrees with force or any of our men or our marching formations are assaulted shall the resistance of these elements be immediately and most thoroughly broken. But now it is our task to give the entire German Volk and also, above all, our economy the feeling of unconditional security. Whoever attempts from now on to disrupt our administration or business life by staging isolated operations is consciously attacking the National Government. Today we are responsible for the Reich, because it has been delivered into our hands.

My party comrades!

You have fought in fourteen years of struggle for the Germany which is now coming into being. Today the flag of this struggle has received the sanction of the State. But it is also evidence of how far your discipline and subordination has led us. It alone can now lead us onwards. Our triumph is so great that we are incapable of harboring petty vindictiveness. Should the enemies of the national uprising attempt any type of resistance, then the will of the Government of the National Revolution will instantly force it to its knees, and you will receive the orders.

Beware of the provocateurs and spies from the Communist Party, who, according to the proof we have available today, have been sent to infiltrate our formations!

Thanks to the insight we have now gained into the doings of this band of organized criminals, we will nevertheless eliminate them within the shortest space of time in any case. And I wish to couple my command that the purity and thus the honor of our national uprising be protected with my thanks to you for the overwhelming loyalty, discipline and sacrifices which you have demonstrated and made until now. In a few short weeks, mainly by virtue of your efforts and your work, one of the greatest upheavals Germany has ever known has taken place. This will be made apparent to the German Volk by means of the decrees of the Reich Minister of the Interior, Dr. Frick, which I may hereby announce to the public:

'In celebration of the triumph of the National Revolution, all public buildings of the Reich shall flag the colors ordered by the Reich President for three days, starting on Monday!'

My party comrades! Long live the National Revolution, long live our dearly beloved German Volk and our proud German Reich!

After this broadcast, Hitler flew to Munich and accepted the homage of the party formations which received him at the Oberwiesenfeld airport. It was the first time he was wearing a brown tunic.

In reply to the welcoming address given by Reich Commissar General von Epp, Hitler stated:¹³⁰

Fourteen years ago, it was here that I began the struggle, the first stage of which has now been completed.

What centuries have longed for in Germany, but were never able to achieve, has now become reality:

The *Gleichschaltung* of the political will of the Länder with the will of the nation has come to pass.

It is our desire and our conviction to ensure with all our might that this will remain so from now on.

I am happy that, this time, this historic event originated in the German South. This time the land of the Bavarians has once more professed its faith in German unity.

In these past few days, Bavaria has taken its place in the great front of the awakening nation.

The political prerequisites for the renaissance of Germany have now been created.

Now it is time to combine our efforts for the task ahead. No one shall be able to hold us back, and I am certain that as a result of these efforts, one day, in addition to freedom, good fortune will return to the German Vaterland.

We do not intend to rape the Länder, but rather, by our joint efforts and our coordinated will, we shall restore the German Länder in future to the position and station to which history and tradition entitles them.

However, this is only possible if the German Länder are under the protection and shield of a united Reich.

We have just arrived from the Reich capital. The Reich President has ordered that, in future, two flags shall wave over Germany:

The old black-white-red flag of the glorious past and the swastika, the flag of our national uprising. Their community shall be a symbol for the restoration of our national power, which is personified here on the field in our unique Wehrmacht and our leagues.

In them is growing the greatest community of the German people who want to join the ranks for the German Reich and its Länder!

Following this speech, Hitler launched on a triumphal drive through the streets of Munich to the Feldherrnhalle. There he laid down a huge laurel wreath in memory of those killed in his 1923 putsch. The banner bore Hitler's dedication:

"But you have triumphed in the end!"

Hitler now had control of the entire executive branch of government. The police in all of the German Länder were at his command, and the larger Länder also had at their disposal a substantial number of standing police units quartered in barracks. These units were of a pronounced military character, being equipped not only with steel

helmets and rifles, but also with machine guns and lightweight combat cars. At Hitler's orders, Göring now began to build a billeted Land Police, the likes of which had never before existed in this field. Its officers were dependable National Socialists. The troop was clad in gray-green uniforms, and the strength of its numbers and military equipment was soon so great that, were the Reichswehr ever to dare to launch a putsch against Hitler, it would have been able to effectively party such an attack.¹³¹

For his own personal protection, Hitler created the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, an elite military regiment composed of hand-picked SS men. This first Waffen SS unit, from which entire divisions and army corps were later to emerge, was placed under the command of SS Obergruppenführer Sepp Dietrich¹³² and stationed in Berlin-Lichterfelde with four battalions. The Leibstandarte subsequently took the place of the guards who had hitherto been recruited for the Reich Chancellor from the ranks of the police or the Reichswehr.

At the same time, Hitler set about reinforcing National Socialist influence in the Reich Cabinet. On January 30, he had given his word of honor that this cabinet would stay together for all time and never undergo any changes. He had actually been serious, for he believed himself quite capable, by persistent persuasion, of making dedicated National Socialists of these ministers.

There was much talk in the period from 1933 to 1945—and prior thereto—about the so-called National Socialist Weltanschauung. A number of Hitler's Unterführers, among them Alfred Rosenberg¹³³ and Heinrich Himmler, made an honest effort to institute a type of National Socialist religion, a revival of the Nordic-Germanic Wotan cult, etc. However, these efforts produced few tangible results.¹³⁴

Hitler left Rosenberg and Himmler to their own ways, but only because their missionary activities constituted a means for inciting people to rid themselves of their previous religious ties. In essence, though, he regarded these actions as mere nonsense. It was his belief that anyone was a dedicated National Socialist who was willing to sanction everything the Führer said, even if it was the exact opposite of what Hitler had proclaimed at an earlier date.

Since Hitler had acceded to power, it no longer required any effort to instill this view in his subordinates as well as his ministers. The submissiveness to authority which characterized German thinking made it quite normal for the majority of citizens to agree with whatever the Government or the Chancellor said, unless they were influenced to judge otherwise by some institution or another, such as the Church.

However, Hitler was not prepared to accept this type of 'dedicated' National Socialist in his cabinet. There he needed reliable, 'tried and true' National Socialists, i.e. those who had proven themselves during the period of domestic struggle and at that time had already accepted Hitler's word as law, even when appearances were against him.

Göring and Frick were two such reliable National Socialists. On March 13, Hitler persuaded Hindenburg to appoint a further reliable National Socialist, namely Dr. Joseph Goebbels, to a ministerial post. He was given the newly created Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, which was to preside mainly over the press, radio, and film. Goebbels believed himself to be an expert in cultural matters and would have preferred the post of Minister of Popular Culture,¹³⁵ but Hitler rightly judged him less capable in that field and chose instead to later appoint¹³⁶ the National Socialist Studienrat (secondary school teacher) Bernhard Rust to head the newly formed Reich Ministry of Science, Education and Popular Culture.

Another loyal subject during the time of struggle had been Dr. Hjalmar Schacht. It was Hitler's desire that he reassume the office of Reichsbank President, and it took little effort to persuade the former President Dr. Hans Luther¹³⁷ to resign on March 16: he was appointed Ambassador to Washington in exchange. However, this evoked a negative echo from abroad, for an international convention in force at the time prescribed that the Reichsbank was under the immediate control not of the government, but of a board of directors, which had not been approached for its consent to the appointment.

Therefore, on March 20, Hitler issued the following statement to the press in Berlin regarding Dr. Luther's resignation:¹³⁸

In parts of the press, the news of the resignation of the former Reichsbank President, Dr. Luther, has been accompanied by editorial comments which are not supported by the facts. Dr. Luther's resignation took place within the course of the overall restructuring presently taking place. It was effected at his own request, due to the fact that the Reich, in and of itself, would in no way have been able to prompt the resignation of the Reichsbank President.

Dr. Luther himself made no reference to these international conventions, but rather explicitly stated that, despite them, German interests and thus the German Government were his sole guiding authority. The conference with Dr. Luther was therefore marked by an extraordinary loyalty to the Government on the part of the retiring Reichsbank President.

On March 20, Hitler procured the consent of his entire cabinet to the Enabling Act. On the same day he twice issued guidelines prescribing

the conduct to be adopted by the Gauleiters and the National Socialist deputies in the Reichstag and the Landtag in the forthcoming sessions of parliament. He made two separate speeches before the two groups in Berlin.¹³⁹

The first session of the Reichstag was to be opened on March 21 in the garrison church in Potsdam. Hitler had chosen the first day of spring for its symbolic value, i.e. as the beginning of a new spring for the German Volk. An added reason was that the first Reichstag of the Prussian German Empire had also been opened on March 21.¹⁴⁰ “Potsdam Day” was the first of many ‘national’ holidays bestowed upon the German Volk until 1945, each of which was, as a rule, accompanied by impressive ceremonial pomp.

Potsdam Day began with services in the Lutheran Nikolai Church and the Catholic parish church. In the latter, a special armchair had been installed in front of the altar for the Catholic Chancellor Adolf Hitler. However, he chose not to attend, visiting instead the graves of National Socialist soldiers with Goebbels.

This snub to the Catholic clergy was not motivated by religious considerations. In the initial years of his rule, Hitler occasionally attended Catholic services, e.g. the requiem for the deceased Polish Marshal Pilsudski in the Hedwig Cathedral in Berlin in 1935. Hitler’s absence on March 21 was designed to teach the Catholic Church once and for all that it should comply with his wishes in future and pose no obstacles to the reorganization of Germany.

It was in this sense that Hitler issued the following official statement:¹⁴¹

The Catholic Bishops of Germany have, in the most recent past, issued a number of announcements which the Catholic priesthood has put into practice and according to which leaders and members of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party have been described as deserters of the Church who, as such, are barred from receiving the sacraments. These announcements have not been retracted to date, and the Catholic priesthood continues to adhere to the practice prescribed therein.

Thus the Chancellor, much to his disappointment, does not feel in a position to be able to attend the Catholic service in Potsdam. During the official services, the Chancellor, accompanied by the Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels, to whom the same applies, visited the graves of his murdered SA comrades at the Luisenstadt Cemetery in Berlin. He laid a wreath on the graves with the inscription: “To my dead comrades.”

The ceremonious act of state commenced at noon in the garrison church whose crypt contained the remains of the Prussian Kings

Frederick William I and Frederick the Great. The church bells played the melody "*Üb immer Treu and Redlichkeit.*"

Thus it would seem that Hitler was carrying on the best of German traditions and virtues. The Prussian spirit of Frederick the Great and the military tradition of the Kaiser, symbolized by Reich President von Hindenburg in his Marshal's uniform, gave their blessings to the new Germany as personified in Hitler.

Only Reichstag members of the right-wing parties, the Center (with the Bavarian People's Party), and the splinter parties were seated inside the church. The Social Democratic deputies had refused to take part in the ceremony. The rest of the church was well filled with prominent public figures, among them Crown Prince Wilhelm, Field Marshal von Mackensen, Colonel General von Seeckt, and others.

Hindenburg turned the rostrum over to Hitler after his own speech, and the Chancellor, attired in a festive cutaway coat, delivered the following address:¹⁴²

Herr Reichspräsident! Deputies, Ladies and Gentlemen of the German Reichstag!

For years our Volk has borne a heavy burden.

After a period of proud uprising, of rich blossoming and flourishing in every area of our life, now—as so often in the past—need and poverty have again come upon us.

Despite industriousness and the will to work, despite drive, wide knowledge and the best of intentions, millions of Germans today are trying in vain to earn their daily bread. The economy is desolate, finances are shattered, millions are without work. The world knows only the deceptive outer appearance of our cities; it does not see the wretchedness and the misery.

For the last two thousand years these changing fortunes of fate have accompanied our Volk. Again and again ascent has been followed by decay. The causes have always been the same. The German is a victim of internal decay: divided of spirit, fragmented of will and thus powerless to act, he becomes too weak to assert his own life. He dreams of justice written in the stars and loses his footing on earth.

But the more Volk and Reich have become divided and thus the protection and shield of national life weakened, all the more constant has been the attempt to make a virtue out of necessity. The theory of the separate values of our tribes suppressed the realization of the necessity of a joint will. In the end, the Germans were left only with the path leading inwards. As a Volk of singers, poets and philosophers, it dreamed of a world in which the others lived, and only when it was inhumanly defeated by need and misery did there spring, perhaps from the arts, the yearning for a new *Erhebung*, for a new Reich and thus for a new life.

When Bismarck allowed the cultural aspirations of the German nation to be followed by political unification, it seemed to signify an end to the long period

of discord and internal war between the German tribes for all time. True to the proclamation of the Kaiser, our Volk participated in multiplying the values of peace, culture, and human ethos. It has never detached the feeling of its strength from a deeply felt responsibility for the community life of the European nations.

During this period when the German tribes were unified in terms of both politics and power, the dissolution of the Weltanschauung of the German Volksgemeinschaft set in which we are still suffering from today. And this internal disintegration of the nation once again became, as has so often been the case, the ally of the world around us. The November 1918 Revolution marked the end of a struggle which the German nation had taken up in the most sacred conviction that it was protecting only its freedom and thus its right to exist.

For neither the Kaiser, nor the Government, nor the Volk wanted that war. It was only the disintegration of the nation, the universal collapse which compelled a weak generation, against its better judgment and against its most sacred inner conviction, to accept the allegation of war guilt.

However, this collapse was followed by disintegration in every sector. Our Volk sank lower and lower in terms of political power, morals, culture, and economy.

The worst thing was the conscious destruction of belief in one's own strength, the disgracing of our traditions, and thus the annihilation of the basic principles of a firm trust.

Since then, our Volk has been shattered by crises without end.

But the rest of the world has not become happier or richer either by politically and economically dislodging one of the major components of its community of states. The utter folly of the theory of eternal victors and vanquished gave birth to the utter absurdity of reparations and, as a consequence, the disastrous state of the world's economy.

While the German Volk and the German Reich thus became mired in internal political conflict and discord and the economy drifted into ruin, a new group of Germans gathered, Germans who, with faithful trust in their own Volk, wished to form it into a new community.

It was to this young Germany that you, Herr Generalfeldmarschall, entrusted the leadership of the Reich in your magnanimous decision of January 30, 1933.

In the conviction that the German Volk should also give its consent to the New Order of German life, we men of this National Government addressed a final appeal to the German nation.

On March 5, the Volk made its decision and the majority gave us their vote. In a unique *Erhebung*, it has restored the national honor within a few short weeks and, thanks to your understanding, Herr Reichspräsident, consummated the marriage between the symbols of old glory and young strength.

When the National Government now, in this solemn hour, makes its first appearance before the new Reichstag, at the same time it professes its unshakable will to take on the great task of reorganizing the German Volk and the Reich and to carry through this task with determination.

With the knowledge that it is acting in accordance with the will of the nation, the National Government expects the parties in parliament, after fifteen years of German misery, to rise above the confines of a doctrinaire, party-oriented way of thinking and submit to the iron rule imposed upon us all by this misery and its imminent consequences.

For the task which Fate requires of us must rise to tower above the scope and basic nature of the petty substitutes of day-to-day politics.

We want to restore the unity of spirit and will to the German nation!

We want to preserve the everlasting foundations of our life: our Volkstum and the energies and values inherent therein.

We want to subordinate the organization and leadership of our State once more to those basic principles which have been the prerequisites for the glory of people and nations at all times.

We want to combine a confidence in the basic principles of our way of life—which are healthy because they are natural and right—with a consistency of political development at home and abroad.

We want to replace eternal indecision by the steadfastness of a government which shall thus once more give to our Volk an unshakable authority.

We want to take into consideration all the experiences—in both individual and community life as well as in our economy—which have proven useful to the welfare of the people in the course of millennia.

We want to restore the primacy of a policy destined to organize and lead the nation's struggle for existence.

But we also want to include all of the truly living powers of the Volk as the supporting elements of the German future; we want to make a sincere effort to unite those with good intentions and ensure that those who attempt to injure the German Volk receive their due.

We want to rebuild a different community from the German tribes, from the stations, professions, and classes which have existed until now. This community shall have the ability to bring about the just balance of vital interests demanded by the future of the entire Volk. Peasants, bourgeoisie, and workers must once more unite to become one German Volk.

This Volk shall then for all eternity act as custodian of our faith and our culture, our honor and our freedom.

To the world, however, in justice to the victims of the War, we wish to be sincere friends of a peace which shall ultimately heal the wounds with which all are afflicted.

The Government of the national uprising is determined to fulfill the task it has assumed before the German Volk. Thus it is addressing the German Reichstag today in the fervent hope of finding in it a support for the implementation of its mission. May you, Ladies and Gentlemen, recognize the meaning of these times as elected representatives of the Volk in order that you may contribute to the great task of our new national uprising.

We have today a hoary head in our midst. We salute you, Herr Generalfeldmarschall.

Three times you have fought on the battlefield of honor for the existence and the future of our Volk.

As a lieutenant in the Royal Army, you fought for German unity; in the armies of the old German Kaiser for the glorious creation of the Reich; and in the greatest war of all times as our Field Marshal for the continued existence of the Reich and for the freedom of our Volk.

You were there to witness the evolution of the Reich, you saw before you the work of the Great Chancellor, the miraculous ascent of our Volk, and you have finally led us during the great age which Fate has allowed us to witness and fight in.

Today, Herr Generalfeldmarschall, Providence has given you the privilege of being the patron of the new *Erhebung* of our Volk. And this, your wondrous life, is for us all a symbol of the indestructible vitality of the German nation. Thus the youth of the German Volk and all of us who perceive your consent to the task of the German uprising to be a blessing may thank you. May this power also communicate itself to the new representation of our Volk now opened.

And may Providence also bestow upon us the courage and the persistence which we sense all about us in this place hallow to every German, as humans fighting for the freedom and glory of our Volk at the feet of the bier of its greatest King.

After Hindenburg had laid wreaths on the sarcophagi of the Prussian Kings, a parade of Reichswehr formations and national leagues (SA, SS, Stahlhelm, etc.) marched through the streets and past Hindenburg for several hours. Hitler and his ministers stood modestly a few rows behind the military guests of honor.

Only at 5:00 p.m. did the initial session of the new Reichstag commence in the temporary parliament building, the old Kroll Opera House in Berlin. Although Hitler despised parliamentarism, he donned his best behavior and took his place as an NSDAP deputy with the others. He joined in electing the Reichstag Presidium, which was composed of Göring as President, Esser as Vice President (Center), Graef (DNVP), and Zörner (NSDAP).

The logistics of constituting the assembly were settled quickly. The next session on March 23 commenced with a statement of policy delivered by Hitler and the presentation of the "Law for Removing the Distress of People and Reich"¹⁴³ for passage. Hitler had proposed this so-called "Enabling Act" in his correspondence with Otto Meissner as early as November 1932¹⁴⁴ as the only possibility of ruling out that the Reichstag might reverse emergency decrees.

In future, the Reich Government was to be authorized to promulgate laws on its own authority (Article 1). The Reich President no longer even drew up the bills; the Reich Chancellor was also to assume this job in future (Article 3).

Thus the Reichstag and the Reich President were, for all practical purposes, eliminated for four years. But not only that: the laws passed by the Reich Government were allowed to deviate from the Constitution “to the extent that they do not concern the institutions of the Reichstag or Reichsrat as such. The rights of the Reich President shall remain inviolate” (Article 2).

Hitler had made a fine distinction between the Reichstag and the Reichsrat on the one hand and the Reich President on the other. The institutions of the Reichstag and the Reichsrat were to be preserved (although now that the National Socialist Länder Governments had been established, the Reichsrat no longer exercised any restraining function). However, there were no guarantees provided to secure the office of Reich President anchored in the Constitution, the election procedure, or the question of representation in case of incapacity or death—merely the rights were to remain inviolate.

This fine distinction was to have grave consequences, particularly in light of the certainly imminent death of the 85-year-old Reich President. Hitler was authorized to simply assume the powers of the Reich President which thus did, in fact, remain “inviolable.”

Clad in a uniform and brown shirt, Hitler submitted the following policy statement on the Enabling Act to the Reichstag on March 23:¹⁴⁵

Ladies and Gentlemen of the German Reichstag!

By agreement with the Reich Government, today the National Socialist German Workers' Party and the German National People's Party have presented to you for resolution a notice of motion concerning a “Law for Removing the Distress of Volk and Reich.” The reasons for this extraordinary measure are as follows:

In November 1918, the Marxist organizations seized the executive power by means of a Revolution. The monarchs were dethroned, the authorities of Reich and Länder removed from office, and thus a breach of the Constitution was committed. The success of the revolution in a material sense protected these criminals from the grips of justice. They sought moral justification by asserting that Germany or its government bore the guilt for the outbreak of the War.

This assertion was deliberately and objectively untrue. In consequence, however, these false accusations in the interest of our former enemies led to the severest oppression of the entire German Volk, and the violation of the assurances given to us in Wilson's Fourteen Points then led to a time of boundless misfortune for Germany, that is to say the working German Volk.

All the promises made by the men of November 1918 proved to be, if not acts of intentional deception, then no less damnable illusions. The “achievements of the Revolution” were, taken in their entirety, agreeable for only the

smallest of fractions of our Volk, but for the overwhelming majority, at least insofar as these people were forced to earn their daily bread by honest work, they were infinitely sad. It is understandable that the survival instinct of those parties and men guilty of this development invents a thousand euphemisms and excuses. An objective comparison of the average outcome of the last fourteen years with the promises once proclaimed is a crushing indictment of the responsible architects of this crime unparalleled in German history.

In the course of the past fourteen years, our Volk has suffered deterioration in all sectors of life, which could inconceivably have been greater. The question as to what, if anything, could have been worse than in these times is a question which cannot be answered in light of the basic values of our German Volk as well as the political and economic inheritance which once existed.

In spite of its lack of mobility in political feelings and positions, the German Volk itself has increasingly turned away from concepts, parties, and associations which, in its eyes, are responsible for these conditions.

The number of Germans who inwardly supported the Weimar Constitution in spite of the suggestive significance and ruthless exploitation of the executive power dwindled, in the end, to a mere fraction of the entire nation.

Another typical characteristic of these fourteen years was the fact that—apart from natural fluctuations—the curve of developments has shown a constant decline. This depressing realization was one of the causes of the general state of despair. It served to promote the insight into the necessity of thoroughly rejecting the ideas, organizations, and men in which one gradually and rightly began to recognize the underlying causes of our decay.

The National Socialist Movement was thus able, in spite of the most horrible oppression, to convert increasing numbers of Germans in terms of spirit and will to defensive action. Now, in association with the other national leagues, it has eliminated the powers which have been ruling since November 1918 within a few short weeks and, by means of a revolution, transferred public authority to the hands of the National Government. On March 5, the German Volk gave its approval to this action.

The program for the reconstruction of the Volk and the Reich is determined by the magnitude of the distress crippling our political, moral and economic life. Filled with the conviction that the causes of this collapse lie in internal damage to the body of our Volk, the Government of the National Revolution aims to eliminate the afflictions from our *völkisch* life which would, in future, continue to foil any real recovery. The disintegration of the nation into irreconcilably opposite Weltanschauungen which was systematically brought about by the false doctrines of Marxism means the destruction of the basis for any possible community life.

The dissolution permeates all of the basic principles of social order. The completely opposite approaches of the individuals to the concepts of state, society, religion, morality, family, and economy rip open differences which will lead to a war of all against all. Starting with the liberalism of the past century, this development will end, as the laws of nature dictate, in Communist chaos.

The mobilization of the most primitive instincts leads to a link between the concepts of a political theory and the actions of real criminals. Beginning with

pillaging, arson, raids on the railway, assassination attempts, and so on—all these things are morally sanctioned by Communist theory. Alone the method of individuals terrorizing the masses has cost the National Socialist Movement more than 350 dead and tens of thousands of injured within the course of a few years.

The burning of the Reichstag, one unsuccessful attempt within a large-scale operation, is only a taste of what Europe would have to expect from a triumph of this demonical doctrine. When a certain press, particularly outside Germany, today attempts, true to the political lie advanced to a principle by Communism, to link Germany's national uprising to this disgraceful act, this can only serve to strengthen my resolve to leave no stone unturned in order to avenge this crime as quickly as possible by having the guilty arsonist and his accomplices publicly executed!

Neither the German Volk nor the rest of the world has become sufficiently conscious of the entire scope of the operation planned by this organization. Only by means of its immediate action was the Government able to ward off a development which would have shaken all of Europe had it proceeded to its disastrous end. Several of those who fraternize with the interests of Communism both within and outside of Germany, motivated by hatred for the national uprising, would themselves have become victims of such a development.

It will be the utmost goal of the National Government to stamp out and eliminate every trace of this phenomenon, not only in the interest of Germany, but in the interest of the rest of Europe.

It will not lose sight of the realization that, in doing so, it is not the negative problem of this organization with which it is dealing, but rather the implementation of the positive task of winning the German worker for the National State. Only the creation of a real Volksgemeinschaft, rising above the interests and conflicts of *Stände und Klassen*, is capable of permanently removing the source of nourishment of these aberrations of the human mind. The establishment of such a solidarity in Weltanschauung in the body of the German politic is all the more important, for only this will make it possible to maintain friendly relations with the non-German powers without regard to the tendencies or Weltanschauungen to which they are subject, for the elimination of Communism in Germany is a purely domestic German affair. It should be in the interests of the rest of the world as well, for the outbreak of Communist chaos in the densely populated German Reich would lead to political and economic consequences particularly in the rest of western Europe, the proportions of which are unfathomable. The inner disintegration of our Volksgemeinschaft inevitably resulted in an increasingly alarming weakening of the authority of the highest levels of leadership. The sinking reputation of the Reich Government—which is the inevitable product of unstable domestic conditions of this type—led to ideas on the part of various parties in the individual Länder which are incompatible with the unity of the Reich. The greatest consideration for the traditions of the Länder cannot erase the bitter realization that the extent of the fragmentation of national life in the past was not only not beneficial, but positively injurious to the world and life status of our Volk.

It is not the task of a superior national leadership to subsequently surrender what has grown organically to the theoretical principle of an unrestrained unitarianization. But it is its duty to raise the unity of spirit and will of the leadership of the nation and thus the concept of the Reich as such beyond all shadow of a doubt.

The welfare of our communities and Länder—as well as the existence of each German individual—must be protected by the State. Therefore the Reich Government does not intend to dissolve the Länder by means of the Enabling Act. However, it will institute measures which will guarantee the continuity of political intention in the Reich and Länder from now on and for all time. The greater the consensus of spirit and will, the lesser the interest of the Reich for all time in violating the independent cultural and economic existence of the separate Länder. The present habit of the Governments of the Länder and the Reich of mutually belittling each other, making use of the modern means of public propaganda, is completely outrageous. I will under no circumstances tolerate—and the Reich Government will resolve all measures to combat—the spectacle of ministers of German Governments attacking or belittling each other before the world in mass meetings or even with the aid of public radio broadcasts.

It also results in a complete invalidation of the legislative bodies in the eyes of the Volk when, even assuming normal times, the Volk is driven to the polls in the Reich or in the individual Länder almost twenty times in the course of four years. The Reich Government will find the way to ensure that the expression of the will of the nation, once given, leads to uniform consequences for both the Reich and the Länder.

A further reform of the Reich will only ensue from ongoing developments. Its aim must be to design a constitution which ties the will of the Volk to the authority of a genuine leadership. The statutory legalization of this reform of the Constitution will be granted to the Volk itself.

The Government of the National Revolution basically regards it as its duty, in accordance with the spirit of the Volk's vote of confidence, to prevent the elements which consciously and intentionally negate the life of the nation from exercising influence on its formation. The theoretical concept of equality before the law shall not be used, under the guise of equality, to tolerate those who despise the laws as a matter of principle or, moreover, to surrender the freedom of the nation to them on the basis of democratic doctrines. The Government will, however, grant equality before the law to all those who, in forming the front of our Volk against this danger, support national interests and do not deny the Government their assistance.

Our next task, in any case, is to call upon the spiritual leaders of these destructive tendencies to answer for themselves and at the same time to rescue the victims of their seduction.

In particular, we perceive in the millions of German workers who pay homage to these ideas of madness and self destruction only the results of an unforgivable weakness on the part of former governments who failed to put a stop to the dissemination of these ideas, the practical implementation of which they were forced to punish. The Government will not allow itself to be shaken by

anyone in its decision to solve this problem. Now it is the responsibility of the Reichstag to adopt a clear standpoint for its part. This will change nothing as to the fate of Communism and the other organizations fraternizing with it. In its measures, the National Government is guided by no other factor than preserving the German Volk, and in particular the mass of millions making up its working populace, from unutterable misery.

Thus it views the matter of restoring the monarchy as out of the question at present in light of the very existence of these circumstances. It would be forced to regard any attempt to solve this problem on the part of the individual Länder as an attack on the legal entity of the Reich and take respective action.

Simultaneously with this political purification of our public life, the Reich Government intends to undertake a thorough moral purging of the German *Volkskörper*. The entire system of education, the theater, the cinema, literature, the press, and radio—they all will be used as a means to this end and valued accordingly. They must all work to preserve the eternal values residing in the essential character of our Volk. Art will always remain the expression and mirror of the yearning and the reality of an era. The cosmopolitan contemplative attitude is rapidly disappearing. Heroism is arising passionately as the future shaper and leader of political destinies. The task of art is to give expression to this determining spirit of the age. *Blut und Rasse* will once more become the source of artistic intuition. The task of the government, particularly in an age of limited political power, is to ensure that the internal value of life and the will of the nation to live are given that much more monumental artistic expression in culture. This resolve entails the obligation to grateful appreciation of our great past. The gap between this past and the future must be bridged in all sectors of our historical and cultural life. Reverence for the Great Men must be instilled once more in German youth as a sacred inheritance. In being determined to undertake the political and moral purification of our public life, the government is creating and securing the requirements for a genuinely profound return to religious life.

The advantages in personnel policy which might result from compromises with atheist organizations do not come close to offsetting the results which would become apparent in the general destruction of basic moral values.

The National Government perceives in the two Christian confessions the most important factors for the preservation of our *Volkestum*. It will respect any contracts concluded between these Churches and the Länder.

Their rights are not to be infringed upon. But the Government expects and hopes that the task of working on the national and moral regeneration of our Volk taken on by the Government will, in turn, be treated with the same respect.

It will face all of the other confessions with objective fairness. However, it cannot tolerate that membership in a certain confession or a certain race could mean being released from general statutory obligations or even constitute a license for committing or tolerating crimes which go unpunished. The Government's concern lies in an honest coexistence between Church and State; the fight against a materialist *Weltanschauung* and for a genuine *Volksgemeinschaft* equally serves both the interests of the German nation and the welfare of our Christian faith.

Our legal institutions must above all work to preserve this Volksgemeinschaft. The irremovability of the judges on the one hand must ensure a flexibility in their judgments for the welfare of society on the other. Not the individual but the Volk as a whole must be the focal point of legislative efforts. In future, high treason and betrayal of the Volk (*Landes- und Volksverrat*) will be ruthlessly eradicated. The foundations on which the judiciary is based can be none other than the foundations on which the nation is based. Thus may the judiciary always take into consideration the difficult burden of decision carried by those who bear the responsibility for shaping the life of the nation under the harsh dictates of reality.

Great are the tasks of the National Government in the sphere of economic life.

Here all action shall be governed by one law: the Volk does not live for the economy, and the economy does not exist for capital, but capital serves the economy and the economy serves the Volk!

In principle, the Government protects the economic interests of the German Volk not by taking the roundabout way through an economic bureaucracy to be organized by the State, but by the utmost promotion of private initiative and a recognition of the rights of property.

A fair balance must be established between productive intention on the one hand and productive work on the other. The administration should respect the results of ability, industriousness and work by being thrifty. The problem of our public finances is also a problem which is, in no small part, the problem of a thrifty administration.

The proposed reform of our tax system must result in a simplification in assessment and thus to a decrease in costs and charges. In principle, the tax mill should be built downstream and not at the source. As a consequence of these measures, the simplification of the administration will certainly result in a decrease in the tax burden. This reform of the tax system which is to be implemented in the Reich and the Länder is not, however, an overnight matter, but one to be contemplated when the time is judged to be right.

As a matter of principle, the Government will avoid currency experiments.

We are faced above all with two economic tasks of the first order. The salvation of the German peasant must be achieved at all costs.

The annihilation of this class in our Volk would bring with it the most severe consequences imaginable. The restoration of the profitability of the agricultural operations may be hard on the consumer. But the fate which would descend upon the entire German Volk should the German peasant perish would stand no comparison with these hardships. Only in connection with the profitability of our agriculture which must be achieved at all costs can the problems of stays of execution or debt relief be solved. Were this to prove unsuccessful, the annihilation of our peasants would inevitably lead not only to the collapse of the German economy per se, but above all to the collapse of the German *Volkskörper*. The maintenance of its health is, however, the first requirement for the blossoming and flourishing of our industry, German domestic trade, and the German export industry. Without the counterweight of the German peasantry, Communist madness would already have overrun Germany by now and thus

conclusively destroyed the German economy. What the entire economy, including our export industry, owes to the healthy common sense of the German peasant cannot be compensated by any kind of sacrifice in terms of business. Thus our greatest attention must be devoted to the further settlement of German land in future.

Furthermore, it is perfectly clear to the National Government that the removal of the distress in both agricultural and urban economy is contingent upon the integration of the army of unemployed in the process of production.

This constitutes the second and most monumental economic task. It can be solved only by a general pacification in implementing sound natural economic principles and all measures necessary, even if, at the time, they cannot expect to enjoy any degree of popularity. The creation of jobs and compulsory labor service are, in this connection, only isolated measures within the scope of the offensive as a whole.

The attitude of the National Government toward the *Mittelstand* is similar to its attitude toward the German peasants.

Its salvation can only be effected within the scope of general economic policy. The National Government is determined to find a far-reaching solution to this problem. It recognizes its historical task of supporting and promoting the millions of German workers in their struggle for their rights to exist. As Chancellor and National Socialist, I feel allied to them as the former companions of my youth. The increase in the consumer power of these masses will constitute a substantial means of reviving the economy. While maintaining our social legislation, the first step to its reform must be taken. In principle, however, every worker shall be utilized in the service of the public. The stagnation of millions of human working hours is madness and a crime which must inevitably lead to the impoverishment of all. Regardless of which values would have been created by the utilization of our surplus work force, for millions of people who today are going to waste in misery and distress, they could represent essential values of life. The organizational capabilities of our Volk must and will succeed in solving this problem.

We know that the geographic position of Germany, with her lack of raw materials, does not fully permit *Autarkie* for our Reich. It cannot be stressed too often that nothing is further from the Reich Government's mind than hostility to exporting. We know that we need this connection with the world and that the sale of German goods in the world represents the livelihood of many millions of German Volksgenossen.

But we also know the requirements for a sound exchange of services between the peoples of the earth. For years, Germany has been compelled to perform services without receiving counter-services. Consequently, the task of maintaining Germany as an active partner in the exchange of goods is less a question of commercial than of financial policy. As long as we are not accorded any settlement of our foreign debts which is fair and appropriate to our strength, we shall unfortunately be forced to maintain our foreign exchange control policy (*Devisenzwangswirtschaft*). For this reason, the Reich Government is also obligated to maintain the dam built against the flow of capital across the borders. If the Reich Government allows itself to be guided by these principles,

one can surely expect the growing understanding of the foreign countries to ease the integration of our Reich in the peaceful competition of the nations.

The first step toward promoting transportation with the aim of achieving a reasonable balance of all transportation interests—a reform of the motor vehicle tax—will take place at the beginning of next month. The maintenance of the Reichsbahn and its reintegration under Reich authority, which is to be effected as quickly as possible, is a task which commits us not only in an economic, but also in a moral sense. The National Government will give every encouragement to the development of aviation as a means of peacefully connecting the peoples to one another.

For all this activity, the Government requires the support not only of the general powers in our Volk, which it is determined to utilize to the furthest possible extent, but also the devoted loyalty and work of its professional civil service. Only if the public finances are in urgent need will interferences take place; however, even in such a case, strict fairness shall have the highest priority in governing our actions.

The protection of the frontiers of the Reich, and with them the life of our Volk and the existence of our economy, is now in the hands of our Reichswehr which, in accordance with the terms imposed upon us by the Treaty of Versailles, can be regarded as the only really disarmed force in the world. In spite of its small size prescribed therein and its totally insufficient arms, the German Volk can regard its Reichswehr with proud satisfaction. This slight instrument of our national self-defense came into existence under the most difficult conditions. In its spirit, it is the bearer of our best military traditions. With painstaking conscientiousness the German Volk has thus fulfilled the obligations imposed upon it in the Peace Treaty; what is more, even the replacement of ships in our fleet to which we were authorized at that time has—I may be allowed to say, unfortunately—been carried out only to a small extent.

For years Germany has been waiting in vain for the redemption of the promise to disarm given us by the others. It is the sincere desire of the National Government to be able to refrain from increasing the German Army and our weapons insofar as the rest of the world is also finally willing to fulfill its obligation of radically disarming. For Germany wants nothing except equal rights to live and equal freedom.

However, the National Government wishes to cultivate this spirit of a will for freedom in the German Volk. The honor of the nation, the honor of our Army, and the ideal of freedom—all must once more become sacred to the German Volk!

The German Volk wishes to live in peace with the world.

It is for this very reason that the Reich Government will use every means to definitively eliminate the separation of the peoples on earth into two categories. Keeping open this wound leads the one to distrust, the other to hatred, and in the end to a general feeling of insecurity. The National Government is willing to extend a hand in sincere understanding to every people which is determined to once and for all put an absolute end to the tragic past. The distress of the world can only come to an end if the appropriate foundation is created by means of stable political conditions and if the peoples regain confidence in one another.

To deal with the economic catastrophe, the following is necessary:

1. an absolutely authoritarian leadership at home to create confidence in the stability of conditions;
2. safeguarding peace on the part of the major nations for a long time to come and thus restoring the confidence of the people in one another; and
3. the final triumph of the principles of common sense in the organization and leadership of the economy as well as a general release from reparations and impossible liabilities for debts and interest.

We are unfortunately confronted by the fact that the Geneva Conference, in spite of lengthy negotiations, has not yet reached any practical result. The decision to institute a real disarmament measure has repeatedly been delayed by questions on technical detail and by the introduction of problems which have nothing to do with disarmament. This procedure is unsuitable.

The illegal state of unilateral disarmament and the resulting national insecurity of Germany cannot last any longer.

We recognize it as a sign of responsibility and good will that the British Government has, with its disarmament proposal, attempted to finally move the Conference to arrive at speedy decisions. The Reich Government will support any efforts aimed at effectively implementing general disarmament and securing Germany's long-overdue claim for disarmament. We have been disarmed for fourteen years, and for the past fourteen months we have been waiting for the outcome of the Disarmament Conference. Even more far-reaching is the plan of the head of the Italian Government, who is making a generous and foresighted attempt to ensure the smooth and consistent development of European politics as a whole. We attach the most earnest significance to this plan; we are willing to cooperate with absolute sincerity on the basis it provides in order to unite the four great powers, England, France, Italy, and Germany, in peaceful cooperation to courageously and determinedly approach those tasks upon the solution of which Europe's fate depends.

For this reason we feel particularly grateful for the appreciative warmth which has greeted Germany's national uprising in Italy. We wish and hope that the concurrence of spiritual ideals will be the basis for a continuing consolidation of the friendly relations between the two countries.

Similarly, the Reich Government, which regards Christianity as the unshakable foundation of the ethics and morality of the Volk, places great value on friendly relations with the Vatican and attempts to develop them. We are filled with a feeling of empathy for the troubles and distress of our *Brudervolk* in Austria. In all its doings, the Reich Government is conscious of the connection between the fate of all German tribes. The attitude toward the other individual foreign powers is evident from what has already been said. But there as well, where the mutual relations are already encumbered with difficulties, we shall endeavor to reach a settlement. However, the differentiation between victor and vanquished can never be the basis of an understanding.

We are nonetheless of the conviction that a settlement of this sort in our relations to France is possible if both governments really attack the problems confronting them with farsightedness. In regard to the Soviet Union, the Reich Government is determined to cultivate friendly relations which are productive

for both parties. The Government of the National Revolution above all views itself capable of such a positive policy with regard to Soviet Russia. The fight against Communism in Germany is an internal affair, in which we will never tolerate outside interference. The national political relations to other powers to which we are related by mutual interests will not be affected by this. Our relationship with the other countries shall continue to warrant our most earnest attention in future, in particular our relationship to the major countries overseas, with which Germany has long been allied by friendly ties and economic interests.

We have particularly at heart the fate of the Germans living outside the borders of the Reich who are allied to us by language, culture, and traditions and who fight hard to retain these values. The National Government is resolved to use all the means at its command to support the rights internationally guaranteed to the German minorities.

We welcome the plan of the World Economic Conference and approve of its meeting soon. The Reich Government is willing to contribute to this Conference in order to finally achieve positive results.

The most important question is the problem of our short-term and long-term indebtedness abroad.

The complete change in the conditions of the commodity markets of the world requires an adaptation. Only by means of trusting cooperation is it possible to really remove the widespread problems. Ten years of honest peace will be more beneficial for the welfare of all nations than thirty years of drawn-out stagnation in the terms of victor and vanquished.

In order to place itself in a position to fulfill the tasks falling within this scope, the Government has had the two major parties, the National Socialists and the German Nationalists, introduce the Enabling Act in the Reichstag. Some of the planned measures require the approval of the majority necessary for constitutional amendments. The performance of these tasks and their completion is necessary. It would be inconsistent with the aim of the national uprising and it would fail to suffice for the intended goal were the Government to negotiate with and request the approval of the Reichstag for its measures in each given case. In this context, the Government is not motivated by a desire to give up the Reichstag as such. On the contrary: it reserves the right, for the future as well, to inform the Reichstag of its measures or to obtain its consent.

The authority and the fulfillment of the tasks would suffer, however, were doubts in the stability of the new regime to arise in the Volk. The Reich Government views a further session of the Reichstag as an impossibility under the present condition of a far-reaching state of excitation in the nation. Rarely has the course of a revolution of such great magnitude run in such a disciplined and unbloody manner as the *Erhebung* of the German Volk during these past weeks. It is my will and my firm intention to provide for this smooth development in future as well.

However, this makes it all the more necessary that the National Government be accorded that position of sovereignty which is fitting, in such an age, to put a halt to developments of a different sort. The Government will only make use of this authorization insofar as this is requisite for the implementation of

vital measures. The existence of neither the Reichstag nor the Reichsrat is endangered. The position and the rights of the Reich President remain inviolate. It will always be the first and foremost task of the Government to bring about inner consensus with his aims. The existence of the Länder will not be abolished. The rights of the Churches will not be curtailed and their position vis-à-vis the State will not be altered. The number of cases in which there is an internal necessity for taking refuge in such a law is, in and of itself, limited. All the more, however, the Government insists upon the passage of the bill. Either way, it is asking for a clear decision. It is offering the parties of the Reichstag the chance for a smooth development which might lead to the growth of an understanding in future. However, the Government is just as determined as it is prepared to accept a notice of rejection and thus a declaration of resistance. May you, Gentlemen, now choose for yourselves between peace or war!

The gentlemen chose peace, or so they were led to believe.

The deputies of all the parties had only domestic policy in mind while they listened to Hitler's remarks on his government. The National Socialists were already accustomed to complying with Hitler's every wish. The German Nationalists and the other right-wing parties were pleased that the Socialists, i.e. the "Marxists," would be prevented from taking any part in government. The Center was happy that the indispensable role it had played in bringing about an absolute majority in every government since 1918 had at least prevailed in regard to achieving the two-thirds majority. The democratic German State Party wanted to prove that it took its name seriously and was genuinely supportive of the State. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, were naturally in no position to approve of Hitler's bill, for he had announced their removal from all public offices and even threatened their extermination in countless speeches.

Not a single deputy voiced objections to the Chancellor's foreign policy program. The entire Reichstag, including the Social Democrats, declared its unanimous consent¹⁴⁶ both in this session on March 23 and in a further session on May 17—in spite of the fact that Hitler's foreign policy program represented the largest threat to the nation.

The terms of Germany's domestic policy, i.e. whether or not the Germans engaged in a civil war, whether the country was governed by a dictatorship or a democracy—even whether or not the Jews were persecuted—were questions which received only marginal attention abroad. Never would any of these domestic matters have incited foreign powers to launch a military intervention against Hitler. Conversely, the foreign policy aims of the German Government did indeed command attention abroad.

The flattering words with which Hitler addressed England, France, Italy, and the Soviet Union in his March 23 statement of policy carried no real weight. The real blueprint revealing his future foreign policy was the program he had laid down in *Mein Kampf* and expounded in numerous earlier speeches. Even if one dismissed as unrealistic folly the idea of a new German Reich formed by conquering *Lebensraum* in the East, there still remained Hitler's goal of disposing of the Treaty of Versailles—an all too real element of his foreign policy program.

There is a general reluctance in Germany to think an uncomfortable matter through to its final consequences. Hitler's program of abolishing the Treaty of Versailles ultimately meant a restoration of the borders of 1914; this, however, entailed war with Poland; war with Poland also meant war with the Western Powers—and hence Germany's military ruin. The deputies did not dwell on these unpleasant thoughts on March 23. Spokesmen for party after party, the Social Democrats included, stood up and declared their respective party's consensus with Hitler's statements on foreign policy. After all, no one wanted to seem anti-national. Ever since 1914, the German Social Democratic Party had lowered its colors whenever the talk had turned to nationalism for fear of being judged unreliable in national matters.

The speech denouncing Hitler's Enabling Act delivered by the Social Democratic deputy Otto Wels was remarkably weak. It might have been expected that he would at least take a stand against the "stab-in-the back" legend; for although Hitler had refrained from mentioning it in his policy statement, he had repeated it often enough in other speeches. Wels chose instead to demonstrate how very 'national' he and the Social Democrats had conducted themselves since 1918. His remarks were confined to domestic issues. Wels protested against the persecution suffered by his fellow party members throughout the country. In touching this topic, however, he made himself vulnerable to counter-attacks, for the Social Democratic rulers, particularly in Prussia, had not exactly been gentle in their treatment of National Socialists during the preceding years.

Thus Hitler took advantage of this chance to settle this special account with the Social Democratic Party one last time. He took notes during Wels' speech and, at its close, once more stepped to the rostrum. If anyone still harbored the suspicion that Hitler had a ghostwriter prepare his speeches, he now learned the error of his ways. No one could have written a rejoinder to Wels' unscheduled speech in that short time.

Below are the speeches of both Wels and Hitler as recorded in the stenographic minutes of the Reichstag:¹⁴⁷

President Göring: Deputy Wels has the floor.

Wels (SPD), Deputy: Ladies and Gentlemen! We Social Democrats approve of the Reich Chancellor's foreign policy demand of German equality of rights even that much more emphatically because we have advocated it from the very beginning.

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

I may take the liberty, in this context, of making the personal remark that I was the first German to oppose the untruth of Germany's blame for the outbreak of the World War before an international forum, to be precise, at the Bern Conference on February 3, 1919.

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

No basic principle of our party has ever been able or will ever be able to hinder us from representing the just claims of the German nation to the other peoples of the world.

("Bravo!" from the Social Democrats)

The day before yesterday, the Reich Chancellor made a remark in Potsdam to which we also subscribe. He said, "The utter folly of the theory of eternal victors and vanquished gave birth to the utter absurdity of reparations and, as a consequence, the disastrous state of the world's economy." This statement applies to foreign policy; it applies no less to domestic policy.

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

Here too the theory of eternal victors and vanquished is, as the Reich Chancellor has noted, utter folly.

But the Reich Chancellor's remark also recalls another remark which was made on July 23, 1919 in the National Assembly. It was said at that time, "We may be stripped of power, but not of honor."¹⁴⁸

(Calls of approval from the Social Democrats)

It is clear that the opponents are after our honor, there is no doubt of that. But it will remain our belief to the last that this attempt at divesting us of our honor will one day rebound on those who instigated this attempt, for it is not our honor which is being destroyed in the worldwide tragedy.

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats; shouts of "Who said that?" from the National Socialists)

That is part of a statement which a government led by Social Democrats submitted before the whole world on behalf of the German people, four hours before the Armistice ran out, in order to block any further enemy advances. This statement constitutes a valuable complement to the remark made by the Reich Chancellor.

No good can come of a dictated peace;

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

and this applies all the more to domestic affairs.

(Renewed calls of approval from the Social Democrats)

A real Volksgemeinschaft cannot be established on such a basis. That requires first of all equality of rights. May the Government guard itself against crude

excesses of polemics; may it prohibit incitements to violence with rigorousness for its own part. This might be achieved if it is accomplished fairly and objectively on all sides and if one refrains from treating defeated enemies as though they were outlaws.

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

Freedom and life they can take from us, but not honor.

(Applause from the Social Democrats)

Considering the persecution the Social Democratic Party has suffered recently, no one can fairly demand or expect of it that it cast its vote in favor of the Enabling Act introduced here. The elections of March 5 have resulted in a majority for the parties in government and thus given them the opportunity to govern, strictly as laid down in the letter and the intention of the Constitution. But where this opportunity is given, it is coupled with an obligation.

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

Criticism is beneficial and necessary. Never in the history of the German Reichstag, however, has control over public affairs vested in the elected representatives of the people been eliminated to the extent to which this is now the case

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

and will be even more so by means of the new Enabling Act. This type of governmental omnipotence is destined to have even more grave consequences due to the total lack of flexibility in the press.

Ladies and Gentlemen! A devastating picture has often been painted of the state of affairs prevailing in Germany today. As always in such cases, there is no lack of exaggeration. As far as my party is concerned, I wish to state that we did not ask for any intervention in Paris; we did not send off millions to Prague; we did not disseminate exaggerated news abroad.

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

It would be easier to counter such exaggerations if the type of reporting which differentiates between right and wrong were admissible at home.

(Calls of approval from the Social Democrats)

It would be even better if we were able, with a clear conscience, to attest to the fact that the stability of the law has been restored for all.

(Renewed calls of approval from the Social Democrats)

And that, Gentlemen, is up to you.

The gentlemen of the National Socialist Party call the Movement they have unleashed a National and not a National Socialist Revolution. The only connection between their Revolution and Socialism has been confined until now to the attempt to destroy the Social Democratic Movement which has constituted the pillar of the Socialist body of thought for more than two generations,

(Laughter from the National Socialists)

and will continue to do so in future. If the gentlemen of the National Socialist Party intended to perform Socialist deeds, they would not need an Enabling Act to do so.

("Hear, hear!" from the Social Democrats)

You would be certain of an overwhelming majority in this forum. Every motion

you made in the interests of the workers, the peasants, the whitecollar employees, the civil servants, or the *Mittelstand* would meet with overpowering if not unanimous approval.

(Calls of approval from the Social Democrats; laughter from the National Socialists)

But you nevertheless first want to eliminate the Reichstag to proceed with your Revolution. Destroying what exists does not suffice to make up a revolution. The people expect positive achievements. They are awaiting drastic measures to combat the economic distress prevalent not only in Germany, but everywhere in the world.

We Social Democrats have borne joint responsibility in the most difficult of times and have been stoned as our reward.

(“Hear, hear!” from the Social Democrats; laughter from the National Socialists)

Our achievements in reconstructing the State and the economy and in liberating the occupied territories will prevail in history.

(Chorus of assent from the Social Democrats)

We have created equal rights for all and socially oriented labor legislation. We have aided in creating a Germany in which the path to leadership is open not only to counts and barons, but also to men of the working class.

(Renewed assent from the Social Democrats)

You cannot retreat from that without exposing your own Führer.

(Cheering and applause from the Social Democrats)

Any attempt to turn back the wheels of time will be in vain. We Social Democrats are aware that one cannot eliminate the realities of power politics by the simple act of legal protests. We see the reality of your present rule. But the people’s sense of justice also wields political power, and we will never stop appealing to this sense of justice.

The Weimar Constitution is not a Socialist Constitution. But we adhere to the basic principles of a constitutional state, to the equality of rights, and the concept of social legislation anchored therein. We German Social Democrats solemnly pledge ourselves in this historic hour to the principles of humanity and justice, of freedom and Socialism.

(Calls of approval from the Social Democrats)

No Enabling Act can give you the power to destroy ideas which are eternal and indestructible. You yourself have professed your belief in Socialism. Bismarck’s Law against Socialists has not destroyed the Social Democratic Party. Even further persecution can be a source of new strength to the German Social Democratic Party.

We hail those who are persecuted and in despair. We hail our friends in the Reich. Their steadfastness and loyalty are worthy of acclaim. The courage of their convictions, their unbroken faith—

(Laughter from the National Socialists; “Bravo!” from the Social Democrats)

are the guarantees of a brighter future.

(Renewed cheering from the Social Democrats; laughter from the National Socialists)

President Göring: The Reich Chancellor has the floor.

(Thunderous applause and cries of "Heil!" from the National Socialists)¹⁴⁹

Hitler left his seat on the government bench and strode to the podium for the second time that day; he pointed an accusing finger at the Social Democratic deputies and began:

*Spät kommt ihr, doch ihr kommt!*¹⁵⁰

(Calls of approval from the National Socialists)

The pretty theories which you, Mr. Deputy, have just expounded here have been addressed to world history a little too late.

(Amused assent from the National Socialists)

Perhaps these realizations, put to practice years ago, would have made the complaints you have today superfluous.

You declare that the Social Democratic Party subscribes to our foreign policy program; that it rejects the lie of war guilt; that it is against reparations. Now I may ask just one question: where was this fight during the time you had power in Germany?

("Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

You once had the opportunity to dictate the law of domestic behavior to the German Volk. You were able to do it in other areas. It would have been equally possible to infuse in the German Revolution, which you played a part in initiating, the same momentum and the same direction which France once infused in its uprising in the year 1870.

("Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

It would have been at your discretion to shape the German uprising into one of true national character, and you still would have had the right, had the flag of the new Republic not returned triumphant, to say: we did everything in our power to avoid this catastrophe by a final appeal to the strength of the German Volk.

(Calls of approval from the National Socialists and the German Nationalists)

At that time you avoided the fight; now you suddenly feel an urge to talk about it to everyone around you.

You state that being stripped of power does not mean being stripped of honor. You are right; that does not necessarily have to be the case. Even if we were divested of our power, I know we would not be divested of our honor. Thanks to having been oppressed by your party, our Movement had been stripped of power for years; it has never been stripped of honor.

(Thunderous applause from the National Socialists)

It is my conviction that we shall inoculate the German Volk with a spirit that, in view of the Volk's defenselessness today, Mr. Deputy, will certainly never allow it to be stripped of its honor.

(Calls of approval from the National Socialists and the German Nationalists)

Here, too, it was your responsibility, you who were in power for fourteen years, (Cries of "Oh, no!" from the Social Democrats)

to ensure that this German Volk had set an example of honor to the world. It was your responsibility to ensure that, if the rest of the world insisted upon suppressing us, at least the type of suppression the German Volk was subjected to would be one of dignity. You had the opportunity to speak out against all of the manifestations of disgrace in our Volk. You could have eliminated this treason just as easily as we will eliminate it.

(Cheering from the National Socialists and German Nationalists)

You have no right to even associate yourself with this claim; for you should never, at that hour when every revolution would have constituted the concurrence of the offenses of treason and high treason, have given your support, even indirectly, to such acts. And you should have prevented the German Volk from being subjected to a new constitution drawn up at the beck and call of foreign countries. That has nothing to do with honor, allowing the enemy to dictate one's own internal structure.

(Cheering and clapping from the government parties)

And, moreover, at that time you should have professed your faith in the German tricolor and not in the colors on the handbills the enemy threw into our trenches,

(Renewed cheering from the right)

because more than ever in an age of distress and suppression by the enemy must one show one's pride and even more pledge one's support to one's Volk and the symbols of one's Volk. You would still have had the opportunity, even if the environment had forced us to denounce everything which had formerly been sacred to us, to allow the national honor to be evidenced to the world in domestic policy.

("Hear, hear!" from the right)

You say: equal rights! Just as we desire it abroad, we also desire it at home. It was for these 'equal rights,' Herr Wels, that we fought for fourteen years! You ignored these equal rights as far as national Germany was concerned! So do not talk to us today about equal rights!

(Loud cheering from the right)

You say that the vanquished should not be labelled outlaws. Well, Mr. Deputy, we were outlaws as long as you were in power.

(Renewed thunderous applause from the National Socialists; protests from the Social Democrats; a cry of "Severing!" from President Göring)

You talk about persecution. I think there are few of us here present who were not forced to pay in prison for the persecution you practiced. Few of us here present who were not made to feel the effects of that persecution in acts of harassment a thousand times over and incidents of suppression a thousand times over!

(Calls of approval from the right)

And in addition to those of us here present, I know a company of hundreds of thousands who were at the mercy of a system of persecution which vent itself on them in a disgraceful, even in a positively despicable manner! You seem to have totally forgotten that, for years, our shirts were ripped off our backs because you did not approve of the color.

(Loud jeers from the National Socialists)

Let us stay within the realm of reality! Your persecution has made us strong! You also said that criticism is beneficial. We will take criticism from anyone who loves Germany. But we will take no criticism from anyone who worships the Internationale!

(Repeated waves of loud cheering)

Here too, you have come to your realization a good deal too late, Mr. Deputy. You should have recognized the beneficial power of criticism when we were in the opposition. Back then, you had not yet been confronted with these words; back then our press was *verboten* and *verboten* and again *verboten*; our assemblies were banned; we were not allowed to speak, and I was not allowed to speak—and that went on for years! And now you say criticism is beneficial!

(Laughter from the National Socialists; shouts from the Social Democrats; the President's bell calling for order)

President Göring: Stop talking and listen to this for once!

(Cries of "Bravo!" from the National Socialists)

Hitler, Reich Chancellor: You complain that in the end the world is told untrue facts about the state of affairs in Germany. You complain that the world is told that every day dismembered corpses are turned over to the Israelite cemeteries in Berlin. How that torments you; you would be so glad to do justice to the truth! Well, Mr. Deputy, it must be child's play for your party, with its international connections, to find out the truth. And not only that. These past few days I have been reading the newspapers of your own Social Democratic sister parties in German-Austria. No one is hindering you from disseminating your realization of the truth there.

(Cries of "That's already been done!" from the Social Democrats)

I would be curious as to how effective the power of your international connections really will be in this case as well.

(Amusement on the part of the National Socialists; shouts from the Social Democrats)

Would you please let me finish, I didn't interrupt you either!¹⁵¹ I have read your paper in the Saar, Mr. Deputy, and it does nothing other than commit constant acts of treason, Deputy Wels,

(Indignant shouts from the National Socialists)

it is constantly attempting to discredit Germany abroad,

(Jeers and cries of "*Gemeinheit!*" ("Dirty trick!") from the National Socialists)

to shed a bad light upon our Volk with lies to the rest of the world.

You talk about the lack of stability of the law. Gentlemen of the Social Democratic Party! I too witnessed the Revolution in 1918. I really do have to say that if we did not have a feeling for the law, we would not be here today, and you would not be here either!

(Shouts of "Bravo!" from the National Socialists)

In 1918 you turned against those who had done nothing to harm you.

(*"Hear, hear!"* from the National Socialists)

We are restraining ourselves from turning against those who tortured us and humiliated us for fourteen years.

(*"Hear, hear!"* from the National Socialists)

You say the National Socialist Revolution has nothing to do with Socialism, but rather that its "Socialism" exists only in the sense that it persecutes the "only pillar of Socialism in Germany," the SPD.

(Laughter from the National Socialists)

You are sissies, Gentlemen, and not worthy of this age, if you start talking about persecution at this stage of the game. What has been done to you? You are sitting here and your speaker is being listened to with patience.

(Cries of "Hear, hear!" and amusement on the part of the National Socialists)

You talk about persecution. Who has been persecuting you?

("Hear, hear!" from President Gbring)

You say you are the only pillar of Socialism. You were the pillar of that mysterious Socialism of which, in reality, the German Volk never had a glimpse.

(Cries of "Hear, hear!" and amusement on the part of the National Socialists)

You are talking today about your achievements and your deeds; you are speaking of all the things you intended to do. By your fruits shall ye, too, be known!

(Tumultuous approval and applause from the National Socialists)

The fruits testify against you!

(Protest from the Social Democrats; laughter from the National Socialists)

If the Germany you created in fourteen years is any reflection of your socialist aims, then all I can say is give us four years' time, Gentlemen, in order to show you the reflection of our aims.

(Calls of approval from the National Socialists)

You say: "You want to eliminate the Reichstag to proceed with your Revolution." Gentlemen, if so, we would not have found it necessary to first go to this vote, to convene this Reichstag, or to have the draft of this bill presented. God knows we would have had the courage to deal with you some other way as well!

(Thunderous, long drawnout cheering and applause from the National Socialists)

You also said that we cannot ignore the Social Democratic Party because it was the first one to clear these seats for the Volk, for the working people, and not only for barons or counts. In every instance, Mr. Deputy, you are too late! Why did you not advise your friend Grzesinski of your views in good time, why did you not tell your other friends Braun and Severing, who accused me for years of being nothing more than a house painter's apprentice!—

(Enthusiastic assent and indignant jeers from the National Socialists; protest from the Social Democrats; countering cries of "Of course that's what you said!" from the National Socialists)

For years you claimed that on your posters.

(Renewed protest from the Social Democrats; cries of "Quiet!" from the National Socialists; the President's bell calling for order)

President Göring: Now the Chancellor is getting even!

(Approval from the National Socialists)

Hitler, Reich Chancellor: And in the end I was actually threatened that I would be driven out of Germany with a dog whip!¹⁵²

(Jeers from the National Socialists)

We National Socialists will now clear the path for the German worker leading to what is his to claim and demand. We National Socialists will be his advocates; you, Gentlemen (addressing the Social Democrats), are no longer necessary!

(Cries of "Hear, hear!" and long drawnout, thunderous applause from the National Socialists)

You also state that not power, but a sense of justice is crucial. We have attempted to awaken this sense of justice in our Volk for fourteen years, and we have succeeded in awakening it. However, I now believe on the basis of my own political experiences with you—

("Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

that unfortunately, justice alone is not enough—one has to be in power, too!

("Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

And do not mistake us for a bourgeois world! You think that your star might rise again! Gentlemen, Germany's star will rise and yours will fall.

(Loud cries of "Bravo!" and "Heil!" from the National Socialists; long drawnout cheering, also from the galleries)

You say you were not broken during the period of Socialist legislation. That was a period in which the German workers saw in you something other than what you are today. But why have you forgotten to mention this realization to us?!

("Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

Everything that becomes rotten, old, and weak in the life of a people disappears, never to return.

(Assent from the right)

Your death knell has sounded as well, and it is only because we are thinking of Germany and its distress and the requirements of national life that we appeal in this hour to the German Reichstag to give its consent to what we could have taken at any rate.

("Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

We are doing it for the sake of justice—not because we overestimate power, but because we may thus one day perhaps more easily join with those who, today, may be separated from us but who nevertheless believe in Germany, too.

(Calls of "Bravo!" from the National Socialists)

For I would not want to make the mistake of provoking opponents instead of either destroying or becoming reconciled with them.

(Cries of "Bravo!" and "Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

I would like to extend my hand to those who, perhaps on other paths, will also come to feel with their Volk in the end,

(Cries of "Bravo!" from the Center Party)

and would not want to declare an everlasting war,

(Renewed cries of "Bravo!")

not because of weakness, but out of love to my Volk, and in order to spare this German Volk all what will perish with the rest in this age of struggles.

(Renewed shouts of "Bravo!" from the National Socialists and the German Nationalists)

That you may never misunderstand me on this point: I extend my hand to everyone who commits himself to Germany.

(Cries of "Bravo!")

I do not recognize the precepts of the Internationale.

(Cheering from the National Socialists and German Nationalists)

I believe that you (addressing the Social Democrats) are not voting for this bill for the reason that you, in your innermost mentality, are incapable of comprehending the purpose which thereby imbues us.

("Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

I believe, however, that you would not do this were we really what your press abroad today makes us out to be,

("Hear, hear!" from the National Socialists)

and I can only say to you: I do not even want you to vote for it! Germany will be liberated, but not by you!

(Long drawnout, thunderous cries of "Heil!" and cheering from the National Socialists and in the galleries. Applause from the German Nationalists. Repeated waves of thunderous applause and cries of "Heil!")

It was to be the first and only time Hitler took part in a debate before the Reichstag and, at least from 1932 onwards, before the public.

The snub he had delivered to the Chairman of the Social Democratic Party naturally elicited the highest acclaim, both in the right-wing parties and among the members of the Reich Government. Even the normally reserved Hugenberg was openly enthusiastic and thanked Hitler at the cabinet meeting on March 24 "on behalf of the other cabinet members for the impressive and successful appearance in the Reichstag, but most of all for the brilliant rebuff of that Marxist leader, Wels."¹⁵³

The further course of the Reichstag session on March 23 brought no other incidents. The deputies Kaas (Center Party), Ritter von Lex (BVP), Reinhold Meier (German State Party), Simpfendorfer (CSV), and Göring (NSDAP) subsequently declared the consent of their respective parties to the Enabling Act, which was then passed with a total of 441 votes (all of the parties with the exception of the SPD) to the 94 votes of the Social Democrats. The Reichsrat, now composed exclusively of National Socialist Länder representatives, passed the bill unanimously the same day.

It is pointless to speculate what Hitler would have done had the Enabling Act not secured the required two-thirds majority. Such a situation would certainly not have presented an obstacle to his plans for governing the country; he had said as much in no uncertain terms on various occasions. As early as August 6, 1932, Goebbels had recorded Hitler's intentions in his diary on the occasion of the then forthcoming government negotiations. He had noted:¹⁵⁴ "If a Reichstag rejects an Enabling Act the Führer demands, it will be sent home."

March 24, 1933

In all probability, Hitler would have continued governing with the aid of emergency decrees pursuant to Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. He had no need to fear interference from the Reichstag due to its right-wing majority. At the next opportunity, he would have announced new elections in order to procure a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag, as had been done in October/November 1933.¹⁵⁵

4

Abroad, the consequences of the new Enabling Act had been perceived more clearly than in the ranks of the non-National Socialist parties in Germany. The commentaries of the foreign press were less than friendly and aroused Hitler's anger. According to his preconception, so-called *Weltjudentum* (world Jewry) was to blame.

As is generally known, Hitler believed in the existence of a secret Jewish world government which influenced all of the governments around the globe to act in its interests; above all, this entity was determined not to allow the German Volk to come to the fore. On the other hand, he believed the solidarity of Jewry throughout the world was so strong that it would be willing to make concessions in order to alleviate any hardships the Jews in Germany might be made to bear.

Therefore Hitler was convinced that he need only harass and threaten the German Jews, and foreign governments would be persuaded to yield in their attitude towards Germany and Hitler: world Jewry would instruct these governments to act accordingly.

Without delay he went to work on setting a warning example. As Reich Chancellor, he had until now been extremely reserved on this point, rarely exhibiting his anti-Semitic attitude. Since January 30, even the Party and the National Socialist press had, on Hitler's orders, refrained from treating the Jewish problem in their customary fashion. This policy was to undergo a radical change.

From March 26 to March 28, Hitler conferred with his *Unterrührers* in Berchtesgaden and Munich in order to outline an operation against German Jews to commence on April 1, with the expressly announced aim of thus putting pressure on world Jewry and foreign governments.¹⁵⁶ On March 28, Hitler issued the following appeal to all party organizations of the NSDAP to boycott the Jews:¹⁵⁷

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

After fourteen years of inner conflict, the German Volk—politically overcoming its ranks, classes, professions, and confessional divisions—has effected an *Erhebung* which put a lightning end to the Marxist-Jewish nightmare.

In the weeks following January 30, a unique national revolution took place in Germany.

In spite of long years of exceedingly severe suppression and persecution, the masses of millions which support the Government of the National Revolution have, in a very calm and disciplined matter, given the new Reich leadership legal cover for the implementation of its reform of the German nation from top to bottom. On March 5 the overwhelming majority of Germans eligible to vote declared its confidence in the new regime. The completion of the national revolution has thus become the demand of the Volk.

The Jewish-Marxist *Bonzen* deserted their position of power with deplorable cowardice. Despite all the fuss, not a single one dared to raise any serious resistance.

For the most part, they have left the masses they had seduced in the lurch and fled abroad, taking with them their stuffed strongboxes.

The authors and beneficiaries of our misfortune owe the fact that they were spared—almost without exception—solely to the incomparable discipline and order with which this act of overthrowing was conducted.

Hardly a hair of their heads was harmed. Compare this act of self-discipline on the part of the national uprising in Germany with, for instance, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which claimed the lives of over three million people, and you will begin to appreciate what a debt of gratitude the criminals guilty of the disintegration in Germany would owe the powers of the national uprising. Compare the terrible battles and destruction of the Revolution of these very November Men themselves: their shooting of hostages in the years 1918 and '19; the slaughtering of defenseless opponents—and you will once again perceive how enormous the difference is between them and the national uprising.

The men presently in power solemnly proclaimed to the world that they wanted to live in international peace. In this, the German Volk constitutes a loyal *Gefolgschaft* (following). Germany wants neither worldwide confusion nor international intrigues. National revolutionary Germany is firmly resolved to put an end to internal mismanagement!

Now that the domestic enemies of the nation have been eliminated by the Volk itself, what we have long been waiting for will now come to pass. The Communist and Marxist criminals and their Jewish-intellectual instigators, who, having made off with their capital stocks across the border in the nick of time, are now unfolding an unscrupulous, treasonous campaign of agitation against the German Volk as a whole from there. Because it became impossible for them to continue lying in Germany, they have begun, in the capitals of the former Entente, to continue the same agitation against the young national uprising which they had already pursued at the outbreak of the War against the Germany of that time.

Lies and slander of positively hairraising perversity are being launched about Germany. Horror stories of dismembered Jewish corpses, gouged-out

eyes, and hacked-off hands are circulated for the purpose of defaming the German Volk in the world for a second time, just as they had succeeded in doing once before in 1914. The animosity of millions of innocent human beings, peoples with whom the German Volk wishes only to live in peace, is being stirred up by these unscrupulous criminals. They want German goods and German labor to fall victim to the international boycott. It seems they think the misery in Germany is not bad enough as it is; they have to make it worse!

They lie about Jewish females who have supposedly been killed; about Jewish girls allegedly being raped before the eyes of their parents; about cemeteries being ravaged! The whole thing is one big lie invented for the sole purpose of provoking a new world-war agitation!

Standing by and watching this lunatic crime any longer would mean being implicated.

The National Socialist Party will therefore now take defensive action against this universal crime with the means which are capable of striking a blow to the guilty parties.

For the guilty ones are among us, they live in our midst and day after day misuse the right to hospitality which the German Volk has granted them.

At a time when millions of our people have nothing to live on and nothing to eat, while hundreds of thousands of German brain-workers degenerate on the streets, these intellectual Jewish men of letters are sitting in our midst and have no qualms about claiming the right to our hospitality.

What would America do were the Germans in America to commit a sin against America like the one these Jews have committed against Germany? The National Revolution did not harm a hair of their heads. They were allowed to go about their business as before; but mind you, corruption will be exterminated, regardless of who commits it. Just as belonging to a Christian confession or our own Volk does not constitute a license for criminals, neither does belonging to the Jewish race or the Mosaic religion.

For decades, Germany indiscriminately allowed all aliens to enter the country. There are 135 people to one square kilometer of land in this country. In America there are less than 15. In spite of this fact, America saw it fit to set quotas for immigration and even exclude certain peoples from immigrating. Without any regard to its own distress, Germany refrained for decades from instituting these measures. As our reward, we now have a clique of Jewish men of letters, professors and profiteers inciting the world against us while millions of our own Volksgenossen are unemployed and degenerating.

This will be put to a stop now!

The Germany of the National Revolution is not the Germany of a cowardly bourgeois mentality.

We see the misery and wretchedness of our own Volksgenossen and feel obliged to leave nothing undone which can prevent further damage to this, our Volk.

For the parties responsible for these lies and slander are the Jews in our midst. It is they who are the source of this campaign of hate and lies against Germany. It would be in their power to call the liars in the rest of the world into line.

Because they choose not to do so, we will make sure that this crusade of hatred and lies against Germany is no longer directed against the innocent German Volk, but against the responsible agitators themselves.

This smear campaign of boycotting and atrocities must not and shall not injure the German Volk, but rather the Jews themselves—a thousand times more severely.

Thus the following order is issued to all party sections and party organizations:

Item 1: *Action Committees for a boycott against the Jews*

Action Committees are to be formed in each *Ortsgruppe* (local chapter) and organizational body of the NSDAP for conducting a practical, organized boycott of Jewish businesses, Jewish goods, Jewish doctors, and Jewish lawyers. The Action Committees shall be responsible for ensuring that the boycott does not do any harm to innocent parties but instead does all the more harm to the guilty parties.

Item 2: *Utmost protection for all foreigners*

The Action Committees shall be responsible for providing the utmost protection for all foreigners, without regard to their religion and origins or race. The boycott is a purely defensive action which is aimed exclusively at the *Judentum* in Germany.

Item 3: *Boycott propaganda*

The Action Committees shall immediately popularize the boycott by means of propaganda and enlightenment. Basic principle: no good German is still buying from a Jew or allowing the Jew or his henchmen to offer him goods. The boycott must be a universal one. It will be borne by the entire Volk and must hit Jewry where it is most vulnerable.

Item 4: *The central management. Pg. Streicher*¹⁵⁸

In cases of doubt, one is to refrain from boycotting businesses until informed otherwise by the Central Committee in Munich. The Chairman of the Central Committee is Pg. Streicher.

Item 5: *Surveillance of newspapers*

The Action Committees shall keep the newspapers under sharp surveillance in order to ascertain the extent to which they are participating in the enlightenment crusade of the German Volk against the Jewish smear campaign of atrocities (*Greuelhetze*) abroad. If newspapers are not doing so or doing so only within a limited scope, it is to be seen to that they are instantly removed from every building inhabited by Germans. No German man and no German business is to continue advertising in such newspapers. These papers must become victims of public contempt, written for fellow members of the Jewish race, but not for the German Volk.

Item 6: *Boycott as a means of protecting German labor*

In conjunction with the factory cell organizations of the Party, the Action Committees must carry the propaganda of the enlightenment concerning the effects of the Jewish smear campaign of atrocities for German labor and thus for the German worker into the factories, enlightening the workers in particular as to the necessity of a national boycott as a defensive measure for the protection of German labor.

Item 7: *Action Committees down to the last village!*

The Action Committees must be driven into the smallest villages in order to hit especially the Jewish traders on the flatlands.

As a basic principle, it should be stressed that the boycott is a defensive measure which was forced upon us.

Item 8: *The boycott is to commence on April 1!*

The boycott shall not begin in a dissipated fashion but abruptly. For this reason all preparations are to be made instantly. The SA and SS will be given orders to set up guards to warn the population not to set foot in Jewish shops from the moment the boycott begins. The beginning of the boycott is to be publicized on posters and in the press, in handbills, etc.

The boycott shall commence abruptly at 10:00 in the morning on Saturday, April 1. It will be maintained until an order from the Party leadership commands that it be discontinued.

Item 9: *Demand of the masses for restricted admission*

In tens of thousands of mass assemblies which are to reach as far as the smallest village, the Action Committees shall organize the demand for the introduction of a restriction to the number of Jews employed in all professions which should be relative to their proportion in the German population. In order to increase the impact of the action, this demand is initially to be confined to three areas:

- a) admission to the German secondary schools and universities;
- b) the medical profession;
- c) the legal profession.

Item 10: *Enlightenment abroad*

Another further task of the Action Committees is to ensure that every German who upholds any connection whatsoever abroad shall make use of this to circulate in letters, telegrams, and telephone calls in an enlightening manner the truth that law and order reigns in Germany; that it is the single most ardent wish of the German Volk to be able to pursue its work in peace and live in peace with the rest of the world; and that it is fighting the battle against the Jewish smear campaign of atrocities purely as a defensive battle.

Item 11: *Calm, discipline, and no acts of violence!*

The Action Committees are responsible for ensuring that this entire battle is conducted with the utmost calm and the greatest discipline. Refrain from harming a single hair of a Jew's head in future as well! We will come to terms with this smear campaign simply by the drastic force of these measures cited. More than ever before it is necessary that the entire Party stand behind the leadership in blind obedience as one man.

National Socialists, you have wrought the miracle of sending the November State cartwheeling in a single offensive; you will accomplish this second task the same way. International *Weltjudentum* should know one thing:

The Government of the National Revolution does not exist in a vacuum. It is the representation of the working German Volk. Whoever attacks it, is attacking Germany! Whoever slanders it, is slandering the nation! Whoever fights it, has declared war on 65 million people! We were able to come to terms with the Marxist agitators in Germany; they will not force us to our knees, even

if they are now proceeding with their renegade crimes against the people from abroad.

National Socialists! Saturday, at the stroke of ten, *Judentum* will know upon whom it has declared war.

National Socialist German Workers' Party / Party Leadership

Contrary to his accustomed practice, Hitler hesitated to sign his name to this proclamation, opting instead to use the more anonymous "Party Leadership." But his style and attitude are evident in every line; only the eleven individual items seem in part to be the work of Goebbels'.¹⁵⁹ Hitler appointed the well-known, violently anti-Semitic Julius Streicher, Gauleiter in Nuremberg, to head the action, and made all the necessary arrangements on March 28 in Munich.

On March 29 he issued another proclamation from Munich to the NSDAP in Bavaria urging Party members to restrain from independent action. Reich Commissar von Epp, the proclamation stated, was to represent the sole authority in Bavaria and the court of last instance—for the Party as well.¹⁶⁰

Afterwards, Hitler flew to Berlin to attend the cabinet meeting. There he openly declared that he was the originator of the boycott action against the German Jews.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* printed the following report of Hitler's address to the cabinet:¹⁶¹

Berlin, March 29

Today's Reich cabinet meeting, the first which is to pass far-reaching resolutions on the basis of the Enabling Act, was opened by Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler with a declaration on the present political situation. The Führer commented on the defensive measures against the Jewish atrocity propaganda abroad. It had been necessary to organize the defense, the Führer stated, because otherwise it would have come from the Volk itself and perhaps taken on undesirable forms.

By means of this organization, the defense measure itself would stay under control and molestation motivated by personal grievances as well as acts of violence would be prevented.

However, *Judentum* must, according to the Führer, realize that a Jewish war against Germany would hit *Judentum* in Germany itself with full force.

On April 1, the SA and other Party forces set up guards in front of Jewish businesses, doctors' practices, law offices, etc. and prevented customers—to the extent that any even dared to make an appearance—from entering. The reaction abroad seemed to lend support to Hitler's theories. The foreign press took great pains to demonstrate reserve in

commenting on the new situation in Germany, albeit not because “world Jewry” had instructed them to do so, but rather because they sympathized with the German Jews and did not wish to aggravate their situation.

On April 4, Goebbels was able to draw the following balance:¹⁶² “Atrocity propaganda abroad has abated quite appreciably. Therefore the cabinet has resolved to refrain for the time being from renewing the boycott, but will keep it in readiness as a standing threat.”

Thus the German Jews remained a means with which Hitler could exert pressure abroad. They were to be exploited as such until their extermination in the Second World War.

In the meantime, Hitler continued his *Gleichschaltung* measures toward depriving the German Under of power. On March 31, the “First Coordination Law of Länder and Reich”¹⁶³ was promulgated, which granted the Under Governments legislative powers and reestablished both the Landtage and local assemblies in accordance with the election results of March 5.

The “Second Coordination Law of Länder and Reich”¹⁶⁴ followed on April 7. Reichsstatthalters were installed in all the German Under and given the task of appointing the Under Governments. Hitler personally assumed this office in Prussia and naturally appointed Göring, not Papen, as Minister-President.

The other Reichsstatthalters were selected from the ranks of the NSDAP Gauleiters, who now also began to steadily assume executive power in their respective Gaus, either as Reichsstatthalter or as District President (in the larger Under) or Oberpräsident (in Prussia).

Gleichschaltung permeated the cabinet level as well. Hitler’s financial expert Fritz Reinhardt was appointed State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Finance on April 1. Former Colonel Konstantin Hierl, head of the Office for Labor Service (*Amt für Arbeitsdienst*) in the NSDAP Reich leadership, advanced to State Secretary for Voluntary Labor Service. Even in the course of this large-scale political restructuring, Hitler did not neglect to deliver his accustomed oratories.

On April 5, clad in a dark suit, he addressed the German Agricultural Council in the Berlin Herrenhaus,¹⁶⁵ above all acknowledging the part played by the German peasant in contributing to his *Machtergreifung*.¹⁶⁶

Herr Präsident! Gentlemen!

The fact that we are able today to meet once more under the old black-white-red flag and under the symbol of the national renaissance in Germany is

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due in no small part to the German peasant, who has perhaps made the greatest contribution to this historic turning point in our destiny.

Believe me, the uprising which lies behind us would not have been possible had not a part of the Volk in the country always stood in our ranks. It would have been impossible to gain those initial positions which lent the weight of legality to our actions in the cities alone. Thus the German Volk has the German peasant to thank for the renewal, the uprising, and hence also the drastic change which will lead to the general recuperation of conditions in Germany.

The fact that German peasantry has today found a great amalgamation will, in future, tremendously facilitate the work of the government, for it shall then act in the knowledge that the enormous masses of its peasant Volk are standing by it. I believe that there is not a single man in this government who is not imbued with the most sincere desire for this closest cooperation. We simultaneously perceive in the accomplishment of this task the salvation of the German Volk in the future, not for 1933 or 1934, but for the most distant times to come. We are willing to now initiate and, in the next few years, implement the measures which we know will be recognized and judged to be basically right by future generations.

There was no question that the head of the Agricultural Policy Office of the NSDAP, Richard Walter Darré,¹⁶⁷ was to assume the leadership in all peasant organizations.

On April 6, Hitler delivered a relatively long address before the associated non-local (German) press in Berlin,¹⁶⁸ in which—in addition to relating the standard “party narrative”—he went into philosophical deliberations on the mission of the press, love of truth, and nihilism. He closed by drawing the following conclusion:

For this very reason we recognize the significance of the press much more clearly than our predecessors did. However, may the press also recognize the significance of a regime which, by righting general conditions in Germany, is bringing about the moral and political, and hence also the economic ascent without which the press cannot exist for long.

Thus I for my part would also like to warmly welcome you, Gentlemen, as representatives of the non-local German press and thank you for what you have already accomplished in terms of giving our Volk a good education, and I warmly invite you to take part in a work which is sure to one day nobly prevail in German history.

For, even though ages of greatness always alternate with ages of disintegration in our Volk, the final judgment of history on the actions of humanity will nonetheless be passed by the spirit of *Lebensbejahung* (affirmation of life).

One day it will be our judge, and it will one day be forced to ascertain that day and night, in sleep and in waking, one single idea dominated our thoughts: *Deutschland*.

On April 8, Hitler issued the "Law on the Reconstruction of the Professional Civil Service" (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*) which in reality constituted a means of removing civil servants who were politically unreliable from the National Socialist perspective. Those dismissed from office were at least allowed to retain their pensions.

On the same day, Hitler held a major speech at an SA roll call in the Berlin Sportpalast. The address was broadcast by every station and could thus be heard by the SA forces which had assembled throughout the country. Goebbels described the event as "the greatest mass roll call the world has ever seen."

Hitler stated in part as follows:¹⁶⁹

The great age for which we have hoped fourteen years long has now dawned. Germany has now awakened.¹⁷⁰ Everything has come to pass which we, sensing and foreseeing, had prophesied in these fourteen years, not due to a gift of those around us or the mercy of our adversaries, but rather to our own power.

So did I begin back then to breed, in a small organization, what was to become the national substance of the coming Reich: people who detach themselves from their surroundings; who thrust far from them all the petty things of life which appear so important; who recall once more a new and greater task; who have the courage to already openly display that they want to have nothing to do with all the eternally dividing and subversive concepts which poison the life of our Volk.

We have fostered in ourselves an allegiance (*Gefolgschaftstreue*), this blind obedience all the others know nothing about and which has given us the strength to survive everything.

We have practiced, too, the virtue of courage. Today millions are streaming into our great front. However, they must for the most part first learn what this brown army has practiced for many years. They must all first learn to take upon themselves what tens of thousands of our comrades have taken upon themselves and paid for with their blood, with their lives. If this Movement were not so boundless in its discipline, those who today complain of sacrifices demanded of them would perhaps have more to complain about. The Movement has, by means of utmost discipline, become its own master, with Germany in mind.

We have also instilled the virtue of steadfastness, of eternal perseverance. It is to this steadfastness we owe our triumph today. We must learn from this for the future.

Fate wants to test us—whether the German Volk is to live and become great or whether the end of our Volk is at hand.

There is one thing we know now: though centuries may pass, these eagles and these symbols are linked with the ascent of Germany for all time. If we maintain the same discipline, the same obedience, the same comradeship, and

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the same unbounded loyalty in the future as well, then nothing will ever be able to eradicate this Movement from Germany.

It was here that Hitler's false doctrine began to take shape: the heresy that, given steadfastness, discipline, bravery, and blind obedience, anything in the world was attainable, even the most impossible aims. The National Socialist *Machtergreifung* after fourteen years of struggle was proof positive, he claimed.

In this speech, Hitler also once more evoked the image of a god enthroned above the clouds (Providence, Fate) who plans to test the German Volk to ascertain whether or not it is really brave and steadfast. If the Volk passes the test, this god will make it great. If not, its end is at hand. This address further marks the beginning of Hitler's obsession with characterizing his measures as designed for the "centuries." Soon these were to become "millenniums."

On April 11, Hitler sent a letter to the Reich President on the dual occasion of assuming the office of Reichsstatthalter in Prussia and von Papen's release from office as Reich Commissar for the Land of Prussia.

Ostensibly, von Papen was exceedingly pleased about his dismissal and had written to Hitler on April 7: "You, Herr Reichskanzler, shall now be in a position, as was once Fürst Bismarck, to coordinate the policies of the largest of the German Länder with those of the Reich. Now that the new law has given you the opportunity to appoint the Prussian Minister-President, I may respectfully ask that you inform the Reich President that I most humbly return to his hands the office of Reich Commissar for the Land of Prussia. Most respectfully yours, Your obedient servant, von Papen."

Hitler gladly complied with this request and wrote to Hindenburg:¹⁷¹

My esteemed Herr Reichspräsident!

Vice Chancellor von Papen has sent me a letter which I enclose and of which you will be so kind as to take note. Herr von Papen had already informed me some days ago that he had come to an agreement with Minister Göring to the effect that he would resign of his own volition as soon as, by means of the new law coordinating the policy in the Reich and the Under, the uniformity of the leadership of government business in the Reich and Prussia was safeguarded.

On the evening following the promulgation of the new law providing for the appointment of Reichsstatthalters, Herr von Papen saw that this goal had been achieved and thus requested that I proceed to appoint the Prussian Minister-President, whereby he placed himself fully at the disposal of the Reich Government for further services.

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In assuming the temporary leadership of Prussia during this difficult time, Herr von Papen has, since January 30, rendered a great service in promoting the idea of policy coordination in the Reich and the Länder. His work in the cabinet, at the disposal of which he is now placing his entire efforts, is so infinitely valuable and my personal relationship with him so warm and friendly that I am sincerely looking forward to the great assistance which is thus bestowed upon me.

With the highest esteem,

Adolf Hitler

The friendly words which Hitler dedicated to the Vice Chancellor served two functions: on the one hand, they were designed as a consolation for Hindenburg, in the event that he should begin to wonder why Papen was being maneuvered out of Prussia; on the other hand, the praise constituted a reward for the willingness with which Papen strove to fulfill Hitler's every order. As a rule, Hitler was not sparing in his use of flattery and, if necessary, of money and endowments as well.

On the same day, Hitler sent Göring the following telegram:

With effect as per today's date I hereby appoint you Minister-President of Prussia. I may request that you be so kind and assume the duties of this office on April 20 in Berlin.

I am happy for this opportunity to demonstrate to you my trust and my gratitude for the services which you have rendered in support of the new uprising of the German Volk for over ten years as a fighter in our Movement; for the victorious execution of the National Revolution as temporary Minister of the Interior in Prussia; and, last but not least, for the unique loyalty with which you have bound your destiny to mine.

Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler

Göring was in Rome at the time. On the following day, i.e. April 12, he, as well as Papen, was received by Pope Pius XI. The preparations for the conclusion of a concordat between the Vatican and the Reich were already underway.

Hitler proceeded by car to Munich on April 12, making a stop in Bayreuth, where he spoke with Mrs. Eva Chamberlain.¹⁷²

On April 19, the eve of his birthday, Hitler was given the freedom of the Free State of Bavaria and responded with an address to the members of the State Government and the City of Munich in the Grütznerstube of the Munich City Hall.¹⁷³ This state ceremony on the part of the Bavarian Council of Ministers, he declared [with reference to his imprisonment in the fortress of Landsberg in 1924], had served to make good what had once been inflicted upon him. He was happy that today all the rest of Germany once more regarded Bavaria with respect.

For the first time, Hitler's birthday on April 20 was celebrated as a national holiday throughout Germany. All public buildings were decorated with flags, as were most private dwellings. Hindenburg sent his birthday greetings in the following telegram:¹⁷⁴

On this day I commemorate with sincere gratitude the great patriotic work which you have accomplished and which still lies before you. Loyally bound to you in the desire to once again lead our *Volk und Vaterland* onwards and out of the misery of these times, I may extend to you my warmest wishes for your continuing efforts as well as for your personal welfare. In comradeship I remain, Respectfully yours,

von Hindenburg

Hugenberg also sent a telegram and published a tribute to the Führer in the newspaper *Der Tag*. Even Monsignor Kaas, who had travelled to Rome for the concordat negotiations, sent his "sincere congratulations and best wishes, and the assurance of unfailing cooperation."

Hitler returned to Berlin for a short sojourn on April 21. On April 22, he was back in Munich, delivering a major speech at a convention of NSDAP leaders.¹⁷⁵ Following the customary "party narrative," Hitler proclaimed that the National Socialist Movement would withstand any and all enemies in order to prevail for millennia. The Revolution, so he claimed, would be finished only when the entire German world had been completely reshaped, both internally and externally.

When Hitler said "the entire German world," he most certainly meant the entire world per se. He stated verbatim as follows:

It is not the ones who are half-hearted and neutral who make history, but rather the people who take the struggle upon themselves. In that our Movement marched and continues to march with double-quick pace, it has in it the power to prevail against every enemy and achieve victory. The Movement has taken on two thousand years of German history and culture. It will become the bearer of German history and German culture of the future. It will ensure that new, unforgettable documents are created which will continue to award the Volk its place among the circle of great civilized peoples in world history. We are not working for the moment, but for the judgment of millennia.

In these last few days of April, Hitler was able to score yet another successful power play. Reich Minister Franz Seldte declared in a radio speech on April 27 that he had joined the NSDAP and was placing himself and the association of former frontline soldiers he headed, the *Stahlhelm*, under Hitler's leadership.¹⁷⁶ The second leader of the association, former Lieutenant General Theodor Duesterberg, had been forced to resign.

April 27, 1933

On the occasion of Hitler's birthday, numerous streets in Germany were named after him. Hitler appeared, however, to be little gratified by these gestures and issued the following declaration to the press on April 27:¹⁷⁷

In numerous communities and cities recently, streets and squares have been renamed. Although I greatly appreciate the honor bestowed upon me by connecting my name with such streets and squares, all the more I may request that one refrain from changing historic names. We must not fall prey to the mistake made in 1918. Each generation should connect only that with itself which it has itself created. It is our bounden duty to erase the names of the November Criminals from our public streets and squares; their former names shall be restored to them. In future, the national revolution may only connect its name and the names of its leading men to what it achieves on its own.

Adolf Hitler

This is one area in which Hitler apparently was unable to enforce his will, as is witnessed by the abundance of "Adolf Hitler Streets" and "Adolf Hitler Squares" in the 'historic' quarters of German cities between 1933 and 1945.

On April 27, Hitler appointed Rudolf Hess, his long-standing secretary and Chairman of the Central Political Commission of the NSDAP, as his Deputy in party matters. The decree read as follows:¹⁷⁸

I hereby appoint the Chairman of the Central Political Commission, party comrade Rudolf Hess, as my Deputy and grant him the authorization to make decisions on my behalf in all questions of party leadership.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler was later to regret having made this appointment.¹⁷⁹

On April 27, it was also disclosed that Hitler's long-standing attorney, Dr. Hans Frank, who had held the post of Bavarian Minister of justice since March 1933, had been appointed Reich Commissar for the *Gleichschaltung* of the judiciary in the Länder and the amendment of the legal system on April 22.¹⁸⁰

On April 29, Hitler made an appearance at Starnberg Lake and went on a short flight with the giant flying boat 'Dornier Do X', at the time the world's largest aircraft. He sat in the cockpit and allegedly took over the flight control for periods at a time.¹⁸¹

In order to effect the next step toward further consolidating his power, Hitler turned to the unions, whose fate had been discussed in the newspapers throughout the month of April. Hitler's aim could be no other than the full-scale elimination of these "Marxist" organizations. However, he intended to lessen the shock to the German workers by

means of noble speeches and demonstrations. He knew that, in the words of Karl Bröger,¹⁸² “the poorest son of Germany” was also its “most loyal” and would not, if robbed of his former leaders, be reluctant to reply to a “national” call. This “most loyal son of Germany” was to be rewarded for his cooperation by a special honor.

By means of a bill passed on April 10,¹⁸³ Hitler had declared May Day—formerly the day reserved for the Marxists’ anti-capitalist demonstrations—the “Day of National Labor.”

Hitler had ordered that momentous events be scheduled in Berlin for May 1, 1933. The festivities commenced with a youth rally in the *Lustgarten* at 9:00 a.m. Hitler had arranged that Hindenburg deliver a speech so that he might witness for himself the joyful enthusiasm with which German youth welcomed the new Germany. Following the jubilantly received address given by the Reich President, which had ended with a triple chorus of “Hurrah!”, Hitler—in a light-colored trenchcoat—stepped to the balustrade and shouted:¹⁸⁴

German boys! German girls! Three cheers for our Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, the great soldier and leader of the World War: *Er lebe hoch, hoch, hoch!*

It is evident that Hitler took pains to do things in a fashion amenable to Hindenburg and thus avoided the three “Sieg Heil!” cheers customary with the National Socialists. His ulterior motive also lay in stressing the contrast between himself, the lord and master, the omniscient and all-organizing Führer, and the Field Marshal, the personification of an age now past.

At noon, Hitler received delegations of workers dispatched from all areas of the Reich itself and from Austria, Danzig, and the Saar. In the afternoon he introduced the delegations to the Reich President.¹⁸⁵

In the interim, hundreds of thousands had gathered at the Tempelhofer Feld. Goebbels estimated the crowd at one and a half million; the Eher Verlag cited the figure as two million.¹⁸⁶

At 8:00 p.m., Hitler delivered a major speech there, expounding once again his old theory that the political and social misery of the German Volk was due solely to its lack of unity. His speech climaxed in the words:

German Volk, you are strong when you are one. German *Volk*, you are not second-class, even if the world wants you to be a thousand times over. German Volk, forget fourteen years of disintegration and rise up to two thousand years of German history!

Following is a verbatim account of the speech:¹⁸⁷

German Volksgenossen!

*Der Mai ist gekommen.*¹⁸⁸ That is how a German folksong puts it. And for many centuries, the first day of May was not only symbolic of spring's arrival in the countryside; it was also a day of joy, of festive spirits and sentiments. There came a time when this day was enlisted for other purposes, and the day of new life and hopeful joy was transformed into a day of quarrel and internal strife. A dogma which had seized hold of our Volk attempted to transform the day of awakening nature, of the visible approach of spring, into a day of hate, of fraternal strife, of discord, and of suffering. Centuries passed by this German country, and this day seemed more and more destined to document the division and disunity of our Volk. But there finally came a time of reflection, too, after the deepest suffering had seized our Volk, a time of turning inward and for German people to come together again.

And today we can once more join in singing the old folk song: "*Der Mai ist gekommen*." Our Volk's awakening has come to pass. The symbol of class conflict, of never-ending strife and discord, is now becoming once again the symbol of the great unity and uprising of the nation. And thus, for all time to come, we have chosen this day when nature awakens as the day of regaining our own power and strength and, at the same time, the productive work which knows no limits, which is not bound to unions or factories or offices; work we wish to recognize and promote wherever it is performed in a positive sense for the very existence and the life of our Volk.

The German Volk has a gruesome crisis behind it. But it is not as though this were due to lack of industry, no! Millions in our Volk are working like before. Millions of peasants are walking behind their plows as in the past, millions of workers are standing at the workbench, hammering to the sound of the ringing anvil. Millions in our Volk are working, and millions more want to work, but they cannot! Tens of thousands voluntarily put an end to an existence which, for them, holds only grief and misery. They have traded it for the next world, in which they hope for something more and better. Appalling suffering and misfortune have descended upon us and brought, in their wake, despondency and even despair. And we now ask ourselves, why?

It is a political crisis. The German Volk has become disintegrated internally, its entire vitality is being used up in the internal struggle. The ability to build on the power of one's own will has dwindled, people's faith in the power of the individual has diminished. Millions are eyeing the rest of the world in the hope that it will bestow upon them good fortune and well-being. The Volk is disintegrating, and its vitality, its power to assert its own life, is fading with this disintegration. We see the consequences of this class conflict around and within us, and we want to learn from this. For there is one thing we have recognized as the primary requirement for the recovery of our Volk: the German Volk must once again come to know itself!

The millions of people divided into professions, separated into artificial classes which, infested by arrogance of rank and class madness, are no longer able to understand each other—they must find their way back together! A

gigantic, tremendous task—we know it! But when madness has been upheld and preached as a political idea for seventy years, when the destruction of the Volksgemeinschaft has been the political rule for seventy years, then it is difficult to seek to change people's minds overnight. We must not allow this to let us become despondent and despair. What one man has built, another can tear down; what human madness once created can be overcome by the power of reason.

We know that this process of coming to know and understand each other cannot be a matter of weeks or months or even of a mere few years. We do, however, have the unshakable will to accomplish this great task before German history, we have the resolution to lead German people back together, and if necessary, to force them back together.

That is the meaning of May Day which shall be celebrated in Germany from now on and throughout the centuries so that all those who are active in the great machinery of our productive national work may join together and extend their hands to one another once a year in the realization that nothing can be accomplished unless everyone contributes his share of work and efforts. And thus, as our motto for this day, we have chosen the sentence, "Honor the work, and respect the worker!"

For millions, it is difficult to overcome all the hate and misunderstandings which have been artificially cultivated in the past and find their way back together. There is one realization which allows us to tread this path more easily. Take a person who is working, wherever it may be—he should and must not forget that his Volksgenosse, who is doing his duty just like him, is indispensable; that the nation does not subsist on the work of a government, of a certain class or in the products of its intelligence, but rather lives from the mutual and harmonious work of all! When millions believe that the type of work itself is any indication of the worthiness of those who execute it, this is a bitter mistake. There are many tens of thousands among us who want to make respect for the individual dependent upon the type of work he does. No! Not what he does, but rather how he does it must be the decisive factor. The fact that millions among us are industrious year in, year out, without ever being able to hope to gain riches, or even only to achieve a life without cares—that should oblige everyone to support them all the more. For it is their idealism and their devotion alone which make it possible for the whole to exist and live. It would be a sorry fate if today this idealism in our Volk were to fade and the value of an individual were to be judged solely by the external fortunes of life which have fallen to his lot. The value of our Volk would then no longer be great and its term of existence would not be long.

It is useless to explain to the worker that he is important or to prove to the peasant the necessity of his existence; useless to approach the intellectual, the mental worker, in order to make him understand the importance of what he does. It is necessary to teach each rank and class the significance of the other ranks and classes. And therefore we want to go forth into the cities to proclaim to them the necessity and the essentiality of the German peasant and go out into the country and to our thinkers and teach them the significance of the German working class. We want to go to the worker and to the peasant to teach them

that there can be no German life unless there is a German spirit; that they all must unite to form a great community: spirit, mind and hand, worker, peasant, and burgher.

This First of May shall also convey to the German Volk the realization that industry and work alone do not make up life if they are not wed to the power and the will of a people. Industry and work, power and will—only if they join forces, only when the strong fist of the nation is raised to protect and shelter the work, only then can real blessings result. And this day shall also make the German Volk conscious of one thing: German Volk! You are strong when you are united, when you banish from your heart the spirit of class conflict and your discord. You can place an enormous power behind your work if you unite that work with your entire *Volkstum's* will to live!

We dream of a State of the German Nation which is capable of once more securing our Volk's daily bread on earth, and we know that this requires the concentrated force of the nation. Though today Marxism scoffs that this will never work, we will provide proof that it does. My friends! Things that are great in this world are never free. One must fight bitterly for everything; similarly, it will not be an easy matter for the uprising of the Volk to become reality: it, too, requires an inner struggle. We should not complain today; we know that we will earn this uprising, will earn the freedom of our Volk. And then it will be proven that Marxism was no more than mere theory and, as such, attractive and seductive, but in reality incapable of bringing real profit and good fortune to a people.

This First of May shall document that we do not intend to destroy, but rather plan to build up. One should not choose the most beautiful spring day of the year as a symbol of fight, but as a symbol of constructive work; not as an embodiment of decay and thus disintegration, but only of *völkisch* solidarity and thus of rising up. It is no coincidence that our opponents, who claim to have been celebrating this day for seventy years now and who have been in power in Germany for fourteen years have not, in spite of everything, succeeded in gaining hold of the German Volk on this day as we have done from the very beginning. The Volk unconsciously perceives in its core that any celebration of the Marxist type was contrary to the springtide season. It did not want hate, it did not want struggle, it wanted uplifting! And today the Volk senses it: the First of May has recovered its true, intrinsic meaning. That is the reason why millions throughout Germany are joyfully pouring forth to bear witness to a will which desires to take part in the reconstruction of the nation. And while we observe this holiday for the first time today, let us call to mind our aims for the time which lies before us: without faltering shall we struggle to ensure that the power captured by the new concept, the new political faith in Germany, will never again fade, but instead grow stronger and stronger.

We want to fight to ensure that this new idea rises above all of Germany and gradually captivates the entire German Volk in its spell. With courage and determination, we want to defend this flag of the resurrection of our Volk against anyone who believes he can tear it down. We want to reawaken our Volk's self-esteem and self-confidence and attempt to increase them on a permanent basis. We know the time which lies behind us and those who

typified it. They intentionally inoculated our Volk with the idea that it was, as a whole, inferior in the world, incapable of great deeds, not worthy of the rights accorded all others. They artificially cultivated inferiority complexes because this corresponded to the inferiority of the parties which seduced this Volk for long years. We want to release the Volk from this spell, want to continually impress upon it this belief:

German Volk! You are not second-class, even if the world wishes it so a thousand times over. You are not of lesser value, of lesser significance. German Volk, remember what you are, remember your past and the accomplishments of your fathers, of your very own generation! Forget fourteen years of disintegration, and rise to two thousand years of German history!

We have called out to you this way, my Volksgenossen throughout Germany, from the first day onwards to instill in all of you this conviction from a feeling of inner solidarity: Germans! You are a strong Volk if you will yourself to be strong!

The millions who are demonstrating in Germany today will return home with the feeling of a newly won inner power and unity. I know, my comrades, that tomorrow your tread will be firmer again than it was yesterday. For all of us feel it: today it may be possible to rape the nation, to put it in chains—but it is no longer possible to break or humiliate it! Thus it is also our desire on this day to fortify the confidence not only in yourself, German Volk, no, but the confidence in your government, too, which feels bound to you and is a part of you, which belongs to you, which fights with you for your life, which has no other purpose but to make you, German Volk, free and happy once more.

And finally, today our solidarity is to be documented for all time by an act. When we first presented the idea of compulsory labor service to the public, the representatives of the dying Marxist world raised a great outcry, declaring, "That is a new attack on the proletariat, an attack on work, an attack on the life of the worker!" Why did they do that? They knew very well that it would never be an attack on work and much less an attack on the worker, but merely an attack on a terrible prejudice, namely that manual labor is inferior. We want to wipe out this prejudice in Germany. At a time when millions in our ranks live without any comprehension of the significance of manual labor, we want to bring the German Volk, by means of compulsory labor service, to the realization that manual labor does not discredit, does not degrade, but rather, just as any other activity, does honor to him who performs it faithfully and honestly.

It remains our firm decision to lead every single German, be he who he may, whether rich or poor, whether the son of scholars or the son of factory workers, to experience manual labor once in his lifetime so that he can come to know it, so that he can here one day more easily take command because he has learned obedience in the past. We intend by no means to eliminate Marxism only in an external sense. We are resolved to remove its very foundations. We want to spare coming generations the mental confusion it causes.

Mental and manual workers must never be allowed to be on opposite sides. For this reason we are exterminating that feeling of arrogance which so readily befalls the individual and makes him look down upon comrades who "only" stand at the workbench or the machine or walk behind the plow. Not only must

every German become acquainted at least once with this type of work, but vice-versa, too: the manual worker must realize that mental work is also necessary. And he must be taught that no one has the right to look down upon others, to imagine oneself something better; rather, each must be willing to join the great community.

This year for the first time we will turn this great ethical concept, which we connect with the *Arbeitsdienst*, into reality.¹⁸⁹ And we know that when forty years have passed, the term manual work will have undergone a change in meaning for millions of people, just as the term *Landsknecht* has come to be replaced by the concept of the German soldier.

This year we will also accomplish the great task of liberating creative initiative from the disastrous influences of majority resolutions. Not only in parliament, but in the economy as well. We know that our economy cannot advance unless a synthesis can take place between the freedom of the creative spirit and the obligation to the Volk as a whole. Thus it will also be our task to give to the treaties the meaning they deserve. Man does not live for the sake of treaties; treaties are there in order to make it possible for man to live. And finally, this year we will endeavor to finish the first lap on the way to an organic management of the economy, and we will proceed on the basic realization that there is no advancement which does not begin at the root of national, *völkisch* and economic life: the peasant. There begins the path which leads to the worker and further on to the intellectual.

Thus we will begin with our husbandman and, as first priority, lead his business back to health. We know that this is the foremost prerequisite for the recovery of the rest of the economy. The opposite has been done now for fourteen years. And we are witnessing the results. It has helped neither the urban dweller nor the worker nor the *Mittelstand*—they have all been forced to the brink of destruction.

And this leads to yet another task: the elimination of unemployment by a program providing employment. We are dividing this employment program into two parts. First of all, there is private provision of employment. Before the year is over, we will have set out to accomplish a work of greatness, a work which will put German structures and buildings back in order and thus provide work for hundreds of thousands. At this time and in this place, we want to direct our appeal to the German Volk for the first time: German Volk! Do not believe that the problem of providing employment will be solved in the stars. You yourself must lend a hand toward solving it. You must do everything you can out of understanding and trust to provide work. Each and every person has the duty not to hesitate to provide that which he requires; not to wait to produce what he will once have to produce. Every entrepreneur, every property owner, every businessman, every private person has the duty to bear German labor in mind. Since today the world is circulating untrue allegations against us, since German labor is being denounced, we must expect each German to take on his work. This is an appeal which, directed to millions of individuals, is best able to provide work for millions of people. We will also attempt to provide public employment opportunities on a large scale within the current year. We are installing a program which we do not want to pass on to posterity, the program

of building a new road system, a gigantic undertaking which will require billions. We will sweep away resistance and make a great beginning. We will thereby introduce a series of public work projects which will help to steadily decrease the unemployment rate.

We want to work and we will work! However, in the end everything depends upon the German Volk itself, on you, on the confidence you place in us; it depends on the force of your belief in the national State. Only when you all unite in the single will to save Germany will the German individual be able to find his salvation in Germany. We know that we still have tremendous difficulties to overcome. We also know that all human labors are doomed to fail if they are not blessed by the light of Providence. But we do not belong to those who comfortably rely on a hereafter. Nothing will be given us for free. Just as, for us, the road from the past fourteen years to the present day has been a road of incessant struggle, a road which often led us near despair, the road to a better future will also be difficult. The world is persecuting us, it is turning against us, it does not wish to recognize our right to live, does not want to admit that we have a right to protect our homeland.

My German Volksgenossen! The fact that the world is so against us is all the more reason why we must become a unified whole; all the more reason for us to continually assure the world: you can do whatever you want! But you will never break us, never force us to submit to any yoke! You will no longer be able to wipe out the cry for equal rights in our Volk! The German Volk has come to its senses. It will no longer tolerate people in its midst who are not for Germany! We want to earn the renewed ascent of the nation by honest means, through our industry, our persistence, our unshakable will! We are not asking of the Almighty, "Lord, make us free!" We want to take an active part, to work, to accept one another as brothers and unite in a common struggle so that one day the hour will come when we can step before the Lord and have the right to ask of Him, "Lord, You can see that we have changed. The German Volk is no longer a Volk of infamy, shame, self-reproach, faintheartedness, and little faith. No, Lord, the German Volk is once again strong in its will, strong in its persistence, strong in bearing any sacrifice. Lord, we will not give You up! Now bless our fight for our freedom and thus our German *Volk und Vaterland!*"

In this closing section of his speech, Hitler led the German Volk, in a manner of speaking, before the heavenly throne of the 'German God above the clouds,' who was to judge whether it had mended its ways. Endowed with godlike authority, Hitler then gave the Germans general absolution for every sin committed in the past and, using nearly the same words Jacob once used,¹⁹⁰ he asked for God's blessing for the approaching freedom fight of the German Volk.

This groundwork having been laid, it was practically only a matter of executing God's will when Hitler undermined the work of the devil on May 2 and ordered that all of the offices of the evil Marxist union organizations be shut down and their assets seized.

To erase any remaining doubts as to the legality of this procedure, the following official notice was published:¹⁹¹

Competent sources have reported that the action taken against the free unions is definitely in line with the battle against Marxism proclaimed by the Führer, Adolf Hitler. The Reich Government has taken the position that one cannot allow Marxism to hide behind the unions and continue the battle in this camouflage. The measures were not directed against the worker as such but rather were to serve the purpose of securing the funds and ensuring full rights for the worker.

These domestic measures did not distract Hitler from his foreign policy concerns in the slightest. As early as April 28, he had dispatched the German Ambassador, Nadolny, to Geneva with eight proposals for amendments to the British plan for gradually restoring equality of rights to Germany. The tone and contents were such that a consensus was impossible, and the Western Powers' reaction was, as Hitler had naturally foreseen, a staunch refusal. In any case, he had little use in the future for too much willingness on the part of the West to accommodate his wishes. For the time being, Hitler was more interested in the East and devoted his attention to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin, Alfred Wysocki, to whom he made conciliating assurances in a conference on May 2.¹⁹² Behind the scenes, he was preparing a German-Polish friendship treaty.

Hitler granted Sir John Foster Fraser of the London *Daily Telegraph* an interview¹⁹³ in which he mainly defended himself against the accusation that Germany wanted war.

No one in Germany who went through the War wants to repeat that experience. The physical training of young German men is [rather] designed to revive their masculine virtues (*Mannestugenden*) and their love of the Vaterland and to strengthen them in a moral sense.

He hopes, as he stated, that the appeal of the Treaty of Versailles can be effected by peaceful means. The plan of German overseas expansion which perhaps existed before the War had been relinquished. Germany did not wish, he stated, to enter into competition with England at sea. The fate of Germany was dependent not on colonies or dominions, but on its Eastern borders.

One must admit that Hitler here stated the aims of his future foreign policy in terms as unvarnished as those he used in *Mein Kampf* no overseas expansionism, but instead expansionism in Europe—beyond Germany's borders to the East!

Hitler had stressed in numerous speeches that no title existed which was greater than his own name.¹⁹⁴ Apparently this fact had not penetrat-

ed to the professors of the Stuttgart Institute of Technology. They had the audacity to offer Hitler an honorary doctorate, perhaps on the assumption that conferring this honor upon Hitler might make him more socially acceptable, as this had been customary practice with numerous Social Democratic Ministers. Hitler gave them a proper rebuff in the following official notice:¹⁹⁵

Berlin, May 4, 1933

Adolf Hitler has informed the Board of the Technische Hochschule Stuttgart that he requests that it refrain from nominating him for an honorary doctor, because he does not contemplate accepting honorary doctorates as a matter of principle.

As a consolation to those who insisted on mourning the loss of the unions, Hitler issued the following proclamation to establish a foundation for "victims of labor" on May 4:¹⁹⁶

A memorable day has passed: the first holiday celebrating national labor. In overwhelming rallies which have never before seen their equal, the German Volk avowed its respect for German labor and the German workers. This miraculous avowal was eloquently expressed in thousands of demonstrations throughout Germany. But this historic day shall not be allowed to pass without the elemental expression of the Volk's emotions having found a lasting expression and without this idealistic avowal having found its material reflection in a gesture of gratitude.

Seven German miners, members of the working class to whom the lot of the most difficult work has fallen, were the victims of a dreadful accident on the eve of May 1 and fell on the field of labor.¹⁹⁷ Widows and orphans have been robbed of their providers. The death of these heroes should give the entire nation occasion to establish a foundation out of which, from now on, the families of all soldiers of labor who fall on the field while fighting for their daily bread will be guaranteed sufficient means of existence. It must no longer be allowed to happen in future that such victims of labor must rely on the meager benefits of public welfare. Rather, it is the bounden duty of all Germans—and in particular of those with means at their disposal—to do their best and everything in their power.

I hereby call upon you to establish a foundation for the victims of labor! In the future it shall provide support for the surviving dependents of all German workers who have met with accidental death in their trades. This foundation cannot be too large. It must become a visible symbol of the respect of the German Volk for national labor and a monument to the indissoluble community of all classes and ranks.

Contributions to this foundation can be paid into the account "Foundation for the Victims of Labor" at the Reichs-Kreditgesellschaft, Berlin W 8, Account No. IIIb 49.

May 4, 1933

The appropriation of the funds will be determined by an honorary committee composed of the following persons: Walther Schuhmann, Fritz Thyssen, and Dr. Emil Georg von Stauss.

Berlin, May 4, 1933

The Reich Chancellor: Adolf Hitler

Indefatigable in his speechmaking, Hitler spoke at a rally of 45,000 SA men in Kiel on May 17.¹⁹⁸ Just as Christ once said to his Apostles, "You are in me, and I am in you,"¹⁹⁹ Hitler imparted to his followers in the SA:

Just as I am yours, so you are mine! Just as I have no other aim but to make Germany strong and free once more, so must your will fuse with mine. You once stood behind me, disciplined and faithful, when we were stripped of our brown shirts. You kept calm then. Today I am also asking you to bear that in mind and remain calm in the future.

I believe that, when we look back fourteen years and draw a comparison with today's miracle, we have reason to be satisfied.

To expect more from the future would be unjust. What has come to pass in these three months must be rated as a miracle, and what will come to pass in future should not be any less. Our struggle goes on!

Comrades! We are now approaching a difficult time. The whole of life will never be anything but a struggle. You were born of the struggle, so do not hope for peace tomorrow or the day after.

We must continue our battle for the inner self of the German being. We desire neither war nor bloodshed, but we do want the right to life, the right to freedom.

It is our desire that the German Volk shall not be treated as a pariah.

The future will be hard. It will be a great success for our flag if you remain what you have been in the past: the ancient, iron Guard of the Revolution, faithful and disciplined as was once the soldier of the German Volk.

On May 10, Hitler announced the institution of the German Labor Front with the following decree:²⁰⁰

I hereby appoint the staff leader of the Political Organization of the NSDAP, Dr. Robert Ley, as leader of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront. I appoint Gauleiter Forster (Danzig) as leader of the associations of salaried employees. The leader of the NSBO, Schuhmann, is hereby appointed leader of the workers' associations.

Berlin, May 10, 1933

Adolf Hitler

On the afternoon of the same day, Hitler delivered a lengthy speech at the first congress of the German Labor Front in the conference hall of the Prussian Council of State.²⁰¹

Here he indulged in endless "philosophical" deliberations on the business structures in the economy, the depersonalization of property, and, as a matter of course, the "Marxist" union organizations.

Marxism as a world view of decomposition has with keen insight recognized that the trade union movement offered the possibility of waging the offensive against the State and against human society in the future with an absolutely devastating weapon. But not, of course, to help the worker—what is the worker in any country to these international evangelists? Nothing at all! They don't even see him. They themselves are not workers, they are litterateurs, alien to the Volk, an alien mob (*volksfremdes Pack*)!

The speech also contained the obligatory attacks on the November Criminals. In point of fact, Hitler still owed a trial to these alleged traitors; he had wanted to see their "heads roll."²⁰² However, he seemed unable to locate the responsible individuals. But allegedly their ranks had swelled to the extent that he would have been forced to "strike tens of thousands dead."

The sum of want, suffering and misery which has passed through millions of small workers' families and small households since then [1918] is something for which the Criminals of November 1918 cannot be excused. So they have nothing to complain about. We have not taken revenge. Had we wanted to take revenge, we would have had to strike tens of thousands dead.

In the further course of his protracted speech, Hitler characterized himself as the only one who really knew all of the classes in Germany; hence he was the only person who could be their "honest broker."²⁰³

Personally, I am against accepting any honorary titles, and I do not believe that one will ever be able to accuse me of much in this respect. I do not do what is not absolutely necessary for me to do. I would never want to have visiting cards printed with the titles which are so ceremoniously conferred upon people in this earthly world. I would not want to have anything else on my gravestone but my name. But perhaps my own peculiar biography has made me more capable than anyone else of understanding and comprehending the essence and life as a whole in the various German classes—not because I have been able to look down on this life from above, but because I have experienced it myself, because I have stood in the midst of this life, because Fate, on a whim or perhaps guided by Providence, threw me into this broad mass of Volk and people. Because I myself worked for years in the building trade and was forced to earn my own living. And because I once again stood in this broad mass for years as an ordinary soldier, and because life then raised me into the other classes of our Volk so that I also know these better than countless others who are born into these classes. Thus perhaps Fate chose me above all others to be—I may apply this term to myself—the honest broker, a broker honest to all sides. I have no personal interest; I am neither dependent upon the State nor upon a public office; neither am I dependent upon the economy or industry or any kind of union. I am an independent man, and I have set myself no other goal than to serve the German Volk to the best of my power and ability—and above all to serve the millions of people who have perhaps been hit hardest thanks to their

simple trust, their ignorance, and the baseness of their former leaders. I have always held to the opinion that there is nothing finer than to be an advocate of those who are not capable of defending themselves.

However, Hitler only set himself up as an advocate of the oppressed Germans whenever it suited his plans at home or abroad. He chose to ignore the fate of the Germans whom he sent to concentration camps and who were similarly “not capable of defending themselves,” just as he was blind to the lot of foreign people. Without pausing for breath, Hitler went on to attack the intellectuals he so despised:

I know this broad mass of my Volk and would like to say only one thing to our intellectuals: any Reich built only upon the classes of intellect is a weak construction!

I know this intellect: perpetually brooding, perpetually inquiring, but also perpetually uncertain, perpetually hesitating, vacillating, never firm! He who would construct a Reich on these intellectual classes alone will find that he is building on sand. It is no accident that religions are more stable than the various forms of government. They generally tend to sink their roots deeper into the earth; they would be inconceivable without this broad mass of people. I know that the intellectual classes are all too easily seized by the arrogance that rates this Volk according to the standards of its knowledge and its so-called wisdom; yet there are things here which even the understanding of the prudent²⁰⁴ fails to see because it is unable to see them. This broad mass of people is certainly often dull and certainly backward in some respects, not as nimble, not as witty, not as intellectual. But it does have one thing: it has faith, it has persistence, it has stability.

Obviously Hitler could more easily identify with these qualities than with sober “intellectual” reflection, a sound knowledge of history and a detached assessment of Germany’s power in comparison to the power of other nations. Hitler was incapable of praising the German workers as he had the peasants on April 5,²⁰⁵ for the former had played only a minor role in his ascent to power. He did, however, want to mention the fact that even “lesser Volksgenossen” had contributed to his triumph.

I can clearly say: the triumph of this Revolution never would have come had my companions, the broad mass of our lesser Volksgenossen, not stood behind us with tremendous faith and unshakable persistence. I could not imagine anything better for our Germany than if it were to succeed in leading these people who are now standing outside our fighting ranks into the new State and shape them into a sturdy foundation for the new State.

The poet once said: “Germany will be at its height when its poorest sons are its most faithful citizens.” I have now come to know these poorest sons for four and a half years as musketeers in the Great World War; I came to know those

who perhaps had nothing to gain for themselves, and who were heroes simply by virtue of the call of their blood, out of a feeling of belonging to their Volk. No Volk has more right to erect monuments to its unknown musketeer as much as our German Volk. This unshakable Guard which stood firm in countless battles, which never wavered and never yielded, which gave us a thousand demonstrations of tremendous courage, of faith, of willingness to sacrifice, of discipline, and of obedience, is one we must conquer for the State, one we must win over for the coming German Reich, our Third Reich. This is perhaps one of the most valuable things we can give this Guard.

Because I know this Volk better than anyone else who also, at the same time, knows the rest of the Volk, in this case I am not only willing to assume the role of honest broker, but am also happy that Fate is able to cast me for this part. I shall never in my life have greater pride than when, at the end of my days, I am able to say: I have gained the German worker for the German Reich.

On May 12, Hitler visited the 76-year-old Benedictine abbot Albanus Schachleitner, who had retired to live in Feilnbach near Bad Aibling, and congratulated him on the 50-year anniversary of his taking orders.²⁰⁶ Schachleitner had variously come out in public support of Hitler and thus was particularly suited to influence the Catholic population as a propaganda figure, much as the military pastor and later Reich Bishop Ludwig Müller served to sway the Lutherans to the National Socialist cause.

Hitler had convened the Reichstag for May 17 in order to submit a statement of foreign policy on behalf of the government. This act of state was prompted by the May 11 resolution of the Geneva Disarmament Conference according the German *Wehrverbände*, i.e. the SA, the SS, the Stahlhelm, etc., military status in the planned restructuring of the Armed Forces. At that time the Western Powers intended to install a system of militias throughout Europe designed to take the place of the standing armies.

Hitler was an avowed enemy of any type of militia, as he had already made clear in *Mein Kampf*.²⁰⁷ Soldiers conscripted for a two-year period were, to his mind, the only force with which he could accomplish his plans of conquering the East.

The Geneva resolution of May 11 did not, however, constitute the sole reason for Hitler's foreign policy speech of May 17: he also needed an alibi for his planned withdrawal from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference.

This speech was the first of many similar speeches to follow until 1939. On each respective occasion, Hitler went into great detail in illustrating how faithfully Germany had fulfilled its disarmament obliga-

tions under the Treaty of Versailles and, on the other hand, how disgracefully the other powers had behaved, above all France and its allies. He juggled figures and columns as he was so fond of doing, citing the millions of German rifles, carbines, machine guns, pieces of artillery, and shells which had been destroyed and enumerating, in contrast, nearly every single aircraft, reserve aircraft, armored vehicle, and gas grenade in the other nations' stockpiles.

Notwithstanding the fact that most of the figures could not be verified, they served their purpose of impressing his listeners. In other respects, it may be noted that Hitler's arguments were by no means pure invention and not totally lacking justification. The Treaty of Versailles did indeed contain an abundance of petty and degrading provisions. The eastern border had been drawn haplessly, and in the West a demilitarized zone stretched from the border to fifty kilometers east of the Rhine—a landstrip over which Germany did not have full sovereignty. The Treaty of Versailles was a conglomerate of half-measures for both Germany and its neighbors. It is revealing to note that Hitler was not alone in referring to it as the Disgraceful Treaty of Versailles (*Schandvertrag*). Foch, the victorious French Marshal,²⁰⁸ shared this view and fought what he held to be the injustice done to France in establishing the 1919 borders until he died. He further regarded the demilitarization of the Rhineland as worthless unless the bridges over the Rhine were under the control of France or the allied powers; later, his views were verified by events.

From France's perspective, the regular army of 100,000 men which the Treaty of Versailles had accorded Germany represented an imminent threat, for every single officer and man was trained as a cadre leader or subleader and thus together this body formed the framework for a future conscription army. This logic lay behind France's proposals for establishing militias and its refusal to disarm. Placards posted throughout France in 1932 proclaimed: "France has been through four invasions in 100 years. France does not need to disarm!"²⁰⁹

In the course of 1932 and 1933, the Western Powers had come to realize that it was necessary to amend the Treaty of Versailles and hence had initiated negotiations to find an acceptable solution. Were they to reach consensus, Hitler would have been robbed of arguments for his planned use of force, and thus he summoned up all of his powers of oral persuasion in order to prevent any agreement from being reached. True to his belief that domestic and foreign policy were of one cloth, he had acquainted himself with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles as

thoroughly as he had previously gained a complete grasp of the articles of the Weimar Constitution. He intended to justify his military plans by citing the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles, thereby setting himself up as the apostle of peace and branding the other nations as the guilty parties who had been unwilling to accept his well-meant proposals. Hitler deployed this tactical approach for the first time on May 17, 1933.

His speech also marked the beginning of another new phase: on May 17, Hitler spoke to a Reichstag which, although still containing representatives of the SPD, the Center, and the right-wing parties in addition to the NSDAP, for the first time had to play the new role Hitler had assigned to it: that of acting as forum for the speeches he was delivering not only to the German Volk, but to the entire world.

This already became evident in the opening sentences of his speech to the Reichstag, which follows verbatim:²¹⁰

Deputies, Ladies and Gentlemen of the German Reichstag!

In the name of the Reich Government I have asked the Reichstag President to convene the Reichstag so that I may take a stand before this forum on the questions which today affect not only our Volk but the entire world.

The problems which you know so well are of such great significance that not only political pacification, but the economic salvation of all are contingent upon finding a satisfactory solution.

When I express the desire on behalf of the German Government that the handling of these problems be totally removed from the sphere of passion, I do this not least of all in the realization dominating us all, namely that the crisis of our time owes its deepest origin alone to those passions which dimmed the insight and intelligence of the nations after the War.

For all of the problems causing today's unrest lie anchored in the deficiencies of the Peace Treaty, which was unable to provide a judicious, clear and reasonable solution for the most important and most decisive questions of the time for all ages to come. Neither the national problems nor the economic—not to mention the legal—problems and demands of the peoples were solved by virtue of this Treaty in a manner which would allow them to withstand the criticism of reason for all time. Thus it is understandable that the idea of a revision is not only an integral part of the lasting side effects of the consequences of this Treaty; indeed, the necessity of revision was foreseen by its authors and hence given a legal foundation in the Treaty itself.

When I deal briefly here with the problems this Treaty should have solved, I am doing so because the failure in these areas inevitably led to the subsequent situations under which the political and economic relations between nations have been suffering since then.

The political problems are as follows: in the course of many centuries, the European nations and their borders evolved from concepts which were based exclusively upon the idea of a political State as such. With the triumphant assertion of the national idea and the principle of nationalities in the course of

the past century, the seeds of numerous conflicts were sown as a result of the failure of States which had arisen under different circumstances to take these new ideas and ideals into account. At the end of the Great War, there could have been no greater task for a real peace conference than to undertake, in the clear recognition of this fact, a territorial and political reorganization of the European States which would do justice to this principle to the greatest possible degree. The more closely the borders between peoples coincided with the borders between States, the more this would have done away with a whole series of future potential conflicts. In fact, this territorial reorganization of Europe, taking into account the actual borders between peoples, would have constituted the solution in history which, with a view to the future, might have allowed both victors and vanquished to perceive that the blood sacrifices of the Great War were perhaps not completely in vain, for they might have served the world as the foundations for a real peace.

As it was, solutions were chosen—partly due to ignorance, partly to passion and hatred—which contained the perpetual seed of fresh conflicts in their very lack of logic and fairness.

The economic problems the conference was to have solved are as follows: The present economic situation in Europe is characterized by the overpopulation of the European West and, in the land comprising this territory, by the dearth of certain raw materials which are indispensable for the customary standard of living in these very areas with their ancient culture. Had one wished to bring about a certain pacification of Europe for the humanly foreseeable future, it would have been necessary—instead of relying upon the unproductive and dangerous concepts of penance, punishment, reparation, etc.—to rely upon and take into account the deep realization that lack of means of existence has always been a source of conflict between peoples. Instead of preaching the precepts of destruction, one would have had to initiate a reorganization of the international, political and economic relations which would have done justice to the vital needs of each individual people to the fullest possible extent.

It is unwise to deprive a people of the economic resources necessary for its existence without taking the fact into consideration that the population dependent upon them must of necessity continue to live in this territory. It is absurd to believe that one is performing a useful service to other peoples by economically destroying a people numbering 65 million. Peoples who would proceed in such a manner would very soon, under the laws of nature linking cause and effect, come to experience that they would be subjected to the same catastrophe which they intended to impose upon another people. One day the concept of reparations and their enforcement will become a classic example in the history of nations of the extent to which disregard for international welfare can be damaging to all.

As it was, reparation politics could be financed only by German exports. The export industry of the creditor states was made to suffer to the same extent to which Germany, because of the reparations, was regarded as a sort of international export company. Hence the economic advantages of the reparation payments could bear no relation to the damage caused to the individual economies by these reparations.

The attempt to avoid this development by compensating for the limits placed on German exports by means of granting loans to make the payments possible lacked circumspection and was ultimately wrong. For the conversion of political debts to private obligations led to an interest requirement, the fulfillment of which unavoidably produced the same results. However, the worst of the matter was that the development of domestic economic life was artificially checked and destroyed. Competition in the world markets by a constant undercutting of prices led to an overintensification of rationalizing measures in the economy.

The millions of our unemployed constitute the final consequence of this development. Were one inclined to limit the reparation obligations to deliveries of goods, this would result in no less substantial damage to the domestic production of the peoples profiting from them. This is because deliveries of goods in the magnitude in question are not conceivable without acute danger to the continued existence of the peoples' own production.

The Treaty of Versailles is to blame for having inaugurated a period in which the mathematical genius of finance is bringing about the demise of economic reason.

Germany has fulfilled these obligations imposed upon it, in spite of their inherent lack of reason and the foreseeable consequences, so faithfully as to be virtually suicidal.

The international economic crisis is the indisputable proof of the correctness of this statement.

The plan of restoring a general international sense of justice was no less destroyed by the Treaty.

In order to justify all of the measures of this edict, Germany had to be branded as the guilty party. This is a procedure which is, however, just as simple as it is impossible. This would mean that in future, the vanquished will always bear the blame for conflicts, for the victor will always be in a position to simply establish this as a fact.

This procedure therefore assumed a terrible significance because, at the same time, it served as a reason for transforming the relative strength existing at the end of this War to a lasting legal status. The concepts of victor and vanquished were hence made to constitute the foundations of a new international legal and social order.

The degradation of a great people to a second-rate, second-class nation was proclaimed in the same breath with which a League of Nations was called into being.

This treatment of Germany could not lead to a pacification of the world. The disarmament and defenselessness of the vanquished which was considered necessary—an unheard of procedure in the history of the European nations—was even less suited to diminish the general dangers and conflicts; rather, it led to a state of affairs consisting of those perpetual threats, demands and sanctions which threaten to become, by virtue of the continual unrest and insecurity they cause, the death of the entire economy. If, in the lives of peoples, every consideration of the risks involved in certain actions is omitted, unreason will all too easily triumph over reason. At any rate, until now the League of Nations has

been incapable of providing appreciable assistance to the weak and unarmed on such occasions. Treaties which are concluded for the pacification of the lives of peoples in relation to one another have any real meaning only when they are based upon a genuine and honest equality of rights for all. And this is the main reason for the turmoil which has dominated the world for years.

Finding a reasonable and lasting solution to the problems existing today lies in the interests of all. No new European war would be capable of bringing about anything better in place of the unsatisfactory conditions of the present.

On the contrary: the use of any type of violence in Europe could not serve to create a more favorable political and economic situation than exists today. Even if a fresh violent European solution were a decisive factor in solving the problems, the final result would be an increase in the disturbance to the balance of power in Europe, and therefore, one way or another, the seed of further conflicts and complications would be sown.

New wars, new uncertainty, and a new economic crisis would be the consequences. The outbreak of such madness without end would, however, lead to the collapse of today's social and political order. A Europe sinking into Communist chaos would give rise to a crisis of unforeseeable proportions and unpredictable length.

It is the earnest desire of the National Government of the German Reich to prevent such an unpeaceful development by means of its honest and active cooperation.

This is also the real meaning behind the radical change which has taken place in Germany. The three factors which dominate our revolution do not contradict the interests of the rest of the world in any way.

First: preventing the impending Communist subversion and constructing a *Volksstaat* uniting the various interests of the classes and ranks, and maintaining the concept of personal property as the foundation of our culture. Second: solving the most pressing social problems by leading the army of millions of our pitiful unemployed back to production. Third: restoring a stable and authoritarian leadership of the State, supported by the confidence and will of the nation which will finally again make of this great Volk a legitimate partner to the rest of the world.

Speaking now, conscious of being a German National Socialist, I would like to proclaim on behalf of the National Government and the entire national uprising that, above all, we in this young Germany are filled with the deepest understanding of the same feelings and convictions and the justified demands of the other nations to live. The generation of this young Germany, which until now has come in its lifetime to know only the want, misery and distress of its own Volk, has suffered too dearly from this madness to be capable of contemplating subjecting others to more of the same.

In that we are devoted to our own identity as a Volk in boundless love and faith, we also respect the national rights of other peoples on the basis of a common conviction and desire from the very bottom of our hearts to live with them in peace and friendship.

Thus the concept of Germanization is alien to us. The mentality of the past century, on the basis of which it was believed possible to make Germans of

Poles and Frenchmen, is foreign to us, just as we passionately reject any respective attempt in the opposite direction. We view the European nations as a given fact. The French, the Poles, etc. are our neighbors, and we know that no historically conceivable event can change this reality.

It would have been fortunate for the world had these realities been given due consideration in respect to Germany in the Treaty of Versailles. For the object of a genuinely lasting treaty should not be to cut open fresh wounds or keep existing ones open, but rather to close and heal the wounds. A judicious handling of the problems could easily have arrived at a solution in the East which would have accommodated both the understandable claims of Poland as well as the natural rights of Germany. The Treaty of Versailles failed to provide this solution. In spite of this, no German Government will of its own accord violate an agreement which cannot be eliminated without being replaced by a better one.

Yet this recognition of the legal character of such a treaty can be merely a general one. Not only the victor, but the vanquished as well has claim to the rights accorded it therein. But the right to demand a revision of the Treaty lies anchored in the Treaty itself. The German Government wishes to base the reasons for and the extent of its claims on nothing other than the present results of past experiences and the incontestable consequences of critical and logical reasoning. The experiences of the last fourteen years are both politically and economically unequivocal.

The misery of the peoples was not alleviated; instead, it increased. The deepest root of this misery lies, however, in the division of the world into victor and vanquished as the intended permanent basis for all treaties and any future order. The worst effects of this order are expressed in the forced defenselessness of one nation in the face of an exaggerated armament on the part of the others. The reasons why Germany has been staunchly demanding universal disarmament for years are as follows:

First of all, the demand for equality of rights expressed in actual facts is a demand of morality, right and reason; a demand which was acknowledged in the Treaty itself and the fulfillment of which was indissolubly tied to the demand for German disarmament as a starting point for world disarmament.

Secondly, because conversely the degradation of a great Volk cannot be maintained in history forever but must of necessity one day come to an end. How long is it believed to be possible to impose such an injustice upon a great nation? What is the advantage of the moment worth in comparison to the ongoing developments of centuries? The German Volk will continue to exist, just as the French and, as we have learned from historical evolution, the Polish have done. What significance and what value can the successful short-term oppression of a people of 65 million have in comparison to the force of these incontrovertible facts? No State can have a greater understanding of the newly established young European national States than the Germany of the National Revolution which has arisen from the same will. It wants nothing for itself which it is not prepared to accord to others.

When Germany today lodges the demand for genuine equality of rights in respect to the disarmament of the other nations, it has a moral right to do so

given its own fulfillment of the treaties. For Germany did disarm, and Germany performed this disarmament under the strictest international control. Six million rifles and carbines were handed over or destroyed; the German Volk was forced to destroy or surrender 130,000 machine guns, huge amounts of machine gun barrels, 91,000 pieces of artillery, 38.75 million shells, and an enormous supply of other weapons and munitions.

The Rhineland was demilitarized, the German fortresses were pulled down, our ships surrendered, the aircraft destroyed, our military system was abandoned, and thus the training of reserves prevented. Even the most needed weapons of defense were denied us.

If, in the face of these indisputable facts, anyone should come forward today, citing truly pitiful excuses and pretexts and claiming that Germany did not comply with the Treaty and had even rearmed, I must reject this view at this time for being as untrue as it is unfair.

It is equally incorrect to claim that Germany has not complied with the provisions of the Treaty in respect to personnel. The allegation that the SA and the SS of the National Socialist Party are connected in any way with the Reichswehr in the sense that they represent formations with military training or army reserves is untrue!

A single example serves to illustrate the irresponsible thoughtlessness with which such allegations are made: last year in Brünn, members of the National Socialist Party in Czechoslovakia were put to trial. Sworn experts of the Czech Army claimed that the defendants maintained connections to the National Socialist Party in Germany, were dependent upon it and thus, as members of a popular sports club (*Volkssportverein*), were to be equated with members of the SA and SS in Germany which constituted a reserve army trained and organized by the Reichswehr.

At the same time, however, the SA and SS—just as the National Socialist Party itself—not only had no connection with the Reichswehr whatsoever: on the contrary, they were regarded as organizations hostile to the State and persecuted, banned, and finally dissolved. And even beyond that: members of the National Socialist Party and those belonging to the SA and SS were not only excluded from all public offices—they were not even allowed to take on employment as simple workers in an army company. Nonetheless, the National Socialists in Czechoslovakia were given long prison sentences on the basis of this false view. In reality, the SA and the SS of the National Socialist Party have evolved totally without aid, totally without financial support from the State, the Reich, or even less the Reichswehr; without any sort of military training and without any sort of military equipment, out of pure party political needs and in accordance with party political considerations. Their purpose was and is exclusively confined to the elimination of the Communist threat, and their training, which bears no connection to the Army, was designed solely for the purposes of propaganda and enlightenment, mass psychological effect, and the crushing of Communist terror. They are institutions for instilling a true community spirit, overcoming former class differences, and alleviating economic want.

The Stahlhelm came into being in memory of the great age of the common experiences at the front, to nurture established traditions, maintain comrade-

ship, and finally also to protect the German Volk from the Communist revolution which has been threatening the Volk since November 1918, a threat which admittedly cannot be fathomed by countries who have never had millions of organized Communists as we have and have not suffered at the hands of terror as Germany has. For the real objective of these national organizations is best characterized by the type of struggle in which they are actually engaged, and the toll this has taken. As a consequence of Communist slayings and acts of terror in the space of only a few years, the SA and SS suffered over 350 dead and about 40,000 injured. If today the attempt is being made in Geneva to add these organizations which exclusively serve domestic purposes to the Armed Forces figure, then one might as well count the fire brigades, the gymnastics clubs, the security corps, the rowing clubs, and other sports organizations as members of the Armed Forces, too.

However, when at the same time the trained annual contingents of the other armies of the world are not included, in contrast to these men totally lacking in military training; when one deliberately overlooks the armed reserves of the others while commencing to count the unarmed members of our political associations, we have before us a procedure against which I must lodge the sharpest protest!

If the world wishes to destroy confidence in what is right and just, these are the best means of doing so.

On behalf of the German Volk and the German Government, I must make the following clear: Germany has disarmed. It has fulfilled the obligations imposed upon it in the Peace Treaty to an extent far beyond the limits of what can be deemed fair or even reasonable. Its army consists of 100,000 men. The strength and character of its police is internationally regulated.

The auxiliary police instituted in the days of the Revolution is exclusively political in character. In those critical days, it replaced the other part of the police which, at the time, the new regime suspected of being unstable. Now that the Revolution has been successfully carried through, this force is already being depleted and will be completely dissolved even before the year is over. Germany thus has a fully justified moral right to insist that the other powers also fulfill their obligations pursuant to the Treaty of Versailles. The equality of rights accorded to Germany in December has not yet become reality. Since France has repeatedly asserted that the safety of France must be given the same consideration as Germany's equality of rights, I would like to pose two questions in this regard:

1. So far, Germany has accepted all of the obligations in respect to security arising from the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the Kellogg Pact, the Treaties of Arbitration, the Pact of NonAggression, etc. What other concrete assurances are there which Germany could assume?

2. On the other hand, what security does Germany have? According to the information of the League of Nations, France alone has 3,046 aircraft in service while Belgium has 350, Poland 700, and Czechoslovakia 670. In addition, there are innumerable quantities of reserve aircraft, thousands of armored vehicles, thousands of pieces of heavy artillery, and all of the technical means required to conduct warfare with chemical gases. Doesn't Germany have more reason,

in view of its lack of defenses and weapons, to demand security than the armed states united by alliances?

Germany is nonetheless prepared at any time to assume further obligations to ensure international security if all other nations are willing to do so as well and Germany also benefits from this step. Germany would also be more than willing to disband its entire military establishment and destroy those few weapons still remaining at its disposal, were the bordering nations to do the same without exception. However, if the other States are not willing to comply with the disarmament provisions imposed upon them by the Peace Treaty of Versailles, then Germany must, at the very least, insist upon its demand for equal treatment. The German Government sees in the British plan a possible basis for the answer to these questions. However, it must demand that it not be forced to destroy an existing military institution without being granted at least qualitatively equal rights. Germany must demand that any commutation of the military institution in Germany—an institution we do not want in Germany, but one which was forced upon us from abroad—is performed only to the extent of the actual disarmament performed concurrently by the other States.

In this connection, Germany is essentially willing to agree to a transitional period of five years to bring about its national security in the expectation that, subsequent thereto, Germany will be accorded genuine equality with the other States. Germany is also perfectly prepared to completely abandon offensive weapons if, within a certain period, the armed nations destroy their own offensive weapons in turn and the use of such weapons is banned by international convention. It is Germany's sole desire to maintain its independence and be in a position to protect its borders.

According to a statement made in February 1932 by the French Minister of War, a large portion of the colored French troops are available for immediate use on the French mainland. He therefore has explicitly included them in the home forces.

Thus it is only fair to take the colored forces into account as an integral part of the French Army in the disarmament conference as well. Although one refuses to do this, one nevertheless proposes counting associations and organizations as part of the German Army which serve purely educational and sporting purposes and are given no military training whatsoever. In the other countries, there is no question of these types of associations being counted as part of military strength. This is obviously a completely impossible procedure. Germany would also be willing at any time, in the event that an objective international arms control board is created, to subject the associations in question to such control—given the same willingness on the part of the other States—in order to demonstrate to the whole world its wholly unmilitary character. Furthermore, the German Government will reject no ban on arms as being too drastic if it is likewise applied to the other States.

These demands do not mean rearmament, but rather a desire for the disarmament of the other States. On behalf of the German Government, I may once again welcome the farsighted and just plan of the Italian Head of State to create, by means of a special pact, close relations of confidence and cooperation between the four major European powers, Great Britain, France,

Italy, and Germany. Mussolini's view that this would serve as a bridge to facilitate an understanding is a view with which the German Government agrees out of its most deeply seated convictions. It desires to oblige to the fullest possible extent if the other nations as well are inclined to genuinely overcome any difficulties which may stand in the way.

Thus the proposal made by the American President Roosevelt, of which I learned last night, deserves the warmest thanks of the German Government. The Government is prepared to consent to this method for solving the international crisis, for it is of the opinion that, if the question of disarmament is not solved, permanent economic reconstruction is inconceivable. It is willing to make a selfless contribution to this task of restoring the political and economic state of the world to order. It is also, as I have stressed in the beginning, of the conviction that there can only be one great task in our time: securing peace in the world.

I feel obliged to state that the reason for today's armament in France or Poland can under no circumstances be the fear of these nations of a German invasion. For such a fear would only be justified by the existence of modern offensive weapons. But these modern offensive weapons are exactly the ones which Germany does not have: it has neither heavy artillery nor tanks nor bombers nor poisonous gases.

The only nation which has reason to fear an invasion is the German nation, which is not only barred from having offensive weapons, but even restricted in its right to possess defensive weapons and prohibited from erecting fortifications on its borders. Germany is prepared to renounce offensive weapons at any time if the rest of the world does the same. Germany is willing to join any solemn pact of non-aggression, for Germany's concern is not offensive warfare, but its own security.

Germany would welcome the opportunity suggested in President Roosevelt's proposal of incorporating the United States in European relations in the role of guarantor of peace. This proposal signifies a great consolation to all those who wish to seriously cooperate toward maintaining peace. Our one most fervent desire is to contribute toward permanently healing the wounds inflicted by the War and the Treaty of Versailles. And Germany will take no path other than that which is recognized by the treaties themselves as just. The German Government wishes to engage in peaceful discussions with the other nations on all difficult questions. It knows that, given any military action in Europe, even if it be completely successful, the losses thus incurred would bear no relation to the gains.

Under no circumstances, however, will the German Government and the German Volk allow themselves to be coerced into signing anything which would constitute a perpetuation of Germany's degradation. Any attempt to influence the Government and the Volk with threats will be to no avail. It is conceivable that, contrary to everything which is right and moral, Germany could be raped; it is, however, inconceivable and out of the question that such an act could be accorded legitimacy by means of our own signature.

The attempt has been made in newspaper articles and regrettable speeches to threaten Germany with sanctions, but a method as monstrous as this can only

be the punishment for the fact that, by demanding disarmament, we are asking that the treaties be fulfilled. Such a measure could lead only to the ultimate moral and factual invalidation of the treaties themselves. But even in that case, Germany would never give up its peaceful demands. The political and economic consequences—the chaos which such an attempt would cause in Europe—would be the responsibility of those who resorted to such measures to fight a people which is doing no harm to the world.

At this point Hitler revealed the ulterior purpose of his entire speech: laying the groundwork for Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference.

Any such attempt, any attempt at doing violence to Germany by means of forming a simple majority against the unequivocal spirit of the treaties could only be dictated by the intention of excluding us from the conferences. But today the German Volk possesses enough character to refrain, in such an event, from forcing its cooperation upon the other nations; it would rather, albeit with a heavy heart, draw the only possible conclusions.

It would be difficult for us to remain a member of the League of Nations as a Volk subjected to constant degradation. The German Government and the German Volk are aware of the present crisis. For years, warnings have come from Germany to desist from the methods which have inevitably produced this political and economic state of affairs. If the present course is held and the present methods are continued, there can be no doubt as to the final result. Seeming political successes on the part of individual nations will be followed by all the more severe economic and hence political catastrophes affecting all. We regard it as our first and foremost task to prevent this.

These words were motivated by Hitler's apprehension that the Western Powers might take military action against Germany should it withdraw from the League of Nations. Hence he judged it expedient to close his speech with a flourish of bathos, deploring the bitter hardships of the German people and citing the number of suicides committed since 1919.²¹¹ He continued:

No effective action has been undertaken to date. The rest of the world tells us that one did, in fact, harbor a certain amount of sympathy for the former Germany; now at least we have become acquainted with the consequences and effects of this "sympathy" in Germany and for Germany!

Millions of lives destroyed, entire trades ruined, and an enormous army of unemployed—an insoluble wretchedness, the extent and depth of which I would like to convey to the rest of the world today in a single figure:

Since the day when this Treaty was signed, which was, as a work of peace, to be the foundation for a new and better age for all peoples, there have been 224,000 people in our German Volk who, moved almost exclusively by want and misery, have chosen to take their own lives—men and women, young and old alike!

These incorruptible witnesses are an indictment against the spirit and fulfillment of a treaty, from the effects of which not only the rest of the world, but also millions of people in Germany once expected salvation and good fortune (*Heil and Segen*). May this also serve to make the other nations understand Germany's unshakable will and determination to finally put an end to a era of human aberration in order to find the way to an ultimate consensus of all on the basis of equal rights.

After the speech, the Reichstag gave its unanimous approval to Hitler's statement of policy. Even the Social Democrats consented with one voice—then again, they had already stood behind Hitler's foreign policy as early as March 23. This vote of approval on May 17 was to be their last appearance before being swept off the political stage.

To increase the impact of his "Peace Speech," Hitler attended a naval maneuver in Kiel on May 22. There he appealed to the onshore marine troops to "do everything in their power for the Vaterland"²¹² and paid visits to the battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* and the cruiser *Leipzig*.

On May 27, Hitler delivered a radio speech from Munich on the upcoming Volkstag elections in the Free State of Danzig which also dealt mainly with foreign policy. The address was designed to whet Poland's appetite to enter into an alliance with Germany. Hitler apparently felt no scruples about stating that he would "never attempt to subjugate foreign people."

This was a prelude to his speech of September 26, 1938, in which he exclaimed: "We do not want any Czechs at all."²¹³

5

On May 27, 1933, Hitler proclaimed:²¹⁴

Just as we National Socialists strongly reject the notion of trying to make Germans of foreign peoples, we fanatically oppose the attempt to forcefully remove the German from his Volk. Just as we are moved by the realization that war brings suffering and misfortune upon people, our love for our homeland obliges us to stand up on their behalf. National Socialism does not advocate a policy of correcting borders at the expense of foreign peoples. We do not want a war for the sole purpose of perhaps bringing several million people to Germany who do not even want to and never can be Germans. We will never attempt to subjugate foreign peoples who harbor only hate for us at the price of sacrificing on the battlefield millions who are dear to us and whom we love. For this reason alone we are all the more devoted to what belongs to our Volk, is of our blood, and speaks our language.

The Volkstag election in Danzig on May 28 resulted in an absolute majority for the NSDAP, enabling the National Socialists to form a government there with the Center on June 20.²¹⁵ The President of the Danzig Landbund, Dr. Hermann Rauschning, became President of the Danzig Senate (head of government). Rauschning had used his connections to make a not insubstantial contribution to the National Socialist cause in Danzig; moreover, Hitler harbored an enormous liking for him.²¹⁶

Now a second German State had joined the Reich in becoming National Socialist and coming under Hitler's rule. In the Saar, the process of building a "German Front" under NSDAP leadership took somewhat longer.²¹⁷ In Austria, Chancellor Dollfuss attempted to set up an antiparliamentary dictatorship with fascist methods to prevent an *Anschluss* with Hitler's Reich.

Meanwhile, the process of *Gleichschaltung* in Germany continued. On May 30, Hitler wrote a letter of gratitude to the Reich Commissar of Justice, State Minister Hans Frank,²¹⁸ thanking him for forming a united

front in the German legal sector by bringing fourteen associations under the control of the League of Nationalist Socialist German Jurists.

On June 4, Hindenburg and Hitler jointly issued an appeal for donations to the German Red Cross, the “Day of Sacrificial Thanks (*Opferdank*) to the German Red Cross 1933.”²¹⁹

On June 8, Hitler delivered an address at a reception held for British Royal Air Force Officers in Berlin, where he was quoted as having stated that “as a German soldier, he had had the opportunity during the war in Flanders to admire and respect the accomplishments of the English pilots.”²²⁰

On June 14, Hitler spoke to National Socialist Reichsleiters and Gauleiters who were attending a *Führer*tagung in Berlin.²²¹ In this speech, Hitler dwelt mainly on the future relationship between the NSDAP and the State and was quoted as having said that

[—] the National Socialist Movement, which had grown up fighting, was the best thing Germany had to show for itself.

The law of the National Revolution had not yet lost effect. Its dynamics still dominated Germany’s development today, and its inexorable course would lead to a completely new order of German life.

He was of the firm conviction that this gigantic work of our Movement, propelled by tremendous idealism, would outlast centuries and nothing would ever be able to eliminate it.

On June 16, after once more addressing the convention, Hitler took the floor at the inauguration of a new NSDAP *Führerschule* (school of leaders) in Bernau.²²² Formerly, the institution had been run by the General Federation of German Unions (Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, ADGB).

On June 17, Hitler received Hungarian Minister-President Gömbös at the Reich Chancellory in Berlin.²²³ Gömbös was the first Head of State to visit Hitler, setting off a continuous series of state visits from Hungary all the way up to 1945.

On June 18, Hitler attended the Central German SA Roll Call in Erfurt, accompanied by Gömbös.²²⁴

The assembly of approximately 70,000 members of the SA, SS and Hitler Youth took place in connection with new action against the Social Democrats on the one hand and the Stahlhelm on the other. At a reception in the Erfurt City Hall, Hitler stated:

Just as we have taken possession of this city today, we have also overcome the Social Democratic movement as it manifested itself in Erfurt,²²⁵ I am particularly pleased to accept the freedom of the city with very special thanks.

The reception was followed by a parade of the brown columns across the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Platz lasting several hours.

The same day, Hitler announced the nomination of Baldur von Schirach, the *Reichsjugendführer* of the NSDAP, to the position of Youth Leader of the German Reich.²²⁶

By virtue of this appointment, Schirach became head of a public office which presided over all of the youth associations and similar organizations in the entire Reich. This facilitated the speedy establishment of the Hitler Youth as the one and only youth organization in Germany.

The *Wehrverbände* were naturally to be subsumed under a single organization in like fashion. For this purpose the German Nationalist *Scharnhorstbund* and the *Jungstahlhelm*²²⁷ were both integrated into the HJ and the SA. Hitler had succeeded in convincing their leaders, in particular Franz Seldte, of the national necessity of such a measure, and he rewarded this cooperation with the following proclamation of June 26:²²⁸

National Socialists! Men of the SA and SS! Men of the Jungstahlhelm!

An aim which has been pursued steadily for fourteen years has now been accomplished. With the subordination of the Jungstahlhelm to my command as Supreme Commander of the SA and the integration of the Scharnhorstbund in the Hitler Youth, the unification of the political fighting movement of the German nation has been carried out and completed.

The SA, the SS, the Stahlhelm and the HJ will now and for all time comprise the sole organizations which the National Socialist State recognizes as responsible for the political education of our youth and our men.

It was understandable that, in the years following the Revolution, resistance against the November Traitors and their disastrous regime was attempted in the most diverse corners of our German Vaterland.

Independently and without any knowledge of each other, the men rose up and organized parties and associations to fight the Marxist State.

Doubtless they all wanted only the best. However, if Germany was to be saved, this could be done only by one single movement and not by thirty different ones. The future of our Volk does not depend upon how many associations stand up for this future but whether or not one is successful in subordinating the desires of many to a single will and thus effectively uniting them in one movement. Just as the German Reichswehr was once forced to eliminate the Freikorps, in spite of the many merits of individual units, in order to once again give the German Volk a single army, the National Socialist Movement was no less forced to eliminate the countless federations, organizations and associations, regardless of their merits or lack of merits, in order to finally construct for the German Volk a single uniform organization built upon its political will.

A great number of the best of Germans failed to comprehend this task, and many others did not wish to understand it.

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Today the meaning and hence the necessity of this tremendous fight is clear to anyone who loves our Volk and believes in its future.

Thus in past years, we have been forced to suppress numerous associations purely out of these considerations. Similarly, we will also prevent the emergence of any new association which would only serve to perpetuate the old fragmentation. The inalterability of this decision imposes upon us the obligation to be just. Therefore it is our desire as Germans and National Socialists to honestly acknowledge the difference which existed between the other associations and the Stahlhelm. We are willing to admit that the hundreds of thousands of German men who had served as soldiers at the front were drawn into this organization and thus withdrawn from the system. However, in the hour in which the fate of Germany turned, the foremost leader of this association (Bundesführer) declared his support for the National Socialist Revolution.

Now this man has drawn the final conclusions from the historical developments and decreed that, with the exception of the traditional association of the old front-line soldiers, the entire younger generation of the Stahlhelm is to be subordinated to the SA, and the Scharnhorstbund is to be integrated into the Hitler Youth and placed under my command.

My SA leaders and SA comrades! This decision will one day be judged in German history to have been an extremely rare proof of a truly magnanimous, national outlook. What might otherwise have only been achieved after years of disagreements and drawn-out struggles—which in turn would have used up German power—has been resolved by the insightful deed of a man who has been sitting next to me in loyal solidarity in the cabinet since January 30.

Our further order, that in future the remaining traditional association of the old front-line fighters would recognize no other party membership than that of the National Socialist Movement, finally provides me with the opportunity to lift the membership ban on our part.

In view of this great development, I feel moved to first of all thank you, my old comrades in the Party, the SA and the SS, from a heart which is overflowing, for the boundless loyalty with which you have stood by me in good times and in bad through so many years. This is attributable primarily to your steadfastness. You were once fanatic fighters against the old system, and today you are the unshakable guards of the National Socialist Revolution.

Second, I would also like to now thank those who voluntarily took what was certainly no easy decision to relinquish their proud independence for the sake of a greater community.

And thus for the first time I may welcome the comrades of the Jungstahlhelm who are now marching in our ranks.

From this day onwards, I order all leaders and SA and SS men to accept the men of the Stahlhelm who have entered our community as comrades and to include them in the eternal bond which binds us and which shall never be broken. No matter what memories the past holds, for you and me, nothing counts but the great future to which we have committed ourselves.

If we have succeeded, in the course of many years, in converting millions of former Marxists, in leading them to us, in admitting them into our ranks, then

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certainly we must and will be able to take on national men who come out of another camp to enter into a bond of amity with us as friends and as comrades. I thus expect of every National Socialist that he recognize the magnitude of this historic development and contribute, by his own behavior, to bringing about the most profound fusion between ourselves and the newcomers as quickly as possible.

Men of the SA, SS and Stahlhelm, to our wonderful National Socialist Movement and our German Volk: Sieg Heil!

Munich, June 26, 1933

Adolf Hitler

As Hitler indicated in this proclamation, he felt it was time to dissolve all of the parties—with the exception, of course, of his own. The KPD had virtually disappeared; its leadership was in concentration camps, along with numerous leading SPD members. The SPD's newspapers had been banned and all political activity on the part of the SPD prohibited. When the Social Democratic Party was finally banned as being treasonous and hostile to the State on June 22 by decree of the Reich Minister of the Interior, the act served only to confirm a *fait accompli*.

Hitler chose a different procedure to rid the country of the bourgeois parties. In 1933, Germany found itself in a state of intoxication similar to that of 1914, when the exclamation made by William II—"I no longer recognize parties, I recognize only Germans!"²²⁹—was jubilantly received. At that time, this remark had had no further impact upon the existence of the parties as such.

In June and July of 1933, however, Hitler was able to exert such influence on the chairmen and members of the bourgeois parties in numerous private meetings that they resolved the dissolution of their parties of their own accord for the sake of the nation.

On June 27, the German National People's Party (Kampffront Schwarz-Weiss-Rot) resolved its own dissolution by a 56 to 4 vote of its leadership. On June 28, the German State Party (the former German Democratic Party) announced its dissolution; on July 2, the Christian Socialist People's Service disbanded, followed by the German People's Party and the Bavarian People's Party on July 4 and the Center on July 5.

The fact that the Center and the Bavarian People's Party were moved to disband was doubtless the result of Hitler's concentrated powers of persuasion, particularly if one calls to mind the role which the Center had played in the German Empire and the Weimar Republic. Hitler had argued that, in view of the forthcoming concordat with the Vatican, the objectives of the Center had been accomplished and thus the party itself was superfluous.²³⁰

One of the few statesmen who appeared to be able to resist Hitler's rhetoric was Hugenberg.

Whereas Hindenburg, Papen, Seldte, Blomberg, Neurath, and the other bourgeois cabinet members had learned, since January 30, to heed only Hitler, Hugenberg would not be made into a devoted National Socialist who upheld Hitler's every word.

Although Hugenberg did not in fact openly oppose Hitler—he was too much of a patriot for this—he did feel it was appropriate to seize the opportunity afforded by a difference of opinion with Neurath during the World Economic Conference in London²³¹ to announce his resignation as Minister in June 1933. This, of course, ran completely contrary to Hitler's wishes, for he wanted to maintain the alliance of January 30 in his own way, i.e. all of the ministers who had been sworn in at that time were to remain in the cabinet for the time being. They would then be assigned National Socialist Secretaries of State; subsequently, they would also turn over their offices to proven National Socialists while remaining in the cabinet as purely token figures demonstrating national unity.

In respect to Hugenberg, Hitler had envisioned that, for the time being, he was to turn over the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to Walter Darré and accept a National Socialist Secretary of State in the Ministry of Economics.

In a lengthy conference on June 27, Hitler used every means at his disposal to move Hugenberg to reconsider.²³² He praised him, alternately pleading with him and appealing to Hugenberg's patriotic sense of duty; ultimately he threatened to throw thousands of German Nationalist adherents in jail—all in vain. Hugenberg remained steadfast. Following this discussion, the Privy Councillor was not sure whether he might indeed be arrested or secretly murdered, but Hitler did have a certain amount of restraint in such matters.

He even respected those who were able to resist his powers of oral persuasion and uphold their own opinions, on the condition, however, that they did not join the opposition or conspire to overthrow him. In later years, Hitler even sent Hugenberg birthday telegrams.²³³

On June 29, Hitler had no choice but to betake himself to Neudeck to visit the Reich President and discuss the situation resulting from Hugenberg's unpleasant resignation. Already accustomed to taking Hitler's advice, Hindenburg accepted his proposals without objection. In any case, he himself had never been particularly partial to Hugenberg.²³⁴

The following communiqué was published on Hitler's meeting with Hindenburg:²³⁵

Berlin, June 29

According to official reports from Neudeck, in response to the Reich Chancellor's proposal, Reich President von Hindenburg has granted Dr. Hugenberg, Reich Minister of Economy, Food and Agriculture, release from his offices per his request and appointed the Director General of the Allianz Insurance Company, Kurt Schmitt, as Reich Minister of Economics, and the Peasant Leader Darré as Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture. Reich President von Hindenburg also ordered the temporary retirement of the Secretary of State for the Reich Ministry of Economics, Paul Bang, and appointed Dipl. Eng. Gottfried Feder Secretary of State for the Reich Ministry of Economics.

Reliable sources indicate that the Secretary of State for the Reich Ministries of Food and Agriculture von Rohr, will remain in office.

The leaders of German industry took little note of Hugenberg's resignation and certainly had no objection to Schmitt's appointment. As noted above, Hitler had granted them substantial leeway and explicitly stated at a meeting of the Association of German Newspaper Publishers in Berlin on June 28²³⁶ that it would run completely counter to Germany's economic tasks were only state-owned newspapers to be published.

In respect to NSDAP members who tended to act on economic matters without authorization from above, Hitler took drastic measures, as illustrated in the following notice to the NSDAP's Reich Press Office issued June 29:²³⁷

Berlin, June 29, 1933

The Reich Press Office of the NSDAP hereby announces the following: former Party Comrades retired Captain Cordemann, retired Captain von Marwitz, retired Captain Wolf, and retired Captain Zucker, all of Berlin, have attempted by means of telegrams and telephone calls to Gauleiters, chambers of commerce, business enterprises, etc. to rob the Führer of the freedom to make necessary decisions. By order of the Führer, they were immediately dismissed from office and excluded from the Party. At the Chancellor's orders they were arrested and sent to a concentration camp.

In this way Hitler could demonstrate to the German people that only those were put into concentration camps who had truly earned a sojourn at a corrective institution: either the evil Communists or those who had chosen to disregard the Führer's wise commands—even if they were members of the Party.

On July 2, Hitler delivered a speech at a *Führertragung* of the SA, SS and Stahlhelm in Bad Reichenhall, in which he paid tribute to the

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generous attitude Seldte had demonstrated in linking his organization to the SA and SS.²³⁸ Seldte himself took a vow of loyalty. After the convention had been closed, Hitler issued the following order on July 3:²³⁹

Under the leadership of the Chief of Staff of the SA, a convention of high-ranking SA and SS leaders took place in Bad Reichenhall from July 1 to July 3, to which the Bundesführer, Seldte, and numerous high-ranking leaders of the Stahlhelm were invited.

The convention, which was designed particularly to promote the mutual acquaintance of leaders fighting in a single front, was characterized by a spirit of sincerity and comradeship.

The common goal and the personal solidarity of the newly created soldierly front hold the promise of a lasting fighting community.

In agreement with Bundesführer Seldte, I thus order as follows:

The entire Stahlhelm will be placed under the command of the Supreme SA Command and reorganized according to its guidelines.

At the orders of the Supreme SA Command, the Jungstahlhelm and the sports units will be restructured by the Stahlhelm offices in accordance with the units of the SA.

This transformation must be concluded by the date still to be determined by the Supreme SA Command.

The Bundesführer shall issue the requisite commands in respect to the remaining sections of the Stahlhelm.

As a demonstration of the solidarity of the Stahlhelm with the National Socialist Movement, these sections of the Stahlhelm shall wear a field-gray armband with a black swastika on a white background.

I hereby bestow upon the Jungstahlhelm and the sports units which are part of my SA the armband of their organization and the national emblem to be worn on their caps between the cockades.

The implementation provisions will be issued by the Chief of Staff.

Adolf Hitler

The fact that such “generous” orders on Hitler’s part were nothing but transitional measures toward the complete elimination of the Stahlhelm was to become increasingly evident throughout the following two and a half years.

After the Center Party had been dissolved on July 5, Hitler regarded the political struggle for power within Germany as settled for the time being. Although he had declared that the Revolution would not be ended until a new order had been established both within and without the entire German world,²⁴⁰ with regard to the economy he felt it was expedient to temporarily shift his focus, as illustrated in an address to the Reichsstatthalters in Berlin on July 6:²⁴¹

The political parties have now been eliminated in full. The achievement of external power must now be followed by internal education. Care must be

taken to avoid making purely formal decisions in a rush and expecting this to bring a lasting solution. People are easily capable of bending an outer form into one bearing the stamp of their own ideas.

A change, of course, can only be made when the persons required for such a change are present. More revolutions have succeeded in the initial onslaught than successful revolutions brought to a standstill.

The revolution is not a permanent state of affairs, and it must not be allowed to develop into any such permanent state. The river of the revolution which has been released must be channelled into the safe bed of evolution. The most important thing in this connection is the education of the individual. Today's conditions must be improved and the people embodying them must be instilled with a National Socialist concept of the State. Thus a businessman may not be dismissed if he is a good businessman but not yet a National Socialist, particularly if the National Socialist appointed in his place does not understand anything about business. In business, ability alone must be the decisive factor.

It is the task of National Socialism to ensure the development of our Volk. However, we should not be searching to see if there is anything left to revolutionize; rather, it is our task to secure position after position, to hold our positions and to make exemplary appointments to these positions in a gradual process. In doing so, we must focus our actions on the space of many years and think in terms of relatively long periods of time. Theoretical *Gleichschaltung* will not enable us to provide bread to workers. Moreover, history will not judge us according to whether we have dismissed and jailed the largest possible number of businessmen, but rather according to whether we have been able to provide work.

Today we have the absolute power to enforce our will everywhere. But we must also be able to replace those who are dismissed with better people.

In the long term, security in terms of power politics will be all the greater, the more we are able to underpin it economically. It is the task and the responsibility of the Reichsstatthalters to ensure that no arbitrary organizations or party offices claim for themselves governmental authority, dismiss individuals or make appointments to offices, for these are matters in which the Reich Government—and in respect to the economy, the Reich Minister of Economics—alone is competent. The Party has now become the State. All power lies in the authority of the Reich. It must not come to pass that the main emphasis in German life be transferred back to individual areas or, much less, individual organizations. Authority is no longer anchored in any partial area of the Reich, but in the concept of the German Volk itself!

In no way did Hitler regard himself as a religious reformer, a fact he had clearly stated in *Mein Kampf*. His sole aim was earthly omnipotence. As long as the Christian churches in Germany relinquished all claim to power in a political and social sense and refrained from exerting any influence on schools and youth organizations, they were free to conduct as many religious ceremonies in their churches as they wished. He was even willing to grant them substantial funding, while hoping in

exchange for active support in the national “expansion,” i.e. future wars, in particular the crusade against the heathen Bolshevist Russia. Primarily, it appeared that the Protestant Church in Germany would be most willing to reach the internal consensus Hitler wanted. However, unexpected resistance soon arose which led to the establishment of a “Confessional Church” (in addition to the “Church of German Christians” which Hitler promoted).

Ultimately, Hitler scored higher with the Catholic Church. With few exceptions, the German Catholic bishops and clergy had rejected Hitler from the very beginning. They were relatively immune to nationalistic slogans and justifiably concerned about the future of their youth groups and other organizations. Turning a deaf ear to Hitler’s promises, they simply refused to partake of his seeming generosity. The Vatican followed a different policy, for it had gathered experience in dealing with a nationalistic dictatorship, and the Italian Church had not fared badly under Mussolini in spite of the loss of its youth organizations.

Hitler’s offer to conclude a Concordat thus fell on fertile ground in Rome; it was something which had come to pass neither in imperial Germany nor during the Weimar Republic. The Vatican felt it was wiser to secure the continued existence of the Catholic Church than to be forced to deal with open persecution and suppression.

On July 8, the Concordat between the German Reich and the Holy See was signed. German clergy showed little enthusiasm upon hearing the news. Hitler, however, was all the more elated, particularly since the act was bound to make a positive impression on neighboring countries, above all Poland. He issued the following order on the same day:²⁴²

By virtue of the conclusion of the Concordat between the Holy See and the German Reich Government, there is, in my view, sufficient guarantee that from now on the members of the Roman Catholic confession in the Reich will place their services unreservedly at the disposal of the new National Socialist State. Thus I hereby decree:

1. The dissolution of those Catholic organizations recognized in the present agreement whose dissolution was performed in the absence of an order of the Reich Government shall be repealed immediately.

2. All sanctions imposed upon priests and other leaders of these Catholic organizations shall be discontinued. Any repetition of such sanctions in future is inadmissible and will be punished in accordance with the laws in force.

I am happy in the conviction that an epoch has now come to an end in which, unfortunately all too often, religious and political interests became trapped in a seemingly irreconcilable polarity.

The agreement concluded between the Reich and the Catholic Church will serve, in this sector as well, to bring about the peace required by all.

July 8, 1933

It is my strong hope that the settlement of the questions which concern the Protestant confession will very soon comprise a happy close to this act of pacification.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler sent the following telegram to von Papen:²⁴³

Please accept my most sincere congratulations and gratitude, Herr Vizekanzler, on the successful conclusion of the new agreement between the German Reich and the Catholic Church.

With kind regards,

Adolf Hitler

On July 9, Hitler addressed a meeting of the SA in Dortmund on the tasks of the future:²⁴⁴

Our foremost task consists of the following: we have power. No one can put up any resistance to us today. But now we must educate the German individual for this State. An enormous piece of work will begin for the coming decades of the German Volk.

Our second task is: we see in Germany an enormous army of people who are without work and thus without a reliable source of daily bread. The past State ruined the entire economy in fifteen years. Seven million people lost their jobs. We have always declared that we are fighting not for some pale theories, but for the continued existence of our Volk.

Now we must master one of the greatest tasks ever assigned to statesmen. We must eliminate unemployment.

We are the largest organization which has ever existed in Germany, but not only that: today we are the only organization. The fact that we have eliminated everything else has burdened a tremendous responsibility upon us. We cannot load it on other people's shoulders. This great responsibility forces us to lead this Movement in such a way that we are able to hold our own before history at all times and later generations will look back on this time with pride. But this Movement is also the German Volk's only hope and its only faith in the future.

Now that we have raised our flag throughout Germany as the flag of the State, we are obliged to ensure that nothing happens which might dishonor this flag. The flagbearer is responsible for the honor of the flag. I bid you gather together, my men of the SA and SS, and you of the Stahlhelm who have joined us, rally around this symbol of evolving life and of the resurrection of our Volk!

We must be the ones to fulfill the great tasks, for there is no one besides us who could do it. Only despair would come after us. Millions of unemployed have confidence in us. They perceive in us the only ones who can save them from their need and misery. We will win the victory, for this victory is everything, it is Germany itself.

As mentioned above, Hitler experienced some difficulties in attempting to steer the Protestant Church onto the course of the new national politics. On July 11, however, it appeared that the conflicts

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within the individual Protestant faiths had been settled by a new constitution. Hitler thus addressed the following congratulatory telegram to Ludwig Müller, military pastor and future Reich Bishop:²⁴⁵

Berlin, July 12

I was happy to hear that the constitution has now been completed. May this serve to provide the foundation for the unity and freedom of the Protestant Church.

Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler

Hitler also made use of this occasion to send the following telegram to Hindenburg:²⁴⁶

Esteemed Herr Reichspräsident,

After the Constitution of the German Protestant Church was completed yesterday, the negotiations to settle the conflict in the Prussian church were similarly brought to a close in a manner satisfactory to both the State and the Church.

The internal freedom of the Church, which is one of my particular concerns, will be placed beyond doubt by removing the State's commissars and deputy commissars. The internal reconstruction of the Land Churches will be brought to a speedy close by free choice of the Protestant parishioners in accordance with Church law. I am happy, Your Excellency, to be able to report that it is now guaranteed that the wish which you, I and all those involved have cherished for the pacification of Protestant church life will be fulfilled within the very near future.

In respectful devotion,

Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler

On July 12, Hitler delivered a speech to Gauleiters, the spokesmen of the NSBO at the Land level, and the newly appointed *Treuhänder der Arbeit* (trustees of labor).²⁴⁷ Here he once again asked that restraint be exercised vis-à-vis the German businessmen.

"We have conquered the land with fighting; now we must till it with peace." The political power had to be captured swiftly and in a single stroke, he said. In the economic sector, however, other laws of evolution were in force. Here one was forced to proceed step by step without radically smashing what existed and without endangering our own vital foundations.

Now Hitler focused a part of his attention on foreign policy. The new President of the Danzig Senate, Hermann Rauschning, had been in Warsaw on July 3 and visited the Polish Minister-President for the first time. On July 13, Hitler received Alfred Wysocki, the Polish Ambassador to Berlin, to demonstrate yet again his good will.²⁴⁸

July 16, 1933

Prompted by the signing of a virtually ineffectual Four Power Pact in Rome to preserve peace (between Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany), Hitler sent a telegram to Mussolini on July 16, which was designed to flatter the Italian dictator:²⁴⁹

Berlin, July 16

The signing of the Four Power Pact which has just taken place gives me a welcome opportunity, Your Excellency, to extend to you my warmest gratitude that this Pact, which owes its existence to the statesmanlike initiative of Your Excellency and which cements the amity between our two countries, has now been brought to a happy close after difficult negotiations. Particularly in view of today's world situation, this commitment of the four powers to mutual cooperation and understanding constitutes a ray of hope in the lives of the peoples of Europe.

Hitler

On July 16, Hitler delivered two speeches at what was known as the "Saxon Meeting," the Gau Party Congress in Leipzig.²⁵⁰

There he stated before 25,000 Amtswalters:

The religions and the Churches will maintain their freedom. But we are in charge of politics.

At the monument commemorating the Battle of the Nations of 1813, Hitler announced to 140,000 men of the SA, SS and the Stahlhelm:

Today we are not leading a mere thirteen or seventeen million, but the entire Volk, and hence the gigantic task accrues to us of training the millions of people who do not yet inwardly belong to us to become soldiers of this Third Reich, to become soldiers of our Weltanschauung.

On July 16, Hitler instituted a general council of businessmen comprised, in addition to Robert Ley and other Party Unterführers, of the businessmen who had long been attached to Hitler,²⁵¹ ranging from Fritz Thyssen to Baron von Schröder.

On July 19, Hitler sent a letter to military pastor Müller, prompted by the upcoming church elections.²⁵² He then spoke with the President of the Geneva Disarmament Conference, Henderson, at the Regina Hotel in Munich on July 20.²⁵³

On July 22, Hitler decided to deliver his own remarks on the Protestant elections which were to follow the next day. He spoke in a radio broadcast from Bayreuth, where he was attending the annual Festival.²⁵⁴

When I take a stand on the elections in the Protestant Church, I am doing so exclusively from the standpoint of a political leader, i.e. my concern lies not with questions of faith, dogma, or doctrine. Neither the Catholic nor the Protestant nor the Russian Orthodox Church has ever or will ever be able to halt the advance of Bolshevism.

Hitler then proceeded to the subject of the Concordat with the Vatican:

As a National Socialist, it is my most cherished desire to be able to reach an agreement with the Protestant Church which is no less equivocal. However, this presupposes that, if at all possible, a single Reich Church take the place of the multiple Protestant Churches.

Although the church elections on July 23 did bring positive results for the German Christians, resistance against Nationalist Socialist church leadership remained strong in the Protestant Churches in the Länder, particularly in those under the Bishops Meiser (Bavaria), Wurm (Württemberg) and Marahrens (Hanover).

Ultimately, Hitler gave up the fight and left them to their own ways, although he did have a number of Protestant pastors imprisoned or sent to concentration camps, among them Niemöller and Lilje, for having, in his view, put up too much resistance.

Hitler stayed in Bayreuth until the end of July 1933, leaving the Festival only when his presence was urgently required elsewhere as, for instance, on July 26, when he delivered an address to 470 members of the Italian Fascist Youth Organization in Munich at 9:00 a.m. and then attended the funeral of Admiral von Schroeder (the "Lion of Flanders") at 2:00 p.m.²⁵⁵ By 5:00 p.m. he was back in Bayreuth. On July 29, he attended a reception held by Frau Winifred Wagner, and on July 30, he visited the graves of Richard, Cosima and Siegfried Wagner. The following account of this visit was published:²⁵⁶

On Sunday morning [July 30], the Reich Chancellor and his staff visited the graves of Richard and Cosima Wagner in the park grounds of Haus Wahnfried and the grave of Siegfried Wagner in the municipal cemetery. Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler laid impressive flower arrangements on the graves in memory of the master, his wife and his deceased son which were decorated with black-white-red silk ribbons with the name of the Reich Chancellor embroidered in gold lettering.

On the afternoon of July 30, Hitler spoke at the 16th German *Turnfest* (Gymnastics Festival) in Stuttgart.²⁵⁷ The tenor of his speech was: "The battle of life is not won by the weak, but by strong men!"

It gave him the opportunity to once more rail against intellectuals:

A Volk which is upright and healthy will also never succumb to the mistakes which a brain overtaxed by one-sided use so easily makes. Intelligent peoples without courage and strength have always been degraded to mere tutors to the healthier races. Their interesting styles of writing are a poor substitute for the lost right to live which nature has always perceived only as the power of standing up for one's own life.

On August 6, Hitler delivered a three-hour address to Reichsleiters and Gauleiters at the Obersalzberg in which he touched upon every subject he held to be of current interest.²⁵⁸

This time Hitler introduced his party narrative with the remark that he was speaking at an "historic site," for it was here that he had conceived of his plans for the November 1923 uprising of the Party. In this speech and in many speeches to follow, Hitler attempted to portray the unsuccessful putsch as having been the right decision at the time. Since he had achieved power, he had convinced himself of his infallibility to such an extent that the failure of 1923 became a constant thorn in his flesh. Now he claimed that, had he not launched his attack at that time, "the others" would have launched their own, and this would have been tantamount to the end of the Reich. In the course of his speech, Hitler left no doubt that the Party was "determined to defend its power by every means." A *Reichsparteitag* (Reich Party Congress) would take place every two years,²⁵⁹ and the Party would "erect the hierarchy of its leadership to a senate composed of the oldest, most reliable and most loyal party comrades."²⁶⁰

With regard to the unemployment problem, the Führer stated that the purpose of the State was not to distribute pensions, but to provide work. When one reflected in which situation the nation might find itself were it to make practical use of the tremendous working potential which lay fallow (nine billion working hours annually) for our Volk, only then could one gauge how much blame accrued to those who governed before us. The NSDAP would, he said, take up and solve this decisive question, which constituted a moral obligation.

The Führer then went into detail in regard to the planned mammoth roadbuilding project which would bear witness, even after centuries, to the boldness and the accomplishments of the National Socialist Movement. He was convinced that posterity would one day refer to our time as an epoch of the most radical spiritual changes in the history of mankind.

On August 12, Hitler took part in a Richard Wagner Celebration at Neuschwanstein, at which he was given the freedom of Hohenschwangau. Expressing his gratitude in an address,²⁶¹ Hitler described

himself, as he did in regard to all great Germans, as having consummated the plans of Ludwig II. He expressed his conviction

that despite all criticism of these structures built by Ludwig II, the fertilization of the arts and the stimulation of tourism had nonetheless given rise to much good, which meant that the work of the King deserved recognition: "It was the protest of a genius against wretched parliamentary mediocrity. Today we have translated this protest into action and finally eliminated this regime."

On the following days, Hitler held various conferences on economic policy at the Obersalzberg: on August 15 he spoke with Reich Minister of Economics, Dr. Schmitt, the President of the Reichsbank, Dr. Schacht, State Secretary Dr. Lammers, and a number of other economic experts; on August 18 he met with Göring and State Minister Esser. This latter discussion dealt with questions of aviation and tourism.²⁶² The Obersalzberg was already becoming a branch office of the Reich Chancellory.

On the afternoon of August 18, Hitler conducted a discussion on the forthcoming Reich Party Congress in the Hotel Deutscher Hof in Nuremberg.²⁶³

At a convention of SA and SS leaders at the Rheinhotel Dreesen in Bad Godesberg on August 19, Hitler delivered a two-and-a-half-hour address, commenting, among other things, on the relationship between the SA and the Reichswehr:²⁶⁴

All organizations were to clearly structure and differentiate their own functions, he stated. The relationship existing between the SA and the Army was the same as that of the political leadership to the Army. Neither was an end of itself; rather, both served only one end: that of preserving our Volk.

Based upon this concept of *Volkstum*, he rejected the Germanization of other peoples and nations alien to our Volk, for this would never mean an invigoration or strengthening, but at most a weakening of the racial core of our own Volk.

At this convention of SA leaders, Hitler—who had previously appeared bareheaded in uniform—donned a brown peaked cap, adorned only with the national eagle emblem and lacking the customary cockade.²⁶⁵

Hitler had scheduled a large rally at the Tannenberg Monument in East Prussia in memory of the battle which had taken place there in 1914. At this occasion he planned not only to commemorate the two battles of Tannenberg in 1410 and 1914, but also to pay a personal tribute of gratitude to Hindenburg. He directed Göring to give the Old Gentleman the gift of the Prussian Domain of Langenau and the Preussenwald forest and to install a tax-free manor, "Hindenburg-Neudeck."

At this act of state on August 27, Hitler held the following speech after Göring had read the deed of gift:²⁶⁶

Herr Generalfeldmarschall!

Nineteen years have passed since those tremendous days when the German Volk, for the first time in centuries, once again received tidings of the name of Tannenberg which is so brightly lit by the radiance of glory. An uncertain fate hung menacingly over the Volk and the Reich at that time. Through no fault of their own, our men were forced to protect Germany with their lives from the attacks of an overwhelmingly superior power. Exhibiting incomparable heroic courage, the armies attacked in the West and held their few divisions in the East. And nevertheless, the numerically superior forces of our Russian opponent forced their way deep into German territory, destroying everything in their path. Large areas of East Prussia fell prey to the destruction. The prayers of millions born of fears and troubles rose up to the Almighty.

Salvation came with the name "Tannenberg," for not merely a battle was fought here; rather, the fate of Germany took a decisive turn, East Prussia was liberated and Germany was rescued. This day marked the beginning of that tremendous series of battles in the East which overwhelmed Russia as a warring nation, showered the German Armies with immortal glory, and obliged the German Nation to forever owe loyal gratitude, Herr Generalfeldmarschall, to your name.

For regardless of how the heroic struggle for Germany was to end, the Great War bestowed upon our Volk for all time the proud feeling of once having made immortal sacrifices for the freedom and life of the Vaterland. In future, however, history will be unable to comprehend that a Volk, after having lost a war which it never wanted, was shamefully oppressed and humiliatingly mistreated only because it would not relinquish its freedom without a fight, but instead attempted, with unutterable suffering and sacrifices never to be equaled, to defend its right to live and the independence of its soil.

At that time, Herr Generalfeldmarschall, fate allowed me, to my good fortune, to join and fight in the ranks of my brothers and comrades for the freedom of our Volk as a simple musketeer. Today, moved to the bottom of my heart, I feel it is a merciful gift of Providence that I may here, on the soil of the most glorious battlefield of the Great War, speak for the united German Nation and on its behalf express to you, Herr Generalfeldmarschall, in deepest reverence the gratitude of all. We are happy that we may celebrate this great day of the German Volk with him who once bestowed this day upon us.

The German Reich Government is acting for the German Volk in expressing the fervent wish that your name, Herr Generalfeldmarschall, live on forever in our Volk not only by virtue of the deed, that not only the stones of this monument shall speak of you, but that along line of living witnesses closely tied to this home soil will also tell of their great ancestor.

The German Reich Government, as representative of the national honor and in fulfillment of the debt of national gratitude, has resolved and made law that the plot of land in this province which is today connected with your name, Herr Generalfeldmarschall, shall remain free from the public duties of the Reich

and the Länder as long as it remains bound to the name of Hindenburg by a male heir.

Hindenburg showed his appreciation by appointing Göring General of the Infantry on August 30. To prevent the appointment from attracting too much attention and perhaps prompting opposition in the ranks of the Reichswehr, Blomberg was simultaneously appointed Colonel General. The following official notice was published on August 31:

With effect as per yesterday's date, the Reich President has promoted the Reich Minister of Defense, Infantry General von Blomberg, to the rank of Colonel General. Within the framework of other promotions, he also conferred upon the Prussian Minister-President, former Captain Göring, Knight of the Pour le mérite, the rank of General of the Infantry in recognition of his extraordinary merits both in war and peace, by virtue of which he is entitled to wear the uniform of the Reich Army.

Göring's promotion from Captain to General of the Infantry—bypassing five military ranks—was in all probability a unique incident in the annals of German military history.

With the exception of the later SS generals, Göring was the only Wehrmacht General who achieved his rank as a result of a revolutionary step. The astounding thing was that it was not Hitler, but the imperial Field Marshal von Hindenburg who made this highly unusual appointment.

After the successful rally in Tannenberg, Hitler immediately headed west on August 27 and, after a flight of some hours, arrived at another national monument, the Niederwald Monument near Rüdesheim, which had been erected in memory of the triumphant campaign of 1870/71. Several thousand Saarlanders had gathered for the occasion, and Hitler was in the right frame of mind to deliver a nationalistic speech.²⁶⁷

German Volksgenossen! My dear Saarlanders!

I have come here first of all to bring you greetings from the province which has maintained unshakable loyalty to Germany in the distant East. A tragic and undeserved fate has struck our East Prussia. Separated from the homeland, two million Germans are loyally standing watch to hold, with their will and their basic convictions, the bridge which has been broken off geographically. Today, an uplifting ceremony took place at the Tannenberg Monument, not only in memory of the great past, but also bearing solemn witness to the fact that there exists a will to preserve what is ours, to preserve the sacred memories, but also to preserve the rights of the present. One of these rights of the present is the return of the Saar territory to the Reich!

Of course—and you who are here, my friends, will perhaps know this best—Germany now is no longer the same as the Germany which evolved in a time

when the Saar was temporarily taken from the Reich; rather, it is a Germany of honor, a Germany conscious of its national rights and obligations.

When the Battle of Tannenberg was won, it was a symbol for the tremendous power of a unified nation. When the Saar was lost to the Reich, it was as a consequence of the loss of this inner unity. It is our unshakable will to restore this inner unity of the nation which we lost in the collapse of November 1918. For fifteen years this goal has been all at once our wish, our prayer, and our idea, and today we can say that our prayer has been answered, our wish fulfilled. Our will has made reality of what had to come about in Germany in order to preserve our Volk from final ruin. Today those around us are talking about terror in Germany, about violence. That is neither terror nor violence, it is destiny. The whole of Germany is rising up!

We have liberated Germany from the rape of those who did not want a strong Germany! We have liberated Germany from the rape and the terror of those who consciously rent it apart because they were able to control this Volk only by destroying its unity. What you witness now in Germany is one Volk and one Reich no longer experiencing party rule and party strife.

It is not the German Volk which yearns for former conditions, but a handful of people who were living off the misfortune of the nation and the inner conflicts of the German Volk.

If we have said it once, we have said it a hundred times: we want peace with the rest of the world. We ourselves have experienced the dreadfulness of war. None of us wants it. None of us wants foreign property. None of us wants to annex foreign people. But what God has given to the Volk belongs to the Volk. And if treaties are to be sacred, then not only for us, but also for our opponents. The treaties clearly provide that the Volk of the Saar is entitled to choose its own fate.

I know that, when the hour comes, the voice of the nation will encompass every single individual, and he will go and cast his vote for the German Vaterland.

We are gladly willing to discuss all economic matters with France. We are gladly willing to reach compromises with France. But there is one point upon which there can be no compromise: the Reich can neither abandon you, nor can you abandon Germany.

On August 30, Hitler proceeded to Nuremberg to attend what was called the "Reichsparteitag des Sieges" (Reich Party Congress of Victory).

In view of the triumphant mood of 1933, this demonstration on the part of the NSDAP was understandable—but Hitler intended to turn it into an annual affair. This congress and those following up until 1938 were yet further occasions for him to experience the intoxication of his power over hundreds of thousands and even millions of people, and to indulge in his passion for speaking at mass rallies. The scale of the event grew from year to year; the parades became more and more tremen-

dous; mammoth stone towers were built only to serve as huge flagpoles. An oversized convention hall was to eclipse all existing comparable structures throughout the world. It remained only a torso when the harsh realities of 1939 put an end to Hitler's rhetoric spectacles and shows of numbers.

To the other participants, these rallies were significantly less pleasant than to Hitler. They housed in tents, stood for hours on end, and marched in endless processions. Although some of them might have regarded the rally as an experience, most of them were more interested in the circumstances surrounding the congress itself—the visit to a big city, the many attractions and amusements, the fireworks, etc.—than in its political contents. Well aware of this, Hitler demonstrated a generosity rivalled only by the Catholic Church on its illustrious pilgrimages.

Hitler's speeches at these conventions were, however, usually among the weakest he delivered. The annual Party Congress was only accorded any real significance if it coincided with some other important occurrence, e.g. the Sudeten crisis of 1938.²⁶⁸ In general, Hitler's outpourings at these annual gatherings were so mediocre that even his most fanatic followers submitted to them as to an ordeal, despite the abundance of "Heil!" cheers and applause. The fact was, these speeches were not motivated by any real events, and the never-ending sequence of retrospectives and forecasts were as tedious as the lectures on art and culture, subjects he presented much better on other occasions—and in *Mein Kampf*. It would certainly be accurate to state that Hitler's speeches at the Party Congresses did not, in contrast to his addresses on other occasions, convert any new followers to the National Socialist cause.

The speeches and proclamations were delivered in a ritual form, to which the six Party Congresses from 1933 to 1938 adhered:

- initial address at the reception in the Nuremberg City Hall
- proclamation upon the opening of the Party Congress, read by the Munich Gauleiter Adolf Wagner²⁶⁹
- speech at the convention on culture; addresses to the individual formations (Political Leadership, NS Frauenschaft, Hitler Youth, SA, and SS, and later the Labor Service and the Wehrmacht)
- speeches to the Diplomatic Corps and address at the final convention.

This work cites the publication of Hitler's respective speeches at the Party Congresses but refrains from citing the contents unless they contain new views of any significance.

On August 30, 1933, Nuremberg's Mayor Liebel handed over a print of Dürer's copper engraving, "Knight, Death and Devil," to Hitler at a reception in the City Hall. Hitler expressed his thanks and said:

I have resolved to order that our Parteitag will take place in this city now and for all time.²⁷⁰

On September 1, Hitler's proclamation was read at the opening of the Party Congress.²⁷¹ It closed with an appeal to the love of truth, which Hitler upheld only as long as he and his rule fared well. Later, as times grew worse and worse, the practical application of this principle underwent a change. But in 1933, at this "Congress of Victory," he had no trouble stating:

Power and the brutal use of force can accomplish much, but in the long run, no state of affairs is secure unless it appears logical in and of itself and intellectually irrefutable. And above all: the National Socialist Movement must profess its faith in the heroism which prefers any degree of opposition and hardship to even once denying the principles it has recognized as right. It may be filled only by a single fear, namely that one day a time might come when we are accused of insincerity or thoughtlessness. The heroic idea must, however, be constantly willing to renounce the approval of the present if sincerity and truth so require.

Just as the hero has renounced his life to live on in the Pantheon of history, so must a truly great movement perceive in the rightness of its concept, in the sincerity of its actions the talisman which will safely lead it from a transient present to an immortal future.

Here Hitler had vowed never to give up his preconceived views on foreign policy. And to the detriment of the German people, he remained true to this pledge.

At the "Convention of Culture" on September 1, Hitler took the podium himself and held forth at length on the character and aims of art as he had done in *Mein Kampf*. This time he also voiced his own antipathy to modern art:

The fact that something has never existed before is no proof for the quality of an accomplishment; it can just as easily be evidence for an inferiority which has never existed prior thereto. Thus if a so-called artist perceives his sole purpose in life as presenting the most confusing and incomprehensible portrayals of the accomplishments of the past or the present, the actual accomplishments of the past will nevertheless remain accomplishments, while the artistic stammerings of the painting, music, sculpture, and architecture produced by these types of charlatans will one day be nothing but proof of the magnitude of a nation's downfall.

On September 2, Hitler stated to the foreign diplomats present

that he would be happy if the gentlemen would leave Nuremberg with the impression that the National Socialist Rule in Germany was not a rule of force or, much less, tyranny, but that here the voice of the Volk truly found its innermost and deepest expression.

On the same day, Hitler proclaimed to the assembled Hitler Youth:

You, my boys, you are the living Germany of the future, not some empty idea, not some faint shadow, but the blood of our blood, the flesh of our flesh, the spirit of our spirit, you are the future of our Volk personified.

Hitler flattered the political leaders at an Amtswalter roll call on September 2 when he said they were a hierarchy of leaders standing solid as a rock in the bustle of life, stating:

It is your duty to ensure that every German, regardless of class and regardless of origins, be put through this *weltanschaulich* and political school which you represent.

In reality, one could only graduate from this so-called *weltanschaulich* and political school if one was willing to take every word Hitler said at face value.

On September 3, Hitler once again assumed the role of a padre in his address to the SA and SS. He spoke of the community of great faith which had assembled before him and once more granted absolution for the sins of the past.

The Party Congress of our Movement has always been a great military parade of its men, its men who are determined and willing to not only uphold the discipline of the community of the Volk in a theoretical sense, but to put it into practice. A community with no respect to origin, class, profession, assets, or education. A community which has come together, united in a single great faith and in a single great will, united not only for one rank, not for parties, not for professions, and not for classes, but united for our Germany.

Fourteen years of want, misery and humiliation lie behind us. In these fourteen years, however, a new, miraculous ideal has also asserted itself in our German Volk. We National Socialists have every right to say: when everyone became disloyal, we remained loyal and became truly loyal—an alliance of unswerving loyalty, unswerving comradeship, and if the Goddess of Fortune turned away from our Volk for fourteen years, we know it was because our Volk had itself to blame. But we also know that she will turn her gaze upon us once more when we have atoned for our guilt. May Heaven be our witness: the guilt of our Volk is extinguished, the crimes punished, the disgrace blotted out! The Men of November have been felled, and their tyranny is over.

In order to lend this rally more mystical force, Hitler consecrated—as he would every year until 1938—the new flags and standards of the SA and SS by touching them with the *Blutfahne* (Blood Flag) which had been carried at the march to the Feldherrnhalle in 1923 and allegedly been drenched in the blood of the martyrs to the cause.²⁷²

In his closing address to the Party Congress, Hitler waxed eloquent on the goals and objectives of the Movement, the failure of the bourgeoisie, racial selection, and the allegedly planned leadership hierarchy. At the same time he found it expedient to mention the future role he intended to play in foreign politics as the peoples' preserver from Bolshevism. Personally, Hitler saw no real danger from that corner, for he held Bolshevism to be extremely primitive and capable of being easily and quickly crushed with brutal force. Hence he stated on September 3:

Communism is not a higher evolutionary stage, but the most primitive basic form of shaping peoples and nations.

In his closing remarks, he once again returned to the idea of his "European mission" to protect the peoples from Bolshevism.

In devoting ourselves in this way to caring for our own blood, a blood which Fate has entrusted to us, we are best helping to protect other peoples from diseases which spread from race to race and from Volk to Volk. If a single Volk were to fall prey to Bolshevism in Western or Central Europe, this poison would continue its corrosive work and devastate today's oldest and most beautiful cultural possession on earth. In taking this fight upon itself, Germany is but fulfilling, as so often in its history, a truly European mission.

The Reichswehr was represented at this Party Congress in 1933 by only a handful of senior officers. At that time, a "Wehrmacht Day" did not yet exist. On September 5 and 6, Hitler thus visited the Fifth Division of the Reichswehr near Ulm, accompanied by the new Reichswehr general Göring.²⁷³

On September 13, the "Winter Relief (*Winterhilfe*) project against hunger and cold" was instituted by the Reich Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin. Hitler delivered the following address:²⁷⁴

Gentlemen!

For many years we have fought at home against the idea of international Marxist solidarity. We perceived in this supposed international solidarity only the enemy of a truly national attitude, a phantom which drew men away from the only reasonable solidarity there can be: from the solidarity eternally rooted in the blood.

But we have also always been conscious of the fact that one cannot eliminate this idea without having another take its place. Thus the motto governing this great act of assistance must be the phrase, "National Solidarity."

We have smashed international Marxist solidarity within our Volk in order to give the millions of German workers another and better solidarity in exchange. It is the solidarity of our own Volk, the indivisible bond not only in good times, but also in bad; a bond not only with those who are blessed by good fortune, but also with those who are dogged by fate.

If we correctly understand this idea of national solidarity, we must understand it as an idea of sacrifice, i.e. if someone says it is too much of a burden, that one is constantly required to give, then the only reply is: "But that happens to be the meaning of a true national solidarity." Taking cannot be the meaning of any true national solidarity.

If one part of our Volk has come to suffer hardships due to circumstances for which all are responsible, and the other part, spared by fate, is willing of its own volition to take upon itself only a part of this hardship which has been forcefully imposed upon the other, all we can say is: a certain amount of hardship should be intentionally imposed upon a part of our Volk so that this part may aid in making the hardships of the other more bearable. The greater the willingness to make such sacrifices, all the more quickly will the hardships of the other side be able to be reduced.

Every person must understand that giving only has any real value, in the sense of bringing about a true Volksgemeinschaft, when the act of giving involves a sacrifice on the part of the giver. This is ultimately the only way to build up the superior solidarity to which we must aspire if we want to overcome the other solidarity.

When this Volk has correctly grasped the fact that these measures must mean sacrifice to everyone, then these measures will not only result in alleviating material want but will also produce something much more tremendous—the conviction that this community of the Volk is not merely an empty phrase, but something which is really alive. We need this community more than ever in the difficult struggle of the nation. Were Germany blessed by good fortune, it might be able to be accorded somewhat less significance. But when we are made to endure difficult times, we must be conscious of the fact that these can only be overcome if our Volk holds together like a single block of steel.

We will only be able to achieve this if the masses of millions who are not blessed by good fortune are given the feeling that those who are more favored by fortune feel with them and are willing to voluntarily make a sacrifice in order to document to the entire world the indivisible solidarity of our Volk.

Whatever the German Volk sacrifices today will—and everyone can be assured of this—be refunded to our Volk in kind, with interest and compound interest; for what are material sacrifices made voluntarily in contrast to the greatest gift, namely the gift of being a joint, unified Volk which feels that it belongs together, which is willing to set upon its earthly path of destiny as one and to fight a united struggle? The blessing which comes from this mutuality, from this national solidarity, is much greater and much more beneficial than the

sacrifice which the individual person makes for its sake. This campaign against hunger and cold must stand under the motto: we have smashed the international solidarity of the proletariat, and in its place we shall build the living national solidarity of the German Volk.

On September 20, Hitler spoke to the members of the newly established General Council of the German Economy (Generalrat der Deutschen Wirtschaft) in Berlin²⁷⁵ and explained his economic policy, which greatly differed from Brüning's system of educating the people to exercise modesty in their needs.

The economy is now once again able to make long-range plans, because with this government there is no danger that it will be gone tomorrow or the day after.

Two million people have been reintegrated in the production process. The Reich Government is convinced that this success can only be permanent if unemployment is combatted by a continuous series of vigorous offensives and fanatical persistence. If we succeed in halting the seasonal remigration of the masses of workers in fall and winter, a new general attack can be launched in spring with every hope of success. In order to achieve this, new and more extensive measures are required. It is the task not only of the Reich Government, but of the economy as well to accomplish the educational work which is of primary importance here.

It is most necessary to combat the ideology of modesty of needs, the systematic reduction of demand, i.e. the cult of primitivism stemming from Communism. This Bolshevik ideal of the gradual regression of civilization's claims must inevitably result in the destruction of economy and of life as a whole.

It is an ideology founded in a fear of one's neighbor, in a dread of somehow standing out, and is based upon a spiteful, envious cast of mind. This code of regression to the primitive state leads to cowardly, anxious acquiescence and thus presents a tremendous threat to mankind.

The decisive thing is not that all limit themselves, but rather that all endeavor to make progress and improve their lot. The German economy can only exist given a definite rate of demand and a definite cultural requirement on the part of the German Volk.

Here Hitler adapted his tone to suit the leaders of German industry; in a speech on September 23 before a gathering of German Autobahn workers near Frankfurt am Main, he made an effective presentation of his theory, which was doubtlessly correct at the time, of creating work and increasing consumption.²⁷⁶ When the first sod was turned in preparation for the initial Autobahn connecting Frankfurt and Heidelberg, Hitler exclaimed: "*Deutsche Arbeiter, ans Werk!*" (German workers, to work!) The program he developed exhibited parallels to the embankment project in Goethe's *Faust*:²⁷⁷

Ministers, Presidents of the Reichsbahn and the Reichsbank! Statthalters, Gauleiters, Party Comrades, and German Workers!

Today we stand at the threshold of a tremendous task. Its significance not only for German transportation, but in the broadest sense for the German economy, too, will come to be appreciated in full only in the course of future decades. We are now beginning to build a new artery for traffic! Aspects of modern traffic will be given deserved and necessary consideration in the development of the German motorway system. In future decades, transportation will be coupled with these great new roads which we now plan to build throughout Germany. The first step toward this goal is 6,400 kilometers long.

I know that this gigantic project is only conceivable given the cooperation of many; that this project could never have evolved had the realization of its greatness and the will to turn it into reality not seized hold of so many, all the way from the Cabinet and the Reich Government, up to the German Reichsbank and the German Reichsbahn.

At the same time we are fighting the most severe crisis and the worst misfortune which have descended upon Germany in the course of the past fifteen years.

The curse of unemployment, which has condemned millions of people to a degrading and impossible way of life, must be eliminated!

It is quite clear to us that the battle against unemployment cannot become a complete success overnight, but we are also aware of the fact that this battle must be waged under any circumstances. We are determined to take it up, for we have taken a vow to the nation to resolve this crisis.

Back then we asked for four years, and we plan to turn these four years to the benefit and advantage of our German Volk and, above all, of the German worker. Workers, I myself was often attacked for my origins during the period of my struggle for power in Germany by those who pretended to represent the interests of the workers. At that time people were fond of saying: what does that ex-construction worker and painter want? I am happy and proud that Fate forced me to tread this path. In this way perhaps I have gained a greater understanding for the German worker, for his character, for his suffering, but also for that which makes up the vital necessities of his life.

In beginning this project today, I am acting on these feelings, on these experiences from my own life; therefore I also know that what is beginning today with a celebration will mean toil and sweat for many hundreds of thousands. I know that this day of celebration will pass and that the time will come when rain, frost and snow will make the work trying and difficult for everyone. But it is necessary: this work must be done, and no one will help us if we do not help ourselves.

In my view, the most productive way of leading the German Volk back into the process of work is to once again get German industry going by means of great and monumental projects.

In taking on a difficult task today which you must continue in the hard times which fall, winter and spring will bring, you are ensuring that hundreds of thousands more will receive work in the factories and workshops by virtue of your increased buying power. It is our goal to slowly increase the buying power

of the masses and thus to provide orders to the centers of production and get German industry off the ground again.

Therefore I ask you to constantly bear in mind that today it is not at our discretion to choose the work to be done. I ask you to bear in mind that we are living in an age which perceives its very essence in work itself; that we wish to build up a State which values work for its own sake and holds the worker in high regard because he is fulfilling a duty to the nation; a State which aims, by means of its labor service, to educate everyone—even the tender sons of high-born parents—to hold work in high regard and to respect physical labor in the service of the Volksgemeinschaft.

I know that this great process of inwardly welding our Volk together cannot be completed overnight. Even we are incapable of doing away with what has gradually disintegrated, become deformed and distorted in the course of thirty, forty, fifty or a hundred years within a few months. The biases have been too deeply implanted in the people to be forgotten overnight. But they will forget. It is our task to build this resolve on the concept of respecting work, no matter what it may be. Fate has not allowed us the freedom to pick and choose the type of work that fits our fancy.

We want to educate the Volk so that it moves away from the insanity of class superiority, of arrogance of rank, and of the delusion that only mental work is of any value; we want the Volk to comprehend that every labor which is necessary ennobles its doer, and that there is only one disgrace, and that is to contribute nothing to the maintenance of our Volksgemeinschaft, to contribute nothing to the maintenance of the Volk itself. It is a necessary transposition which we will effect not with theories, not with declarations or with wishes and hopes, but which we will effect only by life itself, in that today we are setting millions of people to the task of restoring health to the German economy.

In setting hundreds of thousands to work which is great, monumental, and of—I would like to say, eternal—value, we shall ensure that the product is no longer separated from those who have created it. In the future one should not only think of those who have planned or drafted it as engineers, but rather also of those who, by their industry, by their sweat, and by work which was just as hard, have translated the plans and the ideas into reality for the benefit of the entire Volk. Thus, in this hour I cannot hope for anything better than that it be not only the hour when the construction of this, the greatest road network in the world, was initiated, but that this hour also be, at the same time, a milestone for the construction of the German Volksgemeinschaft, a community which will bestow upon us as Volk and as State all that we may rightfully demand and expect from this world.

And so I ask of you: go to work now! Construction must begin today! Let us commence the task! And before many years have passed, a gigantic work shall bear witness to our service, our industry, our capability, and our determination: *Deutsche Arbeiter, ans Werk!*

On September 23, Hitler also delivered a speech at a Stahlhelm rally in the Hanover Municipal Hall. His remarks were totally along the lines of “we soldiers of the front.”²⁷⁸

Each of us knows one thing: we have become what we are only because of what we went through out there.

On September 28, Hitler spoke to Reichsstatthalters gathered in the Reich Chancellory, stating in no uncertain terms that they were to uphold the authority of the Reich and ensure the smooth functioning of the administration at all costs.²⁷⁹

In the meantime, Hitler was planning his foreign policy coup of withdrawing from the League of Nations. The League's regular session had opened on September 25. Hitler dispatched Neurath and Goebbels to Geneva in order to demonstrate how much effort he was allegedly expending toward solving the existing problems. More interesting, however, than Goebbels' statement to 200 foreign journalists there were the meetings which Neurath and Goebbels had with the English and Polish Foreign Ministers, Simon and Beck. On September 29, Hitler abruptly recalled his envoys and met with Neurath in Berlin for a conference on September 30.²⁸⁰

At home, Hitler bestowed yet another "national holiday" on the Germans: *Erntedankfest* (harvest festival), which was to be celebrated to pay homage to German peasantry at the start of October on the Bückeberg, a mountain near Hamelin.²⁸¹

On the morning of October 1, Hitler received 100 peasant delegations from throughout the Reich and once more stressed the solidarity between the National Socialist Movement and the peasants in his speech:²⁸²

To us, the German peasant is not only a class, but a representative of German vitality and thus also of the German future. We perceive in the German peasant the source of national fertility, the foundation of our national life.

In the afternoon, Hitler delivered a speech to the crowds of peasants gathered on the Bückeberg:²⁸³

German Volksgenossen! My German Peasants!

A change of historic dimensions has taken place in Germany since the crops were harvested last year. A State of the parties has fallen; a State of the Volk has arisen. Perhaps only a future age will be able to fully appreciate the extent of the radical change which has taken place in these past eight months. We are all too bound by the spell of this age which is rushing forwards to be able to gauge its progress by drawing comparisons.

What seemed impossible but a few years ago has now become possible. What millions held to be a lost cause has today become reality.

That which attempted to defy this force has been overthrown. A revolution roared through the German countryside, smashing a system, stirring up our

Volk to its innermost depths. It should surprise no one that the class most strongly seized by this powerful movement was the one which constitutes the supporting foundation of our Volk.

The starting point for National Socialism's views, positions, and decisions lies neither in the individual nor in humanity. It consciously places the Volk at the center of its entire way of thinking. For it, this Volk is a phenomenon conditioned by blood in which it perceives the God-given building block of human society.

The lone individual is short-lived; the Volk is lasting. While the liberal world outlook, by according the individual a god-like status, must of necessity lead to the destruction of the Volk, National Socialism wishes to preserve the Volk as such, if necessary at the expense of the individual. It requires a tremendous educational effort in order to make clear to the people what initially appears to be a difficult lesson in order that they may realize that in the discipline of the individual lies a blessing not only for the whole, but ultimately also for the individual himself.

An undertone of concern was audible in this speech. Hitler feared severe complications and even military action as a result of his planned withdrawal from the League of Nations. Events proved his apprehension unfounded. Without explaining exactly which "difficult decisions" he had to make, he proclaimed:

Fate has delivered us into a difficult age and thus also assigned us the holy task of making difficult decisions, if necessary. We know how great the misery is throughout the entire German Volk. We are determined to use every means which human intelligence can discover to fight it.

Near the end of his address, Hitler worked himself up into a state of intoxication by dwelling on the colossal dimensions of his flock of peasants on the mount. He raved:

Thus you, my peasants, have assembled at the largest rally of its kind which has probably ever taken place on earth. However, it should not only be a demonstration of your power, but also a visible display of the will of your leadership. By means of the celebration of labor and the celebration of the harvest, we wish to consciously document the spirit which dominates us and the path which we are determined to take. May the size of this demonstration instill in everyone a sense of mutual respect and the conviction that no class alone, but only all united, will be able to survive.

May this feeling of solidarity between city and country, between peasants, manual laborers and mental workers continue to swell to become the proud consciousness of a tremendous unity. We are one Volk; we want to be one Reich.

On October 2, Hitler flew to East Prussia, visited Graf von Dohna at his Finckenstein Castle and proceeded to Neudeck at 6:00 p.m. to

congratulate the Reich President on his 86th birthday. He required Hindenburg's consent not only for his planned withdrawal from the League of Nations, but also for the dissolution of the Reichstag.

Hitler had long been irked by the Reichstag elected on March 5, for it still contained deputies from the other right-wing parties and the Center sitting in for the NSDAP. What he needed was a "captive audience" in the truest sense of the word, a completely National Socialist Reichstag which was at his beck and call and would pass amendments to the Constitution which went beyond the scope of the Enabling Act and, moreover, also serve as a forum for his future outpourings on foreign policy. It seemed a convenient opportunity to submit the withdrawal from the League of Nations to a plebiscite and at the same time dissolve the Reichstag, although in fact this was purely a matter of domestic policy and had nothing whatsoever to do with the plebiscite.

Hindenburg having consented to go along with his plans, Hitler could leave Neudeck well satisfied.

On October 4, he spoke at the convention of German jurists in Leipzig and stated:²⁸⁴

The totalitarian State will not tolerate any difference between law and morality. Only within the framework of a Weltanschauung can and will a judiciary be independent.

On Saturday, October 14, Hitler announced his decision to withdraw from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations. This action marked the beginning of his Saturday foreign policy coups.²⁸⁵ Hitler naively believed that Anglo-Saxon statesmen took their weekends so seriously as to be deaf to world affairs from Friday to Monday; hence the earliest time at which they could take any action against Hitler would be Monday morning—and by then it might well be too late for effective measures. The official announcement read as follows:²⁸⁶

Berlin, October 14

In view of the unreasonable, humiliating and degrading demands of the other Powers in the Geneva Disarmament Conference, the Reich Government has today resolved to no longer participate in the Disarmament Conference negotiations. At the same time, the Reich Government hereby announces the withdrawal of the German Reich from the League of Nations.

In order to give the German Volk an opportunity to take its own stand on questions involving the fate of the German nation, the German Reichstag is to be dissolved by decree of the Reich President of October 14 and new elections scheduled for November 12, 1933. Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler will speak on all German radio stations this evening.

At a press conference, Goebbels also read Hitler's proclamation to the German Volk on October 14:²⁸⁷

Filled with the sincere desire to perform the task of the peaceful, domestic reconstruction of our Volk and its political and economic life, former German governments, confident of being granted their deserved equality of rights, declared their willingness to enter into the League of Nations and take part in the Disarmament Conference. Germany was bitterly disappointed. Despite our willingness to strictly carry out the disarmament, initially undertaken by us, to the very last consequence, if necessary, other governments could not make up their minds to uphold the promises which they had signed in the Peace Treaty. The fact that Germany was consciously denied any and all real moral and objective equality of rights was a constant humiliation to the German Volk and its government. The Reich Government having again declared its willingness, after German equality of rights had been granted on December 11, 1932, to once more take part in the negotiations of the Disarmament Conference, it was made clear in public speeches and statements delivered directly to the Reich Foreign Minister and our delegates by the official representatives of the other States that the Germany which exists today could no longer be granted this equality of rights. Due to the fact that the German Reich Government perceives in this action a both unjust and degrading discrimination of the German Volk, it does not, under these circumstances, feel itself able to participate any longer as a second-class nation without rights of its own in negotiations which can only result in further dictates. While once more professing its unshakable desire for peace, the German Reich Government must announce, in view of the unreasonable, humiliating and degrading demands, to its deepest regret that it is forced to leave the Disarmament Conference. Thus it will also announce its withdrawal from the League of Nations. It is submitting this decision it has made, together with a new declaration of its belief in a policy of a truly honest will for peace and a willingness to reach an understanding, to the German Volk for its opinion and is expecting from it a declaration of the same love and readiness for peace, but also the same concept of honor and the same determination.

As Chancellor of the German Reich, I have thus proposed to the Reich President that, in order to visibly demonstrate the unanimous will of the Government and the Volk, this policy of the Reich Government be submitted to a national plebiscite and the German Reichstag be dissolved in order to provide to the German Volk the opportunity to elect those deputies best capable of giving the Volk the guarantee of a consistent representation of its interests as sworn representatives of this policy of peace and uprightness.

As Chancellor of the German Volk and Führer of the National Socialist Movement, I am convinced that the entire nation will come to stand united as one man behind a vow and a decision born equally of a love to our Volk and a regard for its honor as well as of the conviction that the final pacification of the world which all require can only be achieved when the concepts of victor and vanquished are replaced by the acceptable application of equal vital rights for all.

Adolf Hitler

A proclamation of the Reich Government to the German Volk was also published at the same time:²⁸⁸

The German Reich Government and the German Volk are united in the will to practice a policy of peace, responsibility and understanding as the foundation of all its decisions and its every action.

The German Reich Government and the German Volk thus reject violence as being an inappropriate means to remedy existing differences of opinion within the existing community of States.

The German Reich Government and the German Volk renew their vow to gladly consent to any real world disarmament and at the same time pledge their willingness to destroy every last German machine gun and dismiss every last man from the Army insofar as the other peoples decide to do the same.

The German Reich Government and the German Volk are bound together in the sincere desire to soberly weigh all questions involved by way of negotiations and to attempt to solve them together with the other nations, including all our former opponents, for the purpose of overcoming the war psychosis and in order to finally restore sincerity to our relations with one another.

The German Reich Government and the German Volk thus declare their willingness at all times to secure the peace of Europe by concluding long-term pacts of non-aggression with other continents, to contribute to Europe's economic welfare and to take part in the new general reconstruction of culture.

The German Reich Government and the German Volk are filled by the same concept of honor, which requires that the granting of equality of rights to Germany constitutes the indispensable moral and objective precondition for any participation of our Volk and its Government in international institutions and treaties.

The German Reich Government and the German Volk are hence of one mind in deciding to withdraw from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations for as long as this genuine equality of rights is denied our Volk.

The German Reich Government and the German Volk are resolved to take upon themselves any crisis, any persecution, and any hardship rather than to sign treaties in the future which must be unacceptable for any man of honor and any honor-loving Volk, and the results of which would lead only to a perpetuation of the want and misery of the conditions under the Treaty of Versailles and thus to the collapse of the civilized community of the States. The German Reich Government and the German Volk do not intend to take part in any arms race put on by the other nations; they demand only that measure of security which guarantees for the nation the peace and liberty to perform its work peacefully. The German Reich Government and the German Volk are willing to secure these justified demands of the German nation by way of negotiations and treaties. The Reich Government addresses the following question to the German Volk:

Does the German Volk approve of the policy of its Reich Government presented here, and is it willing to declare that this is the expression of its own view and its own will, and to bear solemn witness to it?

As if these proclamations were not sufficient, on Saturday evening Hitler also delivered a long wireless address in which he repeated the reasons for his decisions.

Once more he utilized the rhetorical stratagems which had met with such success in his speeches on domestic matters, believing that they would be equally effective in foreign policy.

The "party narrative" was expanded to contain a sweeping account of the difficult path which Germany had taken since 1918. Hitler told how Germany, believing in Wilson's Fourteen Points, had fulfilled the Treaty of Versailles to the letter and disarmed, only to suffer one humiliating disappointment after another at the hands of the victorious powers. Germany did not want weapons; it wanted only equality of rights.

Repeating his claim that he never wanted to win over an alien people, Hitler emphatically rejected the possibility of war.

The fact that the German youth and the National Socialists were marching in columns of four was merely a preventive measure designed to protect the German Volk from Communism.

The present Reich Government, so he insisted, was composed of men of honor, which made it all the more unbearable that Germany was being refused genuine equality of rights.

Hitler stated that as early as in his "Peace Speech" in May, he had declared that under these circumstances Germany would no longer be in a position to maintain its membership in the League of Nations or take part in international conferences. To his chagrin, he was forced now to appeal to the German Volk to reaffirm its government's love of peace by a gigantic *Friedens und Ehrkundgebung* (rally for peace and honor). Hitler spoke on the radio verbatim as follows:²⁸⁹

In November 1918, when the German Volk lowered its arms in trusting faith in the assurances laid down in President Wilson's Fourteen Points, an ill-fated struggle came to a close for which individual statesmen, but certainly not the peoples of the world might be held responsible. The German Volk fought so valiantly only because it was of the sacred conviction that it had been unjustly attacked and was thus justly engaged in battle. The other nations had no conception of the magnitude of the sacrifices which the Volk—left almost entirely on its own—was forced to make. If in these months the world had stretched out its hand in fairness to its prostrate opponent, humanity would have been spared much suffering and countless disappointments.

The German Volk experienced the deepest disappointment. Never before had a vanquished nation made such a sincere effort to help heal the wounds of its opponents as the German Volk had in the long years it fulfilled the dictates

burdened upon it. And the fact that all of these sacrifices were unable to bring about a real pacification of the peoples was due only to the nature of a treaty which, by attempting to perpetuate the concepts of victor and vanquished, had to perpetuate hatred and enmity as well.

The peoples had a right to expect that a lesson would be learned from this, the greatest war in world history, the lesson of how little—particularly for the European nations—the size of the sacrifices corresponded to the size of what could possibly be gained. Therefore, when the German Volk was required in this Treaty to destroy its arms in order to make general world disarmament possible, a great number believed that this was no more than a symbol for the spreading of a redeeming realization.

The German Volk destroyed its weapons! Relying upon the contractual fidelity of its former enemies at war, it fulfilled the treaties with a truly fanatical loyalty. On water, on land, and in the air, immeasurable quantities of war materials were dismantled, destroyed or scrapped. At the request of the dictating powers, a small professional army with wholly inadequate military equipment took the place of what had once been an army of millions. However, at that time the political leadership of the nation was in the hands of men whose spiritual roots lay exclusively in the world of the victorious nations.

The German Volk had a right to expect that, for this reason alone, the rest of the world would keep its promise just as the German Volk had worked, in the sweat of its labor, with thousandfold hardships and unspeakable privations, to fulfill its own contractual obligation.

No war can become the permanent condition of mankind. No peace can be the perpetuation of war. At some point, victors and vanquished must find their way back to the community of mutual understanding and trust. For a decade and a half, the German Volk hoped and waited for the end of the War to also become at last the end of hatred and enmity. The purpose of the Peace Treaty of Versailles, however, did not appear to be that of granting mankind final peace, but rather to preserve in it undying hatred.

The consequences were unavoidable. When justice ultimately gives way to violence, a permanent insecurity will disrupt and check the flow of all normal functions in the lives of peoples. When the Treaty was signed, it was completely forgotten that the reconstruction of the world cannot be guaranteed by the slave labor of a violated nation, but only by the trusting cooperation of all, and that the foremost prerequisite for this cooperation lies in overcoming the war psychosis; that furthermore the problematic question of the blame for the War cannot be cleared up historically if the victor has the vanquished sign a confession of guilt as a preface to a peace treaty; rather, that the contents of such a dictate most clearly prove who, in the end, are the guilty parties!

The German Volk is deeply convinced that it is in no way to blame for the War. It may well be that the other parties involved in this tragic misfortune also harbor the same conviction. If so, it is all the more necessary to everywhere endeavor to ensure that this general conviction of guiltlessness is not allowed to become a permanent enmity for all time, and that the memories of this catastrophe of the peoples are not artificially conserved for this purpose; to endeavor that an unnatural perpetuation of the concepts of "victor" and

“vanquished” does not result in eternally unequal rights which fill one side with understandable arrogance and the other, however, with bitter wrath.

It is no coincidence that, following such a long period of artificially extended illness, humanity is certain to show certain effects.

A shocking collapse of economic life was followed by a no less threatening collapse of politics in general.

But what sense would the World War have had at all if its consequences are manifested solely in an endless series of economic catastrophes not only for the vanquished, but also for the victors? The welfare of the peoples has not improved, and their political image and their human satisfaction have certainly not become any more profound or deep! Armies of unemployed have developed into a new class in society. And just as the economic structure of the nations has been shaken, so, too, are their social structures gradually beginning to weaken.

Germany suffered most from these effects of the Peace Treaty and the widespread insecurity it caused. The number of unemployed increased to a third of those normally engaged in the working life of the nation. That means, however, that in Germany, counting family members, approximately twenty million people of a total of sixty-five million were heading toward a hopeless future without any means of existence. It was only a matter of time until this army of the economically disinherited would of necessity have become an army of fanatics politically and socially alienated from the rest of the world.

One of the oldest lands of culture in today's civilization stood, with over six million Communists, at the brink of disaster, and only a blase lack of comprehension would be capable of ignoring this fact. Had Red rebellion raced through Germany like a firebrand, the civilized countries in Western Europe may well have come to the realization that it is not immaterial whether the outposts of a spiritual, revolutionary, and expansionist Asian world empire stood watch at the Rhine or on the North Sea or whether peaceful German peasants and workers, in sincere solidarity with the other peoples of our European culture, wish to earn their bread by honest work.

In snatching Germany from the brink of this catastrophe, the National Socialist Movement saved not only the German Volk but also made a historic contribution to the rest of Europe.

And this National Socialist Revolution is pursuing only one aim: restoring order in our own Volk, providing work and bread for our starving masses, proclaiming the concepts of honor, loyalty and decency as elements of a moral code of ethics which can bring no harm upon other peoples, but rather is of benefit to all. Had the National Socialist Movement not been the representative of a body of ideal concepts, it would not have been able to save our Volk from the final catastrophe. It has remained true to this body of concepts not only throughout the period of its struggle for power, but also in the period it has been in power! We have attacked and combatted every type of depravity, infamy, deception, and corruption which has accumulated in our Volk since the ill-fated Treaty of Versailles.

This Movement is committed to the task of restoring loyalty, faith and decency to their rightful position, without respect of person. For eight months

we have been waging a heroic battle against the Communist threat to our Volk, the decomposition of our culture, the subversion of our art, and the poisoning of our public morality. We have put an end to denial of God and abuse of religion. We owe Providence humble gratitude for not allowing us to lose our battle against the misery of unemployment and for the salvation of the German peasant. In the course of a program, for the implementation of which we calculated four years, of a total of six million unemployed, more than two and a quarter million have once again been made part of the useful process of production within scarcely eight months.

The best witness for this tremendous accomplishment is the German Volk itself.

It will prove to the world how strongly it stands behind a regime which knows no aim other than, with acts of peaceful labor and civilized culture, to make a contribution toward rebuilding a world which today is spiritually unhappy.

This world, however, which we are not harming and from which we desire only that it let us labor in peace, has been persecuting us for months with a flood of lies and slander. Although the Revolution which took place in Germany did not, unlike the French or Russian Revolutions, butcher hecatombs of humans and murder hostages, and did not, unlike the uprising of the Paris Commune or the Soviet Revolutions in Bavaria and Hungary, destroy cultural monuments and works of art—on the contrary, it did not smash a single storefront window, did not loot a single shop, and did not damage a single building—unscrupulous agitators are spreading a flood of tales of atrocity which can only be compared with the lies fabricated by these same elements at the beginning of the War!

Tens of thousands of Americans, English, and French were in Germany during these months and were able to conclude from what they saw with their own eyes that there is no country in the world with more law and order than present-day Germany, that in no other country of the world can person and property be more highly respected than in Germany, but that, perhaps, too, in no other country of the world is there a fiercer battle being waged against those who, as criminal elements, believe they are at liberty to give free rein to their lowest instincts to the detriment of their fellow men. These parties and their Communist accomplices are the ones who are endeavoring today as emigrants to try to turn honest and decent peoples against one another.

The German Volk has no reason to envy the rest of this world for this gain. We are convinced that a few years will suffice to make the honor-loving members of the other peoples thoroughly conscious of the inner value of these unworthy elements who, effectively hiding behind the flag of political refugees, fled the territories where each had practiced his own degree of economic unscrupulousness.

But what would this world say about Germany if, for the benefit of a character who had attempted to set the British Parliament on fire, we had an investigative farce staged here, the sole purpose of which could only be to place British justice and its judges on a level lower than that of such a scoundrel? As a German and a National Socialist, I would have no interest in Germany in supporting the cause of a foreigner who attempts to undermine the State or its

laws in England or even puts a torch to the architectural symbol of the English Constitution. And even if this character were—may God preserve us from the shame—a German, we would not cover him, but deeply regret that we had had to meet with such misfortune, and would harbor but one wish: that British justice would unmercifully deliver humanity from such a pest.²⁹⁰

However, we possess enough honor to be indignant over a spectacle which, initiated by obscure elements, is to serve the purpose of shaming and degrading the highest German court. And we are very saddened at the thought that these methods are used to stir up animosity and alienate peoples of whom we know that, inwardly, they tower above these elements. Peoples whom we should hold in high regard and with whom we would like to live in honest friendship.

These corrupting and inferior characters have succeeded in bringing about a psychosis in the world, the inner pathological and hysterical duality of which can be demonstrated quite vividly. For these very elements which, on the one hand, complain of the 'oppression' and 'tyrannization' of the 'poor' German Volk by the National Socialist rulers, declare on the other with a brazen lack of concern that the protestations of love of peace in Germany are of no significance because they are uttered merely by a few National Socialist Ministers or the Reich Chancellor, while an uncontrolled war-fever is rampant among the Volk. That is the way they do things: the German Volk is presented to the world as either regrettably unhappy and oppressed or as brutal and aggressive, whatever the occasion requires.

I perceive it as a sign of a nobler sense of justice that, in his most recent speech, the French Premier Daladier found words of conciliatory understanding for which countless millions of Germans are inwardly grateful to him. National Socialist Germany has no other wish but to steer the competition of the European peoples back to those areas in which they bestowed upon the entire human race in the most noble and mutual rivalry those tremendous assets of civilization, culture, and art which enrich and beautify the appearance of the world today.

Similarly, we have been moved to hope by the promise that the French Government under its present head does not intend to offend or humiliate the German Volk. We are overcome by the mention of an all too sad truth, namely that both of these great peoples have so often in history sacrificed the blood of their best youths and men on the battlefield. I am speaking on behalf of the entire German Volk when I affirm that we are all filled by the honest desire to eradicate an enmity which means sacrifices that are in no proportion to any possible gains.

The German Volk is convinced that its military honor has remained pure and unblemished in thousands of battles and skirmishes, just as we view the French soldier only as our old and yet glorious opponent. We and the entire German Volk would all be happy at the thought of sparing our children and our children's children what we had to witness and endure ourselves as honorable men in long and bitter years of pain and suffering. The history of the last 150 years should, in the course of all its vicissitudes, have taught both peoples one thing: namely that essential changes are no longer possible, regardless of the

blood sacrificed to bring them about. As a National Socialist, I, and with me, all my followers, refuse on the basis of our national principles to conquer the people of a foreign nation—who would not love us in any case—at the price of the blood and lives of those who are dear and precious to us.

It would be a tremendous event for the entire human race were the two peoples willing to ban force from their common life once and for all.

The German Volk is willing to do this. In that we openly lay claim to the rights accorded us by the treaties themselves, I also want to declare just as openly that, in Germany's view, there are no further territorial conflicts between the two countries. Once the Saar has returned to the Reich, only a lunatic could conceive of the possibility of a war between the two States, a war for which, seen from our perspective, there would no longer be any morally or reasonably justifiable grounds. For no one would have a right to expect that millions of young lives be destroyed for the sake of making a problematic correction—both in terms of extent and value—of the present borders!

The French Premier asks why German youth are marching and falling into line; the answer is, not in order to demonstrate against France, but in order to show and document that very political formation of will which was necessary to overcome Communism and will be necessary to keep Communism at bay. In Germany there is only one bearer of arms, and that is the Army. And conversely, there is only one enemy for the National Socialist Organization, and that is Communism.

The world will have to come to terms with the fact that, to protect itself from this threat, the German Volk chooses the forms for its internal organization which alone guarantee success. While the rest of the world entrenches itself in indestructible fortresses, puts together huge aircraft squadrons, constructs giant tanks, and molds enormous guns, it cannot talk about a threat because German National Socialists, totally unarmed, are parading in columns of four and by doing so are constituting an outward manifestation of the German Volksgemeinschaft and its effective protection!

If the French Premier Daladier raises the further question of why Germany is demanding weapons which will be eliminated sooner or later in any case, he is in error.

The German Volk and the German Government have not demanded any weapons at all; they have demanded equality of rights.

If the world resolves that all weapons are to be destroyed down to the very last machine gun, then we are willing to join such a convention immediately. If the world resolves to destroy certain weapons, we are willing to renounce them from the very beginning. But if the world grants to every nation the right to possess certain weapons, then we are not willing to allow ourselves to be excluded on principle as an inferior nation. If we honorably uphold our respective conviction, we are more decent partners to the other nations than if we were willing, contrary to our conviction, to accept humiliating and degrading conditions. For we are pledging an entire Volk with our signature, while the dishonorable and characterless negotiator will be rejected by his own people.

If we are to enter into treaties with the English, the French or the Polish, we desire from the start to conclude them only with men who think and act on

behalf of their nations one hundred percent as English, French or Polish. We want to conclude treaties with nations, not sign pacts with negotiators. And if today we turn against an unscrupulous propaganda campaign, we are doing so only because not the agitators, but unfortunately the peoples will have to atone for the sins of this worldwide poisoning (*Weltvergiftung*) with their blood.

The former German governments confidently entered the League of Nations in the hopes of finding in it a forum for a just balance of the interests of the nations and a sincere reconciliation, particularly with former opponents. However, the prerequisite was that equal rights finally be restored to the German Volk.

The same prerequisite applied to Germany's participation in the Disarmament Conference. The degradation of a member of such an institution or conference to one which does not enjoy equality of rights is an unbearable humiliation for an honor-loving nation of 65 million people and a no less honor-loving government! The German Volk has more than fulfilled its obligations to disarm. It is now time for the armed states to do no less in fulfilling their respective obligations.

The German Government is not taking part in this conference in order to negotiate additional cannons or machine guns for the German Volk, but to contribute, as a party with equal rights, to the general pacification of the world. Germany has just as much right to security as the other nations. When the English Minister Baldwin regards it as a matter of course that England's talk of disarmament can only be conceived as the disarmament of more highly armed States parallel to its own arms buildup to a certain common level, it would be unfair to heap accusations upon Germany if, being a conference member with equality of rights, it ultimately holds the same view in respect to itself. This demand on the part of Germany cannot in any way constitute a threat to the other powers. For the defense systems of the other nations are built to withstand the strongest offensive weapons, while Germany demands not offensive weapons, but merely those defensive weapons which will not be prohibited in future but rather granted to all nations. And here as well, Germany is willing from the very beginning to be satisfied with a numerical minimum which is in no proportion to the gigantic offensive and defensive weapons of our former opponents.

The deliberate degradation of our Volk, however, which consists of the fact that every people of the world is granted a self-evident right denied to us alone, is something we experience as the perpetuation of a discrimination which is, for us, unbearable.

I already stated in my Peace Speech in May that, to our greatest regret, we would no longer be in a position to remain a member of the League of Nations or to take part in international conferences under such conditions.

The men leading Germany today have nothing in common with the salaried traitors of November 1918. We all once did our duty to our Vaterland and risked our lives just as any decent Englishman and any decent Frenchman did. We are not responsible for the War and not responsible for what happened during it, but conscious only of a responsibility for what any man of honor would have been forced to do for his people in this crisis and what we did, in fact, do.

We are devoted to our Volk with a boundless love, and it is out of this same love, from the bottom of our hearts, that we desire to reach an understanding with the other peoples and shall, if this is at all possible, also attempt to do so. However, as representatives of an honest nation with an individuality of its own, it is impossible for us to belong to institutions under conditions which can only be borne by the dishonest. As far as we are concerned, it may be that there once were men who believed themselves capable of being part of such international pacts in spite of this burden.

It is futile to discuss whether they were the best of our Volk, but one thing is certain: that namely the best of our Volk were not standing behind them. But the world can have only one interest: to negotiate with honorable men and not with a nation's criminals, and to enter into treaties with the former and not with the latter; however, it then must, for its part, do justice to the honor and sentiment of such a regime, just as we are grateful for being able to deal with men of honor.

This is all the more necessary because only in such an atmosphere can measures be found which lead to a genuine pacification of the peoples. For the spirit of such a conference must be one of honest cooperation; otherwise the outcome of all these attempts is doomed to be failure from the very onset.

Having concluded from the declarations of the official representatives of a number of major States that they presently do not contemplate true equality of rights for Germany, it is presently also not possible for this Germany to continue to impose itself upon other nations from a position of such unworthiness.

The threats of force, if translated into reality, could constitute nothing but violations of law. The conviction is deeply rooted in the German Government that its appeal to the entire German nation will prove to the world that the Government's love of peace and its concept of honor constitute the entire Volk's yearning for peace and concept of honor.

In order to document this claim, I have decided to request the Reich President to dissolve the German Reichstag and, in new elections coupled with a plebiscite, to give the German Volk the opportunity to make a historic vow, not limited to an approval of the principles of the Government, but documenting unreserved unanimity with them as well. May this vow serve to convince the world that the German Volk allies itself completely with its government in this struggle for equality of rights and honor, and that both are filled in their innermost depths by no other desire than to help end a human epoch of tragic aberrations, regrettable discord and fighting between those who, as inhabitants of the culturally most significant continent, also have a common mission to fulfill in the future for the whole of mankind.

May this tremendous rally of our Volk for peace and honor succeed in providing that prerequisite in the internal relationships between the European States which is necessary to end not only centuries of discord and strife, but also to build anew a better community: the recognition of a higher, common duty arising from common equal rights!

Rhetorically speaking, this was certainly not a bad speech. It fulfilled its purpose in respect to the German Volk and smaller countries which looked up to Germany in either admiration or fear.

However, this speech—as all those which followed it—did not impress Hitler's intended audience, the Anglo-Saxon powers. Great Britain and America judged Hitler not by his words, but by his actions. They were willing to refrain from interfering with the dictator as long as his operations were essentially confined to domestic policy, and they even gave him the benefit of the doubt if his demands appeared to be motivated by considerations of international law. On the other hand, they were determined to strike as soon as Hitler fired the first shot.

This was the basic attitude of the Western Powers, which no degree of talented oratory could do a whit toward altering. Hitler never understood this, believing that the West refrained from reacting to his foreign policy measures from 1933 to 1938 as a direct result of his eloquence. He believed that the British were so naive that, like the German Nationalists before them, they would succumb to his sophistry, being incapable of self-directed action. Thus Hitler was dumbfounded upon receiving England's declaration of war on September 3, 1939.

In essence, Hitler's speech on October 14, 1933 and his error as to its effects abroad—both real and supposed—marked the beginning of his fatal foreign policy and thus of his downfall.

6

To further stress his “peaceful” intentions, Hitler had scheduled a “Day of German Art” in Munich for October 15 in connection with a ceremony to lay the cornerstone for a new art museum, the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*.²⁹¹

This event also afforded him an opportunity to pointedly demonstrate to Hindenburg that the forthcoming Reichstag election would in no way infringe upon the rights of the Reich President as Commander in Chief of the Reichswehr. For this purpose, Hitler had the Press office issue the following notice on the “Day of German Art”:²⁹²

The Reichswehr guard of honor will not be called to assembly at the reception for the Führer on the occasion of the cornerstone ceremony at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst on October 15 at the express wish of the Führer, for he desires that this high military honor remain reserved for the Reich President and the high military officers.

At the ceremony, Hitler received numerous guests of honor, among them the papal nuncio, Vasallo di Torregrossa, who graced him with the friendly remark: “For a long time I did not understand you, but I have been making an effort for quite some time. Now I understand you.”²⁹³

Hitler delivered the following address on the occasion:²⁹⁴

It is wonderful to live in an age which assigns great tasks to its people. When the Government of the National Uprising assumed the responsibility, it also assumed the obligation to accomplish those tasks we see before us and around us. A Volk has fallen apart and is to be rebuilt. Today we do not want to quarrel about the misfortune which befell us, about the catastrophe which overcame us. We wish only to recognize that what was broken must be erected anew so that decay can be transformed to something new and alive.

Want and misery came upon our Volk with terrible force. A proud economy, once thriving and rich, seems to be falling into ruin. The scarcity of work condemns millions of industrious people to idleness. The process of proletarianization is pulling one rank of our Volk after another down into its depths. The

foundations of our society are crumbling, and the fists of those bringing still further destruction are pounding at the very gates of the temples of our faith. Turmoil and conflict at every turn.

Germany defenseless and without rights, the Volk filled with despondency and despair! Fate has assigned us the wonderful task of fighting in this crisis, of filling the hearts of these despondent people once more with faith and confidence, of restoring order to the economy, of giving work back to the millions of people who are laid off, of snatching the classes back from the brink of destruction, of building a new society and stopping its enemies with a fist of iron, of protecting the nation and its material, moral and cultural assets from the elements of destruction. A bold and proud mission!

Man shall not live by bread alone. When we regard the rebuilding of our Volk as the task of our age and our lives, we see not only an ailing economy, but also an endangered culture; not only the suffering of the flesh, but also the suffering of the soul, and we can only envision that the German Volk will rise anew if German culture and above all German art emerge once more. Today we are consummating a symbolic deed. In a single night, a tragically interlocking chain of coincidence, blame and unknown factors destroyed a structure which will always be associated with the creative productivity not only of this city, but of the entire German nation. Treasures of German sentiment and German art fell prey to the flames. But that which was lost to destruction in those few hours cannot mean destruction for all time to come. In painfully parting with what has been lost, we confidently begin to build the new with our sights set on the future.

A "Haus der Deutschen Kunst" shall rise up. The old Glass Palace, for many decades a characteristic feature of this city, is to be transformed into a monument to our age. Young Germany is constructing a special building to house its art.

However, in bestowing this structure for German art upon the City of Munich, it is honoring the person who once, as Bavarian King, did this city the service of making it one of the shrines to German art. In that we all appreciate the great contribution which this shrine to German artistic production and German artistic life can credit to its account, we are heeding not only the voice of our hearts, but also the precept of fairness which dictates that we choose this very city to be the center of a new artistic productivity and a new artistic life for all time to come.

We are one Volk; we want to be one Reich! Just as we are fanatic in our commitment to the greatness of this Reich, to its peace, and to its honor as well; so, too, will we be adamant in not tolerating that any arbitrary spirit of discord be allowed to threaten the unity of the nation or that an ignorant eccentricity weaken the political will: so, too, will we be strong in our devotion to the individuality of our German regions and our desire to cultivate the richness of the diversity of our inner life.

If today I have the proud fortune to be able to help lay this cornerstone, then I hope that, in doing so, I am showing this city and this country the way to the future. Discord and petty, envious quarrels with the other brothers in our great German Vaterland will make us unable to recognize the independent life of

Bavaria and its capital, but we can see it if we shift our gaze to the indissoluble alliance with the entire German Volk and the great contribution which this line and this city here are making to the greatness of the Reich and the greatness of the German nation. And therefore we want to remain true to the individuality of this city. Since Berlin is the capital of the Reich; Hamburg and Bremen are the German shipping capitals; Leipzig and Cologne the capitals of German trade; and Essen and Chemnitz the capitals of German industry, so should Munich once more become the capital of German art.

It will thus find its way back to its own real greatness. We must now fulfill, to the joy and for the benefit of the entire German Volk, what a lineage failed to understand: may this city recall to mind its real mission of being a shrine of the sublime and the beautiful, that it may once again be proven true that one has to have seen this city to know Germany.

It is in this spirit that we wish to lay this cornerstone for the first fair building of the new Reich, in thanks to a German architect, in trust to the City of Munich, and dedicated to German art.

On October 16, Hitler congratulated the Reichsstatthalter General von Epp on his 65th birthday and then proceeded to Berlin, where he had scheduled a convention of party leaders for October 18. He was still not certain whether or not his withdrawal from the League of Nations would give rise to military action against Germany. As was common among World War I veterans—in view of Germany's inability to defeat France from 1914 to 1918 as it had within a few months in 1870/71,²⁹⁵—Hitler at that time held the French to be strong adversaries whom he expected to react as he would in their place.²⁹⁶

Even in his initial address to the Reichswehr generals on February 3, he had mentioned the possibility of an early invasion by France to prevent Germany's rearmament. In response to his blow of October 14, he was expecting a French invasion, at least in the territories of the Rhine.

Hitler discussed these problems in great detail in his address to the party leaders attending the Berlin convention on October 18.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* published only a general account of this address, the main part of which read as follows:²⁹⁷

Our Volk, he stated, would be visited by a deep and sacred gravity in the coming weeks. Its enthusiasm was based not on some superficial enthusiasm of the moment, but on the innermost realization of the consciousness of its being right.

The great work of reconciliation which National Socialism had begun was now, he said, to reach its culmination. We would even accommodate our former domestic adversaries and extend our hand to them as a symbol of the struggle of the entire nation if they proved that they too were believers in German honor and love of peace.

However, there is more exact information available on the contents of this speech, i.e. in the report issued by the Gau Press Office Chief, F.H. Woweries, at a press conference which followed in Frankfurt am Main.²⁹⁸

Hitler then gave all party leaders to understand how serious Germany's situation abroad was at the time and that France, unless it had weakened in the interim, would hardly tolerate Germany's action. Everything depended upon the Party's avoiding even the slightest appearance of revenge or chauvinism and refraining from giving France any further reason for military intervention. He himself, he stated, could only say, "If I were Propaganda Minister for France—poor Germany!"

At the same time, Hitler prohibited his fighting formations in the demilitarized Rhineland²⁹⁹ from wearing their uniforms until after the election on November 12. This was an astounding move, particularly because he had vehemently protested against the SA uniform bans in the past—especially shortly before plebiscites; now he voluntarily stripped them of their brown shirts.

This was a further demonstration of Hitler's total lack of scruples. In banning uniforms, he indirectly admitted that his SA formations did, after all, have military character and also made it clear that he would not hesitate to sacrifice the interests of the SA for the sake of military advantages.

Ultimately, Hitler's precautions proved unnecessary: there was no military intervention before or after November 12. As usual, however, Hitler misunderstood the West. Since his own concepts of foreign policy, formed in 1919 and never altered, had little to do with reality, he was incapable of correctly assessing the reactions his policies prompted abroad.

Neither France nor Great Britain was willing to take military action against Germany for its withdrawal from the League of Nations. The decision to let Germany join in 1926 had marked a break with the past. If Germany was now no longer interested in belonging to the League, that was its own concern—but not enough reason to justify armed intervention.

Hitler took this lack of action on the part of the West to be evidence in support of his new theory, i.e. that the French and the British had ceased being heroic peoples and would thus keep still or make only feeble protests on paper when he launched his expansionist offensives in the East. The extent of Hitler's misjudgment of the British mentality is reflected in an October 18 interview with the well-known correspond-

ent of the *Daily Mail*, Ward Price. Hitler repeated his claim that Great Britain and Germany were “related nations,” “both great Germanic peoples.”

Hitler’s answers to the journalist’s precise questions were evasive and trivializing, and his circumlocution served only to reinforce the distrust of the British. Hitler nonetheless naively regarded Ward Price as friendly to—and even sympathizing with—his cause, until the journalist published *I Know these Dictators* in 1937 (German edition in 1939) and Hitler was taught the error of his ways.

The interview of October 18 read as follows:³⁰⁰

Question: It might interest Your Excellency to know that there are indications in London that your personal popularity with the British public has increased enormously since last Saturday.

Lord Rothermere, with whom I spoke on the telephone yesterday evening, told me that when your picture was shown in the news in London cinemas on Monday evening animated applause broke out. It is, however, a fact that within certain circles in the British public and press, Germany’s sudden withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference has given rise to distrust and concern.

It would greatly contribute toward assuaging these fears were the Reich Chancellor to allow me to ask him genuinely objective questions in this connection.

First of all, I would like to cite the speech of the Undersecretary in the Ministry of War, Duff Cooper, who said that “no people in the history of the world has ever prepared for war with the enthusiasm with which the German Volk is now doing so.”

It would be futile to deny that this view is widespread in England. Which answer can be given to this?

Answer: At one time, on August 4, 1914, I was deeply unhappy that both great Germanic peoples who had lived in peace side by side for so many hundreds of years, through all the aberrations of human history, were now thrown into war. I would be happy were this lamentable psychosis to come to an end and the two related nations were to find their way back to their old friendship.

The allegation that the German Volk is enthusiastically preparing for war is, for us, a simply inconceivable misjudgment of the meaning of the German Revolution.

We leaders of the National Socialist Movement were soldiers at the front, almost without exception. I would like to see a former front-line soldier who enthusiastically prepares for a new war! We are devoted to our Volk with a fanatic love, just as every decent Englishman is also devoted to his people. We are educating German youth to combat internal vices and primarily to fight the Communist threat, the extent of which had not, and probably still has not, been grasped in England. Our revolutionary songs are not songs aimed against the other peoples, but songs promoting fraternity at home and combating class conflict and self-conceit; songs for work and bread and for the national honor.

The best evidence of this is the fact that, prior to our accession to government, our exclusively political SA was most terribly persecuted by the State; it even happened that our followers were not only not allowed to enter the Army, but not even allowed to work as laborers in military factories.

Question: The suspicion that Germany's ultimate objectives are warlike rests on the following considerations.

People believe that the National Socialist Government is educating the German Volk in the view that it has a serious and real quarrel with France which can only be mended by a German victory.

Answer: The National Socialist Movement is not educating the Volk in the view that it has a real or serious quarrel with France, but rather to love its own people and to believe in the concepts of honor and decency.

Do you think that we are only educating our youth, which is our entire future and to which we are all devoted, to let it be shot to bits on the battlefield? I have already stressed so often that we have no reason to be ashamed of the military accomplishments of our Volk at war.

Question: There is another widespread opinion to the effect that Germany's armaments have already progressed much further than is publicly admitted. For instance, there are claims that the German Government has acquired munitions factories in Sweden, Holland, and other countries in which large supplies of war materials are kept in stock to be brought over the German border immediately given the threat of war.

Answer: These opinions are ridiculous. Where are these factories in Sweden, Holland, and other countries which we have supposedly acquired as munitions factories? Our enemies abroad always have the most detailed news about what, in their belief, has happened in Germany. It surely would be mere child's play for them to finally come out and say which factories we have acquired in Holland and which in Sweden. As far as I know, there are no National Socialists in power in Sweden, and none in Holland. It would not be difficult for intelligence agencies to find out which Dutch or Swedish factory is manufacturing and storing munitions for Germany. At any rate, they would have to be relatively large warehouses. Every normal soldier knows from the war how large a normal munitions store is even for a single army corps. And all of this is supposed to be kept hidden from the eyes of an inquiring environment?

And what is more, presumably we are going to get these munitions to Germany by air in case of war, or would France issue passes to our ships? No. The whole thing is too ridiculous, but unfortunately it is sufficient to blacken the reputation of a Volk which wants nothing but what it is entitled to in a world that is, in reality, nothing but a gigantic arms factory.

Question: Although the use of heavy field artillery was prohibited in the Peace Treaty, there are claims in France that artillery men of the Reichswehr are being trained in the use of heavy artillery at the German coastal fortifications. It may be that these accusations will be made official within the next few weeks. Would it not be advantageous for the Reich Chancellor to publicly take a stand on this in advance?

Answer: Do you really believe that we allow ourselves the luxury of training the artillerymen of our Army of one hundred thousand to use the heavy artillery at the coastal fortifications so that they can then shoot fieldguns?

At our Königsberg fortress, we have received permission for only a ridiculously limited number of heavy guns, and naturally men are being trained to use them. In other respects, however, the Army unfortunately does not have sufficient field artillery, and we would rather train men on artillery with which they would have to fight than on artillery we do not even have!

Question: A further cause for concern is the view that Germany's admitted intention of one day repossessing the Polish Corridor is not compatible with preserving the peace. Under which conditions does the Reich Chancellor believe it possible to undertake negotiations toward this aim?

Answer: No one in his right mind could describe the solution to the problem of the Corridor as one of the particularly spectacular accomplishments of the Peace Conference. The only purpose this solution could serve is that of making Germany and Poland enemies for all time.

None of us is even considering starting a war with Poland because of the Corridor. We would all like to hope that both nations will one day dispassionately discuss and negotiate the problems they have. It can then be left for the future to decide whether the two nations can find a practicable mode and a solution acceptable for both sides.

Question: The expression, "Volk ohne Raum" (people without space) has given rise to some uncertainty. By which means does the Reich Chancellor envision a possibility for Germany's territorial expansion?

Does the recovery of Germany's former colonies form one of the Government's goals? If so, which colonies would come under consideration, and would Germany be satisfied with a system of mandates, or would Germany demand full sovereignty?

Answer: Germany has too many people for its area. It is in the world's interest not to deny a great nation the vital necessities of life. For us, the question of allocating colonial territories, no matter where, would never be a question involving war. We are of the conviction that we are just as capable of administering and organizing a colony as other peoples are. However, we do not perceive these questions as containing any problems at all which might concern world peace in any way, for they can only be solved by means of negotiations.

Question: In certain circles in Britain, it is expected that the present government will reveal itself to be a prelude to the restoration of the imperial family. Would it be possible for the Reich Chancellor to define his standpoint on this question?

Answer: The government which is in power in Germany today is working neither for the monarchy nor for the republic, but rather exclusively for the German Volk.

Everywhere we look we see want, misery, unemployment, disintegration, and destruction at every turn. To eliminate this is the mission we have set ourselves.

Question: Since Your Excellency's government took power, the Weimar Constitution has been amended de facto in particular cases without ever having been formally invalidated. Does the Reich Chancellor contemplate effecting a constitutional amendment on a different basis?

Answer: I once stated that I intended to fight only with legal means. I have also adhered to this statement. The entire reorganization of Germany took place in a "constitutionally admissible manner." Naturally it is possible and also probable that we will submit the overall results of the reorganization presently taking place as a new constitution to the German Volk for a strike ballot.

As I must, in any case, stress that there is no government in existence at present which has more right than we do to claim that it is a true representative of its people!

Thus we have nothing to make good in this respect, either. The only thing we were ashamed of were the men who left the Vaterland out on a limb in the time of our worst crisis. These persons have been eliminated without exception. The fact that German youth once again possess a feeling of honor fills me with joy. But I do not see why that should mean a threat to another nation. And I refuse to see why a nation which usually thinks as fairly as England does could inwardly blame us for this. I am convinced that, had England met with the same misfortune as Germany, even more English would be National Socialists than is the case with us. We do not want a "quarrel" with France, but rather an honest willingness to negotiate—on a basis, however, that can be accepted by a Volk with a feeling of honor. And besides, we want to be able to live!

Question: A large part of the German youth is presently being trained in military discipline in labor camps (Arbeitslager) or as members of the SA and other formations. Even if the German Government is not planning to effect this training for the eventuality of a war, there is fear in France and, in part, in England that the development of a military spirit in young Germans could lead to the consequence that they will one day demand that the military knowledge they are now acquiring be put to practical use.

Answer: Neither in the labor camps, nor in the SA, nor in the subordinate formations is the German youth being equipped with military knowledge which could act as an incentive for them to one day exploit this knowledge. In view of this, how much more reason would Germany have to complain that, year after year, millions of recruits in the other countries are given genuine military training? Our labor service is a tremendous social institution which, at the same time, also serves to reconcile the classes. We have taken an army of young people who were going to waste on country roads and made of it a productive work force. We are educating hundreds of thousands of others, who had already been corrupted in the big cities when they were still very young, in our youth organizations and SA formations to become upstanding members of human society. Whereas before our time, German streets and squares were controlled by Communism and the entire Volk was suffering from the bloody terror of this arsonist pack, we have now restored safety, law and order. That is the achievement of my SA.

Question: Does the Reich Chancellor look upon the League of Nations as an institution which has outlived its purpose, or can he imagine certain conditions under which Germany would be inclined to consider returning to the League of Nations?

Answer: If the League of Nations continues on its present course and grows more and more to become a syndicate promoting the interests of certain States against the interests of others, I do not believe it has a future. In any case, Germany will never again join or take part in an international organization if it is not recognized as a completely equal factor. We know that we lost a war. But we also know that we defended ourselves courageously and bravely as long as we possibly could. We are men enough to realize that, after having lost a war, whether or not one was to blame, one naturally has to bear the consequences. We have borne them! But that now, as a Volk of 65 million people, we are to be permanently and repeatedly disgraced and humiliated is something we cannot bear. We cannot bear this perpetual discrimination, and as long as I live, I shall never, as a statesman, put my signature on a treaty which I would never sign as a man of honor in private life either, even if it were to mean my ruin! For I would also never want to put my signature on a document knowing in the back of my mind that I would never abide by it! I abide by what I sign. What I cannot abide by, I will never sign.

Question: Does Germany thus regard itself as released from the existing international obligations on the grounds that it has not been accorded equal treatment?

Answer: Whatever we have signed we will fulfill to the best of our ability.

Question: Could the Reich Chancellor give the British public some indication of his plans for relieving the economic misery in Germany in the coming winter?

Answer: We are approaching a very hard winter. Of a total of more than six million unemployed, we have led more than two and a quarter million back to production within eight months. It is our task, if in any way possible, to prevent a dropoff from occurring in winter. In spring we want to launch a new general offensive against unemployment.

For this purpose, we have been instituting a number of measures from which we expect an adequate amount of success. Parallel to relieving the economy of unbearable taxes, generally restoring trust, eliminating a great number of laws hampering the economy which were inspired to a greater or lesser degree by Marxism, there is a large amount of work being created. Since our roads are, to some extent, insufficient and to some extent in disrepair, a network of approximately six and a half thousand kilometers of roads for motorized traffic are being built and work has already been started this winter with tremendous energy. The financing is to be accomplished by means of our taxes on motor vehicles and fuel and by charging tolls.³⁰¹ There is a whole series of further major projects—the building of canals, dams and bridges—which are running concurrently.

We have expended an extraordinary amount of effort toward promoting the fertility of our soil and the settlement of land connected to it.

For the winter period, the sum of approximately two and a half billion, which has been raised in a combination of public and private funds, will be utilized for the repair of our buildings, some of which urgently require renovation work. The idea is that the State make a financial contribution corresponding to the amount which it would otherwise have to bear as the costs of unemployment.

In order to help young people, we will bring them together in labor camps and assign to them meaningful tasks, admittedly for very little pay, but for sufficient upkeep. They do not yet have families of their own and thus can easily be accommodated in barracks and similar lodgings at their worksites.

By means of special measures, we are making it possible, by establishing families, for young girls to be taken out of the production process and for men to gradually take their places. However, since need will nonetheless still be very great, we have organized the gigantic *Winterhilfswerk* which asks our rural population in particular to help the poor and needy industrial and urban population by supplying foodstuffs.

It is a huge exchange organization and hence, at the same time, a tie between the city and the country.

By means of this organization, we will at least provide the absolute minimum amounts of fuel and foodstuffs and, in part, clothing to approximately six million people. In any case, we are doing our utmost to ensure that at least the worst effects of hunger are brought to a halt.

Until now, thanks to the Peace Treaty of Versailles, an average of approximately 20,000 people per year in Germany have been forced by need and despair to take their own lives.³⁰²

You will understand that a government and a Volk facing such tasks can desire nothing other than rest and peace. And with it, finally, equality of rights.

On October 22, Hitler set off on another large-scale speechmaking tour which was, to him, an integral part of any election campaign. His discourses contained constantly new variations of his ideas on domestic and foreign policy and the alleged reasons behind Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations.

Hitler launched the election campaign on October 22 with two consecutive speeches in front of the Befreiungshalle in Kelheim³⁰³ on the occasion of a parade by the SA. He stated:

This monument of unification is a symbol for us of that to which we aspire in our struggle: *ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Wille*.

On the afternoon of the same day, Hitler spoke at a reception in the Regensburg City Hall.³⁰⁴ A campaign speech in the Berlin Sportpalast followed on October 24,³⁰⁵ at which Hitler solemnly declared:

For my part, I declare that I would rather die at any time than sign something which, in my most sacred conviction, I hold to be unbearable for the German Volk.

I bid the entire German Volk: if ever I were to err here, or should the Volk ever be of the opinion that it cannot agree with my actions, then it may have me executed. I will calmly stand firm!

He finished his speech with the claim that he had never before asked for votes:

And so I ask you, this one time—in fact, for the very first time in my life—give us your votes. Bring every Volksgenosse to the ballot boxes, that he may take part in deciding the future of his Volk. For the first time in fourteen years I am now asking you to cast your vote for equal rights, for honor and for real peace, and at the same time cast your vote for a new Reichstag which will be the guarantor of this policy. For one cannot lastingly save a Volk economically if it is politically and morally going to ruin. We have only one goal on earth: not hatred of other peoples, but love to the German nation!

On October 25, Hitler delivered a campaign speech in Hanover (Kuppelhalle).³⁰⁶ On October 26, he declared in a speech in Cologne (Messehalle):³⁰⁷

I did not fear my opponents when I was not in power. I do not fear them now, either. It is not for me that you have to go to the polls, but for yourselves! I am not the one who needs support. I am strong and firm enough! Your Reich needs your support.

A campaign speech in Stuttgart (Municipal Hall) followed on October 28.³⁰⁸ The next morning Hitler spoke in Neumarkt (Upper Palatinate) at the unveiling of a Dietrich Eckart Memorial there.³⁰⁹

On October 30 at 6:00 p.m. he spoke in Frankfurt am Main, where he stated:³¹⁰

I say, “No, thank you” to agreements which I am to pay for with my honor. And when people say we will be isolated, my answer is: rather honorably isolated than tolerated without honor.

It is my conviction that the German Volk has too much character to think other than its government; that it cannot make any other decision in this historic hour than with the word, “yes.”

He held it expedient to add a sentimental note to his words, and therefore continued:

There was no other way. I do not have any cannons, I only have you, my Volksgenossen, and with you I must fight for and win these rights for Germany. You must stand behind me; we must hold together. We can only wage the battle if we are a united team.

You must all see that we are living in a great and historic age, an age which a Volk is capable of enduring only if it asserts its will uniformly and unanimously in this world, and this will be of benefit not only to the German Volk.

Following his speech, Hitler attended a *Meistersinger* performance in the Frankfurt Opera House.

A campaign speech scheduled for October 30 in Würzburg was cancelled. Instead, Hitler granted Karl von Wiegand, a representative of the American Hearst Press, an interview on October 31, in which he told the American journalist “that he had most strictly forbidden members of the Party abroad to carry on National Socialist propaganda. The necessary consequence of such propaganda would be to endanger the friendly relations of foreign Powers with Germany.”³¹¹

On November 1, Hitler resumed his speechmaking campaign, speaking in Weimar (Weimarhalle),³¹² where he stated:

I did not become Reich Chancellor to act any differently than I had preached for fourteen years. We profess to being the type of people who mean what they say.

The following day, Hitler declared at a speech in Essen (Exhibition Grounds):³¹³

I will never sign anything knowing that it can never be upheld, because I am determined to abide by what I sign.

At 8:00 p.m. on November 4, Hitler delivered a campaign speech in Breslau (Messehof),³¹⁴ and on November 5, he spoke in Elbing (Maschinenhalle),³¹⁵ where he proclaimed:

I do not need any *Volksvotum*. I have fought for the Volk for fourteen years. I would like the German Volk to now appear as a witness for the veracity of our statements.

When landing in Elbing, Hitler’s triple-engined Junkers D 2600 plane (‘Immelmann’) sank into the soft earth, which meant that the next day Hitler had to leave from Danzig. Pilot Hans Baur, who had already flown Hitler with the D 1720 on the “Flights over Germany” in 1932, was now completely at Hitler’s disposal and acted as his pilot until 1945.³¹⁶

On the flight from Danzig to Kiel on November 6, the aircraft lost its bearings as a result of malfunctioning radio direction finding equipment, and the fact that Hitler recognized the city of Wismar helped Baur to regain his orientation; the plane’s fuel barely lasted to the Travemünde landing field. This incident served as a basis for a legend according Hitler supernatural powers.³¹⁷ In the Nordostseehalle in Kiel on November 6, Hitler stated:³¹⁸

If, in view of the achievements of the last nine months, our opponents say, “Yes, but there could be a setback!” my answer is: my life up to now has been a struggle, but I have never yet capitulated, and I have reached the goal.

I may remind you of November 6, 1932. Then, too, the false prophets came and predicted our downfall. But for me and for us all, setbacks have never been anything but lashes of the whip driving us onwards all the more. They have never resulted in our capitulation.

On November 7, Hitler had Göring deliver a letter to Mussolini in Rome in which he thanked the Duce for his efforts “on behalf of a fair handling of international relations” and “informed him of the Reich Government’s position in respect to disarmament.”³¹⁹

November 8 marked the commencement of festivities in Munich commemorating the Putsch of 1923 and the march to the Feldherrnhalle. Hitler began his memorial speech in the Bürgerbräukeller on November 8 with the remark that he had acted ten years before “on the dictates of a force majeure” and had in no way rebelled against the Wehrmacht.³²⁰

My Comrades, my German Volksgenossen!

When, ten years ago today, the attempt was made in Germany for the second time³²¹ to overcome the State of shame, the State of German misery, this attempt was not made without reflection. When grown men are willing to commit and, if necessary, sacrifice their lives of their own free will for a certain goal, this is not a thoughtless gesture. It was done under the duress of the most bitter German crisis, in the hope of possibly being able to nevertheless avert this crisis. We know that this uprising of our Volk failed back then. A few hours later, the preconditions upon which it had based its hopes were no longer given. For I can repeat today exactly what I said then at the trial.

Never did we conceive of carrying out an uprising against the Wehrmacht of our Volk. With it, we believed, it would have been possible. Some describe the collapse which then took place as a tragedy of fate; today we would like to call it Providence and the wisdom of Providence. Today, ten years later, we know that we took up our task with pure hearts, incredible determination, and with personal courage, too. But today we also know—better than we did then—that the time was not yet ripe.

And nonetheless I am convinced that all of those who did what they did at that time were made, by the dictates of a force majeure, to act as they did.

In the further course of his speech, Hitler stressed that naturally he had made the right decision in any event. How could it have been otherwise?

Back then we opened the ears of the nation to the young Movement on this evening and the following day; we opened the eyes of the entire German Volk, and we equipped the Movement with the heroism it later needed. And above all:

This evening and this day, they made it possible for us to fight legally afterwards for ten years. Do not be mistaken: had we not acted then, I never

would have been able to found, form and maintain a revolutionary movement and stay legal doing it.

They said to me, and they were right: you are talking like the rest and you will do as little as the rest have done. But this day, this decision, made me able to see it through for nine years in spite of all the opposition.

Hitler maintained that he had never contradicted himself and would also adhere to a strict course as Chancellor.

I do not know how many hundreds of times I have stood here, but one thing I do know is that, these hundreds of times, I have never retracted what I have said, but always continued on a strict course. I have done so for fourteen years, and now that Fate has finally made me Chancellor, I should suddenly turn back? No!

Naturally Hitler did not turn back until the bitter end—but in the years until 1945, the Germans were to be given ample opportunity to hear him contradict himself.

On November 8, Hitler took part in various gatherings of *Alte Kämpfer*, including meetings in the Braunes Haus (*Stosstrupp Hitler*) and the Sternecker, the birthplace of the NSDAP.³²² At midday on November 9, the march from the Bürgerbräukeller over the Ludwig Bridge to the Feldherrnhalle—which had ended so badly in 1923—was reenacted. Hitler and the surviving members of the original march, including the Freikorps fighters (absenting General Ludendorff) silently trod the same fateful path through the streets of Munich.

It was doubtless an impressive demonstration: the grave men clad in their brown shirts, the hushed masses, the burning pylons fronting the streets, and everything against the backdrop of a gray November day. The carillon in the City Hall was playing the Horst Wessel Song when the columns reached the Marienplatz. A salute was fired when their head arrived at the Feldherrnhalle, followed by one minute's silence.

The Reich's and Bavaria's rulers had gathered on the steps of the Feldherrnhalle, among them officers of the Reichswehr and officers of the Bavarian Police Force, which had fired the shots at Hitler's followers a decade before. After being welcomed by Gauleiter Wagner, Hitler strode to the podium on the uppermost step of the Feldherrnhalle, gazed down at his *Alte Kämpfer* filling the large Odeonsplatz, and delivered the following commemorative speech:³²³

Men of the German Revolution! My Old Guard!

When we first took up the political fight in 1919, we did it as soldiers. All of us had before honorably done our duty for Germany. Only when the homeland broke down and the political leadership pitifully surrendered what millions had

paid for with their blood did we resolve to take up the fight in the homeland itself, based upon the conviction that the sacrifices of the soldier must be in vain if the political leadership becomes weak.

Because the Revolution of November 1918 violated the laws then in force, it could not expect us to acknowledge it as a legal and binding condition. At that time we men and political soldiers declared war on it, determined to overthrow those responsible for that November and, sooner or later and in one way or another, to call them to account for their actions.

Hence we marched in November 1923, filled by the faith that it could be possible to erase the shame of November 1918, to exterminate the men who were to blame for the unutterable misfortune of our Volk. Fate decided differently back then. Today, ten years later, we can make a dispassionate assessment of that period. We know that, at the time, we were acting according to the commands of Fate and that we were all probably tools of a force majeure.

It was not to be: the time was not yet ripe. What caused us the most pain back then was the rift which separated the powers which once had us, too, in their ranks, and the powers which the nation needed in order to become free once more.

At that time the rift hurt, and we had only one hope: that time would heal this inner wound again, that the brothers who were hostile to each other at the time but, in the end, really wanted only to fight for one Germany, might grow once more to form the community we had experienced for four and a half years. Ten years have passed, and today it makes me happiest of all that yesterday's hope has now become reality, that we are now standing together: the representatives of our Army and the deputies of our Volk; that we have again become one and that this unity will never again break apart in Germany. Only that has given the blood sacrifice a meaning, so that it was not in vain. For what we were marching for then is what has now become reality.

Were the dead of November 9 to rise again today, they would shed tears of joy that the German Army and the awakening German Volk have now joined to form a single unit. For this reason it is right to keep our memories of that time alive, and right to unveil this day a memorial to that time. Those of us whom Fate allowed to survive wish to couple our thanks to the comrades of that time with our thanks to the comrades of the four years preceding it, that we ourselves may now fulfill the yearning and the hope of that time by doing our own duty!

Fate has shown to us the path from which we will never stray. In this hour when we once again assemble for our Volk, we want to renew our faith in this German Volk, in its honor, in its equal rights, but also to renew its will for peace and its love of peace. It is painful to lose the best of a Volk; over and over again, the best have always been the ones who have had to meet the enemy in battle. And thus today we also wish to affirm, from our innermost conviction, our belief in the concept of peace; we want to be cognizant of how difficult the sacrifices are which the fight requires, but moreover we again want to couple this love of peace with our resolve to courageously defend at all times the honor of the nation, the freedom of the nation, and its equality of rights.

When unveiling this memorial, I wish to once more thank all those who have faithfully fought for the German resurrection throughout all these long

years, each in his place; I wish to thank the tens and hundreds of thousands of comrades in the Movement, to thank the men of the other associations who, marching along other routes, came to join us in the end, and I also wish to thank those who led the Wehrmacht into the new State.

In uniting the entire power of the nation today, we are finally giving the dead eternal peace: for that is what they were fighting for, and that is what they died for! And with this in mind we shall now unveil the memorial.

A small bronze memorial was then unveiled which had been erected at the side entrance arch facing the residence. Hardly any of those present were not impressed and moved by this ceremony in some way. Doubtless it had its justification, and the old fighters of 1923 could not be blamed for honoring their dead now that they had gained the victory. Hitler, however, planned to make a permanent event of this commemoration ceremony, although it actually only made sense in 1933 and perhaps also in 1935 when the corpses were laid out at the Königsplatz.

The memorial march was to take place annually from 1935 onwards. Hitler needed this triumphant spectacle to quiet his inner pessimism, for it served to demonstrate how, against all odds, he had been able to recover from the catastrophic defeat of 1923 to win ten years later; consequently—so his logic—he would always win in the end.

Hitler also believed that this improbable victory gave him the right to demand *Treue bis in den Tod* (loyalty unto death) from his followers—a further reason for the perennial ceremonies at the Feldherrnhalle. On the evening of every November 9, the recruits of the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* would gather and, at Hitler's orders, pledge their oath before the memorial to be willing at all times to give their blood and their lives for him.

At 9.00 p.m. on the evening of November 9, 1933, Hitler conducted this ceremony for the first time. Approximately 1,000 members of the *Leibstandarte*, 100 men from the *Stabswache Göring* and fifty members of the *Stabswache Röhm* had assembled on the square, complete with steel helmets and rifles.³²⁴

The ceremonies began with a chorale sung by the elite soldiers in attendance. A band played. Then came Hitler:³²⁵

I demand of you that you lay down your lives just as the sixteen men who were killed at this very spot. Your lives must have no other purpose but loyalty. These dead are your examples, and you shall be the unattainable [!] examples to the others.

Hitler then personally recited the wording of the oath for the men to repeat. As a rule, he never left out any opportunity to impress upon each individual his obligation and duty to unreservedly sacrifice his life for the Führer.

November 9, 1933 also gave Hitler a chance to finally eliminate the Freikorps—which he had never liked, for they had never submitted to his complete control—and the traditions surrounding them. They were allowed to march one last time and hand over their old flags to the SA; then, for all practical purposes, they expired. There was no reason for Hitler to uphold their traditions, for he had been victorious and he alone constituted the consummation of all national dreams. On the practical side, Hitler believed the Freikorps devoid of any real military value.³²⁶

At 1:00 p.m. on November 10, Hitler made a campaign speech³²⁷ to the workers of the Siemens plant in Berlin-Siemensstadt. Perched atop a huge assembly drum in the dynamo works and sporting a combination of uniform trousers and boots with a dark-colored civilian jacket,³²⁸ he proclaimed to his audience that he was one of them.

In my youth I was a worker as you are, and I worked my way up through industry, through learning and, I might add, through starving.

What is a title to me? I do not need any titles: my name, which I have acquired under my own power, is my title.

I would like only for posterity to one day bear out that I decently and honestly endeavored to translate my program into reality.

We have worked throughout these nine months and achieved great things. When I came, Germany had 6.2 million unemployed, and now there are only 3.71 million. For nine months, that is an accomplishment worth mentioning.

But if I want to provide work and bread to the German Volk, if I want to put it back in order, then I can only do it if it has peace and quiet. People should not expect that I would be so mad as to want a war.

I do not know how many foreign statesmen actually took part in the War. I did. I know war. But among those who are agitating against Germany today and slandering the German Volk—this is one thing I do know—not a single one has ever even heard the hiss of a traveling bullet.

Naturally it was fitting, in view of his audience, to say a few words against the emigrants and the former German princes, and of course to criticize the German parties.

We are against people wanting to judge the character of a Volk on the basis of its emigrants. We do not judge the other peoples according to those who grumble about their countries here in ours. The valuable ones are those who work and are productive, not the international gypsies.

I am setting the affirmation of the entire nation and my own statement against this clique, which is also the reason for the appeal for November 12! For many centuries foreign countries have counted on having allies in Germany.

It was the unprincipled princes who betrayed their peoples cold as ice; then it was the parties, Weltanschauungen—they always had allies.

Now I want to show our opponents that they no longer have any allies in Germany.

On November 12, Hitler submitted the following ballot-paper to all German voters:

Do you, German man, and you, German woman, approve of the politics of your Reich Government, and are you willing to declare that they are the expression of your own view and your own will and to bear solemn witness to this? Yes/No

The Reichstag election proposal of the only existing party was also disclosed:

Reichstag election:

National Socialist German Workers' Party (Hitler Movement)

Adolf Hitler,

Rudolf Hess, Dr. Wilhelm Frick, Hermann Göring, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Ernst Röhm, R. Walther Darré, Franz Seldte, Franz von Papen, Alfred Hugenberg.

Von Papen had now dropped behind Seldte, for the latter had joined the Party. Hitler had insisted that Hugenberg appear on this list even though he no longer held his ministerial post in the Government.³²⁹ The national pact of January 30, 1933 was to be intact externally, and Hitler's vanity would not tolerate Hugenberg's stepping out of line.

The outcome of the plebiscite of November 12 was as follows: 40.5 million yeas (95.1 percent) and 2.1 million nays (4.9 percent). The remaining votes were invalid (0.75 percent).

The single list of NSDAP candidates for the Reichstag received 39.6 million votes; 3.3 million ballotpapers were invalid. The new Reichstag was composed of 661 National Socialist deputies.

On the day following the plebiscite, Hitler issued the following proclamations to the Volk and the Party:³³⁰

German Volksgenossen!

For fifteen years, filled by an inextinguishable confidence in the inner value of the German Volk, I have faithfully fought for its future. Today, from a heart overflowing, I thank the millions of German Volksgenossen for the historically unique affirmation of a true love of peace and likewise of our honor and our eternal equality of rights.

With that, my staff and I wish to do our duty with new strength, courage, and undauntedness.

Berlin, November 13, 1933

Adolf Hitler

National Socialists, my Party Comrades!

An incomparable victory has been won. The German Volk owes it primarily to your faithful loyalty and your ne'er-tiring labors. Men of our organization, of our propaganda department, of the SA, the SS, and the Stahlhelm: supported by the activities of our youth, our women, countless party comrades, and our press, you have accomplished tremendous things within less than four weeks. The unique greatness of this success is the greatest recognition for all of you. The salvation of the Vaterland will one day be your reward.

Berlin, November 13, 1933

Adolf Hitler

On November 14, von Papen addressed a meeting of the cabinet, stating that the Chancellor's genius had made it possible to create a Reich united in hope and faith from what had been an inwardly torn and hopeless Volk. November 12, he claimed, would mark a turning point in German history.³³¹

Hitler thanked him and stressed that the most difficult task of the Reich cabinet had now been accomplished, as had been evidenced in the results of the plebiscite and the election of the preceding Sunday.

Following the speeches, the cabinet—acting on Hitler's proposal—nominated von Papen as the Reich Government's representative in the Saar. Hitler had finally achieved his aim of a purely National Socialist Reichstag. He made the—for him—common mistake of assuming that this meant he had a free hand abroad as well. Great Britain and France had bided their time from October 14 to November 12, refraining from any active intervention. Hitler interpreted this as proof that they were incapable of making "heroic" decisions and were willing to accept Germany's unlimited armament and its expansionism in the East.

Hitler immediately acted upon his—albeit false—conclusion. Now that he had disposed of the troublesome tie to the League of Nations, he could rearm without the necessity of disguising the fact and activate his foreign policy in the East, above all by increasing his efforts to establish the alliance with Poland that he had been planning for some months. As early as November 15, Hitler received the new Polish Ambassador, Lipski, in order to "put German-Polish relations back on a normal track"; in the wording of the official report, this meeting marked the second round of the negotiations which had been taking place for months and which had now "produced tangible results in the form of a mutual declaration of non-aggression."³³²

Hitler led the Polish to believe that their security could only be guaranteed by the neighboring German Reich, not by the far-removed English and French. He intended to proceed with Poland as Italy, in his view, had proceeded against Austria-Hungary:³³³ because Italy was initially incapable of launching a successful military offensive against the despised Austro-Hungarian Empire, it first entered into the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy), thus gaining time to build up its arms, only to then attack Austria when the opportunity arose, as in 1915.

This was Hitler's concept of the purpose of an alliance: gaining time to build up more arms in order to launch a successful offensive against one's ally—a recipe he used with Poland (1934 to 1939) and the Soviet Union (1939 to 1941).

Germany's courting of Poland in November 1933 naturally caused suspicion in France. To allay these fears, Hitler granted an interview on his future "peace policy" to Fernand de Brinon, the foreign correspondent of the French business periodical, *L'Information*. "It is an insult to me when people continue to say that I want war," he claimed indignantly. "I alone decide Germany's politics, and when I give my word, it is my practice to keep it." *Le Matin* published the following report on Hitler's remarks to de Brinon:³³⁴

The Reich Chancellor had declared, the special reporter stated, that he had consistently upheld the same attitude. He desired dialogue and mutual agreement, because he perceived them to constitute the guarantee for peace.

It was his desire that a true peace be concluded between loyal opponents. He had stated this repeatedly but only received words of distrust in reply. However, his will had not altered. "I believe," the Reich Chancellor said, "that the result of the plebiscite gives fresh strength to my desire. When Stresemann or Brüning negotiated then, they could not claim that the German Volk was behind them. But I have the whole of Germany behind me! I have not concealed from the Volk what I wanted. The Volk approved of my policy."

The talk then turned to the Franco-German problem. Reich Chancellor Hitler, Brinon writes, believes in the necessity of a Franco-German dialogue. "I am of the opinion," the Chancellor is reported as having said, "that, once the question of the Saar—which is German land—has been resolved, there is nothing which can bring Germany and France in conflict with each other. Alsace-Lorraine is not in dispute. But how often do we have to repeat that we neither want to absorb what does not belong to us, nor do we want to be loved by anyone who does not love us! In Europe there is not a single matter of dispute which could justify a war. Everything can be settled by the governments of the nations if they possess a feeling for their honor and responsibility. There is a Poland imbued with patriotic sentiment and a Germany no less devoted to its traditions. There are differences of opinion and matters of friction between

them, arising from a bad treaty, but nothing which would make it worth sacrificing precious blood, for it is always the best who are killed in battle. That is why a friendly, neighborly agreement is possible between Germany and Poland. It is an insult to me when people continue to say that I want war. Am I supposed to be insane (*wahnwitzig*) ? War? It would not settle anything, but only make the world situation worse. It would mean the end of our elite races, and in the course of time one would witness how Asia would take root on our continent and how Bolshevism would triumph. How could I want a war when we are still bearing the burdensome consequences of the last war and will continue to be made to feel them for another thirty or forty years to come?

"I do not think of the present, I think for the future. I have a long domestic labor ahead of me. I have restored the concept of honor to the Volk. I also want to give it back its joy of living.

"We are combatting misery. We have already succeeded in driving down unemployment. But I want to accomplish better things! I will need years to get there. Do you think that I want to destroy my work by a new war?"

In this context, the reporter pointed out the external manifestation which was evident in Germany: the joy and the glorification of strength.

The Reich Chancellor replied that Germany must be capable of defending itself. His program could be summarized as follows:

No Germans for a new war, but the entire Volk for the defense of its Vaterland. The youth in Germany were marching in rank and file and wearing the same clothes because they personified the New Order and its guarantee.

The talk then turned to the means by which the Franco-German problem could be solved.

According to de Brinon, the Reich Chancellor stated: "How can two neighboring countries enjoying equal rights reach an agreement? My Vaterland is not a second-class nation, but a great nation which was subjected to unbearable treatment. If France is contemplating basing its own security on Germany's inability to defend itself, then there is nothing it can do, for the times when this was possible have come to an end. However, if France wishes to conclude an agreement as a basis for its security, I am willing to listen to anything, understand anything, and do anything. There is little doubt as to which equal rights Germany is asking for. The practical implementation can be effected in steps, and the details can be negotiated. But they say to me: certainly, equality, but no equality without counterperformance. What counterperformance? It should finally be made known what the French mean by the word security!"

In response to de Brinon's remark that France would like to be certain that no new difficulties will arise once the problems are settled once and for all, the Chancellor stated: "I alone decide Germany's politics, and when I give my word, it is my practice to keep it."

"What more is required? I did not inherit a throne, but I have a doctrine to uphold. I am a person who acts and assumes his share of the responsibility. I pledge myself as security for the Volk which I lead and which gives me strength. But let us talk about French security! If someone would tell me what I can do for it, I would gladly do it if it does not mean dishonor or a threat to my country. An English journalist wrote that, in order to quiet things down in Europe, an

agreement would have to be reached by Germany and France, and France would have to be given the additional security of a defensive alliance with England. If it is an alliance of this sort, I will gladly sign it: for by no means do I intend to attack my neighbors. Poland has realized this by now, but because Poland lies further east than France, it knows us better!”

In response to the question whether Germany would return to Geneva, the Reich Chancellor, de Brinon reported, replied: “In leaving Geneva, I performed an act of necessity, and I believe that, in doing so, I contributed toward clarifying the situation.

“We will not return to Geneva. The League of Nations is an international parliament in which the power groups are at odds against one another. The misunderstandings were only heightened there instead of being resolved.

“I am willing at any time—and I have proven this—to enter into negotiations with governments which want to talk to me.”

On November 20, Hitler retired to the Obersalzberg to recuperate from the election campaign.

On November 26, the new leisure organization of the German Labor Front came into being, greeted by speeches from Ley, Goebbels, and Hess. It was modeled after the Italian *Dopo lavoro* organization and was christened—at Hitler’s request—as the National Socialist Community *Kraft durch Freude, KdF* (Strength through joy).

This organization was designed not to actually bring “joy” to the German Volk or to fulfill some whim of Hitler’s, but with the ulterior motive of contributing, in a subordinate role, to his military and foreign policy goals.

In an address commemorating the fourth anniversary of the *Kraft durch Freude* organization in 1937, Ley quoted the words Hitler had used when appointing Ley to head it in 1933:³³⁵

Make sure for me that the German Volk has sound nerves. This is my desire, because I want a healthy Volk with strong nerves—for great politics are only possible given a Volk which does not lose its nerve!

On November 27, Hitler proceeded to Nuremberg to deliver a political speech in which he sharply attacked the Austrian Government. At a border incident on November 23, the Reichswehr soldier Philipp Michael Schuhmacher of the 21st Infantry Regiment (Nuremberg) had been shot and killed by an Austrian border patrol.

Hitler took up this incident not only to rail against the Austrian regime but also to proclaim the dead Reichswehr infantryman a “martyr (*Blutzeuge*) for the New Germany.”

Schuhmacher’s burial at the Nuremberg Westfriedhof was given the trappings of an act of state. Reich Minister of Defense General von Blom-

berg delivered an address and laid down a wreath from the oldest soldier of the Army, Field Marshal von Hindenburg.

Then Hitler began his speech, which was cited as follows in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.³³⁶

"My dear, dead comrade! I have come here as representative of those forty million Germans of November 12. Their spirit, the spirit of the German Volk, is standing here at this grave. With this wreath, the German Volk is giving its young German soldier the last salute. For they all have affirmed the ideal this soldier served and for which he was forced to sacrifice his young life. I know that a wave of pain and bitterness is passing through all of Germany in these days. But I also know that, above all at the bier of this victim, this dead young German soldier, we may uphold the conviction that he was not killed in vain."

In reference to the remarks of the Reich Minister of Defense, the Chancellor stated: "The Wehrmacht has, in this dead man, a martyr for the New Germany." The entire German Volk would regard him as a martyr for the German cause. He believed that what we all yearn for would result from this casualty. In a raised voiced, the Chancellor called out: "The murderers of this German soldier are not identical with the millions of our tribal brothers on the other side of the border. If these tribal brothers were given an opportunity to raise their voices of their own will, they would solemnly dissociate themselves from the murderers and the principles which gave rise to this bloodguilt. I am convinced that the affirmation over there would be no other than what it already is today here in the Reich."

"Therefore, however, this death may not become a source of new bitterness," the Führer stressed, "but must become a witness to faith, a witness to this new German community."

"I am also laying this wreath on behalf of German youth which is to perceive in this death not only another example for themselves, but at the same time a solemn reminder of what the Vaterland requires of the individual and what the individual must be willing to give to the Vaterland."

"When German youth affirms its belief in this same spirit which is contained in the living personification of this dead soldier's sacrifice, the suffering and pain we are experiencing today can and will one day give rise to a better future for our Volk."

In Hitler's opinion, the special task which fell to German youth was sacrificing their lives for their country.

On November 28, an important step was taken toward a further *Gleichschaltung* of the German press.

Wolffs Telegraphisches-Büro (WTB) and Hugenberg's *Telegraphen-Union* (TU) were absorbed into the new National Socialist *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* (DNB).

On December 1, Hitler enlarged the Reich cabinet by appointing two additional National Socialists: Rudolf Hess, the deputy of the Führer, and Ernst Röhm, SA Chief of Staff.

For this purpose, a “Law to Secure the Unity of Party and State” (*Gesetz zur Sicherung der Einheit von Partei und Staat*) was passed.³³⁷ The terms “national uprising” and “national revolution” were now replaced by the official title, “National Socialist Revolution.” The law provided as follows:

§1

Following the triumph of the National Socialist Revolution, the National Socialist German Workers’ Party is now the representative of the German concept of the State and is inextricably bound to the State.

It is a corporation under public law. Its statutes are to be determined by the Führer.

§2

In order to guarantee the closest cooperation between the offices of the Party and the SA and the public authorities, the Deputy of the Führer and the SA Chief of Staff shall become members of the Reich Government.

Hess and Röhm were sworn in on December 4 by Hindenburg as Reich Ministers without portfolio.

On December 11, Hitler spoke in the plenary hall of the Prussian Landtag, addressing the deputies of the NSDAP who now comprised the entire parliament. Hitler praised the outcome of the November 12 plebiscite, which he had achieved solely on the basis of a foreign policy issue, as a campaign triumph for the NSDAP. The *Völkischer Beobachter* published a report on the speech:³³⁸

The Volk had, the Führer stated, not only said “yes” to the government, but also to the party in power. Fate had delivered all of the power into the hands of a single movement; the NSDAP had attained that for which it had been fighting for fourteen years, but it had also assumed a tremendous responsibility to history, for upon it rested the fate of the entire German nation, and it was now to fulfill what centuries had longed and yearned for.

“One day we will all be weighed together and judged together; either we will pass this test together, or the future will condemn us all.”

History, he said, should one day talk of us as a generation of men who were bold, courageous, unwavering, and tough in thinking only of their Volk. The Führer recalled the bold principles, completely detached from the past, which have borne our gigantic struggle until now. Today the important thing, he stated, was to draw the final consequences. The task of the new Reichstag was to 1) use its authority to support the great constructive efforts of the National Socialist leadership of State; and 2) constitute a living bond to the Volk by means of the Party. The Volk, which was being led nobly and decently, would, in the long term, come to exhibit its most noble and decent virtues. The Volk must, he said, realize through its leaders that the regime in power was unified and of one piece, in all fundamental questions a single, sworn community.

On December 12, the new Reichstag convened for the first time. Göring naturally was elected President; the First Vice President was Hanns Kerrl, formerly President of the Prussian Landtag, and the Second Vice President Hermann Esser, formerly President of the Bavarian Landtag. The election of these new vice presidents indicated that Hitler planned to soon dispense with the parliaments of the Länder.³³⁹

The same day, Hitler addressed the crew of the Köln,³⁴⁰ a cruiser which had just returned to Wilhelmshaven following a long overseas voyage. He made it clear to the officers and their men what an “enormous change had taken place in Germany in the meantime, which very few had envisioned possible one year ago.”

On December 14, Hitler took initial steps toward organizing the Olympic Games to be held in Berlin in 1936 and issued the following proclamation:³⁴¹

Today I have granted my final approval for the commencement and completion of the structures on the stadium grounds. With this, Germany is being given a sports arena the likes of which are to be found nowhere in the world. The fact that the completion of the planned large-scale construction work is creating many thousands of man-days is something which fills me with particular joy.

However, buildings alone are not sufficient to guarantee that German sports are accorded a position in the international competitions which corresponds to the world prestige of our nation. Much more significant is the unified, committed will of the nation to choose the best competitors out of all Germany's Gaue and to train and steel them so that we may pass the forthcoming competition with honors.

A no less important task is the sustained and lasting attention to physical exercise in the entire German Volk as one of the most important cultural assets of the National Socialist State. We will make of this a permanent basis for the spirit of the New Germany in the physical strength of its Volk.

The *Reichssportführer* (Reich Sports Leader) is solely responsible to myself and the competent Reich Minister of the interior for the successful accomplishment of these two tasks. I ask all organizations, official bodies, etc. to grant him every possible support and encouragement.

Berlin, December 14, 1933

Adolf Hitler

On December 23, Hitler had cause for great annoyance. Although the Fourth Criminal Division of the Reichsgericht in Leipzig did pronounce the death sentence for van der Lubbe in the Reichstag Fire trial, it acquitted the Communist Reichstag deputy Torgler and the Bulgarian defendants Dimitrov, Popov and Tanev.

Upon their release, the acquitted were immediately taken into protective custody. The official notice read: ‘Immediately following the

pronouncement of the judgment, the defendants were informed that they would be held at the disposal of the Reich Minister of the interior and taken into protective custody (*Schutzhaft*).³⁴²

After having arranged this matter to his satisfaction, Hitler was free to take part in a Christmas celebration sponsored by SA and SS members in Munich, where he gave a short speech.³⁴³ It was Hitler's custom to spend Christmas Eve in total isolation in his Munich apartment, devoted to sentimental brooding in memory of his niece, Geli Raubal.

On December 31, Hitler sent letters of recognition to his Unterführers to commemorate the close of the "Year of the National Socialist Revolution."³⁴⁴ Of these, perhaps the letters to Hess and Röhm are most significant in light of the fates of these two men.

To the Deputy of the Führer, Rudolf Hess:

My dear Rudolf Hess,

You are one of my oldest fellow fighters. Since 1920, you have placed your loyalty and your skill at my disposal and thus at the disposal of the Movement. First as leader in the SA, then as my closest friend, later as Chairman of the Central Party Commission, today as my deputy in the Movement. Through joy and pain, and even in prison, you have shared these long years with me. On the day marking the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I must thank you, my dear Hess, from the bottom of my heart for the so very great contribution you have made to the Movement and the German Volk.

In long and true friendship and grateful regard, Your Adolf Hitler

To Chief of Staff Röhm:

My dear Chief of Staff,

The fight of the National Socialist Movement and the National Socialist Revolution was made possible only by the consistent suppression of the Marxist terror by the SA.

If the Army is to guarantee the protection of the nation abroad, it is the task of the SA to secure the victory of the National Socialist Revolution, the continued existence of the National Socialist State and the community of our Volk at home.

When I summoned you,³⁴⁵ my dear Chief of Staff, to your present position, the SA was going through a serious crisis.³⁴⁶ It is primarily thanks to you that, in the space of only a few years, this political instrument was able to develop the force which made it possible for me to finally win the struggle for power by overcoming the Marxist opponent.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I feel compelled to thank you, my dear Ernst Röhm, for the immortal service which you have done to the National Socialist Movement and the German Volk and to assure you how grateful I am to Fate to be able to call such men as you fighting comrades (Kampfgenossen).

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Yours, Adolf Hitler

Other letters which Hitler sent read as follows:

To Minister-President Göring:

My dear Göring,

When the Party first attempted to win power in the State in November 1923, you, as Commander of the SA, created, in an extraordinarily short time, the instrument with which such a fight might be ventured. It was utmost necessity which forced us to act, and wise Providence which denied us success back then. After your serious injury, as soon as circumstances allowed, you came to stand at my side as the most loyal fellow fighter in the struggle for power. You made a significant contribution toward establishing the prerequisites for January 30.

Thus I feel compelled to thank you at the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, my dear Party Comrade Göring, from the bottom of my heart for this great contribution you have made to the National Socialist Movement, the National Socialist Revolution, and thus to the German Volk.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

To Reich Leader of Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels:

My dear Dr. Goebbels,

The offensive against the old system and the parties and Weltanschauungen supporting it was only able to be successful in terms of power because an inspired propaganda had already bombarded the positions, laying them open for attack. Its job was to make the people lose faith in their previous world and be ripe for a new one.

When I summoned you to Berlin, my dear Dr. Goebbels, an almost non-existent National Socialist organization was faced with an overwhelming force of opponents.

You deserve credit for the conquest of this city for the Movement. Beyond that, you have made the Party's propaganda into the tremendously sharp weapon which has served, in the course of the years, to fell one opponent after another.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I thus feel compelled to thank you, my dear Doctor Goebbels, for the truly great contribution which you have made to the National Socialist Movement, its triumph, and thus to the entire German Volk.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

To Reichsführer SS Himmler:

My dear Party Comrade Himmler,

In the time of the most difficult crises of our Movement, I was obliged to create a special protective organization for the Party: the SS. As an elite selection of the most loyal and zealous supporters, it was to enable the leadership to represent the interests of the Party with no consideration to individuals.

December 31, 1933

You deserve credit for developing these few defense units into an enormous organization unique of its kind. Thus you have given to the National Socialist Revolution a blindly devoted raiding party and to the National Socialist State an unshakable political guard which incorporates the race concept of our Movement in its own flesh and blood.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, it is thus a pleasure for me to thank you, my dear Party Comrade Himmler, from the bottom of my heart for the truly great contribution which you have made to the National Socialist Movement and thus to the German Volk.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

To the Leader of the Labor Front, Dr. Ley:

My dear Dr. Ley,

It was the task of the National Socialist Party not to attempt to shatter the other parties with the wrong means, but instead to draw the people away from them by means of a tremendous enlightenment and anchor them in the new Movement by means of an exemplary organization. You deserve credit for having made a loyal and outstanding contribution toward developing this organization at a difficult time, my dear Party Comrade Dr. Ley. In particular, the integration of what were once Marxist worker masses into our world which is organized in National Socialist terms will be associated with your name for all time.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I thus feel compelled, Dr. Ley, to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the truly great contribution which you have made to the National Socialist Movement and thus to the German Volk.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

To Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg:

My dear Party Comrade Rosenberg,

One of the foremost requirements for the victory of the National Socialist Movement was the spiritual demolition of the sphere of thought which was hostile to us. You, my dear Party Comrade Rosenberg, have not only consistently waged the offensive against this sphere of ideas since the time of Dietrich Eckart, but also made an enormous contribution by politically and conceptually heading the official Party organ to ensure that every phase of our political fight was saturated with a uniform Weltanschauung.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I thus feel compelled to thank you, my dear Party Comrade Rosenberg, from the bottom of my heart for the truly great contribution which you have made to the Movement and thus to the German Volk.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

To Reich Treasurer Schwarz:³⁴⁷

My dear Reich Treasurer,

The National Socialist Movement was only capable of waging the battle for power thanks to your brilliant organization.

You deserve credit for creating the administrative and financial foundations of our organization.

My dear Party Comrade Schwarz! In the long years of our struggle, thanks to your self-sacrificing labors, you have secured the funds for the Movement which it so urgently required to conduct its fight.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I thus feel compelled to thank you, my dear Party Comrade Franz Schwarz, from the bottom of my heart for the truly great contribution which you have made to the Movement and thus to the German Volk.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

To the Publisher and Reichsleiter Amann:³⁴⁸

My dear Amann,

The victory of the National Socialist idea strongly depended upon its potential for relaying our Movement's body of thought to a large number of party comrades by a centrally organized body of writings. You, my dear Party Comrade Amann, placed yourself at my disposal as one of the first of my former fellow soldiers.

You deserve credit for the organizational development of the Movement in 1923. The development of our enormous central publishing house was, however, your very own achievement.

Thus you have provided me the basis for implementing written propaganda which gained decisive significance not only in the time of our Movement's offensive, but also after the victory had been won.

Therefore it is a pleasure for me to thank you, my dear Party Comrade Amann, at the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution for the truly great contribution which you have made to the National Socialist Movement and thus to the German Volk.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

To Reich Youth Leader Baldur von Schirach:

My dear Schirach,

No matter what we expect from a mature Germany, it can only come to pass if we train our youth accordingly. Thus the inclusion of our youth in our Weltanschauung constitutes the only guarantee for the fulfillment of our tasks with respect to this Weltanschauung. I once asked you, my dear Party Comrade Schirach, to take over the task of heading and reorganizing our student and youth movements. The enormous development of the National Socialist Youth

December 31, 1933

Movement is your achievement and will be associated with your name for all time.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I thus feel compelled, my dear Party Comrade Schirach, to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the extraordinary contribution which you have made to the

National Socialist Youth Movement and thus to the future of the German Volk. In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

To Reichsleiter Buch:³⁴⁹

My dear Party Comrade Buch,

In the long years of building up the internal organization of our Movement, I assigned to you the difficult task of contributing to the internal stability of the Party by establishing a party jurisdiction and taking on the role of arbitrator and judge. My dear Party Comrade Buch, with your work, which entailed extraordinary sacrifices and deprivations and was barely visible to your environment, you have done an exemplary job of fulfilling your important mission.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I thus feel compelled, my dear Party Comrade Buch, to express my thanks to you from the bottom of my heart for the so very great contribution which you have made to the Movement and thus to the German Volk by your selfless devotion and labors.

With true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

Seldte was also sent such a letter. Hitler had come to regard him almost as one of the “old fighters.”

To the Reich Minister of Labor:

My dear Party Comrade Seldte,

One of the most difficult tasks lay in establishing a unified national front by combining the forces which pursue the same goals along the one great line. You, my dear Party Comrade Seldte, deserve the credit for the fact that the largest national association following the National Socialist Party succeeded in fusing with us to become a single unit. The integration of the Stahlhelm in the SA will be highly honored for all time as a rare example of a national duty and will live on amidst those who took part in the National Revolution of 1933 to make the uprising of the German Volk a success.

At the close of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, I thus feel compelled to thank you, my dear Party Comrade and fellow soldier Seldte, for your generous attitude and thus for the very great contribution which you have made to the national uprising and thus to the German Volk.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

Hitler had a right to be satisfied with his own contributions to making 1933 a success. Not only had the year brought him the long-awaited accession to power; it had also afforded him the opportunity to eliminate all of Germany's political parties with the exception of his own. He had been able to dissolve the unions, divest the German Länder of their power, and form a Reichstag comprised exclusively of National Socialists. He had succeeded in reducing the power of the Catholic clergy by concluding the Concordat with the Vatican and had substantially limited the activities of the Catholic organizations and associations. The press had been largely centralized and placed under his direction.

In terms of foreign policy, he had disengaged himself from all international ties and laid the groundwork for an alliance with Poland. Germany had begun to rearm. In Danzig, a National Socialist Government had been installed, and in the Saar the National Socialists had formed a German front.

Unemployment had already decreased sharply due to the economic stimuli, and as a result most Germans were satisfied with Hitler's rule, believing that the "magnificent days" were now coming which William II had heralded in another time.³⁵⁰

THE YEAR 1934

Major Events in Summary

Hitler entered the year 1934 less triumphantly than might have been expected after the many successes he had scored in 1933. He was preoccupied with the question of succeeding Hindenburg, for it was obvious that the 86-year-old President would hardly live out the year. To Hitler, it was equally apparent that he was the only conceivable choice to take the Old Gentleman's place.

At first glance, there was no real reason for Hitler's apprehension. The wording he had chosen in the Enabling Act of March 23/24, 1933 gave him every right to assume the functions of the Reich President's office at Hindenburg's death.¹ In addition, Hitler had at his disposal a Reichstag which would pass any constitutional amendment he chose. Thirdly, there could be no doubt that, even in the event of a regular presidential election, he would win an absolute majority on the first ballot.

Even if Hindenburg were to designate his successor in his will and thus influence the outcome of an election, Hitler was convinced that he was capable of swaying the Reich President to designate him as his heir.

Hitler's fears had less to do with the office of head of state than with the corresponding position of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He had no desire to hold this position merely as a figurehead, as Ebert had done,² but wanted to actually exercise supreme military command in the planned expansions. The key question was whether or not the Generals would accept a former corporal as their superior. At the time Hitler still regarded the upper echelons of the German Army as some sort of Olympian gods.

Although the experiences of 1923 had taught him that the German Generals were not political personages but loyal subjects of the respective head of state and the respective government, in a military sense he perceived them in 1933 and 1934 as burning with desire to enter into Valhalla as war heroes and, not unlike bloodhounds straining on their leashes, eager to sink their teeth into the next best enemy.³ As was often the case in fundamental matters, Hitler was greatly mistaken in his assessment of the military attitude of the Generals.⁴

In 1934, in any case, he was primarily interested in impressing them and winning their unreserved support for his cause, also in view of his plans to institute general conscription with a two-year term of service immediately after the Saar referendum. As has been variously stressed above, Hitler detested the type of paramilitary training practiced in the militias and military organizations. It was his belief that a two-year military service constituted the sole instrument with which he could translate his military aims into reality.⁵

Thus he was strongly disinclined to accept the plans for a militia drawn up by Chief of Staff Röhm and the former leaders of the Freikorps. Hitler and the Generals were united in rejecting Röhm, albeit for different reasons. The Reichswehr was afraid of the very thing Röhm intended: that the *Gleichschaltung* of the Party and the State would be extended to include its own ranks. This *Gleichschaltung* had been carried through in nearly every other area in 1933: the Reichsleiters had become Reich Ministers, the Gauleiters Reichsstatthalters or District Presidents; the Reich Youth Leaders of the NSDAP had risen to become Youth Leaders of the German Reich; the Reichsführer SS was gradually advancing to become the Chief of Police of all of the German Länder, and various leaders in the SS were taking over high positions in the police hierarchy. What could be more logical than that the SA divisions, which already bore the regiment numbers of the former imperial army, would become regiments in a new militia—unless they were completely absorbed in the National Socialist Armed Forces.

It was only too understandable that Röhm was eyeing the post of Reich Minister of Defense and wanted at least to achieve the rank of general. After all, he too had been a captain like Göring, who had advanced from this rank to general of the infantry, and he had even become a lieutenant colonel in Bolivia.

Hitler believed it necessary to prove his solidarity with the Reichswehr by drastic measures. He compensated for his feelings of military inferiority by committing an act of horrendous brutality: he resolved to cold-bloodedly murder his closest friends, the best-known of the SA leaders, for the sake of impressing the German Generals. He did not even flinch at having his Chief of Staff, who had used his connections to greatly aid Hitler's ascent to power, executed without trial. It was only a few months before that he had reassured Röhm of his "proud friendship."⁶

Admittedly, he also made practical use of the occasion to do away with a number of men who had become too loud in their opposition:

Gregor Strasser, General von Schleicher, General von Bredow, the former General State Commissar, Dr. Kahr; the leader of Catholic Action, Ministerialdirektor (undersecretary) Dr. Klausener; von Papen's associates, Herbert von Bohse and Dr. Edgar Jung; and many others.

"I have given them a rap on the knuckles which will smart for quite some time," Hitler declared to his confidant Rauschning in connection with these measures.⁷

The incidents of June 30, 1934 marked an incisive turning point in the history of the Third Reich, for with them the former concept of a constitutional state was now not only practically, but also formally dismissed and superseded by the precept that whatever Hitler demanded or executed now constituted what was legal.

The Reichswehr was not alone in giving its consent to Hitler's elimination of the SA leaders by its actions and lack thereof. The Reich President, the cabinet, and the Reichstag were also accomplices who demonstrated that they accepted whatever Hitler pronounced as right without criticism or opposition.

Having once entered the vicious circle of using violence as a political weapon, Hitler logically kept to the same means in dealing with domestic problems and, consistent with his policy of what worked at home would work abroad, in his dealings with other countries as well. He was given the first chance to put this into practice scarcely a month later. In Danzig, a National Socialist Government had been installed in the last election, and in the Saar, a German Front under National Socialist leadership had been established by agreement. In Austria, however, playing the legal trump card had not enabled him to win the trick. In July 1934 he judged it high time to gain a foothold there by force.

However, the attempted coup in Vienna on July 25, 1934 proved a dismal and bloody failure, and Hitler left his comrades to their fate—for which he was directly responsible—without batting an eyelid. A few days later Hindenburg died, and Hitler became Head of State in Germany. Once more he declared that the struggle for power had now come to an end.⁸

Hitler had triumphed yet again, but at the same time had struck a blow to the very roots of his own authority and, for the first time, done permanent damage to the confidence placed in him by his followers. Neither the Party nor the State would ever completely recover.

Hitler's flow of words, which had constituted a veritable torrent in 1932 and 1933, slowed noticeably in 1934. It was as though, now that he

had let his mask fall, he was reticent to appear in public unless it was absolutely necessary.

Report and Commentary

1

Hitler's "New Year's Proclamation to the National Socialists and Party Comrades"⁹ contained the usual recapitulation and forecast. The future held only one aim: to restore to the German Volk its "honor," by which Hitler meant rearmament and the reinstitution of general conscription.

And so the goal of our fight for the German nation in an external sense as well is none other than that of restoring to our Volk honor and equality of rights and of making a sincere contribution to avoiding future bloodshed, which we former soldiers of the World War can envision only as a new catastrophe of the nations in a Europe which has gone mad. [—]

Thus we leave behind us the Year of the German Revolution and enter into the Year of the German Restoration as National Socialists with the mutual pledge to be a sworn community, filled by the single ardent desire to be allowed to serve our German Volk for the benefit of its peace and good fortune.

On January 1, the Reich President held his customary reception for the diplomatic corps. Following the ceremony, Hindenburg received the Reich Government to extend his New Year's wishes. Hitler, dressed in a tailcoat, made the following speech:¹⁰

Herr Reichspräsident!

At the end of a fateful year, the members of the Reich Government have today come to you, Herr Reichspräsident, to put into words through me the sentiments of gratitude and esteem which move not only the Government, but also the entire German Volk in these hours. When you, Herr Reichspräsident, appointed the new Reich Government on January 30, 1933 and assigned to me the noble task of its leadership, it signalled the departure of the German Volk for a more honorable and better future, because the decision you made then, Herr Reichspräsident, had as its consequence that tremendous unity of spirit and will in our Volk and between it and its leadership which was expressed in such memorable and historic terms on November 11.

The German Volk has been fortunate to experience this unity it had lacked for so long and which, beginning with you, Herr Generalfeldmarschall, extends

all the way to German youth. In an age of the most difficult economic and political crises, the power which flows from this community has enabled us all to stabilize the structure of the Reich, to increase the authority of the Government and respect for the law, to put a stop to the religious, moral and cultural disintegration of our Volk, and to not only halt the economic collapse, but in many areas to even bring about an energetic turn for the better. Motivated and strengthened by the confidence and approval which you, Herr Reichspräsident, gave to me and the Government, we were able, while preserving the honor and equality of rights of the German Volk, to practice policies which were and always will be aimed solely at establishing a genuine and honest peace. In this connection, we feel that it is a particularly merciful act of Fate that we have you, Herr Reichspräsident, the supreme protector of our plans and our deeds, as a witness who can and must prove to the entire world the sincerity of our intentions.

Thus I am speaking here and now not only on my own behalf and on behalf of the Reich Government, but on behalf of the entire German Volk in expressing our deepest and most respectful gratitude for the developments of this year which you, venerable Field Marshal and President of the German Reich, have sponsored, and we may combine our thanks with the heartfelt wish that the Almighty God may protect and look after your life and health in the coming year and give you His blessings to the Reich's good fortune, for to serve this Reich, in the deepest solidarity and with your confidence, is the good fortune and uttermost satisfaction of all the members of the German Reich Government.

Hindenburg responded to this speech as follows:

Herr Reichskanzler! Gentlemen!

The year 1933 led Germany away from inner discord, away from party quarrels, away from the polarization of interests and upwards to a nationally conscious unity and to a belief in itself. Based upon this new spirit, the Reich Government, in cooperation with German business, has succeeded in once again providing work for millions of willing hands and in restoring to those who are still waiting for employment the hope that they will not be idle forever. And in this regained consciousness of an indivisible common destiny, the German Volk called to life the great voluntary *Winterhilfswerk* and thereby provided protection from hunger and cold to those of our brothers suffering deprivation. In this way the German crisis, which was an almost hopeless burden only a year ago, could be alleviated to a large extent.

This reversal is primarily your achievement, Herr Reichskanzler; it is the result of your energetic leadership and the devoted work of your staff. Thus above all in this hour, when we look back upon the past year and cast a glance ahead to the new one, it is my heartfelt desire to express my deeply felt gratitude for everything which you have done for our German Volk and the Vaterland. I must equally thank you, my dear Ministers, and all those in the Reich Government and throughout the country for their contribution to this reconstruction.

May the year 1934 continue to lead us to new heights on the firm foundation which we have regained by our cooperation with several nations. May it bring

us the final victory (*Endsieg*) over economic need and unemployment at home and lead us onward on the way to true peace, the peace of honor and equality of rights abroad.

So let us now, with a firm confidence in the German future and God's help, enter into the new year and continue our joint labors for our beloved Vaterland!

On January 14, Hitler delivered a speech in Lemgo (Lippe), commemorating the decisive electoral victory at the Landtag election in Lippe-Detmold in 1933,¹¹ closing his remarks with the words:

For fourteen years we fought for power. Now we will fight for the next fourteen years for Germany and on Germany's behalf. And if Heaven is on our side in this fight, we want to see if we cannot lead Germany to rise in these fourteen years to the significance to which we have led the Party in the past fourteen years. We expect from the other nations only that they allow us to find our own salvation.

On January 21, Hitler sent his condolences by telegram to the widow of his chief architect, Professor Paul Troost,¹² who had suddenly passed away.

On January 22, Hitler spoke in Berlin to SA leaders headed by Chief of Staff Röhm who had gathered at the chancellory following a convention in Friedrichsroda.¹³ Dwelling primarily on the educational duties of the SA in respect to the National Socialist Weltanschauung, he omitted discussing the question of the SA's future.

Hitler attended Troost's burial on January 24 at the Munich Nordfriedhof.¹⁴ Contrary to his customary habit, he not only appeared at the funeral ceremony itself, but accompanied the casket to the grave. During his stay in Munich, he issued the following party decree:¹⁵

At the suggestion of the Staff Leader of the PO, I hereby assign to party comrade Alfred Rosenberg the supervision of the entire spiritual and *weltanschaulich* training and education of the Party and all coordinated associations as well as of the organization *Kraft durch Freude*.

This shall have no effect upon the functions of the Reich Training Director Pg. Otto Gohdes.

Munich, January 24, 1934

Adolf Hitler

Rosenberg had doubtless hoped for a ministerial post, perhaps even the office of Minister of Culture, but Hitler fobbed him off with this wordy but meaningless appointment, never having appeared to particularly care for Rosenberg and his mystic philosophy, which at the time did not suit the Führer's political and military attitude. Aside from Rosenberg's relatively insignificant role as publisher of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, he had no real influence in the Party and the State in subsequent years until

Hitler named him Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern (Russian) Territories in 1941, an appointment for which Rosenberg certainly had not pressed.

On January 25, Hitler received the Polish Ambassador, Josef Lipski, at the chancellory for the final conference prior to signing the forthcoming agreement with Poland.¹⁶ The same day, he also received Reich Bishop Müller and the Protestant Land Bishops at the chancellory to gain an insight into the position of the Protestant Church.¹⁷ Hitler reported the results of both conferences to the Reich President.

The ceremonial signing of the ten-year pact between Germany and Poland took place on January 26.¹⁸ The pact attracted considerable attention, for it ran contrary to the anti-Polish mentality manifest in Germany since Bismarck's time and even as early as the partitioning of Poland. The National Socialists celebrated this newly-gained friendship with Poland as a miracle of diplomatic statesmanship. Under certain circumstances, the pact may have had its positive sides, had it been taken—and meant—seriously. Further developments revealed Hitler's ulterior motive of gaining time in order to later turn against his ally with an utter lack of scruples.

On January 27, the *Frankfurter Volksblatt* published a conversation between Hitler and the writer Hanns Johst on the concept of the 'Bürger.' When Hitler took a stand against the so-called 'Bürger,' or bourgeoisie, he usually had the intellectuals in mind, whose skepticism of his prognoses for the future never failed to enrage him. However, Hitler by no means rejected the bourgeois way of life: his private hopes and expectations and his needs in terms of accommodations and daily life were, in essence, those of the *Kleinbüfugertum* (lower middle class or petite bourgeoisie).

According to Johst, the discussion ran as follows:¹⁹

Question: The Bürger' is feeling increasingly distressed in respect to the romantic idea of peace of mind, his own peace of mind. So would you, Herr Reichskanzler, allow me to ask quite openly: what is your position on the 'Bürger'?

Answer: I believe it would be a good thing if we first detach the concept of the 'Bürger' from the extremely unclear ambiguity which surrounds it and mutually establish an unambiguous definition of what we understand by the term 'Bürger.' I need only cite the 'Staatsbürger' (citizen) and the 'Spießbürger' (Philistine) to name two members of this species.

Question: Do you mean to say the 'Staatsbürger' is the man who stands up for his State politically no matter what, and the Spießbürger' is the type who calls himself apolitical for fear of losing his peaceful existence and, acting the

Philistine, uses the well-known practice of sticking his head in the sand to avoid being an eyewitness to political conditions?

Answer: That's exactly what I mean. One section of the bourgeois world and the bourgeois Weltanschauung enjoys acting the part of being completely disinterested in political life. These people have not progressed beyond the prewar position that politics has its own forms of existence far removed from their normal life in society and is to be practiced by a special caste engaged and predestined for that purpose. These people, armchair politicians, enjoy criticizing you as part of a general mood or motivated by personal interest, but they will never take on any representative, public responsibility. My Movement, as an expression of will and yearning, encompasses every aspect of the entire Volk. It conceives of Germany as a corporate body, as a single organism. There is no such thing as non-responsibility in this organic being, not a single cell which is not responsible, by its very existence, for the welfare and well-being of the whole.

Thus in my view there is not the least amount of room for apolitical people. Every German, whether he wants to be or not, is by virtue of his being born into German destiny, by the fact of his existence, a representative of the form of existence of this very Germany. In upholding this principle, I am turning every class conflict around and at the same time declaring war on every concept of caste and consciousness of class.

Question: That means that you will not tolerate any flight into private life, whereas the bourgeois likes to take refuge in being a private person? You are forcing everyone to take on the position of a 'Staatsbürger'?

Answer: I reject shilly-shallying (*Drückebergerei*) about decisions! Every single German must know what he wants! And he must take a stand for what he wants!

Since 1914, I have devoted my life to fighting. First as a soldier, blindly obedient to the military leadership. When this leadership allowed itself to be locked out of the power sphere of command in 1918, I took a close look at the new political command and recognized in it the true face of Marxism. With that began my fight against the politics of this theory and its practice.

Question: You encountered Marxist parties and the indifference of the middle class. You were regarded as part of the bourgeois right-wing.

Answer: This evaluation of my life's work leaves room for two errors. My entire energy was devoted from the beginning to overcoming the leadership of the state by parties, and secondly—although this is logical and obvious from the origins of my uprising—I must never be understood in bourgeois terms.

In the quarrel of the parties, it became evident that the discussion was being conducted under false appearances. It is wrong, you see, that the bourgeois parties have become the employers and for the Marxists to call themselves proles and employees. There are just as many proles among the employers as there are bourgeois elements among the employees.

The bourgeois—allegedly for the sake of the Vaterland—are defending property, a capitalistic value. Thus from a Marxist point of view, love of one's country is not dumb, but rather capital's greed for profit. On the other hand, the

international character of Marxism is regarded by the middle class as speculation for a world economy in which there is only state administration and no longer any private property.

The member of the bourgeoisie avoids this division of the Volk into opposing interest groups by hiding behind the superficial and zealous optimism of his daily paper and allowing himself to be educated "apolitically." The lessons are organized very nicely according to the taste of his majesty, Gullible Fritz (*Majestät Zipfelmütze*), placid and peaceful. People are reverting step by step. The compromise serves over and over again to ban controversy literally from the face—but only the face—of the planet, and the end, the end is a political matter somewhere in the distance which is better left alone to preserve the peace, of course. But the fact that this peace was not a peace at all, but a daily defeat, a daily victory of consciously political Marxism—it is for the recognition of this fact that National Socialism is fighting.

National Socialism takes for itself the pure idea from each of these two camps. From the camp of bourgeois tradition, it takes national resolve, and from the materialism of the Marxist dogma living, creative Socialism.

Volksgemeinschaft: that means a community of all productive labor, that means the oneness of all vital interests, that means overcoming bourgeois privatism and the unionized, mechanically organized masses, that means unconditionally equating the individual fate and the nation, the individual and the Volk.

I know that liberal bourgeois concepts are highly developed in Germany, the bourgeois man rejects public life and has a deep-seated aversion toward what goes on in the streets. If he weakens in his resolve for any length of time, this public life, the street, will destroy the ideal of his four walls.

In cases like this, attack is the best form of defense.

I am not responsible for the fact that the central command of the German State was taken over by the street in 1918. However, the bourgeoisie does not have the slightest reason to suspect that I was the drummer who sounds the reveille, for if the bourgeoisie had slept through the facts of history, it would have awakened too late, awakened to a political state of affairs which is called Bolshevism and which is the mortal enemy of the concepts of the middle class. The Russian Revolution was up in arms against the middle class as bourgeoisie, and in Germany the decisive battle of this Weltanschauung has just been lost.

The fact that all of Germany is enlightened as to Bolshevik imperialism, that not a single German can say, "I knew nothing of it," but can resort only to the lame excuse, "I didn't believe it"—that is and always has been my commitment and the basic principle of all of my loyal followers.

Question: Inasmuch as you were forced by the Weimar Constitution to organize along party lines, you called your movement the National Socialist Workers' Party. In my opinion, you are thus giving the concept of the worker priority over the concept of the bourgeoisie.

Answer: I chose the word "worker" because it was more natural and corresponded with every element of my being, and because I wanted to recapture this word for the national force. I did not and will not allow the concept of the worker to simply take on an international connotation and

become an object of distrust to the bourgeoisie. In a certain sense, I had to "naturalize" the term worker and subject it once again to the control of the German language and the sovereign rights and obligations of the German Volk. Similarly, I will not tolerate that the correctly used and essentially understood concept of the 'Bürger' is spoiled. But I believe the 'Bürger' is called upon to ensure this.

Question: In the Weltanschauung of National Socialism, there are therefore only the 'Staatsbürger' and the worker. And all people are either both, or neither, and thus parasites in the life of the State.

Answer: Certainly, I feel this is a significant comparison, for this alone enables us to dispense with the entire superficial vocabulary of unnecessary arrogance caused by parliamentarianism and all of that liberalism. The 'Spießbürger' must become a citizen of the State; the Red comrade must become a Volksgenosse. Both must, with their good intentions, ennoble the sociological concept of the worker and raise the status of an honorary title for labor. This patent of nobility alone puts the soldier and the peasant, the merchant and the academician, the worker and the capitalist under oath to take the only possible direction in which all purposeful German striving must be headed: towards the nation.

Only when everything that happens within the entire German community happens with a view to the whole does the whole, in the changing currents of political effects, in turn become capable of taking on the positive and productive leadership of all of the individual units, classes and conditions.

Leadership is always based upon the free will and good intentions of those being led. My doctrine of the Führer concept is therefore quite the opposite of what the Bolsheviks like to present it as being: the doctrine of a brutal dictator who triumphs over the destruction of the values of private life. Thus as Reich Chancellor I am not discontinuing my activities as a public educator; on the contrary: I am using every means provided by the State and its power to publish and make known my every word and deed with the goal of winning the public with this openness for every single decision of my national will by proof and conviction. And I am doing this because I believe in the creative power and the creative contribution of the Volk.

Question: In other words, Herr Reichskanzler, in the Volk you perceive the myth of a fusion of the worker and the 'Bürger,' just as you perceive the State as the malleable instrument of the Volk? If I may state it quite openly, you see the instrument of the State in the hand of the Volk, and you thus see in your own chancellorship the sovereignty of the Volk as consecrated to the name of Adolf Hitler!

Answer: I hope that this dialogue serves as an enlightenment to the broad circles of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois man should stop feeling like some sort of pensioner of tradition or capital and separated from the worker by the Marxist concept of property; rather, he should strive, with an open mind, to become integrated in the whole as a worker, for he is not a member of society at all in the distorted sense in which he was persecuted as a hostile brother within the ranks of the Volk. He should base his classic bourgeois pride upon his

citizenship and, in other respects, be modestly conscious of his identity as a worker.

For everything which does not feverishly press for work and affirm its faith in work is condemned to extinction in the sphere of National Socialism.

On January 29, Hitler succeeded in placing the *Kyffhäuserbund*, the Federation of German Veterans Associations, under National Socialist leadership. Former Artillery General von Horn resigned as its Bundesführer, making room for the Supreme Landesführer of the Second SA Reserve, former Colonel Reinhardt, who was later promoted to become SS Gruppenführer.²⁰

On January 30, the members of the Cabinet gathered at the chancellory with von Papen as their spokesman to congratulate Hitler on the first anniversary of the *Machtergreifung*. Hitler expressed his thanks in a speech,²¹ stressing that “there was probably not another cabinet in the whole world which cooperated as homogeneously and with such trust as the German Reich Cabinet.”

Hindenburg received the Reich Chancellor for a private conference on the occasion.²² He had also thanked him for his achievements in the previous year in a separate handwritten letter.

The Reichstag convened at 3:00 p.m. to receive a statement of policy. Dressed in his brown tunic, Hitler commenced his speech with the following words:²³

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

Today in retrospect we call the year 1933 [sic!] the Year of the National Socialist Revolution, and one day an objective assessment of its incidents and events will judge it right to put this name down in the history of our Volk. What will be regarded as decisive is not the moderate form in which this revolutionary change took place externally, but the inner greatness of the transformation this year has brought to the German Volk in every sector and in all facets of its life.

In the space of barely twelve months, one world of ideas and institutions was eliminated and another put in its place. What happened in this short space of time before our very eyes was still regarded and described as a fantastic utopia on the very eve of the memorable day of January 30, 1933 by the certainly overwhelming majority of our Volk and in particular by the supporters, spokesmen and representatives of former conditions.

However, such a miraculous historic event would truly be inconceivable had the command which brought it about been due only to the whim of some capricious human spirit or even a quirk of fate. No. The prerequisites for this event have necessarily evolved and resulted from the developments of many long years. A horrible crisis cried out for a remedy. So that the hour was waiting only for a will ready to fulfill the historic undertaking.

With this introduction, Hitler drew a picture of himself as a man resolved to act, with the stature of a personage in world history, the type of figure who fulfilled the yearnings of a line of philosophers of German culture from Hegel to Oswald Spengler.

Hitler then launched upon a one-hour version of his "party narrative," beginning as usual with the period of struggle since 1919 and, this time, culminating in the events of 1933.

After having meted out a few blows to the Churches, above all to the Protestant Church, he stated:

The State has dealt no less radically with the two Christian confessions. Filled by the desire to secure for the German Volk the great religious, moral and ethical values anchored in the two Christian confessions, we have eliminated the political organizations while, at the same time, reinforcing the religious institutions. For an agreement with the powerful National Socialist State is more valuable to a Church than the conflict between denominational political associations which, in view of the policy of compromise necessitated by their coalition, are forced to spiritually abandon a truly inward, religious education and stabilization of the Volk in order to pay for personal advantages to party members.

However, we all harbor the expectation that the merger of the Protestant Land Churches and confessions to form a German Protestant Reich Church might truly satisfy the yearning of those who believe that, in the muddled dividedness of Protestant life, they must fear a weakening in the power of the Protestant faith.

This year the National Socialist State has clearly demonstrated its high regard for the strength of the Christian faiths, and hence it expects the same high regard on the part of the confessions for the strength of the National Socialist State! [—]

Thus at this time I would like to protest against the theory which has been advanced again recently that Germany could only be happy under the rule of its traditional princes.

No! We are one Volk, and we want to live in one Reich.

And those who sinned against this principle so often in the past in German history were not able to credit their mission to God's merciful will but instead, as history has taught us, unfortunately all too often to the expedient favor and support of their worst enemies.

In this year, we have thus consciously enforced the authority of the Reich and the authority of the Government against those infirm descendents and heirs to the politics of the past who believed themselves capable of declaring their traditional resistance to the National Socialist State.

It was one of the happiest hours of my life when it became clear that the entire German Volk was granting its approval to a policy which exclusively represented its interests.

With all due respect to the values of the monarchy and in all esteem to the truly great emperors and kings of our German history, the question of perma-

nently shaping the structure of the State of the German Reich is completely beyond discussion today. No matter how the nation and its leaders may one day decide, there is one thing they should never forget: he who personifies Germany's highest peak receives his calling from the German Volk and is obligated to it alone!

For my part, I regard myself merely as an agent of the nation engaged to implement those reforms which will one day enable it to make the final decision on the permanent constitution of the Reich.

Hitler had never seriously advocated the reinstitution of the monarchy.²⁴ Now and again, when he judged it opportune in light of his respective audience, he indulged in nebulous allusions to a monarchical constitution for the Reich, possible perhaps in some distant future. By no means was he willing, however, to accept the idea that this might come to pass during his own lifetime. His speech of January 30 made this unequivocally clear to those who persisted in clinging to this type of "misplaced" hope.

He now turned his attention to his enemies at home—whom he perceived to be primarily the intellectuals, but also the reactionaries—and gave them a foretaste of the "rap on the knuckles" of June 30.²⁵

The fact that our activities during this past year were nonetheless put under fire from countless foes is only natural. We have borne this burden in the past and will also be able to bear it in the future. Degenerated emigrants, who for the most part quitted the scene of their former operations not for political, but for purely criminal reasons because the changed atmosphere had given them cause for alarm, are now attempting to mobilize a gullible world against Germany with truly villainous dexterity and a criminal lack of conscience, but their lies will catch up with them all the faster now that tens of thousands of respectable and honorable men and women are coming to Germany from other countries and can compare with their own eyes the accounts delivered by these internationally "persecuted" parties with the actual reality.

Furthermore, the fact that a number of Communist ideologists believe it necessary to turn back the tide of history and, in doing so, make use of a subhumanity (*Untermenschentum*) which mistakes the concept of political freedom for the idea of allowing criminal instincts free rein will similarly cause us little concern. We were able to deal with these elements when they were in power and we were in the opposition. In the future we will be even more certain of being able to deal with them because they are now in the opposition and we are in power.

A number of our bourgeois intellectuals as well are of the conviction that they cannot accept the hard facts. However, it is much more useful to have this rootless intellectuality as an enemy than as a follower. For these persons turn away from all that is healthy, and all that is diseased awakens their interest and is given their support.

I would also like to add to the ranks of the enemies of the new regime the small clique of those whose gaze is incorrigibly directed backward, in whose eyes the peoples are nothing other than abandoned trading posts who are only waiting for a master so as to find, under his divine guidance, the only possible inner satisfaction. And last of all, I add that little group of *völkisch* ideologists who believe that it is only possible to make the nation happy by eradicating the experiences and consequences of two thousand years of history to start out on new trails, clad, so to speak, in their "bearskins."

All of these opponents taken together, in numerical terms, scarcely amount to 2.5 million people, in contrast to the more than forty million who profess their faith in the new State and its regime. These two million are not to be rated as opposition, for they comprise a chaotic conglomeration of the most diverse opinions and views, utterly incapable of pursuing any type of common goal, and capable only of joining in rejecting today's State.

Hitler then shifted the focus of his offensive to opportunists and the hereditarily ill, to whom he announced "genuinely revolutionary measures":

More dangerous than these, however, are the two categories of people whom we must perceive as a genuine burden to our present-day Reich and the Reich of tomorrow.

First of all, there are the political birds of passage who alight wherever the crops are being harvested in summer. Spineless, weak characters—yet true opportunists who pounce on every successful movement, and endeavor by overloud clamor and more than perfect behavior to avoid or answer from the very start the question of their past origins and activities.

They are dangerous because they attempt to satisfy their purely personal and egotistical interests behind the mask of the new regime and, in doing so, become a genuine burden to a Movement for which millions of decent people spent years making the most difficult sacrifices without ever even having conceived of the idea that they could ever be repaid for the suffering and deprivation which they had taken upon themselves for their Volk.

Purging the State and the Party of these importunate parasites will be an important task, particularly for the future. Then many inwardly decent people, who were unable to come to the Movement earlier, often for understandable and even cogent reasons, will also find their way to it without having to fear being mistaken for such dubious elements.

And another heavy burden is the army of those who were born into the negative side of the *völkisch* life due to their hereditary predisposition.

Here the State will be able to take genuinely revolutionary measures. The National Socialist Movement deserves great credit for having launched, by way of legislation as early as last year, an initial offensive against this threat of the gradual disintegration of the Volk.²⁶ When objections are raised—particularly from the denominational quarter—and opposition is offered to this legislation, I am forced to reply by saying that it would have been more effective, more decent and above all more Christian not to have stood by those

who deliberately destroyed healthy life instead of rebelling against those who have no other goal but to avoid disease from the very onset.

Apart from that, whatever is allowed to happen in this sphere not only constitutes an act of cruelty against the innocent victims themselves, but is also an act of cruelty against the Volk as a whole. If the development were allowed to progress at the rate of the last hundred years, the number of those dependent upon public welfare would one day threaten to approach the number of those who ultimately would be the only support for the preservation of the community.

It is not the Churches who must feed these armies of the unfortunate, but the Volk. Were the Churches to state their willingness to take those suffering from hereditary illnesses into their care and keeping, we would gladly be willing to dispense with their sterilization. But as long as the State is condemned to raise gigantic, annually increasing sums—today already exceeding the mark of 350 million—from its citizens toward maintaining these regrettable hereditarily ill people in the nation, then it is forced to resort to that remedy which both prevents that such undeserved suffering be passed on in the future and also prohibits that millions of healthy persons are often deprived of the bare necessities of life in order to artificially preserve the lives of millions of ill people.

Men of the German Reichstag! No matter how great the results of the Year of the National Socialist Revolution and leadership of State were, one fact is even more significant: namely, that this great transition could take place in our Volk first of all with what was absolutely lightning speed, and secondly almost totally without bloodshed.

It is the fate of the overwhelming majority of all revolutions to completely lose their footing in rushing to storm ahead, only to be dashed to pieces after all somewhere in the end when meeting up with the hard facts. However, our leadership of the national uprising has been, for the most part, so exemplary as to bar comparison with practically every other in history with the exception of the Fascist Revolution in Italy.

The reasons for this lie in the fact that it was not a Volk driven to despair and otherwise disorganized which raised the flag of revolt and laid the torches to the existing State, but a brilliantly organized movement with followers who had become disciplined in long years which waged the battle. The National Socialist Party and its organizations deserve undying credit for this; the brown Guard is to thank for it. It prepared the German uprising, carried it through and completed it almost without bloodshed and with an incomparable methodicalness.

This miracle, however, was also inconceivable without the voluntary and absolute consent of those who aspired to identical goals as leaders of similar organizations or who, as officers, represented the German Wehrmacht.

It is a unique historic example of how such a sincere attachment could form between the powers of the Revolution and the responsible leaders of an utterly disciplined Wehrmacht in the service of the Volk which is comparable to that between the National Socialist Party and myself as its leader on the one hand and the officers and soldiers of the German Army and Navy on the other.

Whereas the Stahlhelm increasingly came to join National Socialism in these twelve months to finally most fairly express this fraternity in a fusion with it, the Army and its leadership has, in this same space of time, stood by the new State in unconditional loyalty and allegiance and actually first made the success of our work possible before history.

For it was not a civil war which could save Germany, but only the unanimous uniting of all those who, even in the worst years, had not lost their faith in the German Volk and the German Reich.

At the closing of this year of the greatest domestic revolution and as a special sign of the enormous, unifying power of our ideal, I may note that in a cabinet which contained only three National Socialists in January 1933, today all of the ministers are still doing active duty with the exception of one man who left of his own volition and who, to my great pleasure, was elected on our list, a real German patriot, in this auditorium.²⁷ Thus the men of the government formed on January 30, 1933 have also accomplished in their own ranks what they demanded from the entire German Volk: disregarding earlier differences to work together for the resurrection of our Volk and the honor and freedom of our Reich. The struggle for the inner reorganization of the German Volk and Reich, which was best expressed in the fusion of Party and State and of Volk and Reich, has not yet been completed.

True to our proclamation when our Government took office one year ago, we will continue the struggle. Thus the tasks of our domestic intentions and actions are already lined out for the future: strengthening the Reich by uniting all powers in an organizational form which finally accomplishes what has been neglected for half a millennium as a result of selfishness and incompetence. Promotion of the welfare of our Volk in all spheres of life and civilized culture.

The German Reichstag will be called upon within the next few hours to pass a new law to give the Government further legal authorization to continue the National Socialist Revolution.²⁸

Hitler then discussed Germany's relations with other States, namely Russia, France, and above all Poland and Austria, wasting noticeably few words on Italy and England, countries which he especially would have liked to gain as allies.

In principle, the German Government is proceeding on the assumption that, in respect to the character of our relations with other countries, it is naturally of no consequence which type of constitution and form of government the peoples choose to adopt for themselves. It is each and every Volk's very own private matter to determine its domestic life at its own discretion. However, it is thus also the absolutely private matter of the German Volk to choose the spiritual contents and the constructive form of its organizations and leadership of State according to its own wishes.

For many months we have been painfully forced to observe that the difference which is evident between our world view and that of other nations has been used as an excuse not only to heap numerous unjustified accusations upon the German Volk and the German Reich, but also to view it with a completely unfounded distrust.

We have not adopted these views. In the past twelve months, we have made a sincere endeavor to cultivate the relations of the German Reich to all other States in the spirit of reconciliation and willingness to compromise, even if there were great, even irreconcilable differences between us and the concept of the State in these countries.

In regard both to States with a democratic structure and States with anti-democratic tendencies, we were consistently motivated by the single aim of finding ways and means to balance the opposites and bring about international cooperation.

This is the only explanation for the fact that, in spite of the great difference between the two prevailing Weltanschauungen, the German Reich also endeavored this year to cultivate amicable relations with Russia. In his last major speech, Herr Stalin expressed the fear that forces hostile to the Soviets might be acting in Germany; I must, however, take this opportunity to correct this opinion by saying that Germany will tolerate Communist tendencies or even propaganda just as little as German National Socialist tendencies would be tolerated in Russia.

The more clearly and unambiguously this fact is evidenced and respected by both States, the more natural it will be to cultivate the interests which both countries have in common. Hence we also welcome the endeavors toward a stabilization of relations in the East by a system of pacts if these are guided less by factors of a tactical and political nature and more designed to contribute to strengthening peace.

For this reason and in order to make good these intentions, the German Government has endeavored from the very first year onward to establish a new and better relationship with the Polish State.

When I took over the government on January 30, the relations between the two countries appeared to me more than unsatisfactory. There was danger that the obvious differences, which had their origins, on the one hand, in the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and, on the other, in the resultant tension on both sides, would gradually harden to become a relation of enmity which, if allowed to persist, could all too easily have taken on the character of a burdensome political heritage for both sides.

But such a development, aside from the latent danger it holds, would comprise a hindrance for any beneficial cooperation between the two nations for all time to come.

The Germans and the Polish will have to come to terms respectively with the facts of each other's existence. Thus it is more feasible to regulate a state of affairs which a thousand years were incapable of eliminating and will, after us, also fail to eliminate in a manner which will provide the largest possible profit for both nations.

It also appeared to me to be necessary to use a concrete example to illustrate that differences which quite evidently exist must not be allowed to prevent that, in the lives of nations, the form for mutual intercourse be found which is more beneficial to peace and hence to the welfare of the two nations than the political—and ultimately economic—paralysis which inevitably results from the permanent lying in wait of mutual distrust.

It also appeared to me to be right to attempt, in such a case, to acknowledge and deal with the problems affecting the two countries in a frank and open exchange of views between the two than to keep entrusting this task to third and fourth parties. In other respects, be the future differences between the two countries what they may: the catastrophic consequences of attempting to remove them by warfare would be in no proportion to any possible gains!

The German Government would thus be happy to meet with this same generous attitude in the leader of the present Polish State, Marshal Pilsudski, and to lay down this mutual realization in an agreement which will not only be equally advantageous to the Polish and the German Volk but also represent a major contribution toward preserving general peace. The German Government is willing and ready to cultivate economic relations with Poland within the scope of this agreement, so that here, as well, the period of unprofitable reserve can be followed by a time of advantageous cooperation.

The fact that the National Socialist Government in Danzig was also able to bring about a similar clarification of its relations with its Polish neighbor this same year fills us with particular pleasure.

In contrast, to the great regret of the German Reich Government, the relations of the Reich to the present Austrian Government are not satisfactory. The blame does not lie with us. The allegation that the German Reich is planning to do violence to the Austrian State is absurd and can neither be substantiated nor proven.

It is, however, obvious that a single idea which seizes the entire German nation and moves it to its very depths will not halt before the border posts of a country which not only, in terms of its Volk, is German, but which also, in terms of its history as the Ostmark, comprised an integral part of the German Reich for many centuries; whose capital had the honor, for half a millennium, of being the seat of the German emperors; and whose soldiers fought side by side with the German regiments and divisions as recently as the World War.

Even apart from this, there is nothing peculiar about this fact when one considers that nearly all revolutionary thoughts and ideas in Europe have always made themselves felt hitherto beyond the borders of individual countries. For instance, the ideas of the French Revolution extended beyond the borders between States to inspire the peoples throughout Europe, just as today the National Socialist idea has naturally been seized upon by the German element (*Deutschtum*) in Austria out of an instinctive intellectual and spiritual association with the entire German Volk.

If the present Austrian Government considers it necessary to suppress this movement by utilizing every means at the State's disposal, then this is, of course, its own affair. However, it must then also personally assume the responsibility for the consequences of its own policy and answer for them. The German Reich Government only came to the obvious conclusions concerning the actions of the Austrian Government against National Socialism at that point when German citizens living in Austria or visiting there as foreigners were affected.

The German Reich Government cannot be reasonably expected to send its citizens as guests to a country whose Government has unmistakably made clear that it considers National Socialists, in and of themselves, undesirable elements.

Just as we would be unable to count on American and English tourists coming to Germany if these tourists had their national emblems and flags torn away from them, the German Reich Government cannot accept that those Germans who visit another country—and a German country at that—as foreigners and guests are subjected to this disgraceful treatment, for the national emblems and the swastika flags are symbols of today's German Reich. And Germans who travel abroad today, with the exception of the emigrants, are always National Socialists!

When the Austrian Government complains that Germany restrains its citizens²⁹ from traveling to a country whose Government is hostile even to the individual member of a Weltanschauung which here constitutes the prevailing one, it might take into consideration that, were these measures on Germany's part to be avoided, this would necessarily result in conditions which would, in fact, be unbearable. Since the modern German citizen is too proud and too self-confident to allow his respected national symbols to be torn down without resistance, there is no alternative but to spare such a country our company.

I must emphatically reject the Austrian Government's further allegation that the Reich would even plan, much less carry through, any such type of attack against the Austrian State.

The fact that tens of thousands of Austrian political refugees in Germany today are taking an avid interest in the events in their homeland may, in terms of its effects, be regrettable; however, the Reich is all the more incapable of preventing this since the rest of the world has hitherto not been able to put a stop to the activities of certain German emigrants abroad in respect to developments in Germany.

If the Austrian Government is complaining of political propaganda against Austria supposedly emanating from Germany, the German Government has a right to complain of the political propaganda being carried on against Germany in the other countries by political emigrants living there.

The fact that the German press is published in the German language and thus can also be read by the population of Austria is, perhaps, regrettable for the present Austrian Government, but this cannot be changed by the Reich Government. However, the fact that German newspapers are published in the millions in non-German countries and shipped to Germany would constitute genuine grounds for the German Government to protest, for there is no explanation for the fact that, for instance, Berlin newspapers are published in Prague or Paris.

How difficult it is to prevent political emigrants from taking action against their mother country is most clearly evident in the fact that even where the League of Nations is sovereignly responsible for the doings of a particular country, the activities of these circles of emigrants against their former mother country evidently cannot be stopped. Only a few days ago, the German State Police arrested another sixteen Communists at the border of the Saar who were attempting to smuggle large quantities of treasonous propaganda material from that domain of the League of Nations into the German Reich. If something of this sort is allowed so close to the source, one can hardly blame the German Reich for alleged incidents of a similar nature.

The German Reich Government also refrains from lodging any further complaint against the neighboring States based upon the anti-German propaganda of the emigrants which is tolerated there and has gone so far as to institute the performance of a judicial farce mocking the highest German court, a circumstance which ultimately resulted in a wild campaign of boycotts continuing even today. The German Reich Government can refrain from filing suit because it feels that it is the unshakable representative and trustee of the will of the German nation. It has preserved domestic security by not omitting to appeal to the German Volk several times in the space of one year, for its own peace of mind and for the purpose of enlightening the rest of the world, to have this trust confirmed by way of a plebiscite while by no means having been forced to do so.

It would instantly invalidate the attacks being directed against the present Austrian Government were it to finally decide to similarly call upon the German Volk in Austria to ascertain before the whole world whether its will is identical with that of the Government.

I do not believe that, for instance, the Government of Switzerland—a country with millions of citizens of German nationality—could have any complaint to make of any attempts on the part of German circles to interfere with its domestic affairs. It appears to me that this is based upon the fact that the government in existence there evidently enjoys the trust of the Swiss people and thus has no reason to blame domestic difficulties on motives of foreign policy.

Without wishing in the least to interfere in the internal affairs of other States, I nonetheless believe that I must say one thing: no regime can prevail for any length of time with force alone.

Thus it will always be a primary concern of the National Socialist Government of the Reich to ascertain over and over again the extent to which the will of the nation is personified in the government at its fore. And in this sense, we 'savages' are truly the better democrats.

In other respects, while myself being proud and happy to affirm my faith in the Austrian *Bruderland* as my homeland and the homeland of my fathers, I must protest against the idea that the German temperament of the Austrian Volk would require any stimuli at all from the Reich.

I believe that today I still know my homeland and its Volk well enough to know that the throbbing which fills the 66 million Germans in the Reich also moves its own hearts and senses.

May Fate decree that, in the end, a way may nevertheless be found out of this unsatisfactory state of affairs and to a truly reconciling settlement. The German Reich is willing at all times, given full respect to the free will of Austrian *Deutschtum*, to extend its hand to a real understanding.

In this review of foreign policy, I cannot omit mentioning my pleasure at the fact that the almost traditional friendship to Fascist Italy which National Socialism has consistently cultivated and the high esteem which the great leader of that people is also accorded in our country have been further and variously reinforced in the relations between the two States in the past year. The German Volk feels grateful for the many proofs of the both statesmanlike and objective

fairness which modern Italy has demonstrated toward it at the Geneva negotiations as well as subsequent thereto.

The visit of the Italian State Secretary, Suvich,³⁰ to Berlin has given us the opportunity to exhibit, for the first time, an indication of these sentiments for the Italian people—whose Weltanschauung is so close to our own—and for its outstanding statesman.

Just as the National Socialist Government of the Reich endeavored to come to an understanding with Poland this year, we have similarly made an honest attempt to reduce the differences between France and Germany and, if possible, to find the way to a final understanding by reaching a general settlement.

The fight for German equality of rights which, because it is a fight for the honor and the rights of our Volk, is one we will never give up, could, in my opinion, be terminated in no better way than in a reconciliation of the two great nations which have so often shed the blood of their best sons on the battlefield in the past centuries without effecting any essential and permanent change in the facts of the matter.

Thus I also believe that this problem cannot be viewed only through the spectacles of cold professional politicians and diplomats, but that it can be permanently solved only by the warm-hearted resolve of those who perhaps once faced each other as enemies but who, in their high regard for each other's bravery, might find a bridge to the future which must rule out a repetition of past suffering if Europe is not to be driven to the brink of disaster.

France fears for its security. No one in Germany wants to threaten it, and we are willing to do everything to prove this. Germany demands its equality of rights. No one in the world has the right to deny this to a great nation, and no one will have the power to prevent it for any length of time.

However, for us, the living witnesses of the horrors of the Great War, nothing is further removed from our thoughts than to make any sort of connection between comprehensible sentiments and demands and a desire to once more put the forces of the nations to the test on the battlefield, an act which necessarily would result in international chaos.

Motivated by these sentiments, I have attempted, in the spirit of the necessary and desired cooperation between both nations, to bring about a solution to questions which otherwise are all too liable to cause a fresh ignition of the passions at play.

My proposal that Germany and France might already now mutually settle the problem of the Saar originated in the following considerations:

1. This is the only territorial question still open between the two countries. When this question is solved, the German Government is willing and determined to accept not only the letter but also the spirit of the Locarno Pact, for there would no longer be any territorial problem between France and Germany in its view.

2. In spite of the fact that a plebiscite will result in a tremendous majority for Germany, the German Government fears that, in the course of preparations for the plebiscite, national passions will flame up, urged onward by fresh propaganda and fueled particularly by irresponsible circles of emigrants; in view of

the already certain result, this would not be necessary and is hence to be deplored.

3. Regardless of the outcome of the plebiscite, it will in any case necessarily leave behind the feeling of defeat for one of the two nations. And even if the bonfires would be burning in Germany, from the viewpoint of a reconciliation between the two countries, we would be happier if a solution equally satisfactory to both sides could be found in advance.

4. We are of the conviction that, had France and Germany provided for and resolved this question beforehand by mutually drafting an agreement, the entire population of the Saar would have enthusiastically approved of this solution with an overwhelming majority and with the consequence that the request of the population of the Saar to cast its vote would then have been granted without one of the two nations in question having to be made to experience the outcome of the plebiscite as a victory or a defeat, and without providing a new opportunity for propaganda to obstruct the mutual understanding budding between the German and French peoples.

Thus today I still regret that, for their part, the French are not inclined to accept this idea. However, I am not relinquishing hope that nevertheless the will to achieve a genuine reconciliation and to once and for all bury the hatchet will grow consistently stronger in the two countries and win out in the end.

If this succeeds, the equality of rights unwaveringly demanded in Germany will no longer be perceived in France as an attack against the security of the French nation, but as the self-evident right of a great Volk with which it not only maintains amicable political relations, but with which it also has so infinitely many economic interests in common.

We gratefully welcome the endeavors of the Government of Great Britain to place its assistance at the disposal of promoting these amicable relations. We will do our best to examine the draft of a new disarmament proposal given to me yesterday by the British Ambassador in the spirit which I endeavored to explain in my speech in May as being the guiding principle in our foreign policy.

When the German Government was forced to decide this year to withdraw from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations, it did so because the developments surrounding the question closest to Germany's heart of granting equality of rights in connection with international arms control were no longer compatible with what I had to establish in May as the inalterable basic demand not only for the national security of the German Reich but also for the national honor of our Volk.

At this time, I can only once again repeat to the world that there is no threat and no force which could ever move the German Volk to relinquish its claim to the rights which can never be denied to a sovereign nation.

But I can further pledge that this sovereign nation has no other desire than to gladly invest the power and the weight of its political, ethical and economic values not only toward healing the wounds inflicted upon the human race in times past, but also in the interests of a cooperation between the civilized nations which, as a British statesman has rightly stated, through the products of their intellect and labors, are what make life in this world a beautiful thing and genuinely worth living.

January 30, 1934

After one year of the National Socialist Revolution, the German Reich and the German Volk have become inwardly and outwardly more mature to assume that share of the responsibility for the prosperity and good fortune of all peoples which is allotted to such a great nation by Providence and hence cannot be denied it by human beings.

The willingness to fulfill this genuinely international obligation cannot be expressed in any symbol more fitting than in the person of the aged Marshal who, as an officer and victorious leader, waged wars and battles for the greatness of our Volk and today, as President of the Reich, is the most venerable guarantor for the task of peace so important to all of us.

2

At the conclusion of Hitler's speech, the Reichstag unanimously passed the following law:³¹

Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich of January 30, 1934.

The plebiscite and the Reichstag election of November 12, 1933 have proven that the German Volk has overcome all internal borders and differences to become molten together in an indissoluble inner unity.

Hence the Reichstag has unanimously approved the following law which is hereby promulgated with the unison of the Reichsrat, it having been determined that the requirements for legislation amending the Constitution are fulfilled:

- Article 1: The representative bodies of the Volk in the Länder shall be dissolved.
- Article 2: (1) The jurisdiction of the Länder shall pass over to the Reich.
(2) The Land Governments shall be subordinate to the Reich Government.
- Article 3: The Reichsstatthalters shall be subordinate to the supervision of the Reich Minister of the Interior.
- Article 4: The Reich Government shall be entitled to lay down new constitutional law.
- Article 5: The Reich Minister of the Interior shall issue the ordinances and administrative regulations requisite for the implementation of the Law.
- Article 6: This Law shall come into effect at the date of its promulgation.

The passage of this law required a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag, because it affected the institution of the Reichsrat (representative body of the Länder) which had been guaranteed in the Enabling Act of March 24, 1933.

By completely divesting the German Länder of their power and assigning their jurisdiction to the Reich, Hitler accomplished the real purpose behind the much talked-about *Reichsreform*, the redivision of the Reich into other, more easily controlled administrative districts, and

hence could dismiss the subject from then on. His sole interest in the reform had lain in ruling out any possibility that a new concentration of power might arise in one of the German Länder and constitute a threat in the event of difficulties at home or abroad.

As far as Hitler was concerned, the Land Governments were free to stay on as pure administrative bodies, and they actually did remain in existence until 1945. With the exception of a few isolated reforms (e.g. the Greater Hamburg Law, the Greater Berlin Law, the transformation of several Prussian government districts into Prussian provinces, etc.) the Reichsreform sank into oblivion.

In Austria, Hitler later made certain that every trace of the Austrian Federal Government and the Federal States were erased and Reichsgaue and Reichsstatthalters installed in their place. Similar measures were undertaken in the Sudetenland, Danzig and the other eastern territories.

On February 2, Hitler spoke at a convention of Reichsleiters and Gauleiters in Berlin, once more repeating his alleged intention of instituting a leadership hierarchy.³²

“Laying the unshakable foundations of the leadership hierarchy will serve to solve and safeguard the question of the party leadership for all time,” he declared.

In order to lend further emphasis to the anti-monarchic passages of his Reichstag speech, Hitler had the Reich Minister of the Interior dissolve and ban all monarchistic associations on February 3.³³

On February 7, Hitler presented himself to students in Berlin as a real thinker.³⁴ Speaking on the occasion of the passage of a student constitution in the Philharmonie building, he made use of the pretentious and abstract style then common among certain philosophy professors.

Hitler expounded at length upon the many-facetedness of the German intellect and upon Marxism and the concept of race, once more invoking the spectre of an imminent Bolshevik takeover in Europe.

If allowed to triumph in Europe, in the next five hundred years Communism would necessarily bring about the complete annihilation of even the last vestiges of the fruits of that Aryan spirit which, providing the roots of culture and in its many-faceted boughs and branches, has bestowed upon the entire world the general foundations of our culture and thus our truly human foundations in the millenniums upon which history has shed light.

Just as Hitler demonstrated to this audience that his own rhetoric was up to par with that of academic professionals, he adapted his tone on February 14 to address construction workers at a roofing ceremony at

the chancellory,³⁵ where the Chancellor's quarters were being modified. "Every type of work is a service to the Volk," he declared. Meanwhile, the Dollfuss regime in Austria was under fire from an armed uprising led by the Republican *Schutzbund* (Defense League), a Social Democratic organization of armed troops. Open civil war raged in Vienna and other parts of the country for days until Dollfuss put a bloody end to the revolt by resorting to military force, directing artillery attacks against working class housing in Ottakring, Meidling, Simmering, and elsewhere and sentencing many to death.

Hitler made his views on the events in Austria public in an interview with Ward Price, the special reporter of the *Daily Mail*. In his remarks, Hitler indulged in juggling figures as he was wont to do, this time with the aim of stressing the lack of bloodshed and relative innocence of the National Socialist Revolution in contrast to other uprisings.

The interview granted to Ward Price, which also touched upon the topics of Russia and Poland, was published in London on February 18 and cited in the February 19 edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* as follows:³⁶

Hitler had replied that some people believed the German National Socialists had something to do with the unrest in Austria. This, he stated, was absolutely false.

"We sympathize neither with Herr Dollfuss nor with his opponents. Both sides are using the wrong methods. Nothing of permanence can be achieved by the violent methods to which they have resorted."

It had been impossible for the Austrian Socialists to achieve power by proceeding as they had, the Chancellor stated. It had been equally impossible for Dollfuss to draw the opponents over to his side by using the means he had.

Everyone knew that it was possible to raze buildings using shell fire, but these methods would never convince an opponent, they would serve only to embitter him. The only way to make a revolution successful lay in gaining a hold on one's opponent by persuasion.

"That is what we have achieved in Germany. Herr Dollfuss, on the other hand, attempted to carry out a coup d'état. He violated the Constitution and his methods were doomed to fail from the beginning."

Assuming one had proceeded in like fashion in Germany, what would have been the result? In Austria, Hitler noted, 1,600 persons had been killed and four to five thousand wounded. Germany's population was eleven times that of Austria's, which meant that Germany would have had 18,000 dead and 50,000 wounded.

"What are the facts? The total number of our adversaries killed in the disturbances amounted to twenty-seven, while the number of wounded was 150. Among them was not a single woman nor a single child. Not one building was destroyed, not one shop raided.

“Germany’s critics will say, ‘That may well be, but the Austrian Socialists were heavily armed!’”

So were the German Communists, Hitler continued. All kinds of weapons imaginable had been found in their possession.

The reason why the German Communists had not made use of these weapons was due to the fact that they had been won over to the cause of the National Socialists by persuasion, he said.

The proof for this lay in the election of this past November, in which a mere two million people had voted against the new regime, although previously the German Communists had numbered six million and the Social Democrats seven million. The remaining eleven million former opponents of National Socialism had not been suppressed, but converted.

The correspondent asked the Chancellor whether the developments in Austria would influence Germany’s attitude toward that country. Hitler replied:

“By no means, the policies I uphold are determined solely by German interests.”

Naturally the incidents of this week would serve to strengthen the position of the present Austrian Government, but on the other hand the number of Austrian National Socialists would increase. He was expressing only his private and personal view, Hitler stated, but it was his conviction that particularly the workers of Austria would side with the National Socialist cause as a natural reaction against the violent methods the Austrian Government had used against them.

The correspondent then remarked to the Chancellor that the German peace pact with Poland had come as a great surprise to the world and that several people were interpreting it as his intention to establish a basis for a joint attack on Russia by Germany and Poland with the aim of territorial expansion.

Hitler had laughed incredulously and stated:

‘ . . . What? We take territory from Russia? Ridiculous!’

The correspondent interjected that, ten years before in his book, *Mein Kampf* Hitler had recommended acquiring new territory in Russia as a home for future German settlers, but that the decrease in the birth rate which had taken place since then had halted the growth of the German population, so that the necessity of a larger area was now of lesser importance.

In the further course of the interview, Hitler had said that all prior attempts to lay the groundwork for a lasting peace in Europe had failed because public opinion had held that Poland and Germany were irreconcilable enemies. He had never held this view. The first thing he had done after achieving power had been to take steps to initiate negotiations with Poland.

He had found that the Polish statesmen were very magnanimous and just as peacefully minded as he himself. The gulf which had been regarded as unbridgeable had now been crossed. The two nations had come closer together, and it was his sincere hope that this new understanding would signify that Germany and Poland had permanently abandoned the idea of resorting to arms not only for ten years, but for all time.

In respect to the situation within Germany, the Chancellor had stated that many thousands who had been in the concentration camps had already been

released, and he hoped that even more would be freed. They had been interned not as an act of revenge—as had been the case in Austria—³⁷ but rather because these opponents were not to be allowed to disrupt the process of restoring Germany's political health. They had been given time to change their views. As soon as they were willing to take a pledge to relinquish their hostile attitude, they would be released.

The reporter countered with the question, "Do you intend to free Dimitrov, Popov and Tanev?" and Hitler replied, "The court has pronounced its judgment; the sentence will be carried out." The correspondent stressed that these had been the exact words of Hitler's response.

"Do you believe," the correspondent continued, "that these people will be released and brought beyond the German border?"

Hitler had replied, "They certainly will."³⁸ He had added that he nevertheless believed that their release did not reflect the will of the German Volk, but the court's judgment would be carried out.

On February 19, Hitler persuaded the Reich President to adopt the sovereign symbol of the NSDAP for use in the Armed Forces. This was made public in the following official notice:³⁹

In order to demonstrate the alliance between the Wehrmacht and the Volk and State, in accordance with the Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich and at the request of the Minister of Defense, the Reich President has issued a decree adopting the sovereign symbol of the NSDAP for use in the Wehrmacht as well.

There was nonetheless no discernible connection between the Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich and the use of this party emblem by the Armed Forces, unless the step was taken in line with the "continuation of the National Socialist Revolution" which Hitler had cited in his January 30 speech.

The action itself was doubtless revolutionary, for at that time the insignia of the NSDAP—eagle with swastika—which was to be worn only on the uniform cap and above the right breast pocket of the tunic, was an internal Party symbol and by no means the national emblem of the State.⁴⁰

There was every indication that Hindenburg, Blomberg and the entire Reichswehr were rushing to outdo the party organizations themselves in promoting the National Socialist Revolution. The German warships also began to fly the swastika at their bows as of this date.

On February 21, Hitler received the British Lord Privy Seal, Anthony Eden—who was later to become Foreign Minister—for a discussion on disarmament policy at the Reich Chancellory. According to Bullock,⁴¹ Hitler offered to reduce the forces of the SA by two thirds and to see to it that the remainder neither possessed arms nor were given military training—proposals which Hitler repeated in April 1934.

The developments of the following years revealed what such ‘magnanimous gestures’ were actually worth, and thus they are to be accorded little real significance here. Nonetheless, Hitler had given a further indication⁴² of the fact that his primary interest lay in the future of the Reichswehr and not in that of the SA, and in this respect it is not surprising that Röhm was not particularly overjoyed at noting the obvious inclinations of his “OSAF” when these proposals were published in the Prague newspapers.

On February 24, Hitler traveled to Munich for the Party’s anniversary. There he attended a concert of the National Socialist Reich Symphony Orchestra in the Tonhalle before proceeding to the Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus to deliver his annual memorial speech with a lengthy version of the ‘party narrative.’⁴³ in respect to the tasks of the future, he declared that the Party must be filled by the idea of its exclusivity and by the basic principle: “We will not tolerate any political manifestation other than our own in Germany!”

Once more he announced his intention to conduct plebiscites on an annual basis and to courageously submit to the judgment of the people. Of course Hitler only had the courage to do so as long as things were going well and he had no reason to fear the findings of the people. Even in 1935 and 1937 he opted to waive conducting referendums of this kind so as not to “till” the Volk “like the peasant does his field.”⁴⁴

However, on February 24, 1934 he could still afford to boast:

On November 12 last year the Volk made a unique and miraculous affirmation, the greatest which has ever been given to a Movement in this world: we are of the conviction that it will be bestowed upon us again and again, if we again and again fight and struggle for this Volk. Hence we are also of the conviction that we must stand up before this Volk many times over. We are experiencing now, in another State, what happens when one no longer has the courage to step before the nation and ask it for its affirmation.

Things must never be allowed to progress so far in this country that, out of fear of rejection, we might have to resort to violence! We wish to bear in mind at all times that the powers of the German Volk must not be allowed to be squandered at home. Hence in future we want to give the Volk the opportunity to pass judgment upon us at least once a year.

Just as we have stepped before the Volk in tens of thousands, nay hundreds of thousands of rallies to ask for its ballot again and again, we must also continue this fight in the future in tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of rallies and meetings with the purpose of addressing an appeal to the entire nation at least once every year.

If the appeal ends badly, no one shall be able to say the Volk is to blame, but instead know that the Movement has become lethargic, that the Movement

is no longer really fighting, that the Movement has lost its contact with the Volk. And then this will enable us to learn once more to go forth among the Volk once again. This is where our power lies, and no politician can stand up to the world with more than what he has behind him.

Fate has taken from us the cannons, the machine guns, the planes, and the tanks, and this obligates us all the more to at least gather the entire Volk around us.

This is also the greatest conceivable policy of peace. He who represents an entire Volk will carefully consider the consequences which might easily ensue from a fight thoughtlessly started! He who has only a small clique to call his own and must fear being eliminated by the Volk might be inclined to give in to the temptation to compensate for an absence of internal successes by external ones.

We do not need any successes in foreign policy to win the Volk for our cause, for the Volk belongs to us. He who feels that an entire Volk as a whole is behind him will be careful not to thoughtlessly squander this blood, and he will consistently aim to promote the interests of the Volk with the instruments of peace, work and culture which the intellect has given to man. He will only appeal to the power of the nation in dire emergencies. However, he who knows that the Volk is behind him and does indeed have the Volk behind him can face even troubled times with confidence.

If we take a stand for true peace between nations, we can also require that the German Volk not be denied what every decent Volk has a right to demand. That is why we are just as fanatic advocates of peace as we are advocates of equal rights and hence of the vital rights of the German nation.

Following his speech at the Hofbräuhaus, Hitler proceeded to the Ausstellungspark (Theresienhöhe) to deliver a similar appeal to 6,072 political Amtswalters there.⁴⁵

On February 25, the “greatest swearing-in in history” took place under Rudolf Hess’ supervision in Munich: 795,000 Party Amtswalters, 130,477 Hitler Youth leaders, 43,062 BDM leaders, 1,900 leaders of the NSD Sudetenbund, and 18,500 leaders of the Labor Service swore their allegiance to Hitler by means of a joint radio broadcast. In the cities and villages across the country, the Amtswalters etc. had assembled for the ceremony; Hess, speaking nationwide on radio, recited the oath for them to repeat.⁴⁶ Hitler’s obsession with gigantic numbers and events had obviously spread to the entire Party by this time!

Hitler himself spent February 25 in Berlin, where he took part in the festivities in honor of the new “Heroes’ Memorial Day.” This holiday fell on the second Sunday of Lent and was dedicated to the memory of those who died in the First World War. It had previously been called the Volkstrauertag, but a ‘Day of National Mourning’ was naturally out of the question: dying for the Vaterland was no cause for mourning, but an

occasion for rejoicing over the new heroes Hitler was to grant German youth ample opportunity to become. The new name of *Heldengedenkttag* was even anchored in a law passed on February 27.⁴⁷

At the festivities at the State Opera, the Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, delivered a memorial speech while Hindenburg, dressed in his Marshal's uniform, and Hitler, wearing a cutaway, listened from their box. At the close of the program, Hitler rose from his seat and called out:⁴⁸

Soldiers! Ladies and Gentlemen!

Three cheers for our immortal German Volk, and its leader in the Great War, the President of the German Reich, Field Marshal von Hindenburg: *Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!*

Infantry General Göring as well naturally played various roles fitting his position of prominence at the State Opera, the laying of the wreath at the memorial, and in the parade.

On February 28, Hitler addressed the Reichswehr generals⁴⁹ and announced his plans of putting together a modern, armed people's army. He also spoke of the danger of economic relapses in Germany and intimated that offensives against the West and the East might be necessary to "create new Lebensraum." In this connection, he planned to make only domestic use of the SA or, at the outside, assign to it the task of border patrol.

On March 1, Hitler received King Boris III of Bulgaria for a lengthy conference in the Reich Chancellory.⁵⁰

The same day, the Landesleiter of the German Front in the Saar, Pirro, issued a statement proclaiming that the Social Democrats and Communists in the Saar had now joined the German Front.

Hitler traveled to Leipzig on March 6, where he first visited the Saxon Exhibition (*Sachsenfleiss*) and then attended the Technology Fair and the Saar Exhibition.

The primary purpose of his visit, however, was to participate in a Richard Wagner memorial service combined with the laying of a cornerstone. Frau Winifred Wagner was also in attendance.

After the welcoming address delivered by the Mayor of Leipzig, Carl Goerdeler,⁵¹ Hitler strode to the lectum and made the following speech:⁵²

Frau Wagner! Mr. Mayor! German Men and Women!

The greatness of nations has always been the sum of the total worth of its great men.

We Germans can be happy that many great sons have not only established and raised the value of our own Volk, but moreover have also made an everlasting contribution to the immortal work of the spiritual and cultural life of the whole world.

One of these men who, personifying the essence of what is best in our Volk, rose from national German greatness to international renown is Richard Wagner.

The greatest son of this city, the most tremendous master of our Volk's tones.

In attempting today to erect an earthly monument of stone to this man who himself created the fairest monument by virtue of his own endowment, we all foresee that it can and will be no more than a transitory symbol of our love, esteem and gratitude. For we all believe that one thing is certain: when not a stone of this monument is left standing as a witness to the master, his music will continue to ring out.

Mr. Mayor, you have asked me to ceremoniously lay the cornerstone of the Richard Wagner National Monument in Leipzig. In complying with your request, I am not acting as an individual, a man whom Fate has so deeply honored with this rare mission, but on behalf of countless of the best German men and women who perceive in me their spokesman and leader and whose deep sentiments I will attempt to express at this moment.

For today's German generation is trying, after having been purified by decades of confusion and raised in boundless misery, to find the way back to its own great master. It no longer wishes to have anything in common with that thankless age when the desire and the will of one of the greatest sons of our Volk was ignored not only in a symbolic sense, but in reality, too, and business was carried on as usual. This generation is drawing from the everlasting power of our Volk in that it is making its way back to the best of our minds.

Thus as early as the second year of the national uprising, it has found its way to this city to place anew at the feet of this immortal genius of its great son the deeply-felt gratitude of the nation through me, the Chancellor of the Reich, on this day, the day upon which the cornerstone for this monument is laid.

With the sincere vow to comply with the desire and the will of the great master to ensure that his immortal works live on in everlasting beauty so that future generations may also enter the wondrous world of this tremendous poet of sound, I hereby lay the cornerstone for the German National Monument to Richard Wagner as eternal witness and perpetual reminder of this.

When he laid the cornerstone, Hitler spoke in a voice choked with tears. The *Völkischer Beobachter* commented: "The Führer was visibly moved at these words."

On March 7, Hitler was back in Berlin for the opening of the International Automobile Exhibition in the Exhibition Halls on the Kaiserdamm.

In his speech on the occasion, he proclaimed that Germany's fuel supply would be secured in future on a national (i.e. synthetic) basis and

also announced the creation of a Volkswagen. The German automobile industry was reluctant to take on this project, for it had hitherto adhered to the principle of manufacturing distinctive high-quality vehicles and was disinclined to turn to mass production. Hitler cured them of these individualistic ideas, declaring:⁵³

The Government will be persistent and rigorous in continuing the program announced last year. It will give to the entire automotive sector the strong impulse it needs to overcome the general preconceptions on the one hand and the lethargy on the other. It will attempt to continue to directly and indirectly decrease taxes for the automobile owner. In addition to extending the tremendous Autobahn road network, the Reich is determined to devote practical attention to improving the existing major roads. The Reich Government will provide every possible support to the development of the automobile industry. Above all, it will continue its endeavors to establish a close and profitable link between this most recent means of transportation and the large existing transportation institution of the Reichsbahn. The problem of securing and producing fuel on a national basis will be solved!

Gentlemen, I do not need to paint a picture for you of the consequences of the existing attitude and the measures which have resulted from it.

There is no clearer proof of the effectiveness of our actions in the past year than the international Automobile Exhibition of 1934 in Berlin, which was organized literally as fast as lightning and which has become such a wonderful success.

Above all, it gives me the indestructible confidence that the commercial adroitness of our great plants, the ingenuity of our technicians and the miraculous productivity of our German manual laborers and precision workers will doubtless succeed in accomplishing the great tasks which still lie before us. And these tasks are not small.

Gentlemen, if we really want to increase the number of automobile owners in Germany to a figure in the millions, this is only possible if we adapt the price to the financial capabilities of the mass of millions of potential buyers in question.

The German Government desires that the German Volk take an animated interest in motorized vehicles, and it follows that the economy must design and build the right vehicle for the German Volk.

Only a few months ago, German industry succeeded, by fabricating a new *Volksempfänger* (people's radio), in introducing and selling an enormous number of radio sets on the market. I would cite the most significant task of the German automotive industry as that of increasing production of the one car which will necessarily open up a class of buyers numbering millions, for only if we are able to win over the broadest possible masses for this new means of transportation will its economic and social advantages be indisputable.

What German industry has accomplished in the years behind us is admirable. There is no country in the world showing greater progress in the construction of new automobiles than Germany. All the way from small models to the most modern racing cars, from trucks with diesel engines to motorcycles:

everywhere we see new paths being taken and truly ingenious ideas becoming reality. It should be noted that this Automobile Show is not the product of long planning, but shows a random sample of our industry's products.

When I invite the German Volk to review and inspect this random sample, I am doing so with the conviction that it will acknowledge with joyful pride this further proof of what its engineers, merchants and workers have once again accomplished. But I do not wish to let this opportunity pass without once more drawing the attention of every German to the many millions of those who even today have not yet found a way to earn their daily bread by their own labors.

It is the duty of every German to declare his solidarity with these Volksgenossen and to contribute, by his every action and his behavior, towards giving the new spiritual and physical workers of our Volk employment and thus a means of existence.

March 17 is the 100th anniversary of the day upon which the builder of the first automobile first glimpsed the light of day. In addition to Benz, we must also regard Daimler not only as the inventor of the first automobile engine, but also as the founder of the first and hence oldest automobile factory in the world. What a tremendous development has taken place between that fateful December 16, 1883, when an automobile engine was patented for the first time in the world, and today! Who can doubt that we will succeed in carrying on this wonderful development for the benefit of our entire German Volk?

And furthermore, we perceive in this new means of transportation an element of human cooperation which, extending far beyond the borders of an individual nation, ties nations together.

At a time when all of us have but the one earnest desire to heal the wounds of the past decades in peaceful cooperation with the other nations, we are happy to give to the world a visible demonstration of the background of the problems which concern us today and proof of the skill with which we master them.

Thus I am happy and proud to declare the International Automobile Exhibition of 1934 in Berlin open to the public.

On March 11, Hitler spoke at an act of state commemorating the first anniversary of the NSDAP's accession to power in Bavaria. The speech was held in the Ausstellungspark on the Theresienhöhe in Munich and climaxed in Hitler's proclaiming:⁵⁴

The capital of art and of our Movement is and always will be Munich!

One week later, on March 19, Hitler again spoke in Munich at what was called a "Revolution Roll Call for the *Alte Kämpfer*."⁵⁵

In his speech, Hitler went into long explanations of the concepts of liberalism, Marxism and *Reaktion*—all of which had been overcome by National Socialism. Here again he stated, "The Revolution must go on!" and delineated the position of the NSDAP as opposed to the other parties.

The victory of a party is a change in government; the victory of a Weltanschauung is a revolution which changes the very core and character of a Volk's constitution. One cannot become a National Socialist within a single year; it requires many years, and generations may well come and go before we have implanted the symbol of the Reich's victory in every heart. And only then will the National Socialist Revolution have been successfully completed and the German Volk saved at last.

In view of these remarks, it is impossible to seriously uphold the opinion that Röhm alone had developed the idea of a "second Revolution" or a "continuation of the Revolution." It was Hitler himself who fanned the flames in order to gain a mean excuse for later murdering the SA leadership.

In a speech marking the "beginning of the second battle for work (*Arbeitsschlacht*) on March 21 in Unterhaching near Munich, Hitler also attacked the domestic enemy, a favorite target of the SA as well.⁵⁶

The eternal pessimists and habitual carpers have never saved a Volk, but they have in fact destroyed numerous peoples, States and Empires.

Hitler delivered this speech at a construction site on the new Autobahn from Munich to the border (Salzburg) and dwelled mainly on the government's employment program, "the greatest Germany has ever known."

The fight for saving the Mittelstand is primarily also a fight against unemployment. This is the one gigantic problem which we are to solve and in view of which everything else must come second.

It was not quite true that Hitler treated all other matters as secondary to this problem. However, of all his measures, curbing unemployment constituted the primary interest of the German people and, in particular, of the German workers.

Hitler had closed his speech of September 23, 1933 marking the beginning of work on the first Autobahn in Frankfurt am Main with the words, "German workers, to work!" His speech in Unterhaching closed with the command, "German workers, begin!"

On March 22, Hitler once again summoned the Reichsstatthalters to the Reich Chancellory and admonished them to render him their unconditional subordination.⁵⁷

You are not representing the Länder to the Reich, but the Reich to the Länder.

Hitler's next public statement was made in an interview with Louis P. Lochner, an Associated Press correspondent, published on April 4.⁵⁸

He presented himself as an opponent of what was termed 'secret diplomacy' and claimed that one could have unreserved faith in what he said. His sole aim was to eliminate unemployment, and he was extremely concerned with the question of how he could protect Germany from enemy attacks. The interview was cited as follows:

Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler pointed out at the beginning of the interview that he was a staunch advocate of personal interchange, of "man-to-man diplomacy." He would most prefer, he said, being able to speak privately with the responsible leaders of the most important nations, including America.

The antiquated diplomatic method of exchanging notes defeated its own purpose, which was evidenced in the fact that, despite the endeavors of the diplomats, in 1914 the nations had skidded into the biggest war in history, although—in his own personal opinion—the diplomats had been most astonished of all when the War had, in fact, broken out.

The Führer continued: "Any representative of a foreign power will find, when he confers with me, that I am absolutely frank in stating what Germany is willing to do and that I do not make my demands any higher than is necessary. For instance, if I say that we need a Wehrmacht of 300,000 men, I will not condescend to reduce the number to 250,000 afterwards.

"I want to make Germany's word and signature respected once more.

"Under no circumstances will I subject to a *Diktat*. If I have once become convinced that a certain course is the only right course for my Volk, I will adhere to it, come what may. And what I do, I do openly. For instance, I will never be capable of outwardly accepting 150,000 men as a sufficient force for our Reichswehr and then secretly train and equip another 150,000 men."

Speaking of the armament problems resulting from France's refusal to adopt the English, Italian and German position, the Reich Chancellor stated:

"No one would be happier than I were the world to disarm. We want to devote all of our energies toward productive ends. We want to lead our unemployed back to work.

"Then we intend to raise each individual's standard of living. We want to drain our swamps, reclaim and improve unproductive land, if possible put our Volk in a position to provide for its own needs, enable the peasant to reap the maximum from his soil, put the manufacturer and industrial worker in a position to work as productively as possible, supply our country as far as possible with man-made substitutes for the raw materials it lacks. By building roads, digging canals, draining swampland, and installing dams and sluices, we are accomplishing constructive work which has a right to claim our energies.

"As a statesman who is responsible for the welfare of his country, I cannot allow Germany to be exposed to the danger that one of its neighbors might attack it or drop bombs on our industrial plants, or wage a so-called preventive war only in order to distract from its own internal difficulties. For this reason only—and for none other—do we demand a Wehrmacht which fulfills the requirements of a genuine defense."

In response to the question whether 'work for all' meant that a proletarian levelling would take place, in other words whether the Reich Chancellor would

be satisfied if, by stretching the available work, each person would in fact be assured of a certain minimum income, but that larger incomes would then disappear, the Reich Chancellor replied: "Just the opposite! Naturally the first step must be to eliminate the scourge of unemployment. However, as soon as our Volk has work again, buying power will also increase, and then the logical next step is an increase in the standard of living. We do not want to become a primitive Volk, but one with the highest possible standard of living. In my opinion, the Americans are right in not wanting to make everyone the same but rather in upholding the principle of the ladder. However, every single person must be granted the opportunity to climb up the ladder. I also believe that it is absolutely right that an invention should first be the property of the inventor; however, his endeavors must be aimed toward having his invention benefit the general public.

"The first windowpane was a luxury article, but today everyone wants glass. It has become an article of daily use. The first light bulb was a luxury article, but its inventor aimed at making it available to everyone. The aim and the purpose of all progress must be to make a Volk as a whole, and humanity as a whole, happier than before."

Subsequently, in the words of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Lochner "was allowed" to pose "a number of questions for the purpose of making Adolf Hitler's personality more comprehensible to the American people."

A notable feature is the extent to which Hitler boasted of the "blind" devotion of his staff (including, of course, the Reich Ministers), who had subordinated themselves to his wishes "in an admirable way." "The world has never witnessed a more wonderful example of blind empathy than that which my staff provides," he declared.

Lochner's initial question was: "Mr. Chancellor, what is your attitude toward criticism, both personal and that in the press?"

The Chancellor replied: "Do you know something else? That I have surrounding me an entire staff of experts thoroughly versed in economic, social and political life whose sole purpose is to criticize? Before we pass a law, I show these men the draft and ask them, 'Would you tell me what is wrong with this, please?' I do not want them to simply say amen to everything. They are of no value to me if they are not critical and do not tell me which defects might, under certain circumstances, detract from our measures. I am similarly not in support of the press simply printing only what it has been instructed to print.

"It is no pleasure to read newspapers which all have almost exactly the same text. In the course of time, our editors will be so trained that they will be able to make their own valuable contributions to building the nation. However, there is one thing of which I can assure you: I will never tolerate a press whose exclusive aim is to destroy what we have undertaken to build up.

"If an editor's policy is to hold up his own interesting Weltanschauung in contrast to ours, may he take note that I will then equally make use of the

modern opportunities afforded by the press in order to combat him. I will allow the agents of foreign powers no opportunity whatsoever. People like these agents are infringing upon their right to hospitality. I warmly welcome foreign correspondents who report what they see and hear in Germany objectively and without bias. However, each and every correspondent should make it a matter of his own concern, for his own sake and for the sake of his reputation as a journalist, not to expose himself to the risk of having to deny his own reports because he has failed to correctly assess the effectiveness of our regime. Bear in mind that the press was forced to change its opinion of Richard Wagner."

"Whereas on the one hand, I want criticism," the Chancellor continued, "on the other I insist that those who work for the welfare of the entire Volk must have the security of knowing that they can go about their work in peace. The mistake of the systems which preceded our own lay in the fact that none of the ministers nor anyone in public office responsible to the State knew how long they would be at the helm. This had as a consequence that they were able to neither do away with the deplorable state of affairs their predecessors had left behind nor dare to concern themselves with questions involving the future. I assured the gentlemen when I took over the government—even those who were not members of my Party—that they could be certain of the stability of their offices. As a result, they were all enthusiastic and wholeheartedly devoted to what they were doing, and their sights were set solely on a constructive future."

Lochner then asked, "Mr. Chancellor, it has occasionally been said that, among the gentlemen in your immediate vicinity, there are those who would like to take your place. It is claimed, for instance, in respect to one of your most prominent staff members that he attempts to thwart your measures."

Describing his own impressions after having posed this question, Lochner wrote: "The Chancellor's features became illuminated. It was as though the faces of the various men who had been closest to him in the struggle were passing by his mind's eye, and what he saw there pleased him."

The Führer replied: "Of course I know that you are asking this question in order to clarify my relationship to my staff and not because you are personally questioning their loyalty. It would really be slanderous to insinuate that any one of the men who have stood by me year after year had any desire to get me out of the way."

"The world has never witnessed a more wonderful example of blind empathy than that which my staff provides. Perhaps the reason why this type of story comes into being lies in the fact that I have not surrounded myself, so to speak, with washouts, but with real men. Washouts have no backbone. They are the first to collapse when things are going badly. The men around me are strong and upstanding men. Each of them is a person of stature, each has his own will and is filled with ambition. If these men were not ambitious, they would not be where they are today. I welcome their ambition."

"When such a group of powerful personalities comes together, it is inevitable that some friction may ensue. But never has a single one of the men who have given me their allegiance attempted to force his will upon me. On the contrary: they have subordinated themselves to my wishes in an admirable way."

Lochner's final question was: "Mr. Chancellor, in the days before you came to power, you were always among the people and had constant personal contact with them. When you go anywhere today, the streets are decorated, you are given welcoming addresses, you are greeted by the chief authorities. How do you nevertheless manage to keep your finger on the pulse of the nation? How do you maintain contact with the man on the street?"

With an almost boyish laugh, the Führer replied: "First of all, you should see what my lunch hour is like upstairs in this building. You would see how new faces appear there every day. My home is like a Central Station. My home is always open to my fellow fighters, regardless of how plain and simple their circumstances may be. Our organization reaches all the way down to the smallest village, and the men of my retinue come from all over to visit me in Berlin.

"We sit at the table and, with time, they tell me their cares and problems. Then again, there are naturally many other opportunities to come into contact with the Volk. I have mentioned this only as a typical example. However, I would like to stress one thing: although I listen to all of these minor cares and put together a composite picture of the whole from a wealth of details, I never allow my overall view to become clouded. I must constantly keep my sights focused on our primary aim and pursue this goal with unwavering tenacity. I am not equally satisfied with every single detail. Admittedly, I am forced to leave it to my staff to settle the minor matters.

"We are pursuing great aims. Our primary task consists of adhering to this method. I need four years to translate the first segment of our program into reality. Then I will require another four years for the next segment, and so on. We are striving for an important, a better, and a happier Germany."

Hitler's preface to the Italian edition of *Mein Kampf* was published on March 26. The book itself was being printed by the Milan publishing company, Bompiani. The preface read as follows:⁵⁹

Peoples who fight for lofty national ideas lead strong lives and look forward to a rich future. They have taken their fate into their own hands. Hence the sums of their composite powers do not seldom comprise values which enjoy international prestige and are more beneficial for the mutual coexistence of the peoples than the "immortal ideas" of liberalism which confuse and destroy the relations between nations.

Fascism and National Socialism, both related in their basic Weltanschauungen, are called upon to blaze new trails to productive international cooperation. To comprehend their purpose and their nature means to promote peace in the world and, with it, the welfare of the nations.

3

From April 11 to April 15, Hitler took part in a short voyage with the armored vessel *Deutschland* in Norwegian waters.⁶⁰ He was accompanied by Minister of Defense General von Blomberg, the Commander in Chief of the German Navy, Admiral Raeder, and other high-ranking Reichswehr officers.

There is no doubt that many significant matters were discussed in the course of the long, uninterrupted conferences which Hitler held with the generals at sea, including the future of the Reichswehr, the planned reinstitution of general conscription, and particularly the future position of the SA. Bullock⁶¹ is inclined to believe that Hitler used this opportunity to arrange for his own succession as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces after Hindenburg's death, in exchange for suppressing Röhm's plans and eliminating the SA as a power factor.

The time factor might well be right. The fact that Hitler did make such a promise is evidenced in an interview which the Chief of the Ministerial Office in the Ministry of Defense, General von Reichenau, granted to Stanislas de La Rochefoucauld of the *Petit Journal* in early August 1934.⁶² Reichenau stated verbatim: "The Reich Chancellor kept his word when he nipped Röhm's attempt to integrate the SA into the Reichswehr in the bud. We are devoted to him because he has proven himself a true soldier. The Army admires him for his personal courage, and I may stress the remark he made recently: 'The Reichswehr can depend on me as I depend on it.'"

The point is that Reichenau, who was doubtlessly well-informed by virtue of his position as State Secretary to the Minister of Defense, made no mention of a putsch plan but spoke merely of Röhm's attempt to integrate the SA into the Reichswehr. The Reichswehr might have been pleased at the prospect of gaining this additional support at its base; in any case, such an attempt did not, at that time, constitute high treason

as long as the reverse—integration of the Reichswehr into the SA—was not at stake. But Röhm's ideas ran counter to both the marked consciousness of rank uniting the Reichswehr Generals and Hitler's military plans. Ostensibly, however, this sufficed as a reason to dispose of him.

On April 17, Hitler attended the SS Spring Concert at the Berlin Sportpalast⁶³ with Blomberg and Röhm, the respective spokesmen for the Reichswehr and the SA. Hitler sat between the two men, already eyeing Röhm at his right as a doomed person. It was to be the last time he appeared in public with the head of the SA.

On the same day, Hitler received the Gauführers of the *Winterhilfswerk* in the Reich Chancellory and thanked them in a speech for their work in the preceding months.⁶⁴ He intimated that the *Winterhilfswerk* would become a permanent institution even after the present crisis had been overcome.

The *Winterhilfswerk* is to alleviate the misery which cannot be alleviated by official measures. It shall also contribute to educating the Volk in socialist thinking. In the affluent Germany of the pre-war age, it was not possible to establish such an organization. In months of the most intensive propaganda, pre-war Germany obtained a total of no more than seven million marks in donations for the zeppelin project, although it was a cause involving the entire Volk.

In a single winter, we have raised 320 million marks in an impoverished Germany. This enormous sum is not only an accomplishment in and of itself, but also proof of the spirit of sacrifice which abides in our Volk.

Hindenburg sent the following birthday message to Hitler on April 19:⁶⁵

Dear Herr Reichskanzler!

May I extend my best wishes for your 45th birthday tomorrow. In grateful acknowledgement of your constructive work for *Volk und Vaterland* in the past, may I express my heartfelt desire that you may be granted many more years of blessed work and personal well-being! In loyal comradeship and with warm regards, I remain yours faithfully,

von Hindenburg

The Reichswehr also sent a birthday message,⁶⁶ in which Blomberg wrote that the barracks of the First Battalion of Infantry Regiment 19 (Munich), one of the traditional troops of the famous List Infantry Regiment in which Hitler had fought as a volunteer, was to be given the name "Adolf-Hitler-Kaserne."

On the occasion of Hitler's birthday, Chief of Staff Röhm issued an order of the day containing no evidence whatsoever of any planned action against Hitler.⁶⁷

The Supreme Commander of the SA, Adolf Hitler, today celebrates his 45th birthday. For us political soldiers of the National Socialist Revolution, he personifies the following:

What Germans have been yearning for since they first walked onto the stage of history and which two millenniums of German evolution did not accomplish, he has made reality: a Volk which has outgrown the conflicts of rank, class and confession to become united in a united Reich! Born of his spirit, under his flags, the SA has marched for a National Socialist Germany. Struggle and want, sacrifice and death have bound us to him in a community which nothing and no one can break or separate. We were, we are and we always will be proud and honored to be at all times his most loyal followers, upon whom the Führer can depend and build in good times and all the more in bad. On this day when, forty-five years ago, Fate bestowed upon the nation in him its savior, the brown and black battalions of the SA present their compliments to their Supreme Commander and renew their oath: to follow in his footsteps and perform his work in unwavering loyalty and never-faltering obedience—to be at the fore, in spirit and deed, at the reconstruction of the State and the evolution of the Germans as a Volk—to serve National Socialist Germany with body and soul unto death. Heil the Führer of the Germans! Heil the Supreme Commander of the SA, Adolf Hitler!

Berlin, April 20, 1934

The SA Chief of Staff
Ernst Röhm

On Hitler's birthday, Göring appointed Himmler to the post of Chief of the Secret State Police (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, *Gestapo*) in Prussia. Himmler's predecessor, Rudolf Diels, became District President in Cologne. All of these steps were mere foreshadowing of what was to come on June 30.

Hitler, who had received the Bulgarian Minister-President Mushanov in Berlin the day before, spent his birthday traveling from Berlin to Munich by car. He made various stops: in the Fichtel Mountains, in the northern part of the Franconian Jura, and near Eichstätt. He was welcomed at each stop by delegations of the BDM, Labor Service, and SA.⁶⁸

On April 24, Hitler was back in Berlin, where he issued a statement of thanks for the many "well-meaning birthday wishes."⁶⁹

The health of the Reich President was declining steadily, and von Hindenburg was unable to personally take part in the festivities on the "National Holiday of the German Volk" as he had the year before at the youth rally in the Lustgarten and the reception of the workers' delegations.

On April 30, the Reich President and the Reich Government issued a joint appeal to the German Volk which had undoubtedly been composed by Hitler.⁷⁰

April 30, 1934

For the first time in our history, the inner fraternal strife has been settled and the unity of all Germans achieved. That for which our fathers yearned for centuries has thus become reality. Upon this foundation, the German Volk has accomplished great things in the past year. With the weapons of peace, triumphant battles have been won against want and misery, against unemployment and despair. Today's generation can feel proud that it has done its whole duty and thus will prevail before the judgment of German history. We owe our gratitude to the entire German Volk for this unprecedented accomplishment which is unique in history. The nation has every right to celebrate its national holiday on May Day with pride and inner satisfaction.

Berlin, April 30, 1934

The Reich President:
von Hindenburg

The Reich Government:
Adolf Hitler

The festivities began in Berlin with a youth rally in the Lustgarten. Representing the Reich President, Hitler delivered the address, stating in part as follows:⁷¹

If we want a strong Germany, you must one day be strong, too. If we want a powerful Germany, you, too, must one day be powerful. If we want an honorable Germany, you must one day uphold this honor. If we want order in Germany, you must maintain this order. If we want to once again create a loyal Germany, you yourselves must learn to be loyal. You are the Germany of the future, and thus we want you to be what this Germany of the future must and will be.

Therefore you must also avoid anything which impressed the stamp of dishonor upon the Germany of the past. You must cultivate the spirit of the great community. The German Volksgemeinschaft is anchored in you. For many centuries, people longed for what has become reality today. The nation expects you to be worthy of this great age. Above all, that is what this old, good Germany expects, a Germany which once made incalculable sacrifices for the Reich and the nation. Above all, this is what the great representative of this Germany of old, who has today become the benefactor and patron of our Volk, expects. Therefore let us greet the man who, for us, personifies three generations and in whom we see a symbol of the immortal life-force of the German Volk: to the German Volk, the German Reich, and our Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg: *Heil! Heil! Heil!*

At midday, Hitler received thirty-three workers' delegations from throughout the Reich, as well as a large delegation of National Socialists from the Saar, and made short speeches at both receptions.

In the afternoon, he attended the solemn session of the Reich Chamber of Culture, where Goebbels delivered a speech, and then proceeded to the Tempelhofer Feld.

If there had been between one and one-and-a-half million people assembled here the previous year, in 1934 there were even more who

poured out of the factories to flock to this mass demonstration—reportedly a total of two million workers.⁷²

Hitler commenced his speech⁷³ with a long version of the ‘party narrative’ before launching into a vigorous attack upon the zealotry with which “malicious elements” in Germany gave vent to their dissatisfaction.

Only a person who is better able to solve a problem is justified to criticize. We have come to terms with the problems in Germany better than our former opponents and current critics. We thus do not intend to allow the necessary authority accorded to the nation’s leadership to be attacked by those who perceive nihilism as the only fitting framework for their own futile activities. Whenever criticism becomes an end in itself, chaos must be its ultimate consequence. And just as we defend ourselves against these critics in order to preserve confidence in the nation’s leadership, we for our part also want to do everything to reinforce this confidence.

Millions of people who want to take an active part in reconstruction have offered me their support. Millions of our former opponents are today standing in our ranks and, thanks to their work and thanks to their skill as helpers in our reconstruction, are held in no less regard than our own longstanding party comrades. I may affirm before the German Volk that we do not perceive the nature of our authority in the effectiveness of cannons and machine guns, but rather in the actual confidence vested in us.

And just as we struggled as a Party for the trust and confidence of the Volksgenossen for fifteen years, we are now struggling and will continue in the future to struggle for the trust and confidence of the nation. For the belief that we—who were once laughed at and mocked—will one day be able to save the German Volk from misery and ruin was not founded in a confidence in the strength of any power we had, but based exclusively in a trust in the inner value of our German Volk. It is the blood-based essence of our nation which has prevailed again and again throughout so many centuries, which we knew and which thus never let us despair. For this reason, too, we will allow no one to destroy the trust placed in these values. The despondent weakling who sees the great events of our age only from the perspective of his own inadequacy can keep complaining, for all we care, but he should not confuse others.

In this past year, we have thus eliminated all those organizations which we were forced to regard as breeding grounds for phenomena which undermine the self, cause discord in the Volk, and lead ultimately to national and economic ruin. When we initiated the destruction of the German party system on May 2 of last year by taking over the unions, we did so not in order to rob any Germans of their useful representative bodies, but in order to liberate the German Volk from those organizations whose greatest damage lies in the fact that they were forced to encourage that damage be done in order to justify the necessity of their own existence.

Thus we have delivered the German Volk from an infinite amount of internal strife and discord which was of benefit to no one except those directly interested, but was a constant source of fatal harm to the entire Volk. Perhaps

there are some employers and entrepreneurs who today are unwilling to comprehend why we have proclaimed this May Day a public holiday for which the employer must pay wages. An explanation is called for, and I would like to give it to you here:

In the past, the German economy paid hundreds of millions of marks per year for the strife and discord between organizations which had torn employee and employer apart and transformed them into hostile advocates of two different causes. The total losses of national assets caused by strikes and lockouts were enormous. The National Socialist State has eliminated these primitive and senseless methods of reconciling economic interests. The resultant savings to the economy are extraordinary. It is only a very small sacrifice when, in return, the employers pay wages to their employees for a day which is to be the symbol of the fact that these conflicts have been overcome and that a true Volksgemeinschaft has been created.

In this past year, we began to establish this Volksgemeinschaft not only in a purely theoretical sense; we have also endeavored to secure the practical foundations it requires. For it is not sufficient to overcome unemployment as such, to simply train new workers; rather, it is necessary to gradually enlighten the millions of our Volksgenossen as to the nature of the new concept of work. More than one year ago, the National Socialist Party was victorious in Germany. All power and authority in the State is now in the hands of this organization. Millions of people voluntarily subjected themselves to it, and millions of others were brought into line. However, that does not mean that all of them became National Socialists. The purpose of the National Socialist idea—to put together a Volksgemeinschaft by overcoming rank, profession, class, and confession—is not fulfilled by simply registering with a party. One can become a party comrade by subscribing, but one can only become a National Socialist by adapting one's perception, by urgently appealing to one's own heart.

The National Socialist State is resolved to build the new German Volksgemeinschaft; it will never lose sight of this goal and, even if only gradually, it is certain to reach it. The gigantic organizations of our Movement, its political institutions as well as the organizations of the SA and SS, the structure of our Labor Front, and the State Organizations of our Army are all national and social melting pots in which, albeit gradually, a new German individual is being formed. What we do not successfully accomplish with the present generation we will achieve with the coming one. For just as doggedly as we have fought and fought again for the adult man and the adult woman, we shall fight for German youth. It is growing up in a different world and will be the first to do its share to build another world. In our National Socialist Youth Organization, we have created the school for the education of the individuals who will people a new German Reich.

With faith in their hearts and a strong sense of purpose, this youth will one day be a better link in our Volk's genealogical chain than we ourselves were and perhaps can be today.

The national May Day holiday, which we are celebrating today throughout Germany, plays a special and enormously significant role in this program of

forming our Volk anew. All of us talk about human culture and personal achievements, but only very few perceive in them the joint product of mental and physical strength. In the course of the centuries, it became all too customary to talk about the entrepreneur, the artist, the builder; to extol the technicians and to praise the engineers; to admire the architects; to follow the work of chemists and physicists with astonishment—but most of the time the worker was forgotten. People talked about German science, German craftsmanship, German economy as a whole, and they only ever meant one side of it. And that is how it came about that the most loyal helper of all was not only forgotten, but ultimately lost.

When you regard the symbol of today's celebration⁷⁴ which a German artist created for us, then it should convey to you the following: sickle and hammer were once the symbols of the German peasant and the German worker. The arrogance and lack of reason of a bourgeois age abandoned and lost these symbols. Ultimately, Jewish international litterateurs stole the tools of hard-working people and nearly succeeded in exploiting them for their own designs and purposes. The National Socialist State will overcome this ill-fated development. The hammer will once more become the symbol of the German worker and the sickle the sign of the German peasant, and the intellect must form with them an indissoluble alliance, just as we have been preaching and propagating it for a decade and a half. Therefore we have gathered together this day not only to celebrate German labor, but also to celebrate a new German individual. Just as an entire year has been praised in thousands of announcements, articles in the press, and speeches of the mental workers, today we wish to partake in celebrating the fame of that army of millions who—as unknown and nameless soldiers of work—have, by the sweat of their brow, made a loyal contribution in the cities and the country, on the fields, in the factories, and in the workshops, to produce those goods which rightfully elevate our Volk to join the ranks of civilized nations in the world and allow it to prevail in honor. And it is thus also our will that, on this day every year for all eternity, the entire German Volk may be conscious of what it has in common and, leaving behind it any disputes, may once more join hands in inner acknowledgement of its common alliance which we call the German Volksgemeinschaft.

But we do not wish to allow this day to pass without once more demonstrating in complete unanimity to the entire world our Volk's joint claim to the vital right we all have. From its venerable Reich President all the way down to each and every worker and each and every peasant, the members of the German Volk have but one single desire: to become happy and blessed, each in his own way and by his own labors. The Volk has no notion of revenge and does not strive for conquests. It wishes to extend its hand to every nation in understanding and reconciliation. However, it will never waver in upholding its own right to live, and will defend it against any foe. Above all, it will never relinquish its claim to being a Volk with equal rights, but it is likewise willing at all times to make sacrifices more than equal to those which other nations are also willing to make toward the preservation of peace and welfare on this planet.

We want you, my German Volksgenossen, to celebrate this May Day with us in this hour in our tens of thousands of cities, towns and villages, but we also

May 1, 1934

want you not to forget to humbly thank Him who allowed our work to prosper so well throughout the entire year, and we want to ask Him not to withhold His blessings from our Volk for the future as well. Above all, however, may Providence allow our most ardent wish to come true: that our German people come closer and closer together in mutual consideration and mutual understanding in order to finally attain that goal for which our Volk has fought for millenniums and for which many generations suffered and millions had to give their lives: a free German Volk in a strong German Reich.

In honor of the occasion, Hitler appointed the Prussian Minister of Culture, Bernhard Rust, to the post of Reich Minister of Science, Education and Popular Culture on May 1. Such a ministry had never existed before, and both Goebbels and Rosenberg had aspired to its head. Hitler solved this problem by transforming the Prussian Ministry of Culture into a Reich Ministry. At the same time, he appointed Frick Prussian Minister of the Interior, thus creating the impression of having not only promoted the unity of Prussia and the Reich which Hindenburg wanted but also of having taken yet another step in reforming the Reich. In this context, Hitler wrote the following letter to Göring:⁷⁵

My dear Göring,

As early as March 17 of this year, you proposed to me that the Reich Minister of the Interior, Dr. Frick, be entrusted with performing the duties of the office of Prussian Minister of the Interior. Placing your own personal interests secondary to those of the great work of the Reich reform, you expressed the desire to be released from your duties as Prussian State Minister and Minister of the Interior.

I have now complied with your wishes. Please find enclosed a certificate of dismissal from your post as Prussian State Minister and Minister of the Interior. I feel compelled in this context to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude for everything which you have accomplished in this post. You yourself have correctly pointed out that you have now solved the special problems involved in the administration of internal Prussian affairs, a task which I had assigned to you at the beginning of the National Socialist Revolution. You have accomplished this task with great circumspection and vigor. If now, retaining your office as Prussian Minister-President, you retire—corresponding to your own wish—from your post as Prussian Minister of the Interior and allow Dr. Frick, the Reich Minister of the Interior, to take your place, I know that this will serve—corresponding to your own wishes—to promote the great goals of the Reich reform in a particularly fitting way.

In true friendship and grateful regard,

Your Adolf Hitler

As early as May 2, it became evident that, although he had surrendered the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, Göring had by no means relinquished command of the militant associations of the Prussian Land Police.⁷⁶ Thus the following official notice was published:⁷⁷

Berlin, May 2. According to reports of the Official Prussian Press Agency, the responsibilities within the Prussian administration were clarified some time ago to the extent that the high command over the Land Police was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Minister-President. Thus Minister-President Göring has been accorded authority since then which hitherto had been granted to the Minister of the Interior. The routine business of the Land police is still being conducted by the head of the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior. He is directly subordinate to the Minister-President in respect to the affairs of the Land Police.

Hitler had already drummed up a stronger revolutionary spirit in March at his "Revolution Roll Call for the *Alte Kämpfer*," and in May and June he deliberately provoked a high degree of excitability among party members. If SA men in particular, motivated and encouraged by the multitude of propaganda against "killjoys, faultfinders, saboteurs, and agitators," lost control, this would make it all the easier for him to justify his actions in murdering Röhm and the leadership of the SA and the former Freikorps. Apparently the murders had already been slated for June 30 at this time.

On May 3, Hitler had Goebbels publish the following official notice:⁷⁸

Following the tremendous demonstrations on May Day, which documented even more clearly than in the previous year the community of all honest workers, the Reichspropagandaleitung of the NSDAP has ordered that a large-scale propaganda action in respect to public meetings be undertaken which will be aimed particularly against the killjoys and fault-finders, the rumor-mongers and good-for-nothings, and the saboteurs and agitators who still believe that they can disrupt the clear reconstruction work of National Socialism. Beginning with the first days of May and until June 30 [!], public meetings, demonstrations and rallies shall shake up the Volk like drumfire against this nuisance which must be disposed of once and for all. In accordance with the methods practiced in times of fighting, the meetings will encompass everyone down to the very last village, gain in tempo with each passing week, with an even harder relentlessness in their demands, and completely eclipse all previous actions in terms of decisiveness and results.

On May 7, Hitler sent a telegram to the Mayor of Saarbrücken, thanking him for the freedom of the city with the following words:⁷⁹

The honor bestowed upon me by the City of Saarbrücken on the Day of National Work afforded me great pleasure. I hereby accept with sincere thanks the freedom of the city, a city which did not allow itself to be surpassed by any other city in respect to its German loyalty.

The working Volk in the Saar can be assured of my care from the day of reunification onwards.

Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler

On May 7, Hitler received a delegation from the Japanese Navy under the leadership of Vice Admiral Matsushita.⁸⁰ On the same day he made a speech before 400 NSDAP editors who had gathered at the Kaiserhof Hotel in Berlin.⁸¹

Again on May 7, Hitler sent his condolences per telegram to Buggingen (Baden), where a disastrous mining accident had taken place.⁸²

On May 16, he made a speech at the Second Labor Congress in the auditorium of the Prussian Herrenhaus in Berlin⁸³ which closed with the words:

We will never violate the peace, but let no one believe himself capable of conquering us in peacetime without resistance.

On May 17, Hitler received a delegation of German craftsmen in Berlin headed by the Reich Master Craftsman, Schmidt, and accepted a contribution to the "Adolf Hitler Welfare Donation Fund."⁸⁴

May 27 to 30 Hitler attended the Reich Theater Festival in Dresden, where he stayed at the Bellevue Hotel.⁸⁵ On May 27, he attended a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* and spoke with the main actors and the stage crew. The following day, he honored the Dresden Infantry School with a visit lasting several hours and spoke there with high-ranking Reichswehr officers. Apparently this was the real motive behind his visit to the city, for the action against the SA leadership planned for June 30 primarily concerned the territories with military significance under the control of the SA groups Berlin-Brandenburg, Mitte (Saxony), Silesia, Pomerania, and Ostmark.⁸⁶

On May 29, Hitler toured the Reichsstatthalter's offices, the City Hall, and the State Opera and at 3:00 p.m. delivered a short speech to SA leaders at the Bellevue.

On May 30, Hitler met with the composer Richard Strauss and received a delegation of BDM members from Siebnitz. He also spoke briefly to a group of Saxon Kreisleiters.

In the afternoon he returned to Berlin, where he received the Skagerrak Guard of Honor formed by the Navy every year on the anniversary of the sea battle. This year it was comprised of officers and crew members of the cruiser *Köln* who gathered in the Reich Chancellory. Hitler made use of this opportunity⁸⁷—and every other which was afforded him at the time—to express his solidarity with the Reichswehr.

In early June,⁸⁸ Hitler conferred with Röhm in Berlin for five hours, a fact he later disclosed in his speech of July 13,⁸⁹ in which he allegedly expressed his fears of a "national Bolshevik action" on the part of the SA.

I then further explained to him that I had heard rumors of plans to include the Army in the framework of this scheme. I assured Chief of Staff Röhm that the claim to the effect that the SA was to be dissolved was a malicious lie, that I could not make any comment whatsoever in respect to the lie that I myself was planning action against the SA.

Even according to Hitler's version of the talk, which certainly was trimmed for his own purposes, it is evident that Röhm apparently had reason to complain about rumors of hostility against the SA. The news of Hitler's offer to England to reduce the SA by two thirds were by no means pure invention.⁹⁰ Hitler claimed that he had informed Röhm of "totally unacceptable excesses" and demanded "thorough eradication" (*restlose Ausmerzung*).

According to Hitler, the Chief of Staff had left the conference with the promise of taking care of the matter; however, in reality, he had then begun preparing Hitler's own demise.

It is a futile endeavor to speculate what Hitler and Röhm actually said to one another, for there were no witnesses and no record was drawn up. Thus it is recommendable to adhere to the factual consequences summed up in the speech:

1. Röhm declared his willingness to immediately take "sick leave" and retired to Bad Wiessee for this purpose.

2. For the month of July, the entire SA was to take leave; merely a small number of leaders and men were to maintain business operations in the various offices. In exchange, these persons were to be given leave in June.

Although Röhm was not willing to comply with Hitler's proposal to transform the SA into a pure sports association,⁹¹ he did remain loyal to the Führer and had no intention of disobeying his orders as Strasser had done in December and January of 1932/33. He walked unsuspectingly into the trap Hitler had constructed with diabolical cunning.

Hitler was a coward by nature; the various 'tests of courage' to which he submitted himself during his lifetime were dictated only by his will and thus appeared more staged than natural. More often than not, he was interested primarily in creating the impression of being courageous, and the 'tests' were planned so as to rule out any possibility of failure or real danger. The steps Hitler took against Röhm constitute a typical example, both in the planning and in the action itself, of this type of behavior.

Hitler made long and careful preparations for his strike against Röhm and the SA leadership and planned everything down to the last detail.

The “action against the fault-finders and saboteurs” cited above, which Hitler had scheduled for the period from May 3 to June 30, comprised one element. He undoubtedly expected SA men to step out of line, thus giving him an excuse for carrying out his plans, particularly in light of the explosive tension existing between the SA and the Stahlhelm at the time.

Furthermore, Hitler wanted to take every precaution and, if possible, rule out any danger of resistance. To do this, it was necessary to remove Röhm from his accustomed surroundings and persuade him to take lodgings in a normal hotel for a protracted stay at a spa.

The date had been fixed for June 30, a Saturday: Hitler preferred scheduling his more controversial actions on weekends,⁹² for he could launch surprise attacks and need not fear major public reactions before Monday.

Hitler personally summoned the SA leaders to a convention at Bad Wiessee on June 30, proceeding on the—correct—assumption that he could thus most easily arrest the unsuspecting men without danger of resistance.

He had also instructed Röhm to put the majority of the SA on leave for a full month from July 1, with uniforms being banned for this period. These measures reduced the danger of an uprising among the SA after the news of the liquidations became public. The normal behavior exhibited by Röhm and the SA leaders serves, however, to show that by no means had they believed their Führer capable of such actions.

After his five-hour talk with Hitler, Röhm had the following notice published:⁹³

Berlin, June 7, 1934

The Press Office of the Supreme Command of the SA reports that the chief of Staff of the SA, Reich Minister Ernst Röhm, has been granted sick leave for several weeks. The Chief of Staff was ordered by his physicians to take this leave for the purpose of undergoing a health cure which has proven necessary.

In order to preclude any misinterpretations to which this may give rise, the Chief of Staff has asked that it be made known that he will continue to exercise the duties of his office in full when he has been restored to full health.

Following its well-earned July leave and fortified anew, the SA will likewise continue to accomplish its great tasks in the service of the Führer and the Movement as before.

On June 8, Röhm issued the following order from Munich:⁹⁴

I have decided to follow the advice of my physicians and take a health cure in order to fully regain my physical powers, which have been weakened in the past weeks as a result of a painful nervous disorder. The head of the Leadership Office, Obergruppenführer von Krausser, will represent me in my absence.

June 8, 1934

The year 1934 will demand the full power of all of the fighters in the SA. Thus I recommend all SA leaders to commence scheduling leave even in June. In particular, all those SA leaders and men who must be available for work in July should be granted leave in June.

Hence the month of June will be a time of complete relaxation and rest for a limited number of SA leaders and men, and the month of July will provide the same to the bulk of the SA.

I expect that, on August 1, the SA will be completely rested and strengthened and stand ready to serve the honorable tasks which Volk and Vaterland have a right to expect of it. If enemies of the SA are nurturing false hopes that the SA will not return—or only return in part—after its leave, they may enjoy their shortlived hopes for the time being. With time and in the manner which appears appropriate, they will receive the answer they deserve.

The SA is and will remain Germany's destiny.

The Chief of Staff: Röhm

Röhm's closing words were undoubtedly addressed to the circles of the Reichswehr who harbored the hope that the SA would be dissolved—a fact of which Röhm was fully aware. He set off for Bad Wiessee to take up quarters in the Hanselbauer Hotel⁹⁵ situated at the shore of the Tegernsee, where he settled in to enjoy a few weeks of vacation and sun.

On June 4, the Council of the League of Nations in Geneva had unanimously approved of January 13, 1935 as the date for the Saar plebiscite. It was the earliest possible date on which the plebiscite could be scheduled.⁹⁶

Another of Hitler's demands had been fulfilled. At that time he had apparently already conceived of the plan of announcing the reinstitution of general conscription immediately after the Saar had returned to the Reich. Every day counted, for he wanted to call as many men as possible to arms in 1935 in order to have them fully trained in time for his expansion campaigns. Hitler's satisfaction at the early plebiscite date is evidenced in a letter he wrote to von Papen on June 7:⁹⁷

Finally the date has been fixed for the plebiscite in the Saar. On this occasion I must express to you, Herr von Papen, as the person assigned by me to represent the interests of the Saar, my most sincere thanks. The self-sacrificing and untiring work which you have done in fighting for the return of this territory to the German Vaterland has brought the fairest reward for all Germans and hence also for you.

With trusting and grateful regards, Yours faithfully, Adolf Hitler

On June 9, Hitler sent his greetings to the German Red Cross from Berlin on the occasion of Red Cross Day on June 10.⁹⁸

June 11, 1934

On June 11, the newspapers contained the first indications of a forthcoming meeting between Hitler and Mussolini.

The reasons why Hitler desired such a meeting became clear only several weeks later. There was no doubt in Hitler's mind that the planned murder of Röhm and other public figures would give rise to a catastrophic mood in Germany. Thus, so he believed, it was necessary to arrange for some sort of conspicuous success with which to repair the damage done to the prestige of the National Socialist regime. The most obvious and certain way to score these vital points was by a National Socialist takeover in Austria; however, in the short time available, this could only be accomplished by a violent coup.

It would have facilitated Hitler's plans if Mussolini had been supportive or at least disinterested. However, at that time it was highly improbable that the Italian dictator would exhibit such behavior, for he maintained good relations with Austria in the economic sector as well and regarded the neighboring State almost as a satellite.

Goebbels traveled to Warsaw on June 13, and the following day, at 8:20 a.m., Hitler flew to Venice where he arrived shortly after 10:00 a.m. in the company of Foreign Minister von Neurath.

It was the first time Hitler visited a foreign country under normal circumstances. The time he spent in the occupied part of France and in Belgium during World War I could not leave him with any real impression of foreign countries and peoples. Although he had put his above-average power of retention to use committing the maps of the major European capitals to memory and learning the details of all of Europe's culturally significant architectural monuments,⁹⁹ his actual knowledge of foreign mentalities and the real power relationships in Europe and the world were confined to what is taught in elementary schools.

He who had taken every opportunity to criticize the German bourgeoisie as bigoted and ignorant behaved, whenever he was not taking part in political conferences or giving speeches, no differently from a German Philistine on his various visits to Italy until 1943.

Upon landing in Venice on June 14, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Italian King, Victor Emmanuel III:¹⁰⁰

As I set foot on Italian soil, I may address my respectful compliments to Your Majesty in the hope that my meeting with the head of Your Majesty's Government may contribute to the welfare of our two friendly countries and to the world peace for which all nations so yearn.

Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler

When the 'Immelmann D 2600' touched down at the San Niccolò airfield, Hitler was the first passenger to disembark. He immediately strode over to greet Mussolini, who was waiting a few steps away with his entourage. The Führer wore civilian clothes, a light-colored gabardine coat and felt hat; *Il Duce* was dressed in the black uniform of the Italian Fascists. The two dictators shook hands and then boarded a motorboat to cross the lagoon and take the *Canale Grande* to the Grand Hotel, where Hitler was staying for his two-day sojourn.

At Mussolini's invitation, Hitler lunched with him in the royal Villa Pisani in Strá, where the two heads of government then talked in private for two hours following their meal.¹⁰¹

Towards evening, Mussolini returned the visit, spending a short time in the Grand Hotel with Hitler. At 10:00 p.m. the host and his guest attended a concert featuring works by Verdi and Wagner in the courtyard of the Doge's Palace.

Early the next day, Hitler toured the *Biennale*, the International Art Exhibition, and returned to his hotel, where he received a number of National Socialist Amtswalters working in the Foreign Organization for Italy.

At 11:00 a.m. he proceeded to St. Mark's Square, where Mussolini treated him to a parade of Fascist militia organizations. Apparently the Italian dictator was not aware of Hitler's aversion to militias.

A lunch reception at the Lido Golf Club followed at 1:00 p.m., sponsored by the Italian Secretary of the State Department at that time, Fulvio Suvich.

Afterwards Hitler and Mussolini once again met privately for two hours. Since the Duce spoke German, the presence of an interpreter was not required.

The two dictators strolled back and forth under the palm trees, but their conference was not characterized by quite the unanimity Hitler had expected.

Captain Baur, who watched the two from a distance, saw that their talk occasionally flared into excited discussion and that they stamped their feet for emphasis.¹⁰² Their topic was undoubtedly the Austrian question, and Hitler's flow of words made little impression on the Italian head of government who, at that time, was somewhat sensitive about Italy's neighbor to the north, Mussolini could still afford to be patronizing and treat Hitler with a certain amount of condescension. In the course of later years, he would learn how to listen and realize that he was the one who had to be subordinate.

June 14, 1934

A huge rally was scheduled for 5:00 p.m. in St. Mark's Square. Mussolini had arranged for special trains to bring in 70,000 Blackshirts: evidently he interpreted Hitler's visit to Venice as a tribute to his own politics. Lavish in his use of bombastic phrases, Mussolini declared:

A meeting has taken place these past few days here in Venice upon which the attention of the world was focused, but I say to you Italians and to all those beyond our borders that Hitler and I have met here not to rework, much less to alter the political map of Europe and the world onto add any more grounds for unrest to those which are already a cause of unrest to all nations from the farthest corner of the orient to the farthest corner of the occident. Rather, we have joined in the attempt to drive away the clouds which darken the horizon of political life in Europe.

Count Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law and Press Chief of the Italian Government at the time, took a much more sober view of the meeting at the ensuing press conference in the Danieli Hotel.

According to Ciano, no concrete agreement had been reached; instead, the two statesmen had merely discussed the political situation in general terms and had, in this context, held largely corresponding views. As a result, further personal contact had been found desirable, Ciano reported.

In respect to disarmament, there had been unanimity that, when Germany had finally achieved genuine equality of rights, it could return to the League of Nations. Ciano stated that Mussolini and Hitler had also discussed Austria and agreed that, given the guarantee of Austrian independence, it was desirable to reestablish normal relations between Germany and Austria.

It was not difficult to read between the lines of this commentary that Mussolini was unwilling to make any concessions to Hitler in the Austrian question. The meager joint communiqué issued by the two heads of state was equally revealing.¹⁰³

Venice, June 15, 1934

The Italian head of government and the German Reich Chancellor today continued and concluded their review of the questions of general politics and the problems directly involving their own countries in a spirit of friendly cooperation. The personal relations between the two heads of government which have thus been initiated will be maintained in future.

On the evening of June 15, Mussolini was Hitler's guest at dinner in the Grand Hotel. A final conference took place at 11:00 p.m. in the Excelsior Hotel at the Lido. The next morning, Mussolini saw his guest to the airport, where Hitler boarded his flight at 8:15 a.m.

June 16, 1934

When the plane passed over the Italian border, Hitler sent the following telegrams to the King and Mussolini:¹⁰⁴

Over the Alps, June 16, 1934

His Majesty, the King of Italy

Upon leaving the fair country of Italy I may present to Your Majesty, together with my most humble thanks for the hospitable reception, my most respectful compliments.

Adolf Hitler

His Excellency Benito Mussolini, Venezia

May I once more express my most sincere thanks for the kind hospitality and the extremely friendly reception I enjoyed and, upon leaving Italy, send you warm regards.

Adolf Hitler

On June 17, Hitler delivered a speech at the Party Congress of the Gau of Thuringia in Gera.¹⁰⁵

The Führer was in a vile temper and let loose a barrage of insults at his assumed and real adversaries. It was obvious that he was still irked by the meager results of his talks with Mussolini. The German Volk, he declared, was “not some worthless pack which can be kicked around by anyone and everyone.” He labelled the founders of the Weimar Republic “insane fools” and ultimately focused his wrath on his reactionary critics, calling them “little worms” and “little pygmies,” who would come to feel his fist if necessary, “the fist of the nation which is clenched and will smash anyone who dares to make even the slightest attempt at sabotage.” Hitler stated verbatim as follows:

However unqualified our love for peace, however little Germany wishes for war, we will stand up all the more fanatically for German freedom and the honor of our Volk. The world must know: the period of *Diktats* is past! Just as, on the one hand, we do not intend to exert pressure on another people, on the other we will defend ourselves against any further attempt to subject the German Volk to continuous pressure. We do not have the feeling that we are an inferior race, some worthless pack which can and may be kicked around by anyone and everyone; rather, we have the feeling that we are a great Volk which only once forgot itself, a Volk which, led astray by insane fools, robbed itself of its own power and has now once more awakened from this insane dream.

Let no one believe himself capable of immersing this Volk in such a dreamstate again within the next thousand years; this lesson, which we have learned in such a terrible way, will be a historical reminder to us for millenniums. What happened to us through our own fault will not be allowed to happen to the German Volk a second time!

My Volksgenossen, I wish only to bid and remind you to perceive the strength of our Volk in our inner unity of will, in our unity of spirit and our

June 17, 1934

common way of thinking. Rest assured that strength is expressed not so much in divisions, in cannons and in tanks, but that it is ultimately expressed in the community of a single *Volksville*. And further, may you be imbued with the conviction that men must be taught this community and that safeguards must be created for this purpose. Regard our National Socialist Movement as a great safeguard of this kind against the spirit of class conflict, class hatred and class division. Regard the National Socialist Movement and its organizations as one great school of education in achieving this community. Cling to this Movement, fight for it: in doing so, you are fighting for the German Volk and for the German Reich! For one thing is certain: the fate of the German Volksgemeinschaft is bound to the existence of this Movement; the fate of the German Reich, however, depends upon the stability of the German Volksgemeinschaft.

We are all aware that we are not an end in and of ourselves. The Party, the SA and the SS, the political organization, the Labor Service, the youth organizations—all of them are a means to the end of welding our body politic together and thus developing the powers inherent in our Volk to a truly peaceful, culturally advancing and also materially prosperous work.

It has been eight years since I first spoke in this city. What tremendous progress! In spite of all polarities, in spite of all resistance, in spite of all the doubters, in spite of all the carpers, in spite of all the critics: the Movement is great. Who can doubt that the coming years will bring about the same progress? Back then it was a handful of people who believed that the endeavor would succeed. Today there are millions who fanatically vouch for this endeavor, who profess their faith in it. And if, in the course of eight years, starting with a handful of men in this city too, this victory was achieved, then in the coming years and decades this victory will deepen, and all the little pygmies who fancy that they will be able to do anything to stop it will be swept away by the force of this common idea. For all these pygmies are forgetting one thing, no matter what fault they believe they have found: where is that anything better which could take the place of what is now? Where are they hiding what they would put in its place? It is ridiculous when such a little worm tries to fight such a powerful renewal of the Volk. Ridiculous, when such a littly pygmy fancies himself capable of obstructing the gigantic renewal of the Volk with a few empty phrases.

What would happen if these little carpers achieved their goal? Germany would once more fall apart as it fell apart before. But we can assure them of this: they did not have the power before to prevent the uprising of National Socialism, and now the German Volk has awakened, and never again will they be able to lull it back to sleep!

The Party and its organizations will ensure that the blood victims and the sacrifices of the last fourteen years were not in vain. They should know that! They can carp as long as they want; it is all the same to us.

But if they should ever attempt to make even the smallest step toward turning their criticism into a new act of perjury, may they rest assured that what they are facing today is not the cowardly and corrupt bourgeoisie of 1918, but the fist of the entire Volk. It is the fist of the nation which is clenched and will smash anyone who dares to make even the slightest attempt at sabotage.

It is immaterial whether we exist or not. What is necessary is that our Volk exists. We know what those people made of our Volk. We witnessed it ourselves. Let them not say: we want to do it better the second time around. You have given us one demonstration of how not to do it, and we are showing you now how it has to be done! Germany must live!

Hitler certainly considered von Papen one of these “little pygmies.” On the same day Hitler spoke in Gera, von Papen delivered an address at the annual convention of the University League in Marburg in which he took a stance against a second revolutionary wave. One could not have expected von Papen to know what was really at stake; he was doubtless still loyal to Hitler. Perhaps he had concluded from Hitler’s somewhat nebulous references to revolutionary elements that the Chancellor would soon call his party comrades to order. He certainly had no inkling of the dark scheme Hitler was contemplating; moreover, he felt himself called upon to aid him in repressing all too enthusiastic fighters for the cause.

The speech which von Papen delivered on June 17 was composed by the writer Edgar Jung,¹⁰⁶ who had already given the National Socialists several bitter pills to swallow and who inserted such remarks into the speech as, “Great men are not created by propaganda; they take on stature through their deeds,” or “He who talks of Prussianism should think of selfless service first, “ and “No organization, no propaganda, however excellent it may be, can bring about a lasting increase in confidence. “ But the attack backfired, and the circulation of von Papen’s address was prohibited¹⁰⁷ Edgar Jung was arrested a few days after it had been held and killed on June 30, while von Papen was spared for the time being—Goebbels even made a point of being seen with him at the German Derby in Hamburg on June 24.

The gruesome warning Hitler issued eight days later was to teach von Papen that no one could meddle in the Chancellor’s affairs and escape unpunished.¹⁰⁸

On June 20, Hitler attended the funeral of Göring’s first wife Carin, whose body had been brought from Sweden to be interred at Göring’s new estate, “Schorfheide.”¹⁰⁹

On June 21, Hitler visited the Reich President, who had been at Neudeck since May 5, and submitted a report on his talks with Mussolini in Venice.¹¹⁰

Two days later, Hitler received a delegation of women from the Saar at the Reich Chancellory in the morning¹¹¹ and then retired to the Obersalzberg for a few days of rest prior to his action against Röhm. On

June 24, he watched a flight performance of the German Air Sports Association from his Haus Wachenfeld, making two short speeches to the audience and to the pilots who took part in the flight.¹¹²

The remarks made in the next few days by persons who were either accomplices or accessories to Hitler's crime of June 30—Hess, Göring and Blomberg—are of particular interest.

On June 25, Rudolf Hess delivered a speech which was broadcast on the Cologne radio station.¹¹³ Originally, it had been scheduled for the Party Congress in Duisburg the day before but had been cancelled due to bad weather. Hess was fully aware of the fact that Röhm was not a traitor and had acted "in good faith" in pursuing his plans for the militia. However, he also knew that Hitler's strategic plans went in the opposite direction, and placed his entire support behind his Führer. It is nonetheless conceivable that Hess attempted to issue an indirect warning to Röhm in his Cologne speech on June 25, when he declared:

Alone the order of the Führer, to whom we have sworn our loyalty, is decisive. Woe betide anyone who is unfaithful to this vow of loyalty, believing that his revolt will serve the Revolution. Pity unto those who believe themselves the chosen ones who must aid the Führer by revolutionary agitation from below. Adolf Hitler is a revolutionary of the first order and will inwardly remain a revolutionary of the first order. He does not need crutches. Woe betide anyone who makes a crude attempt to trample between the fine threads of his strategic plans under the delusion that he can do it faster. He who does so is an enemy of the Revolution even if he is acting in the utmost good faith. Profiteers would always be the enemies of the Revolution whether they act on behalf of the *Reaktion* or on behalf of Communism.

Göring, to whom Hitler had assigned a particularly bloody part in the performance scheduled for June 30, spoke at an NSDAP convention in Hamburg on June 26.¹¹⁴ In his speech, Göring rejected all notions of restoring the monarchy, declaring that the future form of the State was a matter to be decided by the children and grandchildren of the present generation: "We who are living now have Adolf Hitler!" Then, aiming his invective at the reactionary "interest cliques" and "unproductive critics," he exclaimed:

When one day the cup runneth over, I will strike! We have worked as no one has ever worked before, because we have behind us a Volk which trusts us. Anyone who gnaws away at this trust is committing a crime against the Volk, he is committing treachery and high treason. He who designs to destroy this trust, destroys Germany. He who sins against this trust has put his own head in the noose.

Here Göring was referring not to Röhm and the SA leaders, but to reactionaries such as Schleicher and Strasser, whom he massacred shortly thereafter at Hitler's bidding.

The Reich Minister of Defense, von Blomberg, put the Reichswehr in a state of alert on June 28 and published an article in the June 29 issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, entitled "The Wehrmacht in the Third Reich," in which he wrote:¹¹⁵

The Wehrmacht has merged with the State of the German reincarnation, with the Reich of Adolf Hitler. It came as what it was, an inwardly clean, disciplined instrument of power in the hands of its leadership.

It serves this State, which it affirms from an innermost conviction, and it stands by this leadership which restored to it the most noble right to be not only the bearer of arms, but also the body in which the State and the Volk have vested their unlimited trust.

The fighting communities formed in the trenches of the World War, which Adolf Hitler made the foundation of the new Volksgemeinschaft, became the starting point for the great tradition which the Wehrmacht, as heir to the Army of old, will carry on. In a close alliance with the entire Volk, the Wehrmacht, which proudly wears the symbol of the German reincarnation on its helmets and uniforms, stands by the leadership of the State in discipline (*Manneszucht*) and loyalty: the Field Marshal of the Great War, Reich President von Hindenburg, its Commander in Chief, and the Führer of the Reich, Adolf Hitler, who once came from our ranks and will always remain one of us.

On June 28, former Captain Ernst Röhm was expelled from the German Officers' League¹¹⁶—a further indication that everything was minutely planned.

What of the alleged conspirators? Were they whetting their blades to stab their benefactors in the back? The Chief of Staff was still relaxing at the Tegernsee with no premonition of what was brewing. Occasionally he received visitors, among them his friend General von Epp, Reichsstatthalter in Bavaria. Obergruppenführer Heines attended a midsummer's eve celebration and a sports show put on by the 18th SA Brigade at Bad Kudowa in Silesia on June 24 and 25 and afterwards traveled to Bad Wiessee. The leaders of the separate SA groups issued proclamations ordering their members to take leave from July 1. The Berlin SA Gruppenführer Karl Ernst also published a proclamation to this effect on June 26,¹¹⁷ which read in part as follows:

The Chief of Staff has granted vacation leave to the entire SA for the month of July. The SA man is to spend this month, during which the schools are also free, with his family, his wife and his children. This will serve to dismiss any complaints of too many demands and 'too much work, etc.' In order to bring about this desired situation at any price, even against the will of those who

would withdraw from their families, I have prohibited my formation leaders from scheduling any work whatsoever.

As a further means of helping the SA man to genuinely become a private person for the term of this month of leave, the release from any type of duty is accompanied by a ban on uniforms.

Ernst himself left Berlin for Bremen to take a honeymoon trip with his wife. He was arrested there on June 30, returned to Berlin by plane and shot in Lichterfelde.

Hitler claimed in his speech on July 13 that Ernst had intended to personally supervise the occupation of the Berlin government building by the SA at 5:00 p.m. on June 30.

On June 27, Hitler put the final touches to his plans, and had a state of alert declared for the Reichswehr on June 28. Hitler and Göring went to Essen on June 28¹¹⁸ to attend the church wedding ceremony of the Essen Gauleiter, Josef Terboven. Göring returned to Berlin in the afternoon, while Hitler visited the Krupp works and took a tour of the plant in the company of Alfried Krupp and Professor Goerenz, a member of the Krupp board of directors. Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's personal photographer, was conspicuously absent from Hitler's side during these last days of June, having suddenly traveled to Paris to cover a sports event.¹¹⁹

As a result, the press obtained a number of uncensored photographs depicting Hitler in Essen on June 28 and at his visit to Westphalian labor camps on June 29. The pictures show Hitler in a rumpled leather coat, his hair in disarray, looking exactly what he was: a mentally disturbed, even insane man about to commit murder.

On the evening of June 28, Hitler instructed Röhm's aide, Bergmann, per telephone¹²⁰ to summon all of the high-ranking SA leaders to a meeting. The time and place were noon on June 30, at the Hanselbauer Hotel in Bad Wiessee.

At 10:00 a.m. on June 29, Hitler toured the district *Führerschule* of the Labor Service at Buddenberg near Lünen. There he made a short speech, thanking the Reich leader of the Labor Service, former Colonel Hierl, for his support in building up the Labor Service:¹²¹

That, dear Hierl, has been your great accomplishment. You have created the National Socialist Arbeitsdienst, and for that I may thank you, and for that the German Volk thanks you.

Next on the itinerary was an inspection of the Olfen labor camp. Hitler then interrupted his visit and left for the Rheinhof Dreesen in Godesberg, where he arrived at 3:45 p.m. Goebels had flown there

from Berlin, as had the Commander of the SS Leibstandarte, Sepp Dietrich, whom Hitler ordered to return to Munich.

At 4:00 p.m., Hitler greeted a Labor Service band playing in front of the Dreesen Hotel and was introduced to the Amtsleiters and Kreisleiters of the Gau of Cologne-Aachen.

Around midnight the bands of several Labor Service groups congregated at the side of the hotel overlooking the Rhine to sound the Ceremonial Tattoo. On the opposite riverbank, 600 Labor Service men formed a blazing swastika. Hitler thanked the band conductors and requested the Badenweiler March. The ceremonies ended with a torch-light marching salute of the Labor Service formations, which Hitler received from the hotel balcony.¹²²

At 2:00 a.m., Hitler left for the Hangelar airfield near Bonn to fly to Munich. He was accompanied by his aides Brückner, Schaub and Schreck, and by Goebbels¹²³ and the Reich Press Chief Dietrich.¹²⁴ The plane touched down in Munich at 4:30 a.m.

In the meantime, Himmler had launched his ploys to back up the claim of an attempted coup. Forged handouts had been used to lure several SA divisions out on the streets on the previous evening which had, however, been sent home again by Gauleiter Wagner. SA Obergruppenführer Schneidhuber and SA Gruppenführer Schmidt were summoned to the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, where they indignantly denied having alerted the SA. Hitler then performed the first "heroic deed" of the day: he stripped the baffled SA leaders of their insignias and had them arrested by the police present at the incident.¹²⁵

At 5:30 a.m., Hitler left for Bad Wiessee by car after SA Obergruppenführer Lutze, who had already arrived on the scene, called to say that the coast was clear, i.e. that the men were fast asleep. In a convoy of several heavy black Mercedes convertibles and sedans, Hitler and his party—which also included Hitler's SS guard and several police detectives¹²⁶—set off for the hotel.

Approaching from Kaltenbrunn, the convoy arrived at around 6:45 a.m. and drew up in front of the Hanselbauer Hotel. Hitler told the few guests who were already up and about to clear the way or go to their rooms.

He then proceeded to do his "courageous" deed. Accompanied by his aides, several SS men and a number of detectives, he mounted the wooden stairs to the second floor, where Röhm and Heines occupied opposite rooms—numbers 21 and 31—directly adjacent to the stairwell.¹²⁷

Hitler had the caretaker knock on Röhm's door. When Röhm, clad in pajamas, opened the door, Hitler shouted at him: "You're under arrest!" (*"Du bist verhaftet!"*).

Completely taken aback, Röhm dressed wordlessly and allowed himself to be led to the small foyer of the hotel, where he took a seat near the fireplace between two detectives.

Upstairs in the room across the hall, Heines—a known homosexual—was in bed with a young man. Having been awakened by the sound of voices, Heines attempted to resist when the door to his room flew open. According to eyewitness reports, Hitler fled up into the stairwell for cover, but his towering aide, Brückner, was able to calm Heines. After Heines' arrest, the other SA leaders were taken by surprise in their rooms, arrested and locked in the hotel linen room.

The entire incident had run so smoothly that most of the hotel guests had not noticed anything amiss.

Having accomplished their "courageous" mission, Hitler and his party had coffee in the private quarters of the hotel's owners. Frau Hanselbauer even procured Hitler's permission to bring a cup to the still somewhat dumbfounded Chief of Staff. A chartered bus then stopped before the hotel; the arrested men boarded it and were brought to Stadelheim Prison in Munich. Only Röhm was taken away in a private car. Around 8:00 a.m. Röhm's Staff Guard arrived from Munich, having been summoned to perform guard duty at the meeting scheduled for that day. Hitler emerged from the hotel and explained to the men: "I have assumed the leadership of the SA myself for the day!" He ordered them to drive back to Munich and closed with the words: "I can count on you, can't I?"

The division saluted Hitler with a "Sieg Heil!" and withdrew immediately.

Hitler's cortege set out for Munich via Rottach-Egern. An SS commando was appointed to stop all oncoming cars containing SA leaders on their way to the meeting. A number of them were arrested on the spot, while others were instructed to turn around and join the convoy to Munich. Upon arriving, Hitler first went to the Ministry of the Interior, where he passed on the code word "Kolibri" to Göring, who then launched the Berlin counterpart to the purge. Hitler then proceeded to the Braunes Haus, where the Reichswehr had constructed a blockade in the meantime.

Sepp Dietrich had been stopped in Tölz on his way to Bad Wiessee and instructed to proceed to Kaufering, where a number of SS divisions

of the Leibstandarte had arrived with a Reichswehr transport train. As later became evident, these were the firing squads Hitler had ordered. Dietrich drove the troops to Munich in Reichswehr trucks and went to report to Hitler. To his surprise, he found the Braunes Haus surrounded by Reichswehr soldiers and even had difficulty being allowed through the lines. Having finally gained entrance, he had to wait for several more hours in the aides' office before seeing Hitler.¹²⁸

A number of political and SA leaders had gathered in the Senatorial Room of the Braunes Haus, where Hitler announced Röhm's dismissal and the appointment of Obergruppenführer Lutze as new Chief of Staff.¹²⁹

On July 8,¹³⁰ Rudolf Hess declared in Königsberg that Hitler's speech on June 30 had had "the stature of world history." Hess gave a long account of the day's events at the Braunes Haus and stated: "Back in his office, the Führer pronounces the first sentences."

Thus it cannot be maintained that a type of drumhead court martial was held in the Senatorial Room on June 30 or that the slayings Hitler had ordered had been justified in any way by a prior court judgment. The "Supreme Judge of the German Volk," as Hitler styled himself in his speech of July 13, passed the death sentences sitting alone, without a trial, without any *ratio decidendi*, without a record—but with only his own ends in mind.

As Hess has reported,¹³¹ Hitler himself composed all official reports, notices to the press, proclamations, etc. Every phrase, every word, was his work.

The first "Decree of the Führer" was given to the press at 3:00 p.m. on June 30 and read as follows:¹³²

Munich, June 30, 1934

With effect as per today's date, I have dismissed Chief of Staff Röhm from his post and expelled him from the Party and the SA. I hereby appoint Obergruppenführer Lutze as new Chief of Staff. SA leaders and SA men who do not follow or act contrary to his orders shall be removed from the SA and the Party or put under immediate arrest and sentenced.

Adolf Hitler, Supreme Party and SA Leader

This initial notice revealed both that Hitler expected some resistance and that those who did not step in line would be "sentenced"—to what, was not stated.

The letter Hitler sent to Lutze that same day from Munich read:

June 30, 1934

My dear SA Leader Lutze,

Severe transgressions on the part of my former Chief of Staff have forced me to relieve him of his post. You, my dear Obergruppenführer Lutze, have been for many years a consistently loyal and exemplary SA leader in good times and in bad. When today I appoint you Chief of Staff, I am doing so in the firm conviction that, with your loyal and obedient work, you will succeed in making of my SA the instrument which the nation needs and which I envision. It is my wish that the SA be formed into a loyal and strong member of the National Socialist Movement. Filled with obedience and blind discipline, it must help to build and form the new German.

Adolf Hitler

These notices did not yet reveal to which “severe transgressions” Hitler was, in fact, referring. The impression was created that the Chief of Staff had been guilty of morally unacceptable sexual aberrations, for it was a known fact that he was a homosexual. It was also known, at least within the Party itself, that Hitler had in the past ignored or refused to comment on Röhm’s private affairs, answering respective questions with a shrug of his shoulders or, according to Heinrich Hoffmann, referred to Röhm’s sexual preferences as being a souvenir from his military service in the tropics.

On April 6, 1932, he had dismissed criticism of Röhm as an utterly “disgusting smear campaign” and declared “explicitly once and for all”: “Röhm is now and will remain my Chief of Staff after the elections.”

Even on December 31, 1933, Hitler had published a letter to Röhm in which he had written that he was ‘proud’ to call such men as Röhm his ‘friends.’¹³³

Had Hitler suddenly metamorphosed into a staunch advocate of conventional morality? As evidenced in his next announcement from the Braunes Haus, he did judge it opportune to simulate moral outrage and also to impute treasonous relations with a “foreign power” to Röhm and General Schleicher.¹³⁴

The June 30 statement of the Reich Press Office of the NSDAP read as follows:

For many months now, individual elements have attempted to drive wedges between the SA and the Party and between the SA and the State and to create conflicts. More and more evidence arose in support of the suspicion that these attempts were attributable to a limited clique with a definite purpose.

Chief of Staff Röhm, in whom the Führer had placed a rare trust, did not combat these manifestations but unquestionably promoted them. His known unfortunate predisposition gradually became such an insupportable burden that the Führer of the Movement and Supreme Commander of the SA was driven into an extremely difficult moral dilemma.

Chief of Staff Röhm made contact with General Schleicher without the knowledge of the Führer. In doing so, he made use of the services of an obscure character from Berlin of whom Adolf Hitler most strongly disapproves¹³⁵ as well as those of another SA leader. Due to the fact that these negotiations—likewise, of course, without the Führer's knowledge—ultimately involved a foreign power or, respectively, its representatives, an intervention was no longer avoidable, both from the standpoint of the Party and from the standpoint of the State.

Strategically initiated incidents culminated in the fact that the Führer left Westphalia after he had toured labor camps there, flying from Bonn to Munich at 2:00 a.m. this morning to order that the most seriously incriminated leaders be removed from office and placed under arrest. The Führer proceeded to Wiessee in person with a small escort in order to nip any attempt at resistance in the bud. The act of arresting the men was accompanied by such morally pitiful scenes that every trace of sympathy was necessarily banned. A number of the SA leaders had taken catamites (*Lustknaben*) with them. One of them was surprised in a most revolting (*ekelhaft*) situation and arrested.

The Führer issued the order to ruthlessly eradicate this plague spot. In the future he is no longer willing to tolerate that millions of decent people are incriminated and compromised by isolated persons with pathological leanings.

The Führer issued the order to the Prussian Minister-President Göring to carry out a similar action in Berlin and particularly crack down on the reactionary accomplices to this political conspiracy.

At 12:00 noon, the Führer made a speech to the higher-ranking SA leaders who had convened in Munich, in which he stressed his unshakable alliance with the SA, but at the same time announced his decision to show no mercy from now on in exterminating and destroying (*ausrotten und vernichten*) undisciplined and disobedient characters and asocial or diseased elements. He pointed out that service in the SA was an honorary service for which tens of thousands of upright SA men had made the most difficult sacrifices. He expected from the leader of each SA division that he prove himself worthy of these sacrifices and be a living example to his organization. He also pointed out that he had defended Chief of Staff Röhm for years against the heaviest attacks but that the most recent development had forced him to place all personal feeling second to the welfare of the Movement and to that of the State, and that above all he would eradicate and nip in the bud any attempt to propagate a new upheaval by ludicrous circles of pretentious characters.

Hitler's next press release on June 30 constituted a so-called "eyewitness report" of the incidents at Bad Wiessee and was circulated by the NSK:

As soon as the events and news of the past few days had provided the Führer with certain knowledge of the conspiracy which had been hatched against himself and the Movement, he made the decision to act and to resort to drastic measures. While he had been in Essen and had toured the labor camps in the West German Gaue in order to create the outer appearance of absolute

calm so that the traitors might not be warned, the plan of carrying out a thorough purge had been fixed to the last detail.

The Führer headed the action personally and did not hesitate for a second to stand up to the rebels and call them to account for their actions. Obergruppenführer Lutze was chosen Chief of Staff—in place of Röhm—and included in the action.

Despite the fact that the Führer had spent several days almost totally without sleep, he ordered at 2:00 a.m. in Godesberg that his plane take off from the Hangelar airfield near Bonn and fly to Munich.

The Führer's bearing during this nocturnal journey into the unknown was one of incredible determination. When Hitler and his escort landed at the Munich airfield at 4:00 a.m., he was given the message that the Munich SA had been alerted during the night by its highest command. Using the vulgar and false slogan, 'The Führer is against us; the Reichswehr is against us; SA, out on the streets.'

In the meantime, acting on his own initiative, the Bavarian Minister of the Interior Wagner had relieved Obergruppenführer Schneidhuber and Gruppenführer Schmidt of their command over the SA formations and sent them home.

While the Führer was driving from the airfield to the Ministry of the Interior, the last remnants of the disgracefully deceived and now departing SA formations could still be seen. Schneidhuber and Schmidt were placed under arrest at the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior in the presence of the Führer. The Führer confronted them alone [!] and ripped the shoulder straps off their SA uniforms himself. Accompanied by only a small escort, the Führer left immediately at 5:30 a.m. for Bad Wiessee, where Röhm was staying. Heines was also staying the night at the country house where Röhm was lodging.

The Führer entered the house with his escort. Röhm was personally placed under arrest in his bedroom by the Führer. Röhm wordlessly submitted to being taken into custody and offered no resistance.

In Heines' room directly opposite, a disgraceful picture presented itself to those who entered the room. Heines was in the company of a young man. The repulsive scene which then followed when Heines and his companion were arrested defies description. It sheds sudden light on the conditions surrounding the former Chief of Staff which have been able to be done away with thanks to the determined, brave and intrepid action of the Führer.

The greater part of Röhm's staff was arrested with him. Röhm's Staff Guard, which arrived in Wiessee for relief duty at 8:00 a.m. in trucks, instantly complied with the Führer's words without resistance and spontaneously broke out in a triple chorus of "Heil."

After the arrested men had been taken away, the Führer traveled back along the road from Wiessee to Munich in order to arrest a number of further SA leaders underway who were heavily incriminated and had been journeying to the scheduled SA leadership meeting.

The cars were stopped during the journey and their occupants, to the extent that they were found guilty, were transported to Munich by the Führer's escort. A number of other SA leaders involved in the rebellion were removed from trains at the Munich Central Station and arrested.

Having returned to Munich, the Führer went to see Reichsstatthalter Ritter von Epp for a short conference before proceeding to the Ministry of the Interior, from which locale the remaining steps were taken.

Then the Führer spoke to the assembled leadership of the SA in the Braunes Haus. What had been assumed now became a certainty: only very few members of the SS leadership clique had backed these highly treasonous plans, while the bulk of the SA leaders and all of the SA men stand by their Führer in loyalty as one man, as a unified bloc.

What the Führer has accomplished for the SA and for the Movement during these days can be gauged only by those who stood at his side in this short period of tremendous nervous tension and incredible physical exertion. By his own personal behavior, the Führer has once again been a shining example of vigor and loyalty. The fruits of this purge action will be reaped by the German Volk as a whole.

Hitler's moralistic sermons of June 30 pinnacled in the order of the day he issued to Chief of Staff Lutze, which contained twelve demands addressed to the SA.

Certainly many men and leaders in the SA were no angels, and orgies and drunken excesses were by no means rare; homosexual tendencies had never been an unusual phenomenon in all-male organizations, and the SA was certainly not an isolated case at the time.

In respect to luxury, drug abuse, extravagances, etc. Hitler was willing to be extremely magnanimous in overlooking the transgressions of party leaders as long as they demonstrated blind obedience, for instance in the cases of Göring, Ley and, in particular, the notorious "Frankenführer," Julius Streicher.¹³⁶

On June 30, Hitler donned the robes of a fanatic moralist who wanted to "relieve mothers of the fear" that their sons might become morally depraved in the SA or Hitler Youth. "I want to see men as SA leaders, not ridiculous apes," he declared.

The order of the day to Chief of Staff Lutze read as follows:

When I appoint you to the post of SA Chief of Staff today, I expect that you will concern yourself with a number of tasks which I hereby assign to you:

1. I demand from SA leaders the same blind obedience and unqualified discipline which they demand from their SA men.

2. I demand that every SA leader—and every political leader—is conscious of the fact that his manners and his behavior are to be an example to his association and even for our entire following.

3. I demand of SA leaders—and political leaders—that, should they make themselves guilty of any offense by their actions in public, they are to be mercilessly removed from the Party and the SA.

4. I demand particularly of SA leaders that they be an example of modesty and not of extravagance. I do not wish my SA leaders to hold or take part in

costly dinner parties. We were not invited to such events in the past and we still have no business attending them. Millions of our Volksgenossen today still lack the bare necessities of life, they are not envious of those whom Fortune has blessed, but it is unworthy of a National Socialist to further increase the distance between misery and good fortune, which is great enough as it is. I specifically forbid that Party or SA funds or, in fact, any public funds at all be appropriated for such banquets and similar events.

It is irresponsible to hold gourmet dinners (*Schlemmereien*) from funds comprised in part of the pennies of our poorest fellow citizens.

The luxurious staff quarters in Berlin in which, as has been ascertained, amounts of up to 30,000 marks per month were spent for banquets, etc. are to be dissolved immediately.

I therefore prohibit all Party offices from sponsoring such so-called banquets and dinner parties with any type of public funds. And I forbid all Party and SA leaders from attending such functions. Excepted are those obligations which the State requires be met, for which above all the Reich President and, following him, the Reich Minister of the Exterior are responsible. I prohibit all SA leaders and all Party leaders in general from holding so-called diplomatic dinners. The SA leader's task is not to cultivate social prestige, but to do his duty.

5. I do not want SA leaders to take business trips in expensive limousines or convertibles or to use official funds for the acquisition of same. This also applies to the heads of the political organizations.

6. SA leaders and political leaders who become inebriated in public are unworthy of being leaders.

Our ban on carping criticism imposes an obligation to exhibit exemplary bearing. Mistakes can always be forgiven; bad behavior cannot. Hence SA leaders who behave unworthily before the eyes of the public, who rampage about or even promote intemperance shall be immediately removed from the SA without further consideration. I am holding the superior offices responsible for taking vigorous action. From the State authorities I expect that sentences will be harsher in such cases than in the case of non-National Socialists. The National Socialist leaders and, in particular, the SA leaders should be looked upon highly by the Volk. Hence the demands placed upon them are also higher.

7. I expect all SA leaders to help to maintain and fortify the SA as a neat and clean institution. I would particularly like every mother to be able to send her son to the SA, the Party and the Hitler Youth without fear that he might become morally depraved there.

Thus it is my desire that all SA leaders take meticulous care to ensure that transgressions pursuant to § 175¹³⁷ are punished with the guilty party's immediate expulsion from the SA and the Party. I want to see men as SA leaders, not ridiculous apes.

8. I demand of all SA leaders that, in return for my loyalty, they give me their own loyalty and support. I particularly demand that they attempt to find their strengths within the sphere assigned them and not in spheres which belong to others. I demand above all from every SA leader that he exhibit unreserved honesty, loyalty and obedience in his behavior toward the Wehrmacht of the Reich.

9. I demand from SA leaders that they require only that degree of courage and sense of sacrifice from their subordinates which they are ready to demonstrate themselves at all times.

Hence I demand that they prove themselves in their behavior and in their handling of the Volksgut which I have entrusted to them as genuine leaders, friends and comrades. I expect that, in their associations as well, they will place virtue before number.

10. And I expect from you as Chief of Staff that the old, loyal party comrades, those who fought in the SA for long years, will not be forgotten. I do not want inflation with a thousand unnecessary but costly staffs, and I want promotions to be based not so much upon abstract knowledge as upon the inborn capability to be a leader, and a loyalty and willingness to make sacrifices which have been tried and proven over the years. In my SA I have a tremendous stock of the most loyal and obedient followers. They are the ones who have conquered Germany, not the clever latecomers of the year 1933 and thereafter.¹³⁸

11. I want the SA man to be trained mentally and physically to be the most proficient National Socialist. The unique strength of this organization lies solely in its being anchored in the Party in a common Weltanschauung.

12. I want obedience, loyalty and comradeship to prevail as guiding principles in this organization. And just as every leader demands obedience from his men, I hereby demand from the SA leaders respect for the law and obedience to my orders.

Adolf Hitler

At 5:00 p.m., Hitler finally found time to receive Sepp Dietrich, the commander of the SS Leibstandarte, and to give him the first round of orders for his firing squads.

Dietrich reported that Hitler was completely confused upon entering the room and that he had never witnessed him in such a state.¹³⁹

Hitler ordered Dietrich to take six non-commissioned officers and a company commander from the Leibstandarte to Stadelheim Prison and to have the SA leaders shot whose names had been checked off on a list submitted by Bormann.¹⁴⁰

Dietrich was an old warhorse from World War I and had been through many a battle. But he was not a criminal. Some of those marked on the list were good friends of his. He nonetheless did not flinch at having them executed without a trial, without sentencing, without any reason other than that Hitler had requested it. This concept of utterly unscrupulous, blind obedience—early established and continuously reinforced—culminated in the extermination of those the “Führer” had deemed *Untermenschen* and vermin carried out during World War II by the SS as willing tools. The SS’ fawning submission to Hitler nearly surpassed the dog-like devotion of Napoleon’s “Old Guard,” which also exhibited almost unbelievable feats of blind obedience.¹⁴¹

Hitler's victims at Stadelheim did not grasp why they were being liquidated. Many of them believed that the Reichswehr was behind the slayings, and nearly all of them died—as did Gruppenführer Ernst in Berlin—with a “Heil Hitler!” on their lips.

When Dietrich had reported that the orders had been carried out, Hitler issued the following bulletin to the press:¹⁴²

Munich, June 30

The Reich Press Office of the NSDAP reports: in connection with the unveiling of the conspiracy, the following SA leaders were shot: Obergruppenführer August Schneidhuber, Munich; Obergruppenführer Edmund Heines, Silesia; Gruppenführer Karl Ernst, Berlin; Gruppenführer Wilhelm Schmidt, Munich; Gruppenführer Hans Hayn, Saxony; Gruppenführer Hans Peter von Heydebreck, Pomerania; Standartenführer Hans Erwin Graf Spreti, Munich.

Hitler left Munich at about 8:00 p.m., arriving at the Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin at 10:00 p.m. Göring and Himmler immediately reported to Hitler on the executions which had been carried out in Berlin in the meantime: Gruppenführer Ernst, General von Schleicher, General von Bredow, Gregor Strasser, Edgar Jung, Erich Klausener (Ministerialdirektor and leader of Catholic Action), and others.

Until now, everything had gone smoothly. But would the Reichswehr accept the murder of Generals Schleicher and Bredow without further ado? Both had been high-ranking officers.

Hitler was not quite sure and decided to summon General Litzmann to the Reich Chancellery. Litzmann, a good-natured, elderly standby of Hitler's, immediately appeared and offered his help as he had done on so many prior occasions. But Hitler's fears proved unfounded. The Reichswehr swallowed its pill; the elimination of the SA leaders was worth the price of two unpopular generals.¹⁴³

The company on guard in Berlin made its way to the Wilhelmstrasse on this Sunday, July 1, at 1:00 p.m., parading in goose-step to the strains of the Badenweiler March as Hitler looked on out of the window. The Reichswehr was expressing its gratitude and paying homage to its leader.¹⁴⁴ Hitler, freshly groomed and with eyes feverishly aglow, saluted the passing columns. Behind him stood General Litzmann.

Hitler had issued the following press release on Schleicher's execution:

Berlin, June 30

It had been ascertained in the past few weeks that the former Reich Minister of Defense, former General von Schleicher, had maintained relations with subversive circles in the SA leadership and with foreign powers which repre-

sented a threat to the security of the State. This was proof that, in both words and deeds, he had acted in a manner hostile to the State and its leadership.

This fact made it necessary that he be arrested in connection with the entire purge action.

When police officers attempted to arrest him, former General von Schleicher put up armed resistance. In the ensuing exchange of shots, he and his wife—who had attempted to intervene—were mortally wounded.

In Berlin, the executions in the SS barracks in Lichterfelde continued throughout that Sunday. As yet, no decision had been made in respect to Röhm.

Naturally he, too, would have to die without being given a chance to make any statement of defense. On July 1, Hitler ordered that a revolver be brought to Röhm's cell in Stadelheim so that his former Chief of Staff might take the task upon himself. However, Röhm's devotion to Hitler had a limit; he would not commit suicide at the Führer's command as Field Marshal Rommel would later do.¹⁴⁵ He refused; on the other hand, he did not have to think of his family as Rommel did.

When Röhm's time was up, Hitler sent two SS men,¹⁴⁶ the Commander of Dachau, Theodor Eicke, and Sturmbannführer Michael Lippert, Commander of the Dachau guard troops, to the cell, where they shot Röhm point blank as he stood defiantly before them.

Hitler issued the following bulletin on Röhm's shooting:

Berlin, July 1

Former Chief of Staff Röhm was given the opportunity to draw the consequences of his treasonous deeds. He chose not to do so and was summarily shot.

The following decree of the Reich Minister of Defense was issued at the same time. It praised Hitler's alleged courage and stressed the Reichswehr's future devotion to the Führer:

To the Wehrmacht

Berlin, July 1, 1934

Demonstrating soldierly determination and exemplary courage, the Führer himself attacked and smashed the traitors and rebels. The Wehrmacht, in its function as bearer of arms for the entire Volk, far removed from internal political struggles, will express its thanks by devotion and loyalty! In compliance with the Führer's demand, the Wehrmacht will be pleased to cultivate good terms with the new SA with the consciousness of our common ideals. The alert has been cancelled on all fronts.

von Blomberg

On July 2, Hindenburg dispatched telegrams of thanks to Hitler and Göring, which were published the same day:

July 2, 1934

Berlin, July 2

It has been officially reported that Reich President von Hindenburg has sent the following telegram from Neudeck to Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler: "From the reports which I have received, I conclude that you have nipped all treasonous doings in the bud by your own determined action and your brave personal intervention. You have rescued the German Volk from a serious threat. For this may I extend to you my deeply felt gratitude and my sincere appreciation.

With best regards,

von Hindenburg"

Furthermore, the Reich President also dispatched the following telegram from Neudeck to the Prussian Minister-President and Infantry General Hermann Göring:

"I may express to you my thanks and appreciation for your vigorous and successful action in crushing the attempt to commit high treason.

With comradely regards,

von Hindenburg"

The same day, Hitler had the following made public:

Berlin, July 2

Official notice:

The purge action came to an end yesterday evening. No further actions of this type shall take place. Hence the entire operation for restoring and securing order in Germany lasted 24 hours. Complete law and order now reigns throughout the Reich. The entire Volk is standing behind the Führer with tremendous enthusiasm.

In addition, Hitler issued the following order:

The measures taken to crush the Röhm revolt were completed during the night of July 1, 1934.

Anyone who makes himself guilty of an act of violence following this action, regardless of intent, will be handed over to the normal judicial authorities for sentencing.

Adolf Hitler

In the course of July 2, Hitler went to Berlin-Dahlem to visit the Minister of Economics, Dr. Kurt Schmitt, who had been taken ill.¹⁴⁷

A cabinet meeting took place on July 3. Following speeches by Hitler and Blomberg, a law was passed providing that all of the measures taken from June 30 through July 2 were "justified self defense of the State" (*Staatsnotwehr*).¹⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that the measures taken on July 2 were expressly included, although Hitler had just announced that all action taken to crush the so-called Röhm revolt had been completed during the night of July 1.¹⁴⁹

July 3, 1934

Reich Minister of Justice, Dr. Gürtner, who was not a National Socialist but a bourgeois departmental minister, went even further in declaring that this step, i.e. the shooting of defenseless prisoners without a trial, had not only been justified, but moreover constituted a "statesmanlike duty"!

The following official communiqué was issued on the cabinet meeting:

Berlin, July 3

In today's meeting of the Reich Cabinet, Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler first presented a detailed account of the evolution of the treasonous plot and how it was crushed. The Reich Chancellor stressed that lightning action had been required to rule out the danger that many thousands of human lives would have been destroyed.

Reich Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, thanked the Führer on behalf of the Reich Cabinet and the Wehrmacht for the determined and courageous action with which he had saved the German Volk from civil war. As a statesman and a soldier, the Führer had demonstrated a stature so great as to call forth a vow of effort, devotion and loyalty in the hearts of every member of the Cabinet and throughout the entire German Volk in this difficult hour.

The Reich Cabinet then granted its approval to a law governing measures for the self-defense of the State; its sole article reads:

"The measures taken to crush the treasonous attacks against the internal and external security of the State on June 30 and July 1 and 2, 1934 are deemed justified as selfdefense of the State."

The Reich Minister of Justice, Dr. Gärtner, stated in this connection that the emergency measures taken directly prior to the outbreak of any treasonous action were to be deemed not only justified but a statesmanlike duty.

The Reich Cabinet also resolved an amendment to the Law to Secure the Unity of Party and State providing that the Chief of Staff of the SA must no longer be a member of the Reich Government.

This served to dismiss the SA from the position it had held until that point in time: the new Chief of Staff was no longer a Reich Minister. On July 3, Hitler flew to Neudeck to confer with Hindenburg. At the Marienburg airfield he was received and accompanied to his waiting car by a group of Reichswehr officers under the leadership of Major General Wodrich.

In Neudeck, he gave the Reich President an account of the alleged revolt and, according to eyewitness reports, allowed the Old Gentleman to comfort him in his sad regret that bloodshed had been unavoidable.

Hitler returned to Berlin at midday on July 4 to shroud himself in silence for a week. The only news was that he had received the German Ambassador in Ankara, Dr. von Romberg, on July 6.

July 6, 1934

No further details of the executions were given to the press for the time being, which resulted in a daily increase in rumors and a corresponding number of denials which filled the newspapers. On July 3, the Swedish newspaper *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* published an interview with Göring, part of which broached on von Papen as follows:¹⁵⁰

Question: What is Vice Chancellor von Papen's view on the action taken against the SA leaders:

Answer: It is a lie that Papen was arrested. I can also tell you that this will not be done. The action was carried out at the Führer's orders, and Papen was on his side. They were in complete agreement concerning the action itself. I would also like to stress that the action became necessary not only due to the plans for a putsch. Röhm's private life as well as that of the other persons who have now been arrested was such that it meant a scandal for the entire SA. They were a moral cancer which had to be cut out.

4

Hitler required some time to manufacture at least somewhat credible explanations for the slayings. His private forum, the Reichstag, did not convene until Friday, July 13, at 8:00 p.m. The only item on the agenda was the reading of a statement of the Reich Government.

Hitler had already done thorough work of peddling the story of the alleged putsch attempt in his many bulletins issued from June 30 to July 3, and this version had been relatively well received by the bourgeoisie. Perhaps not without a certain amount of gloating satisfaction, it reassured itself with the thought that a revolution will always devour its own children.

However, the publicized shooting of von Schleicher and his wife on the grounds of resisting arrest was another matter. Although Schleicher had not enjoyed much popularity, the very idea that he had conspired with Röhm and even maintained treasonable relations with foreign powers seemed highly improbable.

In the meantime, news had leaked out that not only Schleicher, but also his State Secretary (head of the Ministerial Office), Major General von Bredow, had been shot, along with Gregor Strasser; other victims included the former Bavarian General State Commissar Dr. von Kahr; Papen's associates Edgar Jung and von Bose; the leader of Catholic Action, undersecretary in the Reich Transportation Ministry, Dr. Erich Klausener; and the leader of the Catholic sports organization *Deutsche Jugendkraft*, Adalbert Probst.

These names told their own story. Those involved were obviously persons who had at one time aroused Hitler's dislike and whom he thus, with or without reason, regarded as unreliable.

Schleicher had embarrassed Hitler before Hindenburg and the eyes of the public on August 13, 1932 by labelling him unsuitable for the post of Chancellor. Strasser had harbored hopes of becoming Vice Chancel-

lor in Schleicher's cabinet without Hitler's permission. Kahr had disappointed Hitler in November 1923 by disassociating himself from the first "national uprising." Jung and von Bose were killed to teach von Papen a lesson once and for all. The Catholics Dr. Klausener and Probst were evidently executed in place of Brüning, whom Hitler also apparently wanted to "rap on the knuckles." In any case, both Brüning and Schleicher had been warned in early June by the well-informed British Secret Service. While Schleicher chose to disregard the tip, Brüning left Germany, going first to England and then to Lugano.¹⁵¹

Hitler did not dream of admitting the real reasons for his actions in the Reichstag speech on July 13 or even consider going into detail naming those whose lives he had ended. Kahr, Klausener and Probst were not even mentioned; neither did he cite von Papen's associates Jung and Bose, but instead vaguely included von Papen himself in a remark referring to men whom he could not remove from their cabinet posts "without the most cogent reasons." The rebels had, so he claimed, threatened to murder von Papen and Seldte.

General von Bredow had been working as a foreign agent for General von Schleicher "in respect to the activities of those reactionary circles which—perhaps without having any direct connection to this conspiracy—allowed themselves to be exploited as a willing subterranean intelligence center for foreign powers."

While the suspicions raised against Bredow were confusing in the least, Hitler offered only the briefest explanation of Gregor Strasser's death: "Gregor Strasser was brought in."

That was the extent of what he had to say in this connection.

In addition to the names which had already been reported, in the further course of his speech Hitler cited SA leaders von Detten, Uhl and Schmidt and also announced, in a passing summary, the executions of 19 high-ranking SA leaders, 31 further SA leaders and members, and three SS leaders. Furthermore, he divulged that thirteen SA leaders and civilians had lost their lives resisting arrest, and three others had committed suicide while five party members and three SS men had been shot for "disgraceful abuse of prisoners in protective custody"—a total of 74 persons. By contrast, in his previous bulletins and even in this speech before the Reichstag, he had cited only fifteen persons by name. However, it was not difficult for his listeners to surmise who the others might be.¹⁵² In view of the frivolous manner in which he informed the Reichstag and the public of the scope and details of the slayings, it was highly improbable that the sum of 74 indeed represented the total

number of victims. This became particularly clear when it was officially announced on August 18 that Göring alone had taken 1,124 persons into protective custody in connection with the so-called Röhm Purge.¹⁵³

In his speech of July 13, Hitler cited dozens of reasons why he had been forced to take action against Röhm and the SA leadership which included everything from moral dissension to alleged rebellion. His real motive—that of winning the sympathy of the Reichswehr—was naturally not among them.

As the self-proclaimed “Supreme Justiciar of the German Volk,” he left no doubt as to the maxim which was to govern German affairs from then on:

Every person should know for all time that, if he raises his hand to strike out at the State [i.e. Hitler], certain death will be his lot.

When the Reichstag session opened on July 13, there were already visible indications of the changes which had taken place since the last session on January 30, 1934. Steel-helmeted SS sentries were stationed next to the podium and throughout the auditorium. Apparently Hitler feared assassination attempts by incensed party comrades. Twelve SA leaders who had been Reichstag deputies were absent, having been slain in the Purge. Reichstag President Göring had exchanged his SA uniform for the dress of the German Air Sports Association.¹⁵⁴

The composition of the government bench also reflected the new state of affairs: Röhm was naturally missing; Reich Minister of Economics Schmitt was absent—albeit due to illness; and von Papen was not in attendance. Foreign Minister von Neurath had taken the Vice Chancellor’s place for the time being. Neither Hitler nor Göring took the trouble to explain von Papen’s conspicuous absence.

Even if the rumors that he had been put under house arrest or received a brutal beating at the hands of the SS were only gross exaggerations, one thing was certain: he would never return to his place next to Hitler on the government bench.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* reported on July 14 that all Reich Ministers had been in attendance at the Reichstag session, listing each deputy separately with the exception of von Papen and Schmitt. The Party’s mouthpiece was well informed: apparently these two men were no longer regarded as ministers.

Strikingly few civilians were in evidence, and those present included General Litzmann who had stood by Hitler so loyally in the Reich Chancellory on July 1.

Hitler began his speech with the following words:

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

Acting on behalf of the Reich Government, the President of the Reichstag, Hermann Göring, has called you together today in order to give me an opportunity to enlighten the Volk before this body, the highest appointed forum of the nation, concerning events which will hopefully live on in our history for all time as both a sad reminder and a warning.

Out of a combination of objective circumstances and personal guilt, of human incompetence and human defects, a crisis arose in our young Reich which all too easily may have brought about truly destructive consequences for an indeterminate period of time.

The purpose of my remarks is to explain to you and thus to the nation how they came about and were overcome. The contents of my remarks will be completely frank. Only in respect to scope must I impose upon myself limitations necessitated, on the one hand, by consideration to the interests of the Reich and, on the other, by the boundaries drawn by the feeling of shame.

However, before Hitler proceeded to the stated purpose of his remarks, he warmed up his listeners with a half-hour version of the "party narrative" on his accomplishments since January 30, 1933.

He then elaborately described four groups of people composing what he viewed as the opposition in Germany.

Street riots, barricade fighting, mass terror, and an individualistic propaganda of disintegration today trouble nearly all countries throughout the world. In Germany as well, a few isolated fools and criminals of this type are still making repeated attempts to ply their destructive trade. Since the defeat of the Communist Party, we have experienced, albeit growing constantly weaker, one attempt after another to establish Communist organizations with varying degrees of anarchist character and to put them to work. Their methods are always the same. While portraying the present lot as unbearable, they extol the Communist paradise of the future and, in doing so, are practically only waging war for hell. For the consequences of their victory in a country like Germany could be nothing other than destructive.

However, the trial run of their capability and of the consequences of their rule have, in the concrete case, already produced results so clear to the German Volk that the overwhelming majority, particularly of the German workers, has recognized this Jewish-international benefactor of mankind and inwardly defeated it.

The National Socialist State will wage a Hundred Years' War, if necessary, to stamp out and destroy every last trace within its boundaries of this phenomenon which poisons and makes dupes of the Volk (*Volksvernarrung*).

The second group of discontented is comprised of those political leaders who regard their futures as having been settled by January 30 but who have never been able to reconcile themselves to the irreversibility of this fact.

The more Time veils their own incompetence with the merciful cloak of forgetfulness, the more they believe themselves entitled to gradually reintroduce themselves to the mind of the Volk. However, because their incompetence then was not a matter of time but a matter of inborn incompetence, they are equally unable today to prove their worth by positive, useful work but instead perceive their purpose in life as being fulfilled by voicing criticism which is as underhanded as it is false. The Volk does not belong to them either. They can neither seriously threaten the National Socialist State nor seriously damage it in any way.

A third group of destructive elements is made up of those revolutionaries who were shaken and uprooted in 1918 in regard to their relation to the State and who thus have lost all inner connection to a regulated human social order.

They have become revolutionaries who pay homage to the revolution for its own sake and would like to see it become a permanent state of affairs.¹⁵⁵ All of us once suffered from the horrible tragedy that, as obedient and dutiful soldiers, we were suddenly faced by a revolt of mutineers who actually succeeded in gaining possession of the State. Each of us had originally been trained to abide by the laws, to respect authority and to show obedience to the commands and orders it issues, and instilled with an inner devotion to the representatives of the State.

Now the revolution of deserters and mutineers forced us to inwardly disassociate ourselves from these concepts.

We were unable to muster any respect for the new usurpers. Honor and obedience forced us to refuse to obey; love of the nation and the Vaterland obliged us to wage war on them; the amorality of their laws extinguished in us the conviction of the necessity for complying with them—and hence we became revolutionaries. However, even as revolutionaries, we had not disassociated ourselves from the obligation to apply to ourselves the natural laws of the sovereign right of our Volk and to respect these laws.

It was not our intention to violate the will and the right of self-determination of the German Volk, but to drive away those who violated the nation.

And when finally, legitimated by the trust of this Volk, we drew the consequences from our fourteen-year-long struggle, this was not done in order to unloose a chaos of unreined instincts, but with the sole aim of establishing a new and better order.

For us, the revolution which shattered the Second Germany was nothing other than the tremendous act of birth which summoned the Third Reich into being. We wanted to once again create a State to which every German can cling in love; to establish a regime to which everyone can look up with respect; to find laws which are commensurate with the morality of our Volk; to install an authority to which each and every man submits in joyful obedience.

For us, the revolution is not a permanent state of affairs. When a deathly check is violently imposed upon the natural development of a Volk, an act of violence may serve to release the artificially interrupted flow of evolution to allow it once again the freedom of natural development. However, there is no such thing as a permanent revolution or any type of profitable development possible by means of periodically recurring revolts.

July 13, 1934

Among the countless files which I was obliged to read through in the past few weeks, I also found a journal with the notes of a man who was cast onto the route of resistance to the laws in 1918 and now lives in a world in which the law itself appears to provoke resistance; an unnerving document, an uninterrupted sequence of conspiracies and plots, an insight into the mentality of people who, without realizing it, have found in nihilism their ultimate creed. Incapable of any real cooperation, determined to take a stand against any kind of order, filled by hatred of every authority as they are, their uneasiness and their restlessness can be quelled only by their permanent mental and conspiratorial preoccupation with the disintegration of whatever exists at the given time. Many of them stormed the State with us in our early period of struggle, but an inner lack of discipline led most of them away from the disciplined National Socialist Movement in the course of the struggle.

The last remnant seemed to have withdrawn after January 30. Their link with the National Socialist Movement was dissolved the moment this itself, as State, became the object of their pathological aversion. As a matter of principle, they are enemies of every authority and thus utterly incapable of being converted. Accomplishments which appear to strengthen the new German State only provoke their even greater hatred. For there is one thing, above all, which all of these oppositional elements principally have in common: they do not see before them the German Volk, but the institution of order they so abhor. They are filled not by a desire to help the Volk, but by the fervent hope that the government will fail in its work to rescue the Volk. Thus they are never willing to admit that an action is beneficial but are instead filled by the will to contest any success as a matter of principle and to extract from every success any potential weaknesses.

This third group of pathological enemies of the State is dangerous because, until a new order has begun to crystallize from a state of chaotic conflict, they represent a reservoir of willing accomplices for every attempt at revolt.

I must, however, now devote my attention to the fourth group, which on occasion—perhaps even unintentionally—nonetheless plies a truly destructive trade. I am speaking of those who belonged to a relatively small class in society, who have nothing to do and thus find the time and the opportunity to deliver oral reports on everything capable of bringing some interesting—and important—variety to their lives which are otherwise completely meaningless. For while the overwhelming majority in the nation is made to earn its daily bread by toilsome labor, in certain classes of life there are still people whose sole activity consists of doing nothing, followed by more of the same to recuperate from having done nothing. The more pathetic the life of such a drone is, all the more avidly will he seize upon whatever can fill this vacuum with some interesting content.

Personal and political gossip is caught up eagerly and passed on even more eagerly. And because these people, as a result of doing nothing, have no living tie to the masses of the nation's millions, their lives are delimited by the scope of the sphere within which they move.

Every bit of prattle which becomes absorbed by these circles throws its reflection back and forth endlessly as between two distorting mirrors.

Because their very beings are filled with a nothingness which they constantly see reflected in those like them, they believe that this phenomenon is universal. They mistake the view of their circle for the view of all. Their doubts, they fancy, constitute the troubles of the entire nation.

In reality, this little colony of drones is only a state within the State, without any living contact with life, with the feelings, hopes and cares of the rest of the Volk. However, they are dangerous, for they are veritable germ-carriers for unrest, uncertainty, rumors, allegations, lies, suspicions, slander, and fear, and thus they contribute to creating a gradually increasing tension until, in the end, it is difficult to recognize or draw the natural boundaries between them and the Volk.

Just as they wreak their havoc in every other nation, they do so in Germany, too. They regarded the National Socialist Revolution as a conversation topic just as interesting as, on the other hand, the fight of the enemies of the National Socialist State.

But one thing is certain: the work of rebuilding our Volk and, with it, the work of our Volk itself is only possible if the German Volk follows its leadership with inner calm, order and discipline and above all if it trusts in its leadership. For it is only the trust and the faith placed in the new State which have enabled us to take on and solve the great tasks put to us by former times.

Even though the National Socialist regime was forced to come to terms with these various groups from the very beginning and has, in fact, come to terms with them, a mood has nonetheless arisen in the past few months which, in the end, could no longer be taken lightly.

The prattle of a new revolution, of a new upheaval, of a new uprising—while at first infrequent—gradually took on such intensity that only a foolhardy leadership of state would have been capable of ignoring it. It was no longer possible to simply dismiss as empty chatter what was put down in hundreds and ultimately thousands of oral and written reports. Even three months ago, the leadership of the Party was convinced that it was simply the foolish gossip of political reactionaries, Marxist anarchists and all sorts of idlers, completely lacking any substantiation in fact.

Hitler then began to spin his yarns of the purported putsch planned by Röhm and Schleicher, neglecting to cite a single shred of solid evidence for his fantastic allegations. Indeed, those who could have testified had been silenced forever.

In mid-March I directed that preparations be made for a new wave of propaganda. It was to make the German Volk immune against any new attempts at poisoning. At the same time, however, I also gave certain Party Offices the order to track down the recurring rumors of a new revolution and, if possible, to locate the source of these rumors.

It was found that tendencies had appeared in the ranks of several high-ranking SA leaders which naturally gave rise to serious doubts.

At first, there were only isolated manifestations, the inner connections of which were not yet quite clear.

1. Against my express order and contrary to reports given me by former Chief of Staff Röhm, the SA had been blown into such proportions as to necessarily endanger the inner homogeneity of this unique organization.

2. Education in the National Socialist Weltanschauung was becoming more and more neglected in the ranks of these certain SA offices I have mentioned.

3. The natural relations between the Party and the SA slowly began to weaken. Methodical steps were taken, by means of which it was ascertained that endeavors were being made to disengage the SA from the mission which I had assigned to it in order to utilize it for other tasks or interests.

4. Promotions to leadership posts in the SA revealed themselves upon review to be based upon a completely one-sided evaluation of purely external capabilities or, in many cases, on a merely assumed intellectual capacity. The greater number of our oldest and most loyal SA men were increasingly neglected when leaders were appointed and posts filled, while those who had enlisted in 1933 and who are not favored with any especial regard within the Movement were incomprehensibly given priority. In some cases, only a few months of uninterrupted membership in the Party or even only in the SA sufficed for promotion to a higher SA office to which an old SA leader was barred access even after many years of service.¹⁵⁶

5. The behavior of these individual SA leaders who, for the most part, had in no way grown to become part of the Movement, was as un-National Socialist as, at times, it was positively revolting. However, it could not be overlooked that these circles contained one source of unrest in the Movement, which lay in the fact that their lack of practical National Socialism attempted to veil itself in quite uncalledfor demands for a new revolution.

I drew Chief of Staff Röhm's attention to this and a number of other problems, but this did not result in any noticeable improvement or even in any recognizable reaction to my censures. In the months of April and May, there was a constant increase in these complaints. For the first time, however, during this period I received reports—with supporting documentation—of discussions which had been held by individual high-ranking SA leaders and which can be described in no other terms than “gross insubordination” (*große Ungehörigkeit*). For the first time, there was undeniable supporting documentation in several cases that references had been made to the necessity of a new revolution in such discussions and that leaders had received instructions to prepare both inwardly and materially for such a new revolution. Chief of Staff Röhm attempted to deny that any of these incidents had in fact taken place, stating that they could be explained as disguised attacks on the SA.

The gathering of evidence for several of these incidents by means of statements of parties involved ended in a most serious maltreatment of these witnesses who, for the most part, came from the ranks of the old SA. As early as the end of April, the leadership of the Party and a number of State institutions concerned were convinced that a certain group of high-ranking SA leaders had deliberately contributed to the alienation of the SA from the Party and other State institutions or at least had failed to prevent this from happening.

Repeated attempts to remedy this through normal official channels failed each time. Chief of Staff Röhm gave me his personal assurance time and time

again that the cases would be investigated and the guilty parties removed and, if necessary, punished. However, no visible change took place.

In the month of May, several Party and State offices received countless complaints of offenses committed by high-ranking and middle-ranking SA leaders which, accompanied by supporting documentation, could not be denied. The offenses included everything from rabble-rousing speeches to intolerable excesses. Minister-President Göring had already previously endeavored in Prussia to give the authority of the National Socialist will of the State priority over the individual wills of certain elements. In other Länder, Party offices and public authorities had been forced, on occasion, to take a stand against certain intolerable excesses. A number of the parties responsible were arrested. I have always stressed that an authoritarian regime bears particularly great responsibilities. If it is demanded of the Volk that it place blind trust in its leadership, that leadership must earn this trust by its achievements and by particularly good behavior. Mistakes and errors may occur in a given case, but they can be eradicated. Bad behavior, drunken excesses, molesting peaceful, upstanding citizens—this is unworthy of a leader, contrary to National Socialism, and detestable to the utmost degree. Thus I have always insisted that higher demands be placed upon the behavior and conduct of National Socialist leaders than upon the other Volksgenossen. He who would command more respect for himself must in turn achieve more. The most basic thing which can be expected of him is that his life not be a disgraceful example to those around him. Thus I do not want National Socialists to be more leniently judged and punished for such offenses than other Volksgenossen; rather, I expect that a leader who forgets himself in this way be punished more severely than an unknown man would under identical circumstances. And I do not wish to make any distinction here between leaders of the political organizations and leaders of the formations of our SA, SS, HJ, etc.

The determination of the National Socialist leadership of State to put an end to such excesses committed by unworthy elements who serve only to heap shame upon the Party and the SA evoked extremely vehement counter-reactions on the part of the Chief of Staff. The first of the original National Socialist fighters, a number of whom had struggled for nearly fifteen years for the victory of the Movement and now represented the Movement as high-ranking State officials in leading positions in our State, were called to account for the action they took against such unworthy elements; in other words, Chief of Staff Röhm attempted to take disciplinary action against these persons, the oldest supporters of the Party, in courts of honor composed in part of the youngest party comrades and even of persons who were not members of the Party.

These conflicts led to very serious talks between Chief of Staff Röhm and myself, in the course of which, for the first time, doubts as to this man's loyalty began to arise in my mind. Although I had rejected any such thoughts for many months, although I had personally protected this man in unshakable loyalty and comradeship for years in the past, warnings gradually began to leave their mark on me—above all, warnings from my deputy in the Party leadership, Rudolf Hess—which, try as I might, I could no longer refute.

From May onwards, there could no longer be any doubt that Chief of Staff Röhm was involved in ambitious plans which, had they become reality, could have resulted only in the most violent disruptions.

The fact that, throughout these months, I hesitated again and again to make any final decision, was due to the following:

1. I could not simply reconcile myself to the idea that a relationship which I had built upon trust could be nothing but a lie.

2. I still harbored the secret hope of being able to spare the Movement and my SA the disgrace of such a confrontation and to repair the damage without bitter fighting.

However, the end of May brought even more alarming facts to light. Chief of Staff Röhm began to depart, not only inwardly, but with his entire outward behavior, from the Party.

All of the principles with which we had become great lost their validity. The life which the Chief of Staff—and with him, a certain circle of others—began to lead was intolerable from any National Socialist point of view. As if it were not terrible enough that he himself and his circle of devotees broke every single law of decency and modesty, still worse, this poison now began to spread in everincreasing circles.

But worst of all was the fact that, out of a certain common predisposition, a sect gradually began to form in the SA which made up the nucleus of a conspiracy directed not only against the normal conceptions of a healthy Volk but against the security of the State as well.

Reviews conducted in the month of May of the promotions granted in certain areas of the SA resulted in the terrible realization that men had been promoted to positions in the SA without any consideration to their accomplishments within the Movement and the SA for the sole reason that they belonged to the circle of these persons with this particular predisposition. Individual incidents which are well known to you, for instance the case of the Standartenführer Schmidt¹⁵⁷ in Breslau, revealed a state of affairs which could only be regarded as intolerable. My order to intervene was followed in theory, but in fact, it was sabotaged.

Three groups gradually crystallized from the leadership of the SA: a small group, the elements of which were held together by a common predisposition who would stop at nothing and who had blindly delivered themselves into the hands of Chief of Staff Röhm.

In principle, these men were the SA leaders Ernst from Berlin, Heines in Silesia, Hayn in Saxony, and Heydebreck in Pomerania.¹⁵⁸ In addition to these men, there was another group of SA leaders who did not inwardly belong to this circle but felt themselves obligated to obey Chief of Staff Röhm simply from a soldierly point of view. And these were faced by a third group of leaders who made no secret of their inner aversion and disapproval and, as a result, had in part been removed from positions of responsibility while others had been pushed aside and, in many respects, simply disregarded.

At the fore of these SA leaders who were rejected because of their basic decency stood the present Chief of Staff, Lutze, as well as the leader of the SS, Himmler.¹⁵⁹

Without informing me at all and, initially, without even the slightest suspicion on my part, Chief of Staff Röhm had established contact with General Schleicher using as intermediary a thoroughly corrupt swindler, a certain Herr von A., whom you all know.¹⁶⁰ General Schleicher was the man who gave an external framework to Röhm's inner desires. He was the one who upheld and defined in concrete terms the viewpoint that

1. the present German regime was insupportable; that
2. above all, power over the Armed Forces and all national associations was to be united in one hand; that
3. Chief of Staff Röhm was the only man who could be considered for this post; that
4. Herr von Papen would have to be removed, and he was willing to assume the position of Vice Chancellor; and that furthermore, other major changes would have to be made in the Reich cabinet.

As always in such cases, the search for men to make up the new government began, under the condition that I was to be allowed to remain at my post—at least for the time being.

The implementation of these proposals from General von Schleicher was bound to meet with my unconquerable resistance as early as item 2.

It would never have been objectively or humanly possible for me to have given my consent to a personnel change in the Reich Ministry of Defense and to have appointed Chief of Staff Röhm to the vacant post.

First of all, for objective reasons:

For fourteen years, I have consistently upheld that the fighting organizations of the Party are political organizations which have nothing to do with the Army. In my eyes, it would constitute a disavowal of my view and my policies of fourteen years to appoint the leader of the SA to head the Army. In November 1923, I proposed appointing an officer¹⁶¹ to head the Army and not my SA leader at the time, Captain Göring.

Secondly, it would have been humanly impossible for me to ever consent to this proposal on the part of General von Schleicher. When I became aware of these plans, my own view of the inner value of Chief of Staff Röhm was already such that I would all the more never have been able to accept him for this post before my own conscience and for the sake of the Army's honor. However, above all, the supreme head of the Army is the Field Marshal and President of the Reich. As Chancellor, I gave him my oath. His person is inviolate for all of us.

The pledge which I made to him to maintain the Army as an unpolitical instrument of the Reich is binding for me, due both to my innermost conviction and to the fact that I gave my word.¹⁶² However, it would also have been humanly impossible for me to have done such a thing to the Reich Minister of Defense. I myself and all of us are happy to be able to look upon him as a man of honor from head to toe. From the very depths of his heart, he has reconciled the Army with the revolutionaries of old and allied it with their present leadership of State.

He has affirmed his most loyal devotion to that principle to which I will be devoted until my dying breath.

There is only one bearer of arms in the State: the Wehrmacht. And only one body in which is vested the political will of the Volk: the National Socialist Party.¹⁶³

Any thought of agreeing with General von Schleicher's plans would, on my part, have constituted an act of disloyalty not only to the Field Marshal and the Minister of Defense, but also an act of disloyalty to the Army. For just as General von Blomberg is doing his duty as Minister of Defense in the National Socialist State in the most pronounced sense of the word, the other officers and soldiers are also doing the same. I cannot expect that each of them find his own position within our Movement; but none of them have abandoned their basic position of loyalty to the National Socialist State. Furthermore, without the most cogent reasons, I could not have those men removed who with me jointly made a vow on January 30 to save the Reich and the Volk.

There are certain duties attached to loyalty, duties which we may not and must not breach. And I believe that, above all, the man who has led the nation to unity in his own name must under no circumstances commit an act of disloyalty, for doing so would make all external and internal confidence in good faith disappear.¹⁶⁴

Due to the fact that Chief of Staff Röhm was himself unsure whether attempts in the direction mentioned might not well meet with resistance on my part, the first plan was designed to bring this development about by force. Extensive preparations were made.

1. The psychological groundwork for the outbreak of a second revolution was systematically laid. For this purpose, the SA propaganda offices spread a rumor—penetrating as far as the SA—alleging that the Reichswehr was planning to dissolve the SA, which was later supplemented by the claim that I had unfortunately been personally won over in support of this plan. A lie as pitiful as it is malicious!

2. The SA was now forced to forestall this attack and eliminate, in a second revolution, both the elements of *Reaktion* on the one hand and the resistance of the Party on the other, while entrusting the authority of the State to the leadership of the SA.

3. For this purpose, the SA was to make all necessary material preparations within the shortest time possible. By using pretexts—among other things, by falsely claiming that he intended to implement a social relief plan for the SA—Chief of Staff Röhm succeeded in raising twelve million marks for this purpose.

4. In order to be in a position to concentrate exclusively on delivering the most decisive blows, special terror groups were formed under the name of "Stabswachen"¹⁶⁵ and sworn in for this sole purpose. While an old SA man had starved his way through an entire decade for the Movement, in this case paid troops were formed whose inner character and purpose cannot be more clearly revealed than in the truly horrible criminal records of the elements of which they are comprised, accompanied by the fact that the tried and true SA leaders and SA men were now thrust into the background to make room for politically untrained elements which were better fit for such actions. At certain *Führertagungen* and recreational outings, the SA leaders in question were brought together step by step and given individual treatment; in other words, while the

members of the inner sect made systematic preparations for the action itself, the second large circle of SA leaders were given only general information to the effect that a second revolution was knocking at the door, that this revolution had the single aim of restoring to me my freedom of action; that hence the new and, this time, bloody uprising—‘The Night of the Long Knives,’ as it was gruesomely called¹⁶⁶—corresponded to my own aim.

The necessity for action on the part of the SA was explained by drawing attention to my inability to make a decision; this situation could be remedied only by a *fait accompli*. Presumably, these false pretexts were used to assign Herr von Detten¹⁶⁷ the task of making preparations for the action in foreign countries. General von Schleicher personally took care of part of this drama abroad, leaving the practical work to his messenger, General von Bredow. Gregor Strasser was brought in.

In a final attempt early in June, I had Röhm summoned for a talk which went on for nearly five hours and lasted until midnight. I informed him that I had received the impression from countless rumors and innumerable assurances and statements from old and loyal party comrades and SA leaders that preparations were being made by unscrupulous elements for a national Bolshevik action which could only bring unutterable misfortune upon Germany. I further informed him that I had also heard rumors that there were plans to include the Army within the scope of this scheme. I assured Chief of Staff Röhm that the assertion that the SA was to be dissolved was a malicious lie, and that I could make no comment whatsoever on the lie that I intended to take action against the SA, but that I would personally take immediate steps to avert any attempt to allow chaos to arise in Germany, and that anyone who attacked the State would have to count me among his enemies from the very onset. I beseeched him for the last time to take a stand against this madness and use his authority to prevent a development which could only end in a catastrophe one way or another.

I once more voiced my strongest objection to the growing number of unimaginable excesses and demanded that every trace of these elements be wiped out in the SA in order to avoid that the SA itself as well as millions of decent party comrades and hundreds of thousands of old fighters were robbed of their honor by isolated inferior subjects. The Chief of Staff left me with the assurance that a number of the rumors were untrue and others were exaggerated and, in other respects, he would do everything he could to set things right.

The result of the conference was, however, that Chief of Staff Röhm, knowing that under no circumstances could he count on me in his planned undertaking, now proceeded to take steps toward my own elimination.

For this purpose, a larger circle of SA leaders who had been initiated were told that I myself was basically in agreement with the planned undertaking but that I could not afford to become personally involved and wished to be placed under arrest for a period of 24 or 48 hours when the uprising broke out so as to be relieved, by virtue of the *fait accompli*, of the embarrassing incrimination which would otherwise result for me abroad. This explanation is conclusively illustrated by the fact that, as a precautionary measure, the man had already been hired in the meantime who was to carry out my elimination at a later date:

Standartenführer Uhl,¹⁶⁸ who confessed only a few hours before his death that he had been willing to carry out such an order.

The initial plan for the upheaval was based upon the idea of granting leave to the SA. During this period and due to the lack of available forces, inexplicable riots were to break out along the lines of the conditions of August 1932¹⁶⁹ which would force me to summon the Chief of Staff, who alone would be in a position to restore order, and to entrust to him the executive authority. However, since it had become clear in the interim that under no circumstances could one count on such a willingness on my part, this plan was abandoned and direct action contemplated. Such action was to commence abruptly in Berlin with a raid on the government building and my arrest in order to allow other actions to follow in sequence, supposedly at my bidding. The conspirators proceeded on the assumption that orders given to the SA in my name would not only mobilize the SA throughout the Reich but also serve to bring about an automatic fragmentation of all other opposing forces within the State.

Chief of Staff Röhm, Gruppenführer Ernst, Obergruppenführer Heines, Hayn and a number of others declared before witnesses¹⁷⁰ that initially the bloodiest possible confrontation with their adversaries was to take place, lasting several days. The question as to the financial side of such a development was dismissed with a positively insane lack of concern and the comment that the bloody terror itself would serve to provide the requisite funds one way or another.

I now must deal with only one more idea, namely whether or not every successful revolution constitutes its own justification. Chief of Staff Röhm and his elements explained the necessity of their revolution by citing the fact that this alone could secure the triumph of pure National Socialism. However, at this point I must make it clear for the present and for posterity that these men no longer had any right whatsoever to cite National Socialism as their Weltanschauung. Their lives had become as bad as the lives of those whom we overcame and relieved in the year 1933. The conduct of these men made it impossible for me to invite them to my home or to even once set foot in my Chief of Staff's house in Berlin. It is hard to even fathom what would have become of Germany in the event that this sect had been victorious. The magnitude of the danger was documented all the more strongly by the observations which then entered Germany from abroad. English and French newspapers more and more frequently talked of a forthcoming upheaval in Germany, and increasing numbers of reports indicated that the conspirators had systematically impressed upon foreign countries the idea that the revolution of the true National Socialists was now imminent in Germany and that the existing regime was no longer capable of action. General von Bredow, who procured these connections as foreign agent for General von Schleicher, worked only in respect to the activities of those reactionary circles which—perhaps without having any direct connection with this conspiracy—allowed themselves to be exploited as a willing subterranean intelligence center for foreign powers.

At the end of June, I was thus determined to put an end to this outrageous development, and to do it before the blood of tens of thousands of innocent persons would seal the catastrophe.

Due to the fact that the danger and the tension which oppressed everyone had grown unbearable and certain bodies within the Party and the State had been compelled by virtue of their assigned duties to take defensive measures, the strange and sudden prolongation of service prior to the SA vacation leave¹⁷¹ aroused my suspicion, and thus I resolved that, on Saturday, June 30, 1 would dismiss the Chief of Staff from office, place him in custody for the time being, and arrest a number of SA leaders whose crimes had come to light.

Because it was doubtful whether, in view of the threat of an escalation, Chief of Staff Röhm would have come to Berlin or anywhere else at all, I resolved to personally travel to Wiessee for the conference of SA leaders scheduled there. Relying upon my personal authority and upon my power of determination, which had never failed me in the hour of need, I planned to dismiss the Chief of Staff from his post at 12:00 noon, arrest those SA leaders principally to blame and, in an urgent appeal, call upon the others to return to their duties.

In the course of June 29, I received such threatening news of the most recent preparations for the action that at midday I was forced to interrupt my tour of the labor camps in Westphalia in order to be available in case of emergency. At 1:00 in the morning I received two extremely urgent alarm bulletins from Berlin and Munich. Namely first of all, that an alert had been issued in Berlin for 4:00 in the afternoon, that the order had already been given for the requisition of trucks to transport what were actually the raiding formations and that this was already being carried out, and that the action was to begin promptly at the stroke of 5:00 as a surprise attack with the occupation of the government building. This was the reason why Gruppenführer Ernst had not traveled to Wiessee but remained in Berlin in order to conduct the action in person. Second of all, an alert had already been given to the SA in Munich for 9:00 in the evening.

The SA formations would not be allowed to return home but were assigned to the alert barracks. That is mutiny!¹⁷² I am the commander of the SA and no one else!

Under these circumstances, there was only one decision left for me to make. If there was any chance to avert the disaster, lightning action was called for. Only ruthless and bloody intervention might perhaps still have been capable of stifling the spread of the revolt. And then there could be no question of the fact that it would be better to destroy a hundred mutineers, plotters and conspirators (*Meuterer, Verschwörer und Konspiratoren*) than to allow ten thousand innocent SA men on the one hand and ten thousand equally innocent persons on the other to bleed to death. For if once the plans of that criminal Ernst were set in motion in Berlin, the consequences were unimaginable! How well the manipulations with my name had worked was evidenced in the distressing fact that these mutineers had, for instance, succeeded in securing four armored vehicles for their action from unsuspecting police officers in Berlin by citing my name, and that furthermore, even before then, the conspirators Heines and Hayn had made police officers in Saxony and Silesia uncertain by demanding that they decide between the SA and Hitler's enemies in the coming confrontation. It finally became clear to me that only one man could and must stand up

to the Chief of Staff. He had broken his vow of loyalty to me, and I alone had to call him to account for that!

At 1:00 in the morning, I received the last alarm dispatches, and at 2:00 a.m. I flew to Munich. In the meantime, I had already instructed Minister-President Göring that, in the event of a purge action, he was immediately to take corresponding measures in Berlin and Prussia. He crushed the attack on the National Socialist State with an iron fist before it could develop. The fact that this action required lightning speed also meant that very few men were at my disposal in this decisive hour. Then, in the presence of Minister Goebbels and the new Chief of Staff, the action with which you are acquainted was carried out and brought to a close in Munich.

Although I had been willing to be lenient only a few days before, in this hour there was no longer any room for such consideration. Mutinies are crushed only by the everlasting laws of iron. If anyone reproaches me and asks why we did not call upon the regular courts for sentencing, my only answer is this: in that hour, I was responsible for the fate of the German nation and was thus the Supreme Justiciar of the German Volk! Mutinous divisions have always been recalled to order by decimation. Only *one* State did not make use of its wartime legislation, and the result was the collapse of this State: Germany. I did not want to abandon the young Reich to the fate of the old.

I gave the order to shoot those parties mainly responsible for this treason, and I also gave the order to burn out the tumors of our domestic poisoning and of the poisoning of foreign countries down to the raw flesh. And I also gave the order that if the mutineers made any attempt to resist arrest, they were at once to be brutally struck down by force (*sofort mit der Waffe niederzumachen*).

The nation should know that no one can threaten its existence—which is guaranteed by inner law and order—and escape unpunished! And every person should know for all time that if he raises his hand to strike out at the State, certain death will be his lot. And every National Socialist should know that no rank and no position relieves him of his personal responsibility and, with it, his due punishment. I have prosecuted thousands of our former opponents on account of their corruption.¹⁷³ I would have to reproach myself if I were now to tolerate the same phenomenon in our own ranks.

No Volk and no leadership of State can be held responsible if creatures turn up such as those we have known in Germany in the likes of Kutisker etc., just as the French came to know Stavisky,¹⁷⁴ and as we are witnessing them again today with the aim of sinning against a nation's interests. However, any nation which does not find the strength to exterminate such pests makes itself guilty. When people confront me with the view that only a trial in court would have been capable of accurately weighing the measure of guilt and expiation, I must lodge a solemn protest. He who rises up against Germany commits treason.

He who commits treason is to be punished not according to the scope and proportions of his deed, but rather according to his cast of mind as revealed therein. He who dares to instigate a mutiny, thereby violating the principles of good faith and sacred vows, can expect nothing other than that he himself will be the first victim. I do not intend to have the lesser culprits shot and to spare the major culprits. It is not my responsibility to ascertain whether and if so,

which of these conspirators, agitators, nihilists and well-poisoners of German public opinion and, in a wider sense, of world opinion, too, has been dealt too hard a lot; rather, my duty is to make certain that Germany's lot is bearable. A foreign journalist who is enjoying the right to hospitality has filed a protest on behalf of the wives and children of those shot and expects reprisal from among their ranks. I can give this man of honor only one answer: women and children have always been the innocent victims of criminal acts committed by men. I, too, have sympathy for them, but I believe that the suffering which has been inflicted upon them by the fault of these men is only a tiny fraction compared to the suffering which would perhaps have come upon tens of thousands of German women had this deed been successful. A foreign diplomat has explained that the meeting between Schleicher and Röhm was naturally of a quite harmless nature. I refuse to discuss this matter with anyone. The concept of what is harmless and what is not will never coincide in the political sector.

However, when three traitors arrange and conduct a meeting in Germany with a foreign statesman which they themselves describe as "business," conduct it privately by excluding their staff and keep it concealed from me by the strictest orders, I will have such men shot dead, even if it were true that, at this meeting which was kept so secret from me, they talked only of the weather, old coins and similar topics.

The punishment for these crimes was a hard and severe one.

Nineteen high-ranking SA leaders and 31 SA leaders and members were shot, as were three SS leaders who were accomplices to the plot. Thirteen SA leaders and civilians who resisted arrest sacrificed their lives in the process. Three other lives were ended by suicide.

Five non-SA party comrades were shot for being accomplices.

And last of all, three members of the SS were shot who were guilty of disgraceful abuse of prisoners in protective custody.

In order to prevent the political passion and indignation from spreading to the lynch law in respect to other incriminated parties, once the danger had been removed and the revolt could be regarded as having been defeated, the strictest orders were issued on Sunday, July 1, to refrain from any further reprisals. Hence as of Sunday night, July 1, normal conditions have been restored. A number of acts of violence in no way connected with this action are being handed over to the regular courts for sentencing.

As heavy as these sacrifices may be, they were not in vain if they may serve to bring about once and for all the conviction that every attempt to commit treason against the internal and external security of the State will be broken, without distinction of person. I am confident in my hope in this respect that, if Fate were to dismiss me from my post at any given hour, my successor would not act differently, and were he also made to vacate this post, that the third in line would exhibit no less determination in his willingness to uphold the security of the Volk and the nation.

In view of the fact that, in the two weeks which now lie behind us, a part of the foreign press flooded the world with untrue and incorrect assertions and reports in the absence of any kind of objective and just reporting, I cannot accept the excuse that it was not possible to obtain any other news. In most

cases, it would have required merely a short telephone call to the competent authorities in order to ascertain the groundlessness of most of these assertions. When, in particular, it is reported that members of the Reich cabinet were among the victims or conspirators, it would not have been difficult to establish that the contrary was the case. The assertion that Vice Chancellor von Papen, Minister Seldte or other gentlemen in the Reich cabinet had had any connection with the mutineers is proven wrong most conclusively by the fact that one of the primary goals of the mutineers included murdering these men. Similarly, all reports of an involvement on the part of any of the German princes or of their prosecution are pure fabrication.

Finally, whereas an English paper has reported in the last few days that I had now had a nervous breakdown, I must note that in this case, too, a short inquiry would have sufficed to learn the truth immediately. I can only assure these anxious reporters that I have never suffered a nervous breakdown, neither in the War nor after the War, but this time I did suffer from the worst breakdown of the good faith which I had placed in a man whom I had once protected to the utmost, a man for whom I had veritably sacrificed myself.

However, at this point I must also confess that my confidence in the Movement—and particularly in the SS—has never wavered. And now my confidence in my SA has been restored to me as well. Three times¹⁷⁵ did the SA have the misfortune of having leaders—the last time, even a Chief of Staff—to whom they believed they owed obedience and who deceived them, men in whom I placed my trust and who betrayed me. However, I have also had three opportunities to witness how, in that moment in which a deed revealed itself to be treason, the traitor was abandoned, left alone and shunned by all. But the behavior of this small group of leaders was just as disloyal as these two National Socialist organizations were loyal to me in the decisive hour. The SS, aching inside, did its highest duty in these days, but no less decent was the behavior of the millions of upright SA men and SA leaders who, standing outside the circle of treason, did not waver for a second in their concept of duty. This gives me the conviction that the newly appointed Chief of Staff of the SA, to whom I am bound by the ties of the old fighting community, will finally succeed in rejuvenating the organizations according to my guidelines and in making of them an even stronger part of the Movement. For never will I consent to the destruction of something which is not only inseparably bound up for all time with the battles and the victory of the National Socialist Movement, but which also deserves immeasurable credit for its contribution to the formation of the new Reich.

The SA has upheld its inner loyalty to me in these days which have been so difficult for both it and myself. It has thus proven for the third time that it is mine, just as I am willing to prove at any time that I belong to my SA men. Within the space of a few weeks, the Brown Shirt will once again dominate German streets and clearly demonstrate to everyone that the life of National Socialist Germany has become all the stronger for having overcome a difficult crisis.

When, in March of last year, our young revolution swept through Germany, it was my foremost endeavor to shed as little blood as possible. For the new State, I offered a general amnesty to millions of my former opponents on behalf

of the National Socialist Party; millions of them have since joined our ranks and are faithfully working with us to rebuild the Reich. I had hoped that it would not be necessary to ever again defend this State with weapons in our hands. But now that Fate has nonetheless put us to the test, all of us wish to pledge to hold fast even more fanatically to that which was first won with so much of our best men's blood and today had to be defended once more with the blood of German Volksgenossen.

Just as, one and a half years ago, I offered reconciliation to our opponents of that time, I would also like to make a bid of forgiveness from now on to all of those who shared the blame for this act of madness. May they all reflect and, in memory of this sad crisis of our recent German history, devote their entire strength to atoning for it. May they now more clearly than before recognize the great task which Fate has assigned to us and which cannot be accomplished by civil war and chaos; may they all feel responsible for the most valuable possession there can be for the German Volk: inner order and peace both within and without! I am likewise willing to assume the responsibility, as history be my witness, for the 24 hours of the most bitter decisions of my life,¹⁷⁶ in which Fate once more taught me to anxiously cling fast with my every thought to the most precious thing we have been given in this world: the German Volk and the German Reich!

Scarcely three years later,¹⁷⁷ Hitler told a completely different tale of the Röhm Purge, stating:

Much to my own regret, I was forced to destroy this man and his following.
[—]

What kind of life would one have in this Volk had the precept of utmost brutal loyalty [to the Army] not been brought to bear here? Where would we be today? Back then, perhaps we might have been able to take a different path. What would we have today? I am not claiming too much when I speak of it [the militia army] as a completely worthless bunch, in military terms. I do not believe in the so-called *levée en masse*. I do not believe that it is possible to create soldiers only by mobilizing what might be called enthusiasm.

Here Hitler stated the real reason behind the Röhm Purge in all frankness: the brutal destruction of those who had supported the militia and utter obeisance to the high-ranking military which was incidentally in favor of the two-year conscription service advocated by Hitler. Gone was the talk of an alleged putsch, gone Hitler's self-righteous indignation at the supposed immorality, the planned assassination of the Führer, and all of the other false motives which Hitler had presented to the Reichstag deputies on July 13, 1934 for hours on end.

Even worse than Hitler's own justifications in this speech were the remarks added by the President of the Reichstag. Turning to face Hitler, Göring declared:

You have succeeded! You have the trust and, based upon this trust, it is possible for you to do what is required for Germany's reconstruction. However, this trust is also the platform upon which Germany stands today. He who seeks to shake and destroy it is guilty of more than treason to the internal and external security of the State. That is the most colossal crime imaginable, and he who commits it must be destroyed—for he is knocking down the very foundation upon which Germany stands today.

The fact that the Reichstag has today resolved: "The Reichstag grants its approval to the statement of the Reich Government and thanks the Reich Chancellor for his energetic and resolute salvation of the Vaterland from civil war and chaos," is merely an outward expression of what the entire Volk—man for man and woman for woman—would declare today. And if foreign countries presently believe that chaos is descending upon Germany, the German Volk's reply is the single cry: "We will all always approve of everything our Führer does."

This "cry of approval" became the sole measure for everything which was to take place in Germany until 1945. Hitler had, in fact, "succeeded": not a single person holding significant authority in the country now dared to stand up against him. Despite this triumph, the Röhm Purge left its traces.

The middle classes and the Reichswehr most easily reconciled themselves with the incidents of June 30. However, the Party's confidence in Hitler had suffered a major setback. The followers who had previously perceived in him a god-like figure—noble, selfless, devoted exclusively to Germany's welfare—were unable to dispel the dark suspicion that his actions could be motivated by aims of a different nature. It began to become evident that Hitler might be less interested in the German people and the National Socialist Party and more inclined to pursue his own unquenchable thirst for power and his grandiose military plans. Only the most naive party members swallowed the story of the alleged SA revolt. In spite of this creeping disillusionment, Hitler's followers did not voice their feelings publicly: some, because they feared Hitler's reprisals, and others, because they had reaped advantages from the altered situation as, for instance, the SS, which now became a self-sufficient organization, or the political leaders, who were finally rid of the SA's mocking criticism of their ambitious scramble for higher positions and their supposed bourgeois habitudes. But the old, unconditional faith in Hitler which had existed within the Party before the Röhm Purge was gone and could not be reestablished even by Hitler's later success in establishing a Greater German Reich or his successive military conquests early in World War II. The dictator had too clearly revealed his utter ruthlessness, having demonstrated that he

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would not hesitate to brutally dispense with even the most loyal and outstanding followers who stood in his way.

Now, after the successful Reichstag speech, Hitler once more appeared in public. The feared assassination attempts by embittered party comrades did not ensue, and the armed SS guards in the Reichstag proved an unwarranted precaution.

On July 18, Hitler received Graf von der Goltz, one of the leaders of German industry, in the Reich Chancellory.¹⁷⁸

On July 19, he delivered an address before the third-year students of the *Reichsführerschule* of the German Labor Service.¹⁷⁹ The following day he expressed his gratitude to the SS for its assistance in crushing the SA in the following decree:¹⁸⁰

In respect to the great services rendered by the SS, particularly in connection with the events of June 30, 1934, I hereby promote same to the status of a self-sufficient organization within the framework of the NSDAP. The Reichsführer of the SS shall thus be directly subordinate, as shall the Chief of Staff, to the Supreme Commander of the SA. The Chief of Staff and the Reichsführer of the SS both hold the party rank of Reichsleiter.

Munich, July 20, 1934

Adolf Hitler

5

During this time, Hitler also had other business in Munich. As mentioned above,¹⁸¹ he had planned to erase the negative impression the Röhm Purge had left by a violent takeover in Austria. It was a matter of principle to him that the National Socialist Party Organizations in territories belonging to foreign States at the time—such as Danzig, the Saar and Austria—be headed not by local residents who might pursue their own interests, but by loyal “Reich Germans” (*Reichsdeutsche*).¹⁸²

In keeping with this principle, the Reich German Theo Habicht¹⁸³ had been appointed Landesinspekteur of the NSDAP in Austria. Habicht frequented Hitler’s home when he visited Germany and even accompanied him on several flights. There can be little doubt that Hitler ordered Habicht to prepare for a violent coup to overthrow the Dollfuss government. Habicht himself, a modest man in a modest position, would never have dared to initiate such a plan.

The date scheduled for the coup—July 24/25—was well chosen, for Hitler would be attending the Bayreuth Festival and hence could feign innocent surprise when the news reached him.

Hitler arrived in Bayreuth in good time, at 3:00 p.m. on July 22.¹⁸⁴ On July 24, he had a notice to the Party published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*¹⁸⁵ which restricted public gatherings to special cases and also banned all fundraising activities until October 31, 1934.

On July 25 trucks carrying members of the 89th SS Standarte (Vienna) pulled up before the office of the Austrian Chancellor at the Ballhausplatz. The SS men wore the uniforms of the Austrian Army, and the guards allowed them to pass.

The interlopers soon had the entire building under their control. Having hoped to surprise and overpower the Ministers at a meeting of the cabinet, they had postponed their action by one day. However, the meeting had been interrupted and most of the Ministers had already left

the premises. Only Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss and the Minister of Security, von Fey,¹⁸⁶ were still in the building. Two National Socialists, Holzweber and Planetta, approached Dollfuss and shot him. A second division of putschists in uniform seized temporary control of the Vienna radio station RAVAG and were able to broadcast a number of announcements before they could be overwhelmed.

A council of ministers chaired by the Minister of Education, Kurt von Schuschnigg, gave the encircled National Socialists an ultimatum, and they surrendered at 5:00 p.m. The Austrian Envoy in Rome, von Rintelen, who had been involved in the plot, attempted suicide. Holzweber and Planetta were hanged in the courtyard of the Vienna Landgericht on July 31, crying, "Heil Hitler!" to the last.¹⁸⁷

The fact that the attempted coup was crushed quickly was due essentially to reports that Mussolini had dispatched troops to the Brenner Pass and threatened to launch a military invasion were the Austrian Government unable to put down the rebellion.

In Bayreuth, Hitler was immediately informed of the unhappy course his Vienna project had taken. Without displaying the slightest emotion, he abandoned his Austrian SS men to their fates¹⁸⁸ although they had been granted safe-conduct to Germany by the German Ambassador in Vienna, Dr. Rieth. Wiring his condolences on Dollfuss' death, he dismissed Rieth and closed the German-Austrian border. On July 26, he issued the following official announcement:¹⁸⁹

Before last night was out, the Reich Government instituted investigations to determine whether any German office was guilty of direct or indirect involvement in connection with the Austrian incidents. The thorough checking and questioning which came to an end today revealed that no German office was in any way connected with the events and that all orders given after the incidents became public were immediately carried out in full.

In particular, a general blockade of all roads to Austria has been set up in order to prevent any undesired bordercrossing; at the same time, the inmates of the interim camps for Austrian refugees and emigrants¹⁹⁰ have been prohibited from leaving their quarters. Thus not a single person has crossed the border before or after who might be brought into connection with these incidents. A most rigid control resulted in only a single case being ascertained in which an apparently insufficiently strict censoring of reports originating in and being spread from Austria might perhaps have given rise to the contrary impression.

As a consequence, Landesinspekteur Habicht, who was responsible for the reports passed on by the Munich station, was dismissed from his post as Landesinspekteur this morning at 10:00 a.m. and placed on retirement.

July 26, 1934

These transparent explanations nonetheless did not suffice to erase the negative impression which the National Socialist coup had made in the rest of the world. Hitler was also aware of this fact and thus conceived of nominating von Papen as special ambassador of the Reich Government in Vienna in the hopes that the appointment of a moderate man of this kind might calm things down. Sending him to Vienna would also formally remove von Papen from his office as Vice Chancellor and divest him of his privileges as special commissioner, a move which Hitler had long desired. He composed the following letter to von Papen:¹⁹¹

Bayreuth, July 26, 1934

Dear Herr von Papen,

Following the events in Vienna, I have been forced to suggest to the Reich President that the German Envoy in Vienna, Dr. Rieth, be dismissed from his post for having allowed himself to be persuaded to comply with the request of the Austrian ministers and the Austrian rebels to consent to an agreement reached by these two parties granting safe conduct to Germany to the rebels, without having consulted the German Reich Government. In doing so, the Envoy involved the German Reich in an internal Austrian affair for no reason whatsoever.

The assassination of the Austrian Federal Chancellor, which the German Reich Government most strongly condemns and regrets, has served to further aggravate the already unstable political situation in Europe through no fault of our own. Thus it is my wish to contribute to easing the tension of the situation as a whole and, in particular, to see to it that relations with the GermanAustrian State are once more steered back to more normal and friendly channels.

For this reason I am addressing my request to you, my esteemed Herr von Papen, to undertake this most important task, for, since the beginning of our cooperation in the cabinet, you above all have enjoyed and still enjoy my utmost and unlimited trust.

Thus I have proposed to the Reich President that you withdraw from the Reich cabinet and be released from your duties as Commissioner for the Saar to be appointed for a limited term to the special mission of taking office as German Envoy in Vienna. In such office, you will be directly subordinate to me. Thanking you once more today for everything which you did long ago for the formation of the Government of the national uprising and have done on Germany's behalf jointly with us since then, I remain faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

On July 27, Hindenburg's consent was made public in the following announcement:

Official notice has been given that, following the letter of July 26, 1934 which the Reich Chancellor addressed to Vice Chancellor von Papen, the Reich President has declared his consent to releasing the Vice Chancellor from his duties as deputy of the Reich Chancellor and Commissioner for the Saar in order

to entrust to him the important task of Envoy for a limited special mission in Vienna as proposed by the Reich Chancellor. Respective agreement to Herr von Papen's appointment was sought today in Vienna.

Apparently, von Papen bore no further grudge against Hitler for slaying his associates Jung and von Bose. Hitler explained to him that it was his patriotic duty to go to Vienna, and von Papen did not hesitate to comply. When the new Austrian Government under Schuschnigg had granted agrément to the new envoy, von Papen left for Vienna with his secretary, Günther von Tschirschky-Boegendorf,¹⁹² who had narrowly escaped being murdered and had just been released from prison.

In order to stress that from now on the National Socialist interpretation of law alone was valid, Hitler issued an announcement on July 27 that Rudolf Hess was to be consulted whenever a bill was drafted.¹⁹³

The signing of the decree appointing von Papen Envoy¹⁹⁴ on July 31 was the Reich President's last official act. For weeks, von Hindenburg's health had been failing rapidly. The prominent surgeon Professor Sauerbruch was constantly in attendance at Neudeck. On July 31, it was announced that Hindenburg's condition had become critical.

On August 1, Hitler paid a final visit to the Reich President, spending some time alone with him. Sauerbruch reports that, upon leaving the sick room, Hitler said to him:¹⁹⁵

The Reich President is only completely conscious for short spells at a time and, in the end, he kept calling me merely "Your Majesty."

By the time he reached the stairs in front of Hindenburg's house, Hitler had put on a doleful expression. Perhaps he did, in fact, regret the death of a man who had done everything "his Chancellor" wished for the past eighteen months.

In the future, Hitler would be forced to make his decisions alone, no longer able to harness the respect and authority accorded to the venerable Field Marshal for his own ends. However, Hitler's sympathies for the "highly esteemed Old Gentleman" ended abruptly where his own interests began, i.e. in the question of succession. Even before Hindenburg's death (!), the cabinet resolved the following law:¹⁹⁶

Law Concerning the Head of State of the German Reich. August 1, 1934.

The Reich Government has resolved the following Law, which is hereby promulgated:

§1

The office of Reich President shall be combined with that of Reich Chancellor. As a consequence, those powers previously accorded to the Reich

President shall pass to the Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. He shall nominate his own deputy.

§2

This Law shall come into effect upon the death of Reich President von Hindenburg.

Berlin, August 1, 1934

The law contained the names of all Reich Ministers; even von Papen's name appeared as "deputy of the Reich Chancellor," although he had already been dismissed from this post.

This clear breach of the Constitution, following so shortly upon the heels of the brutal slayings in connection with the Röhm Purge, constituted a further shock to the sense of justice and what was right in Germany.

Hitler's hurry is characteristic for his state of mind: from this point onward, the measures he took were often precipitate, unreflected and, in part, even redundant. The carnage of June 30 would not have been necessary in order to attain his goals, for, after a presidential election, the Reichswehr would have gladly stood at the disposal of Hitler, the new Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, a position which was automatically combined with the office of Reich President. Röhm and the SA leaders would inevitably have conformed to Hitler's will, and the reactionaries, whom he wished to give a good "rap on the knuckles," would have found no opening for active resistance even without the purge.

Thus the law of August 1 was equally superfluous. There was no doubt that Hitler would have won an absolute majority in the first ballot had a presidential election been held in accordance with the Constitution.

But Hitler was taking no chances: he did not wish to allow this key office to be held by another even for a second.¹⁹⁷

At 9:00 a.m. on August 2, Hindenburg expired. Hitler sent his condolences per telegram to Colonel von Hindenburg and his wife as follows:¹⁹⁸

Berlin, August 2, 1934

Deeply moved still by that moment which will remain unforgettable throughout my entire life in which I was able to see and speak with our Field Marshal one last time, I have now received the distressing news.

United with the entire German Volk in the utmost sadness, I may request that you be so kind as to accept my own condolences and those of the nation.

Adolf Hitler

Although Hindenburg had expressed the desire that he be interred next to his wife in a private ceremony, Hitler had the following Reich Law passed on August 2:¹⁹⁹

§1

The German Volk shall provide a state funeral for the deceased Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg.

§2

The competent ministers shall be entrusted with carrying out the state funeral.

The gravesite Hitler had in mind was not disclosed immediately. Only on August 4 was it announced that he had elected the Tannenberg Monument, which had allegedly been chosen “by agreement with the von Hindenburg family.”²⁰⁰ The new Reich President planned to accord his predecessor a maximum of pomp and circumstance and personally see to it that he “entered into Valhalla.”²⁰¹

In the meantime, as early as August 2 Hitler had published an official announcement regarding the oath of allegiance which he demanded from all members of the Armed Forces:²⁰²

Berlin, August 2

Minister of Defense, Colonel General von Blomberg, has ordered that all soldiers of the Wehrmacht immediately pledge an oath of allegiance to the Führer of the German Reich and Volk, Adolf Hitler, pursuant to the Law Concerning the Head of State of the German Reich and Volk. The wording of the oath shall be as follows:

“I swear by God this sacred oath to render unconditional obedience to the Führer of the German Reich and Volk, Adolf Hitler, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and to be willing at all times to risk my life as a brave soldier for this oath.”²⁰³

After the swearing in, there will be a hurrah for the new Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, to be followed by the two national anthems.

Hitler remarked upon his new title in a letter to the Reich Minister of the interior—notwithstanding that he had, of course, often stressed that the greatest title he knew was his own name. In the second half of this letter, he commented on the plebiscite which he had already anticipated and made superfluous in his law of August 1.

The letter read as follows:²⁰⁴

My dear Mr. Minister,

The legal clarification of the question of the head of state made necessary by the national misfortune which has befallen our Volk moves me to issue the following order:

1. The greatness of the deceased bestowed a unique significance upon the title "Reichspräsident." All of us feel that this title, in view of what it meant to us, is indivisibly bound up with the name of the great man who has passed away. Thus I request that provision be made that I continue to be addressed in official and private intercourse merely as "Führer and Reichskanzler." This arrangement shall remain in effect for all time to come.

2. It is my desire that the assignment of the former functions of the Reich President to me personally and hence to the office of the Reich Chancellor as resolved by the cabinet and admissible according to the Constitution be given the express sanction of the German Volk. Deeply imbued with the conviction that all authority of the State must proceed from the Volk and be confirmed by the Volk in free elections with secret ballots, I request that you immediately present the resolution of the cabinet and any requisite addenda to the German Volk for a free plebiscite.

Berlin, August 2, 1934

Adolf Hitler
German Reich Chancellor

On August 5, Hitler granted an interview to the journalist Ward Price on the occasion of taking over the office of Reich President.

In response to the question whether he intended to remain both Head of State and Chancellor for the rest of his life, Hitler stated: "It will be some time until a national plebiscite deprives the present government of its foundation." In other words, Hitler, who would certainly never have allowed a plebiscite of this type, was not to relinquish the two offices he now held dually as long as he lived. He defended his right to both until the end, and his talk of one day retiring from public life to provide a minimum of supervision for his successor²⁰⁵ was nothing but idle speculation.

Ward Price, who had just returned from covering the execution of the National Socialist putschists in Vienna, succeeded in drawing Hitler out to make a roundabout comment on Austrian "independence." Once more the Führer and Reich Chancellor emphasized his intention of conducting plebiscites on a regular basis "every year." Even in peacetime, he was less than particular about this practice,²⁰⁶ and during the War, there was no talk at all of such "demonstrations of democracy." The interview with the English journalist, which naturally contained Hitler's repeated reference to the two "Germanic nations" (Germany and England), was published as follows:²⁰⁷

The correspondent opened with the following remark: "As eventful as the past few weeks have been for the Reich Chancellor, they have left no mark on his features. In fact, he looks healthier than in February, when I saw him last." The correspondent's first question concerned general armament and international tensions.

Hitler replied: "As far as Germany is concerned, there will be no new war. Germany knows the terrible consequences of war better than any other country.

"Almost all of the members of the National Government know its horrors. They know that it is not a romantic adventure, but rather an atrocious catastrophe. It is the conviction of the National Socialist Movement that war is of no use to anyone and can only result in ruin. We would not profit by a war. For us, 1918 was a lesson and a warning. We believe that the problems of present-day Germany cannot be solved by war. The demands it places upon the rest of Europe do not harbor the danger of such a misfortune, for they are limited to what the other nations consider their most elementary rights. We demand only that our present borders be maintained. We will certainly never fight again, except in self defense. I have repeatedly reassured the French that there will be no further territorial difficulties between us once the question of the Saar has been settled; at our eastern border I have proven our peaceful intentions by concluding a pact with Poland."

The Reich Chancellor continued: "Baldwin once said that Great Britain's defensive border lay, in future, at the Rhine. Perhaps a French statesman might go even further and say that France must be defended at the Oder; Russia might perhaps claim that its national defense line runs along the Danube. In view of this situation, Germany can hardly be reproached for seeking national protection within its borders. To you as an Englishman I may say that, if England does not attack us, we will never have any differences with England, neither at the Rhine nor elsewhere. We do not have any claims upon England."

In response to the correspondent's interim question, "Not even colonies?" the Führer raised his voice to reply:

"I would not demand the life of a single German in order to gain any colony in the world. We know that the former German colonies in Africa are an expensive luxury for England. The expansion of the British air fleet has not given rise to the least bitterness in Germany. The English can double or quadruple their fleet, they can make it any size they choose; it is no affair of ours, because we do not intend to attack them."

The correspondent interrupted to point out that England was building airplanes because it believed that Germany was building up a large air fleet, just as it had built up a large navy before the World War.

Hitler replied: "The English did not feel threatened when France built up a large air fleet. Why should they be excited about German measures for self defense? For us, Great Britain lies outside such considerations. The steps we are taking are designed to do justice to the fact that we may well be surrounded by a ring of powerful enemies on the continent who might one day place demands upon us which we are unable to accept. It is not the volume of arms which brings the threat of war but inequality of arms. That encourages the stronger nations to harbor ambitious plans which the weaker nations cannot tolerate."

The correspondent posed a number of questions on Austria. Hitler replied with feeling:

"We will not attack Austria, but we cannot prevent Austrians from attempting to reestablish their former ties with Germany. These States are separated only by a line, and on both sides of this line live peoples of the same race.

"If one part of England were artificially separated from the rest, who would prevent its endeavoring to become united once more with the rest of the country? Germany and Austria were united until 1866."

"Is Your Excellency aspiring to reinstate the Holy Roman Empire?" the correspondent asked.

"The question of the Anschluss," Hitler declared, "is not a present-day problem. I am certain that the entire affair would be settled if a secret ballot were to take place in Austria. Austrian independence is not at stake, and no one is questioning it.

"In the Austrian Empire of old, the various nationalities professed an affinity to their neighbors of their own race. It is only natural that the Germans of Austria are in favor of a unification with Germany. We all know that this goal is unattainable at present, for resistance in the rest of Europe would be too strong."

The correspondent mentioned the tremendous power and responsibility which now lay united in Hitler's hands.

The Führer stated: "Every year I take one opportunity or another to present my powers to the German Volk. It has the chance to confirm them or to deny them. We wild Germans are better democrats than other nations."

The correspondent asked: "Will you retain the dual office of Head of State and Chancellor for life?"

Hitler replied: "It will be some time until a national plebiscite deprives the present government of its foundation."

The correspondent said: "Five weeks ago, the world was surprised by indications of a rift in the National Socialist Armed Forces and by the severe measures applied to eliminate it. Are you confident that the Party is a completely unified whole?"

The Führer replied, eyes flashing: "The party is stronger and more solid than ever before!"

The ensuing section of the interview concerned Germany's economic prospects. Hitler declared he was confident that Germany would make itself independent of raw materials from abroad if forced to do so. He recalled earlier experiences during Napoleon's Continental Blockade and during the World War.

In respect to world economics as a whole, the Chancellor stated that three things were required for the world's recovery, namely: maintaining peace, the presence of strong, well-organized governments in each country, and the necessary energy to take on world problems as a whole. The Germans were willing to cooperate with other nations in this respect if they demonstrated the same attitude.

In response to a question as to Germany's return to the League of Nations, Hitler declared:

"We left the League of Nations for definite, clearly stated reasons. It was impossible for my government to continue to take part in negotiations in which we were treated on an inferior basis. When our complete equality is recognized, we will perhaps return. The British Government has declared its support of equal armaments, which constitute the major criterion, but unfortunately it has not succeeded in convincing other governments to adopt the same position."

Hitler's next remarks were devoted to the necessity of putting an end to the war psychosis. He said that he had been striving for a better understanding with Great Britain and was continuing to do so. Two Germanic nations should, by the sheer power of natural instinct, be friends. The National Socialist Movement would view a war against England as a crime against the race. He pointed out that English who visited Germany were always able to come to friendly terms with the Germans, and it was desirable that even more English would come in order to satisfy themselves personally as to the circumstances in Germany.

Hitler closed with the remark:

"It is regrettable that our old Marshal Hindenburg has died. Had he lived but a few years longer, he would, I believe, have found a way to make Germany's sincere wish for peace even more evident."

The Reichstag convened at the Kroll Opera in Berlin at noon on August 6 for a session of mourning in tribute to Hindenburg. Hitler delivered the following memorial address:²⁰⁸

Herr und Frau von Hindenburg!

Esteemed Mourners! Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

For months now we have been burdened by a gnawing worry. The knowledge of the illness of our highly esteemed Old Gentleman filled millions of German hearts with inner anxiety for the life of a hoary head who was more to us than only Head of State. For this man, whom the Almighty has watched over for nearly 87 years now, had become for all of us the symbolic personification of the indestructible, ever-replenishing vitality of our Volk.

The fateful will of Providence had visibly raised him above the measure of the commonplace. Only when the nation placed its highest rank into his hands did this position attain the highest honors. For all of us, the German Reich President is indivisibly bound up with the venerable name of the departed.

Only now, as we prepare to pay our last respects to the dearly departed, has the true realization of the scope and greatness of this unique life dawned upon us. And we make a humble bow to the unfathomable Will which serves to shape lives by what seems to be mere coincidence or triviality in a manner which the inquiring man only subsequently sees and recognizes in the whole, wonderful framework of necessary coherences.

Reich President Field Marshal von Hindenburg is dead. When we endeavor to explain the sentiments which move the entire Volk to its innermost depths,

we wish to do so in such a manner as to recall the great deceased in ever more gratitude. Only when, seized by the desire to do justice to history, we begin our inquiry into this figure, are we able to gauge the scope and the contents of a human life of a greatness which is manifested only rarely in the course of centuries.

How much the face of this earth has changed since that October 2, 1847 when Paul von Hindenburg was born! His life began in the midst of a revolution. The lunacy of political Jacobinism refused to allow Europe any peace in those days. The concepts of a new, so-called humanity struggled against the elements and forms of an obsolete order. When the year 1848 came to a close, the bright flames seemed perhaps smothered; however, the inner turmoil had remained.

At that time, the world did not yet know a German Reich or an Italy. Frederick William IV ruled in Prussia. The House of Habsburg controlled not only the German Confederation, but also Venetia and Lombardy. The Balkans were mere tributary provinces of the Turkish Empire.

Prussia itself, just as the other states in the German Confederation, was internally weak and incapable of instilling any genuinely strong idea in the people. The disgrace of Olmütz burns in the hearts of the few true patriots.

Prince William becomes King of Prussia. The young Hindenburg now witnesses the great triumvirate of the political and military reorganization of our Volk. Bismarck, Moltke and Roon enter onto the stage of history!

While the American revolution is triumphantly mastering the Civil War, Prussia's path leads from the Entrenchments of Düppel to Kbniggrätz. And in these regiments marches a young second lieutenant, brave and enthusiastic: Paul von Hindenburg. A piece of shrapnel shatters his helmet, bestowing a baptism of fire upon the young fighter for the unification of the Reich.

Four years later, Fate has elected him to be a witness in the hour marking the birth of the German Reich. When Bismarck finishes making his proclamations on the power and glory of the new State and its will to augment itself by means of the treasures of peace and culture and calls 'long live the Kaiser of the new Reich' for the first time, the rapier of Lieutenant von Hindenburg is also raised and crossed in allegiance to the Kaiser and the Reich.

A life of labor for this new Reich now begins. The great Kaiser dies, a second and a third follow; Bismarck is dismissed; Roon and Moltke take their last breath—but Germany grows as a guarantor of peace and a truly European order. The world is given a new face. In all areas of human development, one revolutionary invention follows upon the heels of the last. Over and over again, what is better takes the place of what is good. Germany becomes a major power.

In constant service to the life of this Reich and our Volk, commanding General von Hindenburg bade his farewell at the age of 64 on March 19, 1911. His term of service seemed to have ended. One of the nameless officers among all of the other tens of thousands who never falter in doing their duty and serving the Vaterland but nonetheless fade into anonymity and are forgotten.

Thus when the World War descended upon Germany and moved the German Volk to rise in resistance, of the sacred conviction that it had been attacked through no fault of its own, the Kaiser called out in a difficult hour to

a man living in retirement, a man who was less to blame for the war and the onset of war than anyone else in this world could be. On August 22, 1914, Hindenburg was assigned the task of assuming supreme command of an army in East Prussia. Eight days later, the German Volk and the world are first told of this appointment and thus become acquainted with the name of the new Colonel General.

Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro makes the following official report: "Our troops in Prussia under the leadership of Colonel General von Hindenburg have defeated the Russian Army advancing from the Narew River in a force of five army corps and three cavalry divisions in a three-day battle in the district of Gilgenburg and Ortelsburg, and are now pursuing them over the border.

Quartermaster General von Stein"

Tannenberg was won. From now on, the greatest battle in world history was indivisibly bound up with this name. Together with his great assistants, he averted the crisis of the year 1916 and, as head of the German Field Forces, saved the nation from destruction many times over. Had the political leadership of our Volk been equal in merit to that of the military, Germany would have been spared the worst humiliation in history.

When the November Revolution finally broke the German Reich and the German Volk after all, the worst catastrophe was at least able to be avoided due to the figure of the Field Marshal, which had already gone down in history.

For a second time, the Commander in Chief retired. And for a second time, he was called upon. On April 26, 1925, the German Volk elected him as President of the Reich and moreover, without suspecting it at the time, as patron of the new national revolution.

And here I now fulfill my obligation to the truth when, overcome by gratitude, I draw the attention of the German Volk to the immeasurable service which the Field Marshal has rendered in history by the reconciliation brought about in his name between the best of Germany's past and a better German future to which we fervently aspire. Since that hour when I was allowed to solemnly swear my oath before this esteemed man as Chancellor of the Reich, I have increasingly sensed the mercy of Fate which has bestowed upon us such a paternal and generous patron.

Like a mystical arc, the life of this figure stretches from the muddled revolution of 1848 along an unfathomably long path to the national uprising of 1933. The German Volk can only be grateful for the dispensation of Providence that its "most German" (*deutscheste*) uprising was placed under the protection and guidance of its most venerable nobleman and soldier. We who did not only have the fortune to know him personally but who, each in his own way, were also allowed to contribute to the miracle of this new resurrection of our Volk wish to cherish the image of this great German in our hearts in grateful remembrance. We shall guard and keep it as a precious inheritance of a great age, and we wish to pass it on to the generations which will come after us.

He who remained so loyal to his Volk deserves to be loyally remembered for all time!

Because Fate has chosen us to lead the Reich and Volk onwards, we can but beg the Almighty to give us the strength to stand up at all times for the freedom

of the Volk and the honor of the German nation and, in particular, to always mercifully allow us to find the right means to secure the good fortune of peace for our Volk and to preserve it from the misfortune of war, just as the great departed always sincerely and wholeheartedly desired.

Deputies of the German Reichstag! Ladies and Gentlemen! German Volk! In this solemn hour I ask you all to look beyond this transitory moment and into the future. Let our hearts be filled with a single, firm realization:

Reich President and Field Marshal von Hindenburg is not dead. He lives on, for in dying he has come to dwell above us in the company of the immortals of our Volk, surrounded by the great spirits of the past as the everlasting patron of the German Reich and the German nation.

When the mournful strains of Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* had died out, the funeral party went outdoors, where they witnessed yet another sign of the changing times: the Reichswehr gave its first official salute to the new Commander in Chief. The honor guard of the sentry stationed in Berlin paraded past Hitler, who received their salute with hat in hand. But in order to demonstrate to the Generals what Hitler's remark about the "nation's sole bearer of arms"²⁰⁹ really meant, the honor guard was followed by the goosestepping ranks of a squad of honor from the *Landespolizeigruppe General Göring* with steel helmets and fixed bayonets, a squad of one hundred members of the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* with steel helmets and rifles, a squad of the militant *Feldjägerkorps*²¹⁰ with steel helmets and fixed bayonets, and an honorary SA storm troop (unarmed). Honorary delegations from the Land Aviation School came next, and the Labor Service, shouldering spades, brought up the rear.

On the morning of August 7, funeral ceremonies for the Reich President commenced in the courtyard of the huge Tannenberg Monument. Hitler had once again conceived of something new: he greeted the bereaved and kissed Frau von Hindenburg's hand, thus reinstituting a ceremony which had no longer been practiced in official German society since 1918.

Needless to say, after all that had happened in the preceding weeks, the gesture was grotesque.

After an address by the Chief of Chaplains (*Feldbischof*) Dr. Dohrmann, Hitler stood before Hindenburg's sarcophagus and delivered the following speech:²¹¹

Herr und Frau von Hindenburg! Esteemed Mourners! Generals, Officers and Soldiers of the Wehrmacht!

A soldier is normally honored twice in his life: following a victory, and following his death.

When the name of the Field Marshal and Reich President first rang out in the German Volk, a long and complete life of fighting and work already lay behind him. As a young officer of the Great King, the 17-year-old fought on the battlefield of Königgrätz and was ordained by his first wound there. Four years later, he is witness to the proclamation of his Royal Commander in Chief to the German Kaiser. In the years thereafter, he aids in shaping the strength of the newly united German Reich. When commanding General von Hindenburg takes his leave on March 18, 1911, he can look back on a full career as a Prussian officer in the service of war and peace.

It was a great age. After centuries of powerlessness, after never-ending confusion and division, the German tribes were united by the brilliant leadership of a single man, the German nation thus created anew. The image of weakness which the Germans had so disgracefully and so often projected in centuries past was replaced by the manifestation of an unsuspected strength. What a wondrous feeling to have played a part in this epoch marking the resurrection of a German Reich by consistently fulfilling one's duty in the storms of battle as well as in the immeasurable work of education and preparation in peacetime! And nonetheless, the name of this man remained unknown to the German Volk as did the names of innumerable other officers. Only a small circle in the nation knows these nameless men who unobtrusively fulfill their duties.

When, three and a half years later, the German Volk first receives word of the name of General Paul von Hindenburg, the tempests of the World War are raging over Europe. In the worst hours, the Kaiser recalled the General from retirement and assigned to him command of the Army in East Prussia. And six days later, the cannons are booming here in the midst of the beautiful countryside of this old Land of the Teutonic Order, and still three days later the churchbells are proclaiming throughout Germany: the battle of Tannenberg has been won. A victory had been achieved which world history is at pains to equal.

And how immense have been the consequences! A precious German Land is snatched from the jaws of further devastation. In deeply-felt gratitude, millions of Germans throughout the Reich are passing on to each other the name of the commander who has performed this miraculous rescue together with his forces. And so much has happened in the space of the twenty years between August 28, 1914 and the present day! A war which made all of our memories and concepts of the past pale to insignificance, an incredible, never-ending series of fights and battles, nervewracking tensions, terrible crises, and victories unequaled. Hope is pitted against despondency, confidence against despair. But again and again the nation is brought to its feet to protect its existence; millions of German men do their duty in loyalty and obedience. For the next century, the German Volk will have no reason to vindicate its military honor.

Never before have soldiers been braver, never before more enduring, never before more willing to sacrifice than were the sons of our Volk in these four and a half years. The miracles of these accomplishments—they are inconceivable if one does not gauge and appreciate the strength of the man himself. A magic power lay in the very name of the Field Marshal who, with his

armies, ultimately forced the greatest military power in the world to its knees in the Russia of that time. And when—unfortunately, too late—the Kaiser appointed him to head the entire Army, he was able, with his brilliant aides, not only to banish the most severe crisis for the time being but also to rouse German resistance to launch an offensive and win tremendous victories even two years later.

The tragic end of that great struggle cannot be held against this commander in history, but is instead a condemnation of the politicians.

With a God-given loyalty to his duty, the hoary Field Marshal led our regiments and divisions onwards from victory to victory, pinning unfading laurels to their flags.

When the heinous deeds at home broke the resistance, a leader once more retired whose name had been inscribed for all time in the book of World History.

It was the final triumph of the Old Army that, in 1925, the best representative national Germany could find was the soldier and Field Marshal of the World War. And it is one of the miraculous decrees of an enigmatic and wise Providence that the preparation for the uprising of our German Volk was initiated under the presidency of this superlative soldier and servant of our Volk and that, in the end, it was he who opened the gates to the renewal of Germany.

It was in his name that the alliance was established which united the stormy power of the uprising with the best abilities of the past. As Reich President, the Field Marshal became the patron of the National Socialist Revolution and hence of the rebirth of our Volk.

Nearly twenty years ago today, the bells sounded here and echoed throughout Germany for the first time in honor of the name of the Field Marshal. Today, to the peal of these same bells, the nation has accompanied its venerable departed hero back to the great battlefield of his unequalled victory. It is here, in the midst of the slumbering grenadiers of his victorious regiments, that the tired commander shall find his peace. The towers of the castle shall be defiant guards of this, his last great headquarters in the East. Standards and flags shall salute him.

And the German Volk will come to its dead hero to gather new strength for life in times of need, for even when the last trace of this body shall have been obliterated, his name will ever more be immortal.

Dead Commander, enter into Valhalla now!

To mark his accession to the office of Reich President, Hitler passed an Amnesty Law²¹² on August 7, by virtue of which several thousand prisoners were released from protective custody. At the same time it was disclosed²¹³ that, of the 1,124 persons who had been jailed in Prussia in connection with the Röhm Purge, 1,079 had been released while 45 remained in custody. The total number of arrests and executions in Prussia was not revealed.

On August 9, Hitler visited the exhibition “Die Strasse” in Munich (Exhibition Park).²¹⁴

The following day, he appointed the NSDAP Gauleiter of Rhineland-Palatinate, Josef Bürckel, as the new Commissioner for the Saar in von Papen's stead.²¹⁵

Von Hindenburg's will was opened on August 15. It bore the inscription: "My Last Will and Testament. This letter is to be given to the Reich Chancellor by my son." The will was dated May 11, 1934 and began with the words: "To the German Volk and its Chancellor."²¹⁶

The document contained a lengthy discourse on the years 1919 to 1933 and closed with the following section dedicated to Hitler:

I thank Providence that It has allowed me to experience the hour of resurgence in the twilight of my life. I thank all those who have contributed to the work of accomplishing Germany's resurrection in selfless love for their Vaterland.

My Chancellor Adolf Hitler and his Movement have taken a decisive step of historic significance toward the great goal of bringing the German Volk together in inner unity beyond all differences of rank and class. I know that there is much still to be accomplished, and it is my heartfelt desire that the act of national uprising and *völkisch* unification will lead to an act of reconciliation encompassing the Gennan Vaterland as a whole.

I take leave of my German Volk in the firm hope that that which I yearned for in 1919 and which slowly matured to culminate in January 30, 1933 will ripen to the complete fulfillment and accomplishment of the historic mission of our Volk.

With this firm belief in the future of the Vaterland, I can rest in peace.

Berlin, May 11, 1934

von Hindenburg

After World War II, the Denazification Court at Nuremberg²¹⁷ took up the question of whether a second will—which Hitler suppressed—did not indeed recommend the reinstitution of the monarchy and, if so, who had been responsible for the text, in particular for the section devoted to Hitler. Oskar von Hindenburg vehemently insisted that there had been only one text and that its full wording had been published. Von Papen, who had drafted the document, originally maintained a different view, claiming that he had not been responsible for the section addressed to Hitler; however, he was ultimately forced to admit that he might have been the author of these remarks as well. This revised view most probably reflects the truth, for von Papen stated on August 4, 1934 in Neudeck after visiting Hindenburg's bier: "No one acknowledged the historic achievement and human greatness of Hindenburg more highly than Adolf Hitler. We can fulfill Hindenburg's legacy no better than to unite our efforts once more for our immortal Germany and its peaceful European mission."²¹⁸

6

The plebiscite on the combination of the offices of President and Chancellor had been scheduled for August 19. For the first time prior to a plebiscite, Hitler refrained from traversing the countryside on a speechmaking campaign. He was cautious due to the Röhm Purge and to the fact that the plebiscite itself had become a foregone conclusion by means of the law of August 1. His Unterführers were assigned the task of disseminating propaganda for the plebiscite, while Hitler refrained from comment for the time being. Finally he could no longer resist, taking a stand on the issue in Hamburg two days before the referendum. At a reception in the City Hall, Hitler briefly expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome he was shown and then proceeded to the harbor to tour the battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* and the Blohm and Voss shipyard, addressing a few remarks to the workers there.²¹⁹ At a state ceremony in the chamber of the City Hall—notedly not at a mass rally—he delivered a lengthy speech beginning at 8:30 p.m. which was broadcast live.²²⁰

The speech is striking for its unusually defensive and almost plaintive tone of self-justification, which Hitler apparently felt was necessary. Contrary to his usual practice, Hitler did not preface his remarks with the “party narrative,” but rather began diffidently with a circuitous apology for having taken over the office of Reich President without waiting for the results of the plebiscite. Claiming that this step had been “necessary in the interests of the German Volk and Reich” in order not to give foreign countries an opportunity to stir up discontent, he declared:

My German Volksgenossen!

When our venerable Field Marshal and Reich President von Hindenburg closed his eyes for the last time after a blessed life, there were no few people outside the Reich who wished to see in his death the beginning of heavy internal fighting within Germany. Elements with whom we can never become reconciled were literally trembling in a joyful anticipation in which, as has so often been

the case, the wish was father to the thought. "Heavy Rioting in Germany," "National Socialist Movement Threatens to Fall Apart," "Fight between the Party and the Reichswehr," "Differences between the Leaders on Succession"—those were the headlines of a certain press whose "sincere" empathy for the fate of our Volk and our Reich is common knowledge over the world.

These circles were apparently entertaining the pleasant hope that weeks without leadership in the Reich would afford an opportunity to confuse the public both within and outside of Germany by an endless game of conjectures and, by doing so, contribute further to the international insecurity already existing.

In the interests of the German Volk and Reich, this game was interrupted! You can believe me, my Volksgenossen, when I say that otherwise we naturally would have chosen the course of first addressing our appeal to the Volk and then complying with its decision. In such a case, the result would have been no different than now.

By announcing the merger of both offices, the Reich Government—vested with legal authority—did what the Volk itself would have demanded in view of the given circumstances.

My personal opinion regarding this problem is unequivocally and clearly stated in my letter to the Reich Minister of the Interior.

Reich President and Field Marshal von Hindenburg was chosen by Fate to be the great mediator between the Germany of the past and that of the future. In his venerable old age, far removed from all self-centered desires, he was, for all of us, the supra-personal representative of our Volk. In the past year and a half, I have thanked Providence again and again that it decreed that the National Socialist Movement, through me, was able to render its pledge of loyalty to this true father of the nation; that finally, after such heavy battles, It bestowed upon me the generous friendship of the Old Gentleman after all, thus providing the basis for a relationship which brought me happiness and was, moreover, of great benefit to the nation.

The Field Marshal and Reich President was a unique figure and cannot be replaced. His mission as Reich President came to fulfillment in his very person. In the future, no one else shall carry on this title.²²¹ Regardless of how logical, however, the combination of the two functions is, and regardless of how irreproachably the law of the Reich Government settles this matter in conformity with the Constitution, I must nevertheless refuse to derive the right to take this most tremendous step toward the new formation of the German Reich from any previous mandate. No! The German Volk itself shall decide!

I am not anticipating the future and final form of the Constitution of the German Reich in any way when I believe that I will succeed in adding new honor to the title of German Reich Chancellor for the future!

The right to be able to state such a bold opinion is one I derive from nearly fifteen years of labor which—whether voluntarily or involuntarily—will one day be recognized as a transformation and development of historic dimensions.

These opening words had served to dispell Hitler's initial nervousness. But those who had hoped to be spared the long-winded "party

narrative” were disappointed, for Hitler continued: “When, nearly sixteen years ago, I returned to the homeland as a wounded soldier, I met with a situation. . .” *ad infinitum*.

This time, the one-hour narrative did, in fact, strike a new note. Hitler categorically refused to tolerate any criticism:

I would like to take this opportunity as well to dwell briefly on those who believe that their freedom of criticism has been unjustly encroached upon. In my eyes, criticism is not a vital function in and of itself. The world can live without critics, but not without workers.

I protest that a profession should exist which consists of nothing but acting the know-it-all without any responsibility of one's own and of telling responsible working people what to do and think. I have spent thirteen years of my life fighting a regime, however not by negative criticism, but with constructive suggestions as to what should be done. And I did not hesitate a second to assume the responsibility when the blessed Old Gentleman gave it to me, and I am now responsible to the entire German Volk. And no action will take place for which I will not vouch with my life, as this Volk be my witness. However, I can at least claim before this Volk the same right which every worker and peasant and entrepreneur can also claim for himself.

What would a peasant say if, while he was laboring in the sweat of his brow, someone kept strolling around on his farm with nothing else to do but go around carping, criticizing, and stirring up discontent?

What would a worker do who is standing in front of his machine and is constantly talked at by someone who has no skills and does nothing but incessantly carp and find fault? I know they would not tolerate such creatures for more than a week; they would tell them to go to hell. The organization of the Movement gives hundreds of thousands of people the opportunity to play a constructive part in shaping our life as a nation. Any serious suggestions and any genuine cooperation are welcomed with gratitude. But people whose only activity is confined to judging and condemning the activities of others without ever assuming any practical responsibility themselves are people I cannot bear.²²² In this State, everyone is called upon to fight and work in some way or another.

In this State, there will no longer be a right to carp, but only a right to do a better job.

Hitler then returned to the topic of the upcoming plebiscite, having the audacity to maintain that the law combining the two highest offices in the State had been passed not before, but after Hindenburg's death, namely on August 3. This bare-faced lie was apparently designed to erase the bad impression to which his precipitate action had given rise.

I myself have no other aim in the future than the aim I have had for the fifteen years lying behind me. I wish to devote my whole life, unto my dying breath, to one task: making Germany free, healthy and happy once more. Just as I have viewed the fulfillment of my task in the past as the conquest of the

Germans for this same concept, so will I do today and in the future. That is why the law of August 3 of this year is being presented to the German Volk for its verdict.

We have malicious enemies in the world. Do what we might, a certain international conspiracy will stop at nothing to interpret it as something bad. They permanently subsist on the sole hope that our Volk might once again drown in inner discord. We know our fate throughout the centuries all too well to overlook the consequences. It has always been Germans who have sacrificed themselves as allies of a foreign design. Ambitious noblemen, greedy merchants, unscrupulous party leaders and parties have repeatedly become the shield-bearers of foreign interests against their own Volk. The hope for such aid has thrown Germany into the most severe misfortune of war more than once. History should be a lesson to us.

Thus I feel that it is necessary, in the face of such speculations, to document anew at this time above all the unshakable unity of the German Volk at home and abroad.

It was not for my sake that I asked for this plebiscite, but for the sake of the German Volk. It is not I who requires such a vote of confidence to strengthen or maintain my position, but the German Volk which needs a Chancellor who is accorded such confidence in the eyes of the world. For I am nothing, my Volksgenossen, but your spokesman, and I aspire to be nothing but the representative of your life and the defender of your vital interests.

The burden which a sad fate has imposed upon our Volk is heavy enough. I am not to blame for this crisis, I am only bearing it with you and for you, my Volksgenossen, and even if there is a scattering of blinded Germans who perhaps are gratified at the thought that this crisis might be greater than the power of my resistance, may these lunatics bear in mind that they are gloating not over my own mishap, but over the misfortune of the German Volk.

There are millions of people whom Fate has made dependent upon their leadership and who are defenseless if no one acts as their spokesman, leader or defender. They comprise millions of German peasants who wish to earn their daily bread honestly and industriously, by upright and loyal effort; millions of the most efficient German workers who labor in the sweat of their brows; countless intellectual workers—they comprise the enormous community of working people who would be helplessly abandoned to demise and destruction were a leadership incapable of changing the course of their fate for the better.

There is no cause for me to concern myself with those who perhaps today know better but knew nothing fifteen or twenty years earlier and failed. The Goddess of Fortune has held her cloak over them long enough. For fifteen long years they were unable to find an opportunity to seize hold of it. Now she has turned away from these spirits. Fifteen years ago I pointed out where they had failed, and one and a half years ago I began there.

If they wanted to be fair, after their failure they would have to grant me at least the term of fifteen years they had to prove themselves. And I know it to be a fact: they will not recognize Germany then, just as Germany will not recognize them. And if they further want to be just, they must acknowledge to me that I have been more industrious in these fifteen years than my opponents. For they

had the power and everything which goes with it, while I was forced, starting with nothing, to wage a bitter and difficult battle to gain it.

And all the same, even my most malicious libellers cannot deny that I have never changed in these fifteen years.

Whether in good fortune or in bad, whether in liberty or in prison, I have remained true to my flag, the flag which is now the national flag of the German Reich. And they further cannot claim that I had ever in my life undertaken or omitted any political act for the sake of my own personal benefit.

And they must finally admit that, in general terms, this fifteen-year-long battle of mine was not unsuccessful, but led a movement evolving from nothing to victory in Germany, giving the German Volk a new and better position at home and abroad.

I will gladly answer for and accept whatever mistakes they can prove that I actually made. However, these all lie within the limits set for everyone by the basic fact of human fallibility. But I can point out in this context that I have never in the course of my fight committed an act which I did not hold to be for the benefit of the German Volk.

For since I have become involved in the political fight, I have been governed and guided, so help me God, by a single thought: Germany!

After Hitler had reaped the appropriate applause from the invited guests, he decided to say a few more words to the crowds gathered on the Rathausplatz before the City Hall:²²³

My German Volksgenossen! People of Hamburg!

I have nothing to add to what I have said. I ask the German Volk to do its duty as we have done ours for the past fifteen years, to comprehend that the fate of the Reich is the fate of each individual, and that each person plays a role in shaping the fate of the Reich.

No one is excepted from the crisis of the Reich; no one is spared from the duty to gain control of this crisis. The community of your united efforts is the prerequisite for the success of your government.

For it is nothing which you are not; it cannot invest what you do not provide. Its strength is an indication of the German Volk, and this Volk is but yourselves. It cannot represent your interests today before this world with any means other than by citing your will, which is the will of this regime and of its leadership.

And there may not be a single person who excludes himself from this joint obligation. Every single fate will either be formed anew or come to ruin with it as a result. I address this appeal to the German Volk in an hour which calls upon us to demonstrate that the German Volk is a single unit, indivisibly clamped and bound together, and that it stands behind its leadership as one man whose sole meaning and goal in life is this Volk.

On the eve of the plebiscite, i.e. on August 18, the late President's son, Colonel Oskar von Hindenburg, broadcast the following statement on the radio:²²⁴

My now immortal father himself saw in Adolf Hitler his immediate successor as head of the German Reich, and I am acting in accordance with my father's wishes when I call upon all German men and women to vote that my father's office be passed on to the Führer and Reich Chancellor.

And thus the Marshal's cry sounds from the Tower of Tannenberg still: "Gather together and stand united and firm behind Germany's Führer. Demonstrate inwardly and outwardly that an unbreakable bond firmly encompasses the German Volk in a single will."

The outcome of the plebiscite was, however, less convincing than Hitler and his cohorts had hoped. A "mere" 89.9 percent of the eligible voters cast their ballots for Hitler. More than five million Germans had voted "nay" or submitted invalid ballots. When the first results came in, Hitler, Goebbels, Brücker, Kerrl, and other leaders were visibly dissatisfied.²²⁵ After the plebiscite of November 12, 1933, they had become accustomed to figures of between 95 and 99 percent. Regardless of how ridiculous their insistence upon results of nearly 100% was, in future plebiscites (1936 and 1938) the figures were manipulated in such a way that the dissenting and invalid votes never totalled more than one or two percent.

On August 20, Hitler addressed a letter of gratitude to the Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg,²²⁶ misrepresenting the law of August 1 as dating from August 3—this time in writing.

To the Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, Berlin

My dear General,

Today, following the German Volk's confirmation of the law of August 3, 1 I would like to express my thanks to you and, through you, to the Wehrmacht for the pledge of allegiance which you have rendered to me as Führer and Supreme Commander. Just as the officers and soldiers of the Wehrmacht have pledged themselves to the new State which I personify, I will equally regard it at all times as my foremost obligation to support the existence and inviolability of the Wehrmacht in fulfillment of the testament of the late Field Marshal and true to my own will to establish the Army as the nation's sole bearer of arms.

Berlin, August 20

Adolf Hitler, Führer und Reichskanzler

Hitler wanted the National Socialists to know why they had struggled and sacrificed for fifteen years: namely to make their leader not only Chancellor for life, but President as well. Thus he issued the following appeals to the German Volk and the NSDAP on the same day:²²⁷

National Socialists! German Volksgenossen!

The fifteen-year struggle of our Movement for power in Germany came to an end yesterday. Beginning from the highest point of the Reich, throughout the

entire administration and down to the leadership in the smallest village, the German Reich is now in the hands of the National Socialist Party. This is the reward for immeasurable labors, for countless sacrifices. I thank all those who, by casting their votes yesterday, have contributed toward documenting the unity of State and Movement before the entire world.

It will be my task and the task of us all to consolidate this unity and to win over the few remaining members of our Volk to the National Socialist idea and doctrine in a struggle as brilliant as it will be resolute and persistent.

The resolutions for the implementation of this action have already been passed this evening; the action itself will be carried out with National Socialist speed and thoroughness. Today marks the close of the fight for the authority of the State. But the fight for our precious Volk will go on. The goal stands firm and unshakable: there must and will come a day on which every last German shall carry the symbol of the Reich in his heart as a sign of his belief.

Berlin, August 20, 1934

Adolf Hitler

Party Comrades!

Yesterday's glorious victory of our National Socialist Party is due foremost to your loyalty, your willingness to make sacrifices, and your industry. As political fighters of the Movement, as SA and SS men, as members of our workers', youth and women's organizations, you have rendered a unique service. Filled with boundless confidence in you, I am determined to take up anew and continue waging the battle for the soul and the unity of the German Volk. In this new struggle for our Volk, you will stand beside me as you have in the fifteen years which lie behind us. And just as we succeeded in conquering ninety percent of the German Volk for National Socialism, we will and must be able to win over the last ten percent as well. This will be the crowning glory of our victory.

Berlin, August 20, 1934

Adolf Hitler

On August 20, Hitler traveled to Nuremberg to inspect the Reich Party Congress grounds there.²²⁸ On August 22, he conferred with Hess, Himmler and Lutze at the Obersalzberg on the upcoming Reich Party Congress.²²⁹

On August 26, Hitler first visited the Saar Exhibition in Cologne and then boarded a ship for Koblenz to speak before 400,000 Saarlanders gathered at the Ehrenbreitstein Fortress. This speech gave him an opportunity to comment on the outcome of the plebiscite.²³⁰ Obviously he was still peeved by the less than unanimous results; the ten percent who had not accepted him as head of state were a blow to his vanity, and the "yea" votes had also decreased as compared to the figures of November 12, 1933. Calling upon the Twelve Apostles as self-justification, Hitler stated:

So what do the ten percent adversaries who were attracted to the others prove?

In the past, my Volksgenossen, five Germans had ten different opinions. Today, nine out of ten Germans are of the same opinion. I am therefore confident that we will be capable of winning the tenth man, too, for at any rate you can believe me when I say that the path from the first seven men to 38 million was more difficult than the path from 38 to 42 million will be.

What does it prove anyway if individual parties believe that they must take another course? What does it ultimately prove if one or the other even becomes a traitor? What does it prove if you in the Saar even have among you isolated Germans—unfortunately Germans—who are not worthy of this name? There was a Judas, too, among the Twelve Apostles. Is it surprising that we, too, have such figures? But Christianity won out in spite of this Judas, and the Movement will be victorious in spite of our emigrants.

In other respects, Hitler essentially repeated what he had said at the Niederwald Monument the year before on August 27, 1933, once more stressing, “The question of the Saar is the only territorial question remaining which divides us from France today.”

Only to a much lesser extent did the Saarlanders themselves share Hitler’s satisfaction that the plebiscite for the return of the Saar to Germany²³¹ had been scheduled for an early date, for he had only his military plans in mind, and in that sense, time for him was of the essence.

However, the happiest event we have witnessed this year has been the scheduling of the plebiscite for the Germans in the Saar—I say the happiest because it marked the end of a situation under which not 800, 000, but 67 million Germans suffered. For not only you, my Volksgenossen in the Saar, have suffered and are still suffering from this separation from the Vaterland; no, Germany too has suffered equally from it. Germany sees you as an indivisible component of its own self. We have followed your fight in Germany, in the Reich, with burning interest. He who attacked you has attacked us; he who abused you has abused us; he who violated you has violated us.

Nothing has been inflicted upon you which has not been inflicted upon Germany as a whole.

After these chauvinistic remarks, Hitler calmed down and stated in closing:

I hope that one day reason will triumph after all and that, on January 13, an understanding will be reached on the Saar which can and will be effected on this higher level.

Thus you have a particularly great and peaceful mission to fulfill on January 13. We will rejoice that, when the bells sound throughout Germany on January 14, they will ring in not only the return of our lost territory, of our lost Germans, but the coming of peace.

Therefore I ask you to take courage and be strong yet again! Go into this last segment of your fight as upstanding and genuine Germans! Live your lives in the conviction that the will of the entire nation is standing behind you! Forget

everything for this struggle which might divide you. Consecrate yourselves to this struggle exclusively as Germans. And then this day will become a great victory, a victory leading you back to the nation and to the German Reich, and then—I hope—we will hold our next and even more tremendous rally here with you.

The Reich Party Congress of 1934 commenced on September 4. The year before,²³² Hitler had announced that the Congress was to take place every two years; apparently he had already changed his mind. Such meetings were more important to him than to any of the other participants, for the pompous demonstrations in Nuremberg afforded him the opportunity to intoxicate himself on these gigantic manifestations of his power.

The Reich Party Congress of 1934 was not given any special theme or title as was the case in respect to the others held subsequent to the NSDAP takeover.

Apparently the events of the preceding months had made Hitler somewhat cautious for the time being. In comparison to 1933, the calendar of events was considerably fuller due to the inclusion of rallies on the part of the NS Frauenschaft and the veterans of war, and above all the Wehrmacht and the Labor Service, which were making their first appearance at a Party Congress. The rest of the program conformed to the itinerary laid down in 1933. As noted above, Hitler's speeches in Nuremberg are quoted here only to the extent that they contain new aspects.

The Congress opened with a reception in the Nuremberg City Hall on September 4, at which Hitler said a few words of thanks.²³³

On September 5, Gauleiter Adolf Wagner read Hitler's proclamation in the Luitpold Hall.²³⁴ In addition to the standard retrospective on the past and prophecy for the future, it contained several remarks on the character of the National Socialist Revolution which are noteworthy for their phrasing:

We wish to establish two realizations as historic facts:

1. The year from September 1933 to September 1934 brought with it the final consolidation of National Socialist power in Germany. The Congress of Victory marked the beginning of a battle of pursuit in the course of which we broke up and captured our enemies' positions one after another.

2. For the National Socialist leadership of state, this period at the same time constituted a year of tremendous constructive and productive work.

This inevitably leads to the unquestionable conclusion: the National Socialist Revolution has now come to an end as a revolutionary and power-related process!

As a revolution, it has completely fulfilled what could be expected of it. The world does not live on wars, and similarly the Volk does not live on revolutions. Both cases can, at most, provide the basis for a new life. But no good will come of it if the act of destruction is not accomplished for the sake of a better and thus higher idea, but is exclusively subject to the nihilistic drives of destruction and will thus result not in the formation of something better but in unending hatred. A revolution which perceives its sole purpose as the defeat of a political opponent, the destruction of earlier accomplishments, or in the elimination of existing circumstances will lead to nothing better than a world war which will reach its appalling culmination—or rather its logical progression—in a mad Diktat.

Genuine revolutions are only conceivable as the consummation of a new calling to which the will of the Volk assigns its historic task in this way. And today this leadership of the Volk has the power to do anything in Germany! Who can deny that the National Socialist Movement has become the omnipotent master over the German Reich? The crowning glory of this political development is expressed symbolically in the fact that the Wehrmacht has adopted the sovereign symbol of the Movement; in the fact that the leader of the Party has been elected to head of state of the German nation, and the Wehrmacht and administration of the Reich subsequently pledged an oath of allegiance to him. Thus we shall crush any and all attempts to instigate acts of violence against the leadership of the National Socialist Movement and of the Reich and nip them in the bud, regardless of whom they originate from.

We all know to whom the nation has given its mandate! Woe betide anyone who does not know this or forgets it! Revolutions have always been rare in the German Volk. The nervous age of the nineteenth century has finally come to an end with us.

There will not be another revolution in Germany for the next thousand years!

Speaking on National Socialist economic policy, Hitler disclosed a number of future projects including roadbuilding, new national railway station²³⁵ and a restructuring of the major cities:

Tremendous was, above all, the work which had to be done in the areas of decay which manifested itself most evidently at the time.

He who finds fault with the economic policy of these past twelve months can only be malicious or have taken leave of his senses.

When we took power, Germany's economy was in what seemed to be an unstoppable process of shrinking. Fear and distrust, despondency and despair comprised the breeding ground for a development whose collapse could be clearly foreseen. These successes are the convincing proof of the effectiveness of our economic policy and the German Volk's confidence in it:

1. The executive destruction of German peasantry was not only stopped, but fully eliminated.

2. The measures taken to create work have, on a large scale, been attended by tremendous success.

3. The number of unemployed has decreased by an estimated four and a half million.

4. The German mark has remained stable, and that in spite of the many export problems.

5. Savings deposits have grown tremendously.

6. The volume of traffic has undergone enormous increases on the railroads, in terms of motorized traffic, and in the air.

7. The receipts from contributions and taxes have far surpassed estimates in respect to all voluntary, nonstate and state organizations as well as to all public funds.

When, two years ago, we predicted that this development would take place if we took power, this was not only challenged and denied, but claimed to be impossible and even dismissed with scorn. And today these same people who did nothing but ruin Germany by their own labors now dare to claim that our achievements are trivial and insignificant. But where would Germany be had these destructive elements governed for even one year longer?

This year which lies behind us has accomplished the tremendous preliminary work for projects which will only become visibly evident to the nation in the course of the next few years. The gigantic roadbuilding plans could not be pulled out of a hat from one day to the next, but required a certain amount of time alone for their conception and design. But the German Volk will see what preliminary work has been accomplished during these twelve months in what will be carried out in the years to come. In addition to the national network of roads, tremendous new national railway stations have been completed in the conceptual and design stages. Revolutionary construction programs are being drawn up for a whole series of major German cities, the magnitude of which will only be able to be fully and finally appreciated after decades have passed.

Some industries have been broken up, new industries have been founded; the settlement policy was consolidated in order to be more effective in broad points of view.

In order to combat the world boycott, the substitution of raw materials was begun and the initial preparations undertaken to make Germany independent of this need. Constantly guided by a single belief: no matter what happens, National Socialism will never capitulate!

The proclamation closed with the following words:

Posterity shall one day say of us: never was the German nation stronger and never its future more secure than at the time when the ancient Germanic peoples' old mystical symbol of salvation (*Heilszeichen*) was rejuvenated in Germany to become the symbol of the Third Reich.

Long live our German Volk, long live the National Socialist Party and our Reich!

On the afternoon of September 5, Hitler delivered his customary speech at the Culture Convention in the Apollo Theater, this time commenting above all on artistic genius.²³⁶

On September 6, he addressed 52,000 workers on the Zeppelin field, creating the impression that he had but one goal in life: to introduce compulsory labor service in Germany:²³⁷

It is a great undertaking to educate an entire Volk in this new concept of work and this new opinion of work. We have taken up the challenge, and we will succeed, and you will be the first to bear witness to the fact that this work cannot fail!

The entire nation will learn the lessons of your lives! A time will come when not a single German can grow into the community of this Volk who has not first made his way through your community.

And we know that then, for millions of our Volksgenossen, work will no longer be a burning issue but a concept uniting all, and that above all there will no longer be anyone living in Germany who insists upon seeing in manual labor something less than in any other type of work. We do not want to be socialists in theory only; we want to seize hold of this genuine problem, too, as genuine National Socialists, and find a genuine solution. And this great task will be accomplished because behind it stands not only the Weltanschauung of a Movement controlling Germany; behind it stands our will! Today, for the first time, you will march in ranks of tens of thousands into the city of the German Reich Party Congresses, and you will be conscious that in this moment not only the eyes of hundreds of thousands in Nuremberg will see you, but in this moment Germany will see you for the first time. And I know that, just as you are serving this Germany in proud devotion, Germany will proudly and happily see in you today its sons marching past. *Heil!*

On September 7, Hitler spoke before 200,000 political leaders who had assembled on the Zeppelin field;²³⁸ on the same day, he made a brief speech before the blinded veterans at a "Victims of War" conference.²³⁹

On the morning of September 8, Hitler addressed the Hitler Youth in the Nuremberg Stadium²⁴⁰ and, at noon, spoke at a convention of the NS Frauenschaft, where he stated:²⁴¹

For the first time in years, I am once again taking part in a convention of National Socialist women and thus of National Socialist women's work. I know that the prerequisites for this have been established by the work of innumerable individual women and, in particular, by the work of their female leaders. The National Socialist Movement has not only seen but also found in woman its most loyal assistant from the time of its conception onwards.

I remember the difficult years of the Movement's fight and especially those times in which good fortune seemed to have turned away from us; those times when many of us were in prisons, others had once more become fugitives, still others were in foreign parts; many of us were lying wounded in sick bays or had been killed. I remember the time when there were those among us who turned back, believing that we would never make it in the end; a time in which the spirit pervading Germany arrogantly believed that it could approach the problems only from the angle of reason, and when many lost faith in us as a result. I know

that back then there were innumerable women who remained unshakably loyal to the Movement and to me.

At that time, the power of emotion truly proved itself to be stronger and better. We have seen that the clever mind can be misled only all too easily, that ostensibly intellectual arguments can cause men of weak intellect to falter, and that it is particularly in these times that the most profound inner instinct of preservation of the self and of the Volk awakens in a woman. Woman has proven to us that she knows what is right! In those times when the great Movement seemed, to many, to falter and all were united against us, the stability and sureness of emotion prevailed as stable factors when confronted with brooding intellect and supposed knowledge. For only very few are endowed with the talent of penetrating superficial knowledge to the most profound inner meaning. But this most profound insight is ultimately the root of the world of emotion. That which perhaps only few philosophically gifted intellects are capable of analyzing scientifically can be sensed by the nature of an unspoiled human being with instinctive certainty. The feeling and, above all, the nature of woman has always acted throughout the ages as a supplement to the intellect of man.

And if at times in the course of human life the working spheres of men and women have shifted to become unnaturally aligned, this happened not because woman aspired to rule over man; rather, the reason lies in the fact that man was no longer capable of completely fulfilling his task. That, of course, is the miraculous thing about Nature and Providence: no conflict is possible in the relations between the two sexes as long as each fulfills the task assigned to it by Nature.

The catchword "Women's Liberation" is merely a phrase invented by the Jewish intellect, and its contents are marked by the same spirit. The German woman will never need to emancipate herself in an age supportive of German life. She possessed what Nature gave her automatically as an asset to maintain and preserve; just as the man, in such an age, never had to fear that he would be ousted from his position in respect to woman.

Woman has been the last to contest man's right to his position. Only when he was no longer sure of himself in recognizing his duty did the immortal instinct of survival and preservation begin to revolt in woman. After this revolt, a shift took place which was not in accordance with Nature's design, and it prevailed until both sexes returned to what an eternally wise Providence assigned to them.

If it is said that a man's world is the State, that the man's world is his struggle, his willingness to devote himself to the community, one might perhaps say that a woman's world is a smaller one. For her world is her husband, her family, her children, and her home. But where would the larger world be if no one wanted to care for the small world? How could the larger world survive if there was no one who would make the cares of the smaller world the content of his life? No, the large world is built upon this small world! This greater world cannot survive if the small world is not firm. Providence assigned to woman the care of this, her very own world, and it is only on this foundation that the man's world can be formed and can grow.

However, these two worlds are never opposed to one another. They mutually complement each other, they belong together, just as man and wife belong together.

We do not feel that it is right when a woman forces her way into a man's world, in territory belonging to him; instead, we feel it is natural when both of these worlds remain divorced from one another. One of the worlds is home to the power of feelings, the power of the soul! The other is home to the power of recognition, the power of toughness, of resolution, and of fighting morale! In one case, this power requires the full willingness of the woman to devote her life to maintaining and multiplying this important cell, and in the other case it requires the willingness of the man to safeguard life.

What a man sacrifices in struggling for his Volk, a woman sacrifices in struggling to preserve this Volk in individual cases. What a man gives in heroic courage on the battlefield, woman gives in eternally patient devotion, in eternally patient suffering and endurance. Every child to which she gives birth is a battle which she wages in her Volk's fateful question of to be or not to be. And hence both must mutually value and respect each other by recognizing that each part is accomplishing the task assigned to it by Nature and Providence. The performance of these two tasks will necessarily result in mutual respect.

What the Jewish intellect maintains is not true—that respect is determined by the overlapping of the spheres of activity of the two sexes—but rather this respect requires that neither of the sexes endeavors to do what belongs to the other. This respect ultimately lies in the knowledge of each half that the other is doing everything necessary to maintain the whole!

Therefore, woman throughout the ages has always been the helpmate of man and thus his most loyal friend, and man, too, has been the protector of his wife throughout the ages and thus her best friend. And both perceived in this manner of living the common foundation for the existence of what they loved, and of its continued subsistence in the future. Woman is an egoist in maintaining her small world, putting man in a position to preserve the greater world, and man is an egoist in maintaining this greater world, for the one is indissolubly bound up with the other. We will stand up against an intellectualism of the most depraved sort which would tear asunder what God hath joined.

Because woman originates in the most basic root of all, she is also the most stable element in the preservation of a people.

Ultimately, she has the most infallible sense for whatever is necessary to prevent a race from ceasing to be, for her children would bear the major brunt of all the suffering.

Man is often far too mentally instable to find the right path by means of these basic insights. However, given favorable times and a good education, man will know just as well what his task is. We National Socialists have therefore protested for many years against deploying woman in political life, for in our view this would be unworthy. A woman once said to me: you must see to it that women join parliament, for woman alone is capable of ennobling it. I do not believe, I replied to her, that human beings were meant to ennoble what is bad by its very nature, and a woman who became caught in the gears of this parliamentary system would not ennoble parliament; rather, this system would dishonor such

a woman. I do not want to leave something to women which I intend to take away from men. Our opponents claimed that we would then never gain women for the Movement. But we have gained more than all of the other parties put together, and I know that we would have won over every last German woman had she been given but one opportunity to study parliament and the degrading role women play there.

For this reason we have integrated woman in the fight of the *völkisch* community in accordance with the decrees of Nature and Providence. To us, our women's movement is thus not something which inscribes on its banner the fight against man as its program, but rather something which takes up in its program the mutual fight together with man. It is thus that we have strengthened the new National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft, thus that we have gained, in millions of women, the most loyal and zealous fellow fighters. Female fighters for a life together in the service of together preserving our life. Fighters who fix their gaze not upon the rights which a Jewish intellectualism pretends to offer them, but upon the obligations which Nature has burdened upon us all.

Whereas in the past, the liberal and intellectualistic women's movements included many, many items in their programs which originated in a so-called intellect, the program of our National Socialist Women's Movement actually contains only a single item, and this item is: the child, this tiny creature who must come into being and flourish, who constitutes the sole purpose of the entire struggle for existence. For what would be the purpose of our fighting and struggling if there were not something to come after us which can make use of and pass on what we attain today for its own benefit and avail?

What else could be the purpose of humanity's entire struggle? Why else the worry and the suffering? For the mere sake of an idea? Only for an idea? Only for a theory? No, that would not be worth traversing this earthly vale of tears. The only thing which allows us to overcome all of that is shifting, our gaze from the present to the future, away from ourselves to that which is growing up to follow us.

A few moments ago, I spoke before the youth rally. It is a glorious thing to look out over this golden youth in the knowledge that it will one day be Germany when we no longer exist! It will preserve the sum of what we are creating and building up. It is for this youth that we are working. That is the real purpose of the entire struggle! And in recognizing this, the most elementary and lapidary goal of Nature, the labors of the two sexes will logically and rightfully fall into place for us, no longer in conflict, but in a common fight for the real life.

You, my female party comrades, are waging this battle as leaders, organizers and helpers. You have joined in taking on a glorious task. That which we wish to shape within our Volk on a large scale is that for which you must internally form a firm support and a solid foundation. You must impart spiritual and emotional reinforcement and stability from within! In this battle which we are waging today for the freedom, equality of rights, honor, and peace of our Volk, you must be a complement to man, so that we can prevail as real fighters before our Volk and for our Volk with our sights set on the future.

Then strife and discontent will never be able to flare up between the two sexes, but they will instead traverse this life fighting together, hand in hand,

fulfilling the wishes of a Providence which created both of them for this purpose. And then the blessings of these mutual endeavors will not be withheld. Then no mad fight over theories will flare up, then man and woman will not turn against one another because of false notions, for then the blessing of the Almighty will rest upon their joint struggle for life!

On September 9, Hitler appeared before the SA for the first time since June 30 to take a mass roll call in the Luitpold arena. He was accompanied not only—as in the year before—by the Chief of Staff, but also by the Reichsführer SS, who was making his first appearance as a new Reichsleiter subordinate only to the Führer.

Addressing 100,000 SA and SS members, Hitler stated:²⁴²

Men of the SA and SS!

For the fourth time in the history of the Party, the SA and the SS have assembled here. Twelve months ago as a sign of having gained power in the State! Today, to testify that this process was carried on and completed!

Today, the power of the German Reich lies in our hands. The National Socialist Movement is today the master of Germany. In the twelve months lying behind us, we took possession over one position after another. No one who is willing to open his eyes can believe that this regime can be eliminated or that it would even consider stepping down of its own accord.

But these twelve months also comprised a period of hard work within the National Socialist Movement itself. When I decided to convene another Party Congress after such a short time in order to summon you, my comrades in the SA and SS, to this place, I did it for a particular reason. A few months ago, a dark shadow was cast over the Movement. Many of our opponents believed that they could see the day approaching on which the power of the National Socialist Party would perhaps come to an end. I have summoned you to this place, my comrades, in order to document three things:

1. the SA had as little to do with this shadow as any other institution in the Party;

2. in order to demonstrate to everyone that my relationship to you, my comrades, is the same as it has been for fourteen years; and

3. in order to show our enemies that the Party stands firm and that its SA and its SS stand firm as guarantors of the National Socialist Revolution.

They are all mistaken, those who believe that even a single crack has appeared in the structure of our Movement. It is standing as solidly as this block here!

And it will be broken by nothing in Germany. If someone sins against the spirit and purpose of our Movement, if he sins against the spirit of my SA, this shall not affect the SA, but those very persons who dared to sin against it.

We have lined up for this roll call not only to demonstrate how indestructibly solid the structure of the Movement and its organization is, but also to demonstrate how it continues to be filled by the spirit of loyalty, of discipline and of obedience, and in order to assign 126 standards to the SA and 57 standards to the SS.

These new ensigns of the Movement will now join forces with the great columns of our old standards. You will put them at your fore and follow them loyally as you have the old.

These ensigns will serve to remind you of what made you great. You will remember the long years of difficult battles, of sacrifices, when it seemed almost impossible that we would be able to conquer the State. And you will recall the great persistence during the time of struggle which was required to wage this battle for Germany. You will learn from this the lesson that we must not allow what once enabled us to be victorious to desert us after the victory, but must hold fast today even more than in the past to the virtues of old.

SA members and SA leaders have no choice but to be loyal, obedient, disciplined, modest, and willing to sacrifice—for otherwise they are not men of the SA.

Holding fast to these virtues of old will not only make our power indestructible; it will also mean that the resurrection of the German Volk will continue to have an effect far into the future. For we are not simply a manifestation of months or years; what has come about in these fifteen years shall live on for centuries.

Only a lunatic or a deliberate liar can claim that I or anyone else ever entertained the thought of dissolving what we ourselves have built up in long years. My comrades, we now stand firmly united for our Germany, and we must stand united for this Germany. We want to continue to strengthen the Movement in the years ahead of us by more strongly than before consolidating the individual organizations and fusing them together to form a single whole. Our flag shall truly fly over a single and unified Movement. That is our goal. And if we work toward this goal, no one will dare to put up resistance or oppose this organization, the most tremendous of its kind in German history.

Thus I assign to you the new ensigns in the conviction that I am placing them in the most loyal hands in all of Germany.

In times past, you have proven your loyalty to me a thousand times over. In times to come, this cannot and will not change.

Hence let me now welcome you as my old and loyal men of the SA and SS: *Sieg Heil!*

At the Nuremberg Market Place, Hitler presided over the customary parade of the party formations which lasted several hours. On this September 9, he also welcomed foreign diplomats at Nuremberg Central Station where they had arrived on board a special train.²⁴³

Von Papen had arrived in Nuremberg from Austria two days earlier, not wanting to miss this “patriotic Party Congress demonstration.” September 10 marked the first “Wehrmacht Day,” accompanied by sample maneuvers on the Zeppelin field performed by Reichswehr troops.²⁴⁴ In 1934, Hitler had not yet begun to capitalize on this additional chance to address the soldiers and accept a marching salute from the highest-ranking Reichswehr generals.

On the afternoon of September 10, the Party Congress came to an end with Hitler's closing address.²⁴⁵

On September 12, Hitler received accredited diplomats in the presidential palace in Berlin who had come to pay their respects to the new head of state. The papal nuncio, Monsignor Cesare Orsenigo, delivered the following address in his role as doyen of the Diplomatic Corps:²⁴⁶

Herr Deutscher Reichskanzler!

The Diplomatic Corps is pleased to appear before you to proffer its sincere congratulations and best wishes to the immediate successor of the highly esteemed Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, whose memory is indelibly imprinted upon our hearts.

By appearing before you today, we wish to express to Your Excellency that each of us is today renewing the same attestation of deference and the same assurance of mutual cooperation to the new head of the German Reich which we expressed earlier upon handing over our credentials.

It is our conviction that Your Excellency will support all of our efforts to fulfill the noble mission which our heads of state have entrusted to us and will, by doing so, maintain and consolidate the good relations between Germany and our countries and thus contribute to preserving peace in the world.

We are well aware that only by strengthening the spirit of truth, of justice and of brotherly love can a pacification of the peoples in the world be achieved. And we are happy that Your Excellency has repeatedly declared that Germany, lying in the heart of Europe, is firmly resolved to play an effective role in peace. We can already observe the devoted care with which Your Excellency is endeavoring in your new office to assist your Vaterland in overcoming the painful consequences of unemployment and to bring about the prosperity of the German Volk.

Thus we may express our wish that, under the highest governmental power now united in your hands, your Vaterland will be allowed to attain a prosperity which can guarantee internal peace in your country. We also wish that Germany may continue to secure possession of all goods of a higher order which constitute the true treasure of each and every nation.

May Divine Providence mercifully allow these wishes and hopes to become reality for the glory of your precious Vaterland, which has just assigned to you the highest office of the German Reich.

Hitler, attired in a tailcoat, expressed his gratitude in the following words:

Your Excellency!

May I express my warmest thanks to Your Excellency for the congratulations which you have relayed to me on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps on the occasion of my assuming the former office of Reich President. I am filled with particular gratitude that you were thereby mindful of the late Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg. His memory shall live on indelibly in the hearts of all Germans.

Your Excellency, you have expressed the conviction that I will support you in your task of maintaining and reinforcing the good relations between your countries and Germany.

It is my will to preserve close and sincere connections between Germany and the foreign powers and thus to promote a reciprocal understanding and acquaintedness which is often still lacking at this time and which is the basis for mutual respect and appreciation. The great tasks which have been assigned to us—as you yourself, Your Excellency, have said—and which we have successfully begun can only then be completed if peace stays with us and with the rest of the world. And I may once more declare today and before you, gentlemen, as representatives of the foreign states, that it is the unshakable goal of my politics to make of Germany a firm stronghold of peace. The relations among people shall not be characterized by power and violence, but by the spirit of equal rights and respect for work and the accomplishments of each of the other people. Under the shelter of this peace, I myself and, with me, the Reich Government will dedicate the sum of our endeavors to the spiritual resurrection of our Volk—a Volk which was driven to the brink of collapse by the hardships of the War and the postwar period—to the new inner order of our Reich, and to overcoming its economic and social crisis. If we are capable of accomplishing this task—and we will accomplish it—Germany will be doing a service not only to itself, but to the whole world, and doing its share to contribute to the welfare and the progress of mankind. And we are confident in our hope that the blessing of Divine Providence, to which you, Your Excellency, have appealed so warmly on our behalf, may not be withheld for this work.

I ask you, gentlemen, at the same time to accept my most sincere wishes for a happy future of all of our people, for your own heads of state, your governments, and your countries.

On September 30, the *Erntedankfest* was celebrated at the Bückeberg near Hamelin. This enormous rally of German peasantry was preceded by a reception of peasant delegations in Goslar at which Hitler had commented briefly on the significance of the peasant class.²⁴⁷

The lengthy speech delivered before 700,000 peasants gathered at the Bückeberg contained Hitler's standard views on the "peasantry as the antithesis of intellectual urbanization." Vainly conscious of holding the supreme military command, he could not resist warning his adversaries at home and abroad that he would not shy away from the "worst," by which he was apparently referring to war. Hitler stated:

They [the adversaries] will never defeat us; at worst, they will make us even more independent. National Socialist Germany stands more firmly today than ever before, and August 19 was the best and most unequivocal confirmation of this fact.

On October 8, Hitler traveled to Landsberg to visit former fellow inmates and prison personnel from the period of his own detention there in 1924.²⁴⁸

The following day, upon learning of the assassination of the Yugoslavian King Alexander and the French Foreign Minister Barthou, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Queen Dowager:²⁴⁹

Deeply shaken by the news of the execrable assassination of which His Majesty the King has become a victim, may I ask Her Majesty to accept my most sincere condolences and to be assured of the sympathy of the German Volk.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

Hitler sent a similar telegram to the President of France, Albert Lebrun. These messages inaugurated a long series of telegraphic statements nearly as numerous as his speeches. Hitler upheld this practice all the way up to April 1945, when Germany had become so isolated that the only remaining recipients were the Slovaks and Croatsians.

At the opening of the second *Winterhilfswerk*²⁵⁰ in Berlin on October 9, Hitler claimed that the relief program constituted a means of insuring the German Volk against lack of political common sense:

Thus prosperity means not only an increase in the possibilities of enjoyment, but above all an increase in obligations. The view that the spending of a fortune of any size is the private affair of the individual requires revision in the National Socialist State all the more because no single individual could enjoy such a privilege without the collaboration of the whole.

If I turn particularly to these circles who enjoy average to above-average standing, I am doing so because I am sufficiently acquainted with the willingness to sacrifice exhibited by the broad masses of our Volk in the cities and out in the country and know that the latter, who have so often suffered firsthand from the curse of unemployment and economic misery, have the most sympathy with their Volksgenossen who are still unfortunate today.

However, I believe that it is necessary to point out one thing in particular here:

The insurance business in Germany today has been built up to cover a large network. Today, people insure themselves against fire and water damage, against theft, against burglary, against hailstorms and drought, against sickness and death—and spend billions doing so. But woe betide a people which forgets that the most precious possession it should insure is its political common sense. That same political common sense which is soundly embodied in the Volksgemeinschaft.

The German Volk can pride itself today that it has found its way back to this common sense. But let everyone be conscious of how tremendous is the benefit for all which generates from this sound political development.

You might care, my Volksgenossen, to shift your gaze from Germany for just a moment to take a critical look at the conditions in other countries. Riots, civil war, social strife, and economic crises follow each other in uninterrupted sequence. The torches of revolt are being carried far and wide. Strikes and

lockouts are eating up millions of the people's assets, but the misery remains great nearly everywhere. In Germany, we have overcome all of that.

Yet not because a few economists put their factories back in operation, but because the Volksgemeinschaft created by National Socialism abolished this political and economic madness, thus securing orders for the factories and an income for workers and entrepreneurs.

Hitler's appeal to political common sense was indicative of the way he so frequently twisted the truth in his verbal acrobatics. In reality, for years he had done everything he could to bar reason and—at least in terms of foreign politics—to rob the German people of their last drop of political common sense. His rhetoric powers were instead devoted to elevating the ideas he had developed in 1919, which had scarcely anything to do with reality, to a universal dogma.

On October 29, Hitler congratulated the Turkish President Atatürk (Mustafa Kemal Pasa) on the occasion of the Turkish National Holiday, sending him the following telegram:²⁵¹

On the occasion of the Turkish National Holiday, may I extend to Your Excellency my warmest congratulations which I may combine with my best wishes for Your Excellency's personal well-being and the continuing prosperity of the Turkish nation.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

On October 30, Hitler received the Land Bishops Marahrens, Meiser and Wurm who were opposed to Reich Bishop Müller—in the Reich Chancellory for an exchange of views on questions of church politics.²⁵²

On October 31, the Reichsstatthalters swore their allegiance to the new head of state, and Hitler spoke to them on political and economic questions of the day.²⁵³

Later the same day, Hitler toured the Olympic Stadium under construction in Berlin²⁵⁴ and also delivered a speech before SA Gruppenführers.²⁵⁵

On November 8 and 9, the festivities in memory of the failed putsch attempt in 1923 took place in Munich. The mood bore no comparison with the enthusiastic frenzy of the year before, for the incidents of June 30 were still too fresh and cast a shadow over the meetings of the *Alte Kämpfer*. Aware of this, Hitler dispensed with the commemorative march to the Feldherrnhalle.

At the Bürgerbräukeller, where he spoke on November 8,²⁵⁶ he attempted to boost his own courage by claiming that it was possible to transform any catastrophe into a triumph if one only had the will to do so.

The significance of November 8 and 9, 1923 lies for us in the fact that this Movement proved its inner toughness and resilience back then. If Fate were ever to impose a similar burden upon us, we can recall the day when we believed to have already grasped hold of power only to find ourselves in prison a few hours later; the day when we were confident of having demonstrated our quick-wittedness only to wake up the next morning empty-handed. How did it happen that we were nevertheless able to overcome this catastrophe?

Back then, the Movement carried out its historic order, and there is only one thing left to say to today's know-it-alls: either none of you has ever read Clausewitz, or if you have, you have not understood how to apply him to the present.

Clausewitz writes that reconstruction is possible even after a heroic collapse. Only cowards abandon their own cause, and that continues to take effect and spread like an insidious drop of poison. And then the realization dawns that it is still better, if necessary, to accept a horrible but sudden end than to bear horrors without end.

As he had the preceding year, Hitler made an effort to portray the fiasco of 1923 retrospectively as the right decision. The main thing, he insisted, was that it had been documented that the men had had the courage to take action; moreover, separatism would have wracked the German nation had they not intervened.

And then the time came when talk was not enough. For once, action had to be taken. For ultimately, only action can force men under its spell.

We had to act in the year 1923, because we were confronted at the time with the final attempt of the separatists in Germany. Want was appalling; inflation had robbed the people of all their worldly goods; hunger was rampant. The people could not count on a single tomorrow. Anyone who hoisted a flag was sure of a following. There were many people who simply said: it makes no difference who takes action. The main thing is that someone has the courage to do something. If another had had the courage to take action, the Volk would have followed him. It would have said: it's a good thing that someone is taking the risk.

Had the men we were faced with taken action, utmost danger would have been imminent. Others would have taken action on November 12, 1923 along the lines of the maxim we heard preached so often back then, namely: Northern Germany will become Bolshevik in any case, so we need to secede! We must have the North gutted! Only when that has been done can we later unite with it once again! Of course they knew how to divide. But how one would ever be able to reunite—that was the least of these gentlemen's worries.

And for that reason we were resolved back then to act first. We did not intend to stage a coup. But I had made one decision: if the opposition goes so far that I know that they will strike, I will strike four days earlier. And if people say to me, "Yes, but think of the consequences!" my reply is, "The consequences could never have been worse than if no action had been taken."

The truth would out: the “opposition” had planned to strike in 1923, and Hitler had beat it to the game by four days! This was the same tactic the dictator later used to justify his attacks on Poland, Denmark and Norway, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, Yugoslavia, and Russia—but here his alleged margin had narrowed to a mere 24 hours.

In closing, he alluded not only to the victims of November 9, 1923, but also to those of June 30, 1934. Those he had slain were thus indirectly accorded the status of having been “martyrs” for the Movement, for they had also died for Hitler, i.e. for Germany’s glory.²⁵⁷ The blood which had been shed had “become the baptismal water of the Third Reich.”

We have but a single pain, that not all of those can be here who marched with us back then, that—tragically—a number of our very best, most loyal and most zealous fighters have not lived to see the goal for which they fought. However, they too are present in spirit in our ranks, and in eternity they will know that their fight was not in vain.

The blood which they shed has become the baptismal water of the Third Reich.

And thus let us look back in this new Reich upon that which lies behind us and do so in the most distant future, too, and let us bear in mind one article of faith:

We shall be resolved at all times to take action! Willing at all times, if necessary, to die! Never willing to capitulate!

In this context, it is also worthy of note that Hitler decreed the institution of an “Endowment for the Martyrs of the Movement” on November 9.²⁵⁸

In place of the commemorative march to the Feldherrnhalle, the youngest members of the Party who had now left the ranks of the Hitler Youth were sworn in on November 9. Hitler delivered the following speech:²⁵⁹

National Socialists!

Deeply stirred, we stand again here today on this square. It is a reminder of our Movement’s first dead, and it is a symbolic act that the swearing-in of the Party’s recruits takes place on this square.

This square of death thus becomes a place for swearing oaths in life. And we could conduct no fairer commemoration celebration at this site at which our comrades once gave their lives than the swearing-in of those who once again dedicate themselves to their work as the youth of Germany.

You shall, I know, be just as loyal, just as brave as our old comrades! And you will have to be fighters! For there are still many, many opponents of our Movement in Germany. They do not want Germany to be strong. They do not want our Volk to be united. They do not want our Volk to defend its honor. They do not want our Volk to be free.

They might not want it, but we want it, and our will will defeat them! And your will shall be with us, and you shall contribute to preserving and immortalizing the will of that earlier time. We shall make even these last few bend under this will.

We shall ensure that the times which once required these sacrifices will never again, within human power, return in Germany!

Today the Party is by no means at the end of its mission, but at the very beginning! It is now in its youth. And thus you, my German youth, are not entering something foreign; rather, youth is joining the Movement of youth, and this movement of youth thus welcomes you as one of its own. You have the task of doing your share to fulfill what your elders once hoped for.

I am confident in you, confident that you who have already grown up and come into being in the spirit of the new Germany will fulfill this task, and that you will bear in mind our old principle: that it is not important that a single one of us lives, but vital that Germany lives!

Hitler's strange observation that there were "many, many opponents" stemmed perhaps from the pessimistic mood he was in throughout the months of November and December. His apparent depression might also have been a cause for the rumors of an assassination plot circulating at the time, as described below.

On November 13, Hitler dispatched the following telegram to the Chairman of the Olympic Organization Committee, former State Secretary Dr. Lewald:²⁶⁰

Your Excellency!

On behalf of the Organization Committee for the Eleventh Olympic Games in Berlin 1936, you have addressed to me the request that, due to the vacancy left by the death of the Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, I become the patron for the Eleventh Olympic Games. I would be glad to comply with this request. I wish you and your Organization Committee continuing success in your work.

With the German salute *Mit deutschem Gruß*:²⁶¹

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, Germany and Poland had promoted their respective legations to the status of embassies. To celebrate the occasion, Hitler received the new Polish Ambassador, Josef Lipski, in the Reich Chancellery on November 14. After Lipski had delivered his new credentials and stressed the favorable course German-Polish relations had taken, Hitler responded with the following address:²⁶²

Mr. Ambassador!

I have the honor to receive from your hands the letter with which the President of the Republic of Poland has certified that you are now the extraordinary, authorized Ambassador here.

November 14, 1934

I, too, perceive in the elevation of the two representations of Germany and Poland to embassies a gratifying sign of the positive direction which the relations between our countries have taken. A restructuring of these relations, which are based upon the consensus reached between the German Government and the Polish Government, deserves particular significance in view of the manifold difficulties in the present political constellation in Europe. It is suited not only to serve the promotion of the interests of both countries, but also to comprise an important factor in safeguarding peace in general. The results achieved to date can but reinforce our will to continue on the course we have set, to intensify even more the cooperation in the various sectors of our relations, in order to thus establish a firm and lasting friendly and neighborly relationship between Germany and Poland in mutual respect and mutual understanding. In the economic sector as well, Germany would gladly be willing to do its part toward overcoming the difficulties caused by the present crisis and to promote a reciprocal exchange of goods as far as possible.

I welcome the fact that you, Mr. Ambassador, who have contributed so successfully in the past to the development of German-Polish relations, have been chosen by your government to dedicate yourself to this task in your new function as well. You may rest assured that, in your work, you will always meet with my support and the support of my government as well.

In November, Hitler also conferred with Jean Goy, the French war veterans' leader, and explicitly relinquished any claim to Alsace-Lorraine. Since the German dictator had not approved of the wording of the interview published in France, an official German version was issued on November 24, quoting Hitler as having said the following:²⁶³

"The former German and French front-line fighters became acquainted with one another during the War and have gleaned from one another the right concept of their value and the value of each nation. They are more capable than others of respecting this value in peacetime. There may be no misunderstandings between our two peoples. The present difficulties generate from the problem of the Saar. The French press seeks to allow the assumption to arise that we Germans are preparing for a putsch. It is pure foolishness to believe that Germany wishes to attempt to disrupt the coming plebiscite by the use of force. I formally declare that we will submit to the results of the plebiscite, no matter what its outcome. Incidentally, I proposed to the French Foreign Minister several months ago that a protocol be drawn up to settle any problems which might arise. But I received no reply."

When the talk then turned to the treaties, the Führer spoke emphatically of the honorable demands of the German Volk, adding:

"There can be no question of shifting any boundary posts. You know my view in respect to Alsace-Lorraine. I have declared once and for all that it would not solve anything to wage war every twenty or thirty years in order to take back provinces which have always caused difficulties for France when they were French and for Germany when they were German. Present-day Germany feels differently on this than the Germany of the past. We do not think in terms of

square kilometers of territory to be conquered. We have the safeguarding of the life of our Volk in mind. What is called for now is work to establish a new social order. People will insinuate that I am seeking only to gain time in order to complete my preparations.

"My answer to them is that my plan is such that the man who is able to attain the goal which I have set for myself will earn a much greater monument in the gratitude of his people than that which a glorious leader could earn after innumerable victories.

"If France and Germany come to an understanding, a great number of neighboring peoples will let out a sigh of relief, and a nightmare would disappear. There would be an immediate reduction of tension, an improvement in the economic relations in all of the countries in Europe. It is up to our two countries to make this dream come true. I am of the opinion that the men who went through the War and who, for the most part, are still at an age when they can be mobilized once more, have a clearer understanding of the dangers which a lack of agreement between the two peoples would cause. The men who went through the War are more open, their attitude is more brutal. And for this reason they dare to look the difficulties in the eye, and that is the only way to solve them more easily. Without regard to diplomatic custom, they must confide their natural fears to one another and disclose these in time to banish the dangers of conflict."

On November 19, Hitler spent some time in Berlin in the circles of the "fighters of Brzeziny."²⁶⁴

From November 23 to December 18, he withdrew almost completely from the public eye. A speech scheduled at the anniversary of the organization *Kraft durch Freude* on November 27 in Berlin was cancelled because "Hitler was detained due to political work."²⁶⁵ Rudolf Hess spoke instead, relaying the Führer's regards. Due to Hitler's absence from the political stage, there were persistent rumors that an assassination attempt had been made.

According to the rumor, a relative (a niece or nephew) of General Schleicher had been the perpetrator and had been killed in making the attempt. Hitler's left arm had been injured. One of his chauffeurs—not, however, Schreck²⁶⁶—had also allegedly been killed.

These rumors were in evidence above all in party circles and had arisen as early as the commemorative festivities on November 9 in Munich. Had the story really been true, it would have been the one and only time an assassin had dared to look Hitler in the eye. All endeavors to shed light on this mysterious affair were in vain.²⁶⁷ After World War II, no one who had been close to Hitler made any official statement on such an attempt, and thus it is assumed that the story was mere myth. The fact remains, however, that Hitler was markedly retired in November and December of 1934, and that various security measures were taken,

such as reinforcing the guards on the Obersalzberg. In all probability, this was due to the Führer's unexpected difficulties brought on by renewed tensions between the Reichswehr and the SS. The Reichswehr insisted upon its Hitler-given right to be "the nation's sole bearer of arms," while the SS leaders, likewise with Hitler's backing, naturally held a different view. As a rule, the longstanding party members perceived the Reichswehr as a stronghold of the *Reaktion* and feared, not without some justification, that the Generals planned to gradually transform the Third Reich into a military dictatorship.

The new crisis which arose in the leadership of state was manifested in obvious signs. One did not even need to turn to the foreign press, for even the German party-line newspapers contained ambiguous denials of differences between the Party and the Reichswehr.²⁶⁸

Reports on the dictator himself were few and far between in the month of December, his volubility almost completely stilled.

On December 4, a decree issued by Hitler was announced in which the Silesian Gauleiter Helmuth Brückner²⁶⁹ was dismissed from office "for behavior detrimental to the Party." His successor was the Gauleiter for Southern Westphalia, Josef Wagner.

On December 5, the State Secretary of the Reich Ministry of Economics, Hitler's old wartime comrade Gottfried Feder, who also held the post of Reich Commissar for Settlement Policy, was dismissed. No reasons were disclosed.²⁷⁰

The following day, Hitler paid a visit to Field Marshal von Mackensen in Frankenwalde near Stettin to congratulate him on his 85th birthday,²⁷¹ accompanied by General von Blomberg, Reich Minister of Defense; General von Fritsch, the Chief of Army Command; and von Neurath, Reich Foreign Minister. Hitler declined making a speech. In the evening, he visited the Geyer film-processing works in Berlin-Neukölln.

On December 10, a picture was published with the following caption: "Adolf Hitler places a one thousand mark bill in Maria Paudler's collecting tin—his donation to the *Winterhilfswerk*."²⁷²

On December 12, Hitler attended the Weimar burial of Dr. Zunkel, who had been an SA Gruppenführer and councillor of state.²⁷³

On December 14, the reclusive dictator made a surprising appearance at the launching of the East Asia steamer *Scharnhorst* in Bremen. He was accompanied by Blomberg, Raeder, von Eltz-Rübenach (Reich Minister of Transportation), and Schacht.²⁷⁴ He then proceeded to Bremerhaven to tour the Lloyd express liner *Europa* and the armored ship *Admiral Scheer*. Here again Hitler made no speeches.

Around 5:00 p.m. on the way back from Bremen to Berlin, Hitler's special train collided near Verden an der Aller with a bus transporting a theater company from Stade which had broken through the crossing gates in the fog. Fourteen persons were killed in the accident. At the burial in Stade on December 17, Hitler had his aide Brückner lay down a wreath and hand over donations to the bereaved.²⁷⁵

On December 18, a "Day of the German Police" was observed throughout Germany. It marked the introduction of the so-called "Deutscher Gruß" (a salute of "Heil Hitler!" with the right arm extended at eye-level)²⁷⁶ in all uniformed police organizations. Hitler delivered a brief address to the Land Police troop which performed a concert in the chancellory courtyard and made WHW donations to the officers' wives.²⁷⁷ In the evening, he watched a television broadcast shown by the State Secretary in the Reich Post Office Department, Dr. Wilhelm Ohnesorge.²⁷⁸

On December 19, Hitler named Dr. Hans Frank, former Reich Commissar of Justice, as a Reich Minister without portfolio, sending him the following handwritten letter:²⁷⁹

Dear Mr. Minister,

Now that the Ministry of Justice of the Reich has been united with that of Prussia and the Reich has assumed the direct supervision of the administration of justice by virtue of the law of December 5, 1934, the task of coordinating the judiciary in the Länder has now been accomplished.

In the Academy for German Law, you have created an exemplary and lasting institution for the work of revising the legal system which has enabled you to aid in enforcing the National Socialist Weltanschauung in every sector of the revision of the law without limitation to the judiciary in a narrower sense. May I extend to you my warmest thanks and my special appreciation for your untiring and successful efforts as Reich Commissar for the Coordination of the Judiciary in the Länder and for the revision of the legal system and, at the same time, hereby declare that the task which was assigned to you by the immortal Reich President von Hindenburg on April 22, 1933 is now completed. At this time I also appoint you to the position of Reich Minister without portfolio in the Reich Government.

Mit deutschem Gruß,

Adolf Hitler

On December 20, Hitler once again received French front-line soldiers of the *Union Federale*, President Pichot, and Secretary-General Randoux.²⁸⁰

On December 22, Hitler arrived in Cuxhaven at 7:40 a.m. aboard a special train in order to congratulate the crew of the Hapag steamer *New York* which had rescued sixteen sailors from the sunken Norwegian ship

Sisto. Hitler thanked Commodore Kruse and delivered the following address on the ship's promenade deck:²⁸¹

My dear Commodore!

I have come to express to you on behalf of the entire German nation its thanks for your outstanding deed. The entire German Volk is proud of you! And you have also done a great service to German navigation! You have borne witness to the world that German ships' crews are brave, fearless and valiant. But you have also shown the world that the German Volk is always ready to provide peaceful assistance.

My congratulations to you, my dear Commodore, on such a crew, and my compliments to the German Volk on such brave men!

One hour after its arrival, Hitler's train left Cuxhaven again for Berlin. On December 24, Hitler spent the noon meal with old party comrades who had congregated in the Wagner Hotel in Munich. Making a brief speech, he stressed that an unshakable will, a consciousness of power, and an unfaltering onward march would make Germany great, as it had the Movement.²⁸²

At the close of 1934, Hitler issued the following order to the Wehrmacht:²⁸³

To the Wehrmacht!

May I extend my best wishes for the new year to all members of the Wehrmacht. They are coupled with my gratitude and my appreciation for the work they have accomplished in the past year in loyal and exemplary fulfillment of their duties.

In the future, our service shall have but one goal: Germany's resurrection in a peace characterized by equal rights, honor and secure freedom.

Berlin, December 31, 1934

Der Führer und Reichskanzler:
Adolf Hitler

One might have expected a lengthier text from the new Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces on the occasion, but Hitler's withdrawn attitude had not changed. Thus the year 1934—a year which had seen the National Socialists achieve their domestic goal—closed not in triumph, but in a mood of crisis.

Crises at home and abroad were indeed characteristic of the Third Reich in the years 1934 to 1939, when they followed in nearly uninterrupted sequence. For the most part, Hitler deliberately provoked them, while others were caused by his typical impatience. He could not tolerate waiting for a matter to ripen gradually on its own, but was driven onward by his inner demon. Although initially he had seemed to race breathlessly from one triumph to the next, his behavior increasingly

came to resemble a precarious balancing act. Indeed, he himself had once spoken of the “instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker” with which he trod the “path assigned to him by Providence.”²⁸⁴

This sureness abandoned him abruptly in September 1939: colliding with reality, he lost his balance and fell.

Introduction

Notes

1. Cf. Heinrich Conrad, *Napoleons Leben. Von ihm selbst* (Stuttgart, 1913); Paul and Gertrude Aretz, *Napoleon I. Mein Leben und Werk* (Basel, 1936).
2. Johannes Penzler, *Die Reden Kaiser Wilhelms II* (3 vols., Leipzig). Vol. I (1890–1895) was published by Reclam ca. 1900, n.d., Vol. II (1896–1900) in 1904; and Vol. III (1901–1905) ca. 1907, n.d. Further speeches, edited by B. Krieger, were also published by Reclam.
3. The expression “Third Reich” was originally a mythological term signifying an ideal *Reich* (empire) of the future, in evidence as early as the Middle Ages. Cf. Julius Petersen, *Die Sehnsucht nach dem Dritten Reich in deutscher Sage und Dichtung* (Stuttgart, 1934). It enjoyed particular popularity in Germany after World War I by virtue of Arthur Moeller van den Bruck’s work *Das Dritte Reich* (Berlin, 1922). Adopted by Hitler’s followers as the aim of their political struggle (one rally song claimed, “Many fell in Munich” and climaxed with the refrain: “There are still thousands fighting for the Third, the Greater German Reich.”). The term was first understood as a sequel to the two previous German empires (the Holy Roman Empire from 962 to 1806, and the Hohenzollern Empire from 1871 to 1918). Throughout Hitler’s rule and thereafter, the “Third Reich” was regarded as identical with the period of National Socialist dictatorship from 1933 to 1945. Hitler himself only occasionally used the expression “Third Reich.” After the *Anschluss* of the Sudetenland territories, he proclaimed, “The birth certificate of the Second Reich was signed by the German Princes. The birth certificate of the Third Reich will be issued and verified by the German Volk.” See below, speech of December 2, 1938. (Footnote references to further remarks made by Hitler which are included in this work are cited by the respective date heading each page in chronological sequence.)
4. Cf. Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler* (2nd unabr. ed., Vienna, 1973); Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–42* (Bonn, 1951); *Hitler’s Table Talk, 1941–44* (London, 1953); *Hitler’s Secret Conversations* (New York, 1953).
5. Early sources for Hitler’s speeches in English translation mainly for the years up to 1939: Norman H. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 1922–1939* (2 vols., Oxford, 1942); Gordon W. Prange, *Hitler’s Words* (Washington, 1943); Count Raoul de Roussy de Sales, *My New Order* (New York, 1941).
6. In his book *Mein Kampf* (Vol. I was published in 1925, Vol. II in 1927), Hitler noted on page 225, “Yet I resolved to become a politician.” This and all subsequent quotations are taken from the 78th to 84th edition (Munich, 1933).—For Hitler’s Munich years after World War I and the beginnings of the National Socialist Movement cf. *ibid.*, pp. 226 ff.; see further Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (Rev. ed., London,

- 1962), pp. 57 ff.; Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur* (Köln, 1969), pp. 60 ff.; William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (London, 1960), pp. 62 ff., 117 ff.; Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler. Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), pp. 155 ff.
7. The term “National Socialist” was originally used by the German Workers’ Party founded in Austria in 1904 (its official title as of May 11, 1918 was the “German National Socialist Workers’ Party of Austria”). Using this party as a model, a lathe operator named Anton Drexler and Karl Harrer, an author and journalist, founded the “German Workers’ Party” in Munich on January 5, 1919 (known from 1920 as the “National Socialist German Workers’ Party”), which Hitler—member number 7—joined in September 1919. Hitler was extremely fond of the expression *national-sozialistisch* and normally declined using the abbreviation “NS.” Ostensibly he was impressed by the mere sound of the word which also had the advantage of denoting the synthesis of nationalist and socialist currents in Germany to which Hitler aspired.
8. Statement of the former Reich Youth Leader and Gauleiter Baldur von Schirach before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg on May 24, 1946: “My guilt lies in having organized the youth of our Volk for a man who, in the course of long years as Führer and Head of State, had to me always seemed unimpeachable. Yet this man was guilty of murder on millions of counts” (IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XIV, p. 477).
9. *Mein Kampf*, p. 3: “I had become a little ringleader.”
10. Cf. August Kubicek, *Adolf Hitler, Mein Jugendfreund* (Graz, 1953), pp. 121 ff.; see also William A. Jenks, *Vienna and the Young Hitler* (New York, 1960).
11. Cf. Konrad Heiden, *Adolf Hitler* (2 vols., Zurich, 1936–1937), Vol. I, pp. 52 ff.
12. The *Alldeutscher Verband* was a non-partisan, nationalist Pan-German association founded in 1891 (Chairman in 1908: Heinrich Class, attorney and publisher). Dissolved during the Third Reich.
13. See also below, pp. 37 ff.
14. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes of the unworldliness of the “völkisch St. Johns of the twentieth century” (p. 398).
15. Cf. Joseph Greiner, *Das Ende des Hitler-Mythos* (Vienna, 1947).
16. Although he was an Austrian citizen, Hitler volunteered for the Royal Bavarian Army on August 3, 1914 and, with the permission of the King, joined the First Company of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment (also called the “List Regiment” after its Commander) in August 1914. He was awarded the Iron Cross, Second Class, in December 1914 and the Iron Cross, First Class, in August 1918. Cf. Hans Mend, *Adolf Hitler im Felde* (Munich, 1931); Fridolin Solleder, *Vier Jahre Westfront. Geschichte des Regiments List R.I.R.* 16 (Munich, 1932).
17. Cf. Heinrich Hoffmann, *Hitler wie ich ihn sah. Aufzeichnungen seines Leibfotografen* (München, 1974), pp. 81 ff.; Rauschning, pp. 230 ff., 260 f.; Rudolf Olden, *Hitler* (Amsterdam, 1935), pp. 62, 66; several quotations in *Mein Kampf* and in his speeches.

18. As did, for instance, Prof. Dr. Oswald Bumke (born 1877 in Stolp, died 1950 in Munich). Records of the author.—See also Oswald Bumke, *Erinnerungen und Betrachtungen* (Munich, 1952), pp. 174 ff. For the manic-depressive diagnosis pronounced by Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Theo Morell, see Leonard L. Heston and Renate Heston, *The Medical Casebook of Adolf Hitler. His Illnesses, Doctors and Drugs* (London, 1979), p. 115.
19. Cf. Birger Dahlerus, *The Last Attempt* (London, 1948; *Der letzte Versuch*, München, 1948), cc. 6 and 9; Erich von Manstein, *Verlorene Siege* (Bonn, 1955), p. 572; Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten* (Heidelberg, 1951), p. 376; Rauschnig, pp. 272 f.; Paul Schmidt, *Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne, 1923–45* (Bonn, 1949), p. 297; William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary* (New York, 1941) pp. 118 f.
20. Cf. Franz Haider, *Hitler als Feldherr* (Munich, 1949), p. 52.
21. Cf. Ernst von Weizsäcker, *Erinnerungen* (Munich, 1950), p. 203.
22. As, for instance, in the speech of September 7, 1937: "The genius consistently stands out from the masses in that he unconsciously anticipates truths of which the population as a whole only later becomes conscious." See below, September 7, 1937.
23. Arthur Weigall, *Alexander the Great* (London, 1933), pp. 16 f.
24. Cf. Guderian, pp. 262, 310 and 402; Heinz Linge, "Kronzeuge Linge," in *Revue*, 51 (1955); Albert Zoller, ed., *Hitler privat. Erlebnisbericht einer Geheimekretärin* (Düsseldorf, 1949), p. 64; see also Jochen von Lang, ed., *Adolf Hitler. Gesichter eines Diktators* (Hamburg, 1968), a selection of photographs compiled by the Zeitgeschichtliches Bildarchiv Heinrich Hoffmann.
25. Although Hitler regarded the ninth of November as a fateful day evoking memories of the Revolution of 1918, he attempted a putsch on November 8/9, 1923. In the first few days of November 1937, he launched a new foreign policy based on military force; this also foundered. On June 22, 1941, he initiated his Russian campaign on the same date Napoleon had chosen for his catastrophic Russian offensive in 1812.—The train accident described by Hoffmann, pp. 86 ff., did not occur in 1936, but on December 14, 1934. See below, *ibid.*
26. See below, July 3, 1934.
27. Ministers Hugenberg and von Eltz-Rübenach were not prosecuted for resigning in 1933 and 1937 respectively, although their actions were a serious affront to Hitler.
28. On March 13, 1943, Major General Henning von Tresckow planted a time bomb in Hitler's plane on its return flight from Smolensk to East Prussia. However, the detonator malfunctioned. Tresckow committed suicide at the front near Bialystok on July 21, 1944; cf. Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Offiziere gegen Hitler* (Frankfurt, 1960), pp. 88 ff.
29. See below, November 6, 1933.
30. G. Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators* (London, 1938), pp. 96 f. Ward Price died in England in 1961.
31. Hans Baur, *Ich flog Mächtige der Erde* (Kempten, 1956), pp. 108 ff.

32. See below, November 8, 1939.
33. In a speech in Berlin, Hitler stated: "We had provided for every eventuality from the start." (See below, January 30, 1941).
34. Henderson's report to Halifax, cited in *British Blue Book* (London, 1939), No. 69.
35. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 7 and 17 f.;
36. Cf. also Kubicek, pp. 97 ff. and 132 f.
37. *Mein Kampf*, p. 35.
38. See below, April 29, 1945.
39. Ward Price, p. 20.
40. Hitler's observations on Richard Wagner before the People's Court of Justice at Munich in 1924; see below, September 7, 1932.
41. Cf. Zoller, p. 58.
42. See below, April 20 to May 1, 1935.
43. Cf. Zoller, pp. 49 f.
44. *Mein Kampf*, p. 21.
45. In 1928, Hitler dictated his *Zweites Buch* (a treatise on questions of foreign policy which had largely been discussed previously in *Mein Kampf*) to Reichsleiter Max Amann, but did not publish it. After World War II, the manuscript was found in the United States and published by the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (*Hitlers Zweites Buch*, Stuttgart, 1961) and simultaneously in English as *Hitler's Secret Book* (New York, 1961).
46. See below, May 30, 1938.
47. For further references to Hitler's remarks in this context, see below, Volume IV, Index under "Intellectuals."
48. See below, speech in Hamburg on August 17, 1934.
49. See below, speech in Nuremberg on September 6, 1938.
50. See below, speech in Munich on November 10, 1938.
51. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 71–73.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 21; repeated on p. 137.
53. See below, speech in Nuremberg on September 14, 1936.
54. See below, March 21, 1933.
55. See below, October 29, 1937. Externally, Hitler had never been a disciple of Germanic cult ideas and rejected Rosenberg's and Himmler's "cult" aspirations. Rosenberg's book *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* was a particular object of his ridicule (see below, September 6, 1938). For Hitler's religious ideas, see Friedrich Heer, *Der Glaube des Adolf Hitler. Anatomie einer politischen Religiosität* (Munich, 1968); see also Picker, c. VII, and Rauschning, c. IV.
56. "God be with us" was imprinted on the belt buckles of the Imperial Army, the Reichswehr and the National Socialist Wehrmacht.
57. Text of the *Rachelied der Deutschen* ("Germans' Song of Revenge") by Ernst Moritz Arndt (1813).
58. Ward Price, p. 17.
59. See below, speech of November 8, 1943.
60. Emanuel Geibel in *Siegeslieder* (1870/71). The German original is, "Und es soll am deutschen Wesen einmal noch die Welt genesen."

61. Cf. especially Rauschnig and Picker.
62. *Mein Kampf*, Epilogue.
63. See below, speech in Vienna on April 9, 1938.
64. See below, speech in Munich on March 14, 1936.
65. See below, speech in Würzburg on June 27, 1937.
66. See below, speech in Hamburg on March 20, 1936.
67. See below, speech in Breslau on July 31, 1937.
68. See below, speech in Regensburg on June 6, 1937.
69. See below, speech in Königsberg on March 25, 1938.
70. See below, speech in Berlin on October 6, 1936.
71. See below, speech in Hamburg on March 20, 1936.
72. See below, speech in Königsberg on March 25, 1938.
73. Eva Braun, born 1912 in Munich, was the daughter of a vocational school teacher. She first met Hitler during her employment with Hitler's photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann (born 1885 in Fürth; died 1957 in Munich) in the early 1930's. In 1932 she attempted suicide in order to tie Hitler more closely. She became his mistress and, on April 29, 1945, his wife. Together with Hitler she committed suicide in the bomb shelter of the Chancellory on April 30, 1945; while she took poison, Hitler chose to shoot himself.
74. Cf. Otto Dietrich, *Zwölf Jahre mit Hitler* (Munich, 1955), pp. 218 ff; Heinz Linge, *Bis zum Untergang. Als Chef despersönlichen Dienstes bei Hitler* (München-Berlin, 1980), pp. 57 ff.
75. An active ingredient in one of these miracle drugs called *Vitamultin Gold*, a preparation manufactured by Morell's pharmaceutical firm, was *Pervitin*, one of the strongest amphetamines available at the time. It was also taken by German pilots in combat during World War II. See also Heston, pp. 82 ff.
76. Matthew 18, 18.
77. *Mein Kampf*, p. 70.
78. Quoted by Rauschnig, p. 212.
79. *Mein Kampf* p. 223.
80. The *Dolchstosslegende* is based upon the inaccurate but widely held view in Germany to the effect that the military defeat in 1918 was due not to the superiority of the enemy forces but a result of events and forces inside the country (e.g. munition workers' strike): the "stab in the back" of the allegedly victorious army. The groundlessness of this claim is best illustrated by the fact that the responsible military leaders, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, had already requested an armistice within 24 hours in September 1918 due to the desperate military situation.
81. Hitler's statement as witness before the Reichsgericht in Leipzig on September 25, 1930; cf. *Frankfurter Zeitung*, September 26, 1930.
82. See below, speech in Berlin on January 25, 1936.
83. See below, speech in Munich on November 8, 1941.
84. See below, speech in Munich on November 8, 1938.
85. See below, speech of October 20, 1932: "For this Volk I would let myself be beaten to pieces if necessary."

86. See below, speech of September 1, 1939.
87. See below, speech of February 10, 1933.
88. See below, speech of February 24, 1933.
89. See below, speech of October 24, 1933.
90. See below, speech of August 17, 1934.
91. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.
92. See below, speech of March 4, 1933.
93. See below, speech of May 1, 1935.
94. See below, January 27, 1932 to February 10, 1932.
95. See below, October 16, 1933.
96. See below, speech of March 12, 1936.
97. Louis de Jong, *Die deutsche fünfte Kolonne im 2. Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1952).
98. The swastika was widely distributed as a religious and spiritual symbol throughout the ancient Mesopotamian, Christian and Byzantine world, occurring as well among the Mayas and in Asia, especially in India and Tibet. In Hinduism, the right-hand swastika stands for light and fortune, the left-hand swastika—as used during the Nazi regime—is considered a symbol of the Goddess Kali, of darkness and destruction.
99. Cf. Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab* (Munich, 1958); Heer, pp. 709–718. The *Ostara* pamphlets represented a primitive mixture of anti-Semitism, mysticism, occultism, the Germanic cult, and pornography.
100. Cf. Rauschnig, pp. 202 ff. and 230 ff.
101. The Thule Order and the Thule Society were established in 1917/18 by the mysterious Baron Rudolf von Sebottendorf (1875–1945). Their leading members included the Munich professor for geopolitics, Karl Haushofer, and his assistant, Rudolf Hess, who later became Hitler's deputy. Cf. Rudolf von Sebottendorf, *Bevor Hitler kam* (Munich, 1934); Dietrich Bröndel, *Bevor Hitler kam* (Hanover, 1964), pp. 190 f. and 219 ff.; cf. also Reginald H. Phelps, "Before Hitler Came. The Thule Society and Germanen Orden," in, *Journal of Modern History*, XXXV (1963).—Karl Haushofer, born 1869 in Munich, died 1946 in Pähl (Upper Bavaria); Major General in World War I and professor at the University of Munich from 1921 to 1939, was the founder of geopolitics in Germany, with its theory of *Lebensraum* (living space). On his various trips to Asia, he had also come into contact with the esoteric doctrines of Tibet.
102. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 54 f.
103. Hitler's belief in the alleged existence of a clandestine Jewish world government was based upon the so-called "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."
Opinion had it that these were allegedly the records of secret sessions of the Zionist Congresses held at Basel in 1897 with the aim of conspiring, on an international basis, to rule the world. Although revealed as forgeries, the "protocols" circulated throughout the world at the beginning of the 20th century, serving to reinforce anti-Semitic currents. Cf. Gottfried zur Beek, *Die Geheimnisse der Weisen von Zion* (Munich, Eher

- Verlag, 1932); see also Theodor Fritsch, *Die zionistischen Protokolle. Das Programm der internationalen Geheimregierung* (Leipzig, 1924).
104. *Mein Kampf*, p. 70.
105. Set off in original.
106. After the takeover, Hermann Rauschning asked Hitler whether “the Jew” was to be annihilated. Hitler replied: “No. Then we would have to invent him. An enemy who is invisible is not enough; one needs a visible enemy.” Rauschning, p. 223.
107. See below, April 1, 1933 and November 9 and 10, 1938.
108. See below, speech before the Reich Cabinet on March 29, 1933.
109. See below, speech in Berlin on January 30, 1941.
110. This remark, to which Hitler refers repeatedly, was made not in his speech of September 1, 1939, but on January 30, 1939; see below, speech of January 30, 1939.
111. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.
112. See below, speech in Pocking on October 12, 1932.
113. For the complete wording of these 25 points, see Walter Hofer, *Der Nationalsozialismus. Dokumente 1933 bis 1945* (Frankfurt, 1957), pp. 28 ff.; see also Gottfried Feder, *Das Programm der NSDAP* (Munich, 1932).
114. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 513 f.: “The National Socialist German Workers’ Party received with its program of 25 theses a basis which must remain unshakable. For the majority of followers, the spirit of our Movement lies not so much in a literal interpretation of our basic principles but in the meaning which we are able to vest in them.”
115. Recorded speech of July 1932; see below, July 15, 1932.
116. See below, speech of June 6, 1937.
117. See below, speech of January 30, 1937.
118. See below, speech of March 21, 1934.
119. See below, speech of September 2, 1933.
120. See below, speech of September 20, 1933.
121. See below, speech of September 14, 1936.
122. See below, January 27, 1932, Note 28.
123. Dr. (Horace Greely) Hjalmar Schacht, born 1877 in Tingleff, died 1970 in Munich; Reichsbank President from 1923 to 1930 and 1933 to 1939; a patron of Hitler’s in 1932/33; Reich Minister of Economics from 1935 to 1937; acquitted in Nuremberg in 1946. In order to disguise the inflationary measures required to finance Germany’s arms production, Schacht had proposed that bills be issued by the Reich Ministry of Finance which were accepted by the Metallurgisches Forschungsinstitut (Mefo) and discounted by the Reichsbank. When, in 1939, Schacht refused to further increase the creation of money, Hitler promptly dismissed him.
124. Franz Pfeffer von Salomon, retired Captain, born 1888 in Düsseldorf; Supreme Commander of the SA from 1926 to 1930.
125. Ernst Röhm, born 1887 in Munich, retired Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel in Bolivia; Chief of Staff in the SA from 1930; Reich Minister in 1933; murdered in Munich-Stadelheim on July 1, 1934.

126. Gregor Strasser, born 1892 in Geisenfeld, apothecary; murdered on June 30, 1934.
127. Kurt von Schleicher, born 1882 in Brandenburg; General in the Reichswehr; Reich Minister of Defense in 1932; Reich Chancellor from December 12, 1932 to January 28, 1933; murdered on June 30, 1934 in Berlin.
128. Rudolf Hess, born 1894 in Alexandria; Deputy of the Führer (in party matters) in 1933; Reich Minister in 1933; fled to Britain on May 10, 1941; sentenced to life imprisonment by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1946; incarcerated in Berlin-Spandau; died on August 17, 1987.
129. Martin Bormann, born 1900 in Halberstadt, farmer, Head of the Party Office in 1941; allegedly killed when attempting to escape in Berlin on May 2, 1945.
130. From 1919 to 1935, the armed forces of the German Reich were officially called the *Reichswehr*. In accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, the Reichswehr was composed of voluntary professional soldiers serving 12-year terms. The *Reichsheer* (Army) was confined to 100,000 men, while the *Reichsmarine* (Navy) was permitted a force of 15,000. A *Luftwaffe* (Air Force) was not permitted, nor were military aircraft, tanks, heavy artillery, or U-boats.
On May 21, 1935, Hitler reinstituted general conscription. From this date, the armed forces were officially called the *Wehrmacht*; this name had, however, been in use unofficially since 1933. The Wehrmacht was composed of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force and was under the supreme command of Adolf Hitler himself, whose official title was *Oberster Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht*. At the same time, the *Reichswehrministerium* (Reich Ministry of Defense) was aptly renamed *Reichskriegsministerium* (Reich Ministry of War).
131. Werner von Blomberg, born 1878 in Stargard; Reich Minister of Defense from 1933 to 1935; Reich Minister of War from 1935 to 1938; died 1946 in Nuremberg.
132. Werner Freiherr von Fritsch, born 1880 in Benrath; Chief of Army Command and Commander in Chief of the Army from 1934 to 1938; killed in action in 1939 outside Warsaw.
133. Walter von Brauchitsch, born 1881 in Berlin; Commander in Chief of the Army from 1938 to 1941; Field Marshal in 1940; died 1948 in Hamburg.
134. See also below, Appendix to Volume II.
135. Colonel General Friedrich Fromm, dismissed from his post as Commander of the Replacement Army on July 20, 1944; later arrested and shot on March 19, 1945 in the Brandenburg Penitentiary.
136. Heinrich Himmler, born 1900 in Munich, degree in agriculture, Reichsführer SS; Chief of the German Police in 1936; Reich Minister of the Interior in 1943; Commander of the Replacement Army in 1944; committed suicide in 1945 near Lüneburg.
137. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 736–742.
138. *Ibid*, p. 705.
139. See below, speech of October 6, 1939.

140. See below, proclamation to the German Volk of September 3, 1939.
141. See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
142. *Mein Kampf*, p. 154.—For Hitler's policy of expansion cf. Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims* (2 vols., London 1973–74).
143. Interview with Bertrand de Jouvenel; see below, February 21, 1936.
144. See below, speech of November 21, 1937.
145. See below, speech of November 8, 1940.
146. Cf. Rauschning, pp. 255 f.—Reference to Alfred Hugenberg, the leader of the DNVP.
147. See below, speech of August 22, 1939.
148. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.
149. Cf. Andre François-Poncet, *The Fateful Years* (London, 1949), p. 193.
150. Dahlerus, c. 6; see also below, August 27, 1939.—Birger Dahlerus was a confidant of Göring's with influential connections to British government circles; during August 25 and September 4, 1939 Dahlerus flew to Berlin and London for attempts to mediation.
151. See IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X, p. 226; cf. also Schmidt, p. 464 and below, September 3, 1939.—Dr. Paul Otto Schmidt, born 1899 in Berlin, died 1970 in Munich; interpreter and chief interpreter in the German Foreign Office from 1924 to 1945, with the rank of an envoy from 1938.
152. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745.
153. Japan and Bulgaria, for instance, remained neutral in regard to Russia; Finland kept its neutrality in regard to the U.S.A.
154. Winston Churchill, *The Collected Works, Vol. XXI (The War Speeches, Vol. III; London, 1975)*, p. 115.
155. See below, speech of February 20, 1937.
156. See below, speech of October 19, 1932.
157. Fritz Thyssen, born 1873 in Styrum (near Mülheim an der Ruhr), died 1951 in Buenos Aires, a German industrial magnate and the eldest son of August Thyssen, lent strong support to Hitler prior to his accession to power, paving his way to meeting the captains of industry at the Industry Club in Düsseldorf in January 1932 and backing his bid for the office of Chancellor. Thyssen fled to Switzerland on September 2, 1939 and then to France, where he fell into the hands of the Gestapo in 1940. Thyssen was confined to the psychiatric ward of the Babelsberg Sanatorium for several years and subsequently transferred to Oranienburg, Buchenwald and Dachau. He was liberated by the American Army in 1945. (Information courtesy of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich.)
158. Quoted by Olden, p. 37.
159. This was the first film adaptation of the utopian novel, *Der Tunnel*, first published in 1913 in Berlin (quotation taken from the 259th to 283th edition, Berlin, 1931). Bernhard Kellermann (born 1879 in Fürth, died 1951 in Neu-Glienicke near Potsdam) narrates the turbulent events surrounding the construction of a subterranean tunnel under the Atlantic Ocean connecting America and Europe.
160. See below, Volume IV, Index under "Time."—Kellermann writes in his novel of the "most extraordinary concert of all time" (p. 9); the "boldest

land speculation of all time" (p.112); the "most brazen slavery of all time" (p. 253); the "greatest gangster of all time" (p. 337), etc. Hitler surpassed even Kellermann's marked use of this superlative. The expression, "the greatest commander of all time" (*der größte Feldherr aller Zeiten*), which became *Gröfaz* in the vernacular, was one superlative Hitler himself did not use.

161. *Mein Kampf* p. 116.
162. Ibid, p. 533. Bethmann-Hollweg was German Reich Chancellor from July 14, 1909 to July 13, 1917.
163. Ibid, p. 534.
164. Ibid, p. 533. David Lloyd George was British Prime Minister from December 10, 1916 to October 19, 1922.
165. Ibid, p. 315. Thomas Woodrow Wilson was President of the United States from March 4, 1913 to March 3, 1921. On January 8, 1918, he issued fourteen guidelines for world peace, the "Fourteen Points." Hitler frequently made Wilson the butt of his ridicule: in his speech on September 26, 1938, for instance (see below), he called him a "wandering scholar" and on November 8, 1940 (see below) an "American sorcerer-priest."
166. Ibid, pp. 390 f.
167. Hitler's own life, particularly in the years from 1939 to 1945, was striking proof of the falsity of this tenet.
168. Wolfgang Kapp, born 1858 in New York, died 1922 in Leipzig, Director-General of the East Prussian agricultural credit banks, launched a nationalist putsch in Berlin on March 13, 1920, which collapsed within few days. The generals of the Reichswehr had sided with the Social Democratic government in power at the time.
169. See below, June 18, 1935.
170. Such as, for instance, the declination of predicate adjectives at the end of a sentence, as in "*Mein Entschluß ist ein unabänderlicher*" ("My decision is an inalterable one"). In radio broadcasts in America during the Second World War, Thomas Mann criticized this and other aspects of Hitler's Austrian diction.
171. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 530 ff.
172. Ibid.
173. Expression coined by the author.
174. See Linge, in *Revue*, part 15 of a serial, p. 30; see also "Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen," in *Münchener Illustrierte* (1954/1955) and the series "Das war Hitler," in *Revue* (Munich, 1952/1953).
175. Information provided by Gau Propagandaleiter Waldemar Vogt (killed in action 1945 in Berlin) to the author on January 3, 1939.—Dr. Joseph Goebbels, born 1897 in Rheydt, Gauleiter of Berlin in 1926; Reich Propagandaleiter of the NSDAP in 1928; Reich Minister of Propaganda in 1933; committed suicide with his wife and children on May 1, 1945 in the Reich Chancellory bunker—Goebbels made this statement in an attempt to impress upon Hitler how intent he was to comply with Hitler's every wish. In a speech to Kreisleiters in Vogelsang on April 29, 1937,

- Hitler had demanded: "For us, the soul of the Volk must be an instrument upon which we can play" (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz).
176. Cf. Ward Price, pp. 56 f.
 177. See below, speech of August 17, 1934.
 178. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 600 f.
 179. See below, second speech delivered on March 23, 1933.
 180. Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. Files of the Reich Chancellory, fascicle materials for speeches of the Reich Chancellor (R. 43 II 994).
 181. Hjalmar Schacht, *Abrechnung mit Hitler* (Hamburg, 1948), p. 32.
 182. The *Völkischer Beobachter* was the official party organ of the NSDAP. Originally founded in Munich in 1887 as a weekly with a nationalist slant, it was first called the *Münchener Beobachter*. In December of 1920, the NSDAP bought the paper and began publishing it first biweekly and then daily from 1923. In August of 1923, the oversized format common in the United States was adopted in accordance with Hitler's wishes. From 1925 to 1933, Hitler himself was listed as editor; subsequently, this role was assumed by Alfred Rosenberg, who had been editor in chief since 1922, and former Captain Wilhelm Weiss took over Rosenberg's function. As of January 1, 1933, a local edition was published in Berlin (with a respective section on Northern Gaus), while the Munich edition was also issued as a Southern German edition (usually containing a page of news from the Southern Gaus). A Vienna edition went into publication in March of 1938. The three central offices of the *Völkischer Beobachter* in Munich, Berlin and Vienna maintained their own independent editorial staffs and printing presses. Thus the texts—and the publication dates—were not always identical. All quotations in this work have been taken, unless otherwise cited, from the Munich (or, respectively, Southern German) edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* (abbreviated VB). The last issue was published in Munich on April 30, 1945 (the date of Hitler's death) but not delivered due to the advance of the American Army (photocopy filed with the Stadtarchiv, Munich).
 183. See below, October 2, 1941.
 184. See below, November 8, 1942.
 185. See below, radio speech of July 20, 1944.
 186. Ward Price, p. 9.
 187. Cf. Zoller, pp. 29 f.
 188. Information reported by Hanna Reitsch before an American Investigation Committee in Oberursel on October 8, 1945. IMT 3734 – PS.
 189. Raeder stated on May 16, 1946 in Nuremberg, "Hitler spoke a great deal, he went quite far afield; above all, he pursued a specific aim in every speech depending on his audience. He was a master at dialectic just as he was a master at bluffing. He used strong language, again depending upon the aim he was pursuing; he allowed his fantasy to roam completely at will, and he often contradicted himself in consecutive speeches. One never knew which were his latest aims and plans. This was extremely difficult to determine after a speech of that sort. His oratory generally made more of an impression on people who seldom heard him

than on those who were already thoroughly acquainted with his manner of speaking." IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XIV, p. 44.—Dr. h.c. Erich Raeder, born 1876 in Wandsbek, was Chief of Navy Command from 1928 to 1943 and Commander in Chief of the Navy from 1935. In 1939 he became Grand Admiral and in 1943 was awarded the honorary title of Generalinspekteur of the Navy; in 1946 he was sentenced to life imprisonment in Nuremberg, incarcerated in Spandau Military Prison and released in 1955 for health reasons. He died 1960 in Kiel.

190. The Italian Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, noted in his diary in respect to Hitler's meeting with Mussolini on April 29 and 30, 1942 in Salzburg, "Hitler talks, talks, talks, talks. Mussolini suffers—he, who is in the habit of talking himself, and who, instead, practically has to keep quiet. On the second day, after lunch, when everything had been said, Hitler talked uninterruptedly for an hour and forty minutes. He omitted absolutely no argument: war and peace, religion and philosophy, art and history. Mussolini automatically looked at his wrist watch, I had my mind on my own business, and only Cavallero, who is a phenomenon of servility, pretended he was listening in ecstasy, continually nodding his head in approval. Those, however, who dreaded the ordeal less than we did were the Germans. Poor people. They have to take it every day, and I am certain there isn't a gesture, a word, or a pause which they don't know by heart. General Jodl, after an epic struggle, finally went to sleep on the divan. Keitel was reeling, but he succeeded in keeping his head up." *The Ciano Diaries, 1939–1943* (New York, 1946), pp. 478 f. Hitler's interpreter, Dr. Paul Schmidt, confirmed Ciano's impression in full; cf. Schmidt, p. 563.

Galeazzo Ciano, conte di Cortellazzo, born in 1903, was Mussolini's son-in-law and became Foreign Minister in 1936. He was executed by Mussolini at Hitler's instigation in 1944.

Colonel General Alfred Jodl, born 1890 in Würzburg; Chief of Operations Staff of the OKW (the High Command of the Armed Forces) during World War II; sentenced to death and hanged in Nuremberg in 1946.

Wilhelm Keitel, born 1882 in Helmscherröde near Gandersheim, Field Marshal, Chief of Staff of the Reich Defense Council (State Secretary) in 1935; Chief of Staff of the OKW from 1938 to 1945; sentenced to death and hanged in Nuremberg in 1946.

191. Cf. for instance, Dahlerus, cc. 6 and 9.
192. Meeting between Hitler and Molotov on November 12/13, 1940; see below, November 12, 1940.
193. Meeting between Hitler and Franco on October 23, 1940; see below, October 23, 1940.
194. World Broadcast on November 12, 1939. Churchill, *Works*, Vol. XIX (*War Speeches*, Vol. I), p. 120.

The Year 1932

Notes

1. In September 1932, SA and SS formations in Mecklenburg conducted joint maneuvers with the National Socialist police force there. Cf. illustrated reports in VB, No. 264, September 20, 1932. See also below, September 15, 1932, note 240.
2. Hitler frequently called himself the drummer of the national movement, as for instance in his closing statement before the Munich People's Court on March 27, 1924: "it was not modesty which moved me to be a 'drummer' then; that is the highest calling; the rest is nothing." Quotation in Dr. Ernst Boepfle, *Adolf Hitlers Reden* (Munich, 1933), p. 118. Hitler also cited his mission as "drummer" in his speech to the Industry Club in Düsseldorf on January 27, 1932; see below, January 27, 1932.
3. See below, February 16, 1932.
4. Called *Standarten*.
5. See below, interview of August 16, 1932.
6. Cf. Joseph Goebbels, *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei* (Berlin, 1934), p. 220.
7. See below, November 8, 1940.
8. The New Year's proclamations of the following years are excerpted to the extent that they contain anything new.
9. Published in VB, No. 1/2, January 1/2, 1932.
10. Ibid.
11. Published in VB, No. 9, January 9, 1932. Dr. h.c. Wilhelm Groener, born 1867 in Ludwigsburg, died 1939 in Berlin; last General Quartermaster in 1918; Reich Minister of Transportation in 1920; Reichswehr Minister in 1928; Reich Minister of the Interior in 1931 (appointed). Dr. Heinrich Brüning, born 1885 in Munster i.W., died 1970 in Norwich, Vt., U.S.A.: Reich Chancellor from 1930 to 1932.
12. In this press release, Hitler withheld the fact that he had also met in Berlin with General Kurt von Schleicher (born 1882 in Brandenburg a. d. H., murdered June 30, 1934 in Berlin). Schleicher had been chief of the ministerial office of the Reich Ministry of Defense since March 1, 1929. Hitler had become acquainted with this influential general through former Captain Ernst Röhm (born 1887 in Munich, murdered July 1, 1934 in Munich). Röhm used these same connections to gain Hitler's access to Reich President von Hindenburg for initial—as it turned out, unproductive—talks on October 10, 1931. During the negotiations in 1932, Hitler relied heavily upon Röhm. Röhm and former Captain Hermann Göring (born 1893 in Rosenheim, committed suicide in Nuremberg in 1946; fighter pilot in World War I and decorated with the pour-le-merité medal) comprised the two assets which he used alternately at the negotiations in Berlin. Schleicher was pursuing his own political goals by cooperating with the NSDAP and believed he could use Hitler and his party for his own designs. He paid for this error with his life.

13. WTB report, January 8, 1932.
14. Report in VB, No. 10/11, January 10/11, 1932.
15. Dr. Alfred Hugenberg, born 1865 in Hanover; Privy Finance Councillor; owner of nationally-oriented newspaper and film companies (UFA); Chairman of the German National People's Party; Reich Minister of Economy, Food and Agriculture in 1933 (resigned June 27, 1933); died 1951 in Kükenbruch near Rinteln.
16. The "national opposition" (National Socialists, German Nationalists, Stahlhelm and Reichslandbund) had consolidated for joint action in Bad Harzburg and formed an action committee, the Harzburg Front, on October 11, 1931.
17. Cf. the account in VB, Nos. 12–14, January 12–14, 1932 and Otto Meissner, *Staatssekretär unter Ebert-Hindenburg-Hitler* (Hamburg, 1950), p. 216; see also Heinrich Brüning, "Ein Brief," in *Deutsche Rundschau*, 70 (1947), No. 7, pp. 2 ff.; Theodor Eschenburg, "Die Rolle der Persönlichkeit in der Krise der Weimarer Republik. Hindenburg, Brüning, Groener, Schleicher," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 9 (1961), pp. 1 ff.; Erich Matthias, "Hindenburg zwischen den Fronten," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), pp. 75 ff.; Thilo Vogelsang, "Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr 1930–1933," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 2 (1954), pp. 420 ff.; and Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart-Düsseldorf, 1955).
18. Published in VB, No. 14, January 14, 1932.
19. Published verbatim in VB, No. 19, January 19, 1932; see also *Hitlers Auseinandersetzung mit Brüning* (Eher pamphlet, 1932).
20. Published in VB, No. 29, January 29, 1932.
21. Published verbatim in VB, No. 16, January 16, 1932.
22. Excerpt in VB, No. 19, January 19, 1932.
23. Excerpt in VB, No. 20, January 20, 1932.
24. Excerpt in VB, No. 26, January 26, 1932.
25. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 42 (journal entry of February 8, 1932).
26. Excerpt in VB, No. 110, April 19, 1932. The full wording was published by the Eher Verlag in a pamphlet entitled *Vortrag Adolf Hitlers vor westdeutschen Wirtschaftlern im Industrie-Klub zu Düsseldorf* (Adolf Hitler's presentation before German businessmen in the Industry Club, Düsseldorf) (Munich, April 1932). The text published above was taken completely from the Eher pamphlet, including the applause cited.
27. Refers to the world economic crisis of 1931/32.
28. The percentage of Communist voters in Germany, even in the—in this sense, remarkable—Reichstag election of November 6, 1932, never exceeded the figure of 17.06 percent.
29. Hitler's interest in Christianity confined itself to religion's function in supporting the State.
30. The leadership of the Social Democratic Party was no less enthusiastic about war in 1914 than its adherents. However, Hitler chose to ignore this fact.

31. Referring to the Reich Government, i.e. the Reich Parties, at that time called the "system."
32. Hitler staunchly refused, as did the right-wing parties as a whole, to recognize the military reasons behind the defeat.
33. One of Hitler's favorite slogans, taken from Theodor Mommsen.
34. The old Holy Roman Empire collapsed in 1806. Between 1806 and 1871, sixty-five years elapsed, not one hundred and fifty.
35. In Hitler's opinion, the inofficial government at that time was none other than himself and the NSDAP.
36. The announcement of what was called the "Hindenburg Committee" (formed by the First Mayor of Berlin, Heinrich Sahm) was made on February 1, 1932.
37. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 36.
38. VB, No. 31, January 31, 1932.
39. Published verbatim in VB, No. 43, February 12, 1932.
40. Report, *ibid*.
41. For discussions of Hitler's Austrian citizenship and, respectively, attempts to expel him in 1924/1925, see Franz Jetzinger, *Hitlers Jugend. Phantasie, Lügen und die Wahrheit* (Vienna, 1957) and D.C. Watt, "Die bayerischen Bemühungen um Ausweisung Hitlers 1924," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 6 (1958), pp. 270–280.
42. Dr. Wilhelm Frick (born 1877 in Alsenz in der Rheinpfalz, hanged 1946 in Nuremberg) participated in the preparations for Hitler's putsch on November 8, 1923 although he was a civil servant at the Munich Police Headquarters at the time. From January 23, 1930 to April 1, 1931, he was Minister of the Interior and Popular Culture in Thuringia. The cabinet there collapsed in 1931 due to disputes between the NSDAP and the Christian National Peasant and Rural Peoples's Party (Christlich-Nationale Bauern und Landvolkpartei).
43. The minutes of the meeting are filed at the Geheimes Staatsarchiv in Munich (Ministerial File 1943, A.V. No. 427) and quoted by Rudolf Morsey, "Hitler als braunschweigischer Regierungsrat," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), p. 421. This article also contains documentation on the attempt to gain citizenship in Thuringia in 1930 and on the related incidents in Brunswick and Berlin in 1932. See also Hitler's testimony before the parliamentary investigating committee of the Thuringian Landtag (VB, No. 77, March 17, 1932).
44. Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitgesetz (Law Concerning Citizenship in the Reich and State) of July 22, 1913, § 14. RGBl. 1913, I, p. 586.
45. Since the Brunswick Landtag elections of September 14, 1930, a right-wing government had been in office there with the National Socialist Dietrich Klagges as Minister of the Interior and Popular Culture and the German Nationalist Dr. Werner Küchenthal as Chairman of the Ministry of State.—In the course of 1932, the governments of the following Länder also became National Socialist when Landtag elections took place: Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Anhalt, Oldenburg, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and—for the second time—Thuringia.

46. VB, No. 43, February 12, 1932.
47. Ibid.
48. VB, No. 45/46, February 14/15, 1932.
49. Excerpt in VB, No. 48, February 17, 1932.
50. Names of SPD Reichstag deputies at the time.
51. Published in VB, No. 48, February 17, 1932.
52. A plan designed by the American economist Owen D. Young in 1928 to control German reparation obligations, which was rejected by the German nationalist parties. The Young Plan was signed on June 7, 1929 in Paris.
53. Published in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1932. This issue also contains an account of the speech in Düsseldorf.
54. Cf. VB, No. 55, February 24, 1932.
55. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 50.
56. WTB, February 26, 1932. Hitler was sworn in as a member of the Brunswick legation in Berlin on February 26, 1932 by the Brunswick envoy, Privy Councillor Friedrich Boden.
57. Published verbatim in VB, Special Issue No. 22, February 1932.
58. Published verbatim in VB, No. 61, March 1, 1932.
59. Report in VB, No. 63, March 3, 1932.
60. Report in VB, No. 64, March 4, 1932.
61. Report in VB, No. 65, March 5, 1932.
62. Report in VB, No. 69, March 9, 1932.
63. Ibid.
64. Report in VB, No. 68, March 8, 1932.
65. Ibid.
66. Report in VB, No. 69, March 9, 1932.
67. Report in VB, No. 70, March 10, 1932.
68. Report in VB, No. 71, March 11, 1932.
69. Report in VB, No. 72, March 12, 1932.
70. Report in VB, No. 73/74, March 13/14, 1932.
71. Published in VB, *ibid.*
72. *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, March 13, 1932.
73. Published in VB, No. 73/74, March 13/14, 1932.
74. According to a report in the Berlin periodical *Der Angriff*.
75. The right-wing parties scored only one victory—Mecklenburg-Strelitz—in the Landtag elections which took place at the same time. There they had achieved a majority, eleven German Nationalists and nine National Socialists, and were able to form a right-wing government.
76. Published in VB, No. 75, March 15, 1932.
77. A number of pistol shots were fired at the moving train. See Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 64, and VB, No. 77, March 17, 1932.
78. Report in VB, No. 77, March 17, 1932.
79. Published in VB, *ibid.*
80. See below, October 3, 1941 and April 26, 1942.
81. Association of German Commercial Employees (Deutscher Handlungsgehilfen-Verband), a right-wing professional organization.

82. Published in VB, No. 79/80/81, March 19/20/21, 1932.
83. Report in VB, No. 82, March 22, 1932.
84. Published in VB, No. 87/88/89, March 27/28/29, 1932.
85. Published in VB, No. 90, March 30, 1932.
86. Junkers D 1720 piloted by Hans Baur.
87. Landtag elections were scheduled for this day, cf. VB, No. 96, April 5, 1932.
88. "Manifesto" and report on the election speeches delivered on April 3, *ibid.*
89. Reports in VB, *ibid.*
90. Reports in VB, No. 98, April 7, 1932.
91. When Hitler turned against Röhm in 1934, he was just as unscrupulous in citing Röhm's homosexual leanings to justify his actions. See below, July 13, 1934.—Heinrich Hoffmann has quoted Hitler as saying of Röhm: "In a man like Röhm, who lived in the tropics for years, homosexuality must be seen in a different light than with others. Röhm is a valuable factor in the party because of his connections to the Reichswehr. His private life is no concern of mine as long as the necessary discretion is maintained. In any case, I will never reproach him or take any steps on this count." See "Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen," in *Münchener-Illustrierte*, 50 (1954), p. 33.
92. Published in VB, No. 99, April 8, 1932.
93. Röhm had left the Reichswehr as a Captain, but in the course of his work as an instructor in Bolivia (1930), he achieved the rank of a Lieutenant Colonel in the Bolivian Army.
94. Reports in VB, No. 99, April 8, 1932.
95. Published in VB, No. 100, April 9, 1932.
96. *Ibid.* This statement led to controversy with the authorities in Brunswick, who were not willing to accept the salary assignment; Morsey, pp. 444 ff.
97. Published in VB, No. 100, April 9, 1932.
98. Report in VB, *ibid.*
99. Reports on the election speeches on April 8 in VB, No. 101/102, April 10/11, 1932.
100. WTB report, April 4, 1932.
101. Strangely enough, Adolf Gustav Winter, plant lawyer in Grossjena near Naumburg, had run on the first ballot as representative of a splinter group which demanded that the old thousandmark bills be appreciated to their prewar value. He had received 111,000 votes on March 13, 1932.
102. Published in VB, No. 103, April 12, 1932.
103. RGB1. 1933, I, No. 22, p. 175.
104. For details of Schleicher's role before and after the SA ban, see Kurt Caro and Walter Oehme, *Schleichers Aufstieg* (Berlin, 1932/1933), pp. 222 ff.; see also Hans Otto Meissner and Harry Wilde, *Die Machtergreifung* (Stuttgart, 1958), pp. 85 ff.
105. Published in VB, No. 106, April 15, 1932.
106. In reality, this phrase is from Karl Bröger, *Kamerad als wir marschiert. Kriegsgedichte* (1918) p. 3: "Herrlich zeigt es aber define grösste Gefahr,

- dass dein ärmster Sohn auch dein getreuester war. Denk es, o Deutschland." [But it is magnificent proof of your greatest threat: that your poorest son was the most loyal one. Oh Germany, do not forget!]
107. The original contains a blank at this spot. Apparently Hitler had a word removed during the printing which he had found too offensive.
 108. Quoted verbatim by Caro-Oehme, p. 230.
 109. Excerpt in VB, No. 107, April 16, 1932.
 110. Reports in VB, No. 110, April 19, 1932.
 111. VB, No. 110, April 19, 1932 and Morsey, p. 444.
 112. Reports in VB, No. 111, April 20, 1932.
 113. Reports in VB, No. 112, April 21, 1932.
 114. This Landtag election took place on May 29, 1932. However, at this time Hitler had more pressing things to do than keeping his promise to visit Masovia.
 115. Reports in VB, No. 113, April 22, 1932.
 116. Reports on the speeches of April 21 in VB, No. 114, April 23, 1932.
 117. Report in VB, No. 115/116, April 24/25, 1932.
 118. Report *ibid*.
 119. Report *ibid*.
 120. These were the Landtag elections in Prussia, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Anhalt, and the elections to the City Parliament of Hamburg.
 121. A coalition government was formed in Anhalt by the National Socialists and German Nationalists under the National Socialist Minister-President Freyberg.
 122. The percentage of National Socialist voters was considerably higher in Northern Germany than in the South and particularly in Bavaria.
 123. Published in VB, No. 117, April 26, 1932.
 124. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 89.
 125. Published in VB, No. 122/123, May 1/2, 1932.
 126. Report in VB, *ibid* ("Adolf Hitler and the Reich leadership have instructed Attorney Dr. Hans Frank II, Munich, . . ." etc.). The suit was rejected.—Dr. Hans Frank, born 1900 in Karlsruhe, was Reich Minister from 1934 to 1945 and Governor-General of Poland from 1939 to 1945; he was hanged in Nuremberg in 1946.
 127. Hitler purchased "Haus Wachenfeld," which had been built on the Obersalzberg in 1916/17 by the Councillor of Commerce Winter, with the aid of Dietrich Eckart, a National Socialist writer and staunch anti-Semite. Initially, the house was held in the name of Angela Raubal, Hitler's half-sister, who also ran the household until 1935. The building was remodeled several times, most extensively upon the addition of the large "Berghof" annex in 1935. This was done not so much for purposes of prestige but rather in order to create inconspicuous private quarters for Hitler and his mistress Eva Braun on the second floor. The ground floor contained large reception and conference rooms; a huge picture window took up nearly the entire front of the building. This room was the site of numerous political meetings, among them the conferences which were held in 1938 with the English Prime Minister, Chamberlain,

the Austrian Chancellor, Schuschnigg, and others.—In the near proximity of the Berghof, there arose a multitude of administrative buildings, SS quarters, buildings for party leaders, etc. On April 25, 1945, an Allied bomb raid destroyed the Berghof and most of the surrounding structures. The ruins were dynamited in 1952. Only the terrace and its supports are still recognizable today. Cf. Josef Geiss, *Obersalzberg. Die Geschichte eines Berges von Judith Platter bis heute* (Berchtesgaden, 1960); see also Maria Rhomberg-Schuster, *The Obersalzberg. Historical Snapshots* (Salzburg, 1957).

128. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 93.
129. Report in VB, No. 142, May 21, 1932.
130. Reports in VB, No. 143/144, May 22/23, 1932.
131. Report in VB, No. 145, May 24, 1932.
132. Note in VB, No. 149, May 28, 1932.
133. Report in VB, No. 147/148, May 26/27, 1932.
134. Report in VB, No. 149, May 28, 1932.
135. Hitler's remarks in the guest book of the cruiser *Köln*, see below, August 11, 1935.
136. Reports in VB, No. 150/151, May 29/30, 1932.
137. Report in VB, No. 152, May 31, 1932.
138. Franz von Papen, born 1879 in Werl, died in 1969 in Obersasbach. From 1921 he was a deputy of the Center Party in the Prussian Landtag. The Herrenklub was a posh influential organization in Berlin.
139. Konstantin Freiherr von Neurath, born 1873 in Klein-Glatzbach (Württemberg), was Reich Foreign Minister from 1932 to 1938; Reich Minister from 1938 to 1945; Reich Protector of Bohemia-Moravia from 1939 to 1943; in 1946 he was sentenced in Nuremberg to fifteen years imprisonment and subsequently transferred to Spandau Military Prison. He was released in 1954 and died 1956 in Enzweihingen.
Johann Ludwig Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, born 1887 in Rathmannsdorf, died 1977 in Essen, was Reich Minister of Finance from 1932 to 1945. He was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in the "Wilhelmstrasse Proceedings" in 1949 and released in 1951.
Paul Freiherr Eltz von Rübenach, born 1875 in Wahn near Cologne, died 1943 in Linz am Rhein, was Reich Minister of Postal Services and Transportation from 1932 to 1937.
Dr. Franz Gürtner, born 1881 in Regensburg, died 1941 in Berlin, was Reich Minister of Justice from 1932 to 1941.
140. VB, No. 155, June 3, 1932.
141. Report in VB, No. 154, June 2, 1932.
142. Report in VB, No. 156, June 4, 1932.
143. Report in VB, No. 161, June 9, 1932.
144. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 106.
145. RGBI. 1932, 1, No. 33, p. 255.
146. RGBI. 1932, 1, No. 34, p. 257.
147. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 109 and VB, No. 162, June 10, 1932.
148. Report in VB, No. 162, June 10, 1932.

149. Report in VB, No. 166, June 14, 1932.
150. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 110 and Meissner-Wilde, *Machtergreifung*, p. 88. Werner von Alvensleben, a brother of the Herrenklub chairman, was a political gambler. On January 29, 1933 he spread the rumor that the Reichswehr was on the verge of a putsch (which resulted in Schleicher's alerting the Potsdam garrison to prevent Hitler from forming a cabinet). He also drew attention to himself in connection with an assassination attempt on the Austrian politician Dr. Steidle. Hitler had him arrested on June 30, 1934 in connection with the Röhm Purge, but he was not shot. See below, July 13, 1934.
151. Report in VB, No. 167, June 15, 1932.
152. Report in VB, No. 168, June 16, 1932.
153. Report in VB, No. 169, June 17, 1932.
154. Report in VB, No. 170, June 18, 1932.
155. Ibid.
156. Decree to Prevent Political Riots of June 14, 1932. RGB1.1932, I, pp. 297ff.
157. Published in VB, *ibid*.
158. Excerpt from the account cited in VB, No. 177, June 25, 1932.
159. Published in VB, No. 175, June 23, 1932.
160. Before the Prussian Landtag election on April 24, 1932, the SPD and the Center had amended the standing orders to provide that an absolute majority was required to elect the Minister-President. Prior thereto, a Minister-President could also be elected by a simple majority: a provision which would have benefited the National Socialists.
161. Report in VB, No. 178/179, June 26/27, 1932.
162. Report in VB, No. 182, June 30, 1932.
163. Report in VB, No. 187, July 5, 1932.
164. Report in VB, No. 190, July 8, 1932.
165. Report in VB, No. 191, July 9, 1932.
166. Report in VB, No. 192/193, July 10/11, 1932.
167. Report in VB, No. 194, July 12, 1932.
168. At that time, Hitler wore a simple brownshirt bearing no insignia but with brown leather shoulder straps. Wearing shoulder straps was a privilege reserved for the National Socialist fighting formations, i.e. the SA, the SS, the HJ, etc. as opposed to the purely political party leaders. Even the police in most of the German Länder wore shoulder straps at that time, while soldiers did not. Hitler's two decorations, the Iron Cross First Class and the bronze or black badge awarded to wounded soldiers, were fastened onto the brownshirt, which was worn with a swastika armband. Hitler wore brown uniform trousers tucked inside black knee boots with soft legs. As a general rule, he wore no head covering at that time other than an occasional leather driving or flying cap when he was traveling in bad weather. He then also donned the light-colored trenchcoat with a belt of the same material. Only in 1933 did he begin wearing a tunic and beret.
169. This was the first election giving German party leaders the chance to speak on the radio. In place of the scheduled speech of Adolf Hitler, the

- radio message on July 29, 1932 was delivered by Gregor Strasser (born 1892 in Geiselfeld, Upper Bavaria, murdered on June 30, 1934 in Berlin). Strasser, an apothecary by profession, was then Reichsorganisationsleiter (Head of Political Organization). His brother Otto (born 1897 in Windsheim, died 1974 in Munich) had separated from Hitler in 1930.—Goebbels had delivered a short radio speech on July 18, 1932.
170. The phonograph record was distributed by the Musikverlag Franz Eher Nachf. in Munich from July 20, 1932. This "brown record" cost 5.00 RM and had a playing time of 8 1/2 minutes.
 171. Reports in VB, No. 199/200, July 17/18, 1932.
 172. Reports in VB, No. 201, July 19, 1932.
 173. Report in VB, *ibid.*
 174. Report in VB, No. 203, July 21, 1932.
 175. *Ibid.*
 176. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 131.
 177. Report in VB, No. 203, July 21, 1932.
 178. The flying boat was piloted by the later NSFK Corps Leader Christiansen.
 179. Reports in VB, No. 204, July 22, 1932.
 180. Robert Hugh Benson, *The Lord of the World* (London, 1907).
 181. On July 17 a great many had died or been wounded, particularly in Altona ("Altonaer Blutsonntag").
 182. RGBl. 1932, I, No. 48, pp. 377/378.
 183. Gerd von Rundstedt, born 1875 in Aschersleben, died 1953 in Hanover; Field Marshal from 1940; Commander in Chief in the West from July 1942 to July 1944 and from September 1944 to March 1945.
 184. Reports in VB, No. 205, July 23, 1932.
 185. Reports in VB, No. 206/207, July 24/25, 1932.
 186. Reports in VB, No. 208, July 26, 1932.
 187. *Ibid.*
 188. Reports in VB, No. 210, July 28, 1932.
 189. Reports in VB, No. 211, July 29, 1932.
 190. Reports in VB, No. 212, July 30, 1932.
 191. Reports in VB, No. 213, July 31, 1932.
 192. Reports in VB, No. 214/215, August 1/2, 1932.—It was alleged that assassination attempts had been made on Hitler in Gera and Fürth. Cf. VB, *ibid.*, and Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 135.
 193. Published in VB, *ibid.*
 194. Prior to World War I, von Papen had belonged to the Fifth Uhlan Regiment. In 1913 he was made Captain (G.S.) and by the end of the War in 1918 had achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and Chief of Staff of the Fourth Turkish Army. See *Kürschners Handbuch Deutscher Reichstag* (1933).
 195. Cf. Meissner-Wilde, *Machtergreifung*, p. 95 and Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, pp. 138/139.
 196. The American journalist H.R. Knickerbocker, who talked with Hitler in the course of summer 1932, described him as a potential chancellor. Cf. H.R. Knickerbocker, *Kommt Europa wiederhoch?* (Berlin, 1932), p. 204.

197. Published in VB, No. 225, August 12, 1932.
198. Cf. VB, No. 218, August 5, 1932.
199. Cf. Meissner-Wilde, *Machtergreifung*, p. 96.
200. *Kölnische Zeitung*, August 13, 1932, evening edition.
201. According to the Constitution, the Reich Government did not have the right to make an appointment to the office of Prussian Minister-President.
202. Apparently, von Papen and Schleicher had Strasser in mind.
203. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*; p. 144.
204. Hitler could hardly have demanded "complete power." In the Weimar Republic, this was distributed among various bodies: the Reichstag, the Reich President (who was simultaneously Commander in Chief of the Reichswehr), and the Reich Chancellor. On August 13, Hitler had demanded the chancellorship for himself and the Ministry of the interior for his party—a demand which he raised repeatedly and which was then fulfilled on January 30, 1933. Von Papen and Schleicher had apparently informed the Reich President on August 13 that Hitler wanted to fill the entire cabinet with his party friends. This is the only conceivable explanation for Hindenburg's—incorrectly applied—phrase, "complete power."
205. This opportunity did arise: Schleicher was murdered on June 30, 1934; see below, June 30 and July 1, 1934.
206. The texts of the official communiqué and the statement of the NSDAP were published in WTB, August 14, 1932.
207. Had one actually intended to grant the NSDAP "influence proportionate to its size," the National Socialists, comprising the strongest party, should have been awarded the leadership of the government, for this had at least been the established custom.
208. Rbhm's proclamation to the men of the SA and SS of August 13, 1932. Published in VB, No. 230, August 17, 1932.
209. Palace revolution of the radical Berlin SA Führer, former Colonel Stennes, in protest against Hitler's legal route.
210. This right-wing industrialist newspaper was published in Essen and supported Hitler during von Papen's chancellorship. It maintained close ties to the Reich Press Chief of the NSDAP, Dr. Otto Dietrich (born 1897 in Essen, died 1952 in Düsseldorf) for family reasons: Dietrich was the son-in-law of the publisher, Dr. ReismannGrone, and there is little reason to doubt that Dietrich himself was the unnamed "representative" of the *Rheinisch Westfälische Zeitung* to which Hitler granted this so-called interview, the text of which was also published in VB, No. 230, August 17, 1932.
211. According to the NSDAP's own figures, at this time (August 15, 1932) National Socialist "dead and martyred" (*Gefallene und Blutzengen*) totalled 192, if one generously extended the list to include remote pioneers of the movement such as Albert Leo Schlageter and Dietrich Eckart. See the "Roll of Honor of Those Murdered for the Movement" (*Ehrenliste der Ermordeten der Bewegung*) in VB, No. 312, November 8, 1937.

212. The interview was published in the *Berliner Nachtausgabe* on August 19, 1932 and in VB, No. 234/235, August 21/22, 1932.
213. NSK report of August 20, 1932.
214. RGBl. 1932, I, No. 54, p. 403. This emergency decree served to pave the way for Hitler's bloody special courts instituted to try political opponents.
215. Term coined by the Germans for the Polish who fought in the Upper Silesian border conflicts of 1920/1921.
216. Report issued by the Press Office of the NSDAP on August 23, 1932.
217. Published in VB, No. 327, August 24, 1932.
218. "If you won't be a comrade, you know what I'll do? I'll come and smash your skull in two."
219. SA Obergruppenführer Edmund Heines, born 1897 in Munich, murdered on June 30, 1934.
220. The Prussian State Ministry (von Papen-Bracht) commuted the sentences by an act of clemency on September 2, 1932. After Hitler's accession to power, the convicted men were released but no longer played any part in politics. The author spoke with two of these men in April 1935.
221. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 152.
222. The speech was published in VB (No. 244, August 31, 1932) only in excerpts and, in part, in indirect speech. Other National Socialist newspapers, as for instance the Berlin publication *Der Angriff* and *Der SA-Mann*, printed longer segments.
223. Prior to this session, Hitler had sent a telegram to Stöhr, the National Socialist Vice President of the Reichstag at the time, who normally would have been considered for the presidency, in which he extended his gratitude and best wishes for Stöhr's recovery from an fictitious illness (printed in VB, No. 245, September 1, 1932). In reality, Hitler preferred to appoint a more presentable and skillful figure—i.e. Göring—to this key office.
224. Following the elections of July 31, 1932, the government had ordered a four-week truce during which public rallies were prohibited.
225. Printed in VB, No. 247, September 3, 1932.
226. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 155.
227. Excerpt in VB, No. 250, September 6, 1932.
228. Report in VB, No. 251, September 7, 1932.
229. Excerpt from the (incomplete) wording published in VB, No. 253, September 9, 1932. The portion left out in the VB is quoted from the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* below; see September 7, 1932.
230. Allusion to the expulsion of German optants from the Polish Corridor and Upper Silesia after World War I. The number is greatly exaggerated.
231. Following Richard Wagner's tombstone. Hitler had declared before the Munich People's Court of justice on March 27, 1924: "The first time I stood at Wagner's grave, my heart overflowed with pride that here lay a man who had refused to have written on his tombstone: Here lies Privy Councillor Music Director His Excellency Baron von Wagner. I was

- proud that this man and so many men in German history have been satisfied to hand down only their names to posterity.” (Cf. Boepple, p. 118).
232. Hitler instantly realized that he had gone too far with this affront to Hindenburg: the entire passage was omitted when the speech was published in VB (No. 253, September 9, 1932). However, it was printed in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* (No. 244, September 8, 1932) and other Munich papers (*Bayerische Staatszeitung*, *Bayerischer Kutier*, *Neue Bayerische Volkszeitung*).
 233. The interview was published in the *Mfinchener Post*, No. 252, September 11, 1932.
 234. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof* p. 160.
 235. Ernst Torgler, floor leader of the KPD, was indicted for allegedly taking part in the burning of the Reichstag but acquitted by the Supreme Court.
 236. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 162.
 237. Report in VB, No. 259, September 15, 1932.
 238. Report in VB, No. 261, September 17, 1932.
 239. WTB, September 27, 1932.
 240. VB, No. 264, September 20, 1932. The Gauleiter of Mecklenburg, Hildebrandt, commented on the military action taken in his Gau during the critical fall months of 1932 in a speech in Schwerin on June 1, 1935. Records of the author.
 241. RGBL 1932, I, No. 66, p. 485.
 242. Report in VB, No. 278, October 4, 1932.
 243. Report in VB, No. 279, October 5, 1932.
 244. Excerpt in VB, No. 282, October 8, 1932.
 245. Published in VB, No. 287, October 13, 1932. According to the VB report, 20,000 people were present at this speech. The *Münchener Post* (No. 240, October 15/16) stated that there were 5,000 attending at most.
 246. Allusion to von Papen.
 247. Report in VB, No. 287, October 13, 1932.
 248. WTB, October 11, 1932 (a number of slight changes in wording have been made on the basis of the author's notes).
 249. Reports in VB, No. 289, October 15, 1932.
 250. Reports in VB, No. 290/291, October 16/17, 1932.
 251. Report in VB, No. 292, October 18, 1932. At a “German Day” celebration in Coburg in 1922, National Socialists beat up their opponents.
 252. VB, No. 295, October 21, 1932. Allegedly 10 million copies were printed.
 253. Reports in VB, No. 292, October 18, 1932.
 254. Quoted in the *Münchener Post*, No. 273, November 24, 1932.
 255. Reports in VB, No. 293, October 19, 1932.
 256. Report in VB, No. 294, October 20, 1932.
 257. Reports in VB, No. 295, October 21, 1932.
 258. Report in VB, No. 296, October 22, 1932.
 259. Reports in VB, No. 299, October 25, 1932.
 260. Ibid.
 261. Reports in VB, No. 300, October 26, 1932.

262. Published in VB, No. 301, October 27, 1932.
263. Reports in VB, *ibid.*
264. Dr. Erwin Bumke, born 1874 in Stolp, committed suicide 1945 in Leipzig. Brother of the psychiatrist Prof. Dr. Oswald Bumke (1877–1950).
265. Reports in VB, No. 302, October 28, 1932.
266. Reports in VB, No. 304/305, October 30/31, 1932.
267. The son of Kaiser William II, SA Obergruppenführer, born 1887 in Potsdam, died 1949 in Stuttgart.
268. WTB, October 29, 1932.
269. Reports in VB, No. 306/307, November 1/2, 1932.
270. *Ibid.*
271. *Ibid.*
272. Reports in VB, No. 308, November 3, 1932.
273. Report in VB, No. 309, November 4, 1932.
274. Reports in VB, No. 310, November 5, 1932.
275. Excerpt in VB, No. 311/312, November 6/7, 1932.
276. Reports in VB. Telegram edition, November 7, 1932.
277. Quoted in Baur, p. 93.
278. Published in the *Nassauer Volksblatt*, November 8, 1932. The *Völkischer Beobachter* was banned from November 8–14, 1932 due to an article against von Papen.
279. The entire correspondence between Hitler, von Papen, Hindenburg and State Secretary Meissner in November 1932 and the official communiqués were published in VB, No. 331, November 26, 1932 and in all major German daily papers at the same time. Also cited in Fritz Poetzsch-Heffter, *Vom Staatsleben unter der Weimarer Verfassung*, *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechts*, Vol. 21 (1933/1934), pp. 163 ff.
280. The hypothesis of Meissner-Wilde (*Machtergreifung*, p. 108) that Goebbels was the real author of this letter is unfounded. Hitler required neither prompters for his speeches nor ghostwriters for his letters, and Goebbels did not have the stature required to draft this type of correspondence. In fundamental matters, Hitler accepted no proposals from third parties, particularly not from Goebbels, for whom he harbored a deep mistrust. Goebbels' attitude toward Hitler was that of a servant to a dearly beloved master. He might have allowed himself a remark upon occasion, but he immediately withdrew to his place if he had failed to strike the right note. On December 13, 1932, Goebbels stated in the Berlin periodical, *Der Angriff* "I may stress, as so often before, that I do not represent any particular direction in the Party. We have only one single direction, and that is the one the Führer determines." He remained true to this principle, following Hitler to the end: he was the only Unterführer who literally breathed the same dying breath as his leader.
281. Cf. Meissner-Wilde, *Machtergreifung*, p. 111 ff.
282. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 114.
283. Hjalmar Schacht, at that time former President of the Reichsbank, gave this interview to the editor-in-chief of the *Nordwestdeutsche Zeitung* in Bremerhaven, Wilhelm Georg, on November 22, 1932.

284. This refers to the decision of the Constitutional Court of October 25, 1932 regarding the powers of the Reich Commissar in Prussia; see above, October 25, 1932.
285. At that time, an NSDAP/Center coalition would have been possible without the German Nationalists.
286. This refers to the dissolution of the Reichstag and the calling of a new election.
287. Meissner-Wilde, *Machtergreifung*, p. 129.
288. Goebbels announced on November 25, 1932 at a rally in Berlin that it would be quite in order were von Papen to return. At least one had grown used to him. "Gott erhalte Franz den Papen" ("Papen" bearing a resemblance to the word "Papst" which means "Pope" in German), he declared, parodying the former Austrian national anthem, "Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser."
289. Cf. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 210.
290. Published in VB, No. 331, November 26, 1932.
291. Cf. Goebbels, *ibid*.
292. Report in VB, No. 334, November 29, 1932.
293. WTB, November 29, 1932.
294. The version circulating in the press at the time, i.e. that Göring had hauled Hitler off the train at Jena on November 30 to prevent him from going to Berlin to see Schleicher, is not credible. Göring did not travel to Weimar until a few hours later.
295. Eugen Ott, born in 1889 in Rottenburg, was Department Head in the Reich Ministry of Defense in 1931; military attaché in Tokyo in 1934, Major General in 1937; and Ambassador to Japan from 1938 to 1943.
296. Cf. Meissner-Wilde, *Machtergreifung*, pp. 123–124; see also Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 214.
297. Reports in VB, No. 338, December 3, 1932.
298. Reports in VB, No. 339/340, December 4/5, 1932.
299. Reports in VB, No. 341, December 6, 1932.
300. Walter von Reichenau, born 1884 in Karlsruhe, died 1942 while in a transport returning from Russia. Chief of the Ministerial Office (State Secretary) in the Reich Ministry of Defense in 1933; Commander in Wehrkreis VII (Munich) in 1936; Field Marshal in 1940. Hitler's letter is quoted verbatim in Thilo Vogelsang, "Hitlers Brief an Reichenau vom 4.12.1932," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1939), pp. 433 ff.
301. The Reichswehr maintained close connections to the Red Army prior to 1933; cf. Edward Hallett Carr, *German-Soviet Relations between the Two World Wars 1919–1939* (Baltimore, 1951).
302. Report in VB, No. 342, December 7, 1932.
303. See below, November 8, 1941.
304. Karl von Litzmann was born 1850 in Neu Globson and died there in 1936. General of the Infantry, secured the breakthrough at Brzeziny on the Eastern Front in 1914 with the Third Guards Division.
305. For Litzmann's role in the action of June 30, 1934, see below, June 30 and July 1, 1934.

- 306. At that time, this was Dr. Bumke, who had already won Hitler's favor on October 25, 1932 for his Constitutional Court judgment against von Papen.
- 307. Cf. H.R. Knickerbocker, p. 204 ff. (interview with Gregor Strasser).
- 308. Strasser was murdered on June 30, 1934; see below, June 30 to July 13, 1934.
- 309. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 220.
- 310. VB, No. 345, December 10, 1932.
- 311. Gottfried Feder, born 1883 in Würzburg, author of the pamphlet, *Brechung der Zinsknechtschaft*, State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Economics from 1933 to 1934, died 1941 in Munich.
- 312. VB, No. 346/347, December 11/12, 1932.
- 313. See below; speech of January 3, 1935 to the "Deutsche Führerschaft."
- 314. Indignation within the SA against Hitler's legal course. Hitler's dismissal of the Supreme Commander of the SA, former Captain Pfeffer von Salomon.
- 315. Published in VB, No. 346/347, December 11/12, 1932.—Dr. Robert Ley, born 1890 in Niederbreitenbach, chemist; Leader of Staff of the Political Organizations of the NSDAP in 1932; Leader of the DAF from 1933 to 1945. Committed suicide in Nuremberg in 1945.
- 316. Published in VB, No. 348, December 13, 1932.
- 317. Ibid.
- 318. Report in VB, No. 353/354, December 18/19, 1932.
- 319. Reports in VB, No. 355, December 20, 1932.
- 320. Published in VB, No. 356, December 21, 1932.
- 321. "I once had a comrade," the first line of a melancholy German soldier's song.
- 322. See below, speech of April 9, 1938.
- 323. See below, November 8, 1940.

The Year 1933

Notes

1. See below, January 30, 1933.
2. See above, October 16, 1932.
3. See below, speech of July 12, 1933.
4. See above, speech of September 7, 1932.
5. RGBI. 1933, I, p. 43.
6. RGBI. 1933, I, p. 43.
7. RGBI. 1933, I, p. 103.
8. RGBI. 1933, I, p. 141.
9. See below, March 23, 1933.
10. RGBI. 1933, I, p. 153.
11. RGBI. 1933, I, p. 173.
12. RGBI. 1933, I, p. 479.
13. See below, March 23 to 28, 1933.
14. See below, July 6 and 8, 1933.
15. See below, May 17, 1933.
16. See below, October 14, 1933.
17. Mussolini became Prime Minister on October 28, 1922 and dictator in 1925. In 1929 he was able to conclude the Lateran Treaty with the Vatican.
18. Printed verbatim in VB, No. 1, January 1, 1933.
19. Excerpted in VB, No. 4, January 4, 1933.
20. Kurt Freiherr von Schröder, born 1889; died 1965 in Hamburg.
21. Wilhelm Keppler, born 1882 in Heidelberg, died 1960; State Secretary in 1938.
22. The memorandum was signed by Kurt von Schröder, Hjalmar Schacht, Fritz Thyssen, and a considerable number of well-known industrialists and economists. It is printed verbatim in Meissner-Wilde, p. 153; commentary pp. 288–289. For the names of those who signed and of other supporters, see Eberhard Czichon, *Wer verhalf Hitler zur Macht? Zum Anteil der deutschen Industrie an der Zerstörung der Weimarer Republik* (Köln, 1967), documents no. 8–10.
23. Published verbatim in VB, No. 7/8, January 7/8, 1933.
24. Excerpted in VB, *ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Report in VB, No. 9, January 9, 1933.
27. Report in VB, No. 10, January 10, 1933.
28. Published verbatim in VB, *ibid.*
29. Report in VB, No. 11, January 11, 1933.
30. Published verbatim in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1933.
31. Excerpted in VB, *ibid.*
32. Reports in VB, *ibid.*
33. Published verbatim in VB, *ibid.* On January 20, 1933, Stegmann was expelled from the Party in a telegram from Hitler which was published

- by the NSDAP Press Office on January 22, 1933. After the seizure of power, Stegmann was arrested and sent to a concentration camp.
34. Verbatim in VB, No. 14, January 14, 1933. The statement is aimed foremost at the *Tägliche Rundschau* in Berlin, Schleicher's newspaper.
35. Notes in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1933.
36. Reports in VB, No. 16 and No. 17 of January 16 and 17, 1933 respectively.
37. Published in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1933.
38. Oskar von Hindenburg had been military adjutant to the Reich President since 1925. In 1934 he achieved the rank of Major General and later became Lieutenant General. For his relations with Hitler, cf. the testimony of Oskar von Hindenburg before the Denazification Court at Uelzen in March 1949, and comments in the magazine *Weltbild*, No. 26, 1957.
39. Published in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1933.
40. Parody on the portal inscription in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Hell III, 9): "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."
41. Misappropriation of public funds for redevelopment of landed properties in East Prussia. Hindenburg's estate Neudeck was also involved in the scandal. Schleicher's cabinet had just recommenced investigations of the matter.
42. Bullock, p. 247.
43. Joachim von Ribbentrop, born 1893 in Wesel; son-in-law of the champagne producer Henkell in Wiesbaden-Biebrich; German Ambassador in London from 1936 to 1938; Reich Foreign Minister from February 4, 1938 to April 30, 1945; hanged 1946 in Nuremberg.
44. Meissner-Wilde, pp. 162–163.
45. Report in VB, No. 24, January 24, 1933.
46. Published, *ibid*.
47. There is no documentary evidence to support Schleicher's alleged coup attempt on January 29 or 30, 1933. It may be that Schleicher had discussed such a possibility, but it is highly improbable that he intended to or actually did put such a plan into action. The experience of history has taught us that, as a rule, active German generals did not make it a practice of overthrowing the legal authority of the State. Even in Schleicher's case, there is no evidence to the contrary. For further comments on this alleged putsch attempt see Bullock, p. 248; Meissner-Wilde, pp. 182 ff.; Theodor Duesterberg's testimony before the Denazification Court at Nuremberg on January 29, 1947 and his book *Der Stahlhelm und Hitler* (Wolfenbüttel, 1949). In an interview with the Berlin newspaper *BZ am Mittag* published on February 2, 1933, Schleicher personally denied that he had intended to stage a coup.
48. Meissner-Wilde, p. 186.
49. Cf. the testimony of Theodor Duesterberg before the Denazification Court at Nuremberg on January 29, 1947; Meissner-Wilde, pp. 184 ff.
50. Meissner-Wilde, p. 191. Franz von Papen's memoirs, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse* (Munich, 1952), exhibit sleights of memory in terms of substance, chronology, and personae and are thus of limited use in evaluating the events of 1932/33.

51. WTB report of January 30, 1933. Franz Seldte, born 1882 in Magdeburg, died 1947 in Fürth. Günter Gereke, born 1893 in Gruhna, had already been a Reich Commissar in Schleicher's cabinet; retired from office on March 30, 1933 (arrested on March 27, 1933 on charges of embezzlement).
52. Walther Funk, born 1890 in Trakehnen (East Prussia); Press Chief of the Reich Government in 1933; State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Propaganda from 1933 to 1937; Reich Minister of Economics from 1938 to 1945; President of the Reichsbank from 1939; sentenced to life imprisonment in 1946 in Nuremberg, subsequently incarcerated in the Spandau Military Prison; released on health grounds in 1957; died 1960 in Düsseldorf. See also IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XIII, pp. 105 ff.
53. Appeal of the Reich Government of February 1, 1933; cf. *ibid.*
54. Even Bullock, p. 255, errs in stating that Hitler "was not even a presidential chancellor."
55. Cf. correspondence between Hitler, Hindenburg, and Meissner, cited above, November 16 to 25, 1932, particularly November 21 and 23.
56. RGBL 1933, I, p. 147.
57. The Second Coordination Law of Länder and Reich promulgated on April 7, 1933 appointed Hitler Reichsstatthalter in Prussia and granted him the power to appoint the Prussian Minister-President. Without perceptible hesitation, he appointed Göring and not Papen to this post. However, the newly elected Prussian Landtag which was dominated by a right-wing majority of National Socialists and German Nationalists would have made the same decision.
58. Published in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1933.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Advance notice in VB, No. 7/8, January 7/8, 1933.
61. RGBL 1933, I, p. 43. Kaas rejected this allegation in a letter to Hitler dated February 1, 1933 (cited in Walther Hofer, *Der Nationalsozialismus. Dokumente 1933 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main, 1957), pp. 50 ff.
62. As Bavarian Minister of Justice, Dr. Franz Gürtner had secured lenient conditions for Hitler after his sentencing by the Munich People's Court of Justice in 1924. Although D.C. Watt attempts to depict Gürtner in another light in his article, "Die bayerischen Bemühungen um Ausweisung Hitlers 1924" (*op. cit.*), he is able to cite only a single source in the documentation which possibly allows for a respective interpretation. While it is true that Hitler did not "reward" Gürtner with the Reich Ministry of Justice in 1933 (he had already held this post under Papen and Schleicher), his positive attitude toward Hitler had long been a known fact, and he remained true to the Führer until his death in 1941. Particularly indicative of Gürtner's attitude was his behavior during the Röhm Purge; see below, July 3, 1934.
63. WTB text, February 4, 1933. For Kaas' reply see Hofer, *Nationalsozialismus*, pp. 5051.
64. See above, January 25, 1932.
65. For the official text see the pamphlet *Die Reden Hitlers als Kanzler*

- (Munich, 1934; already distributed in fall of 1933). The text quoted in VB, No. 35/36 of February 4/5, 1933 contains a number of errors due to faulty transcription. The proclamation was also pasted on advertising pillars in poster form.
66. As Meissner-Wilde has claimed, p. 198.
 67. Minister of Defense, Werner von Blomberg, declared at a conference of army commanders on February 3, 1933 in Berlin that the government proclamation had been Hitler's work from A to Z. Cf. Thilo Vogelsang, "Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr 1930-1933", in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 2 (Munich, 1954), p. 452.
 68. Published in VB, No. 35/36, February 4/5, 1932.
 69. Published in VB, No. 34, February 3, 1933.
 70. Report on this address in VB, No. 34, February 3, 1933.
 71. Published in VB, No. 34, February 3, 1933.
 72. See above, January 27 to February 16, 1932.
 73. Ibid.
 74. RGBL 1933, I, p. 43.
 75. Published in VB, No. 37, February 6, 1933. The report was supplemented as follows: "These close ties were also reflected in remarks from the Wehrmacht's own ranks. The newly appointed head of the Ministerial Office of the Reichswehr Ministry, the former Chief of Staff of the First Division of Military District I in Königsberg, Colonel von Reichenau, who together with the former Commander of Military District I, the new Reich Minister of Defense General von Blomberg, has earned much recognition for the consolidation of East Prussia's defensive positions, stated that he was assuming his new post with the same enthusiasm with which the proclamation of the new Reich Government had been addressed to the German Volk. In connection with the general guidelines which are to govern the actions of the new Wehrmacht leadership, Colonel von Reichenau declared: "Never was the Wehrmacht more at one with the duties of the State than today."
 76. A handwritten record of Hitler's speech on February 3, 1933 drawn up by Lieutenant General Liebmann of Munich is located in the archives of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, No. 167/51, folio 39. See also Thilo Vogelsang, "Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr 1930-1933", in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 2 (1954), pp. 434 ff.
 77. WTB, February 4, 1933.
 78. Published in VB, No. 37, February 6, 1933.
 79. WTB report of February 5, 1933.
 80. Hitler's private apartment on the third floor of 16 Prinzregentenplatz was located in an apartment house designed for well-to-do middle class families in the German style constructed before the First World War. The building, a dark, gloomy structure, was erected at approximately the same time as the neighboring Prinzregenten Theater (1901). In September 1929, Adolf Hitler, occupation "artist and writer," whose residence from May 1, 1920 had been in the second floor of 41 Thierschstrasse, rented the Prinzregentenplatz apartment from the Councillor of Com-

merce Hugo Schühle (who died in 1954). The third-floor apartment consisted of nine living rooms, two kitchens, two walk-in closets, two bathrooms, and furnishings (lease dated September 10, 1929, Stadtarchiv, Munich, Room 117). Hitler's patron, Hugo Bruckmann, had procured the apartment for him. The annual rent was 4,176 marks. The term of the lease contract was first to run until April 1, 1934, with a six-month term of notice. Hitler moved into the apartment on October 1, 1929. Initially, a subtenant remained in the apartment. Then Hitler engaged the packer Georg Winter and his wife as janitor/housekeeper (later they moved into the 5th floor). On November 17/December 27, 1938, "Hitler, Adolf, Führer and Kanzler des deutschen Volkes in Berlin," purchased the entire building from Schühle and his wife Natalie after the satisfaction of mortgages totalling 175,000 RM had been entered (Real Estate Registry of Munich, Real Estate Register 124, Haidhausen, p. 86, Folio 3235).

Geli Raubal, Hitler's beloved niece, committed suicide in the third-floor apartment on September 18, 1931 by shooting herself (cf. reports in the Munich newspapers of September 21, 1931). Her room, which was located at one end of the apartment, remained unaltered on Hitler's instructions.

After Hitler had become Reich Chancellor, he received numerous public figures in his private quarters. Particularly publicized visits were those of Mussolini (see below, September 25, 1937) and Chamberlain (see below, September 30, 1938). Ward Price, pp. 37 f., has described this apartment, although his memories contain a few flaws (e.g. flooring, bay windows, location of the apartment, etc.). 16 Prinzregentenplatz was not destroyed in World War II. After the American Army had entered Munich, it became the headquarters of an American Section. The furnishings and paintings etc. were removed. Thereafter the Munich Financing Office of the Land of Bavaria took up its quarters in the building.

81. See above, speech of October 17, 1932.

82. Published in VB, No. 45, February 14, 1933. In the first few days following Hitler's accession to power, it had already become evident that the English were not willing to be impressed by Hitler's eloquence.

In the published interview, Colonel Etherton not only reported what Hitler had said, but also what Hitler had borne in mind when saying what he did. WTB printed the following on February 14, 1933:

"The Polish Corridor is to be returned to Germany, both in the opinion of the population involved as well as for other reasons.

"Communism was to be completely eradicated, thus allowing for Germany's peaceful development and progress.

"A restoration of the Hohenzollern Monarchy was out of the question. A battle, i.e. the Republic versus the Monarchy, would split the parties and stir up an infinite amount of difficulties at a time when Germany most needs to be a uniform whole.

"The colonial problem was to be solved in a just manner. Germany required colonies as much as other nations.

“In closing, Hitler stated that he wished with all his heart to cooperate with England toward promoting world peace and to avoid, if possible, causing offense to anyone.

“He admired statesmen of Cromwell’s stature; Germany now required a Cromwell to lead it out of its present crises and difficulties and on to prosperity and peace.”

Hitler’s clumsy attempts to curry favor with the great Anglo-Saxon world power (parallels to Cromwell, etc.) met with ironic reactions in England from the very start. The English had no desire to act the part of the German Nationalists in Hitler’s foreign policy and to aid him on his way to world domination.

83. Report in VB, No. 40, February 9, 1933.
84. RGBL 1933, I, p. 35.
85. Statement before the Reichsgericht in Leipzig on September 25, 1930.
86. Published in VB, No. 42/43, February 11/12, 1933.
87. Allusion to Kaas’ questions on January 31, 1933.
88. See below, Volume IV, index (“decisions”).
89. See above, speech of October 19, 1932.
90. See above, speech of October 17, 1932.
91. See above, speech of October 16, 1932.
92. The Protestant version of the Lord’s Prayer according to Matthew makes use of the additional doxology: “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (The German “Reich” also means kingdom.)
93. Published in VB, No. 44, February 13, 1933.
94. Report in VB, *ibid.*
95. Report in VB, No. 46, February 15, 1933. The *Völkischer Beobachter* published Hitler’s remarks in indirect speech, i.e. in a paraphrased version, as cited above.
96. Report in VB, No. 47, February 16, 1933.
97. *Ibid.*
98. Published in VB, No. 48, February 17, 1933. The speech was broadcast on radio.
99. Taken from the author’s notes.
100. Report in VB, No. 49/50, February 18/19, 1933.
101. Report in VB, No. 51, February 20, 1933.
102. IMT. EC-439; Bullock, p. 259.
103. WTB report, February 23, 1933.
104. Published in VB No. 56/57, February 25/26, 1933; WTB, February 24, 1933.
105. Issued by the Reich Press Office of the NSDAP on February 23, 1933.
106. Reports in VB, No. 56/57, February 25/26, 1933.
107. Fritz Schäffer (born 1888 in Munich, died 1967 in Berchtesgaden) was Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1949 to 1961. He repeated the remark cited above in Würzburg on February 23, 1933. Cf. *Fränkisches Volksblatt*, February 24, 1933.
108. North Bavarian border at the Main River.

109. Graf von Herding (Reich Chancellor from 1917 to 1918) was born in Darmstadt. Prior to his appointment he had been Minister-President of Bavaria, just as had Fürst von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst (Reich Chancellor from 1894 to 1900). Fürst Hohenlohe was born in Rotenburg near Fulda. Thus Hitler was not mistaken; at least his own birthplace was on the border to Bavaria.
110. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1933.
111. See above, February 2, 1933.
112. For further information on the events surrounding the Reichstag fire, cf. press reports on the Reichstag Fire Trial before the Reichsgericht in Leipzig from September 21, 1933 to December 23, 1933; see also *Weissbuch über die Erschiessungen des 30. Juni 1934* (Paris, 1934); "Stehen Sie auf, van der Lubbe!—Der Reichstagsbrand 1933, Geschichte einer Legende" (based upon a manuscript by Fritz Tobias), in *Der Spiegel*, 43 (1959) through 1 (1960); Martin Broszat, "Zum Streit um den Reichstagsbrand", in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), p. 275; *Der Reichstagsbrand. Eine wissenschaftliche Dokumentation* (2 vols., Berlin, 1972 and Munich, 1978).
113. RGBL 1933, I, p. 83.
114. Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153. They contained provisions governing freedom of speech; freedom of the press; the rights of assembly and association; the privacy of postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications; restrictions on property; warrants for house searches; orders for confiscation of property, etc.
115. Published in VB, No. 60, March 1, 1933.
116. Report in *Schulthess Europäischer Geschichtskalender* (1933), pp. 51 ff.
117. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1933.
118. Report in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1933.
119. Report in VB, No. 63/64, March 4/5, 1933.
120. Report in VB, No. 67, March 8, 1933.
121. Reich Minister of the Interior Frick declared on March 11, 1933 in Frankfurt a.M.: "When the new Reichstag convenes, the Communists will be unable to attend the session due to other matters which are more pressing and productive. These gentlemen must become reaccustomed to doing productive work. We will give them the opportunity to do this in concentration camps" (WTB, March 11, 1933).
122. *Der 9. März 1933. Erinnerungen und Erkenntnisse. Reden des bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten Dr. H. Ehard und des stellvertretenden Ministerpräsidenten Dr. W. Hoegner*, edited by the Volksbund für Frieden und Freiheit e.V. (Munich, 1953).
123. Published in VB, No. 70/71, March 11/12, 1933.
124. Spartacus was the leader of rebellious Roman slaves in the Gladiatorial War and was killed in 71 B.C. The Spartacus League (*Sparktakusbund*) was the name for extreme leftist followers of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in 1918. Liebknecht had begun publishing what were known as the "Spartacus Letters" as early as 1916. Hitler despised the use of the rucksack as military equipment (as opposed to the military

- knapsack) and had already made use of the pejorative term “Rucksack-Spartakisten” he had coined in *Mein Kampf* (p. 610). However, when the German Air Force adopted the rucksack after 1935, Hitler made no protest.
125. Report in VB, No. 72, March 13, 1933.
126. Article 3 of the Reich Constitution provided that the Reich colors were black-red-gold.
127. The *Volkstrauertag*, which annually commemorated the dead of World War I, was on the second Sunday of Lent. In 1934, Hitler changed the name to *Heldengedenktag* (Heroes’ Memorial Day).
128. Published in VB, No. 70/71, March 11/12, 1933.
129. Published in VB, No. 72, March 13, 1933. By order of the Reich President of March 14, 1933 (RBGl. 1933, I, p. 133), the Reichswehr were given black-white-red cockades on their caps and black-white-red plaques on their helmets in place of the former insignia (colors of the respective garrison country).
130. Published in VB, No. 72, March 13, 1933.
131. The Prussian Land Police were integrated into the Army after the introduction of general conscription in 1935.
132. Sepp Dietrich, born 1892 in Hawangen, died 1952 in Düsseldorf, began his career as a regular NCO, progressed to SS Obergruppenführer and, in the Second World War, to the rank of General of the Waffen SS.
133. Alfred Rosenberg, born 1893 in Reval; Reich Minister for the Occupied (Eastern) Territories in 1941; hanged 1946 in Nuremberg.
134. Only a small fraction of the German people—less than 3%—officially left the Church during the Third Reich.
135. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, pp. 139 ff. Prior to 1933, there had been no Ministry of Culture in the Reich.
136. The appointment was made on May 1, 1934. Bernhard Rust, born 1883 in Hanover, became Reich Minister of Science, Education and Popular Culture in 1934. He committed suicide in 1945 near Berend (Schleswig).
137. Dr. Hans Luther, born 1879 in Berlin, died 1962 in Düsseldorf; Reich Chancellor from 1925 to 1926.
138. Published in VB, No. 80, March 11, 1933. On March 20, Hitler had taken an early special flight from Munich, where he had participated in conferences on internal Bavarian matters the day before. In the same issue of VB, Himmler published a statement on the alleged attempt on Hitler’s life at the Richard Wagner Memorial in Munich.
139. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 284.
140. March 21, 1871. Opened by Bismarck.
141. WTB, March 21, 1933. In response to this official statement, the *Bayerischer Kurier* published a report on March 23, 1933 originating from “competent Church sources,” which read as follows: “The claim to the effect that NSDAP adherents are regarded as deserters of the faith who are not allowed to receive the sacraments, is incorrect in this general form. In numerous cases, NSDAP members have been allowed to receive the Holy Sacraments like all other Catholics. Whether or not they

are allowed to receive the sacraments is a question which, as is the case with all Catholics, is not decided on the basis of political considerations but rather on the merits of the individual. Thus the term ‘deserters of the Church’ is not applicable.”

142. Official text published by the Eher Verlag; also in VB, No. 81, March 22, 1933.
143. RGBL. 1933, 1, p. 141.
144. See above, November 23, 1932. Goebbels mentioned Hitler’s intention to present an Enabling Act to the Reichstag as early as August 6, 1932; Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 139.
145. Printed in VB, No. 83, March 24, 1933; official text also published by the Eher Verlag. Several insignificant transcription errors contained therein were corrected on the basis of the author’s notes.
146. See below, May 17, 1933.
147. The text is taken from the copy at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, supplemented by the author’s notes.
148. “*Wir Sind wehrlos, wehrlos ist aber nicht ehrlos.*”
149. The following sentence was inserted by the author.
150. “Ye have come too late—but you are come!” Schiller, *Wallenstein. The Piccolomini* (I, 1). Quotation taken from the London 1846 edition.
151. The word “either” is absent from the notes. It is a known fact that Hitler could not tolerate interruptions; he would not accept them in this case, either.
152. Reference to a speech held in Leipzig by the Social Democratic Chief of Police in Berlin, Grzesinski, in February 1932; see above, February 10, 1932.
153. Official notice of the Reich Government, March 25, 1933; Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Kabinettsprotokolle R 43 I; see also Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 287.
154. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 139.
155. See below, October 14 and November 12, 1933.
156. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 288.
157. Published in VB, No. 88, March 29, 1933.
158. Julius Streicher, born 1885 in Fleinhausen; hanged 1946 in Nuremberg.
159. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 289.
160. Published in VB, No. 89, March 30, 1933.
161. Ibid.
162. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 293.
163. RGBL. 1933, I, pp. 153 ff.
164. RGBL. 1933, 1, p. 173.
165. Upper House of the Prussian Landtag until 1918. The building itself was later still known “Herrenhaus.”
166. Excerpt from the official wording published by the Eher Verlag; also printed in VB, No. 96, April 6, 1933.
167. Richard Walter Darré, born 1895 in Delgrano (Argentina); died 1953 in Munich.
168. Published in VB, No. 97, April 7, 1933. The speech was held in the Reich

- Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda at the Wilhelmsplatz. Among those attending was the papal nuncio Orsenigo.
169. Excerpt from the account in WTB, April 9, 1933 and VB, No. 100, April 10, 1933.
170. "Deutschland, erwache!" ("Germany, awaken!") had been one of the National Socialists' fighting slogans prior to 1933 and was often sung in chorus (one cry of "Deutschland!", answered by a chorus of the masses with "Erwache!", similar to the antiphonies customary in church liturgies).
171. Hitler's letter to Hindenburg, Papen's letter to Hitler, and Hitler's telegram to Göring were published in VB, No. 102, April 12, 1933.
172. Richard Wagner's daughter, who had married the writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1925) in 1908.
173. Report in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1933.
174. Ibid. and WTB, April 21, 1933.
175. Excerpts of the speech were published in VB, No. 114, April 24, 1933.
176. Report in VB, No. 118, April 28, 1933.
177. Report of the Reich Press Office of the NSDAP, April 28, 1933.
178. Published in VB, No. 118, April 28, 1933.
179. Hitler regarded Hess as an insignificant but nonetheless loyal and devoted man. In spite of this, he was irritated that he had given Hess the title of "Stellvertreter des Führers" (Deputy of the Führer). He once commented to his photographer: "There can be no deputy for a man like myself." See "Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen", in *Münchener Illustrierte*, 51 (1959). On December 1, 1933, Hess and Röhm were made Reich Ministers. In a speech on September 1, 1939 (see below, *ibid.*), Hitler described Hess as his second candidate for succession after Göring. Ultimately, however, Hess knew Hitler too well and decided not to remain a passenger on Hitler's journey to destruction. He fled to England on May 10, 1941.
180. WTB, April 27, 1933.
181. WTB, May 1, 1933. The report in VB (May 2, 1933) makes no mention of this feat.
182. Karl Bröger, working-class writer; born 1886; died 1944 in Nuremberg.
183. RGBI. 1933, I, p. 191.
184. Report in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1933 and WTB, May 1, 1933.
185. Report in VB, *ibid.*
186. Goebbels, *Kaiserhof*, p. 306; Eher pamphlets.
187. Official text published by the Eher Verlag. Also printed in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1933. Hugenberg had given Hitler a draft for this speech drawn up by experts in his Ministry which is still on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (Akten der Reichskanzlei). Naturally Hitler preferred his own words.
188. "May has arrived."
189. This compulsory labor service (*Arbeitsdienstpflicht*) was instituted neither in 1933 nor in 1934, for it was nothing but a propaganda slogan. Hitler's real interest lay in general conscription which he introduced on

March 16, 1935. As a supplement, he initiated a six-month term of compulsory labor on June 26, 1935. This relatively short period of labor service reflected his own priorities: the term for military service was two years (it had only been reduced to one year in 1935 for propaganda purposes and was reestablished at two years in 1936 prior to the dismissal of the first annual contingent).

190. 1 Genesis 32, 26.
191. Published in VB, No. 124, May 4, 1933.
192. Cited by Norman H. Baynes, pp. 1039–1041.
193. Published by WTB, May 6, 1933.
194. See above, September 7, 1932, for example.
195. Published in VB, No. 125, May 5, 1933.
196. Ibid.
197. In reference to an accident at the “Matthias Stinnes” mine in Essen. The honorary committee which Hitler cites in closing was comprised of the industrialist Fritz Thyssen, the head of the NSBO, Walther Schuhmann, and the German Nationalist Emil Georg R. von Stauss (1877–1942).
198. Report in VB, No. 128, May 8, 1933.
199. The Gospel according to Saint John, Chapter 14, Verse 20.
200. Published in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1933.
201. Official text published by the Eher Verlag. Also printed in VB, *ibid*.
202. Speech before the Reichgericht in Leipzig on September 25, 1930.
203. Here Hitler was alluding to a remark made by Bismarck in the Reichstag in 1878 regarding Germany’s role at the Congress of Berlin (held to settle disputes between Russia and Turkey).
204. Paraphrase of 1 Cor. 1, 19 and Isaiah 29, 14.
205. See above, April 5, 1933.
206. Report in VB, No. 136, May 16, 1933.
207. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 603 ff.
208. Cf. Raymond Recouly, *Memorial de Foch* (Paris, 1929).
209. Observation of the author. The four invasions cited took place in wartime in 1814, 1815, 1870, and 1914, whereby in 1814 and 1815 the French borders were crossed not only by German troops, but by international forces interceding against Napoleon.
210. Official text published by the Eher Verlag, which coincides with the wording published in VB, No. 138, May 18, 1933. A few insignificant errors due to faulty transcription have been corrected on the basis of the author’s notes.
211. As usual, Hitler’s figures are exaggerated. According to information supplied by the Statistisches Reichsamt, Berlin, the number of suicides in Germany from 1919 to 1932 was less than 200,000. Hitler took the highest annual average of 16,000 (1926 to 1928), multiplied it by 14, and thus arrived at the figure of 224,000. However, there was no connection between the suicide rate and the Treaty of Versailles or the economic need in Germany. The official statistics show that the suicide rate in 1913, for instance, was significantly higher: 23.2 per 100,000 inhabitants; during the economically depressed years from 1919 to 1923, it ranged

- from 18.4 to 21.7 *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, 44th Year (Berlin, 1925).
212. Report in VB, No. 143, May 23, 1933. The battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* touched off World War II on September 1, 1939 by opening fire on the Westerplatte outside Danzig.
213. See below, September 26, 1938.
214. Published in VB, No. 149, May 29, 1933.
215. A bourgeois government had been in power in Danzig since January 9, 1931, under the leadership of Dr. Ziehm, the German National President of the Senate. At the end of 1932, the National Socialists withdrew their toleration of the cabinet. Negotiations failed, and new elections were held on May 28, 1933. The German Nationalists were angered and refused to take part in government, whereupon the National Socialists entered into a coalition with the Center, although they could have governed alone. The two senators representing the Center retired from office in November 1933.
216. Dr. Hermann Rauschning, born 1887 in Thorn, West Prussia, died 1982 in Portland, Oregon; in 1932 he was able to gain Hitler's confidence, who variously disclosed his thoughts and views to Rauschning; following disputes with the Party leadership in Danzig, Rauschning resigned on November 23, 1934 and emigrated, conducting anti-Hitler agitation from abroad, mainly with his book *Gespräche mit Hitler*.
217. In the Saar, the DNVP, the Center, and the German State Party announced their dissolution in September and October of 1933 respectively. Under the leadership of the NSDAP, they joined to form what was known as the "German Front."
218. Published in VB, No. 153, June 2, 1933.
219. WTB, June 6, 1933. Red Cross Day (*Rotkreuztag*) was June 11, 1933.
220. Report in VB, No. 160, June 9, 1933.
221. Report in VB, No. 167, June 16, 1933.
222. Reports of both speeches in VB, No. 168, June 17, 1933.
223. Report in VB, No. 170, June 19, 1933.
224. Ibid.
225. Reference to the Erfurt Program of the SPD in 1891.
226. Notice in VB, *ibid.*—Baldur von Schirach, born 1907 in Berlin, received a twenty-year prison sentence in Nuremberg in 1946. He was incarcerated in the military prison of Spandau and died 1974 in Kröv an der Mosel.
227. The Jungstahlhelm was comprised of the members of the Stahlhelm formations who had not been soldiers at the front.
228. Published in VB, No. 179, June 28, 1933.
229. Emperor's speech at the opening of the extraordinary session of the Reichstag in the Berlin Castle on August 4, 1914.
230. By virtue of the law of July 14, 1933 (RGBl. 1933, I, p. 479), the NSDAP was declared Germany's only political party and the penalty for forming or reinstituting another party set at penal servitude of up to three years.
231. Hugenberg and Neurath were members of the German delegation attending the World Economic Conference in London in June 1933.

232. Hugenberg's own protocol of his discussion with Hitler on June 27, 1933 and his letters to Hindenburg of June 26 and 27, 1933 have been published by Anton Ritthaler, "Eine Etappe auf Hiders Weg zur ungeteilten Macht. Hugenbergs Rücktritt als Reichsminister," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), pp. 193 ff.
233. See below, June 18, 1935.
234. Cf. Meissner-Wilde, p. 165.
235. Published in VB, No. 181, June 30, 1933.—Dr. Kurt Schmitt was born 1886 in Heidelberg and died there in 1950.
236. Report in VB, No. 180, June 29, 1933.
237. Published in VB, No. 181, June 30, 1933.
238. Report in VB, No. 184, July 3, 1933.
239. Published in VB, No. 185, July 4, 1933.
240. See above, speech of April 22, 1933.
241. Abridged wording in the Eher pamphlet. Also published in VB, No. 189, July 8, 1933. In economic matters, Hitler was far more reasonable than in political or military questions.
242. Published in VB, No. 191, July 10, 1933.
243. Ibid.
244. Report in VB, No. 192, July 11, 1933.
245. Published in VB, No. 194, July 13, 1933.
246. Ibid.
247. Report in VB, No. 195, July 14, 1933.
248. Cf. Baynes, pp. 1081–1082.
249. Published in VB, No. 198, July 17, 1933.
250. Report in VB, Ibid.
251. Ibid.
252. Mentioned by Baynes, p. 374.
253. Report in VB, No. 202, July 21, 1933.
254. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, July 23/24, 1933.
255. Reports in VB, No. 208, July 27, 1933.
256. Published in VB, No. 212, July 31, 1933.
257. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, August 1, 1933.
258. Notice of the Reich Press Office of the NSDAP in indirect speech, published in VB, No. 219, August 7, 1933.
259. Hitler was so pleased with the Reich Party Congress of 1933 that he had a similar event take place each year until the spectacles were put to an end when war broke out in 1939.
260. This senate never came to be. Hitler feared that, were such a body established, it might detract from his absolute power. In his speech at the outbreak of World War II (see below, September 1, 1939), he announced that a senate would be appointed by law which was to elect his successor from its midst (following Göring and Hess). The plan never progressed beyond this announcement.
261. Report in VB, No. 226/227, August 14/15, 1933.
262. WTB reports, August 16 and 19, 1933.
263. Report in VB, No. 231, August 19, 1933.

264. Report in VB, No. 233, August 21, 1933, in indirect speech.
265. The cockade was added only after the Anschluss of Austria in March of 1938. It was to symbolize that his Reich had now been complemented by what had previously been lacking. The golden oak-leaf cluster around the cockade which he wore from this day onwards personified his position as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces; it was otherwise worn only by the Reichswehr and, subsequently, the new Wehrmacht.
266. Published in VB, No. 240, August 28, 1933.
267. Published in VB, No. 241, August 29, 1933.
268. See below, September 12, 1938.
269. Adolf Wagner's intonation was similar to Hitler's, and he also had the same accent. Hitler was always personally present in the Congress Hall at each reading.
270. Report in VB, No. 243, August 31, 1933. The first Party Congresses of the NSDAP (General Membership Meetings) took place in 1920, 1921, and 1922 in Munich. The first "Reich Party Congress" was held in Munich on January 27/28, 1923. The second "Reich Party Congress" took place on July 4, 1926 in Weimar; the third and fourth in Nuremberg from August 19 to 21, 1927, and August 2 to 4, 1929, respectively. The Reich Party Congress of 1933 (the "Congress of Victory") was referred to as the fifth congress and took place from August 30 to September 3, 1933. The sixth "Reich Party Congress" was held from September 4 to 10, 1934. It was given no special name, apparently because of the Rdhm affair and the failed coup in Austria which preceded it. The seventh Reich Party Congress (the "Congress of Freedom") was held from September 10 to 16, 1935, the eighth (the "Congress of Honor") from September 8 to 14, 1936, the ninth (the "Congress of Labor") from September 6 to 13, 1937, and the tenth ("Großdeutschland") from September 5 to 12, 1938. The eleventh Reich Party Congress (the "Congress of Peace"), which had been scheduled to begin on September 1, 1939, of all dates, was cancelled on August 27, 1939 and postponed. It never took place.
271. The proclamation and the other Party Congress speeches held in 1933 are cited in the Eher pamphlet, *Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933* (Munich, 1934); also in VB, Nos. 245 to 247, September 2 to 4, 1933.
272. From 1923 to March 1933, the flag had been stored at Police Headquarters in Munich.
273. Report in VB, No. 249/250, September 6/7, 1933.
274. Published in VB, No. 257, September 14, 1933.
275. Published in VB, No. 265, September 22, 1933.
276. Published in VB, No. 268, September 25, 1933.
277. Goethe, *Faust*, Part II, V.
278. Report in VB, No. 268, September 25, 1933.
279. Report in VB, No. 272, September 29, 1933.
280. Report in VB, No. 276, October 3, 1933.
281. The harvest festival, which drew hundreds of thousands of peasants to the large Bückeberg field near Hamelin (not to be confused with the Bückeberg near Schaumburg-Lippe) each year, took place only five

- times: on October 1, 1933, on September 30, 1934, on October 6, 1935, on October 4, 1936, and on October 3, 1937. In 1938, it was cancelled due to the occupation of the Sudeten German territories.
282. Report in VB, No. 275, October 2, 1933.
 283. Published in VB, *ibid.*
 284. Report in VB, No. 278, October 5, 1933.
 285. Further incidents which Hitler staged on Saturdays included the reinstatement of general conscription (March 16, 1935), the occupation of the Rhineland (March 7, 1936), and the invasion of Austria (March 12, 1938).
 286. Published in VB, Special Edition, October 15, 1933.
 287. *Ibid.*
 288. *Ibid.*
 289. *Ibid.*
 290. Here Hitler is alluding to the (private) commission meeting in London at the time to investigate the Reichstag fire and the circumstances surrounding it.
 291. The building in the Prinzregentenstrasse—which is now called the *„Haus der Kunst“*—survived World War II almost completely intact. The old museum in the Botanical Garden, which had been known as the “Glass Palace,” had been destroyed by fire on June 6, 1931.
 292. Published in VB, No. 288, October 15, 1933.
 293. Published in VB, No. 289, October 16, 1933. On the basis of the Bavarian Concordat, a papal nuncio held office in Munich at the time. His residence lay within close proximity to the “Braunes Haus.”
 294. Published in VB, *ibid.*
 295. The success of the French resistance in World War I was facilitated, on the one hand, by the support of the Anglo-Saxon powers and, on the other, by the strain of fighting on several fronts which weakened Germany. These factors did not play a role in 1870/71 or in 1940.
 296. The extent to which Hitler feared military invention is evidenced in Blomberg’s *Weisung für die Wehrmacht im Falle von Sanktionen* (Orders to the Armed Forces in the event of sanctions) of October 25, 1933 (cited in Hofer, p. 183).
 297. Report in VB, No. 292, October 19, 1933.
 298. From the author’s notes.
 299. The entire territory of the left bank of the Rhine and a strip of land fifty kilometers wide running parallel to the right bank.
 300. Published in VB, No. 293, October 20, 1933.
 301. Ultimately, such tolls were never charged.
 302. See above, May 17, 1933, note 211. The figure of 20,000 is a gross exaggeration.
 303. Reports in VB, No. 296, October 23, 1933. In 1849, King Ludwig I had commissioned Klenze (1784–1864) to build the *Befreiungshalle* in memory of the Napoleonic War from 1813 to 1815.
 304. Report in VB, No. 296, October 23, 1933.
 305. WTB, October 25, 1933. The wording cited in VB (No. 299, October 26, 1933) is incomplete.

- 306. Report in VB, No. 299, October 26, 1933.
- 307. Report in VB, No. 300, October 27, 1933.
- 308. Report in VB, No. 303, October 30, 1933.
- 309. Ibid.
- 310. Published in VB, *ibid.*
- 311. Cited in Baynes, p. 1143. Reference hereto is also made in VB, Berlin Edition, November 1, 1935.
- 312. Report in VB, No. 307, November 3, 1933.
- 313. Ibid.
- 314. Report in VB, No. 310, November 6, 1933.
- 315. Ibid.
- 316. Cf. Baur, p. 106.
- 317. Ward Price (pp. 96 f.) paints a dramatic picture of this flight based upon various accounts. See above, p. 21 f.
- 318. Report in VB, No. 312, November 8, 1933.
- 319. Ibid.
- 320. Published in VB, No. 313, November 9, 1933.
- 321. In Hitler's opinion, the Kapp Putsch in 1920 had been the first attempted coup of its kind.
- 322. A small beer pub in downtown Munich which was closed and remodeled after the Second World War.
- 323. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1933 and in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, No. 307, November 10, 1933.
- 324. The presence of the military staff guards of Göring and Röhm is particularly noteworthy. The existence of Röhm's staff guard was interpreted as proof of Röhm's alleged revolutionary intent in justifying the slayings of June 30, 1934.
- 325. Taken from the author's notes. The speech itself was not published in the press.
- 326. It was a known fact that Hitler despised the *Wehrverbände* (militias) and rejected any organizations with a military character; see *Mein Kampf*, pp. 605 ff. Furthermore, a substantial number of the SA leaders Hitler had executed on June 30, 1934 were former leaders of the Freikorps.
- 327. Published in VB, No. 315, November 11, 1933.
- 328. This semi-uniform dress was worn by the National Socialists during periods when uniforms and the SA were banned, particularly in 1931 and 1932, and was humorously referred to as *Räuberzivil* (casual outfit).
- 329. The Berlin *Lokal Anzeiger* reported on October 28, 1933 that Hugenberg was willing to run for office for patriotic reasons in order to project a united front in regard to foreign policy.
- 330. Published in VB, No. 317, November 13, 1933.
- 331. WTB, November 15, 1933.
- 332. WTB, November 16, 1933.
- 333. Hitler had written in *Mein Kampf* (p. 143): "Therefore Italy had only two alternatives in its relations with Austria: either alliance or war. By choosing the former, one had time to prepare for the second."
- 334. Published in VB, No. 327, November 23, 1933.

- 335. DNB report, November 25, 1937.
- 336. Published in VB, No. 332, November 28, 1933.
- 337. RGBL 1933, I, p. 1016.
- 338. Report in VB, No. 346, December 12, 1933.
- 339. The German Landtage were dissolved pursuant to the Law of January 30, 1934.
- 340. Report in VB, No. 347, December 13, 1933.
- 341. Published in VB, No. 349, December 15, 1933.
- 342. DNB report, December 24, 1933. In his speech on March 23, 1933, Hitler had declared that he planned to “publicly” execute the arsonist and his accomplices; see above, March 23, 1933. The judgment passed down by the Reichsgericht put an end to these plans.
- 343. Report in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1933
- 344. Published in VB, No. 1/2, January 1/2, 1934 and No. 3, January 3, 1934.
- 345. Hitler made use of the familiar form of address to Röhm only.
- 346. In reference to the crisis of fall, 1930; see above, December 9, 1933.
- 347. Franz Xaver Schwarz, born 1875 in Günzburg, died 1947 in an internment camp near Regensburg; Reich Treasurer of the NSDAP from 1925 to 1945.
- 348. Max Amann, born 1891 in Munich, died 1957 in Munich; sergeant in Hitler’s regiment; director of the Eher Verlag from 1922 to 1945; Reich Leader for the Press.
- 349. Walter Buch, born 1883 in Bruchsal, suicide in 1949 in Ammersee; former major and Supreme Judge of the NSDAP.
- 350. “I will lead you still to magnificent days!” (Speech at a banquet of the Landtag for the Province of Brandenburg on February 24, 1892; see Penzler, Vol. I, p. 209).

The Year 1934

Notes

1. The "Law for Removing the Distress of Volk and Reich" was passed by the Reichstag on March 23, 1933 and went into effect on March 24, 1933; see above, March 23, 1933.
2. Friedrich Ebert, First Reich President (1919 to 1925).
3. At von Hindenburg's funeral on August 5, 1934, Hitler called out: "Dead Commander, enter into Valhalla now!" See below, August 7, 1934.— Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Offiziere gegen Hitler* (Berlin, 1960), p. 6, quotes Hitler as having said: "When I was not yet Reich Chancellor, I believed the General Staff was like a brute of a dog who needs to be kept firmly on the leash because otherwise he might attack every person in sight."
4. Hitler believed the military defeats of the Second World War were due not to the impossible tasks assigned to the Generals, but to their personal cowardice and incompetence. To his pilot, Baur, Hitler declared in April 1945: "It should be written on my gravestone, 'He was the victim of his generals.'" Cf. Baur, p. 257.
5. In World War II, Hitler was nonetheless forced to deploy soldiers who had received only very little training. This did not result in any noticeable difference in the outcome.
6. See above, letter of December 31, 1933.
7. Cf. Rauschning, p. 162.
8. See below, proclamation of August 20, 1934.
9. Published in VB, No. 1/2, January 1/2, 1934.
10. Ibid.
11. Report in VB, No. 15, January 15, 1934.
12. Troost had built the "Haus der Kunst" in Munich and drafted the plans for the so-called "Führerbauten" on the Königsplatz.
13. Report in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1934.
14. Report in VB, No. 25, January 25, 1934.
15. DNB report, February 1, 1934.
16. Report in VB, No. 26, January 26, 1934.
17. Ibid.
18. Report in VB, No. 27, January 27, 1934.
19. Cf. *Frankfurter Volksblatt*, No. 26, January 27, 1934. The talk is also published in Hanns Johst, *Standpunkt und Fortschritt* (Oldenburg, 1934).
20. DNB report, January 29, 1934.
21. DNB report, January 30, 1934.
22. Ibid.
23. Cited here in the wording of the Reclam edition, *Die Rede des Führers Adolf Hitler am 30. Januar 1934 im Deutschen Reichstag* (Leipzig, 1934). Also published in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1934.
24. It is incomprehensible how Hindenburg's State Secretary, Meissner, was

able to conclude from the discussion with Göring on January 28, 1933 (cf. Meissner-Wilde, p. 170) that the National Socialists upheld a positive attitude toward the reinstitution of the monarchy. Göring had declared that it was possible only if two thirds of the German population were to deem it their will in a free election, a remark which appears to indicate the opposite. Who was to constitute the two-thirds majority if the National Socialists, the Social Democrats and the Communists comprised three quarters of the German voting public?

25. See Hitler's respective comment to Rauschning, p. 162.
26. Here Hitler was referring to the "Law to Prevent Hereditarily Ill Offspring" (*Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses*) of December 5, 1933 (RGBl. 1933, I, p. 1021). Further developments showed that he was primarily interested not in preventing offspring, but in killing the incurably ill (euthanasia) and, in fact, all those he found to be unworthy of life from his vantage point as a superhuman being; as such, he knew no limits whatsoever.
27. This reference is to Hugenberg. However, he had excused himself from this session.
28. Hitler is referring to the "Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich" (*Gesetz über den Neuaufbau des Reiches*), see below, January 30, 1934. It is interesting to note that Hitler talks of "continuing the National Socialist Revolution" after he had declared on numerous occasions that the Revolution had been completed. "The Revolution is not a permanent state of affairs," he had declared on July 6, 1933 in an address to the Reichsstatthalters. Later, on July 13, 1934, he attempted to excuse the murder of Röhm and other SA leaders by stating that they had evidently "embraced the Revolution as revolution and perceived in it a permanent condition," for the only one allowed to stage a revolution in Germany was Hitler.
29. Hitler had introduced a fee of RM 1,000 for private visits to Austria by means of legislation on May 29, 1933 (RGBl. 1933, I, p. 311) in order to paralyze the Austrian tourist industry and thus exert pressure on the Dollfuss regime.
30. Fulvio Suvich was State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Italy from 1932 to 1936.
31. RGBl. 1934, I, p. 75.
32. DNB report, February 4, 1934; VB, No. 35, February 4, 1934.
33. DNB report, February 3, 1934.
34. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, February 8, 1934.
35. Report in VB, No. 47, February 16, 1934.
36. VB, No. 50, February 19, 1934.
37. The Dollfuss Government in Austria had also instituted concentration camps (called "Anhaltelager") for National Socialists and Social Democrats who had been arrested. The most notorious was Wöllersdorf.
38. The three Bulgarians were deported within the month of February and arrived in Moscow on February 27, 1934. After Bulgaria had refused them admission, the Soviet Union granted the men Russian citizenship.

39. DNB report, February 20, 1934.
40. The sovereign symbol of the NSDAP, an eagle with swastika, only became the national emblem of the Reich and the State by a decree of November 5, 1935 (RGBL. 1935, I, p. 1287) after the passage of the Nuremberg Laws.
41. Cf. Bullock, pp. 288 f. See also general DNB report, February 21, 1934.
42. The uniform ban Hitler had imposed on the SA in the Rhineland after October 14, 1933 (see above, October 16, 1933) was already an indication of his real attitude.
43. Report in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1934.
44. See above, speech of October 16, 1932.
45. Report in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1934.
46. Ibid.
47. "Law Governing National Holidays" (*Gesetz über die Feiertage*, RGBL. 1934, I, p. 129) of February 27, 1934. Other holidays included May 1 (the National Holiday of the German Volk) and the first Sunday after Michaelmas (*Erntedankfest*).
48. DNB Report, February 25, 1934.
49. The subject matter of the speech cited above is taken from the report in the *Münchener Merkur*, May 9, 1957.
50. Note in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1934.
51. Hitler had Goerdeler hanged in connection with the incidents of July 20, 1944 (see below, *ibid.*). He had hoped to become Reich Chancellor after Hitler's assassination.
52. Published in VB, No. 66, March 7, 1934.
53. Published in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1934.
54. Report in VB, No. 71, March 12, 1934.
55. Report in VB, No. 79, March 20, 1934.
56. Report in VB, No. 81, March 22, 1934.
57. Report in VB, No. 82, March 23, 1934.
58. Published in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1934.
59. DNB report, March 26, 1934.
60. Information in VB, No. 106, April 16, 1934 and No. 109, April 19, 1934.
61. Cf. Bullock, p. 290.
62. DNB wording, August 6, 1934.
63. Report in VB, No. 109, April 19, 1934.
64. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, April 17, 1934 and VB, No. 108, April 18, 1934.
65. Cited in VB, No. 110, April 20, 1934.
66. Report in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1934.
67. DNB report, April 20, 1934.
68. Report in VB, No. 112, April 22, 1934.
69. Published in VB, No. 115, April 25, 1934.
70. Published in VB, No. 121, May 1, 1934.
71. Published in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1934.
72. Reports in VB, *ibid.*
73. Published in VB, *ibid.*

74. Round badges depicting the sovereign symbol of the NSDAP, with a hammer on the left and a sickle on the right. Design: Professor Klein, Munich.
75. Published in VB, No. 121, May 1, 1934.
76. The formations of the Prussian Land Police were integrated into the Army when national conscription was instituted in 1935.
77. DNB report, May 2, 1934.
78. NSK report, May 3, 1934.
79. Published in VB, No. 128, May 8, 1934.
80. Report in VB, *ibid.*
81. Report in VB, No. 129/130, May 9/10, 1934.
82. Published in VB, *ibid.* Eighty-six miners met with their death.
83. Report in VB, No. 137, May 17, 1934.
84. Report in VB, No. 140/141, May 20/21, 1934.
85. Reports on Hitler's visit to Dresden in VB, Nos. 148–151, May 28 to June 1, 1934.
86. On July 1, 1934, Göring assigned the task of “reorganizing” these SA groups to SS Gruppenführer and General of the Land Police, Kurt Daluege.
87. Report in VB, No. 156, June 6, 1934.
88. According to Bullock (p. 293), it was June 4.
89. See below, July 13, 1934.
90. See above, February 21, 1934.
91. After the Röhm Purge, the SA's main activities consisted of military sports. It was to provide sports training for young men prior to their military service and motivate them to achieve the “SA Sports or Military Badge.”
92. Other actions which Hitler scheduled for Saturday or Sunday included: October 14, 1933 (withdrawal from the League of Nations); March 16, 1935 (introduction of general conscription); March 7, 1936 (occupation of the Rhineland); March 12, 1938 (occupation of Austria); October 1, 1938 (scheduled date for the invasion of Czechoslovakia; transformed as a result of the Munich Convention to the occupation of the Sudeten German territories), August 26, 1939 (scheduled date for the invasion of Poland; postponed on August 25, 1939 and actually carried out on September 1, 1939); and June 22, 1941 (invasion of the Soviet Union).
93. DNB report, June 7, 1934.
94. DNB report, August 8, 1934.
95. Today Hotel Lederer.
96. According to Article 49 of the Treaty of Versailles, the population of the Saar was to be called upon to exercise its right of self-determination in a plebiscite fifteen years after the Treaty went into effect (January 10, 1920).
97. Published in VB, No. 159, June 8, 1934.
98. Report in VB, No. 162, June 11, 1934.
99. Cf. Ward Price, p. 23.
100. Published in VB, No. 167, June 16, 1934.

101. Reports on Hitler's visit to Venice in VB, No. 167, June 16, 1934.
102. Cf. Baur, p. 100. Baur mistakenly cites the meeting as having taken place in 1933.
103. Published in VB, No. 168, June 17, 1934. 104. Ibid.
105. Published in VB, No. 170, June 19, 1934.
106. Like von Papen, Jung was also a member of the Herrenklub. He is the author of two books, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen* (1931) and *Sinndeutung der deutschen Revolution* (1934), both of which bear a German-Nationalist, reactionary stamp. As early as June 30, 1934, the *Basler Nachrichten* carried reports of Jung's arrest in connection with von Papen's speech in Marburg. On July 5, *Der Angriff* published in-depth coverage of the Jung case, stating: "The litterateurs should beware of meddling in the affairs of the Führer, who is our sole standard, by foolish and scheming drivel. The task which Adolf Hitler has taken upon himself is so tremendous that even the slightest attempt to pick holes in and carp about the methods with which it is accomplished is wicked."
107. A number of pamphlets did, however, survive.
108. Von Papen's associates Dr. Edgar Jung and Herbert van Bose were shot on June 30, while his secretary, Günther von Tschirschky, was initially arrested but released on July 3. Von Papen himself was placed under house arrest. Hitler had dispatched Dr. Walther Funk, State Secretary at the time and later Reich Minister of Economics, to Neudeck to lodge a protest against von Papen's Marburg speech with the Reich President. Hindenburg replied with the comment, "If he [von Papen] cannot maintain discipline, then he will simply have to draw the consequences" (as quoted by Funk in his testimony before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg on May 6, 1946, see IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XIII, pp. 154 f.).
109. Report in VB, No. 172, June 21, 1934. The name "Scharfheide" was later changed to "Carinhall." Göring's wife Carin, née van Fock, had formerly been married to the Swedish officer Nils van Kantzow. Five years Göring's senior, she died in Stockholm on October 17, 1931 (information supplied by the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich).
110. Report in VB, No. 173, June 22, 1934.
111. Report in VB, No. 176, June 25, 1934.
112. Reports in VB, *ibid.*
113. DNB report, June 25, 1934.
114. DNB report, June 26, 1934.
115. VB, No. 180, June 29, 1934.
116. See Bullock, p. 301. Röhm's expulsion had been initiated by Major General van Reichenau, Chief of the Ministerial Office of the Ministry of Defense.
117. DNB wording, June 26, 1934.
118. Reports of Hitler's visit to Essen in VB, Nos. 180 and 181, June 29 and 30, 1934, and in the *Westdeutscher Beobachter* and the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, both of June 29, 1934.

119. Hoffmann apparently refused to believe the stories of Röhm's revolt and plainly disassociated himself from Hitler's massacre in his "Erzählungen" published in 1954 and 1955; see *Münchener Illustrierte*, No. 50, December 11, 1954, and No. 51, December 18, 1954.
120. Bergmann's testimony in what was known as the "Röhm Trial" before the Jury Court at the Landgericht Munich I on May 8, 1957.
121. Reports in the *Westdeutscher Beobachter* and the *Wiesbadener Tagblatt*, both of June 30, 1934.
122. Ibid. Ostensibly, Hitler had scheduled this full itinerary for the entire day (June 29) in order to avoid any contact with the SA.
123. The fact that Hitler took Goebbels with him when arresting Röhm was not an indication of the trust he placed in his Minister, but the opposite: Hitler was plagued by constant doubts as to Goebbels' loyalty and wanted him in his sight during any potentially dangerous incidents.
124. See Goebbels' comments in his radio speech of July 1, 1934 (DNB wording, July 1, 1934).
125. This account of what transpired in Munich and Bad Wiessee is based mainly upon the testimony of witnesses at the "Röhm Trial" against Sepp Dietrich and Michael Lippert before the Jury Court at the Landgericht Munich I from May 6 to 14, 1957; further on the author's interviews with eyewitnesses.
126. From that time, Hitler surrounded himself with his SS bodyguards and plainclothes police detectives. Even at the Berghof (Obersalzberg), they were constantly within calling distance. When Rudolf Hess' aide delivered Hess' farewell letter on May 11, 1941, Hitler had him arrested on the spot by one of the detectives standing by (see below, May 10, 1941).
127. The claim was made in the "Röhm Trial" that Röhm had stayed in room 31, the corner room facing the lake. The present owner, Lederer, informed the author that Röhm had, however, inhabited room 21 facing the courtyard.
128. Dietrich's testimony before the Jury Court in Munich on May 6, 1957.
129. Viktor Lutze, head of the SA Gruppe Nord (Hanover) and Oberpräsident of the Province of Hanover, was regarded as innocuous by the Reichswehr officers and in particular by Major General von Reichenau. Lutze had the reputation of being a man with absolutely no military ambitions.
130. Speech before East Prussian party comrades at the Gau Party Congress, broadcast on all German radio stations. Quoted from the DNB wording.
131. Using a breathless present tense, Hess reported on July 8 as follows: "He [Hitler] is working continuously. He dictates the dismissal order of the Chief of Staff and the appointment of Obergruppenführer Lutze. He dictates a letter to the new Chief and Staff and then, without pausing, dictates the statement of the National Socialist German Workers' Party on the incidents and his own actions [!]. Meanwhile, he issues other orders for individual steps to be taken in Munich and in the Reich. Then, without lifting his pen from the paper, he formulates the famous twelve points governing the actions of the new SA Chief of Staff.
"Not even the slightest necessity of the moment escapes the Führer. He

even issues directions for the publications in the press and on the radio! And at the very moment the last order is given, the respective operation starts immediately.

“It was, in fact, just as a Berlin newspaper described it: ‘At two o’clock in the morning an airplane left the Hangelar airfield near Bonn—at ten o’clock in the evening the same plane landed in Berlin. In between lies a chapter in world history.’”

132. Hitler’s bulletins of June 30 and July 1, 2, and 3 have been cited here in the DNB wording.
133. See above, April 6, 1932 and December 31, 1933.
134. At that time rumors had been set in circulation by unknown parties claiming that this foreign power was France. The French Embassy denied this, and the Foreign Office itself was forced to confirm that any such suspicions were wholly without foundation; see Bullock, pp. 267 f. Hitler declared on July 13 that he would have men shot who spoke with foreign statesmen without his knowledge, even if they had only discussed the weather, old coins or similar topics. He was to be the judge of what was harmless and what was not.
135. This is apparently a reference to Werner von Alvensleben; see below, July 13, 1934.
136. Julius Streicher, well-known for his utter lack of moral scruples, ultimately had to be dismissed as Gauleiter for Franconia in 1940. However, Hitler continued to stand by him and refused to sign his order of expulsion from the Party.
137. At that time, §175 of the German Penal Code defined homosexuality generally as a criminal offense. After undergoing a series of substantial changes, this section was amended on November 23, 1973 in the course of the Fourth Penal Reform Law (1974), making homosexual acts punishable only in connection with persons under eighteen.
138. This statement was pure propaganda and referred to the members of the SA. Or had Röhm and the other slain SA leaders; all of whom had served Hitler since the very beginning, suddenly become “clever latecomers” (*gescheite Spätlinge*)?
139. Dietrich’s testimony before the jury Court in Munich on May 6, 1957.
140. This was the committal list for Stadelheim Prison in Munich which had been drawn upon the imprisonment of the SA leaders and sent to the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior. It is still in existence and bears a notation made by Wagner, Gauleiter and Bavarian Minister of the Interior, on June 30 that “at the Führer’s orders, those gentlemen are to be released into the custody of SS Gruppenführer Dietrich whom he shall specify” (court records of the jury Court at the Landgericht Munich I).
141. Napoleon enjoyed following up the speeches he made to his old campaigners with a round of marching practice. One day he was suddenly called away and forgot to give the command for the men to halt. The “Old Guard” kept right on marching in the given direction and continued for hours and even days, refusing to heed all attempts to make them stop. Numerous guardsmen fell down dead in their tracks before

Napoleon, shocked at the consequences of his forgetfulness, could dispatch a mounted messenger to deliver the command to halt.

142. Hitler made a mistake in this bulletin: at the time it was issued, only the six SA leaders whose names had been given to Dietrich had been shot. Gruppenführer Ernst was on a flight from Bremen to Berlin in handcuffs.
143. The head of the Ministerial Office, Major General von Reichenau, stated in an interview with Stanislas de La Rochefoucauld of the *Petit Journal* (published on August 6, 1934): "The death of Schleicher, our former chief, caused us pain, but we are of the opinion that he long ago ceased being a soldier." Schleicher, according to von Reichenau, had been a born conspirator, and the fact that a former Minister of Defense could conceive of regaining power with the assistance of the SA escaped his comprehension. His connection to Röhm, he stated, had been a known fact, and it was equally certain that he had placed serious hopes in France, which was to aid him in accomplishing the tasks of government. "By no means am I making any accusations against your country [France]. I am merely saying that Schleicher was counting on France. It is a sad thought that officers can so easily lose the qualities of their profession in politics. That was the misfortune in Schleicher's case. He forgot that obedience is the highest commandment in the military." In this interview, Reichenau departed from the official version that Schleicher had been shot resisting arrest, admitting instead that the shooting had been planned. There also exists a statement by Schleicher's domestic employee, Marie Güntel, on the slaying of Schleicher and his wife by two civilians (protocol of the Berlin police of June 31, 1934).
144. On October 14, 1933, Hitler had had an announcement made that high military honors such as, for instance, a guard of honor, were to be reserved exclusively for the Reich President and the upper echelons of the military and that he himself laid no claim to such honors; see above, October 14, 1933.

However, after the "test of courage" on June 30 had sufficed to impress the Reichswehr generals, Hitler was free to accept this "high honor," having personally advanced to the upper echelons of the military.
145. See below, October 13, 1944.
146. Eicke was killed in the Second World War. Lippert and Sepp Dietrich were sentenced to one and a half years' imprisonment on May 14, 1957 for acting as accessories to unlawful homicide (judgment in the Röhm Trial before the Jury Court at the Landgericht Munich I).
147. The fact that Schmitt had been taken ill was disclosed as early as June 28 and thus appears to have no connection with the events of the Röhm Purge, notwithstanding Schmitt's statements to the contrary before the Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1946.
148. RGBl 1934, I, p. 529.
149. See above, July 1, 1934.
150. Cited in the *Dresdner Nachrichten*, August 4, 1934.
151. The *Landeszeitung* in Wiesbaden published the following notice on June 17: "Brüning in England. The London *Times* has reported that the

former German Reich Chancellor, Dr. Brüning, who had come to England due to a cardiac affliction, has been staying with his friend Anderson during his visit here. His state of health has improved substantially as a result of the rest, and he plans to return to Germany in two or three weeks. This report in the *Times* is apparently designed to disperse the false rumors in circulation regarding Brüning's visit to England. The *Evening Standard* published a statement on behalf of former Reich Chancellor Brüning in respect to reports in a number of morning papers to the effect that he had fled Germany under the cover of night. Brüning states that his visit to London is only temporary, that it is completely legal in nature and that he went there in answer to an invitation. Brüning stated further that his name is not on any blacklist, and that he has repeatedly spoken with Reich Chancellor Hitler and other National Socialist leaders."

The following press release was published on July 3: "Brüning in Lugano. London, July 3. In response to the statement issued by the Foreign Office to the effect that the English Government had no information as to whether former Reich Chancellor Brüning was still in England, the *Evening Standard* has reported that Brüning left for Lugano with several friends as early as last week. He planned to wind up his convalescent holiday there and then return to Germany. The newspaper believes it possible to safely assume that Brüning has not been involved in politics since having left office and thus has nothing to do with the most recent incidents in Germany."

152. Hitler cited the following persons: Chief of Staff Röhm; Obergruppenführers Schneidhuber and Heines; Gruppenführers Detten, Ernst, Schmidt, Hayn, and Heydebreck; Standartenführers Sprei, Uhl and Schmidt (the latter of whom was Obersturmbannführer); Gregor Strasser, General von Schleicher and his wife Elisabeth (née Hennings), and General von Bredow. On October 31, 1934, "Führerbefehl 26, Munich P. No. 24 400" was issued for the SA in which the following persons were cited—in addition to the above—as having been expelled from the SA on June 30 or in the period from July 1 to 7, 1934: Obergruppenführers Friedrich Ritter von Krausser and Werner von Fichte; Gruppenführers Karl Schreyer and Walter Luetgebrunn (the latter had been Hitler's attorney since 1923); Oberführer Hans Joachim von Falkenhausen, Standartenführer Hans Schweighart, Obersturmführer Max Vogel, Sturmführer Max Lösch, Obertruppführer Martin Schätzl, Obertruppführer Veit-Ulrich von Beulwitz, and Rottenführer Eduard Neumeier. Circumstances indicate that these eleven persons were liquidated, just as were Kahr, Klausner, Probst, Jung, and Bose. On August 5, 1934, the *Vogtländischer Anzeiger* published an obituary for Unterbannführer Karl Laemmermann with the text: "He died blameless and upright, gladly giving his life for the Vaterland and the Movement, loyal to his Führer unto death." Father Bernhard Stempfle, former member of the Hyronimite order and a staff member at the *Miesbacher Anzeiger* who had edited the first

edition of *Mein Kampf*, was also killed. According to Heinrich Hoffmann's report in his "Erzählungen" (*Münchner Illustrierte*, No. 50/1954), Hitler had remarked: "Those pigs killed my good Father Stempfle, too." If Stempfle was, in fact, killed without Hitler's knowledge, it is conceivable that his slayers were the three SS men whom Hitler ordered executed for "disgraceful abuse of prisoners in protective custody."

The Munich music critic Dr. Willi Schmidt was shot as a result of mistaken identity.

The victims also included Anton von Hohberg, an East Prussian SS Obersturmführer and tournament horseback rider (see reports of the trial against the one-time SS Obergruppenführer, von dem Bach-Zelewski, before the Jury Court in Nuremberg in January/February 1961).

It is difficult to identify even the 74 persons whom Hitler admitted were killed. The *Weissbuch über die Erschiessungen des 30. Juni 1934* (White Book on the Shootings of June 30, 1934) published in Paris in 1934 is not completely reliable. It is based, for the most part, on the *Deutsches Führerlexikon* for 1934/35 (Berlin) which was given the NSDAP seal of approval on June 15, 1934. Numerous "incriminated" parties had to be subsequently (after June 30, 1934) removed from this lexikon, of whom not all were shot; several even remained in office.

153. DNB report, July 18, 1934.
154. Camouflage organization for the Air Force, which was already being built up at the time contrary to the provisions laid down in the Treaty of Versailles.
155. At the "Revolution Roll Call" for the *Alte Kämpfer* on March 19, 1934, Hitler himself had stated that the revolution would continue for generations; see above, *ibid*.
156. Hitler's claim that SA members, who had joined the SA in 1933, had frequently been promoted to leadership positions is not true. This would apply more accurately to the political leadership, for many of the party members who joined in 1933 did, in fact, very quickly become functionaries.
157. Hitler is referring to Obersturmbannführer Hans Walter Schmidt, aide to Obergruppenführer Heines. On July 2, the *Breslauer Neueste Nachrichten* published a detailed wanted notice with the headline: "Obersturmbannführer Schmidt must be arrested!"
158. Heines, Hayn and Heydebreck belonged to the group of former Freikorps leaders who supported the militia and earned Hitler's disapproval by doing so.
159. Hitler's concept of "decency" was unconditional, blind obedience.
160. The words "whom you all know" are absent from the official text of the speech (source: the author's notes). The abbreviation "v.A." refers to Werner von Alvensleben, whose brother, SA Brigadeführer Bodo Graf von Alvensleben, chaired the Herrenklub. Alvensleben was arrested in connection with the Röhm Purge but was not executed.
161. Reference to General Ludendorff.
162. Admittedly, an oath which Hitler made to Hindenburg was worth no

- more than any of the other countless pledges he made during his rule and subsequently broke.
163. Hitler's claim that the Wehrmacht was to be the sole bearer of arms was a dubious affair from the very beginning. As early as March 17, 1933, the armed *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* was created, forming the basis for the *Waffen SS*, from which in turn entire army corps evolved. In 1933, the armed staff guards of Göring and Röhm were installed. Göring then formed a private regiment within the Prussian Land Police called *General Göring*. Even the SA created a *Standarte* (guidon) with the name *Feldherrnhalle* in 1937, which took part in the occupation of the Sudetenland in 1938 wearing air force uniforms. Only marginal mention can be made here of the numerous armed and quartered police troops.
 164. This theatrical appeal to good faith (*Treu und Glauben*) ill became a man as unscrupulous as Hitler, whose promises and oaths were as worthless in terms of foreign policy as they were in respect to domestic affairs. An alliance, in his view, was to be upheld only as long as it served his purposes—a cynical approach he had already espoused in *Mein Kampf*.
 165. Here, the dictator portrays himself as an innocent and ignorant victim of circumstances—although he had personally sworn in Göring's and Röhm's staff guards in front of the *Feldherrnhalle* on the night of November 9, 1933; see above, November 9, 1933.
 166. With these references to the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day and the Sicilian Vespers, Hitler apparently wished to teach his audience the real meaning of fear and, in doing so, in fact aptly described his own actions.
 167. Reference to SA Gruppenführer Georg von Detten.
 168. Hitler is referring to the Standartenführer Julius Uhl. A rumor had been spread that Uhl planned to shoot Hitler on July 1 at a concert of the singer Heinrich Schlusnus in Braubach am Rhein. Uhl was in Bad Wiessee, however, where he was arrested on June 30 and taken to Stadelheim Prison. Apparently, Uhl was chosen to play the leading role in Hitler's concocted assassination plot due to his well-known prowess as a brilliant marksman.
 169. Hitler's claim that "inexplicable riots" had broken out in the ranks of the SA in August of 1932, i.e. in the wake of the failed negotiations on NSDAP participation in the government, is not true. While the members of the SA who had hoped for a takeover were naturally disappointed, they nonetheless followed Hitler's and Röhm's orders and returned home.
 170. Here, too, Hitler is clearly lying to his audience: he could neither name the alleged witnesses nor produce any written statements.
 171. There is no evidence of any sudden extension of service prior to the SA leave scheduled to commence on July 1 with the exception of the contrived alarm in Munich on the evening of June 29.
 172. A "mutiny" is only possible in military or paramilitary organizations and thus reprisals are limited to that respective scope. However, only shortly before, Hitler had denied the SA any military or paramilitary character.
 173. Here, according to Hitler, corruption suddenly became the reason for the

- executions. During the Third Reich, the death sentence was passed for various real and alleged crimes, but corruption was not among them.
174. Kutisker and Stavisky were large-scale defrauders whose dealings attracted international attention at the time. Members of the French Government officials were embroiled in the financial scandal surrounding Stavisky. The extremist right-wing *Action Française* attempted to turn the affair to its advantage and take power. During the riots, which reached a peak on February 6, 1934, fifteen persons were killed and Chautemps' government forced to step down. Within the month, a center government was formed which did not include the right-wing, anti-Republican camp.
175. This is apparently a reference to the crises of 1930 and 1931 surrounding Pfeffer von Salomon and Stennes and, to a lesser extent, to the insignificant Stegmann crisis of January 1933. Former SA Gruppenführer in Franconia, Willi Stegmann, who had protested against Hitler's "legal route" shortly before the NSDAP took power, was put in a concentration camp in 1933. On February 14, 1936, he was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment by a special court in Nuremberg for "maintaining a mutinous organization." A DNB report on February 17, 1936 stressed that the presiding judge had also taken "Stegmann's abhorrent mutiny during the period prior to the *Machtergreifung*" into consideration.
176. Hitler assumed the "responsibility" neither for the Röhm Purge nor for any other of his atrocious deeds, electing instead to commit suicide in April 1945.
177. Speech on April 29, 1937 before Kreisleiters in Vogelsang.
178. Report in VB, No. 200, July 19, 1934.
179. Report in VB, No. 202, July 21, 1934.
180. Published in VB, No. 207, July 26, 1934.
181. See above, June 11, 1934.
182. From 1871 to 1945, the term "Reichsdeutsche" was applied to German citizens.
183. Theo Habicht; commercial employee; NSDAP Kreisleiter in Wiesbaden from 1927 to 1932; Landesinspekteur in Austria from 1932 to 1934; Mayor of Wittenberg from 1937 to 1945.
184. Report in VB, No. 204, July 23, 1934.
185. Published in VB, No. 206, July 25, 1934.
186. Emil Ritter von Fey, former major and leader of the *Heimwehr* (Home Defense Forces—uniformed paramilitary organizations formed in Austria after World War I), born 1886. Minister and State Secretary from 1932 to 1934 Von Fey played a dubious role in the attempted coup and committed suicide on March 16, 1938 after the Germans had occupied Vienna.
187. Ward Price had been present at the execution and reported on it in detail. Cf. VB, No. 217, August 5, 1934.
188. In 1938, Hitler stated in Klagenfurt (see below, speech of April 4, 1938): "You can take my word for it, I suffered with you back then. I could not help you, but I made an oath to myself then, and now I have kept it."

189. DNB wording of July 26, 1934.
190. This is a reference to reception and training camps for the Austrian National Socialists who had fled the country and were taken in by Bavaria until 1938. The inmates later wore olive-drab uniforms and were called the "Austrian Legion." They did not, however, participate in the occupation of 1938 but were inconspicuously brought back into the country.
191. Published in VB, No. 209, July 28, 1934.
192. Cf. Tschirschky's testimony before the Denazification Court at Nuremberg on February 19, 1947. Tschirschky emigrated to England in 1935. Another of von Papen's secretaries, Wilhelm von Ketteler, was murdered by the Gestapo on March 13, 1938 following the German occupation of Austria.
193. Published in VB, No. 209, July 28, 1934.
194. Quoted from a facsimile of von Papen's letter of appointment dated July 31, 1934 published in the *Frankfurter Volksblatt* on August 18, 1934.
195. Ferdinand Sauerbruch, *Das war mein Leben* (Bad Wörishofen, 1951), p. 520.
196. *Gesetz über das Staatsoberhaupt des deutschen Reichs*. RGBl. 1934, I, p. 747.
197. Article 51 of the Weimar Constitution originally provided that the Reich Chancellor was to represent the Reich President only in the interim prior to new elections. At the request of the National Socialists, the Reichstag resolved with a two-thirds majority in December 1932 (promulgated on December 17, 1932) that the President of the Reichsgericht [Dr. Bumke] was to represent the President for this term. At the time, Hitler wished to avoid, in the event of von Hindenburg's sudden death, that Schleicher would be in a position to exercise the powers of both President and Chancellor.
Now that he had become Chancellor himself, Hitler would naturally no longer accept that the President of the Reichsgericht take office and hence passed the law of August 1, 1934, a step for which he had made provisions in the wording of the Enabling Act of March 23/24, 1933; see above, March 23, 1933.
198. Published in VB, No. 215, August 3, 1934.
199. Ibid. RGBl. 1934, I, p. 749.
200. An announcement made at a meeting of the heads of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda on the afternoon of August 2, 1934. DNB report, August 3, 1934.
201. Hitler's speech at the Tannenberg Monument; see below, August 7, 1934.
202. DNB text, August 2, 1934, printed in RGBl. 1934, I, p. 796. RGBl. 1934, I, pp. 753–755, also contains an announcement of the Reich Government to the German Volk documenting Hindenburg's biography with essentially the same contents as in Hitler's two speeches on August 6 and 7, 1934.
203. Up until this point, the Reichswehr had not sworn allegiance to any particular person or to the Reich President. Even after the so-called

“national uprising,” the decree of December 2, 1933 (RGBl. 1933, I, p. 1017) had only provided that the German soldier was to “always serve Volk and Vaterland loyally and honestly” and that, as a brave and obedient soldier, he should be willing “to risk his life for this oath at all times.”

Not until August 20, 1934 was a law passed providing that civil servants and the soldiers of the Wehrmacht were to pledge the new oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler (RGBl. 1934, I, p. 785).

204. Published in VB, No. 215, August 3, 1934. Described and published as the “Decree of the Reich Chancellor for the Implementation of the Law on the Head of State” in RGBl. 1934, I, p. 751. In official intercourse within Germany, Hitler’s title from this point onwards was: “Der Führer and Reichskanzler.” Prior hereto, the official wording (in drafts of bills, etc.) had been merely “Der Reichskanzler.” In intercourse with foreign countries, Hitler used the title “Deutscher Reichskanzler” as head of state and was addressed at all official gatherings and receptions as “Herr Deutscher Reichskanzler.”

The plebiscite on the law of August 1, 1934 was scheduled for August 19, 1934 by a resolution passed by the Reich Government on August 2, 1934 (RGBl. 1934, I, p. 752).

205. Cf. Hitler’s comments on a prospective successor in Ward Price, p. 131, and in Heinz Linge, “Kronzeuge Linge,” in *Revue*, No. 5 (1956), pp. 34–35.
206. No plebiscites took place in 1935 and 1937.
207. Published in VB, No. 219, August 7, 1934.
208. Ibid.
209. See below, August 20, 1934.
210. Special formations composed of hand-picked National Socialists in gray-green uniforms with white collar patches which were later incorporated in the motorized gendarmerie.
211. Published in VB, No. 220, August 8, 1934.
212. RGBl. 1934, I, p. 769.
213. DNB report, August 18, 1934.
214. Report in VB, No. 222, August 10, 1934.
215. DNB report, August 10, 1934; VB, No. 223, August 11, 1934.
216. Wording of the will published in VB, No. 228, August 16, 1934.
217. Von Papen’s denazification trial in February 1947. According to the testimony of Oskar von Hindenburg at his own respective trial before the Denazification Court at Uelzen in March 1949, the Reich President had merely requested in a personal letter to Hitler that he consider reinstating the monarchy at a later date.
218. Ibid.
219. Reports in VB, No. 230, August 18, 1934.
220. Published in VB, *ibid.*
221. However, in his last will and testament, Hitler in fact appointed Grand Admiral Dönitz to the office of Reich President; see below, April 29, 1945.
222. In the official wording of the speech, the word “*ertrage*” (bear) has been

- replaced by the less caustic “*vertrage*” (tolerate), a subsequent change made by Hitler. The original term has been taken from the author’s notes.
223. Published in VB, No. 230, August 18, 1934.
224. Oskar von Hindenburg’s speech was published in all German newspapers on August 18, 1934 before it was broadcast. According to the Constitution, the Reich President did not have the right to choose a successor, and von Hindenburg did not do so in his testament. Hence his son was confined to stating his own personal opinion.
225. See photo XV.
226. Published in VB, No. 233, August 21, 1934.
227. Ibid.
228. Report in VB, *ibid.*
229. Report in VB, No. 235, August 23, 1934.
230. Published in VB No. 239 and No. 240, August 27 and 28, 1934 respectively. DNB wording, August 26, 1934.
231. The Saar plebiscite took place on January 13, 1935, and the Saar rejoined the German Reich on March 1 of the same year. Scarcely a week later, on March 9, Hitler announced the establishment of a new German air force and instituted general conscription on March 16.
232. See above, August 6, 1933.
233. Report in VB, No. 248, September 5, 1934.
234. Published in VB, No. 249, September 6, 1934.
235. This project was never realized.
236. Published in VB, No. 249, September 6, 1934.
237. Published in VB, No. 250, September 7, 1934.
238. Report in VB, No. 251, September 8, 1934.
239. Report in VB, No. 253, September 10, 1934.
240. Published in VB, *ibid.*
241. Ibid.
242. Ibid.
243. Report in VB, *ibid.*
244. Report in VB, No. 254, September 11, 1934.
245. Published in VB, *ibid.*
246. Published in VB, No. 256, September 13, 1934.
247. Report in VB, No. 274, October 1, 1934. This issue also contains the text of the Bückeberg speech.
248. Report in VB, No. 282, October 9, 1934.
249. Published in VB, No. 283, October 10, 1934.
250. Ibid.
251. Published in VB, No. 303, October 30, 1934. Hitler revered Atatürk as a “leader figure” and sent him congratulatory telegrams whenever the occasion presented itself, apparently unaware that Atatürk was anything but friendly toward Germany.
252. Report in VB, No. 304, October 31, 1934.
253. Report in VB, No. 305/306, November 1/2, 1934.
254. Ibid.

255. Mentioned in VB, Berlin Edition, December 1, 1934.
256. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1934.
257. Hitler often maintained in party circles that the victims of June 30 had died "for the liberation of the Vaterland," alluding to the inscription on the Munich monument for the Bavarian soldiers killed during the Napoleonic campaign in Russia (obelisk on the Karolinenplatz). He granted substantial pensions to the survivors of those slain on June 30, 1934.
258. Decree on the *Stiftung für die Blutzeugen der Bewegung*. Printed in VB, No. 313, November 9, 1934.
259. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1934.
260. Published in VB, No. 337, December 3, 1934.
261. The "German salute" was the "Heil Hitler" greeting used as a closing in correspondence.
262. Published in VB, No. 319, November 15, 1934.
263. Published in VB, No. 330, November 26, 1934. DNB wording, November 24, 1934.
264. DNB report, November 19, 1934. This was an organization made up of soldiers from the World War. General von Litzmann, the "Lion of Brzeziny," was its chairman.
265. DNB report, November 27, 1934. The morning of the same day, Hitler visited an exhibition of war paintings by Professor Ludwig Dettmann in the Berlin Zeughaus (VB, No. 332, November 28, 1934).
266. Julius Schreck, Hitler's long-standing chauffeur, bore a marked resemblance to Hitler and was occasionally used as his double prior to the accession to power. Schreck stood in, for instance, on January 4, 1933 in order to keep the meeting between Hitler and Papen secret.
267. Neither the testimony before the IMT in Nuremberg nor the records of the interrogation of witnesses at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte contain evidence of an assassination attempt during this period. The author conducted numerous interviews with witnesses and was similarly unable to procure any evidence to support this theory.
268. On November 27, 1934, an official communiqué was published, for instance, which denied rumors about von Blomberg, General von Fritsch, and Major General von Reichenau, disclaiming that there had been any differences between the Army and Goebbels (DNB wording, November 27, 1934).—On December 2, 1934, Göring spoke in the Friedrich-Alfred-Hütte (steel works) in Rheinhausen and stated, as he had in respect to the Röhm Purge: "He who dares to interfere with the trust vested in the Führer, he who attempts to undermine that which is faithful in the Volk, is a traitor. He who agitates against the Führer is agitating against Germany" (DNB wording, December 3, 1934).—In early December, Major Foertsch, a department head in the Ministry of Defense, spoke before leaders of the SA, SS and HJ as well as representatives of the press on the relations between the Wehrmacht and National Socialism and stressed that the Führer had designated the Wehrmacht to be one of the pillars which, in addition to the Party, supported the State

- as the nation's sole bearer of arms (DNB wording, December 12, 1934).
269. DNB report, December 5, 1934.
270. DNB report, December 6, 1934.—Gottfried Feder, born 1883 in Würzburg, died 1941 in Murnau, was the author of the pamphlet, *Das Programm der NSDAP und seine weltanschaulichen Grundgedanken* (Munich, 1932) and an advocate of the thesis of breaking the shackles of interest.
271. DNB report, December 6, 1934. VB, No. 341, December 7, 1934.
272. DNB Photo Archives, December 10, 1934.
273. DNB report, December 13, 1934.
274. DNB reports, December 14, 1934.
275. DNB reports, December 14 and 17, 1934.—After this incident, Hitler's special train was allowed to travel only at a maximum speed of 60 kilometers per hour.
276. The latter was adopted from the Italian Fascists. For the introduction of the "German salute" in the Wehrmacht, see below, July 21, 1944.
277. DNB report, December 18, 1934.
278. Dr. h.c. Wilhelm Ohnesorge, born 1872 in Gräfenheimichen; Reich Minister of Postal Services 1937 to 1945.
279. DNB wording, December 19, 1934; VB, No. 354, December 20, 1934.
280. Report in VB, No. 355, December 21, 1934.
281. DNB special report, December 22, 1934; VB, No. 357, December 23, 1934.
282. DNB report, December 24, 1934; VB, No. 361, December 27, 1934.
283. DNB wording, December 31, 1934; VB, No. 365, December 31, 1934.
284. See below, speech of March 14, 1936.

**The Complete Hitler
A Digital Desktop Reference
to His Speeches and Proclamations 1932-1945**

Max Domarus

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Volume I 1932–1934

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MAX DOMARUS

HITLER

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1932–1945

THE CHRONICLE OF A DICTATORSHIP

VOLUME TWO
The Years 1935 to 1938



BOLCHAZY-CARDUCCI PUBLISHERS

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Abbreviations

BA	= Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
BDM	= Bund Deutscher Mädel
DAF	= Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front)
DBrFP	= Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1911-1939
DGFP	= Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945
DLV	= Deutscher Luftsportverband (German Air Sports Association)
DNB	= Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (German News Bureau)
G.Kdos.	= Geheime Kommandosache (Top Secret, Military)
Gestapo	= Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
HJ	= Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
HVBL	= Heeresverordnungsblatt (Army Decree Gazette)
IMT	= International Military Tribunal, 1945-1949
KdF	= Kraft durch Freude ("Strength through joy")
NS	= Nationalsozialistisch (National Socialist)
NSBO	= Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation (National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation)
NSDAP	= Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
NSDFB	= Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpferbund, Stahlhelm (National Socialist German FrontLine Soldiers' Association)
NSFK	= Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Air Corps)
NSK	= Nationalsozialistische Parteikorrespondenz (National Socialist Party News Agency)
NSKK	= Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (National Socialist Motorized Corps)
NSV	= Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare Organization)
OKII	= Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKW	= Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
OSAF	= Oberster SA Führer (Supreme Commander of the SA)
Pg	= Parteigenosse (Party comrade)
III,	= Politischer Leiter (Political Leader)
PO	= Politische Organisation (Political Organization)
RGBI	= Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette)
RM	= Reichsmark
SA	= Sturmabteilung (Nazi storm troops; brown shirts)
SD	= Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, the SS intelligence agency)
SS	= Schutzstaffel (Nazi elite guard; black shirts)
TU	= Telegraphenunion (Telegraph Union)
VB	= Völkischer Beobachter (Nationalist Observer)
WHW	= Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Organisation)
WT13	= Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro (Wolffs Telegraph Bureau)

THE YEAR 1935

Major Events in Summary

The last crisis of the preceding year—in particular the tensions between the Reichswehr and the SS—continued to cast its shadow over the early months of 1935. Hitler was able, however, to play down this friction in a speech to “German leadership.”

The overwhelming outcome of the Saar plebiscite on January 13 then catapulted the entire population into such a mood of nationalistic euphoria that domestic problems seemed, at least temporarily, a thing of the past.

On the heels of the triumphant return of the Saar to the German Reich came measures instituted by Hitler which shattered the illusions many Germans had had. As early as March 9, the existence of a new German Luftwaffe was openly proclaimed, and on March 16, the day before “Heroes’ Memorial Day,” general conscription was reintroduced by means of a “Declaration to the German Volk.”

The Germans had barely begun to nourish hopes that, with the return of the Saar, things would settle down and a peaceful future was dawning. Hitler’s actions brought them up short. One must bear in mind that the dominant tendency in Europe at the time was to do away with regular armies and introduce defense-oriented militia systems in their stead. Standing armies based upon conscription service of several years were frowned upon.

Rumor had it at the time that general conscription—which existed in Great Britain, for instance, only during wartime—was also to be abolished in other countries. The German population at large regarded itself as particularly fortunate in this sense, for not only did the Treaty of Versailles not provide conscription duty; but it, moreover, stipulated only a professional army of 100,000 men, which meant that there were no obstacles to the introduction of a militia system based upon voluntary service.

On the basis of what Hitler had been stating in his speeches, the introduction of compulsory labor service was anticipated but by no means general conscription, for the latter was viewed as a clear indication of a country’s intention to conduct aggressive warfare.

Hitler was perfectly aware of the blow this measure had dealt to the German people and thus did not dare to schedule any elections or plebiscites during 1935—notwithstanding his repeated claim that a statesman's appointment should be confirmed anew each year by the people in elections.¹ As late as August of 1934, he had stated to Ward Price, "Every year I take one opportunity or another to present my powers to the German Volk."²

The reintroduction of general conscription caused less consternation to the Western Powers than had been expected. As noted above, they displayed a willingness to allow Hitler free rein as long as his actions could be justified as a claim to equal rights or as a principle of the *ius gentium*; they would, however, act immediately as soon as he fired the first shot.

Great Britain condoned the reinstitution of general conscription in Germany by dispatching its Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, and Lord Privy Seal Anthony Eden to Germany in March and subsequently concluding a naval pact in June which fixed German tonnage at one-third that of Great Britain's.

Hitler was hence in a position to legally step up rearmament. In the autumn of the year, those born in 1914 commenced their military service, the first to be drafted for duty.

On the Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg, three laws were proclaimed: the notorious anti-Semitic racial laws and—less known but at the time the most important one for Hitler—the "Reich Flag Act."

The compulsory labor service Hitler had propagated so enthusiastically in 1933 and 1934 finally did become law on June 26, but was limited to a mere six months.³ In the course of time, it was revealed to be what Hitler had always envisioned, namely a pre-stage to military service, which was thus extended, for all practical purposes, to two and a half years.

The SA was also assigned its new function in 1935: that of preparing German youth for military duty by training them for the SA Sports and Defense Badges.

The Stahlhelm, whose function as a so-called *Wehrverband* and militia-like organization had always irked Hitler, was finally dissolved on November 8, 1935.

Report and Commentary

1

On New Year's Day, Hitler issued a "Proclamation to the National Socialists and Party Comrades" which bore implicit witness to the existing animosity between the Party and the Reichswehr:⁴

The great reformatory work on the Volk and the Reich will go on. The battle against unemployment and social distress will go on.

The enemies and dreamers who have again begun to believe themselves capable of tearing the National Socialist German Volk and the German Reich asunder and overthrowing the regime they so despise by a flood of written lies and accusations will, in twelve months' time, be likewise disproved by harsh reality as was the case in the year now lying behind us.

Every attempt to do damage to Germany will ultimately be rendered unsuccessful by the discipline and loyalty of the National Socialist Party and its adherents as well as by the unshakeable will and perseverance of its leadership.

Yet our most fervent wish for this year 1935 is the return of that German territory which shall proclaim on January 13 with the voice of blood to all the world its indissoluble affinity with the German Reich.

Long live the National Socialist Movement! Long live our united German Volk and German Reich!

Munich, January 1, 1935

Adolf Hitler

The traditional New Year's reception for the diplomatic corps was given by the German Head of State in Berlin.⁵ Attired in a tailcoat, Hitler reciprocated the congratulations proffered by the Apostolic Nuncio, Orsenigo, with the following remarks:⁶

Your Excellency!

It is with sincere gratitude that I may accept the congratulations Your Excellency has extended to me and to the German Volk on behalf of the diplomatic corps and at the same time on behalf of your sovereigns and Heads of State at the beginning of the new year. You have spoken, Your Excellency, of humanity's fervent wish for the preservation of peace and have rightly stressed that, without the guarantee of peace, there is no hope of fruitful

progress in any area of human activity. You can rest assured that these words reflect the opinion of the entire German Volk.

No other country can be more deeply conscious of the need for peace than Germany, which has combined all its forces for an inner reconstruction after hard years full of misery and suffering, which wishes to perform the work of reconstruction in peace and which demands, for its own vital rights, merely the same recognition and respect from other countries which it in turn accords to them. Germany's policies, based unshakeable upon these principles, will make it always a dependable guarantor of peace.

Your Excellency, you have pointed out difficulties and troubles arising from the present situation; for my part, I adhere to your view that they are indeed solvable given the good intentions of all. I do not see any problem in the relations between peoples which would not be conducive to an amicable solution if handled with understanding! I also am not prepared to believe that these good intentions are lacking today in any responsible circles abroad. The German Volk and its government are determined, in any case, to make their contribution toward fashioning the relations between peoples in such a way that a genuine cooperation is ensured on the basis of equality of rights and that this alone will guarantee the welfare and progress of mankind.

May the new year bring us closer to this lofty aim! It is with this hope I may, on behalf of the German Volk and on my own behalf, extend to you, Your Excellency, and you, Gentlemen, as well as to your Heads of State, your governments and your peoples, my warmest wishes for the New Year!

As mentioned above, in the preceding weeks Hitler had been extremely depressed by the increasing friction between the Wehrmacht on the one hand and the Party and the SS on the other. The Saar plebiscite was nearing, and he planned to reintroduce general conscription immediately when this territory once more became a part of the Reich. Hundreds of thousands of young men would swell the ranks of the Reichswehr, doubtless increasing its influence, while the Party would be forced into a supporting role—a fact of which the generals and Party leadership were well aware. But what alternative did Hitler have? He had made up his mind to accomplish his foreign policy goal of conquering new Lebensraum in the East using conscription soldiers serving two-year terms. Later, when he had achieved his aims, he would naturally send the generals packing and structure the army according to pure Natural Socialist principles. In the meantime, however, it was his conviction that he needed the Reichswehr generals, and he had no qualms about German youth entering the reactionary “School of the Nation.”⁷ His exclusive objective at the time was to overcome the resistance of the Party and to impress upon the generals that he would by no means disarm the SS as they wished.

While Hitler did flatter the generals, he certainly did not intend to place himself in their power and sacrifice his SS elite guard. The question was how to lend more emphasis to his wishes; another Rohm Purge, for instance, was not a viable alternative. Faced with this difficult situation, he conceived of an inventive solution relying upon his rhetorical talent to arouse sympathy. This ploy had been very successful during the crisis surrounding Strasser in December of 1932, and what had worked with party leaders might well also prove effective with the upper echelons of government and the Wehrmacht.

Thus Hitler scheduled a “Rally of German Leadership” in Berlin on January 3.⁸ The term “German Leadership” (*Deutsche Führerschaft*) had not been used prior hereto; it was created for the purposes of this rally and never used again thereafter. The expression was, however, understood to signify that the leaders of both the Party and the armed forces were to constitute a single unit for the occasion.

Unfortunately, there is no verbatim record of Hitler’s January 3 speech addressed to the “German Leadership” in the State Opera (Unter den Linden). If one lends credence to the accounts of those in attendance, his speech did not differ substantially from the one delivered to the NSDAP Reichstag deputies in December 1932. He began with a long version of the “party narrative,” enumerated his own achievements, and then, ostensibly close to tears, confessed that he would not be able to continue the work of reconstructing Germany unless all of the leaders of the Party, the State and the Wehrmacht represented a single unit devoted to no one else but him.

It has been reported that here—as on the occasion of the Strasser crisis—Hitler publicly threatened to commit suicide. In any case, the speech accomplished its purpose, due in no small part to the fact that Hitler had placed the necessity for an en-bloc effort within the context of the approaching Saar plebiscite. His performance was greeted with thunderous applause, for no one wanted to bear the blame were the beloved Führer to suddenly suffer a nervous breakdown and decide to put an end to it all. Rudolf Hess, who chaired the rally, subsequently gave the floor to Göring, who—again, just as during the Strasser crisis—expressed the unanimity of all present in moving words. Particular emphasis was put on the fact that he was speaking as a “high-ranking National Socialist leader and at the same time as a Reichswehr General and a Member of the Reich Cabinet”—thus personifying the synthesis of all “German leaders” present—when he read his “Address of Gratitude and Devotion.”

Following Hitler's convincing play-acting, the well-behaved participants were treated to yet another performance that evening at the State Opera. A specially selected ensemble, conducted by General Music Director Erich Kleiber, presented Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, staged for the sole enjoyment of this elite "German Leadership."

On the next day, German newspaper readers were surprised to find the following official report of this somewhat extraordinary rally at the Berlin State Opera:⁹

Berlin, January 3

At the Rally of German Leadership, following the welcoming remarks of the Prussian Minister-President, the Führer took the floor to deliver a speech characterized by electrifying power and inner faith. He first presented a retrospective on what lies behind us, on the achievements and accomplishments of the past year of which we can be proud, and then cited the prospects for the work of the coming year.

In connection with the forthcoming Saar plebiscite, the Führer discussed the flood of lies which has now once again been launched against the Reich. The same elements which persecuted the National Socialist Movement and heaped upon it lies and slander for fourteen years in Germany were today, in foreign countries, returning to these same methods because they had no other means at their disposal with which to attack the new Germany. The Führer then proceeded to show, in a tone of heavy sarcasm, how they attempted over and over again to create the impression of mistrust and discord between Germany's leaders according to their old, worn-out recipes. Their slogan was, "Lies always spread faster than the truth. For that reason lie, and keep lying—perhaps some of it will catch on."

Nothing could be too stupid and too brazen but they would do it. They were, the Führer said, simply speculating on the forgetfulness and stupidity of the people. But in the end they always succumbed to the same mistakes. They had, for instance, up to now repeatedly forecast the dates for the "German collapse" too prematurely—to their own detriment—only to have their own prophecies shown up as lies. Even if now, after these experiences, they had become more cautious and were predicting the next action and catastrophe in Germany only for January 14, intending that their lie would not be revealed before the plebiscite, this maneuver would not be much help at this stage.

On January 13, the Führer stated, it is necessary that our brothers who wish to return to the homeland after fifteen years of brave resistance will be able to return to a homeland worthy of them, and the opponents must realize all the more that any thought of gambling on the age-old ill from which Germany is still suffering, on our lack of unity, would be in vain this time. "They should not think that they only have one of us before them; rather, they should all know that, as concerns the defense of German honor and the defense of peace and the vital interests of the nation, they are faced with the entire German nation, today's entire State, as a single sworn unit."

In gripping words repeatedly interrupted by showers of applause on the part of the entire German leadership corps, the Führer spoke of the indissoluble bond of fate between all those serving the nation and its future by working together in mutual trust toward the great goals of National Socialist Germany. No difficulty could ever be greater than our will, our faith, our decency, our solidarity, and our shared work.

In closing, the Führer responded to the New Year's congratulations which had been extended to him:

"I would like to reciprocate these New Year's wishes to you as representatives of the entire German Volk and to add one more: May the Almighty God not only keep you and our Volk healthy, but may He also make us truly strong of spirit for the coming year so that we may do justice to all of the tasks confronting us.

"In this year, too, we wish to extend our hands to one another in boundless trust and, as before, march into a year not only of struggle and difficulty, but also of victory, as a community which is unshakeable."

In a show of applause powered by deep emotion, the assembled leaders thanked Adolf Hitler for his remarks, giving a spontaneous demonstration of their loyalty and affection. The adage, "Where he treads, no treason lurks; there stands the guard of loyalty" is quite fitting.

Following the Führer's speech, Rudolf Hess returned the floor to Prussian Minister-President Hermann Göring¹⁰ who, in his joint functions as a high-ranking National Socialist leader, Reichswehr General and a Member of the Reich Cabinet, read an address on behalf of those attending:

"Mein Führer!

"Caught still in the grip of the powerful words which you have just imparted to us, I may assure you in this address that we are all moved to the innermost and to the utmost; that we are willing, as a united whole, to follow you as comrades unto death. In this spirit and in this sense, the German leadership assembled here may address you as follows:

"The members of the Reich Government and the Reich Leadership of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the Reichsstatthalters and the representatives of the Land Governments, the heads and officers of the Wehrmacht, the commanders and officers of the Land Police, the Gauleiters of the Party, the Leaders of the SA, the SS, the NSKK, the Labor Service, the Feldjägerkorps, and the Hitler Youth assembled here may thank you for your impressive and arresting words.

"The words of trust which you have given us fill us with deep-felt pride. An irresponsible and transparent campaign abroad is hoping in vain, with a view to the forthcoming plebiscite in the Saar which will bring our German brothers back home, to arouse unrest and mistrust in order to weaken the steady stance of the loyal Saarlanders by senseless, fabricated lies and rumors at home and abroad.

"It is with loathing and indignation that we stand up against these machinations stemming from interested parties. The holders of the highest offices in the Reich, State and Party who have been appointed by virtue of your confidence; the generals and officers of the Wehrmacht and the Land

Police; the well-trying leaders of the SA and SS troops; and all others present who occupy outstanding positions in public life pledge to do everything to put a speedy and thorough end to these malicious lies by steadfastness, enlightenment and vigorous action.

‘The attempt to wear us down with this clever and systematic press campaign should and will fail because of our nerves of steel and our mutual loyalty and dedication.

‘This year as well, we shall all follow our Führer in blind obedience, filled by the unshakeable faith that all of your feelings, thoughts and your untiring work are dedicated solely to the thriving and flourishing of the German Volk, a Volk which wants nothing but to live in peaceful equality of rights with all other peoples while upholding its honor and its freedom.’

“I appeal to all of you to reaffirm this vow by calling out: Three *Sieg Heils* to our dearly beloved Führer.”

As one body, the assembled rose and joined in the *Sieg Heil* with jubilant enthusiasm. Then the Führer’s deputy, Rudolf Hess, announced the close of the rally of German Leadership.

The day ended quite festively with a performance of *Tannhäuser* at the State Opera, attended by the Führer. The opera house was reserved exclusively for those present at the major rally in the afternoon, and the inner determination and unanimity of the audience was displayed outwardly as well by the overwhelming number of party uniforms. It may well be that every single member of the audience had the feeling of being, in his place, important to the will of the Führer and valuable to the Movement.

The Führer was seated in the front row of the large center box. Next to him sat Reichsstatthalter von Epp; General von Blomberg; the Führer’s deputy, Hess; Minister-President Göring; SA Chief of Staff, Lutze; and the Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels.

By virtue of his sentimental speech on January 3, Hitler succeeded in at least temporarily smoothing out the most pressing differences between the NSDAP and the Reichswehr. After general conscription was instituted, the conflicts between the Party and the generals resurfaced, particularly because the latter renewed their efforts to gain influence in the state and the civilian sector by means of their newly created *Soldatenbund*¹¹ (Soldiers’ League). The animosities smoldered on into 1938.¹²

The positive outcome of the “Leadership Rally” freed Hitler from the mental pressure from which he had been suffering. He was so euphoric that he spent the next day with Goebbels touring the Neubabelsberg film studio and visiting film sets.¹³

On January 11, he received the Reichskommissar for the Saar, Gauleiter Josef Bürckel, in the Reich Chancellery and gave him last-minute instructions concerning the plebiscite.¹⁴ On January 13, the vote

was taken determining the future of the Saar under the protection of the League of Nations and neutral troops dispatched by Great Britain, Holland, Sweden, and Italy. The voting procedure was supervised by three hundred commissioners appointed by the League of Nations. Three alternatives were submitted: the status quo, union with France, or reunion with Germany.

Counting the ballots took some time, so that the results were not disclosed until 5:15 a.m. on January 15. The announcement was made by the president of the voting commission, Rhode, and its Secretary-General, Vellemain. 445,000 votes (90.5 percent) had been cast for reunion with Germany; 46,000 for the status quo, and 2,000 for union with France.

Hitler was informed of the results by Gauleiter Bürckel per telephone on the Obersalzberg. He then delivered the following speech on radio from the Post Office at Berchtesgaden:¹⁵

Germans!

An injustice which has existed for fifteen years is coming to an end! The suffering to which so many hundreds of thousands of Volksgenossen in the Saar have been subjected during this time was a suffering shared by the German nation!

The joy at the return of our Volksgenossen is a joy shared by the entire German Reich. Fate willed that it not be superior reason which would end this both pointless and regrettable situation, but a section in a treaty which promised to bring peace to the world and led instead only to endless suffering and constant discord.

Our pride is therefore all the greater that, after fifteen years of violating the voice of the blood, it has now, on January 13, 1935, made its most powerful profession of faith!

There is one thing we all know, my dear Volksgenossen of the Saar: the fact that today, in a few hours, the bells will ring throughout the German Reich as an outward expression of the proud joy which fills us, is something we owe to you Germans in the Saar, to your sheerly unshakeable loyalty, to your self-sacrificing patience and persistence, and to your bravery.

Neither force nor temptation have made you waver in the faith that you are Germans, just as you have always been, and as we all are now and will remain!

Hence I may extend to you as the Führer of the German Volk and Chancellor of the Reich, in the name of all Germans whose spokesman I am at this moment, the gratitude of the nation, and may assure you how happy we are at this hour that you are once again united with us as sons of our Volk and citizens of the new German Reich.

It is a proud feeling to be chosen by Providence as the representative of a nation. In the next few days and weeks, you, my Germans of the Saar, will

be the representatives of the German Volk and the German Reich. I know that you will not forget in the coming weeks of joy over the victory—just as you did not forget in the past under the most difficult circumstances—that there are those whose most fervent desire it is to find fault in your return to the great homeland, even after the event. You must therefore continue to maintain the strictest discipline!

The German Volk will be all the more grateful to you because you have taken upon yourselves a decision that will remove tensions in Europe which have weighed most heavily: for all of us wish to perceive in this act of January 13 an initial and decisive step toward a gradual reconciliation among those who, twenty years ago, stumbled into the most horrible and least fruitful battles of all time, victims of fate and human fallibility. Your decision, my dear German Volksgenossen of the Saar, today makes it possible for me to submit a declaration, as our selfless, historic contribution to the pacification of Europe which is so vital: when your reintegration has been effected, the German Reich will place no more territorial demands upon France!

I believe that, in doing this, we are also expressing to the other powers our appreciation for faithfully scheduling this plebiscite in cooperation with France and ourselves and for making it possible that it subsequently be carried out.

It is our unanimous wish that this German end to such a tragic injustice will contribute to a greater pacification between the peoples of Europe. For just as our determination to gain and ensure equality of rights for Germany is great and absolute, our resolve not to evade those tasks which are a necessary part of bringing about genuine solidarity among the nations in the face of today's perils and crises is equally great.

You, my German Volksgenossen of the Saar, have made a significant contribution to increasing the awareness of the indissoluble community of our Volk and of the inward and outward value of the German nation and today's Reich. Germany thanks you for this from millions of overflowing hearts.

Welcome to our dear, shared homeland, to our united German Reich!

On the same day, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Reichskommissar for the Saar, Gauleiter Bürckel, from Berchtesgaden:¹⁶

On the occasion of the wonderful conclusion to fifteen years of separation of the Saar from the Reich, please accept my most sincere gratitude for the exemplary work you have done. At the same time, I may ask you to pass on my thanks to the leaders of the German Front. Let them know that we are very proud and filled with joy.

Mit herzlichem Heilgruss,

Your Adolf Hitler

On January 16, Hitler granted an interview at the Obersalzberg to the American journalist Pierre Huss, a correspondent for the Hearst Press:¹⁷

Question: Herr Reichskanzler, what is your opinion of the outcome of the Saar plebiscite?

Answer: The results of the plebiscite fill me—and every single one of my staff—with infinite pride in the German Volk. At the same time, this is a subsequent condemnation of the Peace Treaty of Versailles of truly historic dimensions. For in this Treaty, this region was torn from Germany on the grounds that 150,000 French lived there. After a fifteen-year rule of the League of Nations and thus ultimately of France, it has now been ascertained that not 150,000, but a scant 2,000 French reside in this region, i.e. not even four French per 1,000 inhabitants of the Saar. How can anyone be surprised no good can come of a treaty based upon such incorrect assumptions?

Question: Will the Social Democrats or Communists in the Saar and other non-National Socialist inhabitants of this territory who have cast their ballots for Germany have anything to fear in the future due to their former political leanings?

Answer: Sixteen years ago, I began my struggle for Germany with six men; that means my struggle for the German Volk. The number of my followers, to wit, the followers of the National Socialist Movement of the new State, has risen to nearly thirty-nine million since then. Do you think that all these people did not belong to some other party before? No, at one time they were all part of some movement or another.

They have been won over to the National Socialist idea with labor and with time. And we will not give up this struggle for the soul of our Volk now. Therefore, we never ask what an individual was in the past, but what he wants to be today. This is how we have succeeded in dissolving the feuding German parties and formed a true Volksgemeinschaft in which former Communists and adherents of the Center coexist, joined in their mutual struggle for the National Socialist State, the new Reich. But a part of this Reich is the Saar, and its inhabitants comprise a part of our Volk.

Question: Herr Reichskanzler, you have frequently stated that the last obstacle to amicable relations with France would be removed when the Saar question was settled. In view of your untiring, further pursuit of this goal in the interest of world peace, do you have a specific plan in mind?

Answer: I have frequently stated that, after the return of the Saar to Germany, I would place no further territorial demands on France. I have repeated this statement definitively today before the whole world. In historical terms, it is a very difficult thing to renounce this as I am doing in the name of the German Volk. But I am making this most difficult sacrifice in order to contribute to the pacification of Europe. One cannot expect more from Germany. It is now up to the rest of the world to draw the consequences of such a decision. Never shall I—and never shall the new German Reich—consent to any limitations to the rights of our people. We wish to be a peaceful Volk, but under no circumstances without honor.

We are willing to make a very big sacrifice, but never to renounce our freedom. We reject any differentiation between moral equality and factual equality: there is but one equality of rights, and that is the right of a sovereign

state and a sovereign nation. If the world recognizes this, there is no need for grandiose plans to fortify peace in Europe.

Question: Herr Reichskanzler, do you now, after your great success in the Saar plebiscite, have anything to say which might be of particular interest to the American people?

Answer: I have but one request to address to the American people. For years now and in the past months, millions of American citizens will have been hearing and reading the opposite of what has now been affirmed in this free and open ballot on the Saar. I would be happy if this were to be taken cognizance of so that, in the future, no one will any longer believe a word of what the professional international well-poisoners and rabble-rousers among our emigrants say. Just as they lied about the Saar, they are lying about Germany and, in doing so, practically lying to the whole world.

The American people should hear only eyewitness reports on Germany and, if possible, personally come to Germany in order to see for themselves a State whose regime is today supported by the overwhelming majority of the nation.

An interview with Ward Price followed on January 17.¹⁸ Noteworthy is the fact that, although Ward Price emphasized the “fait accompli of the restoration of German arms,” Hitler did not deign to utter a single word on the subject.

Question I. Under which conditions could Germany return to the League of Nations?

Answer: Neither I nor anyone else in Germany would even consider placing any “conditions” on our possible return to the League of Nations. Whether or not we return to this body depends exclusively upon whether we can belong to it as a completely equal nation. This is not a “condition,” but a matter of course.

Either we are a sovereign state, or we are not! As long as we are not, we have no business in a community of sovereign states. As long as the National Socialist Movement is leading Germany—and that will be the case for the next few centuries, no matter how often our emigrants conjure up the opposite view—this opinion will not change.

Incidentally, I stated this explicitly in my May speech in 1933.¹⁹ I would like to stress that the German Volk feels that the differentiation between “moral” and “factual” equality is an insult.

Whether or not sixty-eight million people are morally equal in this world or not is ultimately something which can be decided by no one save the respective people itself.

Either one is factually equal, and consequently morally equal as well; on the other hand, if one is morally equal, there is no reason why one should contest factual equality of rights or simply refuse to grant them.

Question II Will it be necessary to separate the general provisions of the League of Nations from those of the Treaty of Versailles?

Answer: As long as the League of Nations constitutes only a treaty of guarantee for the victorious nations, it is by no means worthy of its name. The fact that, with time, this League—which was presumably designed by its founders to exist for all eternity—cannot be coupled with a Treaty the short term of which is inherent in its own weaknesses and impracticabilities, is a point which can perhaps be contested by today's interested parties, but which will one day be deemed a matter of course in history.

Question III Should the recognition of equality of rights be a precondition, or could granting equality of rights and rejoining the League take place simultaneously?

Answer: German equality of rights is the prerequisite for any participation on Germany's part in international conventions and agreements. I certainly am not alone in the world with this demand; I am in the best of company. Let it be said that no self-respecting people and no responsible government would be able to think or much less act differently in such a case. The world has already seen a great many wars lost in the past.

If in the past, after every lost war, the unlucky vanquished were divested forever of their honor and their equality of rights, the League of Nations would even now have to be satisfied with a whole series of non-equal and thus ultimately dishonorable and inferior nations. For there is hardly a state or nation in existence which has not once had the misfortune, even if it was in the right a thousand times over, to be defeated by a stronger opponent or a stronger coalition.

Until now, this abominable absurdity has not yet been able to gain a foothold in the world, and we are determined to ensure that Germany will not be the first to set an example for the introduction of such an absurdity.

Question IV Does Your Excellency not find that a reform of the League of Nations is called for? What practical steps would this entail? Which arguments could be used to obtain public support?

Answer: Since we are not in the League of Nations in any case, we do not devote our attention to reflecting on its internal reforms.

Question V. Recently I spoke with a high-ranking political personage in France. I asked him the following:

Why does France choose not to recognize the fait accompli of the restoration of German arms? We English always hold that it is more sensible not to ignore such facts.

The politician replied to me:

Yes, we believe that Germany will uphold a policy of reconciliation only until the Reichswehr judges itself capable of successfully waging a war. In France, there is fear that the overtures to the French associations of front-line soldiers are only a camouflage to conceal aggressive future intentions.

What is Your Excellency's reply to this fear?

Answer: That politician has never led a people. Otherwise how could he believe that one can talk about peace for a decade and then suddenly, with the same people, simply start a war without further ado? When I talk about

peace, I am expressing none other than the innermost desire of the German Volk. I know the horrors of war: no gains can compensate for the losses it brings. The disastrous consequences of widespread European butchery in the future would be even worse. I believe that the madness of Communism would be the sole victor. But I have not fought this for fifteen years to elevate it finally to the throne by way of a detour. What I want is the well-being of my Volk! I have seen that war is not the highest form of bliss, but the contrary: I have witnessed only the deepest suffering. Hence I can quite frankly state two of my beliefs:

1. Germany will never break the peace of its own accord, and
2. He who would lay hands upon us will encounter thorns and barbs! For we love liberty just as we love peace.

And if, without being compelled to do so, I submit to France on behalf of the entire German Volk the pledge that we will place no further territorial demands upon it and thus of our own accord eliminate any grounds for revenge, at the same time I pledge an equally sacred vow that no measure of need, pressure or violence will ever move us to relinquish our honor or our equality of rights.

I hold that this must be said, for treaties only make sense when concluded by honor-loving peoples and honor-conscious governments. Germany wishes to establish honest relations with the peoples of neighboring countries. We have done this in the East, and I believe that not only Berlin but Warsaw as well will rejoice in the decontamination of the atmosphere brought about through our joint efforts. I hold to my conviction that, once this path of mutual understanding and consideration has been taken, more will come of it in the end than through ever so extensive pacts inherently lacking in clarity.

In any case, I will reflect a thousand times over before I allow the German Volk to become entangled in agreements whose consequences are not readily evident. If, on our own account, we do not intend to wage war, we are much less willing to do so for interests which do not concern Germany and are alien to it. I may add that we have more than once stated our willingness to conclude non-aggression pacts with the states neighboring our own!

On January 22, at the eighty-fifth birthday celebration of General von Litzmann in Berlin-Nikolassee, Hitler made a short speech and presented the General with a new car for his birthday.²⁰

The evening of the same day, Hitler held a reception in the "House of the Reich President" for members of the diplomatic corps.²¹

On the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact, Hitler received a correspondent of the *Gazeta Polska*, Casimir Smogorzewski, for an interview on January 25, in which he stated in part:²²

The policy which we have adopted of respecting the peoples who live along our borders thus reflects our innermost conviction. [—]

I regard mutual protection of the nationalities as one of the most desirable goals of a superior leadership of state. It is, however, obvious that such a policy can only be successfully put into practice given mutual consensus.

On the subject of the centralized German state, he declared:

The transference of the organizational structure which the NSDAP has long since set up to form the later structure of the Reich will come about of its own, with the necessary corrections, as a natural development in the course of time.²³

Hitler's reply to the question, "Which of the great thinkers of the past had a significant influence upon Your Excellency?" was evasive. He held himself to be such a remarkable personage as to make this query nearly an affront: everything the great thinkers of the past had merely been able to envision was now personified in himself. He stated:

It is very difficult to count the number of thinkers who have made stimulating contributions to every great idea of the past. Our entire way of thinking originates to an overwhelming extent in the products of the mental labors of the past and is only in small part the product of our own thoughts. The important thing is to organize the body of thoughts passed down by the great thinkers of former times reasonably and effectively and to draw the resulting logical consequences. What good is knowledge when one does not have the courage to use it?

By drawing the practical political conclusions from a host of intellectual and scientific findings, we have overcome the lethargy which had become completely sterile, giving decisive impetus to our life as a nation.

At the end of January, Hitler received a number of British politicians for unofficial talks in the Reich Chancellery, among them Lord Allen of Hurtwood of the Labour Party²⁴ and Lord Marquess of Lothian of the Liberal Party.²⁵ The discussion revolved around the question of disarmament, Germany's return to the League of Nations, and its participation in a collective security system.

Just as the Party's commemoration of the Lippe Landtag election on January 15, 1933 had been eclipsed by the Saar plebiscite, the commemoration of the *Machtergreifung* on January 30 passed quietly. Too preoccupied with the preparations for his announcement of general conscription to deliver a lengthy address to the Reichstag, Hitler opted for a proclamation, citing as reasons Hindenburg's decease and the forthcoming return of the Saar, which was to become "the greatest celebration of the year." The wording of the proclamation was as follows:²⁶

To the German Volk!

Two years ago, on this day and at this very hour, National Socialism gained power and thus the responsibility in the German Reich, following a drive unequalled even in the history of parliamentary government.

Just as, not only in the recollections of living witnesses but for coming generations as well, the outbreak of the World War represents an historic transition, so does the accession of National Socialism represent such a transition for our German Volk.

It has put back on its feet a nation wasting away in dull despair and instilled in it a strong, believing faith in the inner worth and creative power of its own life.

And this is its greatest and most significant merit. The transition of the external symbols corresponded to the change in the people themselves! In joyful self-discipline, countless millions of our Volk have placed themselves at the service of the new idea. The soldiers of the Wehrmacht so rich in tradition took their places beside the zealous fighters of our revolutionary National Socialist Party. There came to be a mobilization of human forces of hitherto scarcely conceivable dimensions. From the throngs of millions of our youth up to the gigantic community of the mental and manual workers (*Arbeiter der Stirn und Faust*) united in a single front, we see the evidence of the National Socialist art of organization and work of organization.

The old world was not first destroyed to build the new; the new world on the rise has surpassed the old.

Not for a single second did a break interrupt our National Socialist Revolution. At no stage of our advance and our battles did chaos reign. It was the least bloody revolution in world history, but nevertheless one of its most far-reaching! Thus the attempt to try to deny or falsify the character of our National Socialist Revolution by means of an international campaign of agitation and lies was ultimately futile.

Hundreds of thousands of men and women of all nations who have been placed, in the past two years, in a position to judge Germany with their own eyes have become witnesses to the greatness and discipline of the National Socialist uprising. And they remain the best witnesses to our work of reconstruction.

On January 30, 1933, I asked the German Volk for four years' time to implement the first labor program, and now, in merely half that time, more than two thirds of what was promised has been delivered!

Hence no democratic government in the world can submit itself with greater trust and greater confidence to the will of its people than the National Socialist Government of Germany!

We did not carry out the revolution for the sake of a revolution; rather, our will to rebuild a new German Reich required the elimination of the old powers weighing it down. The overwhelming majority of all our former adversaries has long since apologized to us in their innermost heart of hearts. What we have always hoped for has come to pass. They subjected our intentions and our work to a just examination and ultimately found in us and through us the fulfillment of everything they had not otherwise yearned for

in the depths of their hearts: a Germany of honor, freedom and social good fortune. And if, this year, we are not commemorating this day with large-scale festivities, it is because of the feeling of sorrow which overcomes us in view of the death this past year of the man who, two years ago, entrusted to me and hence to the National Socialist Movement the leadership of Germany. Stirred most deeply, we are all mindful of the fate which led our Movement from the past to the future in so symbolic a fashion.

Furthermore, the greatest celebration of this year should not be a celebration commemorating the takeover of power, but a celebration of joy on the day the Germans of the Saar return. They will encounter a Volk worthy of them and a Reich in which it is once more a thing of good fortune for a German to live. They will encounter a Volksgemeinschaft in which innumerable millions of people, from the National Socialist fighter to the soldier, from the worker to the civil servant, are working together in true comradeship to honestly fulfill their duties in the reconstruction of a state and the education of a nation whose wish it is to be full of honor, peaceful and industrious in this world.

Berlin, January 30, 1935

Adolf Hitler

Notwithstanding the massacre of June 30, 1934, Hitler apparently felt no qualms about once again referring to the National Socialist Revolution as the "least bloody in world history."

January 30 marked the promulgation of several domestic laws of lesser significance, among them the new German Municipal Ordinance, a Reichsstatthalter Act and two laws concerning the reintegration of the Saar.²⁷

In Berlin as well, the activities commemorating the takeover were restricted to general tribute-paying in front of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler received Professor Dr. Friedrich Grimm, pioneer of the national cause and known to be a Francophobe.²⁸

On the same day, he also received the Reich Minister of Economics, Kurt Schmitt, who had been on leave and now requested that he be relieved of his post for reasons of health; Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, was appointed his successor. On January 31, Hitler sent the following telegrams of confirmation to Schmitt and Schacht:²⁹

Dear Reich Minister,

In view of the fact that you have not been fully restored to health, you requested being relieved of your posts as Reich Minister of Economics and Prussian Minister of Economy and Labor. To my sincere regret, I feel myself obliged to grant this request. I may extend to you my utmost gratitude for your knowledgeable, selfless and devoted efforts toward the reconstruction of the Reich. The fact that the German economy was led out of its threatening state of decay and put on the path of recovery and invigoration within a relatively short time is due in part to your resolute efforts.

January 30, 1935

You, my esteemed Reich Minister, have assured me of your willingness to place your powers and your experience at the service of the Reich when you have completely regained your health. I thoroughly appreciate this willingness and thank you for same.

Extending my best wishes for the speedy and complete restoration of your health, I remain with the German salute,

Yours very truly,

Adolf Hitler

Dear Mr. Reichsbank President,

Reich Minister Dr. Schmitt has requested, in view of the fact that his health has not yet been fully restored, that he be relieved of his posts as Reich Minister of Economics and Prussian Minister of Economy and Labor. I have granted this request. I have assigned to you, Mr. Reichsbank President, the task of assuming the responsibilities of Minister of Economics and Prussian Minister of Economy and Labor. In the interim, you have received the decrees which I have passed in this context.

For six months you have successfully devoted your efforts to heading the two Ministries parallel to holding your office as President of the Reichsbank Board of Directors. I may extend to you my particular thanks and wish you much success in your endeavors to restore the German economy to health.

With the German salute, Yours very truly,

Adolf Hitler

Hitler apparently was in the vein for giving interviews during this period; on January 31, he spoke with Armando Bonaventura, a representative of the Portuguese newspaper *Diario de Noticias*, stating:³⁰

There is all the more reason for the relations between Germany and Portugal to be close and truly sincere because the current political situation in Portugal is inspired in many ways by those same principles and precepts which guide the National Socialist regime in Germany.

An interview with a reporter from the *Diario de Lisboa*, Felix Goreira, was published on February 7 containing similar statements.³¹

In early February, Hitler presented himself to the public eye on a variety of occasions,³² attending a concert of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra on February 2, the horse show tournament "Nations' Prize" on February 3, and the inauguration of the "largest film archive in the world" at the Harnack House in Berlin on February 4.

The following announcement was issued two days later: "The Führer's receptions scheduled for the next ten days are canceled due to important political talks."³³

Hitler nonetheless met with the new Japanese Ambassador, Count Mushakoji, on February 7. After having accepted the Ambassador's credentials, he delivered a short address:³⁴

Your Excellency!

I have the honor of personally receiving from Your Excellency both the letter of dismissal of your esteemed predecessor and the letter with which His Majesty the Emperor of Japan certifies your appointment as Ambassador Plenipotentiary.

It fills me with great pleasure that Your Excellency has found such warm words of praise for the German Reich in memory of your former work in Berlin and in remembrance of your deceased father's sojourn in Germany as a student. I may also thank you for the tribute which you have paid to the accomplishments of the German Volk and ask you to rest assured that your words will meet with a grateful response in Germany. It is with great respect that I recall the commendable service of your esteemed predecessor, who demonstrated at all times an avid interest in and a great appreciation for the task of building a new Germany.

The German Volk evinces unbounded admiration for the great Japanese nation, its time-honored culture and its outstanding achievements. It is my pleasure to be able to state that, on the basis of our spiritual alliance, the political and economic relations between our two nations have evolved against the background of sincere friendship, a friendship which, as you have stressed, has already become a tradition.

I welcome the fact that Your Excellency considers it your most noble duty to do your utmost toward further expanding our respective relations by patient cooperation based upon mutual respect. You can be certain that the Reich Government and I are guided by the same motives and will do everything in our power to facilitate the tasks of your high office.

On behalf of the German Reich, I may extend to Your Excellency a warm welcome.

On February 11, Hitler delivered an address in the Deutscher Hof Hotel in Nuremberg on the occasion of Gauleiter Julius Streicher's birthday:³⁵

For Streicher, the Führer explained, it certainly must be an uplifting feeling that his 50th birthday marked not only the turning point of a century but also of a millennium of German history. In Streicher he felt confident of having a man in Nuremberg who never wavered for a second and stood behind him unerringly in every situation.

On February 14, Hitler opened the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in the Berlin Exhibition Halls on Kaiserdamm with a lengthy speech. As in preceding years, he first discussed general aspects of transportation and then focused his attention on government measures promoting motorized traffic. In respect to the Autobahn and Volkswagen projects, he stated:³⁶

When the Reich Autobahn network is completed, Germany will be able to call its own the most modern system of roads in the world by far.

Tremendous evidence of peaceful progress! These measures are to be complemented by the task of creating a car for the people at large. I am happy to say that a brilliant designer has succeeded, with the cooperation of his staff, in completing preliminary plans for the German Volkswagen and will finally be able to test the first models beginning in midyear.

Hitler closed his speech by pointing out that the possibilities of producing synthetic rubber and synthetic gasoline were now theoretically given and stated, "Not only are our automobiles and motorcycles the fastest in the world; they are also, we can proudly say, the best."

Until now, Hitler had prudently kept the fact of German rearmament concealed from the German people, fearing their reaction; he had maintained repeatedly in his speeches and proclamations that Germany was a peace-loving country, a claim obviously at odds with his clandestine steps toward rearming. As Ward Price had pointed out on January 17 in no uncertain terms,³⁷ the accomplished fact of German rearmament had remained no secret abroad.

In early February, the British and French governments presented proposals in Berlin for general arms limitation, the conclusion of an Eastern Locarno Pact and an international convention prohibiting air raids. Hitler responded with delaying tactics, for naturally he would never consent to having the chains of Versailles merely replaced by a new set of shackles restricting his freedom to take military action. He found it wise, however, to wait until the Saar had returned before presenting his fait accompli to the Western Powers.

Thus he stalled, having the following answer dispatched to the British and French Ambassadors on February 15 on behalf of the Reich Government:³⁸

The German Government concurs with the British Government and the French Government in the sincere desire to promote a secure peace, for maintaining peace lies equally in the interests of Germany's security and in the interest of the security of the other European nations.

The German Government hails the spirit of trust which has characterized the exchange between the respective governments and which is manifested in the communications of the Royal British Government and the French Government. It shall thoroughly investigate the entire scope of the European questions posed in the first part of the communique of London. This investigation will be marked both by the spirit of our dedication to peace and by our concern for the security of the German Reich in its particularly exposed geographical position in the heart of Europe.

In particular, the German Government will assess which means can serve to ban the risk of arms races in the future, a risk which has come about due

to the reluctance of the highly-armed nations to comply with the disarmament required by the Treaty. It is of the conviction that only the spirit of voluntary agreement between the sovereign states as expressed in the Anglo-French communiqué can lead to lasting international terms in the arms sector.

The German Government welcomes the proposal to increase protection against unexpected aerial attacks by signing a convention as soon as possible to provide for the immediate aid of the air forces of the undersigned on behalf of the victim of a non-provoked air raid. The Government is fundamentally willing to make use of its air forces as a deterrent to violations of the peace. Thus it is inclined to find ways and means of achieving, as soon as possible by voluntary agreement with the governments in question, a convention which will guarantee the greatest possible security for all signatory parties.

The German Government holds that negotiations within a larger scope for which there is insufficient preparation will, according to the dictates of experience and common sense, be accompanied by friction which should be avoided in the interest of concluding this aerial convention, the effects of which represent a completely new departure. Before, however, the German Government takes part in such negotiations, it holds that it would be advisable to clarify a number of basic preliminary questions in separate talks with the governments involved. Thus it would appreciate if—following the Anglo-French consultations to date—the British Government were willing at this point, in its capacity as the participant in the London talks and simultaneously Locarno guarantor, to also take up direct negotiations with the German Government on this subject.

The German Government is in consensus with the view of the British Government and the French Government, to-wit, that the conclusion of an aerial convention would constitute a significant step towards solidarity between the nations of Europe and can be expedient in bringing about solutions to the other European problems satisfying all of the nations.

On February 18, Hitler congratulated the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin by telegram on the occasion of his seventieth birthday.³⁹

On February 21, he spent several hours inspecting infantry and artillery barracks in Frankfurt an der Oder, subsequently joining the Officers' Corps at their quarters for the evening meal.⁴⁰

In the preceding months, the Labor Service had been neglected in favor of Hitler's protegee, the Reichswehr, and a hush had fallen on the hitherto much-touted topic of compulsory labor service. The Reich leader of the Labor Service and Secretary of State former Colonel Konstantin Hierl took advantage of major land cultivation efforts in Emsland to rekindle support, sending a telegram to Hitler on February 22.⁴¹ In reply, Hitler merely expressed his appreciation for Hierl's show of loyalty and praised the cultivation work as a "model for the entire youth."

The customary festivities commemorating the birth of the NSDAP were held on February 24 in the Munich Hofbräuhaus. In a markedly aggressive mood, Hitler went through the ritual of the “party narrative” and then turned his wrath upon his domestic foes:⁴²

I have been a prophet so often in my lifetime, and you have not believed, but instead ridiculed and mocked me. Once again I will be a prophet and say to you: you will never return! [—]

All the dimwits who are counting on a return of the past would have to resolve to take the same path I took. That means that one of the nameless would have to come and take up the same struggle I took up,⁴³ but with one difference: I conquered democracy with its own madness, but no democrat can conquer us. I was able to eliminate our opponents when they had all the power and we had nothing, so let me say to you: today we have power, and you have nothing! You will surely not eliminate us.

Hitler held the erroneous opinion that foreign powers, too, would never be able to “eliminate” him. He stated:

The rest of the world will have to change its views. It will have to erase the fourteen years of German history before us from its memory and put in its place the memory of a thousand-year history prior thereto, and then it will understand that this Volk was without honor for fourteen years thanks to a leadership without honor, but was strong and brave and honest the thousand years prior thereto. And it can rest assured that the Germany which is living today is identical with the eternal Germany.

The humiliating interim is over! The nation is united in a yearning for peace and determined to defend German liberty. We want nothing but to coexist with other peoples in mutual respect. We do not wish to threaten the peace of any people. But we will tell the world that anyone who would rob the German Volk of liberty must do so by force, and each and every one of us will defend ourselves against force!

Never will I nor any government after me which is born of the spirit of our Movement affix the nation’s signature to a document signifying a voluntary waiver of Germany’s honor and equality of rights. Conversely, the world can also rest assured that, when we do sign something, we adhere to it. Whatever we believe we cannot adhere to, on principles of honor or ability, we will never sign. Whatever we have once signed we will blindly and faithfully fulfill!⁴⁴

On February 27, Hitler received Reich Bishop Müller in the Chancellery to discuss matters of church politics.⁴⁵ The next day he was visited by Gauleiter Bohle, the head of the NSDAP’s foreign organization, for an exchange concerning questions arising in connection with the return of the Saar.⁴⁶

On March 1, the official return of the Saar took place at the Parliament House in Saarbrücken at 9:30 a.m. A triumvirate appointed

by the League of Nations made the presentation to the government appointee, Reich Minister of the Interior Dr. Frick. At 11:15 a.m., Frick installed Gauleiter Bürckel as Reichskommissar for the Saar.

Coming from Mannheim, Hitler crossed the border to the Saar at Homburg at noon and arrived in Saarbrücken at approximately 1:00 p.m., where he took up lodgings at the Excelsior Hotel.

At 3:00 p.m., notwithstanding a torrential downpour, he inspected the ranks of the formations and party sections. Police troops and the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* brought up the rear, constituting the only armed divisions in the parade; the Saar—as the Rhineland—continued to be a demilitarized zone, and the Reichswehr was barred for the time being.

At 5:30 p.m., Hitler addressed the League of Nations' Commission of Three⁴⁷ consisting of its President, the Italian Baron Aloisi; the Argentinian Ambassador in Rome, Cantilo; and the Spanish Envoy, Lopez Olivan, and expressed the gratitude and appreciation of the German people to the League for having conducted the plebiscite. The League of Nations he had so abused had done an exemplary job in the Saar. Nevertheless, he found the mediating efforts of neutral powers bothersome and chose in 1938, for instance, to completely ignore the provisions of the Munich Agreement which called for the appointment of an international commission and required that plebiscites be conducted in certain districts of the Sudetenland.

At 6:00 p.m., Hitler delivered a major public speech at the City Hall Square in Saarbrücken. As he normally enjoyed good "Hitler weather,"⁴⁸ he felt obligated to explain the inclement weather manifest on this memorable occasion, doing so in less than plausible terms.

He also gave vent to his anger that "international bodies" [and not he] had initiated the return of the Saar, even scheduling the date for the rally. Hitler spoke as follows:⁴⁹

German Volksgenossen!

Two years ago, in 1933, I spoke for the first time before many tens of thousands of Saarlanders at the Niederwald Monument.⁵⁰ At that time, in the midst of one of the most difficult battles to establish our ideas and principles in the new Germany, I was filled by anxious concern for the future of the Saar. One year later I was already facing hundreds of thousands in Koblenz.⁵¹ Once more I was moved—as were you all—by a deep-felt concern for the future of this territory which had been torn from the Reich. At that time, we mutually pledged two things:

You promised me that, when the hour should come, you would stand up, man for man and woman for woman, in support of Germany.

You have kept your vow. I promised you that Germany would not desert you, never and nevermore, and Germany reciprocated and kept its promise; both times I was able to assure you with all my heart that I would be happy the day I would be able to reward you for coming to Koblenz.

At that time I promised that I would come to you in the initial hours of your freedom, and now I am happy to be here in your midst. It is my belief that we can all thank Heaven for having made possible that our third encounter does not find you as guests in the Reich, but that I am now able to come to you in your homeland, in our German Saarland, as Chancellor of the Reich and as your Führer. It is the latest possible date the international bodies could schedule for a rally in this territory. And I believe that is why the sky is overcast and is letting rain fall. We have not been deterred by this rain, for even if the sky is shedding tears, today we have had the sun in our hearts.

We are all so overjoyed to be able to take part in this happy day. This very minute countless millions of Germans are listening throughout the Reich. A happy day for the entire nation. From here to Hamburg, from Western Germany to Königsberg—everywhere the same sentiment: finally, finally you are back with us. But it is not only a happy day for Germany; I believe it is also a happy day for the whole of Europe. It was a hallowed decision to finally fix this day and to respect its outcome. To restore this territory, which so easily could have become a permanent bone of contention, to the German Reich, whence it had been torn with no right and no reason. A happy day for Europe particularly because this return of the Saar might perhaps best serve to remedy the crisis from which two great nations are suffering most. We hope that by virtue of this act of conciliatory justice reinstating common sense, we hope that by virtue of this act the relations between Germany and France will improve once and for all.

Just as we desire peace, so must we hope that our great neighboring people is also ready and willing to seek with us this peace. It must be possible for two great peoples to join hands to combat by mutual effort the crises which threaten to bury Europe beneath their weight.

And this day shall also be a lesson, a lesson to all those who, ignorant of an everlasting historic truth, delude themselves that terror or violence could strip a Volk of its innermost character; a lesson to those who imagine they could tear away a part of a nation to steal its very soul. May all statesmen draw one conclusion from this: that it is useless to attempt to tear asunder peoples and nations by such methods. In the end, blood is stronger than any documents of mere paper.

What ink has written will one day be blotted out by blood. This most profound voice, ringing loud and clear, will ultimately drown out every other sound. Woe to him who refuses to learn in the face of this certitude. He will bring distress and troubles upon mankind without achieving his goal. He will bring suffering and misery upon the peoples for a time, but in the end he will sustain a humiliating defeat.

Through this solemn plebiscite and this demonstration of belief in the Reich, you have rendered yet another great historic service. In a hard phase

of the struggle to rebuild the German Reich, you have made my own work easier with this belief.⁵² As God is my witness: this work has no other aim than to make Germany free and happy once more.

You have thus earned great credit and with it, a sacred right to celebrate this day of joy. And I am happy to be allowed to pass this day in your midst. May we today surrender to the embrace of happiness and joy, and tomorrow we shall return to work, to the great task of working for our new German Reich.

For we know that, whatever has been accomplished, and be it oh so wondrous, it is only a start, only the beginning of what we envision. You are not entering a finished building; you are entering a community of people which has just now been joined together. You shall help build and help work, and you shall be proud, you shall be happy that you were able and allowed to work together on the new German structure. It is a wonderful thing to turn the word *Volksgemeinschaft* into a reality. We shall now accomplish what many centuries past have vainly yearned for.

We first had to meet up with misery to make our Volk ready for this idea. Sometimes we are overcome by the feeling that everything which has happened is part of an unavoidable fate destined to lead us to where happier days unfortunately could not have brought us; the feeling that the hand of the Lord had to strike us to make us ready for this, the greatest inner good fortune there is, the good fortune of mutual understanding within one's own people.

What is external glory, what are external advantages in comparison to this greatest of possessions a Volk can acquire? We would be unable to understand the world, and the world would not comprehend us—if we did not first learn to understand each other.

That is the first step to a better future for mankind. We have earnestly pursued this route, endeavoring to rip from our inner depths vanity, class madness, and the arrogance of rank. We have endeavored to judge people on the basis of their inner worth, endeavored to depart from the mere appearance, from the superficial, endeavored to forget origin, rank, profession, wealth, education, knowledge, capital, and all those things which separate people from one another, in order to penetrate to what can join them together. To penetrate to the heart, to the character, to the conscience, to decency—and we have been rewarded. We have found rich treasures. We have been able to discover what we had not seen for centuries: the German Volksgenosse in every class of our Volk, in every rank of our Volk, in every profession. To rightfully address people of the highest value as “*Genossen*” of a Volk.

And it is as a witness on behalf of this community that I have come here to you, as a witness and as a fighter in this community which today joins together the millions who are Germans.

I know that Heaven does not bestow perfection upon men. Their lot is to earn all, hard and painfully. And I know that today this great goal is far from being achieved in full. But we strive for it with burning hearts, and Heaven and Providence have blessed our efforts. For there is one thing I can surely

say: may my opponents at home and the opponents of the German Volk everywhere bear one thing in mind: fifteen years ago I began my struggle for Germany with a handful of people, and it was difficult to spread beyond this handful, to spread into the environment, out into a city, out into a Land, out of a Land and into the German Reich. Fifteen years of struggle, and when I take stock of the result today, I must thank Heaven, for it blessed the struggle and blessed it again and again. The struggle has not been in vain. Fifteen years of struggling for a Volk, fifteen years of fighting for a Reich, and today I am able to welcome you in the German homeland on behalf of this Volk and on behalf of this Reich.

I have come to you today, but this shall be only the first of many visits. I shall return, and I shall speak to you again.

But now I could wait no longer. It would have been impossible for me to have spent today sitting in Berlin or somewhere else, impossible⁵³ to pass this day in inner turmoil and impatience.

I have come because my heart has led me here to you to tell you how infinitely happy the German Volk is and how happy I myself am.

I shall return and then—I hope—speak to you many times over.⁵⁴

It is a wondrous evolution this Movement has made. A truly unique rise from the smallest beginning to such a large following. This evolution gives all of us the confidence that the undertaking will be completed, that we will not only envision the great aim, but perhaps even live to see it materialize. You are now invited to take part in this work. I ask you to give to the new Reich the virtues you have retained these fifteen years. For fifteen years you kept the faith. I beseech you: keep the faith in the new Reich, too; believe in its future, believe in the task and in its accomplishment, believe in the success of this task, believe in the freedom, believe in the greatness and permanence of our Volk.

If you had not had faith as your support during these fifteen years, what would you have left? If you had not had faith during these fifteen years, who would have been your leader? Faith can move mountains; faith can also free peoples.⁵⁵ Faith can fortify nations and lead them to rise again, however humiliated they may have been.

And you have remained loyal for fifteen years. And once more I ask of you: place this loyalty in the new Reich! You were loyal, regardless of what you were offered; you were loyal, regardless of what you were promised. You did not weigh the material advantages. And so I ask of you: be just as loyal in the work you are taking on, be loyal in this new Reich, be loyal to this Movement, loyal to this German Volksgemeinschaft, never be distracted by what those outside our ranks promise us, never forget:

We were just as loyal when Germany was at its worst; it was then we hoisted the flag. When Germany was most deeply humiliated, it was then we unfurled the flag of faith, the flag of commitment to this Germany. We did not say: we are ashamed of being Germans; we said: we are prouder than ever to be Germans.

And we have never asked what else we might be offered, have never weighed what we were actually offered; we believed in Germany, and we

remained loyal to it every hour of the day, in every crisis, in every danger, through all the wretchedness and through all the misery. And I ask you to give this loyalty to the new Germany, your Germany, our Germany.

And I ask you too to give this Germany your will. What good is a man who does not establish a goal which he pursues with zealousness and determination? The will is a tremendous force when used persistently by someone persistently striving towards his goal. It was your will to return to Germany, and your will has triumphed. It was our will to lead Germany once again to the top, and as you see, our will has triumphed.

When Germany sank into the depths of humiliation, our will to establish the German Volksgemeinschaft grew. When Germany split into classes and ranks, our will to overcome them and make the nation ruler over its own life grew. And the will triumphed. Germany has become one, a new banner has gone up, and there, beneath the waving banner, march the millions in step; there marches the entire German nation.⁵⁶

I ask you to transpose the will of the last fifteen years, the will that inspired you, now fresh and alive, onto the new Reich and enter into it with the one great resolution of serving it. Enter with the resolve to subordinate yourselves to this Reich and to place yourselves at its disposal.

If you thus enter our Reich, the Reich we have all built together, the Reich which is ours because no one gave it to us, for the German Volk itself created it; if you thus enter this Reich, you will all be happy! Then you will be happy in knowing that you have not accepted a gift but achieved something magnificent by your joint effort.

Happiness and good fortune are things you cannot be given. The utmost good fortune which can be bestowed is the conviction of having accomplished something through one's own effort. You will be as blessed with this good fortune as we all already are today, for we are proud of the fact that we were the ones who designed and hoisted this flag fifteen years ago, and by virtue of our work it today constitutes a symbol of mutuality everywhere Germans are.

We are happy knowing that we were given nothing by others,⁵⁷ but have achieved all in a thousand battles, in untiring work, by our diligence and our will, with our loyalty and with our faith. And you will be just as happy in fifteen or twenty years, when Germany will be completely free, when Germany, as a nation of peace but also as a nation of freedom and honor, will once more supply its sons and its children with daily bread. You will be happy and proud in knowing that you, too, have contributed to winning this wealth for our Volk. Gathered here in this evening hour, we wish to look not only at the past but also gaze into the future; we want not only to rejoice in our accomplishments, but to establish new goals for the work which shall lie before us.

We shall turn our gaze from the past and fix it on the future of our Volk. There we see the tasks to which we are assigned, and we are pleased, for we have no desire to be a generation which simply takes what is given and which expects things to fall into its lap; we would rather end our days with the feeling: we have met our obligations, we have done our duty. That is the utmost good fortune.

March 1, 1935

When today we set our sights on the future, our goal appears to be this new Reich of a more noble Volksgemeinschaft, this new Germany of a purer *Volksgenossenschaft*; our goal appears to be this Germany which is as peace-loving as it should be strong and must be honorable and true!

And to this Germany, which we all see before us at this moment, we shall now swear our oath. It is to this Germany we wish to devote ourselves in this solemn hour, it is under its spell we wish to fall as long as we breathe, and we wish to confirm this oath together now, man for man and woman for woman:

To our Germany, our Volk and our Reich: *Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil!*

2

Back in Berlin on March 2, Hitler appointed seven new Reichstag deputies from the Saar.⁵⁸ On March 4, he dispatched a telegram to Kemal Atatürk, congratulating him on his re-election as President of Turkey.⁵⁹

In the meantime, unwelcome tidings had reached Berlin: British Foreign Secretary Sir John Simon and Lord Privy Seal Anthony Eden had announced their visit to Berlin for March 7 to personally discuss Hitler's note of February 15.

Hitler was hardly satisfied with the date, for he was on the verge of announcing general conscription and planned to land this coup prior to the arrival of the British statesmen. Hence Hitler conveniently developed a cold—not surprising, considering the downpour in Saarbrücken (!)—and had the following official statement published on March 5:⁶⁰

As a consequence of his visit to Saarbrücken, the Führer has caught a slight cold accompanied by extreme hoarseness. At the recommendation of his physician, talks scheduled for the near future have been canceled to spare his voice. Under these circumstances, the Reich Government has relayed, via the Reich Foreign Minister, to the English Ambassador the request that the scheduled visit by the English Ministers be postponed.

On March 5, Hitler received bad news in a personal vein. His old comrade in arms, Gauleiter and Bavarian Minister of Culture Hans Schemm⁶¹ had crashed in his plane near Bayreuth and was seriously injured. Hitler immediately dispatched a telegram with wishes for his recovery, but Schemm did not survive the accident more than a few hours.

Upon receiving word of his death, Hitler exclaimed, "If I lose Germany, I can win it back again. But one of my best men is irretrievably lost."⁶² The remark, made spontaneously, reveals the pessimism under-

lying Hitler's views on his rule in Germany. Despite his vociferous claims that he would never surrender power, he did not rule out one day perhaps "losing Germany."

He sent the following telegram to Schemm's widow on March 6:⁶³

Most severely shaken by the misfortune of my old, loyal party comrade and fellow fighter, may I offer you my deep-felt condolences.

Adolf Hitler

At the funeral in Bayreuth on March 9, Hitler was in attendance but did not speak "due to his health."⁶⁴ The eulogy was delivered by Rudolf Hess.

The same day, Hitler had the foreign governments informed that Germany once again had an Air Force (Luftwaffe), a fact which amounted to a unilateral abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles.⁶⁵

This announcement—made, as was Hitler's wont, on a Saturday⁶⁶—has been interpreted as a trial balloon sent up to allow the German dictator to gauge reaction abroad one week prior to his introduction of general conscription.⁶⁷ While this may be true in part, the main reason lay certainly in his wish to unveil the Luftwaffe in time for the Heroes' Memorial Day festivities on March 17.⁶⁸

In the interim, the English journalist Ward Price had visited Joachim von Ribbentrop,⁶⁹ at that time Reich Commissioner for Disarmament, and inquired as to Hitler's illness.⁷⁰ He received the reply that the Führer's illness was by no means serious—but neither was it a diplomatic maneuver, as Ward Price had suspected. Ribbentrop clearly indicated, however, that the British White Paper of March 4⁷¹ had elicited bitter disappointment in Germany.

On March 9, Hitler had Foreign Minister von Neurath inform the British Ambassador that he would be taking a two-week rest in Bavaria and hoped to be able to meet with the English statesmen for talks at the end of March.

Hitler had gained fourteen days' time, exactly the right period, in order to make general conscription an accomplished fact in the interim. The alleged two weeks of convalescence in Bavaria dwindled to a scant week and on March 14, as a prelude to the announcement, Hitler outlined the future military sports function (!) of the SA in the following decree:⁷²

The new State requires a robust, hardy race. The *weltanschaulich* training of the spirit must be accompanied and reinforced by an aggressive training of the body by means of simple, useful and natural physical exercises.

In order to give added impetus and direction to the efforts of our youth, I am renewing the award of the SA Sports Badge⁷³ for the entire SA and all of its former sections; it is to be awarded upon completion of a conscientiously absolved period of training when an achievement test has been passed.

In order to lend a more conscious expression to the cultivation of military spirit (*wehrhafter Geist*) in every area of the German Volk, I further direct that this SA Sports Badge may also be acquired and worn by non-members of the Movement insofar as they fulfill, within a racial and *weltanschaulich* sense, the National Socialist requirements.

The implementation provisions will be issued by the Chief of Staff.

The Supreme Commander of the SA: Adolf Hitler

On Friday, March 15, Hitler returned to Berlin to confer that evening with several ministers and to convene a ministerial council for 1:00 p.m. the following day.

The goal was now in sight: the reintroduction of general conscription was scheduled to be announced the day before Heroes' Memorial Day. Hitler had once again deliberately chosen a Saturday, believing that the Anglo-Saxon world was incapable of making a decision over the weekend.

His alleged bout of bad health again proved quite opportune, for he was thus naturally relieved of having to speak personally. For good reason he was apprehensive of a possible unfavorable reaction in the German populace and shunned, as was his custom in such situations, direct contact with the people.

It is absolutely false to claim that the announcement was "received with enthusiasm;"⁷⁴ the opposite was in fact the case. The German people, having a vague premonition of the consequences which would ensue from this step, responded with a baleful silence. Conscious of this widespread feeling, Hitler did not risk holding a plebiscite at any point in 1935.

In the cabinet, however, the news might well have elicited a different reaction, to judge from official bulletins. The Reich Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, let out a chorus of three "Heils" for Hitler and renewed his pledge of unshakeable loyalty and solidarity. That Saturday afternoon, Hitler received the ambassadors of France, Great Britain, Italy, and Poland and informed them of the Government's decision to reintroduce general conscription.⁷⁵

At 4:00 p.m., Goebbels met with representatives of the Berlin and foreign press and read them the "Statement of the Reich Government." In this proclamation, Hitler justified his step with the all-purpose reputed Bolshevik threat inherent, he argued, in the existence of a

Soviet Army comprising 101 divisions. As grounds for the move he also cited the two-year military service recently introduced in France, which had been well-timed for his purposes,⁷⁶ and indulged in enumerating dozens of figures allegedly documenting Germany's reduction in arms after the World War. The German people and the entire world were to hear these numbers—59,000 pieces of heavy artillery, 130,000 machine guns, etc.—time and time again in the years to come. For all his juggling of figures, Hitler overlooked the fact that the world judged him by his actions and not by the dialectic reasoning with which he attempted to rationalize them.

Hitler's statement of March 16 read as follows:⁷⁷

To the German Volk!

When in November 1918 the German Volk—trusting in the guarantees of Wilson's Fourteen Points—laid down their arms after four and a half years of valiant resistance in a war they had never wanted, they believed they were doing a service not only to tormented mankind, but to a great idea in and of itself. Having suffered the most from the consequences of this insane fight, the millions comprising our Volk faithfully reached out for the concept of restructuring the relations between peoples, which was to be consummated by abolishing, on the one hand, the secrets of diplomatic cabinet politics and, on the other, the instruments of horror themselves. Many Germans thus viewed the harshest consequences of defeat in history as an avoidable sacrifice in the interest of ridding the world once and for all of similar horrors.

The concept of the League of Nations awakened perhaps in no other nation more fervent support than in the German nation, so forsaken of all earthly possessions. This alone explains the fact that the—to some extent patently absurd—conditions which destroyed all prerequisites for and any possibility of defense were not only accepted by the German Volk but also fulfilled by it.

The German Volk and especially its respective governments at the time were convinced that compliance with the disarmament provisions stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles in accordance with the auspices of this Treaty would lead to and guarantee the start of a general international reduction in arms.

Only such bilateral accomplishment of the purpose of the Treaty could morally and rationally justify a demand which, unilaterally imposed and carried through, would necessarily have resulted in the perpetual discrimination and thus a certification of the inferiority of a great nation.

Hence such a peace treaty could never have constituted the basis for any genuine inner reconciliation between peoples and a pacification of the world thus brought about, but a basis only for the growth of an ever-gnawing hate.

Germany has fulfilled the obligations imposed upon it to disarm, as . verified by the Allied Control Commission.

The work of destroying the German armies and their resources as verified by this Commission was as follows:

a) The Army: 59,897 guns and barrels; 130,558 machine guns; 31,470 trench mortars and barrels; 6,007,000 rifles and carbines; 243,937 MG barrels; 28,001 gun carriages; 4,390 trench mortar carriages; 38,750,000 shells; 16,550,000 hand grenades and rifle grenades; 60,400,000 live fuzes; 491,000,000 pieces of handgun ammunition; 335,000 tons of shell cases; 23,515 tons of cartridge cases; 37,600 tons of gunpowder; 79,500 ammunition gauges; 212,000 telephone sets; 1,072 flamethrowers; 31 armored trains; 59 tanks; 1,762 observation vehicles; 8,982 wireless stations; 1,240 field bakeries; 2,199 pontoons; 981.7 tons of equipment for soldiers; 8,230,350 pieces of reserve equipment for soldiers; 7,300 pistols and revolvers; 180 MG sledges; 21 mobile workshops; 12 anti-aircraft guns; 11 limbers; 64,000 steel helmets; 174,000 gas masks; 2,500 machines of the former war industry; 8,000 rifle barrels.

b) The Air Force: 15,714 fighter planes and bombers; 27,757 aircraft engines.

c) The Navy: destroyed, scrapped, scuttled or surrendered Navy warship material: 26 capital ships; 4 armored ships; 4 battle cruisers; 19 light cruisers; 21 training ships and special ships; 83 torpedo boats; 315 submarines.

The destruction of the following was also required: vehicles of all types, gas and in part anti-gas defense equipment, propellants, explosives, searchlights, sighting devices, range finders and sound rangiers, optical devices of all types, tackle, narrow-gauge devices, field printing presses, field messes, workshops, cut-and-thrust weapons, steel helmets, ammunition transport wagons, normal and special machines of the war industry, clamping devices with drawings, aircraft and airship hangars, etc.

After compliance with this Treaty, a feat unparalleled in history, the German Volk had the right to expect that the other side also perform the obligations it had undertaken.

Bear in mind: 1. Germany had disarmed. 2. The Peace Treaty had explicitly required that Germany be disarmed as a precondition for universal disarmament, i.e. this fact alleged that the existence of Germany's arms alone constituted the reason for the armament of the other countries. 3. Both the governments and the parties of the German Volk were caught up at that time in a conviction which concurred in every way with the pacifist and democratic ideals of the League of Nations and its founders.

However, while Germany fulfilled its obligations as one party to the Treaty, the other party to the Treaty failed to perform its obligation. And that means: the esteemed parties thereto from the former victorious nations have unilaterally breached the Treaty of Versailles.

It was not enough that not a single reduction in arms was made which was in any way comparable to the German destruction of weaponry; nay; there was not even a moratorium on arms production, but the opposite: the arms of a whole series of nations finally came to light. The new machines of destruction which had been invented during the War were now perfected in peacetime, in methodical and scientific work. In the field of developing powerful land tanks as well as new fighting and bombing machines, constant and terrible improvements were made. Huge new guns were built and new high-explosive bombs, incendiary bombs and gas bombs were developed.

Since then the world has once again been reverberating to the sound of battle cries, as though there had never been a World War and a Treaty of Versailles had never been concluded. In the midst of these highly-armed nations of war, ever better-equipped with the most modern motorized forces, Germany was a vacuum where power was concerned, completely at the mercy of any threat and any danger which any of them might pose.

The German Volk recalls the misfortune and suffering of fifteen years of economical impoverishment, and political and moral humiliation. Hence it was understandable when Germany began to raise its voice to urge that the promise of the other states to disarm be kept. For one thing is clear: not only could the world endure one hundred years of peace; it would view it as an immense blessing. One hundred years of being torn apart as victor and vanquished is something it cannot, however, endure.

This feeling on the moral justification and necessity of international disarmament prevailed not only in Germany but also in many other nations. At the urging of these powers, attempts were initiated to bring about a reduction in arms by means of conferences and with it a general international alignment at a low level. This resulted in the first proposals for international disarmament agreements, and of these, we recall most vividly that made by MacDonald.⁷⁸

Germany was willing to accept this plan and to have it form a basis for agreements to come. It failed for lack of the other nations' support and was finally abandoned. Due to the fact that, under such circumstances, the equality of rights solemnly guaranteed to the German Volk and Reich in the statement of December 1932 did not become a reality, the new German Reich Government saw itself, as protector of the honor and the vital rights of the German Volk, in no position to continue participating in such conferences or to remain part of the League of Nations.

However, even after withdrawing from Geneva, the German Government was nonetheless willing not only to examine proposals made by other states, but also to submit its own practical proposals. In doing so, it adopted the self-styled attitude of the other nations that the creation of short-term armies is unsuitable for the purposes of an offensive attack and thus was to be recommended for peaceful defense.

It was thus willing to transform the long-service Reichswehr into a short-service army in compliance with the wishes of the other nations. Its winter 1933/34 proposals were practical and feasible. The fact of their rejection along with the definitive rejection of the similarly construed Italian and English proposals was an indication, however, that the other parties to the Treaty were no longer inclined to subsequently fulfill their respective obligations to disarm in accordance with the Treaty.

Under these circumstances, the German Government felt compelled to take of its own accord those steps necessary to ensure that an end be put to a situation which was both unworthy and ultimately threatening and in which a great Volk and Reich were powerless and defenseless. In doing so, it was following the same reasoning which Minister Baldwin⁷⁹ expressed so accurately in his last speech:

‘A country which shows itself unwilling to make what necessary preparations are requisite for its own defense will never have force, moral or material, in this world.’

The government of today’s German Reich desires but a single moral and material force—that is the force to preserve peace for the Reich and thereby for the whole of Europe as well.

It has therefore continued to do what was in its power to promote the cause of peace.

1. Quite some time ago, it proposed the conclusion of non-aggression pacts to all of its neighboring states.

2. It sought and reached a treaty arrangement with its eastern neighbor which, thanks to the high degree of accommodating understanding, has, it hopes, once and for all mitigated the threatening atmosphere which existed when it took power and will lead to a permanent understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

3. It has finally given France its solemn pledge that Germany will not make or place any further territorial demands upon France now that the Saar question has been settled. It believes that it has thus created, in a form rarely matched in history and by making a difficult political and material sacrifice, the basis for the termination of a dispute between two great nations which has lasted centuries.

The German Government must, however, observe to its regret that a continuous increase in arms has been taking place in the rest of the world for months. It sees in the creation of a Soviet-Russian army consisting of 101 divisions, i.e. an allowed force of 960,000 in peacetime, a factor which could not have been foreseen when the Treaty of Versailles was concluded.

It views the acceleration of similar measures in other states as further evidence of the rejection of the concept of disarmament formerly proclaimed. The German Government by no means intends to make accusations against any particular nation. However, it is compelled to note that, with the introduction of a two-year term of service in France which has now become law, the ideas underlying the creation of short-service defensive armies have been abandoned in favor of a long-term organization.

This constituted, however, one of the arguments for insisting that Germany abandon its Reichswehr at the time.

The German Government feels that under these circumstances it is impossible to delay any longer the measures required for the security of the Reich or indeed to refuse to inform its environment of these measures.

In now complying with the wish the British Minister, Baldwin, made on November 28, 1934, that light be shed upon Germany’s intentions, it is doing so:

1. in order to give the German Volk the conviction and the other states notice that the preservation and security of the German Reich is once again entrusted from now on to the German nation’s own strength;

2. that, by establishing the limits of the German measures, it will invalidate allegations charging that the German Volk is striving for military hegemony in Europe.

What the German Government desires, as protector of the honor and the interests of the German nation, is to secure the measure of power essential not only for upholding the integrity of the German Reich but also for Germany's international respect and esteem as a co-guarantor of general peace.

For in this very hour, the German Government renews its resolve before the German Volk and before the entire world that it will never step beyond the bounds of preserving German honor and the freedom of the Reich and in particular shall never make of the German national arms an instrument of warlike aggression, but an instrument confined exclusively to defense and thereby to the preservation of peace.

The German Reich Government is confident in its hope that the German Volk, once more restored to its honor and enjoying independent equality of rights, may be granted the opportunity to make its contribution to the pacification of the world in unrestrained and straightforward cooperation with the other nations and their governments.

Bearing this in mind, the German Reich Government has passed the following law as per today's date, which is hereby promulgated:

Law on the Establishment of the Wehrmacht of March 16, 1935

§ 1. Service in the Wehrmacht shall be effected on the basis of general conscription.

§ 2. The German peacetime army, inclusive of the transferred troop-police,⁸⁰ is comprised of twelve corps and thirty-six divisions.

§ 3. The supplementary laws on the details of general compulsory military service shall be submitted by the Reich Minister of Defense to the Reich Ministry of Defense.

Berlin, March 16, 1935

The *Heldengedenktag* on March 17, 1935, was exceptionally suited to mark Hitler's reintroduction of general compulsory military service. The flags were flying full, raised from half mast; mourning for the victims of war was passé: it was time to celebrate the past and future heroes.

The troops of the Army, the Navy and the new Luftwaffe had assembled in Linder den Linden in Berlin attired in dress uniforms. Hitler held a review of the companies, accompanied by the generals and imperial Field Marshal von Mackensen, and subsequently pinned Crosses of Honor to the Army standards posted in front of the palace terrace. The troops then filed past Hitler and Mackensen. In the afternoon Hitler flew to Munich, where he was received at the airport by the local Reichsstatthalter, General von Epp, and made a short speech.⁸¹

On the same day, Hitler granted an interview to Ward Price in Munich, in which he took pains to paint the reaction of the German

public to the announcement of general conscription in positive colors.⁸²

1. In response to the question whether Germany was still as willing to negotiate with England and France as had been stated in his note of February 15, the Chancellor replied:

Establishing German military sovereignty is an act which restores the sovereignty of a great state which had been violated. It would be absurd to assume that a state which has become sovereign would be less inclined to negotiate than one which is not sovereign. It is for the very reason that we are a sovereign state that we are also willing to negotiate with other sovereign states.

2. Ward Price then asked the Chancellor whether Germany continued to feel bound by the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, to which the Chancellor responded:

The act of restoring German military sovereignty touches only upon those points in the Treaty of Versailles which have in any case long since lost their legal validity by virtue of the refusal of the other states to perform their respective obligations to reduce arms. The German Government is conscious of the fact that unilateral measures can never prompt a revision of the territorial provisions of international treaties.

3. In conclusion, Ward Price asked the Führer which impression the proclamation of March 16 had made on the German Volk. The Führer's reply was:

You yourself, Mr. Ward Price, saw the mood of the German Volk in Berlin, and you have now seen it in the South of the Reich, in Munich. It is no different in any other place in Germany. And this may make something clear to you: the German Volk perceives of the German Government's action taken yesterday not so much as a military, but as a moral step.

It has suffered for fifteen years from provisions by which it felt that a self-evident, intrinsic right of each and every people was violated. Had the world disarmed on an international scale, the German Volk would have been more than satisfied. But the fact that the rest of the world was arming itself while denying Germany any right to self-defense was perceived as a monstrous and degrading desecration. And that this defenseless position provoked an incessant stream of humiliations over and above that, begins to explain the proud satisfaction which the nation feels now that its honor has been restored.

If you were to now ask one of these millions whether he is thinking of peace or war, he would gaze at you in total incomprehension. For all these rejoicing people are moved not by some kind of animosity towards any one other nation, but solely by the satisfaction of knowing that their own Volk has regained its freedom.

They are moved by only a single idea: that they may once again, without having to be ashamed, count themselves as part of a great people. You do not understand this and are not able to understand it. Yet had you gone through anything similar to what the German Volk has gone through, you would

perhaps comprehend the emotions which overcome a person who has been kept for years in a dishonorable position and who has now, of his own accord, regained his honor.

And thus I am able, in the same proclamation with which I have re-established the military sovereignty of the German Reich, to plead loud and clear for peace and to offer our cooperation in securing that peace. The German Volk does not want war; it wants only the same rights as all others. That is all.

Abroad, criticism of Hitler's announcement was relatively low-key. On March 18, Great Britain delivered a solemn protest in Berlin but proceeded to ask whether Germany was still willing to enter into talks with Sir John Simon and Anthony Eden in the German capital.

The British put up no real resistance in the matter of general conscription, a fact Hitler attributed to their having become soft and senile.⁸³ In truth, Great Britain's basic policy was to concede to Hitler whatever was justifiable in terms of international law and to immediately draw the line should he take military action against another country. General conscription was perceived to be within the framework of German equality of rights and did not, in England's view, constitute a *casus belli*—notwithstanding the fact that solving this problem by international consensus and integrating Germany in a European system of defense would have been preferable.

Hitler, however, was determined to personally take what he judged his due, irked by the feeling of being passed over whenever his demands were met by international agreement as had been the case at the return of the Saar in 1935 (Treaty of Versailles) and at the surrender of the Sudeten territories to Germany in 1938 (Munich Agreement).

France and Italy required more time to put their resolutions against Hitler's action of March 16 on paper, not handing over their protest notes until March 21 in Berlin. Mussolini still dared to defy his fellow dictator while the Polish, having learned the role assigned to them, refrained from comment.

Hitler acted the part of the convalescent for several more days. On March 19, he drove by car to Stuttgart, where he stayed at the Viktoria Hotel, having stopped along the way in Augsburg to visit the Golden Hall in the City Hall. The next day he proceeded via Heidelberg and Darmstadt on to Wiesbaden, where he spent three days recuperating at the Rose Hotel health resort, attending a concert at the spa center and a performance of *Aida* at the State Theater.⁸⁴

“Potsdam Day,” which had been celebrated on March 21 of the preceding year with a commemorative publication, went by the board in 1935, overshadowed by the decisive stride taken in military policy. Hitler, however, did think to pen the notation, “Potsdam Day, March 21, 1935”⁸⁵ on an insignificant decree concerning the integration of trade and industry in the German Labor Front, which closed with the following words:

The foundations for the new social administration of all working Germans have now, following the establishment of the German Labor Front, the issuing of the Law Regulating National Labor, and the organization of trade and industry, been laid by means of the new agreement. The agreement gives nothing away, but instead requires the highest achievement. It places the will to form a community foremost. This will⁸⁶ must pervade into the bottommost organs of our entire body of labor and economy. I know that every German Volksgenosse will earn the faith which I place in him with this new work.

On March 23, Hitler dispatched a telegram wishing Georg Hirst, Senior Musical Director in Munich and the composer of his particular favorite, the Badenweiler March, a happy birthday.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, Sir John Simon and Anthony Eden had been able to move the German Chancellor to reflect on an armament agreement, and three months later an Anglo-German naval treaty was signed.⁸⁸

On March 24, Simon and Eden arrived in Berlin and met with Hitler in the Chancellery for three extensive talks over the next two days.⁸⁹ The Führer even dined once at the British Embassy.

Hitler dealt with the British statesmen much as he had earlier with the German Nationalists, making no distinction between domestic and foreign policy. Claiming he was saving Europe from Communism, he presented his military steps as a contribution to European security for which Great Britain should be grateful, comparing himself to Blücher, who had come to Wellington’s assistance during the Battle of Waterloo and had not first asked whether or not his actions were in line with the treaties in force. How little the Englishmen were impressed by Hitler’s rhetoric is illustrated by the fact that Eden proceeded immediately on to Moscow at the conclusion of the talks with “Europe’s Deliverer from Bolshevism.”

For the first time on March 28, Hitler paid his respects to the new German *Reichsluftwaffe* in his function as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, viewing the Richthofen fighter group in Döberitz.⁹⁰ In a short speech he expressed his appreciation of the accomplishments he had seen.

On the same day he received the new Spanish Ambassador, y Cortijo, in the Chancellery to accept the latter's credentials, making a few welcoming remarks on the occasion.⁹¹

March 29 marked the premiere of a film by Leni Riefenstahl shown at the Ufa cinema near the Zoo in Berlin centering around the Reich Party Congress of 1934. The documentary showed a scenario that seemed to be arranged for a science fiction opus, but it was reality: column upon column of countless parade formations stand at attention in strict, clear lines, motionless, expecting their Lord and Master. From the wide celestial skies descends the Führer's plane as if bringing down to earth the Redeemer the world so eagerly awaits.⁹² Hitler himself had contributed the film's title *Triumph des Willens* which reflected his belief that, given sufficient will power, one could accomplish anything. He doubtless would have chosen the motto "Triumph of the Will" for the Congress itself, had the Röhm affair preceding it not called for a certain degree of reticence on his part.⁹³

On April 1, Hitler toured the Deutsches Museum in Munich.⁹⁴ The following day, he attended a state ceremony at the Berlin State Opera marking the incorporation of the judicial administration of the Länder into the Reich.⁹⁵

One day later, a reception for the Gauamtsleiters of the Winterhilfswerk took place in the Chancellery, at which Hitler repeated his pledge,⁹⁶ "We will never for all time give up the Winterhilfswerk!"

On April 4, Hitler held an evening reception for NSDAP Reichsleiters and Gauleiters at the "House of the Reich President" in Berlin.⁹⁷

Erich Ludendorff, retired General of the Infantry, celebrated his seventieth birthday in his house on the banks of the Starnberg Lake in Tutzing on April 9. The old fellows of the 1923 Putsch, Hitler and Ludendorff, had not been on friendly terms since 1925. Although their ideas did coincide, each felt superior to the other.

General Ludendorff had been one of the parties essentially responsible for spreading the legend of the "stab in the back." This propagandist allegation had it that the munitions workers' strike in October 1918, just as the German Army was purportedly at the threshold of victory, had been the cause of the dishonorable defeat of the invincible German forces. Although it might be understandable that Hitler and others who had fought in the war held this view, there is no excuse for Ludendorff's support of such an obvious fallacy. He had not experienced the war from a corporal's perspective, as the later dictator

had, but been instrumental in waging it as Quartermaster General from 1916 to 1918. In September of 1918, together with Hindenburg, he had petitioned the German Government to conclude an armistice within twenty-four hours in order to circumvent the otherwise inevitable military collapse. However, this did not prevent him from subsequently claiming, against his own better knowledge, that Marxists, Jews, Freemasons, and the Catholic Church had connived to bring about Germany's collapse.

In 1923, Ludendorff and Hitler had been on the same side; from 1925 Ludendorff rejected his former companion as being not sufficiently radical; strange as this may sound today, he viewed him as an "ultramontane"⁹⁸ and a *Judenknecht* (slave to the Jews).

Ludendorff's attitude naturally rankled Hitler, and his vanity would not allow that anyone in Germany of standing or reputation was not wholly—and publicly—supportive. Moreover, he intended to have Ludendorff enter into Valhalla when he died, just as he had sent Hindenburg⁹⁹ to the great hall dedicated to the war heroes in Norse mythology. Thus he enlisted all of his powers of persuasion to move Ludendorff to desist and adopt a *modus vivendi* of mutual respect. A reconciliation of sorts had come about between the two former comrades in arms by the time of Ludendorff's death in 1937;¹⁰⁰ however, in 1935, Hitler's essays in this direction were fruitless, despite his belief that his foe would finally come to view him as Germany's savior for having reinstituted military service.

Consequently he issued an "order" on April 8 in which he lauded Ludendorff as the "greatest German commander in the World War." This "Order of the Führer and Reich Chancellor"—no one was quite sure to whom it was addressed—read as follows:¹⁰¹

Tomorrow, on April 9, General Ludendorff is celebrating his seventieth birthday. With sentiments of deepest gratitude, the German Volk recalls on this occasion the immortal accomplishments of its greatest commander in the World War. In the grasp of this sentiment of a national debt of gratitude, I order that all state buildings exhibit flags on April 9.

Adolf Hitler

On April 9, Hitler had an honor guard appointed to the celebrant and dispatched the Reich Minister of Defense, von Blomberg, and the Chief of Army Command, von Fritsch, to relay his congratulations in Tutzing. Blomberg was also instructed to present the marshal's baton to Ludendorff, but the latter, the victorious commander per se, rejected the appointment.

Naturally the German public heard nothing of this affront, although it was rather obvious that the reports on the birthday festivities in Tutzing made not a single mention of the Chancellor. Following the "order" of April 8 and the military favors Hitler had bestowed upon Ludendorff, the absence of any word of thanks from the latter did appear curious.

On April 10, Göring was wedded to the actress Emmy Sonnemann in Berlin. Hitler acted as a witness at both the civil ceremony in the Berlin City Hall and the religious one in the cathedral.¹⁰²

The following day marked the beginning of a conference of the British, French and Italian Heads of State in Stresa at the Lago Maggiore which closed on April 14 with a unanimous condemnation of Germany's reintroduction of military service. This opinion was also confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations on April 17, which found, "By its independent action, Germany has violated the Treaty of Versailles and threatened the safety of Europe."

In spite of the consideration the British had shown Hitler, they were anxious to have the fact of Germany's abrogation of Versailles determined by an international body. This sequence of events was repeated even more starkly in 1936, when Hitler occupied the demilitarized Rhineland, thereby violating not only the Treaty of Versailles, but the Locarno Pact as well.¹⁰³

On April 20, Hitler first accepted the congratulations proffered by Generals Blomberg, Göring and Fritsch and Admiral Raeder. Chief of Staff Lutze, on behalf of the SA, presented Hitler with the *Horst Wessel* fighter group, "for restoring military sovereignty."¹⁰⁴ The new "standard of the Führer and Reich Chancellor" was raised at the Chancellery in honor of the day.¹⁰⁵ On April 28, Hitler toured the construction work in progress on the Congress grounds in Nuremberg.¹⁰⁶

May Day festivities commenced in Berlin with a youth rally in the Berlin Lustgarten, and Hitler's now-traditional speech climaxed in the statement, "German Youth! It is a great time you are experiencing. What is often not granted for generations is yours!"¹⁰⁷

Such references to the "great time" which German youth owed to Hitler became, from this point onwards, integral parts of his speeches at May Day festivities and Reich Party Congresses. The rally on the Tempelhofer Feld—this time the crowd numbered "only" one and a half million as opposed to the alleged two million the previous year—was not blessed by *Hitlerwetter* from the start, but obscured by thick

snowfall. However, “the moment the Führer set foot on the steps to the speaker’s platform, the sun broke through.”¹⁰⁸

Hitler made use of his speech before the assembled masses to vent his anger at Oswald Spengler and his book *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*),¹⁰⁹ alleging that these critics had now been proven wrong, for his—Hitler’s—success was obvious to all; moreover, his “forging anew” of the German Volk constituted “the greatest feat of this century.”

The speech began as follows:

German Volksgenossen!

The first of May—in days of yore the German Spring holiday. And another first of May—a day of strife and discontent, a day of our Volk being torn asunder in classes. And yet another first of May—the day marking the springtime of the nation! The day of the solidarity of a Volk in its work!

A great age has thus dawned once again for Germany. We say this knowing that the greatness of an age lies in the greatness of the tasks assigned to it and thereby to us. Great tasks, such as those vested in only few generations in history.

Yesterday we were still a powerless Volk, for we were strife-torn, falling out and apart in internal discord, fragmented into hundreds of parties and groups, leagues and associations, Weltanschauungen and confessions—a Reich built upon this fragmented Volk, equally weak and powerless, a mere plaything at the mercy of alien despotism! Small states deride it, small states deprive it of its rights and gag the people of this Volk. The economy was in the throes of death. Disintegration and ruin at every turn. Every principle had been abandoned. What had once seemed good became bad; what had been detestable was suddenly venerable. What was once meant to and able to give life more meaning was now passed off and perceived to be merely a burden to mankind. One author summed up the impressions of this age in a book which he entitled, *The Decline of the West*.

Is this then really the end of our history and hence of our peoples? No! We cannot believe or accept it! It must be called not the ‘Decline of the West,’ but the ‘Resurrection of the Peoples of the Western World’!

Only what has become old, rotten and bad dies. And it should die! But new life will generate. The will shall find the faith. This will lies in leadership, and faith lies in the people!

But all must believe in one thing. He who would tackle this great work of reorganization must begin with the Volk itself. First a new Volk, and with it the new age! Great tasks have always been accomplished only by strong leaders; but even the strongest leadership must fail if it does not have a faithful, inwardly steadfast and truly strong Volk standing behind it.

It is mankind’s misfortune that its leaders forget all too often that ultimate strength does not lie anchored in divisions and regiments or in cannons and tanks; rather, the greatest strength of any leadership lies in the people

themselves, in their unanimity, in their inner unity and in their idealistic faith. That is the power which, in the end, can move the mountains of resistance! But this requires a philosophy which the Volk understands, a philosophy which it comprehends and which it loves.

When we first set forth in 1919 as preachers of the National Socialist philosophy, we were a tiny little group of idealists or, as they said, dreamers, the object of ridicule. The critics have been proven wrong today. Some of them might also have striven for what has happened since, but they were incapable of bringing it about; in a historical sense, visible success is ultimately decisive for the correctness of a principle. And this here is documentary proof of this success which no one can forge: *one Volk in one Reich!*

Everything we have achieved would have been impossible; nothing we did could have been accomplished; there never would have been a January 30th; never a 21st nor a 16th of March; the external success would never have come about if the German Volk had not gone through an inner transition. The fact that we were able to give the German Volk a new philosophy and to lead it to a new type of life by means of this philosophy is the greatest feat of this century for our Volk. The greatest achievement which will outlive by far everything which can be accomplished in day-to-day work, thanks to this unique achievement.

Hitler then gave himself up to sentimental reflections on the poverty of the Germans compared to the wealth of other peoples, building up to the assurance that no one in the world need fear him. Even if he were given the gift of continents, he would still prefer to be the poorest citizen of the German Volk. The flowing rhetoric in which this noble message was clothed is as follows:

And this united nation—we need it, for when was a leadership confronted with a more difficult task than our German leadership? Bear in mind, my Volksgenossen, what our Germany is, and compare it to other countries. How little we have! 137 people per square kilometer, no colonies, no natural resources, no foreign currency, no capital, no foreign assets left, only heavy burdens, sacrifices, taxes, and low wages. What do we have compared to the wealth of other states, the wealth of other countries, the wealth of other peoples, the wealth of possibilities they have? What do we have? Only one thing: we have our Volk! It is either all, or it is nothing. Our Volk is the only thing on which we can depend. The only thing upon which we can build. Everything we have accomplished to date we owe only to its quality, its capabilities, its loyalty, its decency, its diligence, its sense of order. And when I weigh all of that, then it appears to me to be more than everything the rest of the world has to offer us. And that, I believe, is something we can well impart to other peoples on this first of May: you need not fear that we will place demands on you. We are proud enough to confess that the utmost—something you cannot give us—is something we have ourselves: our Volk.

As Führer, I cannot conceive of any task on this earth more marvelous and glorious than to serve this Volk. Were I given the gift of continents, I would

still prefer being even the poorest citizen of this Volk. And with this Volk it must and will be possible to accomplish the tasks of the future as well.

At the close of his speech, Hitler proclaimed that the demonstration was the greatest and most glorious in the world and that his will must be the faith of all.

And thus I ask of you: renew on this day of the greatest and most glorious demonstration in the world your vow to your Volk, to our community and to our National Socialist State. My will—and this must be the vow of each and every one of us—is your faith! To me—as to you—my faith is everything I have in this world!

But the greatest thing God has given me in this world is my Volk!

In it rests my faith. It I serve with my will, and to it I give my life!

May this be our mutual sacred vow on the day of German labor, which so rightfully is the day of the German nation!

To our working German Volk: *Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil!*

As in preceding years, Hitler also attended the ceremonial session of the Reich Chamber of Culture at the State Opera, at which Goebbels presented the national film award to Leni Riefenstahl for *Triumph des Willens*.

In the afternoon, Hitler received workers' delegations from the various Gaus and delivered a brief address.¹¹⁰

On May 2, the participants and heads of the delegations to the International Film Congress met in the Chancellery to hear Hitler expound at length on the significance of film in international cultural exchange.¹¹¹

On May 3, Hitler received the newly-appointed Bulgarian Envoy, Dr. Christov, and stressed in his welcoming remarks "the traditional amicable relations between Germany and Bulgaria."¹¹²

The next day he toured the new East Asia steamer *Scharnhorst* in Bremerhaven and commented in a short speech on the inauguration of "this most modern and fastest ship in the East Asia line" of the Norddeutsche Lloyd.¹¹³

On May 5, Hitler dispatched the following telegram to King George V of Great Britain from Berchtesgaden:¹¹⁴

I may request that Your Majesty accept my sincerest congratulations and those of the Reich Government on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Your Majesty's accession to the throne, coupled with best wishes for Your and Her Majesty's personal well-being.

The German Volk is following with warm-hearted understanding all of the endeavors of Your Majesty and the Royal British Government to safeguard the peace.

It hopes that these endeavors may be successful for the welfare of the British Empire and to the benefit of the entire world.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

On May 6, Hitler surveyed the new German Alpine route between Inzell and Berchtesgaden.¹¹⁵ May 11 saw him meeting with delegates of the World Association of Automobile Clubs at the Chancellery, where he talked of the “construction of the Reichsautobahn unique in all the world.”¹¹⁶

In response to the news of Marshal Pilsudski’s death, Hitler sent the following telegram to his widow, Alexandra Pilsudski, on May 13:¹¹⁷

The sad news of the decease of your dearly beloved spouse, His Excellency Marshal Pilsudski, has pained me to the quick. I may bid you, my dear madam, and your family accept my offering of deeply felt sympathy. My thoughts of the departed will always be those of gratitude.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

Göring was sent to attend the funeral services in Warsaw and Krakau as Hitler’s proxy, while the dictator himself went to a requiem mass held for Pilsudski in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Hedwig’s in Berlin.¹¹⁸

On May 19, Hitler delivered a short speech in Frankfurt at the opening of the Reichsautobahn segment between Frankfurt and Darmstadt.¹¹⁹

In a cabinet meeting on May 21, the time had finally come for Hitler to announce the new “German Military Service Act” (*Wehrgesetz*), which provided as follows:¹²⁰

§1

1. Military service is an honorable service to the German Volk.
2. Every German man is obligated to perform military service.
3. In the event of war, every German man and every German woman beyond the scope of military service is under obligation to serve the Vaterland.

§2

The Wehrmacht is the bearer of arms and the military training school of the German Volk. It comprises the Army, the Navy and the Luftwaffe.

§3

1. The Supreme Commander (Oberster Befehlshaber) of the Wehrmacht is the Führer and Reich Chancellor.
2. Subordinate to him, the Reich Minister of War has command over the Armed Forces as Commander in Chief (Oberbefehlshaber) of the Wehrmacht.

The most striking facet of the law's phrasing lay in the use of the word "war," which the National Socialists usually shunned due to its negative impact on the population at large.¹²¹ Particularly noteworthy in this context is also the fact that the Reich Minister of Defense was now renamed Minister of War. Although historic parallels¹²² were found for this step, the German public rightly viewed it as a portent of what was to come.

To be on the safe side, Hitler had reserved for himself the decision as to the length of military service, and even now he was disinclined to openly announce the two-year term he envisioned, preferring to dole out these bitter pills one at a time. On May 21, he issued a decree providing that the period of active military service for all members of the Wehrmacht was one year. There is no doubt that he planned to double this term before the first year of service had ended, but by that time the Germans would have become more accustomed and more amenable to the fact as such; moreover, he certainly would have no difficulty in manufacturing some plausible reason for the extension when time came.¹²³

However, at present he judged it expedient to deliver another "Peace Speech" before the Reichstag to reassure the world and the German people of his purported desire for peace and to assuage the consternation his new law had created with typically honeyed phrasing.¹²⁴ In essence, the speech of May 21, 1935 was a reiteration of Hitler's "Peace Speech" of May 17, 1933,¹²⁵ with the notable difference that his own position had become much stronger.

The 1933 speech had constituted something of an alibi for Germany's planned withdrawal from the League of Nations, and the 1935 speech was also an advance justification of Hitler's next coup: the occupation of the Rhineland. On May 2, France and the Soviet Union had signed a pact of mutual assistance; although this in no way violated the Pact of Locarno, Hitler stated on May 21:

The German Reich Government will particularly abide by all of the obligations arising from the Locarno Pact as long as the other parties are willing for their part to adhere to this Pact. The German Reich Government holds that respecting the demilitarized zone constitutes an enormously important contribution to the appeasement of Europe. It feels bound, however, to point out that the continued increase in troops on the other side can by no means be viewed as a complement to these endeavors.

These words served to outline in no uncertain terms the German objectives in respect to the Rhineland.

Hitler commenced his speech of May 21 with the claim that he spoke always “with complete openness and total frankness.” Moreover, he was a democrat extraordinary, having been lawfully elected as sole deputy by thirty-eight million Germans, Here he also inadvertently revealed how much importance he attached to the remaining 668 duly-elected deputies of the Reichstag.

It is my belief that making this type of statement is particularly useful, for it not only gives me the right but actually places me under obligation to be completely open and to speak about the various problems with total frankness.

The German nation has the right to demand this of me, and I am determined to obey. I frequently hear Anglo-Saxon countries express regret that Germany should have departed from the very principles of a democratic concept of state which are particularly sacred to these countries. This opinion is based upon a grave error. Germany also had a “democratic constitution.” The present German Government of the National Socialist State has also been appointed by the people and feels itself responsible to the people in the same way. It does not matter how high the number of votes in the individual Länder were. There are Länder which require 20,000 votes for one deputy. In others, 10,000 or even 5,000 suffice; in still others, the figure is 60,000 or more.

The German Volk elected a single deputy as its representative with thirty-eight million votes! That is perhaps one of the most significant differences in comparison to the conditions in the other countries. It means, however, that I feel just as responsible to the German Volk as any parliament would.

Hitler then launched into what was almost a word-for-word repetition of the views and ideas upon which he had expounded to the British statesmen in exhaustive monologues at the end of March,¹²⁶ from the “dictated peace” (*Friedensdiktat*) of Versailles to the peaceful mission of National Socialism, which he described with the following words:

The blood which has been shed on the European continent for the past three hundred years bears no proportion whatsoever to the outcome of events in terms of nationalities. In the end, France has remained France, Germany Germany, Poland Poland, Italy Italy, etc. What dynastic egoism, political passion and patriotic blindness have attained by rivers of blood in the way of seemingly far-reaching national and political changes served, in terms of the nations, only to scratch the surface of peoples, doing very little to really alter their basic parameters. Had these states devoted merely a fraction of their sacrifices to wiser aims, the resultant success would certainly have been greater and more permanent.

When I, as a National Socialist, uphold this opinion in total frankness, I am moved by yet another realization: every war initially devours the cream of the crop. But because there is no more unoccupied space left in Europe,

every victory—without effecting any change in the fundamental European misfortune—can at best bring about a numerical increase in the inhabitants of a given state. If, however, this means so much to the nations, they can accomplish it in a much simpler and above all more natural way than by shedding tears. A sound social policy can increase the willingness of a Volk to have offspring and thus, within only a few years, give to a nation more children of its own Volk than the number of foreign people who could be conquered and made subjects by war.

No! National Socialist Germany wants peace out of its innermost *weltanschaulich* convictions. It wants peace owing, too, to the simple and so basic realization that no war would be capable of essentially alleviating our widespread European distress, but would more likely increase it. Modern Germany is presently undertaking the enormous effort of repairing its inner damages.

None of our projects of material nature will be completed before ten to twenty years have passed. None of the tasks of an ideal nature which we have taken on can come to fruition in less than fifty or perhaps even a hundred years. Back then I started the National Socialist Revolution by creating the Movement and I have actively carried on this revolution. I know that all of us will witness only the very beginning of this great and sweeping development. What more could I want than peace?

But if they claim that this is the desire only of the leadership, I must respond with the following: even if only the leaders and those in government wanted peace—the peoples themselves have never wanted war! Germany needs peace, and it desires peace.

I have now heard from the lips of an English statesman that such assurances mean nothing and that the only guarantee of sincerity is a signature on collective treaties, and I may ask Minister Eden to take into consideration that it is, in any case, an ‘assurance.’ On occasion it is much easier to sign one’s name to a treaty, inwardly reserving the right to review one’s attitude in the decisive hour, than to declare—before an entire nation and completely out in the open—one’s support of a policy which serves the cause of peace because it rejects the prerequisites of war.

I could have put my signature on ten treaties, and the weightiness of such an action would not have had the same significance as the statement I made to France on the occasion of the Saar plebiscite. When I, as Führer and appointed representative of the German nation, gave my assurance in front of the world and my Volk that Germany would make no further territorial demands upon France after the question of the Saar had been settled, this constituted a contribution to peace which is greater than many a signature on many a pact.

Hitler then aired at length his dislike of international conventions and collective treaties, above all building his case against the prior handling of disarmament, and reciting once more his tedious catalog of quantitative proof that Germany had kept its part of the bargain.

Yet even in the *Friedensdiktat* of Versailles it was expressly provided that Germany's reduction in arms was to be effected first only in order to enable the others to reduce their arms as well. And now this example may serve to illustrate the extent to which the concept of collective cooperation was violated by those very parties who are today its most vociferous advocates.

Germany performed the obligations imposed in the Treaty of Versailles with nothing short of zealously. Financially, up to the complete collapse of its finances; economically, up to the total destruction of its economy; militarily, up to a complete lack of defenses. I may repeat here in general terms the facts of Germany's performance of the treaties which are contested by no one.

The following were destroyed in the Army: 1) 59,000 guns and barrels; 2) 130,000 machine guns; 3) 31,000 trench mortars and barrels; 4) 6,007,000 rifles and carbines; 5) 243,000 MG barrels; 6) 28,000 gun carriages; 7) 4,390 trench mortar carriages; 8) 38,750,000 shells; 9) 16,550,000 hand grenades and rifle grenades; 10) 60,400,000 live fuzes; 11) 491,000,000 small arms ammunition; 12) 335,000 tons of shell cases; 13) 43,515 tons of cartridge cases; 14) 37,600 tons of gunpowder; 15) 79,000 ammunition gauges; 16) 212,000 telephone sets; 17) 1,072 flamethrowers, etc. Further destroyed were: sledges, mobile workshops, anti-aircraft vehicles, limbers, steel helmets, gas masks, machines of the former war industry, and rifle barrels.

Further destroyed in the air were: 1) 15,714 fighter planes and bombers; 2) 27,757 aircraft engines.

At sea, the following were destroyed: 26 capital ships, four coastal tanks, four battle cruisers, 19 light cruisers, 21 training ships and special ships, 83 torpedo boats, and 315 submarines.

Also destroyed were motor vehicles of all types, chemical warfare and, in part, anti-gas defense equipment, propellants, explosives, searchlights, sighting devices, range finders and sound rangefinders, optical instruments of all kinds, harnesses, etc.; all airplane and airship hangars, etc.

Hence in a genuine act of self-sacrifice, Germany fulfilled all of the conditions for cooperation in a collective sense in keeping with the American President's thinking.

At the latest upon the consummation of Germany's disarmament, the world should, for its part, have taken the same step toward establishing equality. It is merely one proof of the accuracy of this view that there was no dearth of admonishing and warning voices in the other peoples and in the other states who endorsed the performance of this duty. I wish to cite only a few of these men—who certainly cannot be referred to as friends of today's Germany—in order to refute, by their own statements, those who seem to be suffering from amnesia and cannot recall that the Treaty of Versailles contained the contractual obligation not only for Germany to disarm, but for the other states as well.

Hitler then proceeded to read statements British and French politicians had made on the question of disarmament:

Lord Robert Cecil, Member of the British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference and Head of the British Delegation to the Disarmament Conference (*Revue de Paris*, No. 5, 1924):

"The disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and the other peace treaties commence with a preamble which reads as follows: In order to make possible the introduction of general arms limitation for all nations, Germany undertakes to closely observe the following provisions on armed forces on land, at sea and in the air. This preamble amounts to an agreement. It constitutes the solemn promise of the governments to the democracies of all those states which signed the peace treaties. If it is not kept, the system set up by the peace treaties cannot be permanently upheld, and even partial disarmament will shortly cease to exist."

Paul-Boncour on April 8, 1927 at the British Meeting of the League of Nations' Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference:

"It is true that the preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles concerns the restrictions on arms which were imposed upon Germany as precondition and as precedent for a general arms limitation. This very clearly distinguishes Germany's limitations on arms from other comparable limitations on arms which have been imposed in the course of history at the close of wars and which have incidentally in general proven rather ineffective. This time such a condition—and only then does it take on its full value—has been imposed not only on the party signing the treaty, but is moreover a duty, a moral and legal obligation of the co-signatories to take steps towards the general limitation of arms."

Henderson's statement of January 20, 1931:

"We must persuade our parliaments and our peoples that all of the members of the League of Nations are compelled to adopt this policy of general disarmament by solemn obligations imposed upon us both by international law and by a sense of national honor. I shall remind the Council that Article 8 of the Covenant, the preamble of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, the final act of the Pact of Locarno, and the resolutions passed every year since 1920 by the assembly demonstrate that all members of the League are subject to the same responsibility in this sector. We have all assumed obligations, and if we do not perform them, doubt can be shed upon our peaceful intentions. The influence and the reputation of the League of Nations would suffer as a consequence."

Briand's statement of January 20, 1931:

"On behalf of my country, I may endorse the eloquent words with which our President has opened the session. . . I believe as you do. I have had the opportunity to say this on several occasions—that the obligations which the nations have contractually undertaken by signing Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations may not be allowed to remain but lifeless words. They constitute a sacred commitment, and a country which would shirk this would dishonor itself."

Remarks of the Belgian Foreign Minister Vandervelde, Member of the Belgian Peace Delegation, on February 27, 1927:

"From now on we are faced with the following dilemma: either the other powers must reduce their armies in proportion to the German Reichswehr or the Treaty of Versailles will be rendered invalid and Germany will claim for itself the right to possess armed forces in order to be in a position to defend the sovereignty of its territory. Two conclusions are to be drawn from these facts: first, that all measures of control have little effect; secondly, disarmament will either be general or not happen at all."

The same Foreign Minister on December 29, 1930 in the *Populaire*:

"The Treaty of Versailles would be reduced to so many scraps of paper if the moral and legal obligations of the Treaty which forced disarmament upon defeated Germany with the aim of preparing for a reduction in arms by the others were not fulfilled."

Lord Robert Cecil in his radio speech of December 31, 1930:

"International arms reduction numbers among our more important national interests. We have not only once, but many times over undertaken the obligation to reduce and limit the arms of the nations which were victorious in the World War to supplement the reduction in arms we imposed as a duty upon our former adversaries. We will destroy all faith in international obligations if we do not carry out what we have promised. In my view it is of secondary importance that we would know no answer were our former adversaries to approach us with the demand to be allowed to rearm."

And once again Paul-Boncour on April 26, 1930 in the *Journal*: "Finally, one does not have to be a prophet; it suffices to keep one's eyes open to observe that, in the event of a definitive failure of the disarmament negotiations or even only in the event of their continuing postponement, Germany—freed of other constraints—will prepare to shake off this arms reduction and to no longer tolerate alone a limitation of arms which the Treaty of Versailles itself describes as the precondition, but also as the promise, of a general reduction in arms. We no longer have a choice."

This by no means marked the end of Hitler's introductory remarks; he continued along this vein for another hour and more. His detailed sketch of German disarmament was followed by an interminable series of figures outlining the armaments of the other nations, the development of new weaponry from machine guns to the direction finders and aiming mechanisms of the Air Force and the torpedo tubes on warships, etc. Then began a long dissertation on the reasons why the reintroduction of conscription had been necessary and on the perils of military pacts.

This discourse climaxed in a comprehensive comparison between National Socialism and Bolshevism in which the former was presented as personifying social justice and cultural and religious forbearance, while the latter was portrayed as no less than the epitome of brutality: hostile to civilization and devoid of any religious feeling. Hitler assured his public:

One could pursue this topic indefinitely. Both we National Socialists and the Bolsheviks are of the conviction that worlds separate us, a gap never to be bridged. But beyond that we are separated by more than 400¹²⁷ murdered National Socialist Party comrades; thousands of other National Socialists in other associations who were killed repelling Bolshevik revolts; thousands of soldiers and police squads who were shot and massacred fighting to protect the Reich and the Länder against the never-ending Communist uprisings; and more than 43,000 injured in our Party alone. Thousands of them are partially blinded, partially crippled for the rest of their days.

Hitler then enumerated all of the actual or alleged Communist uprisings and disturbances around the globe which had taken place since 1918 and lectured Lord Privy Seal Anthony Eden yet again on the perils of Bolshevism:

If I am not mistaken, I gather the impression from the last speech of the English Lord Privy Seal that the Soviet Union has no interest at all in such tendencies—in particular aggressive military tendencies. No one would be happier than we should this opinion prove true in the future. The past, in any case, indicates the opposite. If I presume to contrast my own impression with this finding, I am at least in a position to point out that the success of my own life-struggle is not due exclusively to a particularly large measure of incompetence on my part. I believe I do in fact understand some things here. I began my activities in Germany at approximately the same time Bolshevism was celebrating its initial achievements, i.e. the first civil war in Germany. When, after fifteen years, Bolshevism in our country had six million followers, I had risen to thirteen million. Then, in the decisive battle, it lost. National Socialism has ripped Germany and with it perhaps the whole of Europe back from the brink of the most horrible catastrophe of all time.

When he had completed this part of the speech, Hitler launched the same attack against Lithuania with which he had confronted Simon and Eden in March in the most dramatic tones and gestures.¹²⁸

He was willing, he stated, to conclude pacts of non-aggression with any country—any country, that was, except Lithuania which “failed to respect the most primitive laws of human coexistence.”

Perhaps it may appear surprising that Hitler pounced upon Lithuania of all countries as the target of his vituperative utterances at the time. He believed, however, that it would best distract international attention from his own breaches of treaties to point an accusing finger at another culprit flaunting non-compliance with international conventions. It was an incontrovertible fact that Lithuania had disregarded existing agreements and the authority of the League of Nations in occupying the Memel territory in 1923, in spite of protests by the French High Commissioner Petisné.

While it was true that the inhabitants of the Memel territory had been guaranteed autonomy by means of what was known as the Memel Statute, the parties to the agreement—Great Britain, France and Italy—were at pains to enforce this guarantee upon the Lithuanian Government.¹²⁹

In March, 128 Memel National Socialists had been put on trial in Kaunas; four were sentenced to death. Hitler's diatribe on this red-herring theme was barely surpassed by his later harangues against the Czechs and the Polish.¹³⁰

They [the inhabitants of the Memel territory] are Germans; in an attack which was subsequently sanctioned and took place in the midst of peace they were torn away from the Reich, and as a penalty for continuing to be attached to German *Volkstum*, they are persecuted, tortured and maltreated in the most barbaric way.

What would be said in England or in France if members of these nations were to meet with such a sorry fate? When the feeling of belonging to a Volk which is harbored by people torn away from such a Volk contrary to all law or natural sentiment is deemed a punishable crime, then this means that people are being denied a right which is even granted to each and every animal: the right to be attached to its old master and the old inborn community. But 140,000 Germans in Lithuania were actually confined to a position below these rights. Thus we see no possibility—as long as the responsible guarantors of the Memel Statute for their part are not in a position to lead Lithuania back to respecting the most primitive human rights—of concluding for our part any treaties whatsoever with this State.

In the further course of his speech, Hitler described the new Franco-Soviet pact as a “military alliance” incompatible with the Covenant of the League of Nations and in all probability with the Pact of Locarno as well.

The German Reich Government will be particularly grateful to receive an authentic interpretation of the repercussions and effects of the Franco-Russian military alliance on the contractual obligations of the individual parties to the Pact of Locarno. It would like to rule out any doubt on its own opinion, i.e. that it holds these military alliances to be incompatible with the spirit and the letter of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

In the next part of his speech, Hitler dismissed as inconceivable the notion that Germany could contemplate an annexation of Austria.

Germany neither intends nor wishes to interfere in inner-Austrian affairs or to effect an Austrian annexation or *Anschluss*. Born of a simple feeling of solidarity due to a common national origin, the German Volk and the German Government have, however, the understandable desire that not only alien peoples, but also the German Volk be guaranteed the right of self-determi-

nation everywhere. I personally believe that any regime which is not anchored in the people, supported by the people and wanted by the people cannot endure for any length of time. If such difficulties do not exist between Germany and Switzerland—itself to a large percentage German as well—this is for the simple reason that Switzerland's independence is a fact, and because no one doubts that its government represents the true and legal manifestation of the will of the people. We Germans have, however, every reason to be pleased that there is a state on our border with a large proportion of German inhabitants which has a great degree of inner stability and is in possession of real and factual independence. The German Government regrets the tension caused by the conflict with Austria all the more because it has caused a disruption in our relations with Italy which were previously so good, to a state with which we otherwise have no conflicts of interests whatsoever.

This sobering statement on Germany's Italian "friend" marked the end of Hitler's introductory remarks, and he proceeded to expound his thirteen points [!] containing answers to all of the pressing problems of the day.

Of these thirteen points, only the passage citing a limitation of navy tonnage to thirty-five percent of the British figure has achieved any real significance. Hitler stated:

When I now proceed from these general remarks to fix my aim more closely on the current problems at hand, I arrive at the following position of the German Reich Government:

1. The German Reich Government rejects the resolution passed in Geneva on April 17. It was not Germany which unilaterally breached the Treaty of Versailles; the Diktat of Versailles was unilaterally breached in regard to the points in question and thus rendered invalid by those very powers which could not bring themselves to follow up the reduction in arms required of Germany by one of their own as had been contractually stipulated. The new discrimination of Germany added by virtue of the resolution in Geneva makes it impossible for the German Reich Government to rejoin this institution unless the necessary foundation is laid for a truly equal legal status.

For this purpose the German Reich Government considers it necessary to make a sharp distinction between the Treaty of Versailles, which is based upon a division of the nations into victors and vanquished, and the League of Nations, which must be based upon the equal worth and equal rights of all its members. This equality of rights must be a practicable equality and extend to include all of the functions and property rights comprising international life.

2. As a consequence of the non-performance of the disarmament obligations on the part of the other States, the German Reich Government has, for its part, renounced those articles which, as a consequence of the one-sided burden now placed upon Germany in violation of the Treaty, constitute an indefinite discrimination of the German nation. It hereby most solemnly declares, however, that its respective action is confined to those points giving

rise to the moral and material discrimination of the German Volk as have been disclosed. The German Reich Government shall thus unconditionally abide by the other articles governing the coexistence of the nations, including territorial provisions, and put into effect solely by means of peaceful understanding those amendments which become inevitable by virtue of the changing times.

3. The German Reich Government does not intend to sign any treaty which it does not feel able to fulfill. It will, however, scrupulously comply with every treaty signed voluntarily, even if same was drawn up prior to its having taken office and coming to power. It will particularly abide by and perform all of the obligations arising from the Locarno Pact as long as the other parties are willing for their part to adhere to this Treaty. The German Reich Government holds that respecting the demilitarized zone constitutes for a sovereign state an enormously important contribution to the appeasement of Europe. It feels bound, however, to point out that the continued increase in troops on the other side can by no means be viewed as a complement to these endeavors.

4. The German Reich Government is willing at all times to participate in a system of collective cooperation with the goal of safeguarding peace in Europe, but feels it would then be necessary to do justice to the law of perpetual evolution by keeping amendments to the treaty in reserve. It feels that a stipulation allowing such an evolution of the treaty would be instrumental in safeguarding peace, while choking off any necessary change would amount to bottling up the ingredients for ensuing explosions.

5. The German Reich Government is of the opinion that the goal of rebuilding European cooperation cannot be achieved by means of foisting conditions upon one side. It believes that it is only right to be content with a minimum, in view of the diversity of interests involved, instead of allowing this cooperation to fail as a consequence of an unattainable maximum of demands. It further holds the conviction that this understanding—with one great aim in view—can only be achieved step by step.

6. The German Reich Government is basically willing to conclude pacts of non-aggression with its respective neighboring states and to supplement these pacts by all such provisions designed to isolate those who would wage war and to limit the center of war. It is specifically willing to undertake any and all obligations which may thus arise to supply materials and weapons in peace or in war which are undertaken and respected by all the partners to the pact.

7. The German Reich Government is willing to consent to an air pact to supplement the Pact of Locarno and to enter into talks with this aim.

8. The German Reich Government has disclosed the extent to which the new German Wehrmacht will be built up. It will under no circumstances retreat from these parameters. It does not regard the fulfillment of its program on land, in the air or at sea as constituting any threat whatsoever to another nation. It is nonetheless willing at all times to perform those limitations on its armament which are undertaken by the other states as well. The German Reich Government has already announced certain limitations of its own regarding

its intentions. It has thus best illustrated its good will to avoid an unlimited arms race. Its limitation on German air armaments at a level of parity with the other respective major western nations makes it possible at any time to fix a maximum figure with which Germany would then also be obliged to comply.

The limitation on the German Navy, amounting to thirty-five percent of the English Navy, is still fifteen percent below the total tonnage of the French fleet. Due to the fact that the opinion has been expressed in various commentaries in the press that this demand is only the beginning and would be increased to include the possession of colonies, the German Reich Government hereby makes the following binding declaration: for Germany, this demand is final and lasting.

Germany has neither the intention, the need nor the means to enter into any kind of new naval rivalry. The German Reich Government acknowledges of its own accord the paramount importance of and thus the justification for a dominating protection of the British World Empire at sea, just as we are conversely resolved to do all that is necessary to protect our own continental existence and liberty. It is the sincere intention of the German Government to do everything to find and maintain a relationship with the British people and the British State which will rule out forever a repetition of the only battle thus far between the two nations.

9. The German Reich Government is willing to take an active part in all endeavors which can lead to a practical limitation of boundless armaments. It views a return to the lines of thinking at the former Geneva Red Cross Convention as the only possible way to achieve this at present. It believes that, initially, it will be possible only to gradually abolish and outlaw those weapons and methods of warfare which are at odds, by their most inherent nature, with the Geneva Red Cross Convention already in force. It believes in this context that, just as the use of dum-dum bullets was once prohibited and thus, in broad terms, practically put to a stop, the use of certain other weapons can also be prohibited and thus practically put to a stop as well. It conceives of these as all such combat weapons which cause death and destruction not primarily to soldiers in combat but rather to women and children not directly involved in the fighting. The German Reich Government holds that the idea of doing away with aircraft but allowing bombardment is wrong and ineffective. However, it does see the possibility of instituting a global ban on the use of certain weapons as contravening international law and ostracizing those nations which persist in making use of such weapons from the realm of humanity and its rights and laws.

In this context as well it believes that a gradual process can most readily lead to success. To sum it up: bans on dropping gas, incendiary and demolition bombs outside the real battle zone.

This limitation could actually be extended until bombing were completely outlawed worldwide. So long as bombing as such is permitted, any limitation on the number of bombers is of questionable value in view of the possibility of quick replacements.

Should bombing as such be branded as a barbarity contravening international law, the construction of bombers would soon become superfluous

and pointless of its own accord. If it was once possible by means of the Geneva Red Cross Convention to prevent, in a step-by-step process, the killing of defenseless wounded soldiers and prisoners, then it must also be possible, by an analogous convention, to prevent the bombing of equally defenseless civilian population and ultimately to bring this to a complete halt. Germany believes that such a comprehensive approach to this problem would mean a greater sense of ease and security for the peoples than any number of mutual assistance pacts and military conventions.

10. The German Reich Government is willing to consent to any limitation which leads to the abolishment of those heaviest weapons which are particularly suitable as weapons of attack. These weapons include: first, the heaviest artillery and secondly, the heaviest tanks. In view of the enormous fortifications along the French border, such an international abolishment of the heaviest weapons of attack would automatically put France at least in possession of a one-hundred-percent security.

11. Germany declares itself willing to consent to any limitation on the caliber of artillery, battleships, cruisers, and torpedo boats. Similarly, the German Reich Government is willing to accept any international limitation on the size of ships. And finally, the German Reich Government is willing to consent to a limitation of submarine tonnage or to its complete abolishment, should this be stipulated by international agreement.

Furthermore, it repeats its assurance that it will join any international limitation or ban on arms going into effect concurrently.

12. The German Reich Government is of the opinion that all attempts to effectively ease certain tensions between individual states in the form of international or multilateral agreements must be to no avail until appropriate measures have been taken to prevent irresponsible elements from poisoning the public opinion of the peoples by the written and spoken word and in movies and the theater.

13. The German Reich Government is willing at all times to consent to an international agreement which, by effective means, serves to prohibit and render impossible all attempts by third parties to interfere in other states. It must, however, demand that such a settlement go into force on an international scale and equally benefit all states. Due to the risk that domestic uprisings within countries whose governments do not enjoy the general confidence of their people may all too easily be ascribed by parties with respective interests to interference from without, it would seem necessary to arrive at a precise international definition of the term "interference."

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

I have endeavored to give you an idea of the thoughts which move us today. However great the specific concerns might be, I believe that it is incompatible with my feeling of responsibility as Führer of the nation and Chancellor of the Reich to voice even a single doubt as to the possibility of preserving peace. The peoples want peace. The governments must be able to maintain it! I believe that the restoration of German military power will become a factor in this peace—not because we plan to increase this power to some pointless magnitude, but because the simple fact of its existence does

away with a dangerous vacuum in Europe. Germany does not intend to increase its armaments to an infinite degree.¹³¹ We do not have 10,000 bombers and we will not build 10,000 bombers; on the contrary: we have imposed upon ourselves the limitation which guarantees, in our opinion, the protection of the nation without violating the concept of the possibility of a collective security and a respective agreement. We would be most pleased were such an agreement to afford us the opportunity to make use of the diligence of our Volk for production processes more beneficial than those of manufacturing instruments for the destruction of human life and values.

Hitler closed with the words:

May other peoples also succeed in putting into bold words the true yearning of their innermost depths. He who would brandish the torch of war in Europe can desire nothing but chaos.¹³² We, however, live in the firm conviction that our age will witness not the decline of the West, but its resurrection. That Germany may furnish an immortal contribution to this great work is our proud hope and our unshakeable belief.

After the Führer had delivered his “Peace Speech” following the promulgation of the new Military Service Act, the members of the Reichstag stood up as one body, rose their right arm to the “German salute,” and sang the national anthem *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* and the “Horst Wessel Lied” *Die Fahne hoch! Die Reihen dicht geschlossen!* (“Up with the flag! Form in closed ranks!”). The latter included the line *Zum Kampfe sind wir alle schon bereit* (“We’re all ready for battle”). Though these two songs already belonged to the usual ceremony held in the Reichstag after each session, they seemed to be of greater significance that day.

Hitler’s speech of May 21 was clearly focused abroad—keyed foremost of course to Great Britain—and his forum of the German Reichstag provided the acclaim he needed at home for his arguments. At bottom, however, this favored method of gaining attention abroad was nothing but another of Hitler’s acts of self-delusion; doubtless foreign statesmen listened to the radio broadcasts of these speeches in the same silent, yet disapproving attitude they assumed when being personally subjected to his monologues. Moreover, the deputies of the Reichstag did not represent the German people but—in Hitler’s own view—were but mere replicas of their illustrious Führer.

The more Hitler addressed foreign countries in his speeches and devoted his rhetorical powers to outlining his future foreign policy, the less he cared about the real opinion of the German population. Believing he had progressed beyond the point where he need court

the people's favor, Hitler was content with the plaudits of the Reichstag and NSDAP leadership and basked in the hysterical cheering which accompanied the Party congresses. Withdrawing ever more from direct contact with the people, he increasingly confined his appearances to mass rallies, well knowing that he would find little public support for his military plans and his aggressive foreign policy.

While the Germans listened patiently to the Führer's empty talk of peace on May 21, their faith in the truth of his words began, albeit at first only gradually, to wane. They had just overcome unemployment only to be confronted with the new problems Hitler's armament policy would cause. While much attention was devoted to—and much money invested in—air-raid protection and arms production, civilian life was plagued by a shortage of essential raw materials; construction work and other civil projects were curtailed, and the nation's food consumption gradually underwent a transition to wartime conditions,

One noteworthy aside on Hitler's "Peace Speech" of May 21 was the start of a new program in agrarian policy on May 24: an advertising campaign for "meat in its own juices" was designed to motivate the public to stock up on canned beef and pork.¹³³—People began to wonder why.

3

On May 28, Hitler paid his second visit of the year to the Deutsches Museum in Munich, where he expressed his satisfaction with the “most beautiful hall in Germany.”¹³⁴

On June 1, Hitler appointed Joachim von Ribbentrop Ambassador Extraordinary for special missions.¹³⁵ From this point onwards the German dictator made almost exclusive use of Ribbentrop for foreign errands—not because he valued his opinion, but because Ribbentrop unquestionably carried out his taskmaster’s instructions, even if his own views were diametrically opposed.

After the fall of the Third Reich, the allegation was made both within Germany and abroad that Ribbentrop’s reports to Hitler on Great Britain and the Soviet Union had been incorrect and that this had been the cause of Germany’s failed foreign policy. The facts do not support this interpretation. In contrast to Hitler, Ribbentrop had spent considerable time abroad, and his views were not clouded by fantastic preconceptions of English senility; moreover, there was no doubt in his mind that, in all human probability, Hitler’s foreign policy must lead to war with Great Britain. Ribbentrop’s ideas in respect to the Soviet Union also differed substantially from those of his chief when the latter returned ecstatic from his trip to Moscow in 1939. Ribbentrop’s reports had as little effect upon Hitler as Caulaincourt’s had had upon Napoleon.¹³⁶ This is one of the astounding characteristics shared by nearly the entire upper echelon of the Third Reich: by no means unintelligent men were willing to repudiate their own opinions—and even to act in total conflict with them—the moment Hitler instructed them to do so. The main key to this enigmatic behavior lies in Hitler’s domestic success in the years 1932–33. He did not tire of repeating to all those who initially entertained doubts as to his foreign policy goals that he alone, despite all predictions to the contrary, had always been right in the end

and had triumphed at home after all; consequently, he would also be right in terms of foreign policy, no matter what people said. Nearly all of Hitler's partners in such discussions were bound to succumb to this argumentation, and only major failures and setbacks in his foreign policy allowed reason to win out against Hitler's flood of rhetoric on this point. Although Ribbentrop was personally ambitious, his overriding *raison d'être* was to satisfy Hitler, and he had never harbored any aspirations beyond being his Führer's secretary for foreign affairs—a fact he stressed with pride before the judges in Nuremberg.¹³⁷ The chief interpreter of the Foreign Office, Paul Schmidt, who had known Ribbentrop closely for years, confirmed his absolute devotion to Hitler, stating that the former had parroted Hitler's views and directives almost word for word.¹³⁸

Behind Ribbentrop's appointment as ambassador extraordinary were the upcoming naval talks in London. The British had responded immediately to Hitler's proposals for naval strength in his May 21 speech and were anxious to reach a consensus with him. Until now, he had carefully avoided entering into any international or bilateral armament agreements, attempting to maintain a certain leeway by categorically rejecting existing treaties as non-binding upon Germany on the grounds that they did not bear his—Germany's sole representative's—signature.

June 4 marked the beginning of talks at the Foreign Office.¹³⁹ Ribbentrop did not mince words but informed the British pointblank of Hitler's ultimatum: the offer was final and not open to discussion. As a prerequisite for any further negotiations, Britain was to accept a German Navy thirty-five percent the size of its own.

Taken somewhat by surprise by the artlessness of this piece of German diplomacy, the British temporarily suspended negotiations only to declare their willingness two days later to accept Hitler's conditions *a priori*. The announcement met with widespread consternation. On June 18, the Anglo-German naval agreement was concluded providing for naval strength on the basis of one to three.¹⁴⁰

There was much criticism, particularly in France, of Britain's entering into this agreement with Hitler so shortly after the reintroduction of general conscription. However, further developments finally proved the English right, for their willingness to submit to any German demands which were in some way compatible with international law doubtless accelerated Hitler's ultimate downfall. It was only a matter of time and logic that he would sooner or later outreach his own limits.

Hitler's public speeches were few in the months from June to August, due partly to an operation on his vocal chords performed on May 23 which was not disclosed until August 25, when the following communiqué was published:¹⁴¹

The Führer and Reich Chancellor suffered increasingly from hoarseness in spring, which put a particular strain on him in his last major speech before the Reichstag. Professor Dr. von Eicken located the cause as a polyp on the Führer's right vocal chord which was surgically removed on May 23. The Führer's voice was soon back to its usual clarity. Subsequent examinations have shown that the vocal chords are now once again completely normal.

Hitler compensated for his imposed silence by dispatching numerous telegrams, paying various visits, attending theater performances, etc. Of the multitude of messages he dictated to all types of societies and associations during these months, only the most significant have been mentioned here.

On June 2, Hitler sent a telegram to the German Society of World Economics.¹⁴² On June 3, he attended the funeral service of SS Standartenführer Karl Ostberg in Munich.¹⁴³ He dispatched his condolences to the widow of Colonel General von Linsingen on June 7 by telegram.¹⁴⁴

On June 9, Hitler attended a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in the State Opera House directed by Furtwängler.¹⁴⁵ One week later, he dispatched a telegram to Reich Master Craftsman Schmidt on the occasion of the German Crafts Day of 1935 and Frankfurt's nomination as "City of German Crafts."¹⁴⁶

June 18 marked Hindenburg's seventieth birthday. Hitler's congratulatory telegram read as follows:¹⁴⁷

Highly esteemed Mr. Privy Councillor!

I may extend to you my most sincere congratulations on the occasion of your seventieth birthday today. I always recall your unchangingly loyal national-mindedness and think with appreciation and gratitude of your efforts in the service of rebuilding Germany.

With kind regards,

Your Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler traveled to Reinsdorf near Wittenberg to be present at a funeral service for sixty workers who were killed in an explosion.¹⁴⁸ On June 21, he attended a Bach Festival concert in the Leipzig Gewandhaus.¹⁴⁹ The next three days Hitler spent in Hamburg, where he attended a *Meistersinger* performance at the Reich Theater Festival, also finding time to grace the Navy with a visit and greet veterans from the War of 1864.¹⁵⁰

On June 24, he proceeded to Hohenlychen near Dresden to visit Rudolf Hess in a sports spa there.¹⁵¹ The next day he sent a telegram to the Franco-German and Anglo-German reunions of front-line soldiers in Stuttgart and Brighton respectively.¹⁵²

June 26 finally saw the promulgation of the long-awaited “Reich Labor Service Law” (*Reichsarbeitsdienstgesetz*),¹⁵³ which proved a watered-down and disappointing version of what its advocates had initially envisioned. The term for compulsory labor was set at six months.

The following day, Hitler received Ambassador Mushakoji and accepted the latter’s gift of an antique Japanese painting.¹⁵⁴

The annual convention of the Academy for German Law took place in Munich on June 29. In response to a telegram sent by its head, Reich Minister Dr. Hans Frank, Hitler dispatched the following lines:¹⁵⁵

I may thank the members and guests of the Academy for German Law for the friendly greetings telegraphed to me, which I may most warmly reciprocate with the hope that your work may meet with continuing success in the service of German law.

Adolf Hitler

The Chancellor personally attended the ceremonial session of the Academy at the University of Munich. At the Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin before departing for Munich, he had met with a group of Polish naval officers headed by a Captain Frankovsky.¹⁵⁶ Hitler’s friendly exchange with the officers—who were from two Polish cruisers from Gdingen currently docked in Kiel—received much attention, for popular opinion in Germany had it that the Polish Navy had little or no *raison d’être*, since the coast of the Gulf of Danzig and the “Corridor” constituted its sole base. It was a known fact that Germany lay claim to this territory.

On June 30, Hitler was present at the roof-raising ceremony of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich and also attended the opening of the first twenty-five-kilometer-long segment of the Reich Autobahn from Munich to Salzburg.¹⁵⁷

On July 3 and 4, events in Berlin were dominated by the visit of Polish Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck and his wife.¹⁵⁸ Hitler played the charming host, treating his guests to an evening reception with gala concert. A communiqué on Hitler’s two days of talks with Beck was issued on July 4; it placed particular emphasis on the fact that the German-Polish Pact of 1934 had proven satisfactory and emphasized the resounding echo which Hitler’s May 21 speech had elicited in Poland.

On July 11, Hitler visited Carola Hoffmann, his old Party comrade in Munich-Solln, on the occasion of her seventy-eighth birthday.¹⁵⁹ The following day, he toured the BMW works in Munich, accompanied by Blomberg and Göring.¹⁶⁰

On July 15, Hitler received a delegation of the British Legion and met for two hours with Major Fetherstone-Godley and his five escorts.¹⁶¹ At the close of the encounter, he stressed in a short speech how much value he placed upon the cooperation between the front-line soldiers of the last World War in the interest of preserving peace.

On July 16, Hitler appointed the former Prussian Minister of Justice and Vice President of the Reichstag, Hanns Kerrl, to the post of Reich Minister for Church Affairs.

July 19 marked another appointment: SA Oberguppenführer and former Chief of Police in Potsdam, Graf Helldorff,¹⁶² replaced the Chief of Police in Berlin until that time, former Rear Admiral von Levetzow. Necessitated, it was reported, by the need for a “political purge” (i.e. the elimination of politically “tainted” elements), the move was symptomatic of a new course of action being launched against “unreliable” persons, above all against Stahlhelm followers and politically active Roman Catholics.

The Stahlhelm organization still in existence at the time (now called the NS Deutscher Frontkämpferbund) was dissolved in Silesia, while Stahlhelm leaders in Thuringia were arrested. The activities of Catholic youth groups in Pomerania were discontinued, and similar measures were taken throughout the country.

On July 20, Hitler once again checked the work-in-progress on the congress grounds in Nuremberg and there held an impromptu speech to the construction workers, outlining his “secret” foreign policy goals—or at least some of them. One of the workers responded to this proof of Hitler’s confidence by crying out, “*Nur nichts verraten!*” (Mum’s the word!).¹⁶³ Such ‘secret speeches’¹⁶⁴ to construction workers in Nuremberg, Berchtesgaden, Berlin, and elsewhere were to follow.

On August 2, Hitler stamped Munich for all time with the epithet “Capital of the Movement,” and an official communiqué was issued to this effect:¹⁶⁵

In a meeting today with Mayor Fiehler, the Führer has officially conferred upon the City of Munich the epithet, “Capital of the Movement.”

On August 7, Hitler received the committee of the American Steuben Society at the Obersalzberg.¹⁶⁶ The same day he dispatched

a telegram congratulating the industrial magnate Gustav von Bohlen und Halbach on his sixty-fifth birthday.¹⁶⁷

For the first time since his operation, Hitler made a speech before a public rally at the Max Joseph Square in Rosenheim on August 11. The NSDAP chapter in Rosenheim was celebrating its fifteenth anniversary; it was the first major NS Ortsgruppe to have formed outside Munich.

Hitler made use of the opportunity to rail against his domestic opponents and to support current action being taken against Stahlhelm members and former Centrists, declaring:¹⁶⁸

At that time [1920] we stood one man pitted against ten, and we did not let up from this struggle until success was won.

Today nine members of the Volk as a whole stand pitted against one of the little doubters. if we did not capitulate then, we will certainly not capitulate now.

Fighting we once conquered the German Reich, and fighting we will maintain and preserve it. Let those who are against us not be deceived! We have never shunned the fight—not then, and not now. If they want the fight, they can have it! We will give them such a battering (*niederschmettern*) that they will abandon every thought of continuing this fight for the next fifteen years!¹⁶⁹

Today the Movement is the Movement of Germany; today this Movement has conquered the German nation and is shaping the Reich. Would that have been possible without the blessing of the Almighty? Or would those who ruined Germany back then pretend they had God's blessing? What we are is what we have become not against, but by virtue of the will of Providence, and as long as we are loyal, honest and courageous in battle, as long as we believe in our great cause and do not capitulate, we will continue to enjoy the blessing of Providence.¹⁷⁰

If those who ruined Germany in fifteen years fancy today, in light of the National Socialist achievements in reconstruction, that they see a ray of hope, I can only answer: That would please you fine, now that there is once again something to be squandered away! [—]

And if Fate should choose to test us in the future, we hope that such hammer blows of Providence will make us truly hard and strong.

In closing, Hitler once again took on the role of prophet, predicting that the swastika flag would become, in five hundred years' time, the lifeblood of the German Volk. He stated:

If we have the sacred will to educate our Volk in this unity, then after decades of unceasing work, National Socialism as a Weltanschauung will have become the great mutual experience consolidating our Volk, and then a Volk will exist which is filled to its innermost depths with the sense of its common task and mission.

My belief in respect to the future is just as unshakeable as it was fifteen years ago in respect to today! At that time I created this flag and said that it would one day fly over the whole of Germany. Fifteen years have passed, and waving over Germany are our flags!

And today I further predict: in five hundred years this flag will have become the lifeblood of the German nation!

Hitler had obviously just decided to make the swastika the sole German national flag and to pass a law to this effect at the upcoming Reich Party Congress.

On August 12, Hitler spoke in Berlin with the Bundesführer of the Stahlhelm organization, Reich Minister of Labor Franz Seldte, on “the future of the Stahlhelm.”¹⁷¹ The new course of action taken by the National Socialists spoke a message louder than these words: even in its current restricted role of an NS Front-Line Soldiers’ Association, its days were clearly numbered. Hitler was waiting only for an excuse to completely do away with this organization—and an opportunity presented itself in November 1935.¹⁷²

Beginning on August 26, Hitler observed naval artillery maneuvers in Kiel lasting for several days. Aboard the cruiser Köln, he once again penned an entry in the cruiser’s guest book, in which he had already immortalized himself in 1932.¹⁷³ This time he wrote,¹⁷⁴ “Following the realization of my hopes. Kiel, August 26, 1935—Adolf Hitler.”

On August 29, Hitler sent his condolences to the Kings of Belgium and Sweden subsequent to the fatal car accident of the Belgian Queen Astrid.¹⁷⁵ The same day he undertook a lengthy tour through Schleswig-Holstein, stopping at 3:00 p.m. to inaugurate an “Adolf-Hitler polder” in the Dieksand Bay and the laying of the cornerstone for the *Neulandhalle*, where he gave the following speech:¹⁷⁶

German Volksgenossen!

When we stand here today on this new land, we should not forget two lessons: labor alone has created this work. May the German Volk never forget that at no time has life ever been given as a gift; it must continually be fought for and achieved by labor.

And the second lesson: just as here every square meter must be won from the sea and shielded with untiring, brave devotion, so must everything which the entire nation creates and builds be shielded by all German Volksgenossen.

This is a symbol of labor and of constant struggle, of diligence and bravery! Let no one forget that our Reich, too, is but a polder in the waters of the world and that it can only be maintained if its dikes are strong and are kept strong.

With this thought in mind, I hereby lay this cornerstone.

That evening, Hitler visited one of the workers' barracks and made another 'secret speech' on the political and economical state of the nation and the goals of the future.¹⁷⁷

On September 5, Hitler met with party leaders at the Braunes Haus in Munich to discuss last-minute details of the forthcoming Reich Party Congress.¹⁷⁸ The following two days, he observed autumn maneuvers performed by the Sixth Army Corps in the Lüneburger Heide, which closed with a parade in Munsterlager.¹⁷⁹

On September 8, Hitler received the newly-appointed Italian Ambassador Bernardo Attolico at the House of the Reich President in Berlin and accepted his credentials. Relations between Germany and Italy, which had still been problematic during the conference in Stresa in April of the year, had undergone a steady improvement in the preceding weeks. As early as June 5, the bans on the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the *Illustrierter Beobachter* and the *Brennessel*¹⁸⁰ had been lifted in Italy. The fact that a new Ambassador had been appointed was also designed to promote better understanding between the two countries. Mussolini's change of heart stemmed from the unexpected difficulties he was encountering from the West in reaction to his planned foray into Abyssinia (Ethiopia).

Encouraged by the lenient treatment Hitler had received when reintroducing German conscription, the Italian dictator apparently thought it was a good time to incorporate Abyssinia and found an Italian empire. While Great Britain did allow Italian troops to pass through the Suez Canal, it notified the League of Nations—just as France did—of its opposition to any plans for invasion Italy might have. Mussolini, not disposed or able to abandon his project at that point, had no choice but to rekindle amicable relations with Germany.

Hitler was gratified to accept Attolico and note Italy's friendly overture. To the new Ambassador he declared:¹⁸¹

It is with a lively sense of satisfaction that I conclude from your remarks that you see your task as lying in endeavoring to the best of your ability to strengthen and enhance the relations between Germany and Italy on an ongoing basis, for I share your conviction that these relations will play a significant role in future political developments with the goal of a fruitful and peaceful cooperation between the nations. It is also my belief that such a cooperation can be based only upon the concept of justice and a mutual understanding of the vital necessities of the peoples involved.

At the same time I trust that the mutuality of many of the ideas which form a bond between Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany will more and more come to serve the best interests of our countries, and that the rest of the

world will also benefit from the advantages resulting thereof. In your endeavors to promote the relations between our countries along these lines, Your Excellency can count on my full support and that of the Reich Government.

Reciprocating most sincerely the friendly greetings which you bring from His Majesty the King and His Excellency, the Head of the Royal Italian Government, I may extend to Your Excellency, in the name of the German Reich, a most warm welcome here.

By indirectly expressing in these words his tacit approval of Italy's plan of action in Ethiopia, Hitler was essentially expecting in return the same hands-off consideration with respect to Germany's position vis-à-vis Austria—and it would not be long before he presented this note for payment.

On September 10, the "Reich Party Congress of Freedom" commenced. Hitler had coined this epithet as well, which was to emphasize Germany's having regained the freedom to rearm and defend itself. The 1935 Party Congress in Nuremberg achieved a certain sorry significance by the passage of a number of so-called "Nuremberg Laws," namely the "Reich Flag Act," the "Reich Law of Citizenship," and the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor," all of which were passed by the Reichstag on September 15, 1935.¹⁸² To Hitler, the most important of these was doubtless the "Reich Flag Act," which provided as follows:

Article 1: The Reich colors are black-white-red.

Article 2: The swastika flag is the Reich flag and the national flag. It is, at the same time, the merchant flag.

By virtue of this law, the swastika was finally granted the status of sole official flag of the Reich. The black-white-red banner of imperial Germany, which the National Socialists had disdained as reactionary, now disappeared altogether. Thus the step the dictator had wanted to take in 1933 but had postponed out of consideration for Hindenburg and the German Nationalists now became reality. The black-white-red imperial flag had been a constant thorn in his side during the preceding two and a half years, particularly on the vessels of the merchant marine, where large imperial banners prominently decorated each ship's stern, dwarfing the small swastika flag flying at the bow. Now one Volk had one flag. Hitler did, however, hesitate until November to declare the swastika as the new Reich naval ensign (*Reichskriegsflagge*).¹⁸³

Although they marked another climax in German racial policy, the two other Nuremberg Laws had merely stepping-stone character in

Hitler's scheme of things: laws and treaties signified for him not the establishment of a lasting legal status but mere means to an end, born of the instant, which could be overturned the moment they grew to constitute a hindrance and lost their calculated effect. Though Hitler did make frequent use of legislative measures in both his foreign and domestic policies, he never regarded them as binding upon himself or "his" state. As a consequence, he flew into constant fits over his own party comrades who, schooled in the principles of law, would or could not accept the complete arbitrariness with which their despotic leader treated these time-honored precepts. The German people had been accustomed for centuries to an authoritarian state and wanted only clear-cut legal guidelines by which to abide, regardless of whether these complied with prior legislation or past concepts of what was right.

The National Socialist Unterführers went along with Hitler's view that the system of Roman law, civil or public, was to be discarded; but in lieu of this they desired new, binding norms, and they pressed for compliance with the legal regulations passed by their own National Socialist State.

Some National Socialist judges at the time still claimed that they were able to remain independent of the will of the state. Of course Hitler had a natural apathy against this type of view, and there were times when he favored the even more pliant bourgeois members of the judiciary as, for instance, Reich Minister of Justice Dr. Gürtner and State Secretary Dr. Franz Schlegelberger,¹⁸⁴ over the National Socialist Legal Protectors (*Rechtswahrer*) with Dr. Frank at their fore. Hitler's quarrel with the party jurists was pending until April 26, 1942, when he had his appointment to Supreme judge explicitly approved by means of a "Resolution of the Greater German Reichstag."¹⁸⁵ From that point on, he was empowered to dismiss any civil servant or judge without regard to that person's duly-acquired rights, as they were called, by virtue of office, rank or position.

The so-called "Reich Law of Citizenship" (*Reichsbürgergesetz*) deprived Jews of German citizenship, designating them as "subjects of the state."¹⁸⁶ The third law made public in Nuremberg, the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" (*Gesetz zum Schutz des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*), put militant National Socialist anti-Semitism into practice: it forbade marriage (*Rassenverrat*) and sexual relations (*Rassenschande*) between Jews and citizens of "German or cognate blood." Furthermore, Jews were prohibited from

raising the Reich flag but “allowed to show the Jewish colors,” which was meant as a derision.

The Nuremberg Laws clearly constituted a further escalation of the boycott in force since March 1933, leading to even more open demonstrations of violence. On the other hand, it would be wrong to assume that Hitler viewed the 1935 laws as any more than a momentary measure prompted by the flag act which was his main concern. It was by no means his goal to “solve” the ‘Jewish Question’ by legislation or emigration. He intended to exploit German Jews as a bird in the hand in his foreign policy dealings; later he brutally sent them to the slaughter in the hopes that his inhuman actions would persuade the Western Powers to comply with his demands.

In 1935, there were still Unterführers who believed the answer to the ‘Jewish Question’ lay in legislative measures. Even many German Jews held the opinion that a clarification of their legal status, even if it constituted a temporary change for the worse, was better than no clear status at all. Throughout the centuries in which anti-Semitism had existed in Germany, Jews had not seldom been given a different and lesser status. The times had doubtless been difficult, but they had survived, and they hoped to survive the Third Reich—or at least Hitler—and to afterward regain their former equal status.

On September 10, Hitler was presented with a gift in the Nuremberg City Hall: a replica of the old German imperial sword.¹⁸⁷ He naturally expressed his gratitude in a speech, stating:¹⁸⁸

The extension of the Luitpoldhain which has, in essence, been completed this year, marks the first of these unique arenas for the National Socialist Reich Party Congress.

It has grown particularly dear to all of us because it was here that, even during the time of struggle, one of the first standards was consecrated at Nuremberg. The temporary completion of the renovation of the Zeppelinfeld provides the opportunity for the Movement’s political organization and in particular the Wehrmacht to make their debut there until the large new Märzfeld¹⁸⁹ will have been finished. It is a great pleasure for all of us to be able to inaugurate this new facility in such an uplifting manne—with the *Volksarmee* of the German nation.

Now, following the resurrection of the power and the strength of the Reich, we are particularly happy to be able to celebrate the Reich Party Congress in a city which is not only beautiful but was once so strongly fortified against attack. May the symbolic sign of German national power which you are giving me here as a gift serve me as a constant reminder of this memorable Party Congress in the third year of the National Socialist Revolution and the first year of the new German freedom. I thank you, Mr. Mayor, once again

for this reception and the wonderful gift, and ask you all to join in calling out our German greeting to the old city of the Reich Party Congresses:

Nürnberg Heil!

On September 11, Hitler's annual Party Congress proclamation was read aloud as usual by Munich Gauleiter Adolf Wagner.¹⁹⁰

Several of the passages in the lengthy document treating the enemies at home are of particular interest. Hitler characterized these antagonists as follows:

1. Jewish Marxism and parliamentary democracy related to it;
2. the politically and morally corrupting Center;
3. certain elements in a stubborn, dumb-reactionary bourgeoisie.

The last item amounted to Hitler's description of the intellectuals. He threatened to pass sanctions against all of his enemies—not by way of legislation, but illegally, via the Party. That this was no mere saber-rattling became obvious to the Jewish population in November 1938.

I would like to point out in this context that the battle against the inner enemies of the nation will never be frustrated by formal bureaucracy or its incompetence; where the formal bureaucracy of the State should prove ill-suited to solve a certain problem, the German nation will activate its more dynamic organization as an aid to asserting its vital necessities. For it is a grave error to suppose that the nation would exist only because of some formal phenomenon and that, moreover, when such a phenomenon is not capable of accomplishing the tasks assigned to it, the nation would capitulate in the face of these tasks.

On the contrary: what can be accomplished through the State will be accomplished through the State. But whatever the State is incapable of accomplishing, due to its very essence, will be accomplished by the Movement. For the State as well is only one of the forms of organization in *völkisch* life, driven and controlled by the direct expression of the Volk's will to live, by the Party, by the National Socialist Movement.

This blunt threat of illegal violence sheds a revealing light on the practical value of the racial laws announced at the same Party Congress. Hitler then focused his diatribe on Church circles, which still refused to bend to his yoke:

Under no circumstances will the National Socialist State tolerate that the politicization of the confessions be prolonged or even begun anew by any type of detour. And let no one delude himself as to the determination of the Movement and the State! We have already fought a battle against the political clergy and ousted it from the parliaments, and that after a long struggle in which we had no state authority and the other side had it all. Today we have this authority and will more easily be able to win the struggle for these

principles. But we will never wage this battle as a battle against Christianity or even against one of the two confessions. But we will wage it in order to keep our public life pure and free of those priests who have mistaken their calling, those who should have become politicians and not clergymen.

Still irked that a “mere” ninety percent of the voting public had elected him in 1934, he consoled himself with the following argument:

After an incredible struggle for enlightenment, after endless sacrifices, we have succeeded in converting nine tenths of our Volk to subordinate themselves to *one* opinion and to *one* will. The last tenth comprises the remainder of thirty-seven parties, the confessions, the former associations—in short, that very chaos which thrust Germany into one disaster after another for centuries. And thus, when we calmly take in the perspective of what success recent years have given to our German Reich, in the end we must always recognize the most uplifting fact of all, namely:

The most valuable thing is and remains the Movement, which has joined the nation to form a whole and which allows its desires to manifest themselves in one single will. What security, and what tranquillity reign in our Germany today! Wherever we look, we see everywhere around us the ferments of decomposition, the elements of dissolution.

Endless strikes, lockouts, street-fighting, destruction, hatred and civil war; rootless Jewish-international wandering scholars are infiltrating the nations, agitating against all healthy common sense and whipping up hostility among the people. Under the guise of representing the interests of the classes, they are putting a civil war in motion which will lead only to the utmost satisfaction of their own interests. And we are witnessing the consequences. In a world which should actually live in affluence, need reigns. Countries with a population of scarcely fifteen persons per square kilometer suffer from hunger, states which are blessed with every conceivable natural resource are simply incapable of reducing their armies of unemployed.

It is a triumph of the effectiveness of the National Socialist regime that it has succeeded—in a country in which 137 persons live in one square kilometer, in a country which has no colonies, which lacks most natural resources, which was drained to its very blood for fifteen years, which lost its entire foreign capital, paid more than fifty billion in reparation dues, which was confronted with the total ruin of its economy—that even given the worst problems, it succeeded in preserving a means of existence, in reducing the number of unemployed, so that today we are better off than many of the world’s richer countries.

Turning to economic problems, Hitler once again took up his crusade against any type of currency manipulation. He would by no means tolerate salary and price increases, and this would rule out the possibility of an inflation such as that of the twenties. Although the dictator admittedly entertained quite sound economic views, he failed—as did many others—to realize that the inflation of 1920-23 was not due

to unwise economic policy but was the inevitable consequence of the destruction which the economic structure had undergone during World War I—a phenomenon not limited to this war and not only to the defeated. However, in 1935 he could still boast:

Today we can admit it openly: the year 1934 was unfortunately a bad harvest year. We are still suffering from the aftereffects. But it was nevertheless possible to secure the German Volk's supply of vitally important foodstuffs. The fact that this was possible, in spite of the many restrictions, is an achievement of which the broad masses of our Volk have perhaps not been sufficiently aware. The difficulties connected with this harvest led many a time to a temporary shortage of this or that foodstuff. We were nonetheless determined that under no circumstances would we capitulate as a certain international press was ardently hoping. And we overcame the crisis. We were forced, in this context, to repeatedly halt with every means available attempts to compensate for the bad harvest by partly understandable but also partly unjustified price increases.

In this year we were—and will likewise be in future—motivated by the unshakeable desire to prevent the German Volk from stumbling unawares into a new inflation. But this would still be the unavoidable result of any increase in salaries or any increase in prices at present. So if today, too, irresponsible egoists or unthinking fools fancy that any kind of shortage—which can always arise—gives them the right to increase prices, this behavior would, if the Government were to let it, set the well-known vicious circle of 1921 to 1923 in motion, leaving the German Volk with an inflation on its hands for the second time around. For this reason we will attack such elements from now on with brutal ruthlessness and—if good intentions fail—will not shrink from using concentration camps to make them conform with and adapt to the national interest as a whole.

On that same September 11, Hitler laid the cornerstone for a new gigantic Congress Hall¹⁹¹ which was to bespeak the glory of the Third Reich for millenniums to come. He stated:

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

Sixteen years ago the spiritual cornerstone was laid for one of the greatest and most significant manifestations of German life. The resolution of but a few men at that time to extricate Germany from the fetters of its internal corrupters and to liberate it from the yoke of external bondage constituted one of the boldest decisions in world history. Now, after sixteen years of hard struggle, this scheme has evolved to become a decisive historic achievement. A world of internal adversaries and obstacles was overcome, and a new world is at the verge of being born. On this day, we hereby lay for this new world of the German Volk the cornerstone of its first great monument. A hall shall rise which is to serve the purpose of annually housing within its walls a gathering of the elite of the National Socialist Reich for centuries to come. Should the Movement ever be silent, even after millenniums, this witness shall speak.

In the midst of a hallowed grove of ancient oak trees will the people then marvel in reverent awe at this first colossus among the buildings of the German Reich. With this premonition I hereby lay the cornerstone of the Congress Hall of the Reich Party Congresses in Nuremberg in the year 1935, the year of the freedom of the German nation hard won by the National Socialist Movement.

The same day, Hitler also delivered his obligatory speech on the arts,¹⁹² in which he expounded upon the cultural past of the human species and declared *ex cathedra*, "No Volk lives longer than the evidence of its culture!" Referring to modern art, he pointed out:

But if such a so-called "artist" feels himself called upon to portray human life under all circumstances from the viewpoint and perspective of what is inferior and diseased, then he should do so in an age in which there is a widespread appreciation for just this type of viewpoint. Today this age is over, and hence it is also over for this type of "would-be creative artists." And though we are becoming ever firmer and more strict in our rejection of this, we hold that we are not making a mistake. For he who is chosen by Providence to lend external, graphically visible expression to the innermost and thus eternally healthy substance of a Volk will never find himself on the path to such aberrations.

Thus we are not talking about a "threat to the freedom of art." Just as a murderer is not granted the right to kill his fellow men in body simply because this would mean interfering with his own freedom, a person similarly cannot be granted the right to kill the soul of the Volk merely so as to avoid placing any restrictions on his dirty fantasy and his total lack of restraint.

Hitler finally came to the more pertinent point of his treatise, namely the construction of edifices which should be as great and overwhelming as the 'Age of Hitler' itself:

In the case of really great tasks, as a general rule, both those men who have commissioned the task and those who accomplish it should bear in mind that, although the assignment was given within a certain age, its accomplishment shall, by being performed to the utmost, become ageless.

To this end it is necessary that the really great tasks of an age must be assigned respectively, i.e. public commissions must, if their accomplishment is to generate eternal value, be placed in a certain proportion in respect to the scale of the rest of life.

It is impossible to place the monumental architecture of the State or the Movement on a scale corresponding to that of one or two centuries ago, while the products of bourgeois creation in the sphere of private or even purely capitalistic architecture have expanded conversely and increased many times over. What lent the cities of antiquity and the Middle Ages their characteristic and hence admirable and endearing features was not the size of the private bourgeois structures but the manifestations of community life towering above them.

In the bourgeois epoch, the architectural expression of public life was unfortunately repressed in favor of buildings documenting private-capitalistic business life. But the great historico-cultural task of National Socialist lies above all in departing from this trend.

We must, however, be guided not only by artistic but also by political considerations in endowing upon the new Reich, with a view to the great precedents of the past, a worthy cultural personification. Nothing is better suited to silence the little carpers than the eternal language of great art. Millenniums bow to its utterances in reverent silence. May God grant us the stature to formulate these tasks in a manner equal to the stature of the nation. This is doubtless a difficult undertaking.

The heroic feats of greatness which our Volk accomplished in history over 2,000 years number among the most tremendous experiences of mankind. There were centuries in which works of art corresponded to a spiritual human greatness in Germany—and in the rest of Europe. The unique eminence of our cathedrals represents an incomparable standard for the truly—in a cultural sense—monumental attitude of these ages. They demand from us more than admiration for the work itself; they demand reverence for the races which were capable of planning and carrying out such great ideas.

Since then, our Volk has risen and fallen with the changing tides of Fate. We ourselves were witnesses of a world-defying heroism, of the deepest despair and shocked bewilderment. Through us and in us, the nation has risen once again. When today we call upon German art to take on new and great tasks, we are assigning these not only in order to fulfill the wishes and hopes of the present, but in the sense of a thousand-year legacy. By paying homage to this eternal national genius, we summon the great spirit of the creative power of the past to come dwell in the present.

But such elevated tasks will make people grow, and we do not have a right to doubt that, if the Almighty gives us the courage to demand what is immortal, He will give our Volk the power to accomplish what is immortal. Our cathedrals are witnesses to the glory of the past! The glory of the present will one day be gauged by the eternal values it leaves behind. Only then will Germany undergo a revival of its art and our Volk become conscious of a higher destiny.

On September 12, Hitler gave a speech at the Nuremberg Zeppelin Field before a roll call of the assembled Reich Labor Service, in which he dispensed a few honeyed phrases to console his audience for the anemic version of compulsory labor which had now become law:¹⁹³

Life necessarily divides us into many different groups and professions. It is the job of the political and spiritual education of the nation to overcome this division. This is primarily a job reserved for the Labor Service. It is to unite all Germans in labor and make of them a community.

For this purpose, it shall place in the hand of each the same instrument of labor, the instrument which does a Volk the most credit, the spade! There you march beneath the guardian of peace, the weapon of our inner self-

assertion! You march thus today in the entire German Reich. The eye of the nation rests upon you, its hope!

It sees in you something better than it has been in the past. If the entire German Volk were to see you today, I believe that even the last doubter would have been persuaded that the raising of a new nation, of a new community of our Volk is not a rumor, but reality.

On September 13, Hitler addressed 100,000 Political Leaders at the same site, christening them the political “officers of the nation” in spite of the pronounced non-military appearance of most of their kind.¹⁹⁴

It is good that we are able to see each other like this once a year, you the Führer, and the Führer yourselves. This can also serve as a lesson to all those who would so gladly make a distinction between the Führer and his following, those who are so incapable of understanding that there can be no distinction between us, who would so gladly say: the Führer, yes! But the Party—is that really necessary?¹⁹⁵ I do not ask if it is necessary, but if it was necessary! A commander without officers and soldiers—there are those who would gladly welcome that! I will not be the commander without soldiers; I will remain your Führer.

For me, you are the political officers of the German nation, bound to me for better or worse, just as I am bound to you for better or worse. Not one man alone conquered Germany; all united conquered Germany. One man won you over, and you have won over the German Volk!

Hitler closed his speech to the Political Leaders with a reference to where his real interest lay: the military. This group would not wage offensive wars, but rescue Germany from a “sorry fate.”

We who were able to witness the reinstatement of our peerless Army this year to our most proud good fortune, all of us know that its ultimate and greatest strength lies in the Volk which supports it. For no one is in need of idealism more than the soldier. If ever the hour, that difficult, decisive hour of renunciation, should come upon him, what can but help him then? Only the word faith, idealism. Do not be deluded! All other half-measures are insignificant compared to the power of this destiny, this inner voice.

Hence we are particularly pleased today to have in our midst for the first time the representatives and the representation of our new German *Volksheer*, the Army from which nearly all of us without exception once came forth and to which the German Volk will once again give its sons in the future, handing them over in trust in the hope that they may once again become brave, disciplined, reliable, and self-assured men. We know that our Army is not educating them in warlike militarism any more than we have ever done. It is only educating them to be reliable, decent Volksgenossen who feel faithfully bound to the nation in the hour of need and danger, and if ever Fate were to subject them to the most difficult test of all, they would defend the freedom of their people bravely and decently. That is the reason behind recreating our Army.

It was not created to wage offensive wars, but to protect and to defend our Volk so that Germany may not be made to suffer yet again the sorry fate we were made to bear in the fifteen years behind us. Not in order to deprive other peoples of their freedom, but to protect our German freedom—that is the Army's purpose. But it will come all the more naturally for this Army to accomplish its difficult offices the healthier the young German man is whom it receives from us.

And that is our task, too, to educate the German man to be politically clean and pure so that he may truly become a powerful member of our Volksgemeinschaft and assimilate for himself as well a taste of this pure, great idealism which reigned during the age of the struggle for German freedom. For as long as this idealism is alive in Germany, Germany shall never die!

On September 13, Hitler also stopped to see the visiting diplomats in Nuremberg aboard their special train.¹⁹⁶ The envoys represented only minor states, for the Great Powers still stubbornly refused to take up his invitations to attend the annual party pomp. The Polish Ambassador Lipski thanked Hitler for the invitation on behalf of the entire delegation, also extending "sincere wishes for the prosperity of the German Reich under Your Excellency's leadership."

In his reply to these remarks, Hitler expressed his pleasure at the representatives' visit to the Reich Party Congress and his desire that they would "leave Nuremberg with the feeling that the German Volk was truly united at home and had an opportunity to witness in Nuremberg of what constituted the most inward expression of the substance and sentiments of the German Volk."

The same day, Hitler also spoke before the Foreign Organization of the NSDAP in the Nuremberg Apollo Theater,¹⁹⁷ and gave yet another speech before the NS Frauenschaft.¹⁹⁸ In the latter, he had glowing words of praise for the female party members who had actually demonstrated an unparalleled devotion to their Führer in the early years following the collapse of 1923. Hitler also assured his audience that he would never send "but a single woman to the front" in the event of war and that he would be ashamed to be German, were such a thing ever to come to pass. His statements, published partly in indirect speech, read as follows:¹⁹⁹

Today women's battalions were being formed in Marxist countries, and to that one could only reply, "That will never happen here! There are things a man does, and he alone is responsible for them. I would be ashamed to be a German man if ever, in the event of war, but a single woman were made to go to the front." The woman had her own battlefield. With every child to which she gave birth for the nation, she was waging her battle for the nation. The man stands up for the Volk just as woman stands up for the family. A

woman's equal rights lie in the fact that she is treated with the high regard she deserves in those areas of life assigned to her by nature.

Women still respected brave, daring and determined men, and men had always admired and been attracted to feminine women. These were the two opposites which attracted each other in life.

And if good fortune would have it that these two people find each other, then the question of equal rights became superfluous, for it had already been answered by nature: it was no longer equal rights, but a single unity!

Man and woman represented two intrinsically separate natures. In men, reason was dominant. But more stable than this was the emotion evidenced in women.

When I returned from prison after thirteen months of imprisonment, when the Party had been shattered, it was above all female party comrades who had held the Movement together. They did not succumb to clever or reason-oriented deliberation, but acted according to their hearts, and they have stood by me emotionally until today.

If our opponents were to allege, "You want to degrade women by assigning to them no other task beyond providing children," he would reply that it is not a degradation to a woman to become a mother, but the contrary—it is her utmost elevation.

There was, the Führer continued, no greater nobility for a woman than to be the mother of sons and daughters of a Volk. All the members of our youth lining the streets, so strong and beautiful, these beaming faces, these shining eyes—where would they be had not woman after woman been willing to give them the gift of life? The last immortality here on earth lay in preserving the Volk and the *Volkstum*.

People should not be able to accuse us that we have no understanding of the dignity of women. Quite the opposite! We have been in power now for three years, but I believe that when we have had a National Socialist government for thirty, forty, or fifty years, women's position will have become quite different from what it was in the past—a position which cannot be gauged politically but only appreciated in human terms. We are happy knowing that the German woman, with her instinctive insight, will understand this.

There was a time when liberalism was fighting for 'equal rights' for women, but the faces of German women and German girls were devoid of hope, bleak and sad. And today? Today we see countless beaming, laughing faces. And here again it is woman's instinct which tells her for good reason: we can laugh once again, for the future of the Volk is guaranteed.

The compensation which National Socialism gives woman in exchange for her work lies in that it is once again training men, real men, men who are decent, who stand erect, who are brave, who love honor. I believe that when, in the past few days, our healthy, unspoilt women have watched the marching columns, these sturdy and faultless young men of the spade, they must have been saying to themselves: what a healthy, marvelous race is growing up here! That is also an achievement which National Socialism has wrought for the German woman in the scope of its attitude toward women in general.

We have now reintroduced general conscription, because it is a wonderful education we wish to confer upon the upcoming young German generation, a wonderful breed which we are rearing in the Hitler Youth, the SA, and the Labor Service. I believe that the German Volk will not grow older during the next few years, but will create the impression that it remains forever young. "This all applies to our girls, too. They too are growing up in a different world, with different ideas, and they, too, will become healthier than before. Thus the two columns march along their respective paths and will sooner or later encounter one another."

Hitler then stressed how marvelous it was to live in such a great age and voiced some thoughts on his own inevitable demise:

Thus I believe that it is a marvelous thing after all to live in such an age and to lend a helping hand at one point or another. When I am one day forced to finish this life, my final conviction will be: it was not in vain. It was good, because it was a life of fighting, a life of struggle; because it was a life of work towards an ideal which often seemed so distant and which many a man believed would never be attained. We have reached our goal! That applies to all of you who are fighting with us here. No German generation will be happier in the end than ours. We have experienced infinite hardships. And the fact that we have succeeded in overcoming them and that we will succeed ever better in overcoming them—that is such a wonderful thing that all of us, men and women alike, can be proud and happy and will also be proud and happy one day. The time will come when you will all think back with proud joy on these years of struggling and fighting for this new Germany. Then it will be your most treasured memory that, as German women, you helped wage the battle for our German Volk in this great age of the German renaissance and uprising.

On the morning of September 14, Hitler spoke before 54,000 members of the Hitler Youth in the Nuremberg stadium,²⁰⁰ where he used the later much-quoted phrase describing the ideal German man of the future which he had coined in *Mein Kampf*²⁰¹ "Swift as greyhounds, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel."²⁰²

German Youth!

You are now lining up for this roll call for the third time; more than 54,000 representatives of a community which grows from year to year. The weight of those you personify here each year has become consistently greater. Not only in terms of quantity, oh no; we can see it: in terms of quality. If I think back on the first roll call and on the second and compare them to this one today, I can see the same development we see evidenced throughout the rest of German *Volksleben*: our Volk is becoming increasingly disciplined, sturdier, more taut—and youth is beginning to as well. The ideal of the man has been subjected to different views in our Volk as well. There were times—they seem to be long ago and are almost incomprehensible to us—when the ideal of the

young German man was, to use the jargon, a beer-drinking, hard-living fellow. Today we are happy to note that the ideal is no longer the beer-drinking and hardliving young man, but the tough young man, impervious to wind and weather. For the main thing is not how many glasses of beer he can drink, but how many blows he can withstand; not how long he can make the rounds night after night, but how many kilometers he can march.

Today the beer-happy bourgeois (*Bierspiesser*) of those times is no longer regarded as the ideal of the German Volk, but men and girls who are fit as a fiddle, who are string taut. What we want from our German youth is different from what the past wanted of it. In our eyes, the German youth of the future must be slender and supple, swift as greyhounds, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel. We must cultivate a new man in order to prevent the ruin of our Volk by the degeneration manifested in our age.

Following the youth rally in the stadium, Hitler addressed a convention of the German Labor Front in the Congress Hall,²⁰³ in which he praised the institution of a Reich Council for Labor and Economy²⁰⁴ and emphasized that the enormous convention marked the first gathering of representatives from all areas and levels of labor from workers to management.

On the evening of the same day, Robert Ley presented the working masses to Hitler in their new blue uniforms in front of the Deutscher Hof Hotel. As did the other organization leaders, Ley wanted his own private guard and had not rested until the German Labor Front could don its uniforms and march in formation—much to the irritation of the militant party units.

September 15 marked the roll call of the fighting formations, the SA, the SS, and the NSKK, in the newly renovated and greatly expanded Luitpold arena. The armed SS troops in their black helmets formed a huge block within this army unit. Numerous new SS regiments had joined the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, which were now called *SS Verfügungstruppe* and had swelled to gigantic proportions. This demonstrated to the Wehrmacht in no uncertain terms that it was definitely not “the nation’s sole bearer of arms.” While drawing attention in his speech²⁰⁵ to the change in external appearances, Hitler stressed that the spirit had remained the same since the “times in which the SA man and SS man never asked where the march was headed but stood ever by the flag.”

This was the attitude Hitler wanted to instill in his military: theirs was not to reason why, theirs was but to do—and if need be, die. In his speech, he promised the SA that the soldiers who had been discharged from the Wehrmacht would join the ranks of the SA: a clear

negative to the generals, who had entertained hopes of organizing the Soldatenbund from former conscripts.²⁰⁶ Hitler stated:

Today you present a different picture. I see how much has been learned within a year's time and what has changed in favor of the Movement. However, even though this external picture has altered, it nonetheless constitutes proof that the spirit of the old—and by that I mean our best—times has remained, times in which the SA man and SS man never asked where the march was headed but stood ever by the flag.

And it is good that your exterior also makes manifest the changing times we are so lucky to witness. For Germany has once again undergone a great historic transition in these past years, and you yourselves, my men of the SA, will notice it visibly and clearly in but a few months. For the first time, many thousands shall report to you for duty: the discharged soldiers of the first round of conscripts in the new German Army.

And just as we once came here, now year after year the German Volk, drilled in protecting the nation, will flock to us and the men will be given the best German home in your ranks.

What was once a two-year temporary schooling of the nation which was afterward lost in the course of life and in the political doings of the parties—that is now being given in trust and held in custody for the German Volk. Only then will the cycle of our Volk's education be complete. The boys—they will become members of the *Jungvolk*, and the *Pimpfs* will join the Hitler Youth, and the young men of the Hitler Youth will then report for duty in the SA, the SS, and the other associations; and the SA men and the SS men will one day report for duty at the Labor Service and from there proceed to the Army; and the soldier of the Volk will return once more to the organization of the Movement, of the Party, to the SA and the SS, and never again shall our Volk degenerate as it once regrettably did!

The ensuing ceremonies, including the consecration of the standards and banners with the *Blutgähne* (Blood Flag) and several hours of parades across the Nuremberg Market Place, ran according to schedule. At 8:00 p.m. the Reichstag convened in the hall of the Nuremberg Cultural Association building in order to pass the three bills introduced by the Government.

It was to be the first and last time during Hitler's rule that a Reichstag session was held outside Berlin. Nuremberg had last been the site of a German Reichstag (at the time an assembly of the German Empire's estates) in 1543, and the location more than the content of the session made this Nuremberg gathering remarkable.

From a constitutional standpoint, Hitler could have passed the laws himself, but he judged it more fitting to have the tradition-laden black-white-red flag of imperial Germany discarded by a jointly responsible Reichstag, the legislative body authorized to amend the constitution

under Weimar law. The reasons for this were obvious, for had he himself declared the swastika the sole national flag, this may well have prompted resistance at home from followers of the Stahlhelm and the more reactionary generals, with whom relations were already strained.

But in terms of foreign policy as well, he considered a resolution of the legislative body to be more effective. The swastika had already become a target of anti-German sentiments abroad, having, for instance, been ripped from the bow of the Lloyd steamer *Bremen* in the New York Harbor, an incident to which Hitler referred in this speech.²⁰⁷ By virtue of both the flag act and his anti-Semitic *Blutschutz* legislation, Hitler wished to convey to foreign countries that any speculations on a change in course within Germany were completely unsubstantiated. His September 15 speech to the Reichstag demonstrated anew that he was primarily pursuing foreign policy goals in his treatment of German Jews. Already extremely irritated by criticism in the foreign press, Hitler was also irked by the fact that his relations with the British statesmen were not evolving as he had envisioned in his plans for an Anglo-German alliance.

Naturally choosing not to seek the reasons in his own erroneous conceptions, he held "Jewish press agitation" abroad accountable and resolved to exert yet more pressure. In his opinion, this would be conducive toward swaying "World Jewry" to intervene and end the boycott campaign against Germany in the foreign press while at the same time prevailing upon the Anglo-Saxon powers to be more amenable to Germany's wishes. As further developments showed, this was a complete miscalculation, and while the British and the Americans sympathized with German Jews, they were not willing to change their attitude toward Hitler for this reason alone.

In the Nuremberg Laws, Hitler employed the same tactics underlying his boycott of April 1, 1933:²⁰⁸ he persecuted the German Jews but stopped short for the time being of making their lives totally unbearable. At the same time, he threatened to issue further sanctions if the foreign powers continued to refuse to comply with the wishes of National Socialist Germany. This complicated blackmail strategy was based, however, upon false premises; and thus even his drastic measures after 1941 were doomed to fail.

Hitler's September 15 speech to the Reichstag was as follows:²⁰⁹

On behalf of the German Reich Government, I have requested Reichstag President Pg. Göring to convene for today a session of the German Reichstag in Nuremberg. The place was chosen because, by virtue of the National

Socialist Movement, it is closely connected with the laws which will be presented to you today for passage; the time was chosen because the great majority of the deputies are still in Nuremberg in the capacity of Party comrades. I would like to make a few general remarks on these bills which are being introduced on a notice of motion.

The first part of the Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg has come to an end. The Wehrmacht Day will mark its final conclusion tomorrow. The picture presented by this celebration of the Movement echoes even more strongly last year's impression. The German Volk has found the way to a unity and discipline such as has never before existed in history. This expression of the stability of the Movement is simultaneously the expression of the strength of the current regime. What the German nation longed for in vain for centuries has now been given unto it: a united Volk of brothers, free of respective biases and the scruples of past epochs. This inner strength will be reflected by the picture the Wehrmacht will present to us tomorrow. It shall not be a mass demonstration, but an exposition of the inner value of our new Army.

The German Volk can consider itself lucky at the knowledge of having regained this strength after having suffered so terribly and been impotent for so long. And that particularly at a time which seems to be afflicted by formidable crises. Germany has regained its health. Its facilities are back in working order, both inside and out.

All the more greater is the responsibility of the leadership of the Reich in such grave times. There can be but one guiding principle for the whole of our actions: our great and unshakeable love of peace. It appears to me that such a statement is necessary at this time, for a certain international press will unfortunately persist in its attempts to draw Germany into the circle of its calculating designs.

Before we know it, there will be reports that Germany plans to take action against France; there will be speculation that it is turning against Austria; or the suspicion that it will attack Russia—don't ask me where. These threats are then usually presented as an argument for the necessity of forming various coalitions, depending on the needs of the moment.

In no less generous terms does this press give German friendship away and treat it as something given free for the having to any statesman inclined to reach out his hand to take it.

I hardly need assure you, my deputies and men of the Reichstag, that the German Government does not base its decisions upon any kind of negative attitude towards anyone, but solely on the consciousness of its own responsibility to Germany. The purpose of our work is not, however, to squander what it has achieved in some thoughtless and hence lunatic gamble.

The purpose of building up the German Army was not to threaten the freedom of any European people, much less deprive them of it, but solely to preserve the freedom of the German Volk. This viewpoint is the fundamental principle upon which the foreign policy of the German Reich Government rests. Therefore we refuse to comment on incidents which do not affect Germany, and do not wish to be dragged into such incidents. It is with all the more concern, however, that the German Volk is following the incidents in

Lithuania.²¹⁰ In the midst of peacetime, the Memel territory was stolen from Germany years after the peace treaty. This theft was legalized by the League of Nations and coupled only with the condition that the contractually-stipulated autonomy awarded to the Memel Germans be preserved. For years now, the German element in this area has been abused and tortured in violation of law and the treaty. A great nation is forced to look on while, contrary to law and the stipulations of the treaty, its blood relations who were attacked in the midst of peacetime and torn away from the Reich are being subjected to a treatment worse than that to which criminals are subjected in normal states.

Yet their only crime is that they are Germans and wish to remain Germans. Proposals of those responsible in Kaunas have, to date, not progressed beyond mere worthless formalities with no consequences within the country.

The German Reich Government views this development with interest and with bitterness. It would be a laudable undertaking were the League of Nations to turn its attention to the respect due to the autonomy of the Memel territory and see to it that it is put into practice, before here, too, the events begin to take on forms which could one day but be regretted by all those involved. The preparations for the election which are now taking place there constitute a mockery of both law and obligation!

Germany is by no means lodging unreasonable claims in demanding that suitable measures be taken to coerce Lithuania to comply with the existing treaties. A nation of sixty-five million ought surely to have the right to demand that it at least receive no less consideration than the whims of a country of two million.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing how, although the understanding between peoples is more needed than ever, the Bolshevist International of Moscow has resumed its open and methodical revolutionizing, which means whipping up animosity among the peoples. The farce of the Comintern Congress in Moscow is a telling illustration of the sincerity of the "non-intervention" policy this same power demands.

Since we expect nothing to come of protests and remonstrances in Moscow and have learned through our own experience and, as far as we can ascertain, from the experiences of other states as well, we are resolved to combat the Bolshevist revolutionary agitation in Germany with the effective weapons of National Socialist enlightenment.

The Party Congress has certainly left no room for doubt that National Socialism—if an attempt is made by Moscow-Bolshevism to establish a foothold in Germany or to drive Germany into a revolution—will most definitely put a stop to this plan and such attempts.

We are further compelled to note that here, as everywhere, it is almost exclusively Jewish elements which are at work as instigators of this campaign to spread animosity and confusion among the peoples. The insult to the German flag—which was settled most loyally by a statement of the American Government—is both an illustration of the attitude of Jews, even in civil service status, towards Germany and revealing proof of the pertinence of our National Socialist legislation which is designed as a precautionary measure to

prevent from the very onset that similar incidents take place in our German administration and in our courts, and to prohibit them at any cost. However, should the pertinence of our view require yet further underscoring, this is provided in abundance in the renewed boycott campaign which the Jewish element has just launched against Germany.

This international unrest in the world unfortunately appears to have given rise to the opinion among Jews in Germany that now perhaps the time has come to set Jewish interests up in clear opposition to the German national interests in the Reich. Loud complaints of provocative actions of individual members of this race are coming in from all sides, and the striking frequency of these reports and the similarity of their content appear to indicate a certain method behind the deeds themselves. These actions have escalated to demonstrations in a Berlin cinema directed against a basically harmless foreign film which Jewish circles fancied was offensive to them.

To prevent this behavior from leading to quite determined defensive action on the part of the outraged population, the extent of which cannot be foreseen, the only alternative would be a legislative solution to the problem. The German Reich Government is guided by the hope of possibly being able to bring about, by means of a single secular measure, a framework within which the German Volk would be in a position to establish tolerable relations with the Jewish people. However, should this hope prove false and intra-German and international Jewish agitation proceed on its course, a new evaluation of the situation would have to take place.

I now propose that the Reichstag adopt the bills which the Reichstag President, Party comrade Göring, will read aloud to you. The first and second laws repay a debt of gratitude to the Movement, under whose symbol Germany regained its freedom,²¹¹ in that they fulfill a significant item on the program of the National Socialist Party.

The third is an attempt at a legislative solution to a problem which, should it yet again prove insoluble, would have to be assigned to the National Socialist Party for a final solution by law. Behind all three laws stands the National Socialist Party, and with it and behind it stands the nation.

I may request that you adopt the laws for passage.

Before Reichstag President Göring disclosed the wording of the three laws, he took the podium to speak for thirty minutes in support of Hitler's views. True to his adage of July 13, 1934 ("We will all always approve of everything our Führer does"),²¹² he merely parroted what his Führer had told him to say. Although he spoke with the "voice of his master," Göring was consistently capable of expressing his own views in a tone of utter conviction; the fact that he spoke almost exclusively of the flag act on this occasion indicated how very important this matter was to Hitler.

In his remarks, Göring stressed that the old black-white-red banner had now been lowered in honor and belonged to a Germany of the

past. One had been forced, he explained, to take steps to ensure that this flag was not demoted to a mere "Party pennant disguising *Reaktion's* sign of victory."

We wish to prevent that the black-white-red banner is further degraded as not worth a fig, and held up as a fig leaf disguising the naked truth about democratic-pacifistic ignorance. For us, the swastika has become a sacred symbol, and thus it is quite self-evident that, if this flag is to fly over Germany in the future, no Jew may be allowed to hoist this sacred insignia. The new flag shall clearly demonstrate to the world that Germany will stand under the swastika for ever and for all eternity.

Göring also made reference to the New York incident involving the swastika flag, stating:

He who offends this flag insults the nation. We have noted to our regret what happened recently in America, and we feel sorry for the American people for having been forced to witness such an indignity. We frankly declare, however, that we regard this act merely as an excess and hold that a brazen Jew will never be able to insult us in his profound hatred.

The victory of the swastika gave us back our pride and gave us back our might. The Wehrmacht yearns for the insignia under which it was resurrected. Had the victory not been won through the fighting and the sacrifices of the brown battalions, had we not had this victory, we know that not a single battalion, not a single boat, not a single new airplane would have been possible. Thus for us the swastika has become for all time the symbol of freedom, and therefore it is only natural that today, at the Party Congress of Freedom, this symbol of freedom be anchored.

At the close of his speech, Göring announced the wording of the three laws. The "Reich Flag Act" and the "Reich Law of Citizenship" were received with the standard applause. The reading of the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" elicited hoots of laughter when Göring read the "comical" text of § 4: "Jews are prohibited from hoisting the flag of the Reich and the Nation and from exhibiting the Reich colors. However, exhibiting the Jewish colors is permitted. The exercise of this right is subject to State protection."

As a matter of course, the three laws were unanimously accepted for passage, whereupon Hitler felt called upon to make yet a further statement in which he stressed how many centuries would be thankful for the Reichstag's work. He declared in his "final appeal:"²¹³

My Deputies!

You have now approved of a law, the impact of which will only become evident in its full scope after many centuries have passed. See to it that the nation itself does not stray from the straight and narrow path of the law! See

to it that our Volk adheres to the path of the law! See to it that this law is ennobled by the most tremendous discipline of the entire German Volk, to whom and for whom you are responsible.

As if this were not enough, Hitler once more strode to the podium at the following meeting of leading party members. It was his fourth speech of the day. The *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following report:²¹⁴

At this gathering, the Führer expressed his gratitude to the responsible leaders of the Reich Party Organization for their accomplishments, and took advantage of the opportunity to underscore the significance of the new laws and to point out that the National Socialist legislation presented the sole means for coming to passable terms with the Jews living in Germany. The Führer particularly stressed that, by virtue of these laws, the Jews in Germany were granted opportunities in all areas of their own *völkisch* life such as were not in existence to date in any other country. In this connection, the Führer renewed the order to the Party that it continue to refrain from taking any independent action against Jews.

September 16 marked the “Wehrmacht Day,” which opened with large-scale presentations at the refurbished Zeppelin Field. It was Hitler’s first public address to the soldiers of the army :²¹⁵

Soldiers of the new German Wehrmacht!

For the second time, units of the Army and the Navy have assembled at this spot; for the first time in the position of a free armed force (*Wehrfreiheit*). Now you have been joined by the new units of our German Wehrmacht which can now be shown to the German Volk in this, their new context.

The German was always a good soldier. For our Volk the service of arms was never an enforced service, but a service of the highest honor in every period of our history. It was thus all the more painful and dispiriting for the honoring, decent German man not to be allowed to be a soldier—or if so, under dishonorable and humiliating circumstances. How successfully this situation has now been mastered is something evidenced to you, my soldiers, and today to the entire German Volk, in this display of the union between the German man as soldier and the weapons of modern technology. Now every young German man, should he be found worthy by the nation, will join your ranks. And you will now once again perform your service with arms which are in use today throughout the world.

This service requires of each and every one of you certain sacrifices. Each of you must make a sacrifice in terms of personal freedom; he must exhibit obedience and subordination, but also toughness, endurance and, above all, an utmost sense of duty.

Those who believe this sacrifice must be wrung out of the German man are mistaken! Throughout the centuries, German men have done this voluntarily, and they were proud of their accomplishments. And not only in peacetime

did the German man joyfully make this sacrifice to the nation as soldier; he did so no less when the crisis of the Reich called upon him to protect *Volk und Vaterland*. The German was not only a good soldier in peacetime, but a brave fighter at all times.

But what are all the sacrifices required of you and of us today compared to the sacrifices required of millions of us and our comrades twenty years ago? May each of you, should he ever perceive the duty of the soldier a burden, recall that eight days of drumfire required more in terms of sacrifice from the battalions and regiments of our Old Army than the service of peace during an entire year. The German Volk in arms was not brought to its knees by this. It was brought to its knees only because it lost its inner freedom, its inner belief in its rights. This faith has returned today, and this faith, my soldiers, belongs not only to hundreds of thousands, but to millions of you; and millions of our Volksgenossen embrace you with this burning faith, with this burning confidence and with this warm love.

And if you are personally required to make the sacrifices of obedience, of performing your duty, of subordination, of being tough, enduring, and efficient, do not forget, my soldiers, that the entire German Volk makes great sacrifices for you, too. It is a difficult task for the German Volk to build what is standing here and in countless other places in Germany. Our Volk must make difficult sacrifices, and it does so gladly. For first of all, it does not want to see its sons badly equipped and secondly, it no longer wants to see Germany defenseless.

So we continue to make these sacrifices mutually—the Volk for you, and you for the Volk! Both for Germany, our Volk, and our precious German Reich! And we are also making these sacrifices with the conviction that it does not require a war to reward us for doing so.

Once Germany had a proud and brave army; it had heroic fighters. That is natural for the German soldier.

But the army was not only the nation's great defense in wartime; in peacetime it was also the splendid school of our Volk. It made men of us all, and the sight of it has always bolstered in us the faith in the future of our Volk. And this splendid Old Army is not dead; it was only sleeping and has now been resurrected in you!

You, my comrades, bear at the points of your weapons and on your helmets a tremendous legacy. You are not something artificially created, something void of tradition and a past; rather, whatever else Germany may have to offer pales compared to what you must and can personify in terms of tradition. There is indeed no need for you to win for the German army any title to fame; it already has that, you need only preserve it!

And as we stand here armed in steel and bronze, it is not because we feel it is necessary to repair the honor of the German Volk. As long as this honor was borne by the soldier, no one in the world has ever been able to rob us of it! Germany has never lost its military honor, least of all in the last war. Thus we need not recover this honor. But we will see to it in the future that not as much honor, not as much heroic courage, and not as many sacrifices are in vain as has been the case in the past.

This army of old—of which you are a continuation and whose representative and bearer of tradition you must be—offered the greatest sacrifices on the altar of the Vaterland ever required of an army from its Volk.

Demonstrate that you are worthy and deserving of these sacrifices! See to it that the nation can depend on you just as it could once depend on our splendid old military, on our Old Army and Wehrmacht. See to it that the trust of the nation can be placed in you just as it was once placed in the army, for you wear helmets from its most glorious age. Then the German Volk will love you; it will see in you the best part of the German Volk, just as it sends its best sons into this unique organization year after year. This Volk will then believe in its army and gladly and joyfully make any sacrifice out of the conviction that, in doing so, it is preserving the peace of the nation and securing the education of the German Volk.

For you have become men, and we want the whole of German youth to attend this splendid, final school and likewise become the men you are. We want to raise a tough breed which is strong, reliable, loyal, obedient, and decent, so that we need not be ashamed of our Volk before history.

That is what the nation requests, what the nation hopes for and demands of you! And I know you will fulfill this demand and this hope and this request, for you are the new soldiers of the new German Reich!

Hitler had clearly closed the book on the past. Apparently the times were over when the Reichswehr played a special role in public life and represented a separate class in the hierarchy of the State: even the designation “Reichswehr” was now avoided.

In order to bring home to the generals their new status under his sole subordination, Hitler had their representatives march by him after the speech just as young recruits pass inspection by their non-commissioned officers. The Reich Minister of War and Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht,²¹⁶ General von Blomberg; the Commander in Chief of the Army, General Freiherr von Fritsch; the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral Raeder; and the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, General der Flieger Göring, led the parade, marching by Hitler’s rostrum with a salute.

Following this triumph, Hitler delivered his lengthy closing speech to the assembled Party Congress participants.²¹⁷ So engrossed was he in his subject that he even made a few remarks on a future constitution for the Reich and a time when he would no longer dwell among his comrades, announcing that his successor should also personify the combined offices of “*Herr* (leader) of the Party, Head of the Reich, and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.”

When I will breathe my last breath is something I do not know. But that the Party will live on is something I do know, and that it will successfully shape

the future of the German nation beyond any individuals, whether they be weak or strong, is something I believe and something I know! For it guarantees the stability of the leadership of the Volk and the Reich, and by its own stability it guarantees the authority this leadership requires. The constitution of the new German Reich will grow out of this solid base. It is the duty of the Party as *weltanschaulich* shaper and political navigator of German fate to provide the nation and thus the Reich with its Führer. The more naturally and uncontestedly this principle is established and maintained, the stronger Germany will be.

The army as the representative of and organization for the defensive strength of our Volk must always preserve and maintain the organized military strength of the Reich entrusted to it and place same in loyalty and obedience at the disposal of the Führer given to the nation by the Movement. For when the respective new Führer is appointed, he shall be *Herr* of the Party, Head of the Reich, and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. If these principles form the unshakeable foundation of the German structures of Volk and State, Germany will be able to withstand any storms which may come its way.

But let the two fundamental manifestations of the new Reich both bear in mind that they can only satisfy the demands placed upon them jointly. The Party gives to the Volk the Army, and the Volk gives to the Army its soldiers; both together thus provide to the German Reich the security of internal peace and order and the power to stand up for itself. Today, as Führer of the Reich and the nation, I can still personally offer help and advice. But these principles must lead from the personal to the eternal.

Führers will come and Führers will die, but Germany must live on. And alone this Movement will lead Germany to this life. All of us, though, will one day be judged by the quality and historic permanency of what we are building today!

We, my Party comrades, co-leaders of the Volk and the Army, have been chosen by Fate to make history in the loftiest sense of the word. What millions of people are deprived of has been given to us by Providence. Even most distant posterity will be reminded of us by our work. And it should one day find most noteworthy and distinguished of all the fact that, in an age marked by lack of loyalty and rampant betrayal, it was possible in the Germany of our age to form as never before a mutual league of the most loyal followers. And we know one thing:

One day, a page in world history will be devoted to us, the men from the National Socialist Party and the German Army who joined efforts to build and safeguard the new German Reich. One day we will stand then side by side, immortalized in the pantheon of history, immortalized in indivisible loyalty as in the time of the great struggle and the great fulfillment.

On September 17, following the official close of the Party Congress, Hitler delivered another speech in Nuremberg to the winning troops at the Reich Sports Competition of the SA²¹⁸ in which he declared that, although the SA had decreased in quantity, it had increased in quality.

In the course of this “Party Congress of Freedom” in Nuremberg, Hitler had written and—for the most part—delivered a total of seventeen speeches.²¹⁹ He spoke, however, only at organized events to captive and obedient audiences and had little direct exposure to the public at large.

Hitler began to shrink from immediate contact with the population, a more objective audience than his Party followers. A pattern began to emerge which was later to characterize Hitler’s speeches up to 1945: he addressed only those who wanted to hear him, or—more aptly expressed—who were forced for reasons of their status and function to listen to his outpourings.

Hitler’s ‘secret speeches’ before small groups of workers etc. were no substitute for the earlier mass rallies before and after the take-over, in which he courted public support for patriotic ideals, promised economic aid and met with genuine applause. With his new “comrades from the Volk,” before meager gatherings of uncritical workers, he was certain of approval from the very onset. These “poorest and most loyal” sons of the Volk, to quote Brücker, were still easily impressed by vain words and fantastic schemes for the future. In contrast, the German people as a whole became increasingly skeptical the longer Hitler’s reign persisted. And the dictator knew it.

4

On September 24, Hitler delivered a speech at the leaders' convention of the NSDAP in Munich, in which he discussed planned implementation provisions for the Reich Law of Citizenship.²²⁰ A somewhat lengthy consultation between Hitler and Hungarian Minister-President Gömbös took place in the Berlin Chancellery on September 29.²²¹

On October 1, Hitler paid a visit to East Prussian troop units. The next day he attended Hindenburg's "final interment"²²² in a newly erected vault in the Tannenberg monument near Hohenstein.²²³ On the evening of October 2, he declared the Tannenberg monument a "Reich Memorial" and dispatched the following official announcement:²²⁴

Berlin, October 2, 1935

The mortal remains of our dearly beloved Field Marshal von Hindenburg have today, on the day he was born eighty-eight years ago, been transferred to the vault erected for him in the Tannenberg monument. Here, at the site of the victory of Tannenberg, surrounded by his soldiers who lost their lives in battle, the Commander has now found his final resting place. Laying this great German to rest within the walls of this tremendous monument to battle constitutes a special consecration of this monument and elevates it to one of the nation's shrines.

In order to render visible the significance of the Tannenberg monument, I hereby declare it a "Reich Memorial" and bestow upon it the name "Tannenberg Reich Memorial." As the burial place of the Field Marshal and the twenty unknown soldiers resting at his side, it shall be consecrated for all eternity to the grateful memory of the glorious achievements and heroic sacrifices of the German Volk during the World War. The German Reich takes the "Tannenberg Reich Memorial" under its wing from today onwards and shall be mindful to preserve and protect it as a symbol of German loyalty, comradeship and self-sacrifice for all time to come.

German men created this monument in times of hardship, and many were those throughout the German populace who contributed to its expansion

with voluntary gifts. To sincerely thank all of them in this hour is both my duty and a matter dear to my heart.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor: Adolf Hitler

The same day, Mussolini gave the order, "Italy, forward march!" and launched his invasion of Ethiopia.

On October 3, Hitler addressed workers at the Schichau shipyard in Elbing and subsequently toured the Marienburg. In the evening, he spoke to the Führerkorps of the NSDAP in the Königsberg Municipal Hall.²²⁵

The *Erntedankfest* was celebrated on October 6 on the Bückeberg near Hamelin. A reported mass of one million peasants had heard the appeal and gathered there to listen to the great Pied Piper. Prior to addressing them, Hitler had exhibition maneuvers by the Wehrmacht displayed to the audience. This time, the entire rally had a militaristic character: there were artillery salutes; guards of honor marched up; the generals were in attendance, etc. The sheer magnitude of the 1,000,000 people sent Hitler into ecstasies, and he rhapsodized in his speech:²²⁶

Just as you are standing here before me, my German Volksgenossen, there stand multitudes more, sixty-eight times as many. Our Volk numbers sixty-eight million. These sixty-eight million are our principals; we are under obligation to all of them, responsible to all of them. They all want to live; they all need to eat; they need freedom, and thus they all have command over our actions. The Volk alone is our master (*Herr*), and it is this Volk we serve according to our best knowledge and belief.

However, in order to fulfill this task, it is necessary for each person to understand that the discipline and order demanded of him are to his own advantage and that the authority which requires this order is acting in his own interest. Everyone must understand this, for everyone profits from it.

Despite all his efforts, Hitler had been unable to convince the entire German population to unreservedly acknowledge the supremacy of his will. Thus here he once more expressed his annoyance at intellectual critics, calling upon his peasant audience to confirm that criticism was an unendurable phenomenon.

And I thus turn once again to you, my peasants. When you till your soil, when you walk behind the plough, when you plant and when you finally arm [!] yourselves for the harvest, you would not enjoy it if someone were constantly standing beside you who knew nothing about farming but who felt called upon to constantly criticize you. My dear peasants, what would you do with a man like that? And if we try to defend ourselves against these people, they say, "There is a need for criticism." No, my venerable Sirs, the critics: there

is a need for work! There is a need for someone to have the courage to assume the responsibility and to stand by it to the death. Where would humanity be if in place of work and responsibility only criticism had been the governing, controlling and guiding factor in the lives of men?

What all of us have witnessed today with our own eyes, this wonderful, condensed display of military action [!], would not be possible in terms of its prerequisites, its preparation and its performance were this institution governed by the rule, "Critics welcome here," instead of, "Here orders are given, and orders are obeyed!"

It is not difficult, in view of the vast amount of work being accomplished everywhere in Germany, to ascertain with notebook in hand that somewhere, sometime, perhaps a mistake has been made. I have yet to see the peasant who can state that he has never had a bad harvest, never perhaps could have done something more sensibly. That is not the point. The point is rather that one tries to do the right thing and never capitulates in the face of whatever difficulties may arise!

Anyone forced to eliminate such distress as we were must seek new paths. Unfortunately, our predecessors in office failed here and did not bequeath to us any recipes as to how such distress could be alleviated. We have sought our own paths, and we have found them. I believe the proof is in rallies such as these, too.

Where else could it be possible that nearly a sixtieth of a great Volk's total millions flock together on one day in order not only to solemnly bear witness to their unity, but also to their solidarity with this regime and this system? Where is the statesman, where the head of state who can go forth into his Volk as I go forth among you?²²⁷

That is the marvelous thing, that our Volk has understood this regime, its necessity and its actions, and carried on as usual, in contrast to the weaklings who cannot comprehend that our Volk has understood that the actions we are taking lie in the interest of all.

The persistence with which Hitler attempted to defend himself against the criticism of the intellectuals reveals how annoying he found it—and how justified it was. Hitler closed his speech with a word of thanks to Providence for the harvest, meaning not only the agricultural harvest but above all the yield from the military and "demographic"²²⁸ harvest.

Providence has enabled us this year to reap a harvest not only plentiful in financial terms; it has blessed us even more: from the beginning of this year onward, Germany was able to score numerous and decisive victories. Our German Wehrmacht was brought back to life. The German fleet²²⁹ will come to life once more. The German cities and the beautiful villages—they are protected, watched over by the strength of the nation, watched over by the weapon in the air.

Far beyond that, we want to say thanks for a special harvest: in this hour, we wish to thank the hundreds of thousands and hundreds of thousands of

German women who once more gave us the most beautiful gift they have to give us: many hundreds of thousands of small children! [—]

We want to do our duty, to take the straight path without looking back, as we have done hitherto. We want to stride through the difficulties of this age, strong and prepared, and never weaken. We want to do the right thing and have fear of no man, and want then to submit a request to the Almighty that He bless our work in the year to come as well, that He once more bestow upon our fields a plentiful bounty and upon us all great success.

May He especially keep alive in our Volk the right insight, may He secure for it inner [!] peace and instill in us all the wisdom and the prudence to do the right thing, that our Volk may live and Germany never die.

After this flourishing finish in the style of the Catholic liturgy, Hitler left for Goslar, where a ceremonial army tattoo and a fireworks spectacle awaited him.

On October 8, Hitler opened the third Winterhilfswerk with a speech in the Kroll Opera in Berlin.²³⁰ He gave a detailed account of past socio-economic polarities, but naturally did not waste the opportunity to stress his present position of power:

First of all: in terms of power, class struggle in Germany today has been abolished; in other words, no one is left who would be in a position to engage in it. There may be an isolated individual here or there who still entertains this idea in his thoughts and hopes for better times—which is to say worse times—in which he might once again be in a position to mobilize these instincts.

Let no one be deceived! We have the power to prevent that, and we are resolved to prevent it under all circumstances, and to do so on both sides. Secondly: we are presently engaged in arriving at a material solution to the differences underlying this class struggle. We are fortunate to be able to enforce this material solution because we ourselves are above such differences. I might well say that I view myself as the most independent of men in this context; obligated to no one, subordinate to no one, indebted to no one—instead answerable only to my own conscience. And this conscience has but one single commander: our Volk! The German Volk and its elite, united in the Movement, in the National Socialist Party!

Following further pontificating on the power of the ideal and the corroding poison of Bolshevism, Hitler called upon his audience to make sacrifices for the Volksgemeinschaft, stating:

Now one might say, “if the economy cannot solve everything, why do you not have the State solve it?” But what is the State? Volksgenosse, you are the State! And the State should not force you to fulfill this natural duty; rather, you yourself should express in real terms your feelings for the Volksgemeinschaft, you must come forth and make voluntary sacrifices! []

Don’t tell me, “All right, but it’s still a bother to do all this collecting.” You have never known hunger, otherwise you would know what a bother it is to

be hungry. You have never experienced what it means to have nothing to eat, much less what it means not to be able to give one's loved ones anything to eat!

And if the other then says, "But you know, all these stew Sundays²³¹—I would like to give something, but it's my stomach, I have stomach problems all the time anyway, I don't understand it. I'd give ten pfennigs just the same." No, dear friend, there is a reason behind everything we do. It is particularly useful for you, someone who does not understand, if in this way at least we can guide you back to your Volk, to the millions of your Volksgenossen who would be happy if they only had that stew all winter long that you perhaps eat once a month. We did this intentionally and will never depart from it. On the contrary: we are convinced that this is a great day in the German nation and that he who would play truant is without character and a pest within our Volk.

We hold that, by such visible demonstrations, we are continually stirring the conscience of our Volk and making each of you once more aware that you should perceive yourself as a Volksgenosse, and that you should make sacrifices!

Do not say, I would gladly give! You should give, even if it means forbearing on your part, for you should make sacrifices for others. We too might have done things differently. But no, we want to show the whole world and our Volk that we Germans perceive the word "community" not as a hollow phrase, but that for us it really does entail an inner obligation.

That is our war! We are engaged in the greatest campaign of conquest in world history; in other words, we are making the conquest of our German Volk.

That is the most splendid conquest there can be—if one has possession of a Volk which shares one mind, one heart, one will, and one action. If this conquest is successful, Providence will not withhold from us our earthly reward in other respects, either.

We National Socialists view this as our tremendous, great task, the most splendid mission there is, the most wonderful battle we can imagine. Anyone who has once found access to this world of ideas will be infinitely and richly rewarded. He will then no longer view it as something painful, as a series of deprivations, but will finally achieve true happiness, namely the happiness of being able to help others and thus to make progress on the road to pure idealism.

Therefore this Winterhilfswerk is a proud affair of the heart to us National Socialists. We are truly proud in feeling that, with it, we have built up something which the world has hitherto not known the likes of, nor we ourselves. If we take only the achievements of peace, of our rich age of peace, as a comparison—how deplorable that was!²³² That is the way of things: first our Volk had to be beaten so that it could finally find its way to its own.

Hence we are once more appealing to the Germans. And we are not miserly regarding the outcome of this project. We do not exclude anyone! We are fighting with the Communists here, and we will beat them into the ground if necessary. But should they say, "I'm hungry"—fine, then let them have

something to eat.²³³ We are not fighting them in order to kill them, but in order to preserve our Volk from madness. But if they come to their senses and return to their Volk, they shall be welcomed with open arms. We rejoice in every person who has found the way to his community. We are just as resolved to defend this community as we are generous in winning over members for this community.

On October 19, Hitler spoke in the Coburg City Hall on the occasion of a roll call of the leaders of the NSKK. He recalled the significant role Coburg had played in the struggle for power and, before the assembled Old Fighters, declared that he would never capitulate.²³⁴

The next day, a volume entitled “Hall of Fame to those killed for the Third Reich,”²³⁵ was published, for which Hitler had written the following preface:

The men of whom these pages speak lost their lives as soldiers of the National Socialist Revolution in the battle for Germany’s liberation and new order. Their great dream has today come true. From their blood has sprouted the seed of a better future, the sacrifice of their lives has become a bulwark bearing their former insignia as the flag of the Third Reich.

Adolf Hitler

The last *Wanburgfestz*²³⁶ of the *Deutsche Burschenschaft* (fraternity), the largest academic association, took place on October 18. In the words of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, on this day the German Fraternity members “laid down their colors on the altar of the German Volksgemeinschaft,” and were subsumed into the NS Students’ League. The other student fraternities and organizations—the *Landsmannschaften*, the *Deutsche Sängerschaft* (choir), etc.—followed suit within the next several days. Again Hitler had succeeded in eliminating organizations which had once exerted an influence upon the course of German politics. No one but himself and the bodies under his control was ever to be allowed to wield power. Within merely a few days’ time, the Stahlhelm, too, would be forced to disappear.

Field Marshal von Mackensen had aided Hitler in defeating the Stahlhelm by renouncing his honorary membership in that organization on July 31, because “the most important battle aim of the Stahlhelm” had been “realized with the reinstitution of general conscription.”²³⁷ In return for this support, Hitler assigned to Mackensen the title to the ancestral estate²³⁸ Prüssow near Stettin—which was state property—on October 22. It was a well-known fact that Hitler showed a marked generosity in bestowing material and financial endowments upon persons who were devoted to him.²³⁹

On October 23, Hitler dispatched a telegram expressing his condolences to the widow of Gauleiter and Reichsstatthalter Loeper in Dessau who had died following a prolonged illness.²⁴⁰ The same day, he consulted with the head of the Reich Veterans' Association (Kyffhäuserbund), former Colonel Reinhardt. The talks were obviously related to the planned dissolution of the Stahlhelm.²⁴¹

On October 26, Hitler attended Loeper's funeral in Dessau, calling him an "apostle of the Movement" in his eulogy delivered at the Friedrich Theater.²⁴²

When Fate is especially fond of a man and wishes to bestow upon him the best thing in the world, it will give him loyal friends, men who are resolved to share with him equally both joy and sorrow, men whom nothing can lead astray, men who, particularly in days of need, stand by him firm and resolute. I have been given a most generous share of this happiness and good fortune such as perhaps only few people in this world have.²⁴³

Yet this happiness of so many years turns to pain when I now see how this and that member of the community of fighters is called to his Maker. When I speak here today, I am speaking as the happy—yet now so unhappy—Führer who must now accompany a member of his old guard to the grave, a man the likes of whom are rare even in our Movement.

Once he came to me when one could expect nothing more from this Movement than sacrifices and troubles, persecution and abuse. And truly it was only love of Germany which led him to that host of inseparable men who were determined to take up and pursue the battle for a new Germany against all odds. This man, with his boundless love of Germany, also had an unshakeable faith [in Adolf Hitler]. This faith was combined, in his case, with a unique loyalty [to Adolf Hitler]. He was one of the most loyal members of the old guard. During the time of struggle, we never spoke about it; no one would have understood it anyway. But today, at the bier of my dead comrade in arms, I must express it in words for German youth, that they may aspire to the same.

The new Reich was not given to us; it had to be hard won in battle, and in this fight only an overabundance of love for Germany, of faith, of willingness to sacrifice, and of loyalty allowed [us] to triumph. That is something the German Volk must know. For it is my wish that the names of these first apostles of our Movement go down in German history for all eternity. Party comrade Loeper was a zealot, but he was more than that: a strong, selfsufficient man as hard as granite. He was persistent as only few are, untiring in his work and never swaying from the conviction: in the end we must succeed!

Hence for many of us this Party comrade was a model, in his unselfish modesty too, in his personal simplicity and in his lack of emotionalism: he was strictly a helper devoted to our great mutual cause.

Formerly the captain of the pioneers of the World War, he became a captain and pioneer of the National Socialist Weltanschauung, of our

Revolution, and thus of our new German Reich. By having waged this battle in his lifetime, he lives on for us in death. He is a man for the German future. He deserves to be distinguished from the masses of hundreds of thousands and millions and be held up before the nation for all time! And this applies particularly to German youth. They shall hear this, and they shall learn from it. They shall once again realize that the old fealty was not only a virtue of the Teutons. The new Reich was built up with this virtue as its basis. This Reich would not be standing today were it not founded upon this fidelity [to Adolf Hitler].

A wonderful life has thus come to a close. Yet today we are all overcome by deep sorrow that our Party comrade, our Gauleiter and our Reichsstatthalter has been forced to leave us so soon, one of the old guard. Our hearts bleed when we see how our ranks slowly begin to thin out.

But as the old passes, so the young grows to take its place. For this old guard did not live in vain, did not struggle and fight in vain. From their work and their influence has sprung forth the richest of blessings—and Party comrade Captain Loeper was one of the most blessed of men.

On November 3, Hitler delivered a speech at the official opening of the rebuilt Ludwig Bridge in Munich.²⁴⁴

It was his hope, he stated, that the many sad events which this bridge had been made to suffer²⁴⁵ in the past would not be repeated in future and that the train twelve years before would hopefully be the last dismal incident on this bridge.

The same day, the roofing ceremony for the new Party buildings at the Munich Königsplatz (built according to the plans of Professor Troost) took place, and Hitler made use of the occasion to speak to the construction workers in the Löwenbräukeller. There he once more announced the coming of “Party buildings as large and as rock-solid (*steinhart*) as the Movement itself.”²⁴⁶

On November 5, Hitler signed the Decrees on Flags and National Emblems.²⁴⁷ He had already “decreed” the existence of a new Reich service flag on October 31,²⁴⁸ showing the swastika with a black and white border and the sovereign symbol of the Party in the upper inner corner. The first of the November 5 decrees provided, “the Reich shall use as its national emblem the sovereign symbol of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party.”

With the second decree, Hitler introduced a new Reich naval ensign similar in design to the old imperial ensign.²⁴⁹ The white background was, however, now red, and the imperial eagle in the circle at the flag’s center was replaced by the swastika with its black and white border. In the upper inner corner, the old iron cross on the imperial ensign had been retained.

Still on November 5, Hitler received the International Olympic Committee headed by Count Baillet-Latour in the Chancellery, where arrangements for the 1936 Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Berlin were discussed.²⁵⁰

Two days later, the recruits of the first age-group of general conscription²⁵¹ swore their allegiance to the new Reich naval ensign. Hitler had the following order of the day read aloud:²⁵²

Berlin, November 7, 1935

Soldiers of the Wehrmacht!

As of today, I hereby present to the resurrected Wehrmacht of general conscription duty the new Reich naval ensign.

May the swastika be for you a symbol of the unity and purity of the nation, a sign of the strength of the National Socialist Weltanschauung, a pledge of the freedom and strength of the Reich. The iron cross shall be a reminder to you of the unique tradition of the old Wehrmacht, of the virtues which inspired it, of the model it gave you.

It is your duty to do loyal service in life and death to the Reich colors of black, white and red. To follow the flag shall be a matter of pride to you. The former Reich naval ensign²⁵³ will be taken down in honor. I reserve for myself the right to have it raised on special days of commemoration.²⁵⁴

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

Hitler made use of this day of triumph, on which the Wehrmacht throughout the country was forced to accept the flag he had designed as naval ensign, to give the Stahlhelm its final deathblow. As so often before, he once again killed two birds with one stone.

On November 7, he sent the following letter to the Bundesführer of the Stahlhelm, Franz Seldte:²⁵⁵

As of today, the reconstruction of the German Wehrmacht has achieved its crowning glory in that the recruits from the first age-group of conscription have sworn their allegiance to the Third Reich and its flag. Hence the German Wehrmacht has once again become the bearer of German arms and the preserver of their traditions for all time to come. The shaping will and the expression of political power is the Party. Under these circumstances, I no longer consider the requirements for a continuation of the "Stahlhelm" to be given.

For it was the Stahlhelm's aim to preserve the traditions of the old army and to link with them a striving to re-establish a strong Reich which shall, in a new Wehrmacht, possess its own certain means of protecting and defending its freedom.

Now that this goal has been achieved, I would like to express to you, the leader of the Stahlhelm organization, and all its members my sincere gratitude for the work and the great sacrifices you have made in the service of this ideal. In order to give the old members of the NSDFB (Stahlhelm) who had already

fought for the liberation of the Reich even prior to the take-over the opportunity to take part in the ongoing struggle to shape and form the National Socialist Third Reich, I hereby lift the existing general ban on membership in the NSDAP for such persons. These old members of the Stahlhelm cannot be incorporated as a body, but only by individual application. In addition to the general conditions for being admitted into the NSDAP and its organizations, i.e. the SA, SS and NSKK, I hold that special terms must apply which are to be stipulated with the Reich Treasurer or, respectively, the heads of these organizations.

The final decision regarding membership in the NSDAP is to be made mutually by the Reich Treasurer and the respective authorized representatives of the Party (Gauleiters, Ortsgruppenleiter, etc.).

The decision on the membership of former Stahlhelm members in the SA shall be made by the SA Chief of Staff.

The decision on the membership of former Stahlhelm members in the SS shall be made by the Reichsführer SS.

The decision on the membership of former Stahlhelm members in the NSKK shall be made by the NSKK Corps Leader.

These parties shall base their decisions on their own dutiful discretion. In order to afford those members of the Stahlhelm who are not moved by a will to take on a political function or be politically active the opportunity to continue to foster their soldierly recollections, I recommend joining the Kyffhäuserbund.

The liquidation of the NSDFB (Stahlhelm) and its financial institutions and enterprises shall be effected by the Bundesführer or his appointed representative. The Reich Treasurer of the NSDAP is willing to assist in a strictly advisory capacity at such liquidation, but will not, however, assume responsibility for any ensuing proprietary obligations.

In thanking you, Pg. Seldte, and your former fellow fighters once more for their great idealistic work and the many sacrifices made to resurrect a new Reich, I am at the same time certain that history, even in distant ages, will never forget this contribution to the uplifting of the German nation. Thus this tribute must be all the higher, the more unified and close-knit the result of all efforts toward resurrecting a new Reich will be.

Hence what may today seem to be a great sacrifice for many former members of the Stahlhelm is nothing other than the historic enhancing of the work and achievements to date. For we will only be in a position to ably hold our own before the future of our Volk when we are capable not only of ceasing to maintain the age-old ill of German fragmentation as a basic component of our very nature but also of successfully overcoming it.

One Volk, one Reich, one political will, and one sword!

I now ask you and your fellow fighters to continue to do your part in this tremendous task of asserting German life.

Adolf Hitler

Instead of protesting, Seldte even dispatched the following exuberant reply:

Mein Führer!

I acknowledge with sincere gratitude the receipt of your letter of today. My comrades in the NSDFB join me in thanking you for the generous words of recognition with which you paid tribute to the struggle of this association for the internal and external liberation of the German nation. The gratitude we feel is all the more sincere and joyful because it is addressed to the man and front-line soldier who once more gave to the German Volk its internal and external freedom, which fact has been manifested most visibly in the re-establishment of military sovereignty. With that, the desires and the struggles of the Stahlhelm, too, have achieved the end my comrades and I had unrelentingly striven for with all our hearts and with the best of our knowledge and belief.

My comrades and I are particularly grateful that you have recognized the purity of our motives in that you are giving members of the Stahlhelm the opportunity to join the Party and its organizations.

On the historic day when the Wehrmacht resurrected by virtue of your order raised the flag you gave us, we old comrades of the NSDFB (Stahlhelm) view it as a symbolic act when, on that same day, we take down our old flag and declare our purpose as having been fulfilled. We do so with the gratitude of the fighter who has been able to live to see his goals accomplished and his ideas realized.

Once more I may thank you for your good wishes and the appreciation you have shown to my comrades and the association. I hereby report to you, mein Führer, that I have ordered the dissolution of the NS Deutscher Frontkämpferbund (Stahlhelm).

Heil Hitler!

Franz Seldte

On November 7, Hitler also attended the opening of the remodelled State Theater at the Gendarme Market in Berlin before proceeding to Munich for the commemorative activities on November 8 and 9. This year's orchestration provided for a great deal of pomp: the sixteen members of the NSDAP who had lost their lives in 1923 were to be exhumed from their burial sites and reinterred in special pantheons at the Königsplatz in Munich. The imposing ceremonies marking the occasion were to drown out any discord connected with memories of the Röhm affair the year before. Under cover of this pomp and circumstance, Hitler could afford to once more schedule the commemorative march to the Feldherrnhalle which had been dispensed with in 1934.

At 8:30 in the evening of November 8, Hitler delivered his memorial speech in the Bürgerbräukeller.²⁵⁶ Following the customary long-winded "party narrative," Hitler went into the events of November 1923 and once more alleged that, by staging a putsch himself, he had forestalled a coup attempt on the part of the separatists. Whereas the

year before he had claimed having taken action four days before, now he recalled it had been “at least twenty-four hours.”

By the summer [1923] we had already realized that the dice would have to fall one way or another in Germany. At that time we were aware that, although we were perhaps weakest in terms of numbers, in terms of quality we were at the top by a long margin. When the fall came and the events began to pile up, it became more and more evident that unscrupulous scoundrels (*gewissenlose Halunken*) were aiming, under the pressure of the occupation of the Ruhr, to ultimately tear Germany apart. At that point there grew in us—I can admit, there grew in me the resolve that, if things were ever to progress that far, we would take the law of action into our own hands at least twenty-four hours before and not wait until the other side found the courage to make a decision and thus take action. One thing was clear: whoever summoned up the courage to take action in that inflationary time when absolutely everything was collapsing, was certain to have the Volk behind him.

Had a different flag been raised, the foreign powers would have immediately declared: we will no longer tolerate that this “liberation”—for that was how Germany’s fragmentation was described—is halted yet again by the attempt to restore the hegemony of one or the other Federal States. We knew that. And it was out of this urgent feeling for the hour and out of the need of this hour that we resolved to take action.

Today there is no reason for me to reveal all the details. I will do so when I no longer live.²⁵⁷ What happened then is something one not yet need know today, but one thing I can surely say is: it was the most daring decision of my life.

When I think back on it now, it makes me dizzy. The decision to strike a blow at a part of Germany and to capture the enemy’s consolidated forces at one fell swoop—it was a bold decision, bold because one needed the courage to take over power with the existing means—and they were limited. Yet this decision was necessary and unavoidable. It was the only thing that could be done.

In that hour, someone had to take a stand against the treason and confront those traitors with the national slogan. Who did it was of no consequence in the end. We did it. I dared to do it.

Then Fate was on our side. It did not allow an action to succeed which, had it succeeded, would necessarily have failed in the end due to the inner immaturity of the Movement and the defects of its organizational and intellectual foundations at the time. Today we know this! Our own deeds back then were manly and brave. And Providence acted wisely. But those brave deeds were not in vain. For in the end, the great national Movement came of them; in other words, this explosion attracted the attention of Germany as a whole to the Movement at one fell swoop. And while our opponents believed they had destroyed us, in reality the seed of the Movement had been hurled out to fall all over Germany at one fell swoop.

When the big trial took place, we were able—for the first time before such a tremendous German and international forum—to stand up for our ideals.

We scorned to say as the others did: we didn't mean it like that; no, we said: we want to destroy Germany's traitors. Unfortunately we did not succeed. At that time we solemnly declared, "We have the responsibility, and we bear the responsibility. We regret only one thing: that we did not succeed."

When we were engaged in the first trial and were waging that battle, it was still natural—because they were all, in fact, leaders—that each individual was to stand up for his actions and take the entire responsibility. But there was one thing I feared. Following us were nearly 100 Party comrades to come, men from minor combat patrols, members of certain SA storm troops. They, too, would be dragged before the judge. I was already in the fortress when these trials began to unwind. And I had only one fear, namely that under the pressure of being held in detention etc. or of all these methods of conducting trial, one or the other of them might perhaps weaken and try to save himself by declaring, "But I'm innocent, was forced to do it, I had no choice."

My heart overflowed when I saw the first report of these trials and when I read in the *Münchener Post* (at that time it was delivered to us): "The people from the combat patrols are just as brazen and impertinent as their lord and master." Then I knew: Germany is not lost. The spirit will find a way to survive! It was one thing they would not be able to stamp out.

And these same people from the combat patrols and these same SA men later became the largest organizations of the German Movement, the SA and the SS. And the spirit has remained and proven itself ten thousand times over, hundreds of thousand times over.

Because you see, that is what we owe to these dead: the example they gave us in a most terrible time in Germany. As we marched forth from here, we knew that it was no longer a triumphal march. We went forth in the conviction that it was the end, one way or another. I remember one man who said to me outside on the stairs as we were leaving, "This is the end." Each of us carried this conviction with him.

At this point I must pay tribute to a man who is not with us today, whom I asked at the time not to march at the head—General Ludendorff—and who replied to me, "I will stand at the head." And who then took his place in the foremost rank.

But that was the point, that in spite of this premonition the company was determined. When that blood had been shed, the first act of the German drama came to an end. There was nothing else one could do. Now the legal power stood armed against the national liberation movement. And it was then the realization had to dawn that this path could no longer be taken in Germany. That was over. And now comes the second infinite accomplishment of those who died. For nine years I was forced to fight legally for power in Germany. Many were those who had tried that before me. But because they preached legality, they got only weaklings, only the cowardly, to join their movement.

The revolutionary men, the men of action, stood outside their ranks. Had I not attempted this revolution in November 1923, staged a coup, and had blood not been shed and so many killed in the process, I would not have been able to say for nine years, "From now on there will be legal fighting only." Or I, too, would have got only the half-men.

Only thus did I later have the energy to persist in adhering to my course, which was now obviously the only right one. As we know from the history of the Party, there were many who opposed me, who reproached me, saying, "How can it be done legally?" But I was able to tell them, "Gentlemen! What do you want, do you want to teach me how to fight? Where were you when we launched our attack? I don't need you to tell me anything about revolutions or legality. I've done all that myself. You couldn't summon up the courage. So hold your tongues now!"

In this way I was able to build up a movement made of men, a movement which took the only path it was possible to take. And we are infinitely grateful for that. For we are not alone in this world. Surrounding us are huge states looking upon every type of German uplifting with suspicion. We can only hold our own against them if we are strong not only in terms of Weltanschauung but also in terms of weapons. And there was no doubt about that. That was not to be accomplished by our destroying the existing arms institution, but by reconciling it absolutely and in its entirety as a unified whole with the National Socialist idea and the realization of this idea, and hence founding this new federation which allows Germany once more to become so strongly manifest for all the world to see.

I saw that the moment the echoes of those shots here died. If you go back and read my final speech in the major trial, you will most likely be able to say that I prophetically foresaw the only possible course of events; I voiced it, and I adhered to that course persistently for nine years. I was only able to adhere to it because this action had taken place before, and because men had died for this course before.

The fact that a new naval ensign was raised yesterday in the German Reich constitutes a tremendous event. Just imagine: we can follow the German Volk throughout history for nearly 2,000 years, and never was the Volk as united in the form of its inner convictions and its actions as it is today. For the first time since Germans have inhabited the world there is one Reich, ruled by one Weltanschauung, shielded by one army—and all this joined under one flag.

Truly the palls of these sixteen fallen soldiers have celebrated a resurrection unique in world history. They have become the freedom banners of their Volk. And the most wonderful thing is that this great unity in Germany, this victory of a movement, of an idea, followed by the obligation of the entire Volk, evolved from this sacrifice. And all of this we owe to these first men. For if I had found no one at that time to support this Reich with life and limb, it would also have been impossible at a later point. All of the ensuing blood sacrifices were inspired by the sacrifices of those first men.

That is the reason why we are bringing them forth from the depths of oblivion to stand for all time before the great public eye of the German Volk. In killing these sixteen, the opponents believed they had killed the National Socialist Movement. But they succeeded only in stirring the river of blood which has been flowing ever more strongly since. Today, this tie, this armband from back then, embraces the whole of the German Volk and reaches far beyond. For today Germans everywhere—and that is the miraculous thing—recognize no other symbol of fraternity than what you, my Party comrades

and Volksgenossen, wore even then on your arms. And it is truly a miracle to follow the evolution of our Movement. It will seem like a fairytale to posterity. A Volk is shattered; then a mere handful of unknown men stands up and embarks upon a crusade whose beginning is zealous and whose course continues to be zealous. Only a couple of years later, these few people and unknown nameless have given rise to numerous battalions, and a few more years later these battalions have already become regiments and divisions; Ortsgruppen become districts (*Kreise*) and Gaus. And again but a few years later, this Movement sends numerous deputies to the representative bodies. And it wages its battle untiringly on the street. Again and again there are new holes in its ranks, thousands are injured—but the river swells nonetheless and fights its way through to power. And then it raises its standard to fly over an entire state. A splendid crusade! It will go down as one of the most miraculous and remarkable phenomena in world history. And history will attempt to find analogues and parallels, but it will hardly find a parallel in which, beginning with such a birth, an entire Volk and a state could be totally conquered in so few years.

This miracle is something we have wrought. We are the fortunate ones who are not learning about it from books, but were chosen by Fate to live through it. We, my comrades in arms, can be proud that history has appointed us to accomplish such a mission. Many years ago I said to my followers, "Perhaps there are those among you who would ask, 'What's in it for me?' My Party comrade: the day will come when you will be particularly proud of this armband, you will inscribe upon it the year of your enlightenment and be pleased to be able to say: I've been with the cause all this time."

This is what joins us all and welds us together; coming generations will learn it one day. But we can say: we were there. That is our accomplishment! Other generations learn from heroic sagas and heroic crusades. We have lived this saga and marched in this crusade. Whether the name of a certain individual among us lives on in posterity is of no consequence. We are all bound together in a single, great phenomenon. It will live on.

It will nevermore die out in Germany, and from the sacrifices of the first fighters will come forth the renewed strength to make sacrifices. Thus our gratitude to those who made the first sacrifices is undying. Undying because the Movement is undying and because it must always remember to whom it owes all this. One should not ask, "How many are dead or wounded?" but rather, "How many marched back then?" Only then can one get a picture of the dimensions of that instance. And one must also ask, "How many did they march against?" For was ever in Germany such a battle taken up against such superior forces? It certainly required courage. And because they demonstrated courage back then, we shall never forget them.

Just as it was clear to me that, if Fate were once to give me power, I would take these comrades out of their cemeteries and honor them and show them to the nation; just as I constantly kept sight of this resolve, so have I now fulfilled it. They are now attaining German immortality. Back then they could not yet see today's Reich, but only sense its coming. Fate denied them the chance to personally witness this Reich. However, because they were no

longer allowed to personally witness and see this Reich, we will make certain that this Reich sees them. And that is the reason why I have neither laid them in a vault nor banned them to some tomb. No, just as we marched back then with our chest free so shall they now lie in wind and weather, in rain and snow, under God's open skies, as a reminder to the German nation. Yet for us they are not dead. These pantheons are not vaults but an eternal guardhouse. Here they stand guard for Germany and watch over our Volk. Here they lie as true witnesses of our Movement.

Back then we and our generation fulfilled our duty to these dead comrades. We did not forget them, but cherished them loyally in our hearts and, as soon as we could, we made certain that the entire Volk was once more made aware of their sacrifice, that the German nation would never forget this sacrifice.

To you yourselves, my old fellow fighters, I would now like to extend a welcome. Twelve years ago we were in this hall, and now we are here again. But Germany has changed. What I was able to predict would follow the uplifting twelve years ago has come to pass. Today the German Volk is united in its political leadership and in the structuring of its inner life as well as in carrying the sword. We have once more become a strong state, a powerful Volk, no longer helplessly at the mercy of others. Today the flag is firmly anchored, pennant and standard for the German resurrection, for the new Reich.

And once again, as so often before, I would like to thank you for finding your way to me back then, for joining an unknown man, falling into his ranks and taking up the march with him; for sending representatives to my rallies and thus clearing the way for the weapon of the spirit. Hence I ask you to think back on this time again and again. For it is a wonderful thing to be able to harbor such memories.

It is something granted to but few generations in thousands of years. You have been chosen by Fortune. You have joined the right flag. And you shall stand by this flag as the Old Guard of the National Socialist Revolution.

Long live our National Socialist Germany! Long live our Volk! And may today the dead of our Movement, Germany and its men, living and dead, live on! *Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*

Following the speech, Hitler proceeded to the Feldherrnhalle where the sixteen caskets had been brought on gun carriages. The solemn procession had led through the Siegestor (Victory Arch) and the Ludwigstrasse, past the burning pylons. It was doubtless an impressive ceremony, this laying out of the dead in the dark of night, witnessed by scores of honorary formations acting as guards of honor.

Hitler ascended the stairs to the Feldherrnhalle alone to spend a few minutes by the caskets draped with their swastika flags. Only after some time did other Old Fighters join him to pay their last respects to the dead while the strains of *Ich hatt' einen Kameraden* filled the air.

The march to the Feldherrnhalle the next day was also marked by extraordinary pomp and circumstance. Pylons bearing the names of all “blood witnesses” of the Movement lined the streets, and all those participating in the procession wore the *Blutorden* (Blood Order).²⁵⁸ A guard of honor formed by the Sixty-First Infantry Regiment had been stationed at the Odeonsplatz; officers of the Wehrmacht and the police who were bearers of the Blood Order had also taken up posts there.

Among the guests of honor were high-ranking officers, including the new commanding General of the Seventh Army Corps (Munich), Lieutenant General von Reichenau, formerly Hitler’s loyal head of the Wehrmacht Office in the Reich Ministry of War.²⁵⁹ When the procession reached the Feldherrnhalle, the artillery fired a salute of sixteen rounds from the courtyard. Hitler then laid a wreath at the base of the memorial. With the sixteen dead on horsedrawn gun carriages at its fore, the procession made its way to the Königsplatz, where the caskets were installed in the pantheons with impressive ceremony. Here they were to act as an “Eternal Guard” in their bronze sarcophagi between the two central party buildings.

One can assume that Hitler, too, wished to have his final resting place here—most likely in the middle of the Königsplatz, which had been renamed *Königlicher Platz* (Royal Square) since 1935 at his bidding.²⁶⁰ Perhaps he envisioned himself interred under a colossal monument bearing only the words “Adolf Hitler,” a shrine to which pilgrims would flock from every corner of the globe to pay homage to the greatest German of all time.

In the afternoon, the Italian Ambassador Attolico laid down two large wreaths in the two pantheons—a telling demonstration of Italy’s present predicament.²⁶¹ At 10:00 p.m. that evening, Hitler gave an address at the swearing-in ceremony of new SS recruits in front of the Feldherrnhalle and reminded them of their duty to be prepared to die for him at all times.²⁶² The SS Verfügungstruppe had been represented at the ceremonies of November 8 and 9 particularly by its SS Standarte *Deutschland*. From this point onwards, SS sentries stood guard at the pantheons day and night, year in and year out, until at the end of the Second World War they, too, were banished.²⁶³

Still on November 9, Hitler issued a decree granting “Honorary Support for the Disabled of the NSDAP” which read as follows:²⁶⁴

In the self-sacrificing struggle of our Movement, many National Socialists suffered most severe injuries. It is an honorable duty of the NSDAP to thank

them for their efforts in the service of the National Socialist idea. Thus I proclaim this 9th of November 1935:

1. For the Party's disabled who, while voluntarily fulfilling their duty in the struggle for the Third Reich, suffered lasting, severe, physical injury which permanently impaired their earning capacity, the sum of half a million Reichsmark will be set aside annually from Party funds as honorary support.

2. The distribution of this amount shall be determined according to the degree of physical disability and the social and economic circumstances of the applicants.

3. The implementations will be issued by the Reich Treasurer of the NSDAP.

Munich, November 9, 1935

Adolf Hitler

On November 11, Hitler attended a funeral ceremony for Frau Förster-Nietzsche, Friedrich Nietzsche's sister, who had died at the age of ninety. Frau Winifred Wagner was also present.²⁶⁵

On November 15, Hitler sat in on a session of the Reich Chamber of Culture in the Philharmonic Concert Hall in Berlin. He also attended a performance of *Die Meistersinger* marking the opening of the newly renovated German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg.²⁶⁶

Hitler received the French Ambassador François-Poncet in the Chancellery on November 21 for extensive talks.²⁶⁷ The French Foreign Minister, Pierre Laval, had arranged the meeting with the aim of improving Franco-German relations, if possible, but above all in order to pacify Hitler in respect to the Franco-Russian pact of May 2 and to stress its defensive character. Apparently Paris had not forgotten Hitler's remarks of May 21 and his dark threats regarding the possibility of repercussions to the Locarno Pact. However, Hitler's plans to occupy the Rhineland stood firm. Any steps Western diplomats took at this point served only to strengthen his conviction that France—and the Western Powers as a whole—had grown feeble as a consequence of their democratic and parliamentary system of government and would put up no resistance to his military schemes.

To both Great Britain and the United States, Hitler presented himself as a bulwark against the bogey of Bolshevism. He believed himself capable of bluffing these countries just as he had the German Nationalists: because of their fear of Communism, the Anglo-Saxons would not interfere, but instead allow him free rein in the East. The interview the German dictator granted in late November to the American journalist and President of the United Press, Baillie, bore witness to this tactic.²⁶⁸ There Hitler stated:

"Germany is the bulwark of the West against Bolshevism and will fight propaganda with propaganda, terror with terror, and violence with violence to combat it."

In response to a question as to the reasons behind the Jewish legislation in Nuremberg, he replied:

"The necessity for combating Bolshevism is one of the main reasons for Jewish legislation in Germany. This legislation is not anti-Jewish, but rather pro-German. It is designed to protect the rights of Germans against destructive Jewish influences."

Hitler then pointed out that nearly all the Bolshevik agitators in Germany had been Jews and further that Germany was separated from Soviet Russia by only a few miles, which meant that effective defense measures were called for at all times to protect Germany from the machinations of the mostly Jewish agents of Bolshevism.

In the further course of the discussion, Hitler noted that the tens of thousands of officers who had been dismissed after the War had evolved into an intellectual proletariat of sorts, and that many of them, although they were academically educated, had had to take work as street sweepers, drivers and in similar occupations in order to eke out an existence. On the other hand, the Jews—who made up less than one percent of the population—had attempted to seize for themselves the cultural leadership and swarmed into the intellectual professions such as jurisprudence, medicine, etc. The influence of this intellectual *Judentum* in Germany had left its subversive mark at every turn.

"For this reason it was necessary to take steps to put a halt to this subversion and bring about a distinct and pure division between the two races."

The basic principle governing the handling of this question in Germany was that Germans were to be given that to which Germans were entitled and Jews that to which they were entitled. He stressed that this also served to protect the Jews, citing as evidence the fact that since the restrictions had been established, anti-Jewish feeling in the country had lessened.

In reply to Mr. Baillie's question whether further legislative measures were to be expected on this point, Hitler answered that it was the main endeavor of the Reich Government to prevent by means of legislative measures that the Volk take the matter into its own hands—for that could give way to dangerous explosions—and by means of such measures, to maintain peace and order in Germany as hitherto. On the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin there were just as many Jewish shops as in New York and other major cities, and, as a close look would show, these shops were operating without any disruption whatsoever. He believed that new tensions had likely been averted by means of the Nuremberg Laws.

However, should new tensions arise, among other things further legislative measures would become necessary.

Turning to the question of Bolshevism, he declared that Germany was the bulwark which protected the West from Bolshevik expansion spreading from Soviet Russia.

In the United States, a country geographically far distant from Soviet Russia, this would probably not meet with understanding on every front! However, the context would be readily understandable for anyone who viewed the situation from Germany's perspective, i.e. from that of a country which was only very few hours' distance from Russia by airplane or fast train. "Germany will continue to fight Communism with the weapons which Communism itself uses."

Asked to comment on the buildup of the German Army, Hitler stated: "The purpose of restoring the German Wehrmacht is to protect Germany from attacks by alien powers. Germany is a major power of the first rank and has a right to have a first-class army."

In response to a question as to the size of today's German Wehrmacht compared to military strength in 1914, Hitler stated that an army of millions such as the one Germany had raised in 1914 could only come to be under pressure of the demands of a new war—a new war from which God, as he confidently hoped, would preserve Germany and the coming generations. Furthermore, he drew attention to his earlier proposals for stabilizing the size of European armies at 200,000 to 300,000 men. These proposals had been categorically rejected at the time.

When discussing German military strength, one was also to take into consideration Germany's geographical position. If a strip of land 100 kilometers wide were occupied by an enemy in America, this would be but a minor bruise which America could easily bear. By way of contrast, in the event of invasions which would perhaps be but minor for the United States, Germany would be crippled.

Finally, Mr. Baillie asked the Führer and Reich Chancellor whether Germany was endeavoring to recapture colonies. Hitler answered that Germany would never relinquish its colonial claims.

On November 29, Hitler gave a speech at the inauguration of the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin²⁶⁹ in which he looked back on his three years in office. In a pessimistic mood, he attacked "know-it-alls" and vowed:

The Volk that called me will never abandon me. [—] He who has once inspired a Volk with an idea cannot believe that the Volk will change from one day to the next.

While the German Volk had in fact not changed, it did sense Hitler's change in tune since the *Machtergreifung*. He who had once credibly stated that his one and only aim was to promote the well-being of the German Volk now made it increasingly evident that he had only his own ambitious schemes in mind and viewed the well-being of the public as secondary.

The year finished relatively quiet. On December 6, Hitler sent a telegram congratulating von Mackensen on his eighty-sixth birthday.²⁷⁰

On December 8, Hitler gave a speech marking the hundredth anniversary of the German Reichsbahn (railroad system) in Nuremberg in which he declared:²⁷¹

This enterprise, guided and organized according to high ethical and moral concepts, is at the same time the most modern transportation enterprise in existence today.

Later that day he addressed the Ortsgruppe of the NSDAP in Landshut at the celebration of its fifteenth anniversary,²⁷² taking critics and carpers to the task with relish and stating, "He who has the courage to conquer the state with seven men also has the courage and the power and the confidence to maintain that state."

On December 13, Hitler received British Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps in the Reich Chancellery and deliberated with him the possibilities of arms limitation and the Anglo-French proposal for an air pact.²⁷³ On December 17, Hitler toured the barracks of the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* in Berlin-Lichterfelde and spent several hours there. In the afternoon, he made a speech to "his loyal soldiers of the Movement."

The *Völkischer Beobachter* reported as follows:²⁷⁴

There was nothing more splendid than an elite such as that which the *Leibstandarte* represented. The Führer underlined in particular the SS men's task of recruiting for the Party. To great applause, he stressed that "no one would bend or sway us; he would have to break us, and then he would see whether he himself might not be broken first."

At the close of his speech, Hitler emphasized that nothing was more splendid than knowing that the wonderful regiment of the *Leibstandarte* bore his name.

On December 24, Hitler delivered his customary speech at the Christmas festivities of the Old Fighters at the Wagner Hotel in Munich.²⁷⁵ At the end of the year, the following "Notice to the Wehrmacht" was published:²⁷⁶

Berlin, December 31, 1935

Soldiers!

A decisive year in the history of the German military lies behind us. The Reich is once again free and strong.

To all soldiers and all those who have otherwise helped to build up the Wehrmacht I may extend my thanks and my recognition for the achievements of the past year. The motto for 1936 is: Forward march again and again for the peace, the honor and the power of the nation.

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

The year 1935 had brought Hitler a series of domestic triumphs which were extremely important both for his own self-confidence and for his future plans.

January 3: unconditional subordination of German leadership (Party and Wehrmacht) to Hitler's will;

March 16: introduction of general conscription;

May 21: passage of the new Military Service Act and the elimination of the term "Reichswehr;"

September 15: presentation of the new armed SS Verfügungstruppe and its regiments at the Reich Party Congress; Hitler's swastika banner becomes the national flag by virtue of a law passed by the Reichstag;

September 16: the German generals march by Adolf Hitler in salute;

October 18: dissolution of the *Deutsche Burschenschaft* and, in rapid succession, of all other student fraternities;

November 5: the sovereign symbol of the NSDAP is declared the national emblem of the German Reich; decree establishing a new Reich naval ensign (swastika flag);

November 7: swearing-in of the recruits of the Wehrmacht to the new Reich naval ensign; dissolution of the *Stahlhelm*.

In spite of these major accomplishments, Hitler's mood in the last three months of 1935 was marked by constant annoyance at his critics in intellectual circles.

Moreover, an instinctive mistrust spread among segments of the population which had hitherto gladly followed their leader. Even if they were not completely conscious of the reasons, the faithful devotion and trust of the early years were gone. The Austrians and the Sudeten Germans—who did not join the Third Reich until 1938 and thus had not witnessed the developments since 1933—were still capable of demonstrating their unbounded exuberance. The Reich Germans, on the other hand, had already been robbed of many of their illusions by this time, and hence there was a marked difference in the enthusiasm with which Hitler was greeted on the respective sides of the old Reich borders.

THE YEAR 1936

Major Events in Summary

In 1936 Hitler intended to surpass the victories of the previous year with new triumphs of a military nature. He set himself the goal of extending the military sovereignty of the Reich to the Rhineland. In addition, he planned to prolong the one-year compulsory military service to two years. He had earlier chosen the shorter term of service only to make its introduction politically and psychologically more acceptable.

Hitler attained these goals on March 7 and August 26. He took full advantage of the staging of the 1936 Winter Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the Summer Games in Berlin. Through the games, he was able to divert the attention of the German public and the international community at large away from military and political activities.

Further, by means of the German participation in the Spanish Civil War, Hitler gained a magnificent training ground for German troops and armor. For the subsequent three years in Spain, the new German combat planes, tanks, etc., would be put to the test. For them, it was a valuable hands-on "live" training experience.

In Austria as well, Hitler could claim a significant interim victory for himself. Italy's backing of the Austrian Government had waned as a result of the substantial moral and economic support Hitler had accorded Mussolini's aggression in Abyssinia. The Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg was forced to reach an understanding with Hitler. On July 11, von Schuschnigg found himself cornered into accepting an ill-disguised National Socialist as a member of his cabinet, namely, the Director of the Austrian War Archives, Edmund Glaise-Horstenau.¹

Agreements with Italy (Rome-Berlin Axis) and Japan (Anti-Comintern Pact) in November, strengthened Germany's position; they were not in main aimed—as pretended—against Bolshevism, but to impress the Western Powers.

Report and Commentary

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At 2:00 p.m. on January 1, Goebbels read Hitler's New Year's address to the German people in a radio broadcast. it began with the following words:²

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

The new Reich is ringing in the New Year for the third time. At the beginning of the twelve months past, the imminent collapse of the National Socialist regime was prophesied—for the third time.

And for the third time, under this regime Germany has become stronger and healthier in every area of its national life.

After reflecting on the significance of events from 1933 through 1935, Hitler defined the new German state as "a bulwark of national European discipline and culture against the Bolshevist enemy to mankind." He appealed to the party members:

I am conscious that, no matter what might happen to Germany, the Party will remain a stable and indestructible foundation for the German will to live, just as it has been in the past fifteen years. A zealously devoted community of German men, German women, and German youth will stand behind me: as it did in the past in both good times and bad, so it will in the future!

Hitler proceeded to express his gratitude to all party formations which, through their "unflinching support and loyalty," had rendered it feasible for him to make "the most difficult political decisions." He then thanked millions of German peasants and praised Germany's women "who, through their newborn young, enable our Volk by their bravery to benefit from our fight at a future date." Hitler closed with the words:

May the year 1936 see us filled with a new and sacred enthusiasm to work and stand up for our Volk.

May it see us all united in the consciousness of the common task assigned to us. But today we wish to thank the Almighty who has given our work His blessings in the past. And we wish to join together in our humble request to Him that He not desert us in the future.

Long live the National Socialist Movement! Long live our united German Volk and Reich!

Berlin, January 1, 1936

Adolf Hitler

On January 4, Hitler went to see an ice-skating show, featuring Sonja Henie, in the Prinzregenten Stadium in Munich.³ Two days later, he was the first to drive down the newly completed Autobahn segment connecting Munich and Rosenheim.⁴ In Munich on the next day, von Papen presented Hitler with the latest acquisition of the Bavarian State Library, a 14th century handwritten scroll from the Austrian convent Kremstminster. A tour of the State Library followed the official presentation of the gift.⁵

Hitler spent the first days of 1936 much to his own liking. Indeed, arguing that the reception of the Diplomatic Corps had ruined his 1935 New Year's celebration, Hitler for the first time postponed it (to January 10). On the tenth, at approximately 11:00 a.m., Hitler received the well-wishes of the Wehrmacht, presented to him by Blomberg, Fritsch, Raeder, and Göring in the Chancellery. Fifteen minutes later the traditional reception of the *Halloren* (saltworks at Halle) took place.⁶ By noon, Hitler was at the "House of the Reich President," where the Apostolic Nuncio Orsenigo, on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps, extended his best wishes for the new year to Hitler in a short address. He placed particular emphasis on peace. Attired in a formal tailcoat, Hitler responded to the cleric's words:⁷

Your Excellency!

May I express my most sincere gratitude to Your Excellency for the New Year's wishes you have extended to me, my staff, and the entire German Volk on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps and on behalf of the Heads of State represented here.

I am particularly grateful for the heartfelt words you found for the professional ranks of Germany's working population; they will meet with a lively echo everywhere. We are able to note with satisfaction that the year 1935 brought with it important steps forward for our Volk. We have succeeded in assigning new work to yet another enormous number of unemployed Volksgenossen and thus provided better food, shelter and family care for ever-increasing circles of comrades with a will to work. In the past year, the German economy has continued to stabilize.

The understandable desire of our Volk—a desire common to all peoples—to establish an external safeguard for the fruits of its labors against the vicissitudes of an age of political turmoil has finally become a reality in this past year. Hence we look back on the year 1935 with gratitude to Providence which has blessed our labors and enter the new year with the firm resolve to successfully continue the work we have begun.

Filled with a yearning to live in peace with the other peoples on earth and to cooperate with them in every area of life in common understanding for the well-being and progress of mankind, the German Volk earnestly wishes to meet with the same aspirations toward trusting cooperation and mutual consideration in all the other peoples. The Reich Government, myself and the entire German Volk thus join you, Your Excellency, in the hope that the new year may bring both an eagerly awaited détente and tranquility and genuine peace to the peoples.

With this hope, may I extend to you, Your Excellency, and to each of you gentlemen—and at the same time to your Heads of State, Governments and peoples—in my name and in the name of the German Volk, the warmest wishes for the New Year.

On January 12, Hitler sent Göring a congratulatory telegram:⁸

My dear Göring,

Please accept my heartfelt best wishes for the birthday you are celebrating today.

With the kind regards of old friendship,

Your Adolf Hitler

On the first anniversary of the Saar plebiscite on January 13, Hitler and Gauleiter Bürckel exchanged telegrams.⁹

Two days later, this time in the Detmold air plane hangars, Hitler commemorated the NSDAP's 1933 victory in the Lippe-Detmold election.¹⁰ This anniversary was far more significant for Hitler than the 1935 Saar plebiscite. The events of 1933 had proven Hitler's assessment of domestic policy to be correct and therefore, he reasoned, his prophecies would also stand the test of time. On January 15, Hitler declared:

If future historiographers aim to record the entire contents of these three years [1933-35], they will require more pages than they would in other times for perhaps ten, perhaps twenty, fifty, or even a hundred years.

After the usual "party narrative" in his speech at Detmold, Hitler's words betrayed his true intentions. Back then already, he remarked that in the end all would depend on which side would have the "last battalion" to throw at the enemy.

Decisive in a battle are not the total losses; rather, he alone who remains with the last battalion has won the great battle. [—] You all know that the

future is not a bed of roses, but that everything we need and must have must be fought for and a price paid.

The final triumph will always be accorded to that person who remains steadfast and never loses his nerve.

In order to conquer "everything we need and must have," Hitler added that it would be necessary to submit to certain exigencies: "It must always be one will that decides."

Naturally, the will he referred to here was his very own. However, as mentioned earlier, Hitler was constantly plagued by the fear that someone could dispute his claim to sole proprietorship of the supreme will.

Hitler's effort to ascertain his role of prominence in Germany by means of his Detmold speech is particularly evident in the following excerpt of the speech, as witnessed by the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.¹²

Time has shown that we were right. We held our own in the fight, and we have learned a lesson for the future. It may be that difficulties will arise at some point in the future, too. But wait until you get to know me better. I see here my Volk, and I see history and understand its lessons. I raised the entire Movement according to my ideals.

Our opponents do not understand that, but I can't help them. National Socialism governs according to its ideals, and the others will have to fall in line. By no means do we intend to surrender our ideals and adopt new ones. And there is something else we can learn for the future from the election campaign back then: at that time, the Movement was guided by one will which swept everything along with it.

Where would we have ended up in Germany had there not been one Movement, but instead thirty-six or forty-five? If a leadership really wants to be a leadership, it must have the courage to elevate its opinion to the opinion of the nation; otherwise it should resign. There is only one central power, and it assigns authority and sovereignty. But it can also revoke these immediately from any person and any thing. We think back on that campaign battle in Lippe with a deep inner stirring and emotion. We defeated our opponents on their own democratic ground. I am of the conviction that our opponents of that time would not be able to defeat us on our own ground. Yet that is what they would have to do now, and thus I look forward to the future with boundless confidence.

It is completely futile for anyone in Germany to attempt to change this regime. Whoever would attempt it nonetheless can rest assured that he will be dashed to pieces like glass.

The Movement does not stand on one person alone; today there is a regime whose succession is assured without being linked to any particular individual. I admit that the National Socialist ideal, in its ultimate consummation, stands over mankind like the North Star. And man will always need a star to

gain his bearings. Were man to grasp that star, he would no longer be able to see it. We are on the right path, and we have the right goal. We will improve upon the German Volk for centuries.

On January 19, Hitler sent the following telegram to the gravely ill King George V:¹³

I have just received word of the grave illness of Your Majesty and would not like to fail to convey herewith my most sincere and heartfelt wishes for Your Majesty's recuperation and complete recovery.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

After George V's demise, Hitler extended his sympathies to the Heir to the Throne, Edward VIII, and to the Queen Dowager, in a telegram dated January 21.¹⁴ Another telegram left Hitler's office a day later, addressed to General von Litzmann congratulating him on his eighty-sixth birthday.¹⁵

The interview Hitler had granted to Madame Titayna, the correspondent of the French newspaper *Paris Soir*, was published on January 26.¹⁶ In view of his plans to reoccupy the Rhineland, Hitler was very anxious to get good publicity in France during the months of January and February 1936. His intent is mirrored in the January conversation with Madame Titayna, as well as in the interview accorded to Bertrand de Jouvenel on February 21.¹⁷

Madame Titayna's description of her meeting with Hitler began with the following observation:

No matter which political ideals we espouse, it will always be the personality of the man who, like Adolf Hitler in this case, enters into the history of his people and therefore of the world, that captivates us most. No one can escape this enchantment. As soon as I was informed that the German Chancellor was willing to receive me and that he would grant an interview to the readers of *Paris Soir*, my elation, resulting from my professional interest in the matter, was superseded by the thrilling sensation that now finally I would know who 'he' is and how 'he' speaks. Maybe then I would come to understand the power he exercises over the crowds rallying to him.

The palace in the Wilhelmstrasse, in which the Führer lives and works, is characterized by an austerity of architectural and interior design reflecting the straight-forward nature of the new Germany: a wide and well-lit staircase leads to a gallery, through unassuming rooms to the office of the Führer.

I did not have to wait long. Five minutes to eleven I arrived; the interview was set for eleven o'clock. State Secretary Funk¹⁸ led me out of the anteroom, which was equipped with numerous modern and comfortable easy chairs. The minute I had sat down in one of them, I was reminded of the reception I had received a few months earlier from Mussolini. At the time I had been

made to wait for the Duce in a room filled with uncomfortable, wooden Gothic chairs. Once I had entered the Italian dictator's office, I saw him standing about thirty meters away from me, where he had posed himself between window and desk, seeming all the more remote since we were separated by a parquet appearing to be endless.

Today my experience at the Führer's is quite to the contrary, everything is marked by modesty and great simplicity. The Führer comes up to me with his hand extended in greeting. I am surprised and astonished by the vivid blue of his eyes, which on photographs had always appeared to be brown. I remark that indeed he does look very different from any pictures I have seen of him. I much prefer the real life Hitler, that face that radiates intelligence and energy, and emits a special glow when he speaks. At this very moment, I understand his magical appeal to the masses and the power he wields over them.

When I was called to Berlin by wire, I had prepared a good dozen of questions at night on the train, which no matter under what circumstances, I intended to pose. In any case, only the answers to these questions could be indiscreet. Within the first few words he utters, I can tell that the Führer has no intention of hiding out behind diplomatic phrases, but rather that he wishes to speak openly and honestly to the French people.

In the room, I hear my voice sound uncertain while speaking German. I try to explain my own, and thereby the fears of all of us:

"The French are afraid of and despise war more than anything else, and because constantly preoccupied with this fear; we are prone to see war lurking just around the corner. I would like to hear from you that Germany's foreign policy is solidly based on pacifist principles."

The man sitting across from me reflects for just a moment and then responds:

"The word 'pacifism' has two meanings, and does not have the same meaning for France as for us. We cannot accept a pacifism that means forfeiting one's vital rights. For us, pacifism can only become a reality if it is built on the basic human premise that each and every people has a right to live. I said 'to live,' and not 'to vegetate.'¹⁹ Whoever truly wants peace must first acknowledge this right of the nations. In other words, there is not a single German who wants war.²⁰ The last one cost us two million dead and seven-and-a-half million wounded. Even if we had been victorious, no victory would have been worth paying that price."

To my question, whether it would be possible to revise the Treaty of Versailles without endangering the interests of other nations, Hitler replies: "The Treaty of Versailles had two consequences. It confirms the fact of a territorial conquest, and it establishes a moral conquest. Every territorial solution has its weak points. In all territorial questions, the voice of the Volk and its economic needs should alone decide.²¹ But seen from the moral point of view, it is outrageous and inadmissible to humiliate and discriminate against a Volk. In the case of the Treaty of Versailles, the human conscience should give justice priority over interests and parties.

"Each Volk has the right to live on its own soil with its own faith, history, customs, and economic potential. To favor some to the detriment of the others

is absurd, for this destroys the balance of human society. In European politics, too, peace can issue only from a balance, in other words from justice. We have sixty-eight million inhabitants in Germany, sixty-eight million creatures who want food, clothing, shelter, and a place to live. No treaty in the world can change that. The statesman too must give his Volk what it needs."

"Certainly. We are touching upon a very serious question. The population policy being advocated in Germany by necessity creates a desire to expand the Empire in order to accommodate the additional countrymen—that means war. You complain of not having enough bread to go around, and then you want more mouths to feed"

"There are talented and untalented peoples in the world. The European countries belong to the former category. One must become conscious of the fact that, in this sense, they comprise a community of peoples, though they are sometimes a quarrelsome family."

I am silent for a moment, since I myself share his opinion. Through my travels I too have become aware of an inequality among the races, and of the significance of the term European.

"Does this mean that because of the more numerous population, Germany will need to subdue colonies?"

"Wouldn't you agree?" Hitler replied.

To the question of how he intends to turn this ambition into a reality, Hitler states:

"If the conscience of the other peoples were receptive to the idea of a balance and of justice, then it would be easy to arrange the material details. What concerns me most at the moment is the world's awakening to the insight that the good will of the peoples must combine in a cooperative effort, without ulterior motives, to make possible a better life for each separate people."

"I will be traveling to China within a few days, because the Far East . . ."

"How lucky you are," Hitler interrupted me. "Unfortunately, I myself am unable to travel. You will see Japan where, under completely different working conditions, those goods are manufactured which are flooding the world market. One day, that will apply to Russia, too. If necessary, Moscow's rulers will allow a part of the population to die to safeguard the export trade. Communism can survive in Russia because it has established itself at the fore of a population devoid of needs in an enormous, undeveloped territory. But if Communism had come to Germany, there would have been a catastrophe of unforeseeable proportions, because in Germany only 25 percent of the population live in the country and 75 percent inhabit the cities, whereas in Russia 92 percent live in the country and 8 percent in the cities. And because a much more complicated apparatus would have fallen prey to the destruction."

"What is your opinion with regard to the Anschluss?"

"That is a question no one here is excited about. In Vienna, they need this bogey for reasons of domestic politics. In Berlin, the Anschluss question is not acute."

The hands on my watch keep moving relentlessly forward; I fear I am running out of time and that I will not be able to pose all the questions I had intended to, nor hear the responses to them. Quickly I ask:

"What about the role of the women? Do you honestly believe they are only there to bear the children of men?"

This time the Führer laughs: "Who told you that?"

"The press!"

"I accord women the same right as men, but I do not believe they are alike. Woman is man's life companion. She should not be burdened with work for which men are made. I am not envisioning women's battalions; I believe they are better fit for work in the social sector. But in any event, a woman who does not marry—and we have many in Germany, because we do not have enough men—has the right to earn her living just as a man does. Incidentally, I might remind you that it was a woman who made the great Party Congress film, and a woman will shoot the Olympic film.²³

"Just one word on the Olympic Games. We are quite happy, we are looking forward to welcoming the French here—hopefully a great many of them. We will do everything to show them they are welcome here and that they are encountering a supremely hospitable German Volk. I sincerely hope that your travelers will come not only for the sporting events, but will also visit our country, the whole country. They will not find prearranged propaganda trips which would steer them away from the truth. We will not tell them that Germany is a paradise, for there is no such thing in this world. And they can roam about freely here and see for themselves that Germany lives in peace and order and in work. They will see our upswing, our efforts, our will for peace. That is all I want."

The Führer rises. I have been able to ascertain that he is in the best of health and that rumors of an illness are unfounded. I retreat, happy to be in a position to communicate his ideas to the French people. The entire conversation took no longer than fifty minutes.

Hitler had proven himself to be a charming conversationalist in this interview and had demonstrated an agility in avoiding compromising issues. The naivety and openness he displayed obviously did not fail to impress his French guest.

However, Hitler's rhetoric failed him miserably when he had to face representatives of the Great Powers, be they British, American, or Russian. Yet to a certain extent, his oratory impressed people coming from small countries or neighboring states, who shared an affinity with German culture. This was, above all, the case with regard to representatives from the Balkans, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Italy. Sometimes, his rhetorical versatility even left its mark on some people from the Netherlands, and he also managed to impress Frenchmen sympathetic to the German cause with his eloquence such as Laval,²⁴ de Brinon²⁵ and others. At times the French Ambassador to National Socialist Germany, André François Poncet, could not help coming under the influence of Hitler's powerful oratory as well.²⁶

On January 25, Hitler spoke at the ten-year-anniversary celebration of the NS Students' League at the Zirkus Krone in Munich. There he gave a speech, to cite the terminology employed in the official press statement, on the "philosophical principles of the state and the basic laws for the life of the nation."²⁷

After the obligatory "party narrative," Hitler switched to a more learned style of discourse to impress his academic audience. Thus emphasizing his competence in the matter, he further discussed the evolution of the system of modern states and contrasted the "bourgeois economic world view with the National Socialist heroic Weltanschauung," which he advocated.

He then continued to argue that parliamentary democracies were actually communist in nature, since they were based on the assumption that all men are essentially equal. In economic matters, to the contrary, their theoretical structure rested upon a stringent individualism.

In the midst of his philosophical rampage, Hitler was overcome once again by his disdain for the constant carping criticism of the "stubborn German Volk." Even the "great emperors of our past" had been compelled to employ force in order to overcome this destructive trait of the Germanic tribes. Hitler declared:

We perceive in this historical evidence of Teutonism the unconscious mandate vested by Fate, to unite this stubborn German Volk, if necessary by force. That was, in terms of history, just as necessary then as it is necessary today.

Singling out those narrow-minded Philistines who actually believed that "our German uniqueness" was lost to Nationalist Socialist centralism, Hitler retorted:

I know what you are losing, but I also know what I am giving you in exchange. You are losing the past, but you are winning the German future. To be German means to be clear;²⁸ to be clear means to think and act logically; to act logically means to act with a purpose; and I am acting with a purpose when I give the Volk a Constitution which will make it strong.²⁹ The German Volk will survive longer than the Bavarian or Prussian Parliaments have survived.

Hitler concluded his "lecture" with an appeal to the students to become "supporters of the will and authority of those leading our state." This appeal returned Hitler to his original and favorite topic, himself.

On January 28, Hitler attended the funeral service for the deceased George V in the English St. George's chapel in Berlin. The British

Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps accompanied Hitler to his seat.³⁰ The following day, Hitler received the newly appointed Chilean ambassador at the Chancellery³¹

For the next day, Hitler had decided that holding a Reichstag session would be inappropriate and disturbing to the commemoration of as important a date as January 30. While it had been the reintroduction of general conscription the previous year, that had made the discussion of general political questions before such a forum as the Reichstag inconvenient, this year it certainly was not opportune to have such a body convene immediately prior to the military reoccupation of the Rhineland.

Nonetheless, Hitler felt himself called upon to rally his followers once again by assuming the countenance of a long-awaited Messiah and by speaking to his comrades in arms as Jesus had once spoken to his disciples. To this end, Hitler had 30,000 SA men³² brought to Berlin from all over the Reich, comprised of the two eldest Kämpfer of each SA unit.

At noon on January 30, these large crowd of SA men marched up in the Berlin Lustgarten, with Goebbels leading them, shouting their battle cry: "*Führer befehl! Wir folgen!*" Hitler began his speech with the following words:³³

Men of the SA! National Socialists! Party Comrades!

When we take a retrospective look today, it does not end in the year 1933, but must go back further. What was a moment of surprise back then for many who did not know our Movement, was for us and for you, my Old Fighters, but the hour of fulfillment.

There were many, particularly outside Germany, who may have been amazed on January 30 and in the following weeks and months at the miracle which had taken place before their very eyes. Yet you, my comrades, and I had together awaited this hour for a decade, had believed in it and placed our hopes in it. For us, it was not a surprise but rather the culmination of fourteen years of hard fighting. We set forth not blind, but seeing and believing. And thus when I look back on that day I am gripped with a deep gratitude, gratitude to those who enabled me to experience this day three years ago. Today they are gathered here from throughout the German Reich as the pioneers and banner bearers of our Movement, the two eldest from each storm troop. They all experienced first-hand the evolution of our Movement, the evolution of its struggle, its fight and its conquests. And I myself stood over this fight for fourteen years. I conducted the fight for fourteen years; I also founded this SA and, in its ranks and at its fore, led the Movement onward for fourteen years. I have come to know you. And I know: everything you are, you are through me, and everything I am, I am through you alone.³⁴

Hitler announced that on January 30, 1933, he already had the backing of the vast majority of the Volk. Only the narrow-minded, intellectual, constant doubters, who would never comprehend the Movement, had still opposed him at the time. According to Hitler, those who still argued against the National Socialist doctrine in 1936, however, were no less than self-proclaimed enemies of the German Volk.

The best core of the German nation already stood in our ranks that day. The best of our Volk had already chosen us that day. Only the petty doubters and the unreasonable were still standing to the side. But now these ranks have been markedly diminished. For what stands against us today is not standing against us because we are National Socialists, but because we have made Germany free and strong once again. Those are the enemies of our Volk in our own land whom we know from the time of the Great War, from the time of the regrettable revolt in 1918, and whom we know from the time of our worst decay. They are the only ones who not only do not want to find their way to us, but who will also never be able to find the way—and whom we ourselves can do without.

Then Hitler proclaimed that all those who counted on a collapse of the Movement after his death would be sorely disappointed.

The Movement has given to the German Volk an element of oneness and unity which will long have an effect, far into the most distant future. Those who believe that this Movement is still bound today to a single person are mistaken. I was its herald. And today from this one herald have come millions. If one of us draws his last breath today, he knows that after him come ten others! This Movement will fade no more. It will lead Germany on, and even if our enemies refuse to accept the fact, Germany will never again lapse into a state of that most sorry disgrace we were forced to endure.

And you, my oldest Party fighters, men of the SA and SS and political soldiers, are the guarantors of this being as it is. You are the guarantors that this spirit shall never die out. As you stand here, members of the entire German Volk, of all professions, all ranks, and all classes, from every confession, joined to form a whole, blind to all but this Germany and your service to it, there will grow forth from among you a young generation, inspired by the same spirit, seeing in you their model and following you.

Germany will not live through the times of November 1918 again. Let every man relinquish the hope that the wheels of world history could ever be turned back.

As usual, Hitler laced his speech with a few solemn declarations on the preservation of peace and declared:

At the same time, just as we have always preached peace to our Volk at home, we want to be a peace-loving element among the other peoples. We

cannot repeat that often enough. We seek peace because we love peace! But we stand up for honor because we have no desire to live without it.

Hitler then recounted the successes of the previous three years, and maintained that the Germans had in the meantime become free and self-assured “world citizens.”

Today we can proudly stand up before the world as Germans. For particularly in this last year of our regime, the German Volk has been given back its honor before the world. We are no longer defenseless Helots but have become free and self-assured ‘world citizens.’

It is with pride that we can allow these three years to pass before our mind’s eye. They constitute an obligation for the future as well. The coming years will not require less work. There are individuals who believe themselves capable of striking a blow at National Socialism in that they claim, ‘Yes, but all of that requires sacrifices.’ Yes, my worthy petits bourgeois, our fight has required constant sacrifice. But you did not go through that. Perhaps you imagine Germany has become what it is today because you did not make any sacrifices. No! It is because we were able to make sacrifices and wanted to do so that this Germany came to be! So if someone tells us, ‘That means the future will require sacrifices, too,’ we say ‘Quite right!’

National Socialism is not a doctrine of lethargy, but a doctrine of fighting. Not a doctrine of good fortune, of coincidence, but a doctrine of work, a doctrine of struggle, and thus also a doctrine of sacrifices. That is how we did things before the fight, and in these past three years this has not changed, and it will remain so in the future!

At this point, Hitler announced, not only to the “worthy petits bourgeois” but to the entire German people, that the sacrifices he demanded would not be made in vain.

Only one thing matters: for millenniums our Volk has had to make sacrifices for its chosen path in life and its life-struggle. It has been given nothing, but only too often the sacrifices have been for naught. Today the Movement can give the German Volk this guarantee: whatever sacrifices you, German Volk, make, will no longer be in vain; rather, these sacrifices will always win you a new life.

Hitler ended his speech with the following “battle cry”:

And I would like to ask you to join me once again in uttering the battle cry for what means most to us in this world, for which we once fought and struggled and triumphed, which we did not forget in the time of defeat, which we loved in the time of need, which we adored in the time of disgrace, and which is sacred and dear to us now in the time of victories.

Our German Reich, our German Volk, and our one and only National Socialist Movement:

Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!

On February 4, Hitler mailed the telegram below to the widow of the Landesgruppenleiter of the German National Socialists in Switzerland, Wilhelm Gustloff, who had been assassinated by a Jew:³⁵

On behalf of the entire German Volk, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences for the loss you have been made to suffer. The cruel crime which put an end to the flourishing life of a truly German man has deeply moved and appalled the entire nation.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler received the former British Minister of Aviation, Lord Londonderry, at the Chancellery.³⁶ There he made an all-out effort to convince the Englishman that the English were related to the Germans by blood, indeed that they were part of the German Volk.

How often did I say to myself during the World War as a simple soldier, lying across from the English troops, that it was absolute madness to combat these people—who could be members of our own Volk—with arms. Such a thing must never be repeated!

Still on February 4, Hitler established a German “Olympic Honor Badge.”³⁷ A day later, the Swedish King Gustav V came to the Chancellery to pay his respects to Hitler, while journeying to the South.³⁸

Hitler attended the opening ceremonies of the Olympics in the new Skiing Stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen on February 6. According to the usual practices at the Olympic Games, these were conducted under the auspices of the head of state of the host nation, meaning Hitler in this case. After the participating nations had ceremoniously marched into the Stadium at 11:00 a.m., Hitler spoke the following words “with resounding clarity,” as the German News Bureau phrased it:³⁹

I hereby declare the Fourth Winter Olympics of 1936 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen open to the public!

Later he himself congratulated every victorious German athlete by sending a telegram.

On February 12, the funeral of the assassinated Swiss Landesgruppenleiter Wilhelm Gustloff took place in Schwerin. It is interesting to note how differently Hitler reacted to the Gustloff case in comparison to his behaviour in 1938, when the German Legation Counsellor Ernst vom Rath was murdered in Paris.⁴⁰ In essence the cases were remarkably similar. In both instances, a fanatic foreign Jew assassinated a representative of National Socialist Germany in order to

protest against the persecution of the members of his own creed and race in Germany.

In the 1938 case, Hitler instigated a pogrom for reasons rooted in his foreign policy, to exert pressure on the Western Powers. In 1936 as well, Hitler's reaction to the Gustloff case was determined largely by foreign policy considerations. At the time, however, moderation seemed opportune. Hitler was about to invade the Rhineland, which made him wary of unnecessarily outraging international public opinion.

In addition, the assassination had taken place in Switzerland, a country from which Hitler had always kept a remarkable distance. Given the fact that most Swiss were of German descent, one would have expected Hitler to demonstrate an interest in the country, if not to more or less forcibly annex at least the German-speaking territories to the German Reich. During the days of Hitler's rule, the Swiss on several occasions feared just such an intervention on the part of the Germans. They were even more astonished that with regard to this matter, Hitler demonstrated more diplomatic sensitivity than for instance Napoleon once had. For Hitler, Switzerland's importance as a neutral territory and financial center, as well as its role in international communications and intelligence services, and in matters such as the treatment of war prisoners, by far outweighed any territorial or military advantages that could be gained through annexation.

Therefore in the case of Gustloff no domestic or foreign reprisals took place. Hitler contented himself with delivering a—for his standards—moderate speech at Gustloff's casket. He extolled the willingness to sacrifice of the National Socialist fighters and demonstrated satisfaction that the "Jewish foe" had this time been forced to operate himself, and not through middlemen as previously.

In his eyes, it was a "glorious chapter" for the Swiss that not one of their fellow countrymen had let himself be prodded to carry out the deed. The verbatim content of Hitler's speech at Schwerin was the following:⁴¹

My German Volksgenossen! National Socialists! My dear deceased Party Comrade!

It is a painful path the peoples must take to find their fortunes. The milestones along the way have always been graves, graves in which their best men lie buried. Movements, too, can reach the goal of their desires—if truly worth striving for—only by way of this same painful path. Happiness cannot be had for nothing in this world. Everything must be hard-won and bitterly

earned, and every fight will require sacrifices and result in victims. The fact that these victims are witnesses of the holy conviction upon which such a fight is based makes them guarantors of victory, success and fulfillment!

Our own National Socialist Movement did not begin by demanding sacrifices from others. Back then we stood in the front lines of the World War as soldiers, and there did our duty for Germany. And when this Germany was delivered a lethal stab at home in those November days of 1918, we attempted to convert those who, at that time, were the tools of a terrible supranational power. We were not the ones who victimized our Volksgenossen who rose up against Germany. During those November days the bloody red terror began to rage openly in Germany for the first time. In Berlin and many other places, German men were murdered: not because they had done anything wrong—no, only because they were devoted to Germany and wanted to remain devoted to it. In the heavy fighting of the first quarter of 1919, German men everywhere sank to the ground, struck by the bullets of their own Volksgenossen.

They did not die because they harbored any hatred for these Volksgenossen, but merely because of their love for Germany. Because they refused to believe that a free and honorable Germany had come to an end, because they wanted to devote themselves to the future of this German Volk; that is why they were shot, stabbed, murdered by mad, blind people!

Yet behind this mad blindness we see at every turn the same power, at every turn the same phenomenon which led these people on and stirred them up and finally equipped them with rifles, pistols, or daggers!

The victims multiplied. The soviet republic broke out in the south of the Reich, and for the first time now we are seeing victims who had already made an inner, albeit unconscious, choice to take the path leading to National Socialism. These hundreds who were murdered back then in their drive to help Germany and to save Germany have now been joined by eleven Volksgenossen, ten men and one woman, who consciously supported a new idea, who had never harmed a single opponent, who knew but one ideal, the ideal of a new and purified, better Volksgemeinschaft: the members of the Thule Society.⁴² They were savagely slaughtered in Munich as hostages. We know who the principals are. They too were members of this disastrous power which was and continues to be responsible for the fratricide in our Volk.

Then the National Socialist Movement set out on its path, and I must put one thing straight here: on this, the path of our Movement, lies not a single opponent murdered by us, not a single assassination. We rejected that from the very first day onwards. We have never fought with these weapons. However, we were just as determined not to spare our own lives, but to defend the life of the German Volk and the German Reich, and to protect it from those who would not shrink from the most treacherous murder, as history has so often taught us.

Then comes an infinitely long list of murdered National Socialists, murdered by cowards, nearly always ambushed and beaten to death, stabbed or shot. But behind every murder stood the same power which is responsible for this murder: behind the harmless, insignificant, indoctrinated Volksgenossen

who were driven to sedition stands the hate-filled power of our Jewish foe, a foe to whom we had done no harm but who attempted to subjugate and make of our German Volk its slave, who is responsible for all the misfortune which came upon us in November 1918 and responsible for the misfortune which plagued Germany in the years thereafter! They all died, these party comrades and good comrades, and so were others, too, to die; many hundreds have survived as cripples or badly wounded; many have lost their power of sight, are paralyzed; more than 40,000 others were injured. Among them were so many loyal men whom we all knew who were dear and close to us, of whom we knew they were incapable of doing harm to anyone and who never had done harm to anyone but been guilty of a single crime, namely, of having devoted themselves to Germany. One who stood in the ranks of these victims was Horst Wessel, the singer who gave the Movement its song, never suspecting that he too would join the spirits who march with us now and have marched with us in the past. Thus National Socialism has now registered its first conscious martyr (*Blutzeuge*) abroad. A man who did nothing but stand up for Germany—which is not only his sacred right, but also his duty in this world; who did nothing but be mindful of his homeland and loyally pledge himself to it. He too was murdered exactly as were so many others. We know this method. Even as we took power three years ago on January 30, exactly the same incidents were taking place in Germany: in Frankfurt an der Oder, then again in Köpenick, and again in Brunswick. The same procedure was used each time: a few men appear, call the man to come out of his house, and then stab him to death or shoot him down.

That is no coincidence; a guiding hand organized these crimes and will continue to do so. Now, for the first time, the party responsible for these deeds has become visible. For the first time this party has not employed a harmless German Volksgenosse. It is a glorious chapter for Switzerland and for our own Germans in Switzerland that no one let himself be hired to do this deed, thereby forcing the spiritual author to himself become the perpetrator. Thus our Party Comrade was struck down by the power which is waging a fanatical battle not only against our German Volk, but against every free, autonomous, and independent people. We understand the declaration of war, and we will respond! My dear Party Comrade, your death is not in vain!

Our dead have all come back to life. They are marching with us not only in spirit; they are alive, too. And one of those who will accompany us into the most distant future will be this dead man. May that be our sacred vow in this hour, that we wish to ensure that this dead man take his place in the ranks of our Volk's immortal martyrs. From his death shall hence come forth life a millionfold for our Volk. That Jewish murderer did not suspect or foresee that, by killing one, he would awaken millions upon millions of comrades to a truly German life long into the most distant future. Just as it was formerly impossible to hinder the triumphant march of our Movement by means of such deeds, for the opposite was the case—these dead became the banner bearers of our idea—so shall this deed too in no way hinder Germans abroad from belonging to our Movement and to the German Fatherland. Quite the contrary, now every Ortsgruppe abroad has a National Socialist patron, a sacred martyr for

the Movement and for our idea. From now on his picture will hang in every headquarters. His name will be engraved upon every heart, and he will nevermore be forgotten for all time to come.

That is our pledge. This deed will fall back upon its doer. It is not Germany that will be weakened by it, but the power which committed this crime.

The German Volk has lost one of its living in the year 1936, but has gained an immortal for the future!

Three days later, Hitler inaugurated the international Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin by delivering a lengthy speech.⁴³ The first part of his talk consisted once again of a lecture on “economics and philosophy.” In this particular instance Hitler’s rendition of his theory on the primitive nature of Bolshevism does merit attention. Of all of Hitler’s theories, the economic ones were the best. However, correct realizations on his part were deluded by his political preconceptions, which had haunted him ever since 1919. Examples of these included the idea that the English were becoming increasingly more senile and, as mentioned above, that the Bolsheviks were of a primitive nature. Hitler simply projected his own personal experiences with the German Nationalists and the German Communists to the international arena, and he characteristically saw the motorization question in a similar way. Indeed, the government of the Weimar Republic had not done much for traffic concerns, doing more to impose restraints upon it than to seek its advance. In Hitler’s eyes, this was the obvious outcome, which the misbegotten conception of the equality of all men had led to. In the end, all it had brought about was an equally low standard of living for all. As Hitler maintained, the percentage of cars per person in Germany had been so low in 1932 that only the Russians possessed even fewer automobiles. He regarded the low level of motorization in the Soviet Union as proof of the primitive nature of Bolshevism. Imagine his surprise when in World War II, the supposedly primitive Russians threw row after row of motorized vehicles and tanks at the German lines.

On February 15, 1936, however, Hitler was still undaunted to voice the following “profound” insights in a speech before representatives of the German automobile industry:

I believe it is particularly fitting on a day such as this, if merely to counter the forgetfulness of mankind, to stress those factors which have been psychologically responsible for the sorry decline of our automobile industry and thus of our transportation industry as a whole, that is to say of that industry

which can currently be described as the single most powerful industry and which is thus called upon to put its unique and characteristic stamp on today's age.

1. One factor responsible for this decline on the part of the consumer was the view originating in the social-democratic theory of equality, that it was necessary for the human race to become a race of primitives, which was to be accomplished by proletarianizing the standard of living for all so as to arrive at a level shared by as many as possible. This more than primitive idea proceeded on the limited assumption that human progress was rooted in the collective masses and was therefore to be valued or rejected as a collective manifestation. The fact is, however, that every act of human progress, seen from a mental and objective point of view, originates with a very few individuals; from a mental viewpoint, because the invention is born only of the imagination of individuals and not of the cross-section of a collective endeavor; objectively, because each human invention, regardless of whether its value is recognized or underestimated, always appears initially to be an additional pleasure in everyday life and thus a luxury article for a more or less limited circle. It is not an isolated incident, but rather unfortunately quite often the case that this circle is regarded by the amiable collective of fellow mankind as being crazy—as this was, in fact, the case with our great inventors Benz and Daimler. Thus a truly progressive development is only possible given respect for individual creative power and for the similarly unique mental receptivity and actual marketability. It is not proof of the falseness, but rather proof of the accuracy of this statement that the Marxist state, in order to limp along after mankind on its mental collective crutches, practically borrows the individual engineers, draftsmen, managers, inspectors, chemists, etc., from individually organized economies to enable it to cultivate its original Marxist economy with their generous assistance. This merely serves, of course, to show that just as the rest of the world was able to achieve culture without Bolshevism; Bolshevism itself would be unable to survive as a Communist entity all of its own without the help of the rest of the world.

This insight is significant because concentrated support particularly for our modern transportation industry is dependent upon the complete liberty of a Volk to make use of it, not only in terms of legislative liberty, but above all in terms of psychological liberty. It is just as antisocial to buy oneself an automobile as it once was to insert a piece of modern glass in one's window instead of using the traditional oiled hide. The evolution of such an invention necessarily proceeds from a very few persons, also its being put into practice, to then spread to increasingly larger circles, ultimately reaching everyone. Thus it was no coincidence that the lowest percentage of automobiles—after Communist-Marxist Soviet Russia—was seen in Germany which, at that time, also had a Marxist government.

2. Due to the fact that, in the long term, the ideology of the masses cannot and will not forever stand in opposition to the ideology of those in government and vice versa, it was only too natural that, originating from this common root of ignorance and irrationality, those in government acted on the Marxist theory of primitiveness, and for their part, also regarded the

automobile as something unnecessary—and thus as something superfluous—and set taxes accordingly. A capital error, I might add, which served to show how badly our own bourgeois economic views were already failing. For the theory of so-called luxury tax articles is absurd wherever and whenever in all human probability the luxury article promises to become an article of general use. Above all, one should not tax those products which are in the process of development, but rather those whose development can clearly be deemed to be finished.

It goes without saying that, on the basis of such false thinking, all those specific steps which could be conducive toward promoting the development of this so incredibly promising and propitious industry were neglected or even completely ignored. Fiscal authorities and police headquarters cooperated to choke off and stamp out the development of German road traffic and with it the transportation industry as thoroughly as possible, and—this is one compliment which must be made to the Marxist-Centrist governments—they succeeded brilliantly in their joint attack. Whereas in America approximately twenty-three million automobiles were on the roads and three to four million were being manufactured annually, the combined efforts of the leadership of Volk and state succeeded in limiting the number of automobiles in Germany to barely 450,000 and in reducing the number produced in the year 1932 to 46,000.

3. The economy itself. It was bad enough that the leadership of Volk and state, under the influence of such ideas, had no comprehension of the development of motorization; it is at least as bad that the German economy, albeit perhaps unconsciously, gave in nonetheless to quite similar thoughts. Thus the economy was likewise incapable of understanding that the automobile must become a tool for the general public, for otherwise the broad potential for development slumbering therein will not be realized. The automobile is either a costly luxury object for very few and thus of no particular consequence in the long term for the economy as a whole, or it should truly give the economy the enormous impetus of which it is intrinsically capable, and then it must evolve from a luxury object for very few to an object of use for all. And this is where the German automobile industry—and I fear this is still a general view—was not yet fully aware of the fact that the development of German automobile production as a whole can only truly be successful if its pricing is commensurate with the incomes of the customer groups it is to reach.

The question as to the number of automobiles Germany can bear is very easy to answer.

a) The desire for automobiles in our Volk is at least as lively as in any other country; I would almost like to say that the yearning for automobiles is so strongly in evidence here because our Volk has been deprived of them. And gentlemen, you can see the best proof of this in the enormous, incomparable numbers of visitors, particularly at these exhibitions. They are the most pointed disproof of the view held by those who believed, only a few years ago, that they could completely dispense with these exhibitions as being merely insignificant and uninteresting. The German Volk has exactly the same

need to use automobiles as, for instance, the American people. It is superficial to regard a quantity of twenty-three or twenty-four million automobiles in America as natural and understandable and 500,000 or 600,000 as such in Germany, although in terms of numbers the German Volk makes up somewhat more than half of the population of the North American Union. No, the people's requirement is given in Germany, too.

b) The prerequisite for the fulfillment of this desire can, however, be no different from the rest of the world. That means that the price of an automobile must correspond to the income of its potential buyer. And that means that there will be people who are in a position to sacrifice 20,000 marks and more for an automobile because their income is proportionate. But the number of these people will not be large. Lowering the cost to 10,000 marks will result in a much greater number of respective able buyers. And lowering the cost of a car to 5,000 marks will mobilize an even greater group with corresponding incomes. All this means:

If I hope to achieve a volume of three or four million automobiles in Germany, then the price and maintenance costs for these automobiles must be graded to correspond to the incomes of the three or four million potential buyers. I advise the German automobile industry to proceed on the basis of these ideas and gather information on the income situation of the four or five million best-situated Germans, and you will then understand why I am so ruthlessly determined to have the preliminary work for producing the German Volkswagen carried on and brought to a conclusion, and, gentlemen, I am talking about a successful conclusion.

I do not doubt that the genius of the constructor⁴⁴ entrusted with the task as well as the subsequent manufacturers, in connection with the highest insights into national economy on the part of all those involved, will succeed in putting the costs of acquisition, operation and maintenance for this car in a ratio acceptable to the income of this broad mass of our Volk, as we can see has successfully been accomplished in the brilliant example of America.

It is a regrettable error for anyone to believe in this context that such a development will move the buyers of better and more expensive cars to drop down to the Volkswagen. No, gentlemen, this car will act to mobilize millions, of whom hundreds of thousands will all the more easily find their way to better and more attractive cars as a result of their continuously rising standard of living. The Ford car did not displace better and more expensive American automobiles—on the contrary: it served initially to loosen up and mobilize the enormous masses of American buyers, From whom particularly the more expensive models later profited.

Hence in finding two or three million buyers for a new German Volkswagen, there will be some who, in the course of their lives, will quite naturally switch to better and thus more expensive cars of their own accord. A great number will never be in a position to purchase an expensive car. Not because these people have no desire to do Mr. Manufacturer Whoever a favor but because they are unable to do so because of their modest income. Yet to simply exclude these millions from the pleasure of this modern means of transport because one is unwilling to run the risk that, of the two or three

hundred thousand better-situated people, perhaps a few could buy the cheaper car, would be not only humanly unprincipled, but also economically unwise. For this would mean nothing but artificially bringing to a halt the most tremendous economical development for our Volk and our country out of both selfish and shortsighted considerations.

I know that I am thus assigning an extremely large task to the German economy, but I also know that Germans are no less capable than anyone else in the world. And matters which have been solved in one corner of the globe can and must be solved in Germany as well.

After this forceful appeal to the industry to advance the production of a “true car for the people” (*Volkswagen*) Hitler announced that, thanks to the “wonders the German chemists and inventors have truly accomplished,” it had become possible to create synthetic gas and synthetic rubber. Without doubt this was a great step toward Hitler’s goal of self-sufficiency, designed to make Germany independent of imports from foreign countries. However, these successes misled both Hitler and the German people to believe that “wonders” could be worked, given the true spirit of invention, as for example, infinitely increasing the production of war goods during a conflict whenever the need arose. Hitler declared:

1. The crisis of Germany’s fuel supply, whose paramount significance we can gauge particularly at the present time⁴⁵ in political terms, can be considered overcome. Our chemists and inventors have truly accomplished wonders, particularly in this sector as a whole. And trust in our determination to put this theoretical solution into practice!

2. In this exhibition, you will find for the first time tires made of German synthetic rubber. And it is my pleasure to inform you and the German Volk at this time that the performance tests which have been conducted by the Wehrmacht for nearly a year now have shown that this synthetic rubber surpasses natural crude rubber in terms of life and durability by ten to thirty percent.

At the end of the Olympic Winter Games on February 16, Hitler sent the following letter to the President of the International Olympic Committee, Count Baillet-Latour:⁴⁶

Dear Mr. President,

The brilliant course and finish of the Fourth Winter Olympics of 1936 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen moves me to express to you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Committee my own and the German Volk’s deep-felt gratitude for your extraordinarily outstanding work which has played such an instrumental role in making it possible to host and carry out this international event. May I further ask that you, Mr. President, relay these

thanks along with our highest admiration to all those involved who, as men and women competing at these Olympic Games, kept the world in utmost suspense and filled it with enthusiasm as a result of their magnificent performances. In sincere esteem I remain, Mr. President,

Your Adolf Hitler

In the interview with Bertrand de Jouvenel on February 21, Hitler did his utmost to promote Germany's image in France. Again, he was motivated by the imminent military occupation of the Rhineland. He sought to soften or even take back the harsh language he had employed in *Mein Kampf* in reference to France.⁴⁷

In his speech before the Reichstag on March 7, Hitler complained that this interview had not been published by the French newspaper *Paris Midi* until February 28, the day after the ratification of the Franco-Russian agreement through the French Chamber of Deputies.⁴⁸ Much of what Hitler then used in his speech as a justification for the military occupation of the Rhineland, he had already alluded to in the interview. In his conversation with Bertrand de Jouvenel, Hitler declared:⁴⁹

"I know what you imagine. You think, 'Hitler is giving us declarations of peace, but is he really sincere?'"

"Would it not be better if, instead of attempting to solve psychological puzzles, you applied the famous French logic for once? Would it not be the ruin of both our countries to clash yet again on the battlefield? Is it not logical that I am endeavoring to attain the best advantage for my country? And is that best advantage not freedom?"

In the further course of the interview, Hitler came to speak of the alleged "puzzle" which had made him Führer of the German *Volk*. As one solution to this "puzzle" he cited the fact that he had simplified the ostensibly extremely complicated problems with which the professional politicians had not been able to deal, also mentioning in this context the problem of the "class struggle."

"I would like to tell you what propelled me into my position. Our problems seemed complicated. The German Volk was unable to deal with them. Under those circumstances, one preferred to leave these problems to the professional politicians. But I simplified the problems and reduced them to the lowest common denominator. The masses recognized this and followed me."

Just as he had proven to the German Volk by appealing to reason that class struggle was an absurdity, he now addressed the same appeal to reason on an international scale. "I want to prove to my Volk that the concept of a traditional enmity between France and Germany is absurd. The German Volk

has understood this. It followed me when I undertook a much more difficult act of reconciliation, when I intervened to reconcile Germany and Poland.”

Following these remarks, Bertrand de Jouvenel broached the topic of Hitler’s repeated declarations of peace, stating:

“We French are happy to read your declarations of peace. At the same time, we are concerned about other, less encouraging matters. In your book *Mein Kampf* for instance, you said quite disagreeable things about France. This book is now regarded as a political bible of sorts throughout Germany. It is sold in successive editions without any corrections whatsoever being made in respect to the passages on France.”

Hitler replied:

“I wrote that book when I was in prison. It was at the time when French troops occupied the Ruhr. It was at the height of tension between our two countries ... Yes, we were enemies; and I stood up for my country against your country, as is right and proper, just as I stood up for my country against yours when I was in the trenches for four-and-a-half years! I would despise myself had I not first and foremost been a German in the hour of conflict! You want me to correct my book like an author who publishes a revised edition of his works.

“I am not an author.⁵⁰ I am a politician. I make my corrections in my foreign policy, which is geared to reaching an understanding with France! If I succeed in bringing about the rapprochement of Germany and France, that will constitute a correction of true value. I enter my corrections in the great book of history!”

Afterwards, Bertrand de Jouvenel inquired about Germany’s stand on the Franco-Russian Mutual Assistance Pact which doubtless constituted an obstacle to a reconciliation between France and Germany. Hitler answered:

“My own personal endeavors toward such an understanding will never cease. In objective terms, however, this more than regrettable pact would create a new situation. Are you aware of what you are doing in France? You allow yourselves to be drawn into the diplomatic game of a power with no other aim but to bring confusion upon the great European peoples from which this power alone would profit. One must not lose sight of the fact that Soviet Russia is a political factor which has at its disposal an explosive, revolutionary idea and a gigantic store of arms. It is my duty as a German to account to myself for such a situation. Bolshevism has no chance to penetrate in Germany, but there are other major peoples who are less immune than we against the Bolshevik bacillus.”

Returning to the topic of German-French relations, Hitler closed that he was speaking on behalf of the entire German Volk when declaring to France that, “if France truly had the will, it could put an

end to any supposed German threat for all time, because the German Volk put its utmost faith in its Führer, and the Führer desired amicable relations with France.”

On February 24, Hitler spoke at the traditional gathering at the Hofbräuhaus in Munich celebrating the foundation of the Party.⁵¹ He reveled in memories of the “fighting times” and once again described the first historic assembly in 1920:⁵²

It was the first major rally our Movement had ever held in which we can say that the Volk participated. For the first time the internal organization was tested in a large hall, and it worked. For the first time people came to us who wanted to listen. We certainly had not lacked the courage to summon the masses, but for a long time the masses lacked the courage to hear our call. It so happened that the man from whom I had rented the hall only gave it after I had made advance payment, although to be fair I would like to add that the situation later changed.

At that first rally we announced our twenty-five points—which our opponents ridiculed—for the first time, to implement them item for item in the years thereafter. And finally, I myself spoke to a large crowd of people for the first time in this hall, although someone⁵³ had told me I had any number of talents, but speaking was not one of them. I had to assert myself at that large rally, which was not as well-mannered as it is today. Things were rather primitive, and most of the men were not wearing collars out of solidarity, so as not to attract attention.

Later my opponents conceived of the idea of calling me “the drummer” for years afterwards. In any case, that first rally was significant in that it was the first mass rally of our Party, it announced our program and produced a new speaker.

Three days later, Hitler gave two speeches, one at the reception of the new Chinese Ambassador Tien Fong-cheng,⁵⁴ and the other welcoming the Mexican Envoy, Dr. Almazan.⁵⁵ That same February 27, he again visited the Automobile Exhibition and stayed in the exhibition halls from 11:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. During a conference with automobile manufacturers, he proclaimed:⁵⁶ “Now the German automobile industry is back in shape!”

On February 28, Hitler received Gustav Gründgens, the Director of the Berlin Schauspielhaus at the Chancellery. That day Hitler also conferred with the Afghan Foreign Minister, Sidar Faiz Muhammad Khan.⁵⁷

A day earlier, the French Chamber of Deputies had finally ratified the Franco-Russian Pact of May 2, 1935. The Mutual Assistance Pact, which was defensive in nature, doubtlessly was directed against the

Germans and was intended to quell any expansionist designs Hitler might entertain.

However, Hitler's thesis that the agreement went against both the letter and the spirit of the Locarno Pact could not be maintained on the grounds of international law.

Hitler was aware of this and thus refused to put the matter before the International Court of Justice in The Hague.⁵⁸ For him the entire affair was only of interest if he could take advantage of it for propaganda purposes. He needed an excuse to execute the occupation of the Rhineland as planned, and so the ratification of the Pact in February came at a most opportune moment.

After all, Hitler had made his intentions in this matter perfectly clear as early as in his "Peace Speech" of May 21, 1935.

2

On March 2, Hitler received François-Poncet, whom the French Minister for Foreign Affairs Flandin had asked to discuss with Hitler various approaches to reaching a Franco-German understanding. Hitler had alluded to the possibility of such an agreement in his interview with Bertrand de Jouvenel.⁵⁹ At first the German Chancellor was most ungracious because of the belated publication of the interview. Then however, he promised to present François-Poncet with concrete suggestions for an agreement soon. He asked the Ambassador to treat the content of their conversation confidentially; not surprisingly so, since he intended to confront the Frenchman with accomplished facts at the latter's next call.

That same day, Hitler set the date for the occupation of the Rhineland for March 7. As in the previous year, he chose the day before the Heroes' Memorial Day for his military intervention. For one, he did so because it was a Saturday. That was Hitler's favorite day of the week to launch a venture, since this surprised the English on their weekend and hence gained him an additional forty-eight hours' time. He counted on the French consulting the British prior to any action on their part. Hitler presumed that world public opinion would have calmed sufficiently by then, insofar as to render a military retaliation to the occupation extremely unlikely.

In order to keep his enterprise secret for as long as possible, and to gain an advantage by the element of surprise, Hitler had devised a unique plan. It was an intrigue, which truly would have been to the credit of any writer of mystery novels.

On March 6, Hitler had Goebbels round up all foreign newspaper correspondents at a Berlin hotel. There they were quarantined until the next day, supposedly attending a news conference. On the afternoon, an official announcement was issued calling for the assembly of the

Reichstag “for tomorrow, Saturday at 12 o’clock.” Only topic on the agenda: “The hearing of a declaration by the Reich Government.”⁶⁰ This announcement already led one to suspect that the Reichstag would be confronted with some fait accompli. Hitler shortly informed the members of the Reich Cabinet of his activities on March 6. His address to the Reichstag on March 7 began with the following words:⁶¹

Men of the German Reichstag!

The President of the German Reichstag, Party Comrade Göring, convened today’s session at my request in order to give you an opportunity to hear a declaration from the Reich Government pertaining to questions which instinctively are regarded not only by yourselves but by the entire German Volk as important, if not to say decisive.

When in the gray November days of 1918 the curtain was lowered on the bloody tragedy of the Great War ... [etc., etc.]

For the next half hour, a “party narrative” followed, or better a “Germany narrative,” the monotony of which was only relieved by Hitler’s sudden remark that the Volk felt it to be “very distressful that the access of a people of thirty-three million [Poland] to the sea leads through territory formerly belonging to the Reich.” The utterance of such a statement on the part of Hitler ought to have been taken more seriously—as a warning to the Polish people. Every time Hitler termed something “distressful,” this was a certain indication that he had something in mind, aiming at speedily removing the cause of his distress. In this case, however, he would restrain himself for quite some time. After Hitler had closed his introduction, he turned to the “German question” in a manner he thought appropriate at this point in time:

However, I have a right to lay these views of mine open before you gentlemen, Deputies of the Reichstag, for they constitute both the explanation for our own political experience, for our internal work among the Volk and for our external standpoint.

Since the rest of the world often talks about a “German question,” it will be wise to reach for ourselves an objective clarification on the essence of this question. Some regard the “question” as being the German regime itself, as being the completely misunderstood difference between the German regime and the other regime, as being the so-called “rearmament” perceived as threatening, and as being all those things one imagines one sees as a mirage ensuing from this rearmament. For many, this question is rooted in the German Volk’s alleged lust for war, in its slumbering plans for offensive or in its diabolical skill in outwitting its opponents. No, my dear politicians! The German question is something entirely different.

Here we have sixty-seven million people⁶² living on a very limited and only partially fertile area. That means approximately 136 persons per square

kilometer. These people are no less industrious than other European peoples; they are no less demanding; they are no less intelligent and they have no less will to live. They have just as little desire to allow themselves to be heroically shot dead for some fantasy as, for instance, a Frenchman or an Englishman does.

Neither are these sixty-seven million Germans more cowardly; and by no means do they have less honor than members of the other European nations. Once they were torn into a war in which they believed no more than other Europeans and for which they bore just as little responsibility. Today's young German of twenty-five had just celebrated his first birthday during the pre-war years and at the beginning of the war; thus, he can hardly be held responsible for this catastrophe of the nations. Yes, even the youngest German who could have been responsible was twenty-five years old when the German voting age was fixed. Hence he is today at least fifty years old. That means that the overwhelming majority of men in the German Volk were simply forced to take part in the war, just as was the bulk of the survivors from the French or English peoples. If they were decent, they did their duty then—if they were already of age—just as well as every decent Frenchman and Englishman. If they were not decent, they failed to do this and perhaps earned money instead or worked for the revolution. These people are no longer in our ranks today, but live for the most part as emigrants with some host or another. This German Volk has just as many merits as other peoples, and naturally just as many disadvantages and weaknesses, too.

The German question lay in the fact that this Volk—even as late as, for example, 1935, and on the basis of a guilt it had never committed—was to be made to suffer lesser rights which constitute an intolerable burden to an honor-loving Volk, a torment to an industrious Volk, and an outrage to an intelligent Volk. The German question also means that one is attempting, by way of a system of unreasonable actions, measures and hate-filled incitements, to make even more difficult the already hard battle to assert the right to live, and to make it more difficult not only artificially, but perversely and absurdly.

For the rest of the world does not profit in the slightest from making it more difficult for Germany to maintain its life. There is eighteen times less land per capita of the population in respect to the German being than, for instance, in respect to a Russian. It is understandable how hard the mere fight for one's daily bread must be and is. Without the efficiency and industriousness of the German peasant and the organizational ability of the German Volk, it would hardly be possible for these sixty-seven million to lead their lives. Yet what are we to think of the mental naivety of those who perhaps recognize these difficulties yet nonetheless celebrate our misery in childish glee in articles, publications and lectures, who moreover actually hunt down every indication of this, our inner plight, to tell it to the rest of the world? Apparently they would be pleased were our distress even worse, were we not able to succeed over and over again in making it bearable by industriousness and intelligence.

They have no idea how the German question would present a completely different picture were the abilities and industriousness of these millions to falter, whereby not only misery but also political unreason would come into

evidence. This, too, is one of the German questions, and the world cannot but be interested in seeing that this matter of securing a German means of living year after year is successfully solved, just as it is my desire that the German Volk will also comprehend and respect a happy solution to these vital questions for other peoples, just as in its very own best interest.

However, mastering this German question is initially a matter involving the German Volk itself and need not concern the rest of the world. It touches upon the interests of other peoples only to the extent that the German Volk is forced, when solving this problem, to establish contact in an economic sense with other peoples as buyers and sellers.

And this is where, again, it will be solely in the interests of the rest of the world to understand this question, i.e. to comprehend the fact that the cry for bread in a Volk consisting of forty, fifty, or sixty million is not some sly feat of malice on the part of the regime or certain governments but rather a natural expression of the urge to assert one's right to live; and that well-fed peoples are more reasonable than those who are hungry; and that not only the respective government should have an interest in securing sufficient nourishment for its citizens, but the surrounding states and peoples should as well; and that it therefore lies in the interest of all to make it possible to assert one's right to live in the highest sense of the word. It was the privilege of the pre-war age to take up the opposite view and proclaim it a state of war, namely the opinion that one part of the European family of peoples would fare all the better, the worse another part fared. The German Volk needs no special assistance to assert its own life. It wants, however, to have opportunities no worse than those given to other peoples. This is one of the German questions.

And the second German question is the following: because, as a result of the extremely unfortunate general circumstances and conditions, the economic life-struggle of the German Volk is very strenuous—whereas the intelligence, industriousness, and hence the natural standard of living are in contrast very high—an extraordinary exertion of all our energies is required in order to master this first German question. Yet this can only be accomplished if this Volk enjoys a feeling of political security in an external sense.

In this world, it is impossible to maintain—or much less lead—a Volk of honor and bravery as Helots for any length of time.

There is no better confirmation of the German Volk's innate love of peace than the fact that, in spite of its ability and in spite of its bravery—which cannot be denied, even by our opponents—and in spite of this Volk's large numbers, it has secured for itself only such a modest share of the Lebensraum and goods of this world. Yet it is above all this trait of concentrating increasingly on the inland, so characteristic of German nature, which cannot bear being abused or shamefully deprived of its rights.

In that the unfortunate Peace Treaty of Versailles was intended to fix the—historically unique—perpetuation of the outcome of the war in moral terms, it created that very German question which constitutes a critical burden to Europe if unsolved and, if solved, will be Europe's liberation. And following the signing of the Peace Treaty in the year 1919, I set myself the task of one

day solving this problem—not because I have any desire to do harm to France or any other state, but because the German Volk cannot, will not, and shall not bear the wrong done to it on the long term!

In the year 1932, Germany stood at the brink of a Bolshevik collapse. What this chaos in such a large country would have meant for Europe is something perhaps certain European statesmen will have an opportunity to observe elsewhere in future. For my part, I was only able to overcome this crisis of the German Volk, which was most visibly manifest in the economic sector, by mobilizing the ethical and moral values common to the German nation. The man who wanted to rescue Germany from Bolshevism would have to bring about a decision on—and thus a solution for—the question of German equality of rights. Not in order to do harm to other peoples, but on the contrary: to perhaps even spare them great harm by preventing a catastrophe from engulfing Germany, the ultimate consequences of which would be unimaginable for Europe.

For the re-establishment of German equality of rights has had no harmful effect on the French people. Only the Red revolt and the collapse of the German Reich would have dealt the European order and the European economy a blow having consequences which, unfortunately, are virtually beyond the grasp of most European statesmen. This battle for German equality of rights which I waged for three years does not pose a European question, but answers one.

It is a truly tragic misfortune that of all things, the Peace Treaty of Versailles created a situation the French people thought they should be particularly interested in maintaining. As incapable as this situation was of holding any real advantages for the individual Frenchman, all the greater was the unreal connection which appeared to exist between the discrimination of the German Volk by Versailles and the interests of the French. Perhaps the character weakness of the German postwar years; of our Governments; and, in particular, of our parties, was also to blame for the fact that the French people and the serious French statesmen could not be made sufficiently aware of the inaccuracy of this view. For, the worse the individual governments before our time were, the more reason they themselves had to fear the national awakening of the German Volk. Therefore, they were all the more frightened of any type of national self-awareness, and thus all the more supportive in their attitude toward the widespread international defamation of the German people. Yes, they simply needed this disgraceful bondage to prop up their own sorry regimes. Where this regime finally led Germany was vividly illustrated in the imminent collapse.

Now, of course it was difficult, in view of the fact that our neighbors had become so firmly accustomed to non-equality of rights, to prove that a re-establishment of German equality of rights would not only do no harm to them, but on the contrary: in the final analysis, it would be useful internationally. You, my Deputies and men of the Reichstag, know the difficult path I have had to take since that thirtieth of January 1933 in order to redeem the German Volk from its unworthy situation, to then secure for it, step by step, equality of rights, without removing it from the political and economic community of

the European nations and, particularly, without creating a new enmity in the process of settling an old one.

One day I will be able to demand from history confirmation of the fact that at no time in the course of my struggle on behalf of the German Volk did I forget the duties I myself and all of us are obligated to assume toward maintaining European culture and civilization.

However, it is a prerequisite for the existence of this continent, which ultimately owes its uniqueness to the diversity of its cultures, that it is unthinkable without the presence of free and independent national states.

Each European people may be convinced that it has made the greatest contribution to our Western culture. On the whole, however, we would not wish to do without any of what the separate peoples have given, and thus we do not wish to argue over the value of their respective contributions. Rather, we must recognize that the greatest achievements in the most diverse areas of human culture doubtless stem from the rivalry between individual European accomplishments.

Therefore, although we are willing to cooperate in this European world of culture as a free and equal member, we are just as stubbornly determined to remain what we are.

In these three years, I have again and again attempted—unfortunately all too often in vain—to build a bridge of understanding to the people of France. The further we get from the bitterness of the World War and the years that followed it, the more the evil fades in human memory, and the more the better things of life, knowledge, and experience advance to the fore.

Those who once faced one another as bitter foes today honor each other as brave fighters in a great struggle of the past, and once again recognize one another as responsible for maintaining and upholding a great shared cultural inheritance.

Why should it not be possible to terminate the futile, centuries-old strife which has not brought either of the peoples a final settlement—and which never will—and replace it by the consideration of a higher reason?

The German Volk has no interest in seeing the French suffer, and vice versa: how would France profit if Germany were to come to ruin? What use is it to the French peasant if the German peasant fares badly—or vice versa? Or what advantage does the French worker have from the distress of the German worker? And what blessing could it hold for Germany, for the German worker, the German *Mittelstand*, for the German Volk as a whole, if France were to fall prey to misfortune?

I have attempted to solve the problems of a hate-filled theory of class conflict within Germany's borders by means of a higher reason, and I have been successful. Why should it not be possible to remove the problem of the general European differences between peoples and states from the sphere of irrationality and passion and to place it in the calm light of a higher insight? In any case, I once swore to myself that I would fight with persistence and bravery for German equality of rights and make it a reality one way or another,⁶³ but also that I would strengthen the feeling of responsibility for the necessity of mutual consideration and cooperation in Europe.

Hitler took advantage of the occasion to paint in the most vivid colors, both for the benefit of his audience and for the international public at large the picture of the utter chaos Bolshevism necessarily entailed. He himself “trembled” at the mere thought of it. At the same time, he assured his listeners that nothing could ever sway him as a statesman to enter into a closer relationship with the Bolsheviks. He forgot to mention, however, that earlier he had welcomed concerted action by National Socialists and Communists, as in the case of the Berlin transportation workers’ strike in November 1932. In August of 1939 no solemn declarations of the past would keep him from concluding a Russo-German NonAggression Pact with a secret additional protocol aimed at partitioning the Polish State. On March 7, 1936, however, in the guise of a man of great integrity, Hitler proclaimed:

When today my international opponents confront me with the fact that I refuse to practice this cooperation with Russia, I must counter this assertion with the following: I rejected and continue to reject this cooperation not with Russia, but with the Bolshevism which lays claim to world rulership.

I am a German, I love my Volk and am attached to it. I know that it can only be happy if allowed to live in accordance with its nature and its way. The German Volk has been able not only to cry, but also to laugh heartily all its life, and I do not want the horror of the Communist international dictatorship of hatred to descend upon it. I tremble for Europe at the thought of what would lie in store for our old, heavily populated continent were the chaos of the Bolshevik revolution rendered successful by the infiltrating force of this destructive Asiatic concept of the world, which subverts all our established ideals. I am perhaps for many European statesmen a fantastic, or at any rate uncomfortable, harbinger of warnings. That I am regarded in the eyes of the international Bolshevik oppressors of the world as one of their greatest enemies is for me a great honor and a justification for my actions in the eyes of posterity.

I cannot prevent other states from taking the paths they believe they must or at least believe they can take, but I shall prevent Germany from taking this road to ruin. And I believe that this ruin would come at that point at which the leadership of state decides to stoop to become an ally at the service of such a destructive doctrine.

I would see no possibility of conveying in clear terms to the German worker the threatening misfortune of Bolshevik chaos which so deeply troubles me were I myself, as Führer of the nation, to enter into close dealings with this very menace. As a statesman and the Führer of the Volk, I wish to also do myself all those things I expect and demand from each of my Volksgenossen. I do not believe that statesmen can profit from closer contact with a Weltanschauung which is the ruin of any people.

In the past twenty years of German history, we have had ample opportunity to gain experience in this sector. Our initial contact with

Bolshevism in the year 1917 brought us the revolution one year later. The second encounter with it sufficed to put Germany near the brink of a Communist collapse within but a few years' time. I broke off these relations and thus jerked Germany back from the verge of destruction.

Nothing can persuade me to go any other way than that dictated by experience, insight and foresight.

And I know that this conviction has grown to become the most profound body of thought and ideas for the entire National Socialist Movement. With persistent tenacity we shall solve the social problems and tensions in our Volk by means of carrying on the evolutionary process, thereby ensuring for ourselves the blessing of a peaceful development from which all of our Volksgenossen will profit. And each of the many new tasks we will encounter in this process will fill us with the joy of those who are incapable of living without work and hence without a task to perform.

When I apply this basic attitude to European politics at large, I find that Europe is divided into two halves: one comprised of self-sufficient and independent national states, of peoples with whom we are linked a thousandfold by history and culture and with whom we wish to continue to be linked for all time in the same manner as with the free and self-sufficient nations of the non-European continents; and the other governed by the very same intolerant Bolshevik doctrine claiming general international supremacy, which even preaches the destruction of the immortal values—sacred to us—of this world and the next, in order to build a different world whose culture, exterior and content seem abhorrent to us. Except for the given political and economic international relations, we do not wish to have any closer contact with that.

It is infinitely tragic that, in conclusion of our long years of sincerely endeavoring to obtain the trust, sympathy and affection of the French people, a military alliance was sealed, the beginning of which we know today, but—if Providence is not once again more merciful than mankind deserves—the end of which will perhaps have unforeseeable consequences. In the past three years I have endeavored to slowly but surely establish the prerequisites for a German-French understanding. In doing so, I have never left a single doubt that an absolute equality of rights and thus the same legal status of the German Volk and State form part of the prerequisites for such an understanding. I have consciously regarded this understanding not only as a problem to be solved by means of pacts, but as a problem which must first be brought home psychologically to the two peoples, for it has to be prepared not only in mental, but also in emotional terms. Thus I was often confronted with the reproach that my offers of friendship contained no specific proposals. That is not correct.

I bravely and explicitly proposed everything that could in any way possibly be proposed to lessen the tension of German-French relations.

I did not hesitate on one occasion to join a concrete arms proposal for a limit of 200,000 men. When this proposal was abandoned by those responsible for drawing it up, I approached the French people and the European Governments with a new, quite specific proposal. This proposal for 300,000

men was also rejected. I have made a whole series of further concrete proposals aimed at eliminating the poison from public opinion in the individual states and at cleaning up methods of warfare, and thus ultimately at a slow yet, therefore, sure reduction in arms. Only one of these German proposals was given any real consideration. A British Government's sense of realism accepted my proposal for establishing a permanent ratio between the German and English fleets, which both corresponds to the needs of German security and, conversely, takes into account the enormous overseas interests of a great world empire. I may also point out here that, to date, this agreement has remained practically the only truly considerate and thus successful attempt to limit arms. The Reich Government is willing to supplement this treaty by a further qualitative agreement with England.

I have expressed the very concrete principle that the collective programs of an international *Paktomanie* have as little chance of becoming reality as the general proposals for world disarmament which have been shown from the very onset to be impracticable under such circumstances. In contrast, I have stressed that these questions can only be approached step by step more specifically in that direction from which there is presumably the least resistance. Based upon this conviction, I have also developed the concrete proposal for an air pact grounded on a parity of strength between France, England and Germany. The consequence was that this proposal was initially ignored, and then a new Eastern-European-Asiatic factor was introduced on the stage of European equilibrium, the military ramifications of which are incalculable. Thus, for long years I took the trouble to make concrete proposals, yet I do not hesitate to state that the psychological preparation for the understanding has seemed just as important to me as the so-called concrete proposals, and I have done more in this area than any honest foreign statesman could ever have even hoped. I removed the question of the everlasting revision of European borders from the atmosphere of public discussion in Germany.⁶⁴ Yet, unfortunately, it is often held, and this applies particularly to foreign statesmen, that this attitude and its actions are not of any particular significance. I may point out that it would have been equally possible for me as a German, in a moral sense, to place the restoration of the 1914 borders on my program and to support this item in publications and oratory, just as the French ministers and popular leaders did after 1871, for instance. My esteemed critics would do better not to deny me any ability whatsoever in this sector.

It is much more difficult for a National Socialist to persuade a Volk to come to an understanding than to do the opposite. And for me it would probably have been easier to whip up the instinct for revenge than to awaken and constantly amplify a feeling for the necessity of a European understanding. And that is what I have done. I have rid German public opinion of attacks of this sort against our neighboring peoples.

I have removed from the German press all animosity against the French people. I have endeavored to awaken in our youth a sense for the ideal of such an understanding, and was certainly not unsuccessful. When the French guests entered the Olympic Stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen several

weeks ago, they perhaps had an opportunity to observe whether and to what extent I have been successful in bringing about this inner conversion of the German Volk.

This inner willingness to seek and find such an understanding is, however, more important than clever attempts by statesmen to ensnare the world in a net of pacts obscure as to both legal and factual content.

These efforts on my part have, however, been twice as difficult because at the same time I was forced to disentangle Germany from the web of a treaty which had robbed it of its equality of rights and which the French people—whether rightly or wrongly is secondary—believed it to be in their best interest to uphold. Being a German nationalist, I above all was forced to make yet another particularly difficult sacrifice for the German Volk in that context.

At least in modern times, the attempt had not yet been made following a war to simply deny the loser its sovereign rights over large and long-standing parts of its empire. It was only in the interest of this understanding that I bore this, the most difficult sacrifice we could be made to bear politically and morally, and had intended to continue bearing it for the sole reason that I believed it was necessary to abide by a treaty⁶⁵ which could perhaps contribute to eliminating the poison from the political atmosphere between France and Germany and England and Germany and to spreading a feeling of security on all sides.

Yes, beyond that I have often—in this forum, too—upheld the standpoint that we are not only willing to make this most difficult contribution to safeguarding peace in Europe as long as the other partners fulfill their obligations; furthermore, we view this treaty—because concrete—as the only possible attempt to safeguard Europe.

You, my Deputies, are acquainted with the letter and spirit of this treaty. It was to prevent the use of force for all time between Belgium and France on the one hand and Germany on the other. But unfortunately the treaties of alliance which France had concluded at an earlier date presented the first obstacle, although this obstacle did not contradict the essence of that Pact, namely, the Rhine Pact of Locarno. Germany's contribution to this Pact presented the greatest sacrifice, for while France fortified its border with steel, cement and arms, and equipped it with numerous garrisons, we were made to bear the burden of permanently maintaining total defenselessness in the West. We nonetheless complied with this, too, in the hope of serving—by making that contribution, one so difficult for a major power—the cause of European peace and promoting an understanding between nations.

Now, this Pact is in contradiction to the agreement France entered into last year with Russia which has already been signed and just recently received the Chamber's approval. For, by virtue of this new Franco-Soviet agreement, the threatening military power of a huge empire has been given access to Central Europe via the detour of Czechoslovakia, which has signed a similar treaty with Russia. The incredible thing in this context is that these two states have undertaken an obligation in their treaty, regardless of any presently existing or anticipated rulings of the Council of the League of Nations, to clarify the question of guilt in the event of an Eastern-European complication

at their own discretion and to thus consider the obligation to render mutual assistance as given or not, as the case may be.

The claim that the former obligation was canceled in this Pact by virtue of a supplemental restriction is incomprehensible. I cannot in one context define a certain procedure as a clear breach of obligations otherwise valid and hence thereby assume that such procedure is binding, and in another context declare that no action is to be taken which violates these other obligations. In such a case, the first binding obligation would be unreasonable and thus make no sense.

But this is first and foremost a political problem and is to be rated as such with all its weighty significance.

Hitler then denounced France as a future Bolshevik stronghold in Europe. The consequences of the Franco-Russian Pact were such, that he as preserver of Germany had to fear the worst.

France did not conclude this treaty with any arbitrary European power. Even prior to the Rhine Pact, France had treaties of mutual assistance both with Czechoslovakia and with Poland. Germany took no offense at this, not only because such pacts—in contrast to the Franco-Soviet Pact—recognized the authority of rulings passed by the League of Nations, but also because the Czechoslovakia of that time, and particularly Poland as well, will always basically uphold a policy of representing these states' own national interests. Germany has no desire to attack these states and does not believe it will lie in the interest of these states to prepare an offensive against Germany. But above all: Poland will remain Poland, and France will remain France.

Soviet Russia, in contrast, is the exponent of a revolutionary Weltanschauung organized as a state. Its concept of the state is the creed of world revolution. It is not possible to rule out that tomorrow or the day after, this Weltanschauung will have conquered France as well. However, should this be the case—and as a German statesman I must be prepared—then it is a certainty that this new Bolshevik state would become a section in the Bolshevik International, which means that the decision as to aggression or non-aggression will not be made by two separate states according to their own objective judgment, but instead by directives issuing from a single source. And in the event of such a development, this source would no longer be Paris, but Moscow.

If only for mere territorial reasons, Germany is not in a likely position to attack Russia,⁶⁶ yet Russia is all the more in a position to bring about a conflict with Germany at any time via the detour of its advanced positions. Ascertaining the aggressor would then be a foregone conclusion, for the decision would be independent of the findings of the Council of the League of Nations.

Allegations or objections that France and Russia would do nothing which might expose them to sanctions—on the part of England or Italy—are immaterial, because one cannot begin to gauge which type of sanctions might possibly be effective against such an overwhelming construction so unified in both *weltanschaulich* and military terms.

For many years we anxiously warned of such a development, not only because we have more to fear from it than others, but because it may one day bring with it dire consequences for the whole of Europe, if one attempts to dismiss these, our most serious apprehensions, by citing the unfinished state of the Russian instrument of war, or even its unwieldiness and unfitness for deployment in a European war. We have always combated this view, not because we are somehow of the conviction that the German is inherently inferior, but because we all know that numbers, too, have their own weight. We are all the more grateful that M. Herriot⁶⁷ has just enlightened the French Chamber as to Russia's aggressive-military significance. We know that M. Herriot's information was given to him by the Soviet Government itself, and we are certain that this party cannot have supplied the spiritual inspirer of the new alliance in France with false propaganda; we similarly do not doubt that M. Herriot has given a true account of this information. Yet according to this information, it is a fact that the Russian army has a peacetime strength of 1,350,000 men; that secondly, it has a total of 17,500,000 men ready for war and in the reserves; that thirdly, it is equipped with the largest tank weaponry; and fourthly, that it supports the largest air force in the world.

Introducing this enormous military factor—which was described as being excellent in terms of its mobility and leadership as well as ready for action at any time—onto the Central European stage will destroy any genuine European equilibrium. This will furthermore present an obstacle to any possibility of estimating what means of defense on land and in the air are necessary for the European states involved, and particularly for the sole country targeted as an opponent: Germany.

This gigantic mobilization of the East against Central Europe contradicts not only the letter, but above all the spirit of the Locarno Pact. We are not alone in feeling this because we are directly involved; rather, this view thrives among innumerable intelligent men of all nations and has been openly upheld everywhere, as has been documented in publications and politics.

On February 21, a French journalist⁶⁸ approached me with the request that I grant him an interview. Because I had been told that the person in question was one of those very Frenchmen who, like ourselves, is endeavoring to find ways of arriving at an understanding between our two peoples, I was all the less inclined to refuse, particularly since such an action would have instantly been interpreted as an indication of my lack of respect toward French journalism. I provided the desired information, just as I have openly given it in Germany hundreds and thousands of times, and I once more attempted to address the French people with a plea for the understanding to which we are dedicated with all our hearts and which we would so dearly like to see become reality. At the same time, however, I did express my deep regret as regards the threatening developments in France brought about by the conclusion of a pact for which, in our opinion, there was no conceivable necessity, yet which, were it to come into being, by necessity, would create a new state of affairs. As you all know, this interview was held back for reasons unknown to us and was not published until the day after ratification in the French Chamber.

As much as I will continue in the future to be ready and sincerely willing, as I stated in that interview, to promote this German-French understanding—for I see in it a necessary factor in safeguarding Europe from immeasurable dangers and because I do not expect and indeed am incapable of even perceiving any advantages whatsoever for the two peoples from any other course of behavior; while I do, however, perceive the gravest general and international dangers—I was all the more compelled by the knowledge of the final signing of this Pact to enter into a review of the new situation thus created and to draw the necessary conclusions.

These conclusions are of an extremely grave nature, and they fill us and myself personally with a bitter regret. However, I am obligated not only to make sacrifices for the sake of European understanding, but also to bow to the interests of my own Volk.

As long as a sacrifice meets with appreciation and understanding on the part of the opposition, I will gladly pursue that sacrifice and recommend to the German Volk that it do the same. Yet as soon as it becomes evident that a partner no longer values or appreciates this sacrifice, this must result in a one-sided burden for Germany and hence in a discrimination we cannot tolerate. In this historic hour and within these walls, however, I would like to repeat what I stated in my first major speech before the Reichstag in May 1933:

The German Volk would rather undergo any amount of suffering and distress than abandon the precept of honor and the will to freedom and equality of rights.

If the German Volk is to be of any value to European cooperation, it can be of value only as an honor-loving and hence equal partner. As soon as it ceases to be valuable in terms of this integrity, it becomes worthless in objective terms as well. I would not like to deceive ourselves or the rest of the world with a Volk which would then be completely without value, for it would lack the essentially natural feeling of honor.

I also believe, however, that even in the hour of such a bitter realization and grave decision, in spite of everything, one must not refrain from supporting European cooperation all the more and from seeking new ways to make it possible to solve these problems in a manner beneficial to all.

Hitler then announced the verbatim content of the memorandum,⁶⁹ which on the same day he had the Reich Foreign Minister von Neurath present to the ambassadors of France, Belgium and Italy, the nations party to the Locarno Pact. The document contained the official note of abrogation of the agreement concluded in Locarno. Further, it furnished the diplomats with various suggestions for a peaceful resolution of all European problems.

Thus I have continued my endeavors to express in specific proposals the feelings of the German Volk which is concerned for its security and willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of its freedom, but is likewise willing at all times to take part in a truly sincere and equally-valued European cooperation.

March 7, 1936

After a difficult inner struggle, I have hence decided on behalf of the German Reich Government to have the following Memorandum submitted to the French Government and the other signatories of the Locarno Pact:

Memorandum

Immediately after the Pact between France and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which was signed on May 2, 1935 became public, the German Government drew the attention of the Governments of the other signatory powers of the Rhine Pact of Locarno to the fact that the obligations which France assumed in the new Pact are not compatible with its obligations according to the Rhine Pact. At that time, the German Government submitted full legal and political justification for its standpoint: in legal terms in the German Memorandum dated May 25, 1935, and in political terms in the numerous diplomatic talks which followed in the wake of this Memorandum. The Governments concerned are also aware that neither their written responses to the German Memorandum nor the arguments they brought forth via diplomatic channels or in public statements were able to discount the standpoint of the German Government.

In fact, the entire diplomatic and public discussion which has ensued since May 1935 on these questions has served merely to confirm every aspect of the position the German Government has taken from the very beginning.

1. It is an uncontested fact that the Franco-Soviet Agreement is directed exclusively against Germany.

2. It is an uncontested fact that, under the terms of this Agreement, France will undertake obligations in the event of a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union which far exceed its duty pursuant to the Covenant of the League of Nations and which force it to take military action against Germany even if it can cite as grounds for such action neither a recommendation nor even an existing decision of the Council of the League of Nations.

3. It is an uncontested fact that, in such event, France will also be claiming for itself the right to decide at its own discretion who is the aggressor.

4. Thus it is established that France has entered into obligations vis-à-vis the Soviet Union which, in practice, are tantamount to its acting as though neither the Covenant of the League of Nations nor the Rhine Pact, which rests on such Covenant, were in effect.

This consequence of the Franco-Soviet Pact is not canceled out by the fact that France has therein made the reservation not to be under obligation to take military action against Germany if, by doing so, it were to expose itself to sanctions on the part of the Guarantor Powers Italy and Great Britain. Despite this reservation, however, what remains decisive is the fact that the Rhine Pact is based not only upon guarantees on the part of Great Britain and Italy, but primarily on the obligations governing the relations between France and Germany. Thus the sole question is whether France has remained within those limits imposed upon it by the Rhine Pact in regard to its relations with Germany when assuming these treaty obligations.

And the German Government must answer this question in the negative. The Rhine Pact was intended to accomplish the goal of securing peace in

Western Europe, in that Germany on the one hand and France and Belgium on the other were to renounce for all time the use of military force in their relations with one another. If specific exceptions to this renunciation of war extending beyond the right of self-defense were allowed at the conclusion of this Pact, the sole political reason lay, as was generally known, in the fact that France had earlier undertaken certain alliance obligations toward Poland and Czechoslovakia which it was not willing to sacrifice for the idea of unconditionally securing peace in the West. With a clear conscience, Germany decided to accept these limitations on the renunciation of war. It made no objection to the agreements with Poland and Czechoslovakia which France's representative presented at Locarno, acting as it did under the obvious condition that these agreements were in line with the layout of the Rhine Pact and contained no provisions whatsoever on the implementation of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations such as those contained in the new Franco-Soviet agreements.

This also corresponded to the contents of such special agreements as disclosed to the German Government at that time. The exceptions allowed for in the Rhine Pact are not, however, explicitly worded so as to apply only to Poland and Czechoslovakia, but are rather formulated in the abstract. Yet it was the aim of all respective negotiations to merely bring about a balance between the German-French renunciation of war and France's desire to maintain the alliance obligations it had already undertaken.

If France now attempts to draw an advantage from the abstract wording of the possibilities of war allowed pursuant to the Rhine Pact in order to conclude a new alliance against Germany with a state heavily armed with military weapons; if it chooses to continue, in such a decisive fashion, to impose limits on the renunciation of war stipulated between itself and Germany; and if, in the process, it does not even confine itself to the established formal legal limitations, as stated above, it has ultimately created a completely new situation and destroyed—in both spirit and fact—the political system of the Rhine Pact.

The most recent debates and resolutions of the French Parliament have shown that France is determined—notwithstanding Germany's standpoint—to definitely put the Pact with the Soviet Union into effect; talks on the diplomatic level have even revealed that France already regards itself as bound to the Pact by virtue of having signed it on May 2, 1935. However, faced with such a development in European politics, the German Reich Government cannot stand idle unless it wishes to abandon or betray the interests of the German Volk duly entrusted to it.

In negotiations in recent years, the German Government has consistently stressed that it intended to abide by and fulfill all of the obligations arising from the Rhine Pact as long as the other contracting parties were willing, on their part, to stand by this Pact. This obvious condition can no longer be deemed to exist as regards France. France responded to Germany's repeated friendly advances and assurances of peace by violating the Rhine Pact by virtue of a military alliance with the Soviet Union directed exclusively against Germany.

Hence the Rhine Pact of Locarno has lost its inherent meaning and ceased, in a practical sense, to exist. As a consequence, Germany no longer views itself as bound for its part to this lapsed Pact. The German Government is now compelled to react to the new situation created by this alliance, a situation aggravated by the fact that the Franco-Soviet Agreement has been supplemented by a treaty of alliance between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union with arrangements which are exactly parallel. In the interest of the primal right of a people to safeguard its borders and maintain its possibilities of defense, the German Reich Government has today re-established the full and unlimited sovereignty of the Reich in the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland.

Hitler then expanded upon his “seven points,” which related his idea of how to “establish a system for securing peace in Europe.” His love of peace was so overwhelming that he practically reeked of it. Obviously, his main purpose was to divert the attention of the Western Powers from his occupation of the Rhineland. He came up with a suggestion for the conclusion of a non-aggression pact with France and Belgium for the next twenty-five years. He even considered making the Netherlands party to such an alliance, which might include aviation concerns as well. He was not opposed to the idea of incorporating Germany’s neighbors to the East, similar to the manner in which Germany and Poland were linked. He even considered including Lithuania in a like security structure. Indeed, Hitler even offered to withdraw his forces from the Rhineland, if France established a corresponding demilitarized zone on the Western bank of the river. As a final treat, he alluded to a possible return of Germany to the League of Nations. It was easy for Hitler to propose such suggestions. He knew he needed not fear any of them being carried through. Should indeed per chance one of these agreements materialize, he intended to consider it binding only as long as it was convenient for him.

The verbatim content of Hitler’s suggestions is reproduced below:

However, in order to prevent any misinterpretation of its intentions and to erase any doubt as to the purely defensive character of these measures, as well as to lend emphasis to its eternally given yearning for a true pacification of Europe between states enjoying equal rights and equal respect, the German Reich Government declares its willingness to assent to the following proposals for new agreements towards establishing a system for securing peace in Europe:

1. The German Reich Government declares its willingness to immediately enter into negotiations with France and Belgium concerning the formation of a mutually demilitarized zone and to give its consent to such a proposal from the very beginning, regardless of extent and effects, under the condition, however, of complete parity.

2. The German Reich Government proposes that for the purpose of ensuring the intactness and inviolability of the borders in the West, a nonaggression pact be concluded between Germany, France and Belgium, whereby it is willing to fix the term of same at twenty-five years.

3. The German Reich Government desires to invite England and Italy to sign this treaty as Guarantor Powers.

4. The German Reich Government agrees, in the event that the Royal Dutch Government so desires, and the other contracting parties hold it to be fitting, that the Netherlands be included in this treaty system.

5. The German Reich Government is willing to conclude an air pact as a further reinforcement of these security arrangements between the Western Powers which shall suffice to effectively and automatically ban the risk of unexpected air attacks.

6. The German Reich Government repeats its offer to conclude non-aggression pacts with the states bordering Germany to the East such as that with Poland. Due to the fact that the Lithuanian Government has made a certain correction in its position regarding the Memel territory within the past months, the German Reich Government withdraws the exception it was once compelled to make as regards Lithuania and declares its willingness, under the condition of an effective development of the guaranteed autonomy for the Memel territory, to sign such a non-aggression pact with Lithuania as well.

7. Now that final equality of rights has been achieved for Germany and its complete sovereignty over the entire German Reich territory has been restored, the German Reich Government regards the main reason for its earlier withdrawal from the League of Nations as having been remedied. Thus it is willing to once more join the League of Nations. In this context, it may state that it anticipates that, within the course of an appropriate period, both the question of colonial equality of rights and the question of separating the Covenant of the League of Nations from its Versailles foundation will be settled by way of amicable negotiations.

As Hitler's lengthy speech drew to a close, he pronounced two "sacred, inner vows." For one, he would "rather perish honorably from the gravest distress than ever capitulate before it." Secondly, he promised to work "now more than ever" to achieve "an understanding between the peoples of Europe." He had "no territorial claims to make in Europe."⁷⁰ He had been able to endure "countless sleepless nights and days filled with work" only because he always had felt himself to be the true leader and representative of the Volk, and he had never seen himself as a dictator. To give the people a chance to judge for themselves, he had decided to dissolve the Reichstag.

Men, Deputies of the German Reichstag!

In this historic hour when German troops are presently occupying their future garrisons of peace in the Reich's western provinces, may we all join together to stand by two sacred, inner vows:

March 7, 1936

First, to the oath that we shall never yield to any power or any force in restoring the honor of our Volk and would rather perish honorably from the gravest distress than ever capitulate before it.

Secondly, to the vow that now more than ever shall we dedicate ourselves to achieving an understanding between the peoples of Europe and particularly an understanding with our Western peoples and neighbors. After three years, I believe that today the struggle for German equality of rights can be deemed concluded.

I believe that the initial reason for our earlier withdrawal from a collective European cooperation has now ceased to exist. If we are now, therefore, once more willing to return to this cooperation, we are doing so with the sincere desire that these events and a retrospective on those years will aid us in cultivating a deeper understanding of this cooperation among other European peoples as well. We have no territorial claims to make in Europe. Above all, we are aware that all the tensions resulting either from erroneous territorial provisions or from the disproportion between the size of a population and its Lebensraum can never be solved by wars in Europe. However, we do hope that human insight will help to alleviate the painfulness of this state of affairs and relieve tensions by means of a gradual evolutionary development marked by peaceful cooperation.

Specifically, I sense today above all the necessity to honor those obligations imposed upon us by the national honor and freedom we have regained, obligations not only to our own Volk, but to the other European states as well. Hence at this time I would like to recall to the minds of European statesmen the thoughts I expressed in the thirteen points of my last speech here with the assurance that we Germans are gladly willing to do everything possible and necessary toward putting these very realistic ideals into practice.

My Party Comrades! For three years now I have headed the Government of the German Reich and thus the German Volk. Great are the achievements which Providence has allowed me to accomplish for our Vaterland these three years. In every area of our national, political, and economic life, our position has improved. Yet today I may also confess that, for me, this time was accompanied by numerous cares, countless sleepless nights and days filled with work. I was only able to do all this because I have never regarded myself as a dictator of my Volk, but always as its Führer alone and thus as its agent. In the past, I fought for the inner approval of the German Volk for my ideals for fourteen years, and then by virtue of its trust, I was appointed by the venerable Field Marshal. But since then I have drawn all my energy solely from the happy consciousness of being inseparably bound up with my Volk as a man and as Führer. I cannot close this historic period, in which the honor and freedom of my Volk have been restored, without now asking the German Volk to grant to me—and hence to all my co-workers and co-fighters—in retrospect their approval for everything I have had to do during those years in the way of making decisions that often appeared stubborn, in carrying out harsh measures, and in demanding difficult sacrifices.

Therefore I have come to the decision to dissolve the German Reichstag today so that the German Volk may pass its judgment on my leadership and

that of my co-workers. In these three years, Germany has regained once more its honor, found once more a faith, overcome its greatest economic crisis, and ushered in a new cultural ascent. I believe I can say this as my conscience and God are my witnesses. I now ask the German Volk to strengthen me in my belief and to continue giving me, through the power of its will, power of my own to take a courageous stand at all times for its honor and freedom and to ensure its economic well-being; above all, to support me in my struggle for real peace.

Once the applause for Hitler had died down in the Reichstag, Göring read “a message from the Führer” to the deputies, which was nothing other than the order of dissolution for the Reichstag.⁷¹ It was the very first time that Hitler himself, in his capacity as Head of State, effected the dissolution. Certain of himself, Hitler did not even find it necessary to refer to Article 25 of the Weimar Constitution in his ordinance, the statute which granted such power to the Head of State. The message read as follows:

I dissolve the Reichstag as of March 28, 1936, with the intent to afford the German Volk the opportunity to formally acclaim the policy resolved upon today, which restitutes national honor and sovereignty to the Reich and is tied to a sincere striving for a true understanding and reconciliation among the peoples of the world on the basis of equal rights and obligations. The new elections to the Reichstag will take place on Sunday, March 29, 1936.

Berlin, March 7, 1936 The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

On March 8, Hitler attended the *Heldengedenktage* ceremony in Berlin, that was completely marked by the military intervention in the Rhineland the day before. At 7:00 p.m. in the Berlin Herrenhaus, Hitler gave an address to the leading men within the Party, in which he distributed the guidelines for the upcoming election campaign.⁷²

At the end of the day, a torchlight procession of party formations, led by the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, moved down Wilhelmstrasse. It passed by beneath the Führer, demonstrating the men’s gratitude for Hitler’s restoration of military sovereignty and of “national honor” to Germany. Shortly after 10:15 p.m., Hitler stepped onto the new balcony at the Chancellery, that had been installed in order to render such displays of popular enthusiasm more effective. The crowd burst out singing: “*Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall . . .*”⁷³

The first reaction abroad to the remilitarization of the Rhineland came in a French radio broadcast on the topic of the earlier Franco-German talks. This broadcast and the German response to it were published by the German News Bureau in the following report:⁷⁴

Saturday night, all French radio stations disseminated the following information:

The day subsequent to the last interview of the Chancellor, Flandin had not even hesitated one day to send the French Ambassador to the Führer. The Ambassador inquired as to the nature of the documents, which the Führer proposed be discussed at Franco-German consultations. In reply, the Chancellor stated that such documents had to be drawn up yet. He implored the French Ambassador to treat this diplomatic advance on his part confidentially. M. Flandin complied with the Führer's request and did not publish an official note on the subject. All the greater was the astonishment of the French Government today, as it finds itself faced with a unilateral German declaration and with the abrogation of treaties, which Germany had signed of its own free will. The following is to be said with regard to this matter:

1. In truth, the Führer's interview lay on the desk of the French Embassy that same day, and assuredly, it was at the disposal of the French Government no later than the next day. Regrettably, the French Government did not wait only one day, but rather several days, before allowing for the publication of the interview. In the interim, the Chamber of Deputies had already ratified the agreement with the Soviet Union. The French Government did not commission its Ambassador to request further particulars on the topic until the following day, that is one week later.

2. The inquiry presented by the French Ambassador was to the effect of asking the Führer and Reich Chancellor to be so kind as to provide more precise information on the topic of the offer of Franco-German negotiations, as proposed in the interview. The French Ambassador was informed to the extent that repeated, detailed German offers had consistently failed to elicit a response on the part of France. It was never suggested to the French Ambassador that his visit be kept secret by the French Government. Rather, the issue had merely been the refusal to issue a joint communiqué. There had been no conceivable reason why the French Government for its part should have refrained from making public the fact of the French Ambassador's visit.

It is easily understood why the German Government had little desire to publish a joint communiqué to account for the oddly belated publication of the interview and thereby to retroactively sanction the consequences it entailed.

For two hours on March 9, Hitler granted an interview to Ward Price. Here once again, Hitler detailed his various "peace plans" and gave a rather lame explanation of his forced entry into the Rhineland.⁷⁵ Ward Price presented Hitler with five concrete inquiries.

First question: Does the Führer's offer of a non-aggression pact to every Eastern neighbor of Germany also apply to Austria? Does he consider Czechoslovakia as a state neighboring Germany in the East, too?

Answer: My proposal for the conclusion of non-aggression pacts both to the East and West of Germany was of a general nature, i.e. there were no exclusions. Hence, this applies to both Czechoslovakia and Austria.

Second question: Does the Führer intend to return Germany to the League of Nations so that his proposals might be placed before that body for consideration, with Germany a full member of the League's Council? Or would he prefer to call for an international conference to deal with the matter?

Answer: In the stead of Germany, I declared it willing to immediately join the League of Nations. I do so in the expectation that, in due time, both the question of colonial claims and the question of a divorce of the Covenant of the League of Nations from the so-called peace treaty would be resolved.

I believe it would be most practical if the Governments in question would directly take responsibility for the conclusion of the non-aggression pacts proposed by the German Government. This means that in the case of pacts securing the borders between Germany, France, and Belgium (and perhaps, given the circumstances, even Holland) the powers invited to participate would consist of the Governments involved and England and Italy—the signatory powers and guarantors of the agreement. It might be a good idea if those countries which will be secured by these pacts approach their future guarantors. The non-aggression pacts with the other states could then be negotiated in the manner in which the German-Polish pact was concluded, in other words, directly between the Governments involved.

In addition to that, Germany would certainly be content if another power—for instance England—assumed the role of an impartial mediator in the practical resolution of these questions.

Third question: It is highly unlikely that, given the upcoming elections in France in April, any French Government will be in a position to discuss your suggestions, even if it wanted to. Is Germany willing to keep its offer in force until after that date? Will Germany be undertaking any steps in the meantime that again might alter the present situation?

Answer: There need not be any change of the current situation, at least not on the part of the German Government. We have restored its sovereign rights to the German Reich and have brought ancient Reich territory back under the protection of the entire nation. Hence, for us, there is no need to set deadlines. I would like to make one thing clear, however. Should these proposals fail, or simply be ignored, like so many before them have been, then the German Government will not impose upon Europe with any further suggestions.

Fourth question: Now that the Führer has reclaimed total sovereignty over the entire German territory, is he willing to restrict the forces deployed in the Rhineland to a number that would preclude any offensive actions directed against France on the part of Germany?

Answer: It was not our intention to commit an act of aggression against France as we occupied the so-called “demilitarized” zone. Rather, we consider that such an enormous sacrifice by a nation is only conceivable and hence supportable if it is met with objectivity and political understanding on the part of the other party to the contract. Not Germany is in breach of contract! Ever since the signing of the armistice agreement based on President Wilson's Fourteen Points, the following customs have been observed in Europe.

Whenever victor and vanquished draw up a contract between each other, the vanquished becomes obliged to observe its conventions while the victor may proceed as he sees fit and as suits his purposes. You cannot deny the fact that the provisions of Wilson's Fourteen Points and the three additional contracts supplementing it were not upheld.

Further, you cannot deny the fact that their general disarmament provisions were not upheld on the part of the victorious powers. And the letters of the Locarno Pact as well are of significance since they additionally carry political weight.

Had the Franco-Russian agreement of May 2, 1935 been on the books already upon the signature of the Locarno Pact, then naturally there would have been no signing of the Rhine Pact. It is unacceptable that, retroactively, a contract should take on a different meaning or should be interpreted in a manner not intended. In the case before us not only the spirit but also the letter of the Locarno Pact was violated. The conclusion of a military alliance between the Soviet Union and France brings Germany into a position in which it is forced to draw certain conclusions. It is nothing but these conclusions that I have drawn!

After all, it is clearly impossible that, with France concluding such a military alliance, such a densely populated and economically vital border region of the German Reich should be left defenseless and without protection. This is the most natural and instinctive reaction to such a move.

Perhaps in England, I fear, there may be many persons who do not realize that the so-called "demilitarized" zone has about as many inhabitants as does, for instance, the Czechoslovakian State or Yugoslavia. The area is merely being furnished with garrisons to protect its freedom precisely as in the other parts of the Reich—no more and no less! There cannot be any talk of massing troops along the border for offensive purposes because:

a) Germany no longer has anything to demand of France and it will not demand anything anymore;

b) Germany itself has called for the establishment of non-aggression pacts, expressing the desire that England and Italy might become signatory powers and guarantors of these agreements;

c) massing troops along the border would be unnecessary from a military point of view and, as a matter of fact, it would be senseless!

Moreover, we want to create a future in which these two countries no longer feel threatened by one another. When M. Sarraut⁷⁶ declares that he cannot support the sight of German cannons threatening the Strasbourg fortress, it ought to be quite obvious that we too cannot support the sight of French fortress cannons threatening our open cities Frankfurt, Freiburg, Karlsruhe, etc. Such a sense of threat could be prevented by finding a mutual solution to the question of the "demilitarized" zone.

Fifth question: Will the Führer tell the world, why he has chosen this particular path to attain his goal? Why did he not first present his suggestions to the public and then demand the remilitanzation of the Rhineland in return? I am certain that the entire world would have agreed enthusiastically.

Does he have any particular motive necessitating such a speedy action on his part?

Answer: I have already dealt with this topic at great length in my speech before the Reichstag. However, let me touch upon your remark that any solutions proposed by me, divorced from a military occupation of the Rhineland, would have assuredly been greeted with great enthusiasm. That is well possible. Yet this regrettably is not the crucial point. It was I, for instance, who proposed the 300,000-man army. I still think that was a most reasonable proposal. It certainly was a concrete proposal and it would greatly have contributed to a lessening of tensions in Europe. No doubt, many people welcomed it. Indeed, the French and British Governments have even adopted this proposal.

Nonetheless, it was rejected. Thus, for better or for worse I had to proceed as sole bearer of responsibility. After all, I sought to secure equal rights for Germany in questions of armament, thereby resolving one of the most burning issues in Europe today. No one can deny Germany's moral claim to these rights. And this time as well, the outcome would have been no different. It is well possible that if I had first made my proposal public, demanding the restitution of full sovereignty to the Reich in the demilitarized zone as well, it would have been welcomed and understood by the world public. However, based on my experiences in the past, I did not believe that we ever would have come together at the conference table. Yet if one party to an agreement moves against the spirit and letter of the contract, then it is only natural that the other party withdraw from its obligations as well. And that is precisely what I did! Moreover, if ever a French or British statesman encountered his people in similar distress as I found my own Volk, then I have no doubts that he would have proceeded in precisely the same manner, given the same circumstances. He will do so in the future as well, I am certain.

Rarely does the present realize the full import of an event of historic proportion. No doubt, posterity will see that it was morally more decent and appropriate to eliminate the cause of these insupportable tensions in order to finally arrive at a reasonable approach in that opening of doors we all desired. It was far better to proceed in this manner than to try to maintain such a position, a position which ran contrary to any considerations of common sense and reason.

Once the proposals of the German Reich Government have been accepted, it is my firm conviction that posterity will deem these proposals to have rendered a great service to Europe and to the cause of peace.

At the same time the interview was published, Hitler expressed his gratitude to those men who had taken the oath of loyalty:⁷⁷

Berlin, March 11, 1936

On the occasion of the speech before the Reichstag and of the return of German troops to their peacetime garrisons in the Rhineland on March 7, the Führer and Reich Chancellor received a great number of pledges of loyalty, wired avowals of gratitude and other avowals by German Volksgenossen

both here and abroad, in particularly great number from the cities and communities of the formerly demilitarized zone. To his regret, the Führer cannot possibly send individual replies to all the congratulations by the various party formations, clubs and associations, factories, schools and families. He wishes to express his heartfelt gratitude to all those who pledged themselves to him loyally in the course of these days and who thus expressed their support for him as well as their best wishes for his undertakings.

The military occupation of the Rhineland went smoothly, without provoking any foreign intervention. While the German generals had been skeptical at the beginning of the venture, Hitler had maintained a supreme confidence. Later, even in the course of the Second World War, Hitler repeatedly claimed:⁷⁸

The forty-eight hours subsequent to the occupation of the Rhineland have been the most exciting in all my life. Had the French back then marched into the Rhineland, we would have been forced to withdraw, greatly losing face, since our armed forces back then did not possess sufficient strength to mount even the most modest resistance.

Such additional statements by Hitler must not be taken at face value. Retrospectively, he often termed something the “most difficult decision” or the “most daring venture” of his life, in order to add color to his rhetoric, or simply as a spontaneous expression of his bombastic exuberance. Nonetheless, it is possible that he was indeed worried on the seventh and eighth of March. These worries, however, could not have been so grave as the fears of military intervention he had entertained in 1933 immediately after Germany withdrew from the League of Nations.

By 1936, Hitler had become convinced that he had witnessed sufficient signs of weakness in France and senility in England that he felt there was little risk in remilitarizing the Rhineland. He intended to eliminate even the remotest possibility of an intervention by the Western Powers through frequent Machiavellian phraseology and assurances of his peaceful intentions and with his Reichstag speech. Indeed, to Hitler the failure of the Western Powers to react energetically to the Rhineland occupation was a direct result of his own rhetorical efforts. However, in this assumption he made a fundamental error.

Although the occupation of the Rhineland was a glaring breach of both the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Pact, it was not sufficient cause for a *casus belli*. After all, the international legal principles of self-determination of a people and the guarantee of equal treatment under the law precluded any refutation or forceful response by the Western

Powers. The clauses in the Treaty of Versailles concerning the status of the Rhineland were highly questionable on the grounds of international law. The Western Powers were well aware of this fact. The early withdrawal of Western occupation forces and the creation of a demilitarized zone had demonstrated a reluctance to insist that no German troops be stationed in the Rhineland.⁷⁹

Already in the twenties, Marshal Foch had argued that “the guarantee [of demilitarization] is an illusion.” He claimed that withdrawing troops from the Rhineland amounted to abandoning the goal of demilitarization.⁸⁰ The most important things are the bridges across the Rhine; whoever controls these will prevail. Once we withdraw from the Rhineland, the bridges will be 150 kilometers away from us. Prussia stands only 50 kilometers from the crossings and thus will be the first there. Undoubtedly they will be the first to take the bridges, and that is precisely why I had demanded the military occupation of the Rhineland in the first place.” Time would prove the validity of Foch’s assessment.

Even though the Western Powers did not respond militarily to Hitler’s actions along the Rhine, they did not refrain because of weakness. Fundamentally, they were willing to agree to Hitler’s demands if these appeared to have any legal foundation; rather they had long given up the territory in their minds. The Führer’s rhetorical efforts, contrary to his fervent conviction, played no part in their calculations. They did not judge Hitler on the basis of his rhetoric but in accordance with his deeds. And in fact, without giving prior notice, he had committed a unilateral breach of an international treaty.

The extent to which Hitler’s argumentation failed to influence the Western Powers was evident in the London discussion of the remilitarization of the Rhineland in the session of the Council of the League of Nations.

Astonishingly, Hitler accepted the invitation to attend the meeting, and assigned Ribbentrop as his Ambassador Extraordinary to present the German case to the Council.⁸¹ Ribbentrop acted as Hitler’s mouthpiece, reciting the Führer’s instructions nearly verbatim. He merely reiterated the arguments Hitler had employed in his speech before the Reichstag.

The Council members patiently waited for hours for Ribbentrop to come to a close with his—or better Hitler’s—argumentation, without responding in any manner. Only the Soviet delegate Litvinov seemed tempted at times to retort to some of the allegations, but was silenced

by the remaining members of the Council. Then, without any debate, the Council unanimously condemned Germany's action and passed the following resolution which had been submitted in the name of Belgium and France:

The Council of the League of Nations declares that the German Government committed breach of Article 43 of the Treaty of Versailles on March 7, 1936, when it sent troops into the demilitarized zone, which is defined in Article 42 and the following of the above stated treaty and in the Locarno Pact.

All oratory efforts had been in vain. Germany's breach of contract was inscribed in the book of history by the unanimous judgment of an international forum. However, the breach did not provoke any military reaction. Hitler had not invaded foreign territory nor had a single shot been fired on foreign people—that was the crucial point. Nonetheless, Hitler's first use of force greatly damaged his image abroad.

3

On March 12, Hitler began his campaign for the upcoming Reichstag election. In the course of the campaign he gave speeches in a total of eleven German cities. In comparison to his intensive campaigning during 1932 and 1933, this was a modest effort. As mentioned before, Hitler had lost his taste for real mass rallies, since he sensed that popular enthusiasm for him had cooled markedly in the aftermath of the Röhm Purge, and in particular after the reintroduction of compulsory military service in 1935.

However, in the March 1936 campaign, he did not have to fear a lack of enthusiasm among his listeners. The remilitarization of the Rhineland had shocked the German public much less than the reintroduction of general conscription the previous year. The majority of the people were not even aware of the fact that certain regions in the Reich were not occupied by the German military. Most Germans had not been affected personally by Hitler's operation. The Rhineland's inhabitants, who had not seen any German troops since 1918, were partly overwhelmed by genuinely patriotic feelings; others were motivated by economic and personal considerations.

It would be superfluous to reproduce all of Hitler's March 1936 campaign speeches here.⁸² Mostly the speeches consisted of lengthy and tiring "party narratives," and endless repetitions of arguments which had already appeared in the Reichstag speech. Thus, only excerpts which contain new information are cited below. In one speech at the *Hochschulkampfbahn* (University Stadium) in Karlsruhe on March 12, Hitler explained his worldwide mission as a bearer of peace in the following terms:

I know no regime of the bourgeoisie, no regime of the workers, no regime of the city dwellers, no regime of trade or commerce. Nor do I know a regime of industry; I know only a regime of the German Volk! [—]

I have endeavored to bring to the German Volk internal peace. Today, after three years, I can say: the German Volk is internally the most content people in the world. It is my desire to resolve the great differences in the life of peoples as I have those within this country—from the vantage points of law, of justness, and hence of reason.

One might say, “that is not possible, that is fantastic, those are ideologies.” Well, I believe in these ideologies, and wonderful things have already been accomplished in this sector! I am not approaching the German Volk as an idle gabbler. I can say: these thoughts have guided me for three years, and they have guided me well.

When I took over the government three years ago, the German Volk was surrounded only by animosity in Europe. And the worst thing about it was that this mentality appeared to be based on so little reflection on every side; neither here nor elsewhere had the problems been thought over with sufficient sobriety. People were allowing themselves to be driven into hatred, envy, fear, and jealousy.

I have endeavored to introduce reason into Germany’s relations with its environment. I have endeavored to promote these relations on the basis of principles which have proven to be eternally just, principles of a shared sense of belonging to the human race and of working on behalf of the human community.

I have attempted to make clear to the world and the German Volk that Europe is a limited term; that no far-reaching shifts have taken place in this small Europe for centuries; that here in Europe we have one family of peoples; that the individual members of this family are each, however, tremendously consolidated. That they represent nations rich in traditions, looking back on a great past and a culture they call their own, and proudly place their hopes in the future. I have endeavored to make comprehensible to our Volk and, in addition, to the others as well, that every hate-filled conflict will reap only very short-lived, minor successes.

The European borders of the states may change, but their peoples remain stable! One can change the borders between states, but the borders between peoples have become virtually unalterable!

There are no empty spaces in Europe into which the masses in Europe could flood. There are no unconsolidated peoples in Europe which could easily be deprived of their essential character. But neither is there any necessity for this, and, therefore, it is senseless to attempt to divest a people of its individuality and force it to take on an alien one. I have endeavored, proceeding from this quite sober consideration, to improve Germany’s relations with its surroundings, and my efforts have not been without success.

Three years ago, when Germany stood in profound opposition to Poland, I succeeded in gradually lessening those tensions, and thanks to the profound understanding of another great leader and statesman,⁸³ the attempt of two peoples to slowly approach one another was successful.

From this rapprochement there gradually grew an understanding, and from this understanding the conviction of the necessity for living side by side in friendship, and from that in turn grew mutual consideration. I am of the

conviction that, after a certain time has passed, it will have become incomprehensible that two peoples could possibly have lived within the framework of an evolving, so-called “traditional archenemy relationship.” I have endeavored to bring about a normalization of this relationship between the two peoples, as far as concerns Germany. This has been successful for the benefit of both peoples. I have attempted to transfer this same idea from the East to the West. Here as well I endeavored as a German National Socialist—as the first, I believe—to show that further maintaining this so-called “doctrine of the hereditary enemy” (*Erbfeindschaftslehre*) must be and is unreasonable—because pointless—for both peoples. Granted—here, too, many will perhaps say that is but an ideal. Yet I believe in this ideal and believe that one day reason shall triumph here as well! In any case, I believe it will be necessary to do everything to help this reason be victorious.

My own policy of rapprochement is based on this, namely, on the idea that there can be either two partners with equal rights or none at all. Only this equality of rights can bring forth mutual respect, and only from this mutual respect can esteem for one another ensue, and only from this esteem for one another can mutual consideration finally grow.

Both peoples have drenched the battlefields countless times with the blood of their best men. The borders moved fifty, 100 kilometers back and forth from one side to the other. A final decision would never come about in this way; yet the two peoples would again and again lose their best blood while their economy suffered from the trouble and distrust, the fear and the hatred. I believe that calm deliberation must one day show these two peoples the path to an understanding. And that is what I am offering toward such an understanding, as spokesman for more than sixty-seven million people! Then again, there are many who say reason is not what matters; there are other imponderabilities to be taken into consideration. I believe that nothing of value exists which cannot ultimately be grasped by reason as well.

I object that, in statesmanship, certain views are found to be correct which cannot be anchored in reason. Sometimes I am told: but that has never been the case before, and statesmanship has proven that it is not possible on the long term. No, statesmanship teaches us the opposite, that past policies have not led to long-range success, and thus I reject this type of statesmanship.

Hitler then declared that his ambition was not to attain any military triumphs. Rather he wished to be remembered by the Volk as a man of peace. Nearly every sentence began with the tell-tale word “I”.

I am told that, if you are a German nationalist, you must want military triumphs. I can only say that my ambition is directed toward completely different triumphs. I am a German nationalist and will represent my Volk with all the zealotry of a soldier in that great army of the past. It is my ambition to establish a memorial to myself within the German Volk. But I am also aware that it would be better to erect this memorial in peacetime rather than in times of war. My ambition is aimed at creating the best possible institutions for training our Volk. I want that we in Germany have the greatest stadiums; that

our road network is expanded; that our culture becomes elevated and refined; I want our cities to become beautiful; I want to put Germany at the top in every field of human cultural life and cultural aspiration. That is my ambition!

I want the working capacity of my Volk not to lie fallow, but to be utilized to give us new values. I want to convert this working capacity into beauty for our Volk, into life and joy for our Volk. I want to dedicate my efforts toward ensuring that this Volk can lead its life as free of cares as possible. I shall dedicate my efforts toward ensuring that its life-goods are distributed as rationally as possible. However, I do not want anyone else to interfere here and think he can take anything away from us!

I live only for my Volk, and the National Socialist Movement thinks only of this Volk.

I live only for the thought of the future of this Volk seeing before me these countless millions of people who work so hard and have so little to live on, who often have to struggle with so many cares, and who are so seldom favored by fortune. The National Socialist Movement wants only to help these people; it wants to try to make their life easier, to organize it more pleasantly. Toward this purpose, it will place all the capacities of its work, its genius, and its organizational talent at the service of maintaining this life.

Thus I ask of you, go to the polls this coming election day. Do your duty and do not forget: Germany is not borne by a single man, but by the entire German Volk. And one man can only be the spokesman for this Volk as long as this Volk stands behind this man—man for man and woman for woman. It is not for myself that I ask you to do your duty on this March 29, but for our Volk and its future.

Whereas we shall perish, Germany will survive! We may die, but Germany must live, now and for all time to come!

At the exhibition halls in Munich on March 14, Hitler delivered another campaign speech, in which he stated:

Neither threats nor warnings will prevent me from going my way. I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker. My destination is the peace rooted in the equal rights of the nations. We are one of Europe's major powers and wish to be respected as a major power.

No warning, even if intended to be beneficial, did any good with Hitler, in particular if it concerned any of his preconceived notions in matters of foreign policy, that he had cherished ever since 1919. Indeed he proceeded with "the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker" as he himself phrased it. His secure steps were numbered, however, and it was merely a question of time that he would finally lose his balance and fall.

Hitler's Munich speech drew to a close and he appealed to the audience:

The German Volk shall now judge. Three years ago I was called upon, borne up by the trust of the German Volk,⁸⁴ and summoned by the old Field Marshal.

Now I have worked for three years, together with my men, my companions and comrades in arms. And now the German Volk shall judge whether or not I have been industrious these three years, whether I have worked these three years, or not worked.

It shall judge whether Germany has become weaker in these three years or stronger; it shall judge whether Germany has become poorer or richer; it shall judge whether the German nation has declined in these three years or whether it has undergone a resurrection—this is what the German Volk shall now judge!

It shall further judge whether I have represented its interests to the world, whether I have represented them courageously and bravely or whether I have betrayed them. It shall ultimately judge whether it possesses the same sense of honor regarding its life and its existence as I do.

I am expecting this judgment. And I know it will become the greatest historic authorization I have. And then I will be able to stride forth before the world and say, "It is not I who am speaking thus, but the German Volk that has spoken!"

On March 16, Hitler consecrated the so-called *Truppenfahnen*,⁸⁵ flags with new insignias for the various divisions, and addressed the ordinance reproduced below to the Wehrmacht:⁸⁶

Today, on the first anniversary of the rebirth of the German Wehrmacht, I hereby present to the Wehrmacht its *Truppenfahnen*.

The glorious career of the old Wehrmacht was put to an end by the events of 1918. Yet while tenacious soldierly spirit tested throughout the centuries can perhaps be suppressed in times of national misfortune, it can never be defeated. May the new banners serve as a symbol of this. Further details will be handled by the Reich Minister of War.

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

That evening Hitler spoke at another campaign rally in Frankfurt am Main (Festhalle). Here again, he came to speak of the introduction of the swastika as the national flag of Germany and maintained:

I have abolished these sixteen or seventeen flags of the Länder and placed a single flag in their stead with the aim of giving Germany what all nations of the world call their own.

Actually the matter had nothing to do with the removal of Länder flags! Rather, the issue centered on the black-white-red flag of the German Empire that had been banned because it reflected reactionary sentiments. Hitler continued to argue:

All of the rules of law are subject to the natural right to live and the freedom of that right to live God-given to man. The peoples are more eternal than bad treaties can be. The peoples live longer than unreasonable regulations or extortionate measures can possibly survive.

Once and for all a line must be drawn between that past, the present and the future. [—]

I would be prepared at any time to reach a settlement with the French Government. We call upon the two peoples. I will submit to the German Volk the question:

“German Volk, do you want the hatchet to finally be buried between ourselves and France, and peace and understanding to be brought about? If this is what you want, say yes.”⁸⁷ And then one should address this same question to the French people on the other side. And there is no doubt in my mind that it equally desires understanding, and it equally desires reconciliation. I will then further ask the German Volk, “Do you want us to oppress the French people or accord it lesser rights?” And it will reply, “No, that is not what we want!”

Then they should pose the same question to the population over there, whether it wants the German Volk to have fewer rights in its own four walls than any other people. And it is my conviction that the French people will say, “No, that is not what we want!”

I am expecting your decision, and I know it will confirm that I am right! I will accept your decision as the voice of the Volk, which is the voice of God. Enter into this 29th of March with the deep-felt, sacred conviction that you are to submit an historic ballot for which each and every one of us will one day be examined and judged. I have now done my duty for three-and-a-half years. German Volk, now is the time for you to do yours!

Similar ideas would also be present in Hitler’s March 18 campaign speech in Königsberg.

The following day, the aforementioned judgment on Germany by the Council of the League of Nations, was made public. One can only imagine Hitler’s anger at this defeat. London had listened to his tirades, ignored them, and turned its attention back to the issues of the day. Nobody had bothered to respond to Hitler’s sophistic arguments. Hitler was particularly infuriated by Eden—British Foreign Secretary since December 1935—and his advice to Ribbentrop that Germany would do well to make at least a symbolic gesture, as, for example, to refrain from fortifying the military installations in the Rhineland.

However, such a fortification was part of Hitler’s grand design. Reinforced by a speedily assembled line of fortifications, he believed that his western flank could not be penetrated, thus allowing him to proceed with his conquest of the East. Not surprisingly, Hitler’s speeches from March 20 through March 28 included a series of

defamations of British statesmen. Through an international committee, the British had dared to condemn Germany for breach of contract before the entire world. Now they had the impudence to demand token gestures and symbolic actions of Hitler. Contracts, articles, gestures, and symbolic actions—what were these in comparison to the “generous offers of peace” and the “plans of a new order for Europe” that the Führer envisioned?

On March 20, Hitler declared in Hamburg (Hanseatenhalle):

It is a pity that the statesmen—and population—of the rest of the world cannot catch a glimpse of modern Germany. They would, I believe, then be cured of their misconception that this Volk is languishing under a dictatorship that oppresses it, and of their misconception that one can do with this Volk what one wishes! [—]

The German Volk will cast its vote on March 29 not for my regime—I need no votes for that [!]. However, I do need the German Volk in a battle I am waging for its own sake only, in a battle for equal German rights, in a battle against the presumptuousness of others who are once again treating the German Volk as inferior. I need the German nation in order to proclaim with it to the whole world the vow that, come what may, we will not retreat an inch from our claims to equality of rights. Not because we desire a disruption of European order, but because it is our conviction that a long-term order in Europe is only conceivable given peoples with equal rights. The view that it is possible to base European order on the defamation of a population of sixty-seven million for any length of time is ahistoric, insane and a folly. [—]

My only aim is that this German Volk grows to become an equal member of the European community. I feel sorry for the statesmen who believe that such participation is best prefaced by a new defamation of the German nation. Were they to look beyond the immediate moment, beyond the supposed success of days, weeks or months, they would be frightened by the realization of the inevitable consequences of such ahistoric action. [—]

I, on the other hand, must profess: never was the Party as attached to me and never was this unity between Führer and Movement stronger than when the opponents believed they had already conquered us or were capable of wrestling us down! We have always achieved the greatest determination in the gravest crisis.

I know that the German Volk will stand as one, united as never before, come what may. Führer and Volk have but one desire: to live in peace and friendship with the other peoples; yet they also have but one resolve: by no means to abandon the claim to equality of rights.

Even if the rest of the world has not yet lost the spirit of Versailles, the German Volk has dismissed it, once and for all!

The problem with which we are faced is not the revision of the letter of the Treaty, but the revision of an outlook evidenced in the fact that now, seventeen years after the end of the War, the belief persists that it is possible to deny the German Volk its equality of rights.

This problem must be solved, and there is only one way to do it: either it is solved decently, as is our goal, and we are thus enabled to cooperate with the rest of Europe, or Germany will go its own way alone—but under no circumstances will it ever again betray its rights or its honor!

This resolve is a threat to no one. On the contrary! It takes an impossible burden off the world! It was on the basis of this resolve that our generous offer was made, an offer from which we hope—still hope—that it can contribute to giving Europe a long-awaited peace. We stand by this offer. The world asks, “Yes, but will they adhere to it?” The world has no business whatsoever talking about complying with treaties. We could draw up a balance showing how treaties have been complied with since 1918. The German Volk will allow no one to deny it its honor. We, for our part, do not take the liberty of censoring other peoples.

I have scheduled this election for all to see that I am not the only one with these concepts of honor; they are cherished by the entire nation! Let it be seen that I am not making this offer of peace on my own, but on behalf of these sixty-seven million; and further that I am not the only one who rejects insulting demands,⁸⁸ but that the entire German Volk will not stand for such treatment! I also want this vote to show the world that the bayonet does not tyrannize the Volk in Germany, but that here the government is supported by the trust of the entire population.

I myself come from out of the Volk. In fifteen years I have worked my way up out of this Volk with my Movement. I was not appointed by anyone to stand above this Volk.

It is from the Volk I have evolved, it is within the Volk I have remained, and it is to the Volk I shall return!⁸⁹ I will stake my ambition on the fact that there is no statesman I know in this world who has more right than I to say he is a representative of his Volk!

And if someone says, “But we know that anyway! Why all the excitement and the trouble, the rallies, and then voting all over again?”—My dear friend! Do you think that all this does not mean work and trouble for me? In my opinion, if I have been working for two or three years, you can go to the polls once, too! That is why you are here today, together with hundreds of thousands of fellow inhabitants of this Hanseatic city. That is why thousands of my leaders in the Movement have been visiting the German Gaus in recent weeks.

The aim is to document the indissoluble bond joining the Movement of the regime, the Party, and the German Volk to its leadership!

Hence today, my German Volk, I call upon you: stand behind me with your faith! Be the source of my power and my faith. Do not forget: he who does not abandon his principles in this world will not be abandoned by the Almighty either! The Almighty will always help those who help themselves; He will always show them the way to their rights, their freedom and thus to their future. And this is the reason why you, German Volk, are going to the polls on March 29.

I have taught you to have faith, now give me your faith!

Two days later, Hitler proclaimed in Breslau (Jahrhunderthalle):

We—and all other peoples—have the feeling we are at the turning point of an age. New concepts, new ideas and new realities are in the air. Not only we, the vanquished of yore, but the victors, too, are of the inner conviction that something was awry, that reason in particular seemed to have deserted mankind, that in place of reason had come the insanity of hatred, jealousy, and envy, and this in turn had evoked feelings of fear and apprehension.

The peoples are sensing it everywhere: a new order must come, above all on this continent, on which the peoples are pressed so closely together. The peoples must find a new way to deal with each other. A new construction must be built which allows all of them to live, which is based upon the conviction that the diverse peoples are realities in a historical sense; while one can perhaps wish they did not exist, they cannot be done away with. The new order to be established must, however, be headed by the words, "Reason and Logic, Understanding, and Mutual Consideration"!

Those who believe that the word "Versailles" might stand at the entrance to this new order are mistaken. That would not be the cornerstone of a new order, but its gravestone. Germany is striving for this new order. Not for an order which takes anything away from the other peoples, but for one which establishes equal rights as the basis for gladly assuming equal obligations. Today the German Volk lives these views, it lives them to such an extent that it is impossible to remove them from the world of its ideas. [—]

The claim that this restoration of the Reich's sovereignty over its own Reich territory is intolerable for others is intolerable for us! What kind of an order is that, what kind of understanding between nations, if it is possible to threaten another people only because it claims sovereignty over its own territory? We will not capitulate before such views! Let the world take note of that!

It is of no consequence to us what other peoples do within their borders; in fact, we hold just that to be a prerequisite for the formation of a true order of the peoples, a true community of nations. We believe that one of the most basic principles for a true understanding between the peoples is that the people of each nation allow the people of another nation their space to live as they wish to live.

Germany makes no demands upon other peoples. But it is also not willing to recognize claims and demands of other statesmen pertaining to the inner organization of the Reich and its sovereign rights! And these men are mistaken

If they believe that is only the opinion of a man named Adolf Hitler! No! That is the opinion of a population of sixty-seven million!

We do not want gestures, we want twenty-five years of peace for Europe! And the peoples? They, too, do not want statesmen to demand gestures and make only gestures to one another; they want them to make peace and keep the peace!

Other statesmen can ask their people for once, too, whether they share this view. Whether they want Europe to be entangled in a score of military alliances. Whether they want one people or another to be deprived of part

of their sovereign rights—or fully denied them—on their own territory. Whether they want fresh bitterness and fresh hate to ensue, or whether they do not wish that this insane and foolish war of all against all might finally be put to an end!

In any case, I have asked this question. And directed it to the one body which is decisive for me and which alone has the power to pass judgment for or against me. This body is the German Volk! I have turned to the nation and presented to it this question: do you share my view?

I have surrendered myself to the judgment of the German Volk, and not only in respect to this question. It shall testify whether it believes that my co-fighters and I have done our duty. Whether it believes that we—to the extent to which weak, mortal man [!] is capable—have turned what we once promised into reality.

In his March 24 campaign speech in Berlin (Deutschlandhalle), Hitler once again expressed his displeasure with the British members of parliament and British statesmen in general:

I am not leading the life of a parliamentarian working in the dark; I am standing openly before the entire Volk; it can follow my path and my every action and come to its own conclusions.

He had felt compelled to eliminate the forty-seven political parties⁹⁰ which he claimed had destroyed Germany, because:

At that time [1933] action was called for! There could only be *one* leadership, *one* will, and *one* resolve. Not forty-seven deeds, but *one* deed. And he who justly assesses these three years will not be able to deny that events of import in terms of world history have been accomplished within this short time:

Germany has not only become united, but has also become stronger in every area of its life. Today it is a different Volk from four or five, or even ten years ago.

Today this Volk has a different spirit. It is guided by a different will and borne up by a different faith!

The world should know that this ostensible Germany of old no longer exists today! They should not be surprised that it no longer exists. In reality, it never existed! The rest of the world was only led to believe that it did!

The German Volk has remained honest and pure all those years, even though its former representatives dragged it through the mud! [—]

Let the rest of the world cling to the letter, I cling to an eternal moral! Let them cite sections to me, I pledge myself to the eternal right of a Volk to live! To equal rights and to equal obligations as well.

Let the others try to spell confessions of guilt from those letters and sections; I am forced, as representative of the German Volk, to stand up for the nation's right to live, for its honor, for its freedom, and for its vital interests.

He who would believe he might refuse to grant us honor and equality of rights should not talk about peace! He does not believe in peace and does

not want peace. He wants to sow discord among the peoples, perhaps in order to make political deals where this discord thrives. [—]

For three years now I have been fighting for these principles of German equality of rights. We do not want to deprive others of anything, but neither will we allow Germany to be deprived of anything! We do not want to offend anyone else's honor, but neither will we allow German honor to be treated lightly, as is being done in the spirit of Versailles. [—]

We do not want to rob other peoples of their peace and their freedom. But we also want to have our own freedom and our peace! [—]

When they say, "Why does that have to be now, in these three years—of course those are very pretty ideals, without a doubt, but why does it have to be now of all times?" my answer is: because I am living *now*, that's why it has to be *now*.

Each generation has a duty to make up for what has been done wrong through its actions and in its time. Our generation has fallen, and our generation must rise up once again! [—]

The peoples are yearning for peace, indeed—but for a peace that allows them to live side by side with equal rights. I do not believe that today any Volk seriously wants a neighboring people to be oppressed. I do not believe that *any* Volk wants a neighboring people to be humiliated, to be subjected to unreasonable demands⁹¹ which would make any decent man grow crimson with shame. I do not believe that!

I would like to thank Providence and the Almighty for choosing me of all people to be allowed to wage this battle for Germany. It is the most wonderful battle and the most splendid task which can be assigned to mortal man: to stand up for a Volk which lies prone, which is being insulted, whose honor people think they can trample upon. [—]

When today other statesmen place unreasonable demands upon us which they would probably reject with great indignation when applied to their own people, they should not be surprised if the same rejection echoes back to them from Germany today.

My actions are those the entire Volk wants! Not *one person* is standing up in Germany; a *Volk* is rising!

We have hence submitted a clear program to the world, and next Tuesday" I will repeat this program in even clearer and more urgent terms. I wish to show the world what is possible, what we are prepared to do—just as I have told it today what is impossible and what we will never do.

I am not the Führer of the German Volk in order to make gestures. I have been appointed by the German Volk to simply represent its interests. That is my intention.

If there is talk of a "symbolic act" we are to perform—I have already performed it. I have announced to the world a program for international peace for a quarter of a century. I have pledged my word and the word of the nation to it.

I now call upon Germany to show the rest of the world symbolically on March 29 that this gesture reflects its will. And I would like—I may repeat—to invite other statesmen to perform this same symbolic act!

Similar talks were given by Hitler on his next two speaking engagements in Ludwigshafen and Leipzig. On March 25, Hitler issued an ordinance for the constitution of the fighter group Horst Wessel.⁹³

Two days later, Hitler opened his campaign speech in Essen (Krupp locomotive construction plant) with a lengthy and detailed description of his three years in government and remarked:

There has been nothing but talk for fifteen years, so someone has to come and finally take action! And I have taken action!

He then proclaimed himself to be the only true representative of the Volk and declared that now the Volk had become his “instrument.”

For fourteen years I worked on this instrument. When I came to power, I was as strong as my instrument was. And since then I have only been as strong as my Volk is. For that is the source of all my strength.

I do not delude myself that a single person can work miracles on this earth. The miracle lies in the power of a Volk itself, given in the plans of God and Nature. I wish to create this power! I want to mobilize the best efforts and the highest values of this Volk so that this Volk will stand firm on its own and thus make me strong again. The power of this Volk is my power, and its strength is my strength! I do not serve any employer or employee or class; I belong exclusively to the German Volk.

Whatever I have undertaken I have always done with the conviction: it must be done for our Volk! [—] Whenever I stand up for the German peasant, it is for the sake of the Volk. I have neither ancestral estate nor manor. Yet I stand up for my German peasant because I know with him lies the foundation of German power! Without him Germany would go to ruin.

I do not stand up for arming the German Volk because I am a shareholder. I believe I am the only statesman in the world who does not have a bank account. I hold no stock, I have no shares in any companies. I do not draw any dividends.

What I want is for my Volk to be strong and thus be able to survive in this world. That is my will!

Such rhetoric did not fail to impress the Krupp workers. Hitler then turned to the remilitarization of the Rhineland, emphasizing that German troops had not invaded any foreign territory.

I have not set foot on foreign territory!

I have not robbed any nation of anything! I have not broken into a house not my own! I have not stolen anything from anyone! No one has the right to play the self-appointed judge in a matter which concerns only my German Volk. In a German matter, my Volk alone is my judge, not an international council!

Because we wish to believe in the sacredness of treaties, we would like to lay the necessary foundation.

Subsequently, Hitler challenged all statesmen to consult their own people on the issue and declared:

It is my conviction that they will find but one answer everywhere: Do not talk of gestures, nor of symbolic acts, but make and keep the peace! That is the desire of the peoples.

Hitler concluded:

German Volk! Look at the greatness and the scope of the last three years! Be just! Is there any reason for you—assuming you are a decent German—to be ashamed of these past three years before the German Volk, before history, or before posterity? Or could it be that, in the final assessment, you have a reason to be proud once more?

Is it not possible for you to say once more, Good Lord, no matter what might have happened here or there,⁹⁴ on the whole we have once again become a marvelous Volk! We have once again become such a decent Volk!

We have once again become such a hard-working and energetic Volk. We are once again capable of accomplishing anything in Germany! What great tasks we have once more! In these three years we have proven that we are a Volk with nothing to be ashamed of before the other peoples.

I do not subordinate myself to the world, for it cannot pass judgment on me! Only to you, German Volk, do I subordinate myself! Pass judgment on me! Pronounce whether you hold my work to be right, whether you believe that I have worked hard, that I have taken your side throughout these years, that I have decently devoted my time to the service of this Volk.

On March 28, Hitler arrived in Cologne and had himself celebrated as the “liberator of the Rhineland”⁹⁴ at an official reception in the Giirzenich banquet hall. He graciously received the laudation of various “liberated” districts and declared:⁹⁵

That Providence has chosen me to perform this act [restoring German military sovereignty in the Rhineland] is something I feel is the greatest blessing of my life.

At a following mass rally in the exhibition halls, Hitler gave his final speech of the campaign.⁹⁶ It was a mixture of sentimental reflections, holy oaths, and religious-mystical incantations. Of course, there were also sarcastic remarks at the expense of the British statesmen who had incensed him by demanding gestures and symbolic deeds. The “party narrative” began with a sentimental description of November 1918:

It seemed as though the Lord had withdrawn his grace from our Volk. Millions no longer saw any way out. I, too, belonged to those who were in despair back then: a half-blinded soldier in a sick-bay—tormented too by that anxious concern for the German future, shaken by the magnitude of this

misfortune which had come upon us, despairing at our own weaknesses, our own mistakes, and our own failures that had allowed us to sink so low ... [etc., etc.]

Turning his attention to more current matters, Hitler appealed to his audience:

When I ask you in this hour to raise your gaze to the grave problems, I do not want to begin enumerating to you all the things we have created and accomplished these past three years. I would like to approach all that has happened from a higher vantage point. I would like to equate what has happened with all the great and similar events in our Volk in history. For in these three years we have done what was often done before us within the German Volk—perhaps not in such a tremendous massing of powers, of numbers; not as concentrated in terms of time.

That disintegration threatened to destroy us. I know I was forced to hurt innumerable national men in Germany. I can assure you that it had to be in order to prevent our Volk from perishing in a fratricidal war.

Someone had to come to place a great unity above this disintegration. I dared to do it;⁹⁷ in my life I have come to know so many classes of the German Volk, in my own hard youth in the time I took part in the Great War as a soldier, and later, too; I came to know the German being, and I came to have that unshakeable faith in this German being. It was then I began to have faith in my Volk.

Now Hitler went on a rampage against those who did not agree with the “methods” he employed and proclaimed:

But there is one method, my dear critics, which you cannot tell us is not right: we have once more gained a Volk which is the most tremendous thing we have accomplished in these years!

For three weeks I have been standing in German parts as in the years of struggle. Hundreds of thousands of people flow by me. And, believe me, God has forsaken whoever does not feel his heart tug at the sight: what a great Volk we have once more become! Back then the last regiments marched over these [Rhine] bridges; today a Volk has returned!

The German being has arisen from the ranks of workers, peasants and the bourgeoisie; from young and old, from every class, every religion, and from all over the country. A new community has come to stay in our Volk. The things it can only begin in the space of three years, it will complete in decades and centuries. Having found this unity in our Volk that allows us all to be so happy and proud, we must desire a similar order of reason penetrating far beyond our own Volk, for other peoples among themselves, in their relations with one another. We must desire that there, too, this senseless fight of all against all will come to an end, that the old age of senile concepts⁹⁸ will finally be overcome by a new youth which, with faithful heart, has a will to solve these problems using reason not only within their own nations, but beyond them as well.

A renewed attack on Eden followed. It was directed at the Anglo-Saxon powers who had the audacity to demand “gestures” of him.

We are envisioning a legal order of national European states with equal rights. When I say “legal order,” I am addressing myself specifically to those countries who always talk about law and legal precepts but renounce equality before the law and refuse to take it seriously. The German Volk has come a long, long way. During these past years, it has truly undergone an inner reformation. Much of the external ado (*Tantam*), much of the external prattle has been removed from our Volk. It barely knows these phrases of which politics were made in former times. It has become more sober, because it has become more ideal. There are grave problems today. Perhaps that is why others do not understand us—but often we cannot understand them here anymore, either.

What can we say when we hear over and over again today in the world of politicians that gestures have to be made, symbolic acts need to be performed? That has become so alien to our Volk, to think that today a German could still say: We want to reach an understanding with the French people—but only if the French people bows down before us three times and then makes such and such a gesture and such and such a symbolic act. That is something we no longer understand, that is inconceivable to us.

We offer other peoples our hand. It is the hand in which a people of sixty-seven million is united. Nowhere in the world today is there a greater guarantee for the security of such a treaty than if it is signed by this hand. Here one Volk is united, forming a single will, brought together in a single community. This environment responds only with phrases or gestures or remarks and demands. What a discrepancy between what is offered, between the magnitude of what is given and the smallness of the recipient.

But if this other world refuses to understand our giving, it will have to understand our persistence, i.e. as regards these obligations we have all assumed to set free Germany’s honor and Germany’s equal rights under all circumstances!

The fact that we want peace is something I need not confirm over and over again. I do not believe that any other man in this world has talked about and struggled and fought for peace more than I have. And it is understandable that, when I talk about peace this way and am so devoted to it, I do so, my dear German Volk, because I came to know war in a different place than so many of my international political antagonists. I do not mean to talk at all of those for whom the war was a useful event. I am only talking about those who saw it roll by beneath them from some higher position, i.e. from a higher perspective. I was not seeing it from that angle. I was a musketeer and experienced war with its horror and its terror. And I believe more people have learned to see war with my eyes than with the eyes of these political antagonists. That is the key to understanding my attitude. I stand up for the rights and the freedom of my Volk. I want peace. I offer it personally to the others, and I demand of you, my Volk, that you become united with me to form an inseparable community.

For three years I have worked for this honor of my Volk, I have labored and fretted for its freedom and its equal rights. For three years I have trembled for its peace. Today I must produce to the world the proof that this concern and this anxiety and this hope—and this resolve as well—are not those of a single man, but are the virtue and vow of an entire Volk.

My German Volksgenossen, we have a great deal to rectify before our own history and before our eternal Lord. Providence had withdrawn its protection from us. Our Volk had fallen, plunging to a depth to which a Volk has rarely fallen before. In this difficult plight we have once again learned how to pray; we have learned to respect our Lord; we have regained our faith in the virtues of a Volk, and have endeavored to be better again. Hence a new community evolved.

Today's Volk can no longer be compared with the Volk which lies behind us. It has become more decent, better. And we feel that the Lord is now slowly beginning to show us His mercy once again.

And in this hour, let us fall down upon our knees and beg the Almighty to grant us the strength to prevail in the struggle for freedom and the future and the honor and the peace of our Volk, so help us God!

On March 29, the Reichstag election which Hitler had decreed was conducted. Even before the election, the Reichstag was a purely National Socialist body. It had been begun its sessions on November 12, 1933, and according to the Weimar Constitution could have remained in office until 1937. Nonetheless, Hitler dissolved it and he did so for two reasons.

First, had the Reichstag's term run its full course to its expiry in 1937, it would surely have signaled the end of the near dictatorial powers Hitler had obtained through the Enabling Act. By 1937, the Volk would have had time to reassess and judge Hitler as he himself had challenged—after having accorded him “four years’ time.” Nevertheless, in all likelihood the Volk again would have voted for Hitler in 1937, but, as stated earlier, Hitler was extremely distrustful and preferred to avoid any unnecessary risks where questions of power were concerned. Therefore Hitler decided to hold the new election to the Reichstag at an earlier date.

The second reason was that the Saar had not participated in the previous election. Though ingenious, Hitler's method of assigning the Saarland seats in the Reichstag did not appeal to many Germans. He divided the total of votes cast for Germany in the plebiscite of January 13, 1935, by 60,000.⁹⁹ According to Hitler's method, this resulted in the allotment of eight new seats to National Socialist deputies in the Reichstag. Incidentally, the unpopularity of this procedure apparently taught Hitler a lesson: following the annexation of the Sudeten Ger-

man territories in 1938, he immediately conducted a normal Reichstag election there. On the other hand, the procedure he had employed in the Saarland could not be applied to the Sudetenland simply because no plebiscite was held there.

Both in his Reichstag speech of March 7 and in the eleven campaign speeches, Hitler declared that he would submit himself to the judgment of his Volk on March 29. This declaration should not be construed to mean that Hitler intended to allow each citizen to freely judge his policies with either “yes” or “no.” Rather, he intended a simple result, for everyone to vote “yes,” an intention which was clearly expressed in his March 7 ordinance to dissolve the Reichstag.¹⁰⁰ Here he quite openly stated that the occasion was to afford all Germans the chance to “formally acclaim his policy.”

The last official election had been the plebiscite on the issue of Hitler’s assumption of office as Reich President on August 19, 1934. In the election, Hitler secured “only” 90 percent of the vote, comparatively “far less” than the 95 percent he had received in the plebiscite and the Reichstag elections of November 12, 1933. Ever since the August 1934 election, Hitler had often expressed dissatisfaction with the mere 90 percent in favor and the excessive 10 percent against. He considered the results a personal affront and a great injustice done to him by the Volk.

Hitler had no intention of going through such an immense disappointment again. His propaganda chief Goebbels correctly assessed the Führer’s thoughts and acted accordingly. He instructed all electoral committees to not only take down the usual “yeas” as positive results, but to include all empty or crossed-out slips in the count for Hitler as well. Unless “no” was clearly written on the election slip, the vote would be interpreted as “yes.” Even if “no” was marked, it was highly questionable whether the head of the electoral committee actually counted it as such.

The manipulation of the votes cast led to grotesque results in some cases, particularly in smaller towns. Even though entire families might have stood against Hitler, the electoral committee claimed a 100 percent victory for the Führer.

When the results from all over the Reich had come in, the official returns were as follows: of the 45.4 million eligible voters, 44.9 million had cast their vote, whereof 44.4 million had voted “yes,” which corresponded to 99 percent of the electorate. Another half a million votes were cited as invalid.

Finally, Hitler was content, particularly with the results in the Saarpfalz,¹⁰¹ where the polls claimed that he had achieved the most stunning result of 99.9 (!) percent for the Führer—which must have sounded preposterous even then. On March 30, Hitler sent the following telegram to Josef Bürckel:¹⁰²

On your birthday, I send heartfelt congratulations. I am deeply impressed by the Saarpfalz' first place results in the election, my dear merited Gauleiter.
Adolf Hitler

A day later, Hitler addressed the Reich Cabinet, detailing the political situation and referring to the election results as “an overwhelming show of support by the Volk for the political leadership of party and state.”¹⁰³

4

On April 1, Hitler delegated Ambassador Extraordinary Ribbentrop to fly to London once again to consult with Foreign Secretary Eden and to present him with the new German *Friedensplan* which Hitler had earlier promised. Hitler had spent so much time preparing this “generous” proposal that he worked until the last minute, forcing Schmidt to translate the document during the flight to London.¹⁰⁴

Hitler’s new proposal was about three times as long as the memorandum of March 7. It began with a refutation of the March 19 declaration of the Locarno Pact signatory powers and launched into an endless flood of details, minutely listing all the steps Hitler was willing to undertake solely to “preserve the peace in Europe.” He proclaimed that he would refrain from reinforcing the troops in the Rhineland within the next four months and that he would participate in various committee meetings addressing military matters. In addition, he was willing to discuss plans for a twenty-five-year peace; to emphasize peace in the curricula for the youth; to conduct plebiscites in Germany; to call for conferences; and finally, to submit legal concerns to the jurisdiction of an international court of law. Moreover, he was willing to ban the use of gas, poison and incendiary bombs and would consider outlawing the bombing of unfortified towns that lay outside of the reach of medium-sized heavy artillery in combat zones. Furthermore, he was ready to ban the construction of heavy tanks and artillery, etc.

However, Hitler made no mention of the request he had received to submit to the International Court of Justice in The Hague the issue of whether the Franco-Russian agreement violated the Locarno Pact. Of course, Hitler had no intention of performing the token gestures the British had demanded of him. He was not going to refrain from fortifying the Rhineland. Instead of responding to the question, he

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substituted for it a series of vague suggestions on matters that were not even up for discussion. This strategy had served him well in his domestic maneuvers with the reactionary ‘senile’ men of the German National People’s Party, the Stahlhelm, and the aristocracy.

The British Foreign Secretary accepted Hitler’s voluminous March 31 note on April 1 and promised to read it through thoroughly. That was where the matter ended for the time.

On April 10, the German Ambassador in London, Leopold von Hoesch, died at the age of fifty-four. Hitler sent his condolences in a telegram to the sister of the deceased.¹⁰⁵ On April 20, Hitler celebrated his birthday in Berlin with military pomp.¹⁰⁶ At 8:00 a.m., the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* and its commander Sepp Dietrich sang him a birthday song. At 8:45 a.m., an SS battalion paraded past the Chancellery. At 10:00 a.m., the highest-ranking generals came there to congratulate the Führer. Hitler made the best use of the occasion by giving a short speech in which he appointed Blomberg Field Marshal,¹⁰⁷ Göring and Fritsch Colonel Generals and Raeder Admiral General.¹⁰⁸ Turning to von Blomberg, Hitler stated:

Herr Generaloberst!

Today I look back with pride and joy upon the year now lying behind me. I look forward with unshakeable trust in the strength and hence the future of our Volk.

Its miraculous resurrection fills me with the deepest gratitude to all those whose loyal assistance has enabled me to successfully lead the nation. My hope in the German future lies rooted in a knowledge of the immortal values of our Volk.

I am thereby building upon that organizational structuring of these values which, in my opinion, constitute the sole guarantors for the consummation of this hope: upon the National Socialist Party as the shaper and supporter of the new political will, and upon the Wehrmacht as shaper and supporter of military strength.

At this moment when you, dear sir and the heads of the three divisions of the Wehrmacht, are conveying the congratulations of the German Army to me, I feel driven to express to you and hence to the entire German Wehrmacht sincere thanks for the tremendous achievement of re-erecting the German Army and the German Navy and reestablishing the German Luftwaffe.

My sense of gratitude is all the stronger for my belief that this newly-formed strength of the nation will be best able to put us in a position to preserve for our Volk—and perhaps beyond it to others as well—that very peace upon which so much happiness and welfare depend.

By today promoting you, General von Blomberg, to the rank of Field Marshal; you, General Göring and General von Fritsch, to Colonel Generals; and you, Admiral Raeder, to Admiral General, I am bestowing an honor upon

the entire German Wehrmacht, upon every single officer and every single soldier.

I may once more express my thanks to you, gentlemen, for your loyal assistance in re-erecting the new German Reich by rebuilding the German Wehrmacht.

At 11:00 a.m., Hitler inspected a parade of the army troops in the Lustgarten. The commanding general of the Third Army Corps, Lieutenant General von Witzleben,¹⁰⁹ reported to Hitler the presence of: 489 officers, 13,932 enlisted men, 977 horses, and 1,573 military vehicles. At noon, Hitler reviewed the troops in the Berlin Tiergarten.

On his birthday, Hitler received and answered numerous telegrams. The order in which these exchanges with foreign dignitaries was published revealed the relative importance Hitler placed on them: King Edward VIII of Great Britain, Mussolini, and King Boris III of Bulgaria appeared at the top of the list.¹¹⁰

At 12:15 p.m. on April 24, Hitler spoke at the formal dedication of the *Ordensburg* Crössinsee in Pomerania.¹¹¹ It was consecrated to provide—along with the two other *Ordensburgen* (Sonnhofen in the Allgäu and Vogelsang in the Eifel mountains)—an education for the next generation of German leaders.

That afternoon, Hitler spoke for ninety minutes to all the six hundred Kreisleiters of Germany on the topic of “the mission of the Kreisleiter in the National Socialist Party.” Afterwards, Hitler sent a telegram to Admiral Raeder on his sixtieth birthday.

Two days later he addressed another birthday telegram to Rudolf Hess, who had turned forty-two years of age. On April 28, a telegram left the Chancellery for Egypt’s King Farouk, bearing the condolences of Hitler on the demise of the King’s father, Fuad I.¹¹²

At 8:30 in the morning of May 1, “the National Holiday of the German Volk,” Hitler delivered an address to the German youth in the Post Stadium in Berlin.¹¹³ Once again he assured his young listeners of the glorious future that awaited them thanks to his untiring efforts and referred again to the 99 percent of the ballot he had received at the last election. Hitler began his speech in a characteristic manner:

My German Youth!

Never before in German history has such a wonderful fate been bestowed upon a young generation. You, our youth, are living in a young Reich, in a young Reich filled with joyful life, with strong hope, with inextinguishable confidence. You are living in a Reich with young, fresh ideas, filled with young, fresh power.

Today's German generation has made infinite progress toward overcoming German fragmentation and disunity. Beyond differences of class, beyond artificial frontiers between countries, beyond parties, the unification of the German nation has been triumphantly achieved in a new Movement: its unification under one view, in one idea, and for a joint life-struggle. Hence also the unification for embarking upon a path in this struggle for unity and consolidation in every action.

You, my youth, are witnessing it: that for the first time in our history, ninety-nine percent of the Volk have professed their support for the spirit of this oneness. You are lucky to be the youth, the offspring of this Volk. You can build your life in this Volk thus that you become the future foundation for the life of this Volk.

As in the previous years, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., Hitler attended the ceremonial session of the Reich Chamber of Culture in the newly refurbished German Opera House in Charlottenburg. Both the director Carl Froehlich (for his film titled *Traumulus*) and the SA Obersturmbannführer Gerhard Schumann were especially honored by telegrams from Hitler, congratulating them on their awards for best film and best book, respectively.¹¹⁴

At 12:30 p.m., at the state ceremony in the Lustgarten, Hitler gave his main speech, an "Appeal to the Entire German Volk."¹¹⁵ After the usual lengthy "party narrative," Hitler spoke of the difficulties he had encountered with other statesmen and proclaimed:

We ourselves have been able to deal with our internal difficulties without detriment to any other people. Solve your own problems, and do not attempt to involve others in what are your own quarrels. In Germany we do not need—and I can say this today to you above all, my Volksgenossen: I do not need to perform some glorious deed which will bring death to millions in order to obtain esteem and respect from my Volk. I have that anyway! I am not standing on shaky ground; I do not need to lead millions of our people to the sacrificial altar so that millions of others might perhaps believe in me!

In these three years we have done nothing that could possibly have caused suffering to another people; we have taken not a single step that might harm anyone. We have not reached out our hands to grasp anything that did not belong to us. We have remained within our borders, we have offered our hand to the others in friendship dozens of times.—What more could one expect?

During these three-and-a-quarter years, the German Volk has become strong and determined internally. Yet it has never abused its determination to perhaps threaten anyone else. Quite the opposite: in these three-and-a-quarter years, we have attempted to introduce this determination to European life as a factor toward its stability. How can we help it if others do not agree? We have witnessed it during these past few weeks. Only recently we made the world a generous offer,¹¹⁶ not schemed up by a handful of legal experts

and lawyers but issuing from healthy common sense, simple and clear-cut. If there is a will, that is the way Europe can be given inner peace and a feeling of security. But what happens to us?

At the same time we declare that we are prepared, regardless of past or present, to offer our hand in friendship to all peoples, to conclude treaties with them, we see yet another smear campaign breaking out. Once again lies are being spread about that Germany will invade Austria tomorrow or the day after. I ask myself: who are these elements who have no desire for tranquility, for peace, for understanding; who have a need to constantly agitate and sow the seeds of mistrust, who are these people? (*Cries of "The Jews!"*) I know (*Applause lasting several minutes*),¹¹⁷ I know it is not the millions who would have to take up arms were these agitators to succeed in their plans. They are not the ones! Not in any nation! It is a small faction of interests (*Interessenklüngel*), an international clique that lives off stirring up other peoples by agitation. We know these fellows from our own country, and we see their tracks between the peoples. Thus it is all the more necessary for us to cling more than ever—and for this reason most of all—to our own unity and consolidation.

How splendid it is in Germany to have a Volk that leads itself, orders itself and guides itself instead of being governed by the rubber truncheon! How splendid it is today to have people here who are not attempting to mutually make their lives difficult and bitter, but who are beginning to show more and more consideration for one another! We are so fortunate to be able to live amongst these people, and I am proud to be your Führer. So proud that I cannot imagine anything in this world capable of convincing me to trade it for something else. I would sooner, a thousand times sooner, be the last Volksgenosse among you than a king anywhere else.¹¹⁸

And this pride fills me today above all. When I was driving through these long streets earlier and saw to the left and right these hundreds of thousands and millions of Volksgenossen who had come from their plants and workshops, from our factories and counting houses, my heart was about to burst, I truly felt it: that is our Germany! That is our Volk, our marvelous German Volk and our dear German Reich!

In this hour I believe we can have but one desire: let the other peoples cast a single glance in here, let them only see this Volk of peace and labor and I believe they would take those rabble-rousers and throw them out! Then they would understand and comprehend why this most sacred national community is and will always be both the most sacred guarantor of a genuinely European order and thus of a truly human culture and civilization. Therefore, I ask you in this hour to take heart and allow your spirit to gaze back upon the past and share in feeling the good fortune we have come to enjoy by virtue of having found our way back to one community, to one Volk. And let us pledge our dedication to this Volk on this first of May of work and of the Volksgemeinschaft with our old vow: to our German Volk and our German Reich—*Sieg Heil!*

At 5:00 p.m., as the final event of the holiday celebration, Hitler received delegations of workers at the House of the Reich President and gave a short speech.¹¹⁹

On May 5, a delegation of members of the German Civil Service presented Hitler with a splendid special edition of *Mein Kampf* bound in parchment paper. He was exceedingly pleased and declared that the book needed to be preserved as "property of the German Volk for all time." The short address Hitler had delivered on this occasion was reproduced by the *Völkischer Beobachter*.¹²⁰

The literary work presented by the civil servants should be placed for safe keeping in the most beautiful and worthy place in the Capital of the Movement [Munich], namely, in the Führerbau. The book must be placed in the pulsating life of the Movement which finds its most visible expression in a capital. Here it will remain true to its purpose of service and use to the Volk. In the Movement's Führerhaus, it is in the secure possession of the Party and thereby belongs for all time to the Volk.

On May 14, Hitler received the British Ambassador Sir Eric Phipps for a consultation at the Chancellery. A week earlier, on May 7, the Ambassador had presented the German Foreign Minister von Neurath with the British Government's response to Hitler's various and lengthy proposals of March 31 and April 1. The response began with the words:

His Majesty's Government regrets that the German Government has not been capable of producing a serious contribution to the effort being made to re-establish mutual trust, which Great Britain believes to be a crucial prerequisite to any further talks.

The statement was followed by a series of questions, the first of which read: "Does the German Reich now consider itself to be in a position to conclude 'real contracts'?" As was well known, direct questions of this nature were not to Hitler's liking, and therefore it was not surprising that the Hitler's conference of May 14 with the British statesman ended without any real progress being made.

The Envoy Schmidt aptly commented on the incident:¹²¹ "Hitler's efforts to detract from his rash method of dealing with the actual issues at stake, by making lengthy and voluminous suggestions not pertaining to the subject at hand, had completely failed him." In the subsequent weeks and months, to Hitler's great distress, he would more often have to face the painful realization that he could not provoke and bluff the English as he had the German Nationalists. Nevertheless, this did not move him to reconsider his approach. He persisted in his confrontational approach to the English, while simultaneously declaring that he was ardently pursuing peace. It was not until September 3, 1939, that he finally had to face the harsh reality he himself had created, when the British presented him with their declaration of war.

On May 17, Hitler mailed the following telegram to Reich Minister Frank on the occasion of the German lawyers' convention in Leipzig:¹²²

The cooperation of the German Legal Protectors in the building up of National Socialist Germany is a crucial prerequisite for the success of our great enterprise. I thus gladly accept your pledges for loyal cooperation in this great enterprise and heartily return your greetings.

Adolf Hitler

Two days later, Hitler attended the funeral of his long-time driver Julius Schreck¹²³ in Gräfelfing near Munich and had a wreath put down bearing the following words: "To my old fighting companion and dear comrade."

That same day Hitler awarded the brevet rank of Major General to the Reich leader of the Labor Service, former Colonel Konstantin Hierl, and to the NSKK Corps Leader, former Major Adolf Hühnlein.¹²⁴ This had been the rank Hitler had denied Chief of Staff Röhm.

On May 21, Hitler took the Walhalla memorial hall in Regensburg under his auspices and ordered a bust of Anton Bruckner placed there.¹²⁵ The following day, Hitler sent a welcoming note in a telegram to the German Society of World Economics, which was holding a conference in Düsseldorf, presided over by the retired governor Heinrich Schnee. On May 27, Hitler addressed a delegation of Amtswalters of the Winterhilfswerk at the Chancellery.¹²⁶ There on the next day, he received the Hungarian Minister of Culture Homann, who was visiting the capital of the Reich.¹²⁷

On May 29, Hitler observed the naval maneuvers in Kiel and watched a parade from the light battleship *Grille*. After the parade, he inspected the German shipyards. The following day, a ceremony commemorated the dead of the World War on the twentieth anniversary of the Battle of Skagerrak (May 31, 1916). Hitler attended the dedication of a navy memorial and laid a wreath honoring the navy's dead.¹²⁸

On June 1, Hitler ordered a state funeral for General Karl Litzmann, who had died on May 28 at the age of eighty-six. For many years Litzmann had supported Hitler and helped him through difficult times. The ceremony took place on June 3 in Neu-Globsow (district of Mark Brandenburg), where the deceased had resided. All high-ranking generals were present.

The new Field Marshal von Blomberg delivered the commemorative address and Hitler placed a huge wreath on Litzmann's grave, reading:¹²⁹ To Party Comrade Litzmann, the old soldier and loyal fighter for Germany's greatness and resurrection."

On June 9, Hitler received calls by three statesmen in sequence: first the Japanese Ambassador Mushakoji, then the Egyptian Envoy Nahat Pasha, and finally the Afghan Minister of War Shah Mahmoud. The latter had recently undergone surgery in Berlin.¹³⁰ In the Chancellery on that day as well, Hitler gave a short speech before delegates of the Sixth International Municipal Congress, which was convening at the time in Berlin.¹³¹ On June 10, he issued a note regarding the upcoming Red Cross Day.¹³²

On June 11, Hitler left early for Wilhelmshaven to inspect its naval units and to attend a parade in his honor. Thereafter he went on a tour of the navy's shipyards in Wilhelmshaven.¹³³ In the afternoon, he visited a seaside hotel in Horumersiel, a small fishing village where he had spent several nights during his 1932 Oldenburg election campaign.

Hitler addressed a telegram containing a note of a general nature to Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg in Munich on June 16, where the latter presided over a meeting of the NS Culture Community.¹³⁴ On June 17, at a reception honoring Moniz de Aragao, previously Brazilian Envoy, who had recently been named the first ambassador of his country in Berlin, Hitler expressed his desire to expand the relations between Brazil and Germany. Immediately thereafter, Hitler received the calls of the Dominican Envoy Olivies and the retiring Estonian Envoy Akel.¹³⁵

That same day Hitler issued an ordinance establishing a position for a Chief of Police in the Reich Ministry of the interior:¹³⁶

I. The position of a Chief of the German Police shall be established in the Reich Ministry of the interior to provide for standardized law enforcement within the Reich. At the time of establishment, conduct and handling of all police affairs, at present within the realm of the Reich Ministry and the Prussian Ministry, shall be transferred to this Chief of Police.

II. The present Deputy Chief of the Secret Prussian State Police, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, is appointed Chief of the German Police to the Reich Ministry of the Interior. His person shall be directly responsible to the Reich Minister and Prussian Minister of the Interior, to whom he shall be subordinate. He shall substitute for the Reich Minister and Prussian Minister of the Interior in the event of the latter's absence. He shall bear the following official title: Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police with the Reich Ministry of the Interior.

III. The Chief of the German Police with the Reich Ministry of the Interior shall attend sessions of the Reich Cabinet in so far as the agenda pertains to the affairs of his department.

IV. I commission the Reich Minister and Prussian Minister of the Interior to see to the implementation of this decree.

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Another important milestone on the way to equating party and state had been reached: the Reich leader of the SS was at the same time chief of the entire German police force. The process that had begun in 1933 with the nomination of Himmler as Chief of Police in Munich, and that had steadily accelerated in the three years since, now had reached its logical conclusion. However, Himmler was not the sole, unchecked commander of the police force. Naturally, he still had to obey the Führer, and continued to be subordinate to Göring as well. This is particularly evident in the following telegram Himmler sent to Göring on June 17:¹³⁷

I duly report that the Führer today has appointed me Chief of the German Police. I greet you as my revered commander of the past, of the present, and of the future.

In true comradeship,

H. Himmler, Reichsführer SS

On the same day, Hitler also promoted the SS Obergruppenführer Daluege to the rank of general of the police. Daluege had proven himself to be very reliable in the course of the Röhm Purge and had executed the Führer's orders without questions. Hitler addressed the following note to him:¹³⁸

Dear Party Comrade General Daluege!

Ever since the National Socialists' assumption of power, to the attainment of which you greatly contributed in Berlin, you have dedicated yourself to transforming the German police into a powerful instrument of the German state.

This is particularly true of the Land Police which, thanks to your efforts, have become a valuable part of the German Wehrmacht. I feel compelled to express to you my great appreciation and gratitude for your services to the German police. I promote you to General of the Police.

Adolf Hitler

Later on June 17, Himmler accompanied Hitler on an inspection of the new police uniforms which were to be introduced in the entire Reich.¹³⁹ Hitler also visited the Olympic village at the Berlin Reich Sports Field. The athletes were to reside there during the competition.

In *Mein Kampf*¹⁴⁰ Hitler had referred to boxing as the most valuable sport overall, and he felt himself to be the particular patron of this discipline. On June 21, Hitler sent a telegram congratulating the German boxing champion and former world heavyweight champion Max Schmeling on his surprising 12-round knockout of the unbeaten "brown bomber," Joe Louis, in New York City:¹⁴¹

June 21, 1936

Please accept my heartfelt congratulations on your magnificent victory.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler also sent Schmeling's wife, the movie actress Anny Ondra, a congratulatory telegram:

I must congratulate you with all my heart on the wonderful victory of your husband, our greatest German boxer.

Adolf Hitler

At the same time, Hitler also had a bouquet of flowers delivered to her address. In order to please Hitler, Goebbels mailed an even more enthusiastic telegram to Schmeling in New York. When Schmeling returned from the United States on June 27, he, along with his wife and his mother, was immediately ushered to a reception at the Chancellery. On June 22, Hitler addressed a telegram to the British King Edward VIII congratulating him on his birthday.¹⁴²

Hitler spoke to a delegation of German craftsmen on June 26,¹⁴³ which had come to Berlin under the auspices of Reich Master Craftsman Georg Wilhelm Schmidt. Hitler declared that "unity and continuity in matters of statesmanship" was essential for the advance of German craftsmanship. In other terms, what was of supreme importance to the German craftsmen was that the future fate of the nation was securely placed in Hitler's hands! In addition, Hitler received the Italian Air Force General Valle that day.¹⁴⁴ On June 28, Hitler sent the following telegram to the President of the University of Heidelberg on the 550th anniversary of its foundation:¹⁴⁵

I extend to the University of Heidelberg my and the Reich Government's congratulations on the 550th anniversary of its foundation. Today, the oldest university of the German Reich celebrates in the circle of its German and foreign friends and representatives of numerous nations its day of honor.

At the same time I thank you, Herr Rektor, the senate, and the student body for your loyal greetings extended to me on this occasion. I return these with all my heart and with the wish that this ancient and dignified university, in keeping with its traditions, shall remain the germinator of the most noble of German intellectual life and the time-tested conveyer of real German cultural goods for a long time to come.

Adolf Hitler

In Berlin-Lichterfelde on July 2, Hitler attended the funeral services for four members of his SS Leibstandarte who had died in an accident.

The next day, Hitler journeyed to Weimar, where the several days of festivities commemorating the first Reich Party Congress of the

NSDAP, which had been held there ten years ago, were taking place. At the official reception in the castle, at 5:00 p.m. on July 3, first Gauleiter Sauckel and then the Minister-President of Thuringia Marschler¹⁴⁶ addressed the guests. Finally it was Hitler's turn to speak and he began:¹⁴⁷

My dear Gauleiter Sauckel, dear Minister-President Marschler!

I thank you for your welcome. You know best how deeply I am moved by being able to dwell these few days within the walls of the old city. It is a wonderful reunion for all of us, a reunion with our comrades in arms, with the majority of those who marched into Weimar back then. Some have passed away; others have grown gray in the meantime, and many are already white. Yet one thing has remained the same, the memory and the zealous resolve to preserve for all time to come the precepts and principles that guided us then! This resolve to dedicate ourselves to the old principles today, too, at a time when, through a miracle of fate, we have power in Germany, in order to assign them to those who will come after us. Ten years of history can be subject to different interpretations. The ten years we have left behind us are, I believe, truly world-shattering years. Only posterity will be in a position to fully gauge the extent of the foundations laid in the course of these years.

Back then, in the year 1926, we launched an offensive against this city, an offensive against this Land and thus an offensive against Germany. Today, barely ten years later, we have already scored the consummate victory. The faith which filled several hundreds of thousands at that time has today become the faith of the entire German Volk!

We were not simply given this success; these ten years have been years of countless battles and countless sacrifices. What do they know, the ones who did not become aware of our Movement until after the victory; what do they know about the sacrifices and battles the preceding years cost us? How many troubles we were forced to bear; how much faith was required in order to ultimately turn this small Movement into the ruling power in Germany? What do they know about how much obedience had to be demanded—how much strict obedience, although this subservience all too frequently seemed to contradict every stirring of emotion, indeed even reason itself? How often was it necessary for us in these ten years to admonish our young fighters never to lose their nerve, never to act unwisely, but always—trusting in the future—to allow time to ripen on its own! May today's youth learn a lesson from this sacrifice and this obedience for themselves and for the German future.

All of this was attainable only by virtue of the boundless loyalty and devotion of my fellow fighters. For this I would like to express to you my special thanks here and now: to you, my dear Gauleiter, who—I am certain—is one of my most loyal followers; to you, my Party comrades in the government; to all of you who have gathered here from elsewhere in Germany as leaders of the individual organizations; and not least to all of those countless lesser Party comrades, the known and the nameless, who remained steadfast in the years in which the seductive power of the other side was so

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great and the probability of victory so small. I would like to express my thanks to you for having stood by the Movement so loyally and decently throughout those years, that you did not turn your back on it as sometimes seemed the case, as though our mission might not be accomplished after all—but instead more zealously than ever vowed to support me and zealously stood up in my defense. Where would we have ended up had this devotion been demonstrated only in times of success? What has enabled our Movement to become so great has not been loyalty and devotion after victories and successes, but loyalty above all in the wake of our defeats. When we were faring badly, when good fortune seemed to have deserted us entirely, it was then more than ever that these hundreds of thousands of little people came to stand behind the Movement and, I may say, in front of me. Only thus were we able to wage this battle, so unique in German history, through to the end and prevail as victors.

And just as we have achieved our great goal of winning power in Germany and have been able to use this power to accomplish successful work for Germany for the past three-and-a-half years thanks to these virtues, in placing our allegiance in these same principles in the future as well, we will always find our way onwards.

May the German nation never forget that the firmness of a Volk is put to the test not when its leadership can demonstrate visible proof of progress, but in its hours of ostensible failure. As long as a leadership is blessed by good fortune, any weakling can declare his allegiance to it. Only in those hours in which good fortune seems to have vanished do the people who are truly valuable come through. Only then does loyalty count! May the German Volk maintain these virtues in future! With these old precepts, the principles of our Movement, it will march into a great future! Today, in addition to my thanks, I have but one request to the Almighty: that He may bless our Volk in our Movement. It is my most sacred conviction that, as long as the National Socialist Movement stands firm and strong in Germany, Germany will be strong and firm! If this Movement were ever to falter, Germany would falter along with it.

Ten years of struggle lie behind us. Providence has enabled us to score achievements for our Volk in the area of labor and above all to preserve the peace for it. I believe that today we can send no other wish to that same Providence than that this peace be granted our Volk in future as well. But let us always write the word “honor” before peace, and let us always understand this peace to mean liberty! Let us hold that, without this honor and without this liberty, there can be no peace. That is something our Volk knows, and something the world should know, too. I believe that this explicitness is best able to help eliminate false ideas, false hopes, and false opinions and thus promote the cause of genuine peace.

Therefore I may once again thank you, my dear Gauleiter and my dear Minister-President, for your welcome. It is my wish that these days may become for all the Party comrades who are taking part in them for the second time—and even for the first—days of contemplation, of contemplating the magnitude of the Fate we serve!

At a commemoration in the National Theater in Weimar on July 4,¹⁴⁸ Hitler emphasized that the 1926 Reich Party Congress had been the first “prototype of a National Socialist Party Congress.” He also referred to the “so-called National Assembly”¹⁴⁹ that had gathered in Weimar in 1919 as “a great blemish on the face of the city, disgracing this revered home of the German spirit, the German sciences and German art,” and claimed: “We, however, restored Weimar to its proper significance for Germany.”

Before an assembly of 50,000 party members on July 5 in the gardens of the Tiefurt Castle, Hitler gave a speech honoring the dead of the Movement.¹⁵⁰ He lauded the “sacrifices made by the preachers and the recruiters for the National Socialist cause.” That afternoon, Hitler spoke again in Weimar at a mass rally in the *Landeskampfbahn* (Land Stadium).¹⁵¹ After a lengthy “party narrative,” Hitler claimed that the great tasks faced alone sufficed to render the National Socialist rule immortal for all time to come. Future generations would look back upon the National Socialist Revolution and realize its justification:

It is to this 1933 Revolution that the German Volk owes its booming economy. The Volk owes the protection accorded by a strong army to this Revolution. It owes a new form of German culture to this Revolution. It owes a new form of German art to this Revolution. However, above all, it owes the development of a new German being to this Revolution.

On July 11, an agreement between Austria and Germany was made public. The agreement was due to a strengthening of ties between Rome and Berlin, which had come about as a direct result of the Italian aggression in Abyssinia. Mussolini had obviously miscalculated when he counted on a lenient response of the League of Nations and of Great Britain. Thereby forced into the open arms of Hitler, Mussolini had to accept a German offer of economic aid to his enterprise. In return, he was expected to display marked disinterest in Austrian affairs. Suddenly abandoned by his most important patron, the Austrian Chancellor von Schuschnigg had to make compromises. One of the first signs of Schuschnigg’s surrender had been the May 13 dismissal of the Austrian Vice Chancellor Fürst von Starhemberg, a declared opponent of the National Socialists.

The pull the powerful German Reich exerted on Austria, which had been strong even before the First World War, was constantly being reinforced. As Mussolini had finally come to realize:¹⁵² “Austria is German state No. 2. it will never be able to do anything without Germany, far less against Germany.” Therefore, he approved the

German-Austrian Agreement of July 11, even though this effectively amounted to a cease-fire declaration at the expense of Austria. After decisive action based on the use of force had failed miserably on July 25, 1934, Hitler had come to terms with the situation and decided to penetrate the country from the inside. Goebbels publicized a communiqué on the July 11 agreement in a radio broadcast:¹⁵³

In the conviction of rendering a most valuable service to the cause of peace in Europe, and in the belief that the mutual affairs of both German States might thereby best be served, the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Federal State of Austria have concurred to once more restore friendly and nonnal relations.

On this occasion, the following declaration is made:

1. In accordance with the statements of the Führer and Reich Chancellor on May 21, 1935, the German Reich Government acknowledges the full sovereignty of the Federal State of Austria.

2. Each of the two Governments regards the internal political structure of the other country, including the issue of Austrian National Socialism, as a matter upon which it shall not attempt to exert influence, either directly or indirectly.

3. The policy pursued by the Austrian Federal Government shall, in general, and particularly with regard to the German Reich, always count for the fact that Austria avows itself to be a German State. This shall not infringe the Rome Protocols of 1934¹⁵⁴ and their supplementary articles of 1936, nor upon Austria's relations to Italy and Hungary as parties of the Protocols.

In the expectation that the détente sought by both sides can only be realized, if certain basic conditions are established by both Governments concerned, the German Reich Government and the Austrian Federal Government shall create the necessary prerequisites in a series of individual measures.

No details were announced at first with regard to the "individual measures" alluded to in the communiqué. Later it became evident that one of the measures referred to was the removal of the 1,000-Reichsmark limit imposed upon German travellers to Austria since 1933.¹⁵⁵ Precisely which "prerequisites" Austria would have to fulfill in order to relieve tensions with Germany became clear already the day of the announcement, when Edmund Glaise-Horstenau joined Schuschnigg's Cabinet as "national," in other words, National Socialist member. At first named Minister without Portfolio as early as November 3, 1936, he took over the Ministry of the Interior (!).

On July 11, 1936, a process began which would logically lead to the legalization of the National Socialists in Austria and finally to Hitler's assumption of power. The position of weakness in which

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Schuschnigg found himself when facing Hitler is reflected in an exchange of telegrams between the two statesmen on that day.¹⁵⁶ Schuschnigg's telegram read:

Now that an understanding designed to reinstate friendly relations between our two neighboring nations has been reached, allow me to take this most welcome opportunity to greet Your Excellency as the Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich. At the same time, I would like to express my conviction that both our people will profit from the ramifications of this agreement, and that it will be a blessing for the entire German people.

Your Excellency, I believe we both share the opinion that besides its beneficial nature with regard to both our countries, the understanding between Austria and Germany renders a most valuable service to the attainment of peace among all nations.

von Schuschnigg

Hitler replied:

I sincerely return the greetings which Your Excellency has extended to me on the occasion of the German-Austrian agreement concluded today. I connect with this the desire that this agreement shall reconstitute the traditionally good relations which have evolved due to our racial community and the centuries of shared history in order that these may promote further work benefiting our two states and strengthening peace in Europe.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

That very same day, Italy informed the Belgian Minister-President that it was not interested in a meeting of the signatories of the Locarno Pact. Evidently Hitler had made progress in his effort to win Italy as an ally, an idea he had entertained ever since 1919. Telegrams to King Edward VIII did little to change the lamentable course of events in Anglo-German relations. On July 16, Hitler sent a telegram from Berchtesgaden to the King, who had just narrowly escaped an assassination attempt while reviewing a parade at the Hyde Park.¹⁵⁷

Just now I have received news of the contemptible attempt upon Your Majesty and extend to you my heartfelt congratulations on your escape from this danger.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

On July 19, Hitler came to Bayreuth to attend the opening of the Wagner Festival. After a performance of *Lohengrin*, Hitler himself delivered a short address to the artists backstage.¹⁵⁸

That same day open rebellion broke out in Spanish Morocco. The leader of the rebels, General Francisco Franco, established contact to the German Chancellor in Bayreuth by employing a German go-

between. He clamored for support of his revolutionary undertaking. For Hitler the events in Northern Africa could not have come at a more opportune moment. Eagerly he took advantage of the situation in Spain, which he believed gave him the opportunity of realizing a part of his vision of a "New Order for Europe." The greater the number of states in Western Europe headed by Fascists, he reasoned, the more they might be willing to submit to one will. And this one will of course would be none other than Hitler's own. All heads of state would then be securely positioned as *Unterführers* in Europe, corresponding to the *Gauleiters* in Germany: Mussolini in Italy, Franco in Spain, and so on.

The first crucial assistance Hitler rendered Franco was the immediate ordering of numerous Junker transportation airplanes to North Africa. Franco desperately needed these in order to transport his soldiers and his important Moroccan elite troop across the Mediterranean to the Spanish mother country, where they established a strong bridgehead for the invasion. Without Hitler's intervention on Franco's behalf, the General's rebellion might soon have dissipated. Nevertheless, it took Franco quite some time—close to three years—to emerge as victor from the bloody civil strife. The length of the conflict was most advantageous for Hitler since it gave him ample opportunity to test combat strategies for the German Air Force and the new tank divisions. The experiences gained in Spain were to serve as guidelines for the planned conquest of the East. While the troops Hitler sent—collectively termed the "Condor Legion"—were not numerous, his fellow Italian dictator commissioned entire army battalions to participate in the battle despite the fact that Mussolini had not yet recovered from the aftermath of his July 10, 1936 entanglement in Ethiopia.

On July 24, Germany ordered a naval formation to the Spanish coastal waters to protect its nationals in the region,¹⁵⁹ as the Great Powers had also done. Hitler's frequent later references to the incident show that it did much to boost his self-confidence.¹⁶⁰

In the meantime, the preparations for the Olympic Games in Germany had reached their final stage. A large attendance of athletes, spectators and political observers was expected. On July 21, Hitler sent a telegram to the Greek Olympic Committee, reading:¹⁶¹

I thank you for your message informing me of the launch of the Olympic torch. May it safely arrive in Berlin and soon ignite the Olympic Flame there, which shall shine upon a successful course of events at the Eleventh Olympic Games.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler arrived to attend the opening of the Games in Berlin on the 30th of July. The next day, he dedicated a German Olympic Commemorative Medal.¹⁶² On August 1, Hitler received the members of the International Olympic Committee at the Reich Chancellery. After a few words on the part of its president, Count Baillet-Latour, Hitler himself took the floor and addressed the committee members with the following words:¹⁶³

Esteemed Mr. President, Gentlemen of the International Olympic Committee and the Organization Committee!

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you personally and on behalf of the German Volk on this, the day marking the opening of the Olympic Games and to have an opportunity to thank you, esteemed Mr. President, for the kind remarks you have addressed to me.

My thanks also include the International Olympic Committee for having chosen the capital of the German Reich as the site of the Eleventh Olympics of the modern cycle, thus affording Germany the opportunity to make its contribution to the immortal memory of the Olympic Games. It was with enthusiasm and joy that Germany applied itself to the task of preparing this years' competitions in a framework which attempts to do justice to the grand idea and traditions of the Olympic Games, and it hopes to have thus contributed toward promoting the ideal of strengthening the bonds between the peoples, the ideal upon which these competitive Games are based.

You, gentlemen of the German Organization Committee, I may thank for the devoted and careful work you have put into the preparation of these Games. I am confident in my hope that success will reward you for your efforts.

The basic principles which are once more evidenced to the world in the Olympic Games are ones of very ancient origin. They have been passed down from that old place of worship where the Games were celebrated for more than a thousand years as an expression of religious sentiment and a demonstration of the competitive spirit of the Greek people. German scholars unearthed this honorable site in the years 1875-81 in accordance with agreements concluded at that time with the Greek government: hence the world was given a more detailed impression of the arena of this national shrine of the Hellenes and of the type and structure of the games. The excavation was not fully completed at that time.

I have now decided, as a lasting memory of the Eleventh Olympics in Berlin, to resume and complete the excavation work begun in 1875 at the site of the Olympic festivities and sports events.¹⁶⁶ I may extend my thanks to the Royal Greek Government for granting its enthusiastic consent to this task. Thus a consecrated site from ancient culture is returned to today's civilization. It is my hope that this will help to keep the memory of the Olympic Games of 1936 alive for all time to come.

That they may be a wonderful success is my one sincere desire and the one we all share.

The actual opening of the Games at 4:00 p.m. in the newly built Olympic Stadium on the Berlin Sports Field, took place amidst over-awing, ceremonious and magnificent celebrations. Even though Spain and the Soviet Union did not participate, the teams of fifty-two nations marched into the arena and paraded by the Führer's special rostrum, on which Hitler sat with the International Committee. With the much-noted exception of the British and the Japanese, all teams voluntarily greeted Hitler with an outstretched and raised right arm—just as the gladiators, “doomed to die,” had once paid their tribute to the Emperor in the Roman stadiums (*Morituri te salutant!*) before starting their life-and-death struggle. Now the Fascist or “German salute,” derived from the ancient gladiators' salute, had become the greeting of the 1936 Olympic Games.

After the speeches by the presidents of the various committees, Hitler approached the microphone and proclaimed:¹⁶⁵

I hereby declare the Berlin Games in celebration of the Eleventh Olympic Games of the new age open to the public.

After the last bearer of the torch had ignited the Olympic flame in the basin, the former champion marathon runner Spyridon Louis from Greece presented Hitler with an olive branch as a “symbol for love and peace.” On the same day, Hitler sent a telegram thanking the Mayor of Pyrgos in Greece for the latter's congratulations upon the arrival of the Olympic flame.¹⁶⁶ In addition, another telegram was addressed to the Honorary President of the International Olympic Committee, Pierre de Coubertin.¹⁶⁷

In the course of the subsequent days, Hitler watched several of the competitions and also greeted the official guests, such as the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin. On August 4 in the Olympic Stadium, the Swede addressed a speech to the “youth of the world.” On August 9, Hitler observed the Olympic sailing competition in Kiel from aboard the cutter *Nixe*.

On August 11, Hitler named Ribbentrop the new German Ambassador in London. During those days it was becoming increasingly clear that Hitler intended to turn the subservient Ribbentrop into his sole executer of foreign policy.

The next day, numerous receptions were held at the Chancellery. Lord Kemsley and Lord Camrose of the *Daily Telegraph*, twenty deputies of the Japanese parliament, and finally the Polish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Count Jan Szembek, consulted Hitler on that day.¹⁶⁸

The conference with the count was not a pleasant experience for Hitler. Count Szembek brought to Hitler's attention the hostile attitude of the National Socialist Government in Danzig and to other actions directed against the Polish people.¹⁶⁹ Besides these complaints, it is possible that the Polish felt offended by Hitler's March 7 speech before the Reichstag, which was much less favorable to Poland than his earlier talks. Hitler could not allow such discord to persist in the "Olympic Year," thus, he assured the Polish statesman of his sympathies for the entire Polish people.

That evening, Hitler held a large reception in the Chancellery¹⁷⁰ for his foreign guests and their female escorts and once again played the role of the charming host. Among the renowned guests were men like Sir Robert Vansittard, permanent adviser to the British government on foreign policy matters and German expert; Ward Price, Count Szembek, and Count Baillet-Latour; several British Lords, a few Hungarian and Yugoslavian Ministers, and numerous Italian luminaries. Somewhat at odds with this illustrious international gathering was another guest, the leader of the Sudeten German Party, Konrad Henlein.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, as a citizen of Czechoslovakia, he too was a foreigner.

After the Olympic Games had come to a close on August 16, Hitler addressed the following note to Count Baillet-Latour:¹⁷²

Esteemed Mr. President!

Now that the competitions at the Eleventh Olympic Games in Berlin have come to a close, I feel myself compelled to express to you and the International Olympic Committee my and the German Volk's gratitude for your excellent work and dedication and the great pains you have taken, which doubtlessly contributed to the most successful conduct of the Games. We are particularly indebted to those fighters from all over the world, whose fabulous performances command our respect.

Their names will live on forever in the history of sports. I hope that the Olympics in Berlin have contributed to the strengthening of the Olympic idea and that hence they helped to build bridges between the peoples of the world.

With this in mind I extend my sincere greetings to you, Mr. President,

Yours respectfully,

Adolf Hitler

The note addressed to former State Secretary Lewald, the President of the German Organization Committee, read as follows:¹⁷³

Esteemed Mr. President!

Under your presidency, the German Organization Committee has conscientiously prepared for the Berlin Olympics and has done so in an exemplary fashion. Next to the work of the International Olympic Committee

it was the Organization Committee's achievement that the Games ran such a propitious and harmonious course. Therefore, I extend to you, to the members of the Organization Committee and to all its assistants, my own and the German Volk's gratitude and appreciation for your great achievement. You may look back upon the athletic competitions at the Eleventh Olympic Games in Berlin with a feeling of having rendered a great service not only to the physical fitness of humankind, but also to the understanding among the peoples of the world.

In particular, the entire German Volk is grateful to our fighters who so honorably represented German sport. Their excellent performance filled all of us with a feeling of pride. Please relay to all of them my heartfelt thanks and my great appreciation.

With best wishes,

Adolf Hitler

The Olympic Games marked one of the greatest political successes to date concerning the dictator's image within Germany and abroad. As the world's host, he presented a clean and prospering National Socialist country, a magnificent setting for what is portrayed in a highly stylized manner in Leni Riefenstahl's documentary *Olympiade*.¹⁷⁴

On August 23, Hitler met privately with the Hungarian Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy at his residence on the Obersalzberg.¹⁷⁵ Hitler's house there had been refurbished to accommodate the exigencies of its new function as a semi-official residence of the Chancellor. A private suite had been added, exclusively reserved for Hitler and Eva Braun. There were also additional rooms in which he could receive his official guests, in particular one large conference room on the first floor. The outside wall of the room was adorned with an oversized window, which took up nearly the entire wall, providing a magnificent view of the mountains surrounding the Berghof.

Hitler had taken on the habit of issuing ordinances and decrees in Berchtesgaden, as if this location were a seat of the Reich Government. An example of this was Hitler's August 24 decree from Berchtesgaden stepping up the military tour of service to two years.

It simply decreed, without any further explanation:¹⁷⁶

In reference to Article 8 of the Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 (RGBl., I, p. 609) I decree the following, subsequent to suspension of my decree of May 22, 1935 (RGBl., I, p. 614):

The duration of the tour of service with all three branches of the Wehrmacht is set at two years.

The Reich Minister of War and the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht will issue the necessary regulations for the implementation thereof, and regarding the transition period.

This new move was achieved without much ado, or *Tamtam* to put it in Hitler's own words.¹⁷⁷ In this instance, he refrained from issuing proclamations and holding lengthy speeches, contrary to his approach in the two previous cases of the occupation of the Rhineland and of the reintroduction of compulsory military service. This time, Hitler did not even bother to try to explain his action. He left it up to the newspapers to popularize the measure.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* interpreted the extension of the service period as "another step by our Führer to ensure peace and to protect our nation." The NS Party correspondence enumerated Hitler's incentives, which first of all consisted of the Bolshevik threat, then of the Spanish Civil War, and finally of an "international group, agitating to water down those of pure blood by advocating intermarriage among the races, thus attempting to induce chaos and precipitate a Communist take-over equaling the destruction of the entire world."

The fact that he had burdened the soldiers with additional service requirements, certainly did not weigh heavily on Hitler's conscience. After all, as soldiers, their duty was to obey their Führer. But with an uneasy eye on public opinion, Hitler delayed issuing an explanation for his measure until the Reich Party Congress in September. At the Congress, he would be assured of an audience which would burst into applause in response to any of his utterances, no matter what their true significance and its ramifications might be.

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On August 29, Hitler again went to see a *Lohengrin* performance in Bayreuth. On his August 30 return trip, he inspected the recently completed massive buildings erected on the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg.¹⁷⁸

On September 4, Hitler expected a very special guest on the Obersalzberg, David Lloyd George.¹⁷⁹ As mentioned earlier, Hitler was convinced that the English were actually German, or at least closely related to the Germans through common Germanic ancestors. The rise of the British Empire was, therefore, the natural result of the Germanic blood surging through the veins of the Englishmen. The deplorable situation and the decline of the Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century had been caused by senile British statesmen, who were no longer capable of actively participating in the affairs of the world. The degeneration in process and the imminent collapse of the British Empire could only be halted by a last minute rescue through German Army divisions. In Hitler's opinion, the British feared, but at the same time admired the Germans as the "Coming Race." If he—their charismatic Führer—turned against the Bolshevik threat, thus defending instead of infringing the Crown's Dominion, he would get carte blanche. The arrogant Englishmen might believe they could use him, as the German Nationalists, the members of high finance, aristocracy, etc., had meant. In the end, he would again demonstrate who was the master strategist. These were the reasonings on which Hitler based his policy toward Great Britain from 1933 onward.

If the English had planned to confirm Hitler in his theses, they could not possibly have chosen a better man for the task than Lloyd George. He had been British Prime Minister during the First World War, in which he had vanquished William II, and he most certainly was an expert on Germany. Already in his book *Mein Kampf*; Hitler had shown

himself truly fascinated by this particular British statesman. Hitler considered Lloyd George's speeches delivered during the war "masterpieces of psychology in the art of influencing the masses."¹⁸⁰ Obviously, Hitler regarded Lloyd George as the only British statesman who had not yet succumbed to senility.

Seated now next to the great man of the First World War, who was in an amiable mood, Hitler went into a near frenzy. Lloyd George had declared from the outset that he had come less to discuss politics than to gather information on the social reforms within the new Germany. This objection on the former Prime Minister's part did nothing to contain Hitler's exuberance. At great length, Hitler reveled in memories of his service during the First World War; his English guest demonstrated great interest. During the further course of their talk, Lloyd George made honorable mention of Germany's peace efforts. He seemed to be particularly impressed by its achievements in the social area and the institutions of the German Labor Front. No wonder, Hitler was so enthralled with the old gentleman that for a long time after this visit, he would refer to him only as "the great British statesman Lloyd George." For Hitler, the only dampening of his fervor was the Englishman's persistent refusal to come to attend the Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg.

After Lloyd George had experienced Hitler himself for three hours, he returned to Berchtesgaden around 7:00 p.m. that night, accompanied by the interpreter Schmidt. Outside the hotel, his daughter Megan jokingly greeted him with her right arm raised, shouting "*Heil Hitler!*" To this Lloyd George replied: "Yes, *Heil Hitler* indeed, for truly he is a great man!"

Back in England, Lloyd George wrote a series of articles all similarly ironic in content. He stated that if ever he had entertained any reservations with regard to the Germans' claim that they were a kind of *Übermensch*, he had no more doubts now. After his visit with Hitler, he was completely convinced that the Germans had been totally right.

The "Reich Party Congress of Honor" took place on September 8 in Nuremberg. As usual Hitler himself had contributed the title, which he thought would emphasize that through its occupation of the Rhineland Germany had regained its national honor. The term "honor" was stretched beyond endurance in the course of the meeting. Among other grandiose statements, Hitler at one point proclaimed that "the German Volk has come to the close of a most dishonorable chapter in its

history.” Superlatives continuously had to give way to additional exaggerations. Already in the month of September, in his speech at the Nuremberg City Hall, Hitler claimed that year to have been “the most difficult year of my own historic role.”¹⁸¹

The fact that you, Mr. Mayor, have presented to me on behalf of the city of Nuremberg the old plans and sketches of the fortifications, towers, battlements, and trenches so familiar to us all, is a particular pleasure to me. The work will serve me not only as a dear remembrance of our City of the Reich Party Congresses, but also as a token reminder of the most difficult year of my own historic role, by means of which, with God’s help, I succeeded in strengthening the military potential of the Reich and increasing its security.

The next day, a proclamation commenting on the Party Congress was read, as usual, by Gauleiter Adolf Wagner. In the course of his “party narrative,” Hitler maintained that the previous twelve months had been “the pinnacle of Germany’s rise to power.” Here he was referring to the 99 percent of the ballot that he had obtained in the election of March 29:

What would they [the opponents in 1933] have said to my prophecy that before four years had passed, this Volk, then so torn apart, would march to the polls—99 percent of it—for the National Socialist policy of restoration and the honor and freedom of the nation, and that 99 percent would declare their approval?

After Hitler had lauded his own efforts, he was forced to address the increasing scarcity of goods in Germany. The lack of quality foodstuffs and of products requiring the use of natural resources had resulted from the priority assigned to the production of armament. This situation had been aggravated by Germany’s effort to become self-sufficient. Foreign currencies were almost exclusively used to procure metals and other goods crucial to the production of weaponry. Hitler had decided to explain the new scarcity by arguing that it was merely an unpleasant side effect in his drive to prevent a renewed unemployment crisis. Although the scarcity of goods and unemployment were completely unrelated factors, Hitler proclaimed in his speech:

We are not so much concerned with the question of whether there is more or less butter or whether eggs have grown scarce; rather, it is our duty to be primarily concerned that the broad masses of our Volk retain their jobs and their earnings and can thus save themselves from slipping back into the terrible plight of unemployment.

He then announced the implementation of a new Four-Year Plan, which would quickly resolve the goods shortage.

Thus it is the task of the National Socialist leadership of the state and the economy to thoroughly investigate whether requisite raw materials, fuels, etc., can be manufactured within Germany.

The resulting foreign exchange savings should be used in the future toward helping to safeguard the food supply and toward purchasing those materials which cannot be obtained here under any circumstances. And today I am now establishing this as the new Four-Year Program:

In four years, Germany must be completely independent of foreign countries with respect to those materials which we are capable of obtaining ourselves in any way with the aid of German ability, with our chemical and engineering industries, and with our own mining industry!

The rebuilding of this great German raw-materials industry will at the same time provide employment to the masses of people who will be free after rearmament has been concluded [!], employment which is useful in terms of our national economy. We hope that this will enable us to once again increase national production in many sectors, namely, in the internal cycle of our economy, so that receipts from our exports can be reserved foremost for foodstuff supply and for procuring supplies of the raw materials we still lack.

I have just issued the directives requisite for the implementation of this gigantic German economy plan.¹⁸² The execution will be performed with National Socialist energy and drive. Independent of this, however, Germany cannot waive its claim to a solution of its colonial claims.¹⁸³ The German Volk's right to live is just as great as the rights of the other nations!

I know, my National Socialist Volksgenossen, that this new program represents an enormous task; however, in many areas it has already been solved in scientific terms: the production methods are already being tested and, in part, have already been chosen and specified. Hence making this program a reality will be but a question of our own energy and determination. As National Socialists, we have never known the word "impossible," and we, therefore, do not plan to add it to our vocabulary in the future.

In four years we will once more account to the nation for this gigantic task of securing its food supply and thus its life and independence.

In the remainder of his proclamation, Hitler used the example of the Spanish Civil War to illustrate to all Germans and to the entire world the pitiful fate of those who were not wary of a Bolshevik invasion. Listening to his gruesome description of the events in Spain, one could have believed that it was not Franco who had instigated a Fascist Putsch, but rather the Soviets who had raided the country and set free the mechanisms of a blood-thirsty revolution. In Spain, the Soviet Union, like France and other countries, was supporting the legal government and aiding volunteer groups which were fighting to ward off the Fascist assault.

We have gathered our experiences these past eighteen years. We know the lot of those who believe that, without making any effort on their part, they

have a right to expect justice from others or even assistance. All around us we see the signs of growing evil. We preached for years about the greatest world menace of this second millennium of our Christian history now coming to an end, and now it is becoming a horrible reality.

Everywhere the burrowing work of the Bolshevik wire-pullers is beginning to take effect. In an age where bourgeois statesmen talk of non-intervention, an international Jewish center of revolution in Moscow is undertaking to revolutionize this continent via wireless stations and thousands of channels of money and agitation. One thing we do not want to be told is that we are developing an anxiety psychosis by repeatedly drawing attention to these facts and these dangers in Germany.

Even today we have no fear of a Bolshevik invasion of Germany—not because we do not believe in such a thing, but because we are determined to make the nation so strong that, just as National Socialism was able to deal with this worldwide incitement within, it will ward off every attack from without with the most brutal determination.

This is the reason for the measures we have taken in the military sphere. These German measures will rise or fall proportionate to the degree of the dangers surrounding us increasing or decreasing. We do not gladly ban the energies of our Volk to arms plants or barracks. However, we are also men enough to look this necessity in the face and remain cold and unflinching. I would like to say here in this proclamation before the entire German Volk that, convinced as I am of the necessity of maintaining Germany's peace without—just as I have safeguarded its inner peace—I will not shrink from any measure conducive to making the nation not only feel secure, but above all to make us, under all circumstances, feel convinced of the independence of the Reich. The Muscovite Communist rabble-rousers Neumann, Béla Khun¹⁸⁴ and cohorts, who are today devastating Spain on behalf of the Comintern Movement, will play no role in Germany, and the agitation of the Muscovite radio station calling for support to reduce unhappy Spain to rubble, will not be repeated in Germany.

Then Hitler finally spoke on the topic of the two-year compulsory conscription:

Thus after having consulted [!] the Reich Minister of War, I have directed that the two-year period of conscription now be introduced without delay. I know that young Germans will bow to this necessity without blinking an eye. The leadership governing Germany today has a right to demand this from the Germans, for we all not only served two years in peacetime, but four years in the most gigantic war of all time. And we did it for Germany, for our Volk, for our German homeland. And the National Socialist Movement struggled for fifteen years and demanded from its followers the greatest sacrifices to rescue Germany from the inner Bolshevik foe and adversary.

However, Hitler refrained from confessing to the true reason behind the prolongation of the military service. Already in *Mein Kampf*,¹⁸⁵ Hitler had expressed his conviction that “two years barely suffice to

mold an untrained young man into the cast of a professional soldier.” It so happened that it were precisely these “molded” professional military men that Hitler needed for his envisioned conquest of the East. Speaking at the Party Congress, however, he merely stated inconclusively:

Now generation after generation will make this most noble sacrifice a man can be asked to make.¹⁸⁶ The German Volk put an end to the age of its historic dishonor in 1936, in the fourth year of the National Socialist regime.¹⁸⁷

Long live the National Socialist Movement, long live our National Socialist Army, long live our German Reich!

Hitler’s speech at the Culture Convention on September 9 again turned into a two-hour lecture on “culture and philosophy.” In it, Hitler displayed such brilliant insights as:

This is a fundamental principle: no one can maintain an inner relationship to a cultural accomplishment which is not rooted in the essence of his own descent.

Toward the end of his speech, Hitler returned to his favorite “cultural” topic, his plans to carry out the construction of “gigantic construction projects.” He explained their necessity in the following terms:

It is our will to find the way out of the distraction of our individual cultural accomplishments to enter into that great type of community work characterized by mutual complement and improvement.

This purpose is served by the gigantic construction projects we have launched at various locations in the Reich and shall launch shortly [in others].

These plans are bringing forth the new Nuremberg of our Reich Party Congresses.

Here, in the most gigantic dimensions possible, a document designed to improve style must be created which shall, at the same time, also be for millions of Germans a monument of pride, of belonging to this community. And it is this same spirit and these same aims which dictate the remodeling of the Movement’s capital, and shortly the task of rebuilding of Berlin as the capital of the German Reich will be taken on.

The great buildings which shall stand there will not only gladden our Volk in the present, but also fill it with pride in the future. The only truly immortal investment of human labor is art!

The next day, Hitler gave a speech before men of the Labor Service (*Arbeitsmänner*). He had never been at ease with this group, and he did not know what to say, since to him the true purpose of the compulsory labor service was its function as a stepping stone and preparation ground for the military service. As a result his speeches to

the Labor Service often leaned toward the grotesque. One case in point is his declaration on that September 10:

When I see you thus, it is difficult for me to find words. All our hearts are overflowing with enthusiasm for you. You have no idea how very much the German Volk has come to love you! In the space of but a few years, you have become a part of our national life, a part we can no longer imagine living without. Above and beyond our youth, the work of the Party organization, beyond the SA, the SS etc., you are a further component in the great work of educating our Volk, and the bridge to the final stage of this education of young men in the Army. You surely feel it yourselves: that what we have accomplished in Germany is better than what is happening today in the countries of those who still persist in criticizing us.

Here there is building going on! Here there is comradeship! And here above all is the faith in a better humanity and hence in a better future! What a difference from another country in which Marxism is attempting to gain power.¹⁸⁸ There the cities are in flames, there the villages are being reduced to rubble, there a man no longer knows whom he can trust. Class is fighting against class, rank against rank, brothers are destroying brothers. We have chosen the other path: instead of tearing you apart, I have joined you together.

Thus you stand before us today, not only the foundation upon which your own strong faith rests for the future of our Volk, but also one of the foundations upon which our own faith rests.

We have faith in you! In you, we have the faith in our male and female German youth! And we are thus all the more regaining our faith in our Volk, of which you are one of the most splendid components!

On September 11, in an address to the NS Frauenschaft, Hitler thanked all German women for bearing “him” hundreds of thousands of children each year, as their special “gift” to the Führer. At several points in his speech, Hitler indeed sounded as though he were claiming all these children as his own.

When I drive through Germany like this, I see in all the millions of children exactly what allows all this work to make any sense at all. I see in them the children who belong to their mothers just as, at the same time, they do to me.

Hitler closed with the recognition:

I am of the conviction that no one understands the Movement better than the German woman.

This verbose laudation of the German woman meant little in relative terms, for Hitler was constantly honoring one group or another, most generous with regard to the praise he distributed. Frequently, he would maintain that the German peasant, worker, youth, or Old Guard was the sole person or group that truly understood him.

In an appeal to the Political Leaders of Germany on September 11, Hitler declared—albeit prematurely:

The time of internal tensions has now been overcome, just as has the time of the external threat!

Just as we are joined together here, so has the German Volk been joined together today. Just as you, my banner bearers, have marched here in columns, so stands the German Volk arrayed in columns under your banners and behind your banners!

Thereafter, Hitler again took on the guise of the Messiah (“Yet I feel you, and you feel me!”), transforming entire passages from the Bible:¹⁸⁹

How could we help but feel once more in this hour the miracle that brought us together! Once you heard the voice of a man, and that voice knocked at your hearts, it awakened you, and you followed that voice. For years you pursued it, without ever having even seen the owner of that voice; you simply heard a voice and followed it.

When we meet here today, we are all of us filled with the miraculousness of this gathering. Not every one of you can see me, and I cannot see every one of you. Yet I feel you, and you feel me! It is the faith in our Volk that has made us small people great, that has made us poor people rich, that has made us wavering, discouraged, fearful people brave and courageous; that has made us, the wayward, see, and has joined us together!

Thus you come from your little villages, from your small market towns, from your cities, from the mines and the factories, leaving the plow; one day you come into this city. You come from the limited environment of your daily life-struggle and of your struggle for Germany and our Volk, to have for once the feeling: now we are together, we are with him, and he is with us, and we are now Germany!

Hitler concluded his speech to the Political Leaders as follows:

This Reich has only seen but the first few days of its youth. It will continue to grow for more than centuries to come; it will become strong and mighty! These banners shall be borne through ages of ever-new generations of our Volk. Germany has come into its own! Our Volk has been reborn!

Hence I greet you, my old comrades in arms, my leaders, my banner bearers, as the standard bearers of a new history, and hence I greet you here and thank you for all the loyalty and all the faith you have shown me all these long years.

Hence I greet you as the hope of the present and the guarantors of our future. And hence I greet particularly the youth assembled here. Become men like those who stand before you! Fight as they have fought! Be upstanding and determined, fear no man, and in other respects do what is right and your duty! And then the Lord God will never abandon our Volk.

Heil Deutschland!

At a ceremony dedicated to the Hitler Youth on September 12, he once again declared that the children were most fortunate to be alive in such exciting times. Prior to and during the First World War, German youth had already experienced the ramifications of such a “good fortune,” which they had been called on to remember, in particular, by their school teachers. Hitler began his speech with the following words:

My German Youth!

You have the good fortune of witnessing a time of both upheaval and greatness. That is a fate not bestowed upon all generations. When I think back on the youth of my own time and on the time of my own youth, it seems truly empty to me compared to what fills today’s time and in it, today’s youth as well; what tasks today’s time is faced with, and what tasks are facing today’s youth. It is really wonderful to live in such an age and to be allowed to grow and mature in it. And this great good fortune is yours!

You are not experiencing the reconstruction of a state, for you did not know the old Reich. You are experiencing the birth of a great age you can judge in comparison to our surroundings!

In the second part of the speech, Hitler reminded the boys that living in such great times carried with it certain responsibilities, such as the duty to “dedicate oneself to the eternal Reich and the eternal Volk.” In other words, the youth were called upon to “die a hero’s death,” the reasons for which Hitler detailed:

Perhaps that is the greatest miracle of our time: buildings are being erected, factories founded, roads built, train stations constructed—but beyond all this, a new German being is maturing! When I look at you, filled with the happiest sentiments, when I meet your gaze, I know that my life-struggle has not been fought in vain, the effort has not been made for nothing! With this flag and in its young bearers, it will live on, and a worthy generation will one day stand prepared to relieve you.

You will be men, just as was the great generation of the war. You will be brave and courageous, just as were your older brothers and your fathers. You will be as loyal as Germans can be. Yet you will see the Vaterland with completely different eyes than we, unfortunately, had to see it with. You will learn a different kind of dedication to the eternal Reich and the eternal Volk. Now five years have passed since your leader, my old Party Comrade Schirach, himself once a member of the Youth, took over training and forming you. Back then a weak, small beginning—already today a miraculous accomplishment! Let that be a reminder and a comfort to us for the future: if we have been able to achieve this miracle in five years, the coming five, ten, twenty and one hundred years will certainly reinforce this miracle!

Generation after generation will take turns in the tasks and their accomplishment; again and again a new youth will assemble here in this city.

It will be constantly stronger, more powerful and more healthy, and give living generations ever greater hopes for the future. We want to join our wishes for this future, that it may bring our Volk blessings and good fortune, that it may be allowed to live and thwart all those who wish to unsettle this life.

Today we are in the midst of a turbulent age. Yet we do not complain. We are accustomed to fighting, for it was the struggle that brought us forth. We are determined to keep our feet planted firmly on our ground, and we shall parry every attack. And you shall stand beside me if this hour should ever come!

You shall stand in front of me, at my side and behind me, and shall hold our banners high! Then let our old adversary try to march against us and raise his head once more. Though he might carry his Soviet symbol before him—with our symbol we shall triumph once again!¹⁹⁰

His next speaking engagement was at the annual meeting of the German Labor Front, which convened on the same day. Here Hitler once more expounded upon the primitive nature of Bolshevism. He had been greatly annoyed by the sensationalist reporting in the media, acclaiming the completion of the new subway in the city of Moscow. Hitler declared the Soviet state incapable of exploiting the vast reserves of natural resources which Russia possessed, much less than of ever being able to produce sufficient foodstuffs to feed its people. Under a National Socialist regime, this would be an entirely different matter. Already he envisioned Russia as an appendix to the Greater German Reich.

If the Urals with their vast wealth of raw materials, Siberia with its rich forests, and the Ukraine with its vast fields of grain were in Germany, it would be swimming in surplus under National Socialist leadership. We would produce—and every single German would have more than enough to live on.

But in Russia the population is starving in these huge areas because a Jewish-Bolshevist leadership is incapable of organizing production and thus according the worker practical help. [—]

In Moscow they build a subway and then invite the world to tour it, saying, “Look what we’ve accomplished!” We do not even mention such accomplishments. We build our subways just in passing!¹⁹¹ In the same time they need to construct eleven kilometers of subway lines in Moscow, we construct 7,000 kilometers of Reich autobahns—and that not only eighteen or twenty years after our revolution, but in the fourth year, and in another four years the entire network will be finished!¹⁹²

Thus Hitler came to speak of his Four-Year Plan and proclaimed that he would be able to resolve even more demanding problems than the above stated. His rise “from nothing, all the way to the top of the German nation” served as sufficient proof of his abilities.

We will never say that the problems cannot be solved. Problems that arise can also be solved, and they will be solved! Naturally this requires boldness, initiative, determination, and great faith. But a much greater boldness and a much greater faith were required for a single man to take up the battle eighteen years ago against a whole world of ideas and foes!

When I say today that we will have solved this or that problem in four years, it all seems much easier to me than it seemed to me then to strike out as a lone wanderer on the path from nothing, all the way to the top of the German nation. Therefore, may no one stand up against me and say, "That won't work!" No one can and no one will say that to me. I am not one of those men who let themselves be told, "It won't work." It must work, for Germany must live.

Naturally we will only solve the problems if we are *one* front. [—]

When I see you standing before me as the front line of German labor, then please grasp the meaning of the word "front." Front means *one* will, it means *one* resolve; front means *one* goal and *one* deed!

What he was referring to naturally was the will, the resolve, the ambition, and the deeds of one man, Adolf Hitler.

In a speech before the Party's fighting formations on September 13, Hitler addressed the men in the style of Jesus Christ, as passed on to us by John the Evangelist:

That is the miracle of our age—that you have found me [here he was interrupted by lengthy applause], that you have found me among so many millions! And that I have found you, that is Germany's good fortune!

Then Hitler turned the attention of his listeners to the issue of the volunteer troops that had constituted themselves all over the world in an effort to aid Spain against the onslaught of Franco's men. Hitler proclaimed that should he call for such volunteers, these would certainly not resemble the 30,000 undisciplined warriors now rallying, but rather there would be millions.

Rallies are being held everywhere during these weeks and months. We read about how, in other countries, the stirred-up masses are called upon to attend protest rallies against Fascism, against National Socialism; to attend rallies for Bolshevism, rallies for shipments of arms; rallies for donations—yes, and even to attend rallies for the shipments of people.

I have never called out for people to attend a rally, and if I ever do, then all of Germany will be but a single rally, because not only ten or twenty or thirty thousand undisciplined people will demonstrate, but instead millions upon millions will be inflamed against the old adversary and hereditary enemy of humanity!

On "Wehrmacht Day," September 14, Hitler presented a peculiar argument in a speech before an assembly of conscripts to attempt to

win their approval of the extension of the service. Hitler had the audacity to claim that by undergoing two years of military training the recruits would gain ten years more life expectancy than ordinary mortals. The irony of the matter was that in front of him on that day stood the very first recruits drafted, the majority of whom had been born in 1914. They also would be the very first to be engaged in combat once the war broke out and to suffer the greatest amount of casualties in the armed conflict which ensued and later came to be known as the Second World War.

The experience they were going to have to undergo would make most of them lose fifty years in life expectancy in the end. Nonetheless, that day Hitler stated the following:

Soldiers!

For the third time you are assembled here on this square in Nuremberg! For the first time the war flags of the new Reich are flying before you! For the first time you are holding in your fists the new banners of your regiments!

Thus even this external image illustrates the change which Germany, our and your Germany, has undergone.

This change is the result of the great work of educating our Volk and no less great an effort in all the areas of our national life.

The fact that we are able to stand here today and celebrate these days this way is something we owe to the infinite energy, the infinite diligence, the infinite work of our Volk. Yet this work would be in vain were the Reich not able to safeguard its internal and external peace. What today fills us with such great pride are the accomplishments of our work of peace. The supreme task assigned to us all is safeguarding and thus preserving this accomplishment and this work. And if millions of people dedicate their lives to this work year in, year out, in factories and workshops, in plants and offices, then it is understandable and reasonable that all of them are equally prepared to dedicate their lives to preserve what has thus been accomplished.

This is why you, my soldiers, have been called upon by the nation! Not to support some frivolous experiment of hysterical chauvinism—but to stand guard over our work! To stand guard over our Volk! To stand guard over Germany! When I see you thus before me, I feel and I know that this guard will stand firm against any danger and any threat.

Germans have always been good soldiers. The Army from which you have grown forth looks back on the proudest heritage of all time. If Germany collapsed back then, it was the consequence of its inner political collapse.

Today the nation stands as straight as you, my young comrades, stand here before me. Germany has once more become worthy of its soldiers, and I know that you will be worthy soldiers of this Reich! With the Volk, the Party and the Army, we make up an indissoluble, sworn community.

Grave times may lie ahead. They will never find us wavering, never disheartened and never cowardly! For we all know the kingdom of heaven

cannot be gained by half-men! Freedom cannot be preserved by cowards! And the future belongs only to the brave!

What is being asked of you is only a small part of what the past required of us. Back then we did our duty, today you will do yours. The two years I ask of you for Germany I will give you back with ten! For this discipline will make every one of you healthier than he has ever been before. Whatever you give to the Fatherland in your youth, will be returned to you in your old age. You will be a healthy generation, not suffocated in offices and factory halls, but raised in the sun and the outdoors, steeled by physical exercise, and above all strengthened in character. And believe me, Germany has a place in its heart for you, its soldiers! It has transferred the esteem, the admiration and the love it showed for our former great army to you. And you shall be worthy of it! The nation expects no sacrifices from you that you shall not make!

Then Germany will never again approach the sorrowful times we were made to endure! Our Fatherland, your Germany, your homeland and the homeland of our children will be strong and great and happy. It will be able to preserve that very peace that safeguards our life.

In this hour we all join in professing our faith to this, our German Volk, and to the millions of toiling people in the cities and the countryside, in professing our faith in the German Reich.

To our Germany: *Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*

Hitler's final speech at the Party Congress, delivered on September 14, was for the most part a reiteration of the imminent threat to the world posed by Communism. Taking advantage of Franco's mutiny in Spain, Hitler was determined to create an international Red scare, just as he had done in Germany in the years 1932/1933. The fear he had been able to induce domestically at the time had bordered on mass psychosis. The German Nationalists, the heads of industry, and the top men of the military had easily fallen prey to Hitler's designs. They had aided and abetted his rise to power in the hope that he would spare Germany the plight of a Bolshevik take-over.

Outside of Germany, Hitler's schemes failed him miserably. In the West, Hitler did not succeed in convincing anyone that the Bolsheviks had attempted to topple the Spanish Government. The Western Powers did not accord Hitler the freedom of preventive actions against the East. The only tangible result of Hitler's arguments was the confusion his tirades created in the German public. His harangues convoluted the public's comprehension of world affairs so much that many Germans actually became convinced that the dreaded monstrosity of Bolshevism truly was raising its frightful head in Spain. The "party narrative" of September 14, 1936, reached a hitherto unequaled height when Hitler concluded a little hastily:

Thanks to the National Socialist idea and through the work of the National Socialist leadership, a new Germany has arisen! One can love it or one can hate it, but no one will change it, no one can do away with it!

In addition, Hitler gave an explanation of the motives behind the extension of the service period which came much closer to the truth than the fairytale on the dangers of Bolshevism.

The first and most difficult of our appointed political tasks can be said to be solved today. With the introduction of the two-year period service, the German Reich has once again been liberated, in scarcely four years of National Socialist leadership of state, from the worst consequences of that unscrupulous mutiny that attempted to defame us not only militarily, but first and foremost morally! It may be that the peoples who were not visited by a misfortune comparable to that of Germany have no concept of the emphasis we place on settling this question above all.

Hitler observed at the beginning of his attack on the Bolsheviks that it would have suited him well had the Communists indeed taken care of the so-called "upper ten thousand"¹⁹³ and the "worthless Philistines" in Germany. The latter term mainly referred to the intellectual critics of National Socialism.

We did not defend Germany against Bolshevism back then because we were intending to do anything like conserve a bourgeois world or go so far as to freshen it up. Had Communism really intended nothing more than a certain purification by eliminating isolated rotten elements from among the ranks of our so-called 'upper ten thousand' or our equally worthless Philistines, one could have sat back quietly and looked on for a while.

The aim of Bolshevism is not, however, to liberate peoples from what is sick, but the opposite: to exterminate what is healthy, what is healthiest of all, in fact, and to place in its stead the most degenerated of all.

I cannot ally myself with a Weltanschauung which, as its initial action upon taking power, would invariably choose not to first liberate the working Volk, but to liberate instead the asocial scum of the earth concentrated in the penitentiaries, and then to let them loose like animals upon their frightened and stunned fellow beings. [—]

We also reject this doctrine as a consequence of the more humane approach we have to our fellow men. The remarks of our speakers at this Party Congress and the events in Spain have once again provided to the world and to our German Volksgenossen an insight into atrocities of Bolshevik combat methods and government maxims. The German Volk is too good and too decent for such hideous monstrosities.¹⁹⁴

For hours, he continued along these lines. Occasionally, he would stop to admire his own successes and again swear that nothing could ever lead him away from an opinion he had once formed.

I have only been able to score these successes because, first of all, I endeavored to see things as they are and not as one would like to have them. And secondly, because I have never allowed weaklings to talk me out of or lead me away from an opinion I had once formed; and thirdly, because I have always resolved under all circumstances to respond to a necessity once recognized. Today, now that Fate has bestowed such great success upon me, I will not abandon my principles.

Then he appealed to the neighboring peoples to finally come to realize that they could not possibly have a better friend or a stronger protector in the face of the Bolshevik threat than Adolf Hitler.

May the peoples living around us comprehend that, if they respect German independence, freedom and honor, they will nowhere find a more sincere friend than the National Socialist Third Reich.¹⁹⁵

May, however, that very Bolshevism of which we learned only a few months ago that it intends to arm its forces in order to open the door to revolution among other peoples with force, if necessary; may this Bolshevism know that the new German Army stands guard at the German door.

Following the appeal, Hitler described in minute detail the gruesome deeds of the Bolsheviks in Spain, which he rendered more vivid by references to the French Revolution in 1789, to the Kerensky government in 1917¹⁹⁶ and to the 1936 Popular Front government in France, under the leadership of the Socialist Léon Blum.¹⁹⁷

The brutal mass slaughter of nationalist officers, igniting the gasoline-drenched wives of nationalist officers, the slaughter of the children and babies of nationalist parents, for example in Spain, should be a warning to all like-thinking powers in other countries to shrink from any act of resistance in a similar situation.

Should these methods achieve their aim and the modern Girondins be replaced by Jacobins and Kerensky's People's Front by Bolsheviks, Europe will perish in a sea of blood and mourning. European culture which—fertilized in prehistoric antiquity—will soon celebrate 2,500 years of history, will yield to the crudest barbarity of all time.

At the end of the speech, Hitler got increasingly carried away and raged against his intellectual critics. He acted as if he intended to march against Russia within days.

No one will harbor a single doubt that National Socialism will defend itself everywhere and under any circumstances against the attacks of Bolshevism, and will conquer and destroy it. [—]

We are marching in a rapid step toward turbulent times. The tempo requires men of determined toughness, and not weakly Philistines. It will not judge people according to the superficial manners of society, but according to the quality and toughness of their character in times of heavy burdens.

Now more than before, it is the Party's task to ensure that hard views are established in our Volk and that above all a relentless war be declared on every trace of that pitiful cleverness Clausewitz castigated as the worst symptom of cowardice. We are approaching great historic periods; in courses of time such as these, pure cleverness has never triumphed, but invariably brave courage. Above all, the Party must embody the optimism we National Socialists know so well. Every fault can be overcome, and its manifestations are easier to eliminate than pessimism and its consequences.

Let him beware who has no faith [in Adolf Hitler]. He is committing a sin against the meaning of life as a whole. He is of no use for anything, and his existence will be nothing but a burden to his Volk.

In the course of my political struggle—and unfortunately I must stress this again—it was particularly in bourgeois circles that I encountered these sorry pessimists who, in their pitiful state, are incapable of any faith whatsoever and hence could not be used for any redeeming action. And even today I often meet them.

I have but one question I must confront them with:

What would have happened to Germany had an unknown soldier not had the faith in 1919 that he would one day be able to rescue the German nation from its demise by steadfastness and dedication, by bravery and a willingness to sacrifice?

What did Germany rescue after all? Was it the pessimism of these petty carpers, these pitiful doubters, these invariable despondent defeatists? Or was it not the unshakeable confidence that the eternal qualities of our Volk would win out against the inferior and the burdensome? No! It was the miracle of faith that rescued Germany.

Today, after all these historically unique successes, it is more than ever the duty of the Party to recall this National Socialist profession of faith and to carry it once more at its force as the holy symbol of our fight and our certain victory.

This is why the Party too must penetrate again and again to the heart of the Volk at large which is the best and the strongest supporter of the faith we have. This Volk alone has in itself the courage and the bravery and the confidence Nature provides to primitive beings for their own self-preservation. Had commanders¹⁹⁸ always been as courageous as grenadiers must be at all times, many battles would not have been lost. And if politicians are as strong of faith as the broad masses of a Volk are true, then they are invincible as leaders of their peoples.

The Party Congress was barely over when Hitler appeared at another mass rally, this time military in nature. The most extensive maneuvers of the postwar period were held by the Second Army Group (Heeresgruppe II), involving the Fifth Army Corps from Stuttgart and the Ninth Army Corps from Kassel.

At 10:00 a.m. on September 17, Hitler addressed the men of the Fifth Corps in Giebelstadt near Würzburg. He returned to the half-forgotten

“stab-in-the-back” legend and claimed that in 1918 “the great Army, that proudest emblem of our Volk, was forced to lower its arms and the old flags, the victim of a treacherous attack.” Although he could not help mentioning the army of the Weimar years, he avoided to term it the “Reichswehr,” speaking only of the “small force of 100,000 men.” Instead he was completely enraptured by the revival which he had struggled for and achieved for his Volk, namely, the “resurrection” of Germany and its army. He stated in his Giebelstadt address:¹⁹⁹

Soldiers of the Fifth Army Corps!

In a few weeks’ time, exactly eighteen years will have passed since the great Army, that proudest emblem of our Volk, was forced to lower its arms and the old flags, the victim of a treacherous attack. In a Peace Treaty which was thrust upon us as a *Diktat*, the opponent demanded the abolishment of this great and unique Army, doing so in the conviction of not only thereby removing an obstructing organization, but also of delivering a mortal blow to the German Volk. And this blow was made possible and accepted by unscrupulous and irresponsible politicians.

What our Volk has been forced to endure since then is something we and you all know: not a peaceful development, not a time of understanding and reconciliation between peoples has come, but a time of German lamentation, of misery and of despair. Only a few months after the Old Army’s collapse there arose a young movement in Germany with the goal of re-erecting the German Volk and the German Army. For many years, two views stood opposed: the first held that Germany could only be happy if it were completely without defenses.

The second, in contrast, claimed that happiness can only come to him who is able to hold it fast in his strong fists. Since then, eighteen years have passed; the second view has won out. It has re-erected the German Volk and crowned this achievement of construction with the establishment of a new, great *Volksheer*, whose soldiers you comprise today. The great inheritance of the old army that was cultivated by a small force of 100,000 men has now been passed on in turn to a great, tremendous army of the entire German Volk.

You have now become the pillars of this unique and great tradition, the representatives of a new and great German Army, and hence the protectors of the honor, the strength and the magnificence of the German nation.

A new flag was raised over the new Reich. It has nothing to do with cowardice and subjection but signifies instead the spirit of the new German uprising and the German resurrection. Your flags wave in the colors and symbols of the new Reich, of a Reich of the *Volkgemeinschaft* whose sons you are; your parents have sent you here to serve the German nation.

It is on behalf of this new Reich that I present to you these flags and standards. You shall be loyal to them just as the regiments and battalions of the old army were loyal to their banners! As sons of our Volk, as soldiers of the National Socialist Third Reich, as the guard of the new Germany shall you march behind these banners!

You will do your duty just as the generations coming after you. And at the fore of fulfilling your duty you shall place our Germany, our holy Reich!

After the speech, Hitler presented the troop commanders with the new flags and standards. The Giebelstadt rally was not the only one of its kind. In Upper Hesse on the next day, the new flags were handed over to the troops of the Ninth Army Corps at Fritzlar. There, in front of a parade formation of soldiers, Hitler delivered the following short address:²⁰⁰

You shall stand by these banners in good times and bad! Never shall you abandon them, you shall carry them in your fists before a nation grown great once again. It gazes upon you with the greatest of pride and with blind trust. Prove yourselves worthy of this trust and always place your service and your actions before the phrase: 'Germany, our German Volk and our German Reich.'

Next, the maneuvers of the two Army Corps began. Hitler himself spent September 21 with the Second Army Group Command (Gruppenkommando II) at its headquarters outside of Fulda.

In Breslau on September 27, a ceremony marked the completion of the first 1,000 kilometers of Autobahn. Hitler gave a speech addressed to the assembled Autobahn workers. This time, he declared that it was the German worker who understood him best—even though he had just paid the German women this same compliment. At first, Hitler sarcastically described the difficulties of such an enterprise as road construction prior to his accession to power. He contrasted this state of affairs with his predictions that within the next five years²⁰¹ the first 7,000 kilometers of Autobahn would be completed, and within eighteen months Germany would be freed from its dependence upon fuel imports.

On October 3, Hitler attended the launch of the light battleship *D Scharnhorst* in Wilhelmshaven.²⁰² The following day, an *Erntedankfest* celebration took place on the Bückeberg near Hamelin. For once, there was no sunny "Hitler weather," rather, it was raining, and Hitler had a hard time accounting for the fact in his speech.

The currency problem, much debated by economists, could not be avoided in this speech. Following the lead of the Anglo-Saxon Powers, most countries bordering on Germany²⁰³ had agreed to devalue their currencies. If Germany did not follow suit, German exports would be endangered. Hitler was opposed to such measures. In his opinion, the backing of a currency was determined by the productive capacities and the "working power of the Volk." He preferred to accept economic

difficulties rather than follow the other European countries in matters of financial and currency politics. His ‘proof,’ however, that a currency not backed with either gold reserves or foreign currency as well as wages and prices could remain stable in spite of gigantic armament expenses, was a short-time illusion built on hidden money-creating measures by the Reichsbank. When war broke out—the money circulation had already been out of all proportion to real productivity reflected in the balances of trade, payments, etc.—not even the NS Government could prevent a considerable inflation. No government ever has been able to do that, not since the first days of the monetary system. On that 4th of October, however, Hitler believed he had decisively resolved the currency problem, and confidently declared on the Bückeberg:²⁰⁴

I believe that reason is to be the sovereign in our state and that the German Volk has sufficient insight and discipline to grasp the necessities this reason entails. And therefore we perceive:

First of all, that we can only prevail if we have social peace, i.e. if not everyone can do what he wants to. The individual must subordinate himself to the whole, to a higher common interest. Hence the worker cannot look after only his own interests, just as the peasant and the urban dweller cannot look after only their own; rather, each is called upon to show mutual consideration to the others!

Secondly, that we must keep our wage policy and thus our pricing policy stable and steady. And if anyone believes he can violate that policy, believe me, as long as I live and remain standing at the head of the Reich, I will successfully defend the reason of general, national self-preservation against these few lunatics!

I am thereby doing something which in fact brings great good fortune to millions upon millions of people in Germany. We could make maneuvers like those the others are making: today I grant a worker a fifteen or twenty-percent wage increase; tomorrow I raise prices by fifteen or twenty percent; then I raise wages and then prices again, and two months later we devalue the German mark and betray the savers, and then we increase wages again, and so on—do you think that would make the German Volk happy? I am directing an appeal to all of you: gauge the good fortune of our inner German economic, social, and political peace!

How splendid it is indeed in Germany today! Take a look into other nations who have lost this power of reason! We must never allow this good fortune and this peace to be taken from us, and I know that this will never come to pass!

Where in the world would it be possible that, on a day such as today—on a day so cold that the wind whips the clouds over the mountains and one expects it to rain again any minute—where else would it be possible that hundreds of thousands and hundreds of thousands—nearly a million people—flock together on such a day to profess their unity?

October 6, 1936

Two days later in the Berlin Deutschlandhalle, Hitler delivered a lengthy speech at the opening of the new Winterhilfswerk.²⁰⁵ In essence, the talk only reiterated arguments he had previously presented. Yet Hitler added to the arguments such as the “Volksgemeinschaft” and “Socialism of deeds” acrobatically juggled figures and vehement attacks on his critics.

That was the miracle—that the first seven were joined by a further seven and ultimately twenty and fifty and one hundred and then one thousand and ten thousand and one hundred thousand, and that they did not tire of parading their idealism again and again and of obeying it and not the so-called real purpose of life.

And think of the sacrifices they had to make! Reading it is easy: 400 murdered and 42,000 injured.²⁰⁶ [—]

In the former world, there was nothing I hated more than so-called lip service. There they were, loyal German citizens who gave their thundering three cheers for the commander in chief over war and peace behind closely locked doors with outposts on the street.

But then when the hour arrived when they would have had to take their positions in front of their commander in chief, they were nowhere to be found. [—]

I also hated the other side for its lip service. They talked about socialism but were capable only of leading the broad masses into misery. They preached heaven on earth and succeeded only in creating hell. They talked about how they intended to abolish the classes, and instituted forced labor camps.²⁰⁷ They were the same liars in socialist areas as the others were in their national areas. When I see this type of lazy carper traveling to and fro in Germany, finding things to criticize here and there, at bottom I almost have pity on the man, because I have to say to myself: basically you’re quite a pitiful fellow; you don’t even know how splendid it is to work, and above all you have no idea as to what work there is to do. You loiter about, your hands clasped behind your back, and complain; you complain about this, you complain about that, but you have no idea as to all the things that are really happening and all the things that are still to happen. [—]

Our faith in Germany is unshakeable, our will unbounded, and where will and faith so fervently join forces, Heaven cannot withhold its approval. Then these little critics, these ridiculous newspaper-scribblers can spray any amount of poison in the other world, and we can truly say: they will nevertheless fail. Hence we begin the new Winterhilfswerk. The entire nation shall stand together once again just as in the years past. The National Socialist Movement and the Party will march at the fore, and I expect every German of decency and character to join in step with this column.

On that same October 6, Hitler addressed a telegram to the Hungarian Regent, expressing his sympathies with regard to the demise of General Gömbös. The Hungarian Minister-President had died of an internal

illness in the Munich hospital Neuwittelsbach at the age of fifty. The telegram read:²⁰⁸

I express to your Excellency the great sympathy felt by both myself and the German Volk at the death of Herr Gömbös, Minister-President of Hungary. While Hungary suffers the loss of one of its most deserving and best sons in the person of the deceased, Germany loses a good friend.

Adolf Hitler

Gömbös' widow, too, received a similar telegram. Her husband had been the first foreign dignitary to visit Hitler after his assumption of power. Hitler attended the funeral ceremony in the Kaisersaal of the Munich Residenz.²⁰⁹

In Berchtesgaden on October 18, Hitler signed the "Decree for the Execution of the Four-Year Plan," which read:²¹⁰

The implementation of the Four-Year Plan, as announced by me at the Party Congress of Honor requires the central orchestration of the German Volk's strength and demands a stringent reorganization of responsibilities in Party and State. I charge Colonel General and Minister-President Göring with the implementation of the Four-Year Plan.

Minister-President Göring shall take all measures necessary to see to the fulfillment of his mission. He is entitled to issue legal and general administrative regulations. He is further entitled to investigate all matters concerning the administrative apparatus, including the Supreme Reich Authorities and all offices of the Party, with its various subdivisions and formations—to whom he is entitled to issue instructions.

At first glance, this decree seemed to accord Göring enormous power. However, it actually merely removed bureaucratic hurdles that occasionally had resisted the imposition and execution of Hitler's orders. By naming Göring chief of all matters related to economics and administration, as head of all government agencies and party offices, Hitler was able to quite considerably speed up the implementation of his measures. Göring was not only trustworthy and completely loyal, he was also sufficiently adept to immediately grasp the true intentions of Hitler's ordinances.

Speaking before an assembly of the German industrialists on December 17, 1936,²¹¹ Hitler praised him in the following terms: "He is my best man. May all of you back him a full 100 percent." Soon the true nature of Hitler's Four-Year Plan became evident; its primary goal was to hasten the production of war goods and create the economic environment most favourable to a wartime economy.

On October 24 on the Obersalzberg, Hitler received the son-in-law of Mussolini, Count Ciano, who had recently been named Foreign

Minister in Italy.²¹² Hitler decided to make the most of the situation and announced that Germany would officially recognize the Italian Empire of Ethiopia. This most certainly was good news for the Count. The press statement on the two-day talks was most confident and congenial in tone. Italy and Germany expressed a concurrence of opinion on all political questions of importance, agreed to continue to work for peace and promised mutual aid in the restoration of their respective homelands. Mussolini himself pronounced the existence of the "Rome-Berlin Axis" on November 1 in Milan.

A day earlier, the Gau Gross-Berlin celebrated the tenth anniversary of its foundation within the NS Party organization. On this occasion, Hitler gave an effusive laudatory at 11:00 p.m. in the Sportpalast, to his "shield-bearer" Goebbels:²¹³

Just as everywhere in Germany, from the largest to the smallest context, the man is what counts—that is how it was back then, too, in the Capital of the Reich. For two years I racked my brains asking, "Where is the man?" And when I heard this man speak for the first time and spoke to him myself, I knew: he and no other is capable of doing it, he has to do it! [—]

That marked the real beginning of the history of the National Socialist Movement in Berlin; what had gone before was only its prehistory. Just as I once joined an association already composed of six members; yet I believe that the history of the association—the history of the Party—commenced on the day I joined it. [—]

I can understand the sentiments that fill you today, my dear Doctor, when you once again gaze upon this old company of your first fighters, the company that stood by you in loyalty and devotion through all these years, when you first began a nearly hopeless struggle and marched at the fore of this struggle as a devout zealot into this very Berlin, this awakening Berlin. Hence today I would like foremost to thank you, my dear Doctor: you to whom I handed a flag back then, ten years ago, a flag you planted in the Reich Capital as the banner of the nation. Your name stands for this ten-year struggle of the National Socialist Movement in Berlin! It is inseparably bound up with this struggle and shall never be erased from German history, from the history of the National Socialist Movement, and above all from the history of this city.

You, my Berlin Party Comrades, men and women, have had the good fortune of seeing one leader at the fore for the space of ten years. I have had the good fortune of knowing I had a loyal, unshakeable shield-bearer (*Schildknappe*) of the Party here doing outpost duty these ten years. And you, my dear Doctor, you and I have both had the good fortune these ten years of having encountered so many manifestations of affection and loyalty such as those evidenced here again today before us in this hall. This will enable the entire German Volk to understand yet again why the National Socialist Movement is so proud of its evolution, of its struggle, and why it is so closely-knit; why this Movement's following and its leader are one as no one else can be. [—]

I believe we all still have so tremendously much more work to accomplish in our Volk that we will witness a further anniversary celebration. For whoever expects to accomplish a great deal will be kept younger by these accomplishments than others; thus, on this tenth anniversary of the founding of the Gau of Berlin, I look forward to celebrating the twentieth—in the conviction that you, my dear Doctor, will then also be here. And if God so wishes, perhaps I will be here as well. And then—this I know—you will look back with even more pride on the past which will then have become ever so grand. [—]

I ask all of you to join me in hailing the man who has borne our banner as my Statthalter in Berlin and as your leader: to our Dr. Goebbels—*Heil!*

Even though Hitler's vision of a twenty-year anniversary of the Gau of Berlin did not stand the test of time, in a sense the city was indeed inseparably intertwined with the fate of the Führer and his *Schildknappe*. Instead of celebrating the anticipated anniversary in 1946, a year prior to it they committed suicide together in the bunker beneath the Chancellery, amidst the rubble of a collapsed empire and of a destroyed city, about to be overrun by the victorious Allied Powers.

It is evident that it was Hitler, and not Goebbels, who was responsible for the tragic turn events took in the following years. Hitler never accepted advice from anyone in questions of principle and did not tolerate others meddling with these affairs, least of all Goebbels. As Goebbels aptly phrased it in 1932 in the Berlin edition of *Der Angriff*: "I do not represent any particular direction in the Party. We have only one single direction, and that is the one the Führer determines."²¹⁴

To his last breath, Goebbels lived up to this maxim. His address to "our Hitler" on the latter's birthday in 1945 was identical in content with the one he had given in 1933. In 1945, he still had the courage to stand up and defend his master in public, when Hitler himself had for a long time already been quiet and other Unterführers, like Göring and Himmler, were hastily preparing for their own "survival."

At the Berghof on November 4, Hitler had a three-hour-long conference with Cardinal Faulhaber on the topic of the relationship between Catholic Church and Third Reich.²¹⁵ On November 8, Hitler delivered his traditional address in the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich, marking the anniversary of the 1923 Putsch.²¹⁶ Looking to the past as well as to the future, Hitler was concerned mainly with military matters, in other words, with his right to decide upon either war or peace.

I took the first step when I made the decision to found the Movement. And it was a very difficult decision indeed for me to imprison the Bavarian

Government and proclaim a national revolution in Germany. For the first time one was forced to make a decision on life and death without having been given any orders. And I believe that was a good thing; in the past three-and-a-half years I have had to make very difficult decisions [on life and death] in which, at times, the fate of the entire nation was on the line. Unfortunately, I never had that famous fifty-one-percent certainty when doing so.²¹⁷ Often enough there was a ninety-five-percent chance of failing and merely a five-percent chance of succeeding. Yet perhaps that eighth of November 1923 helped me to later be able to decide on issues fraught with danger. Moreover, that decision became an important lesson for the future.

Perhaps that is the achievement of which I am personally most proud and for which history will surely one day give me the most credit: the fact that I succeeded not only in not shattering the Army, but in forming it into cadres for the new German *Volksarmee*.

And this gives us all a deep sense of inner satisfaction: when I appeared in this hall for the first time, I myself was still a soldier. All of us came from the old army, we all wore this garb, and it was because we were all so very attached to this gray garb that we were unable to ever reconcile ourselves with the revolution that had sullied this garb! It was as soldiers we began this struggle, and as politicians we won it out! Yet the wonderful thing about this struggle is that we have now been able to present the German Volk with a new gift of the old army. And just as the old army once fought for the old Reich, so shall the new army—if ever the hour so require—fight and prevail for the new Reich.

There is but a single difference: when the old army went off to war, it was armed with weapons against everything but the propaganda of infiltration and decay. Today the Army carries with it the talisman of political immunity against every attempt to infiltrate this Army.²¹⁸ Never again will our opponents succeed there. This Army is the National Socialist Army of the new Reich, and by virtue of the fact that, year for year, we send one generation after another from our National Socialist offspring into this Army, it becomes ever more closely bound up with our modern Volk and its spirit. We are increasingly endowing it with the strength of our Weltanschauung. This is perhaps the greatest achievement of all we have accomplished after these many long years.

This is the one thing of which I am personally most proud. I believe that one day posterity will give me the most credit that I did not confine Germany to defenselessness for fifteen years, but that I succeeded in creating, in scarcely four years' time, a great German National Socialist *Volksarmee* from the army of 100,000; that all those who might otherwise have become our enemies are working and helping us in this Army. When the trial came to a close in 1924, I predicted—back then—that the hour would come in which both phenomena would unite to become one. And that prediction has now come to pass! Cannot we thus quite rightly say that those who were killed in 1923 did not die in vain; that their sacrificial death was worth it? I hold that, were they to rise from the dead, theirs would be eternal bliss were they to see what has now come to be. [—]

There are perhaps those who say, "You're virtually making them into martyrs!" Yes, that is my intention. I want to make of these dead the first sixteen martyrs of the National Socialist Movement, sixteen persons who were killed believing in something completely new that would only become a reality ten years later. Sixteen persons who marched under a completely new flag to which they pledged their oath of allegiance sealed with their blood. These sixteen made the utmost sacrifice and deserve that we keep them in constant remembrance. Hence it is my wish that for all time, beyond centuries and millenniums, the National Socialist Party and with it the whole of Germany shall always commemorate this sacrifice on this day, that they may thus remember these men again and again. [—]

That is also why we are gathered together here once more today, thirteen years after that day. This year in particular we have very strong reasons to evoke a recollection of that former time. For today I can assure you: this is the first time I am celebrating this day of commemoration without deep concern for our German Volk.²¹⁹

I can already see the time coming in which our own numbers will slowly decrease and the young circle of new and coming generations will rise up around us. Yet one thing I know is that even after the last one of us has fallen from our ranks, the youth will hold our flag clenched firmly in their hands and be ever mindful of those men who believed—in the age of Germany's deepest humiliation—in a shining resurrection.

At the march commemorating the event of November 9, a new protocol was introduced. After the formation reached the Feldherrnhalle and stood silently before the monument erected there, the Reich Minister of War, Field Marshal von Blomberg, joined the first row of bearers of the Blood Order on Hitler's left. The procession then marched on to the Königsplatz. Colonel General Göring had positioned himself to the right of Hitler. Next to Gauleiter Wagner strode the General in Command of the troops in Munich, Walter von Reichenau. The Old Fighters wore their simple brown shirts, only Himmler appeared in full SS uniform complete with sword. Small details such as these may appear trivial, but they amount to significant symbolic statements by their bearers. At midnight in front of the Feldherrnhalle, the new SS recruits took their loyalty oaths. In a special address, Hitler swore them to the task of sacrificing their lives relentlessly, and he personally spoke the words of the oath.²²⁰

On November 12, Hitler received the newly appointed Argentinian Ambassador Eduardo Labougle and the Bolivian Envoy Sanjumes, holding the usual welcoming speeches.²²¹ The next day in Berlin, Hitler attended a concert of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.²²² On November 18, Hitler officially recognized the Franco regime. Telegrams were exchanged with Franco, the contents

of which were never made public.²²³ Italy followed suit and announced its support for Franco that day, too.

On November 19, Hitler received the new Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Guido Schmidt, for a two-hour consultation on pending matters.²²⁴ This in itself was a sign of the changed climate in German-Austrian affairs that had developed over the previous months. Before an assembly of eight hundred Gauamtsleiters at the Ordensburg Vogelsang, Hitler gave a speech on November 20 in the Eifel mountains.²²⁵ The NSK reported as follows:

The Führer spoke on the topic of the principle ideas of our time. On the doorstep to the third millennium of German history into which National Socialism is guiding the German Volk today, he outlined the German history of the past two millennia.

On November 24, Hitler sent a telegram to Reichsleiter Amann, congratulating him on his forty-fifth birthday.²²⁶ In addition, he honored the surgeon Professor August Bier by presenting him with the *Adlerschild des Deutschen Reiches* medal and sending him a telegram.²²⁷

The following day, Goebbels announced in a radio broadcast that Germany and Japan had concluded an agreement directed against the Communist International (Comintern).²²⁸ The pact was primarily directed against the Soviet Union. In all likelihood, it was also intended as a warning to Great Britain to not further underestimate the Führer!²²⁹ The fact that he assigned Ribbentrop—not Foreign Minister von Neurath—to draft and sign the document was intended to reinforce the affront against the English. Up to 1938, Hitler repeatedly employed this approach in his dealings with Britain. This resulted in the ludicrous situation that Ribbentrop, in his eighteen months as German Ambassador to Great Britain, spent less time in London than traveling from one European capital to the next in attempts to snub the Government in London. The pact of November 25 read as follows:²³⁰

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of Imperial Japan,

in the recognition that it is the ultimate goal of the Communist International, termed Comintern, to subvert and ravage the existing states by all means at its disposal,

in the conviction that allowing for a like interference in the internal affairs of a nation by the Communist International to take place, is not conducive to its internal peace and its society's welfare, and that moreover it poses a threat to world peace,

desire to cooperate in the warding off of Communist subversion, and have agreed to the following:

Article I

The High Powers Signatory to this Contract agree to keep each other informed on the activities of the Communist International, to consult with each other on necessary countermeasures, and to do so by close cooperation.

Article II

The High Powers Signatory to this Contract agree to mutually assist third parties, the internal peace of which is endangered by subversion through the Communist International, to effect countermeasures in the spirit of this pact or to join this pact.

Article III

Both the German and the Japanese text shall serve as originals of this pact. The pact is effective the day of signature and will remain so for a period of five years. The High Powers Signatory to this Contract shall confer on the further mode of cooperation between their states in due time prior to expiry of said period.

In witness thereof, the signatories have set their hand to this pact, as the justly and fully accredited representatives of their respective governments, and have affixed their seal hereto.

Thus duly accomplished in dual copy in Berlin on the twenty-fifth day of November 1936, the twenty-fifth day of November in the eleventh year of the Showa Period.

On the occasion of the official signing of the document, Hitler held an evening reception at the Chancellery. In addition to the Japanese ambassador and his military attaché, nearly all the leading men of the Third Reich were present: Hess, Göring, Goebbels, Lutze, Dietrich, etc. The later famous Admiral Canaris was also among the illustrious guests of that evening.²³¹

At the gathering of the Fourth Reich Peasants Day in Goslar, the peasants' lobby under their leader, Minister of Food and Agriculture Darré, pledged its loyalty to Hitler.²³² In return, Darré received a telegram from Hitler expressing his appreciation of the support the peasants accorded him.

On November 27, Hitler was present at the third annual meeting of the Reich Chamber of Culture in the Philharmonic Concert Hall in Berlin. There he spoke to Franz Léhar and Sven Hedin among others.²³³ That same day, Hitler issued an ordinance regarding the envisioned National Socialist *Kampfspiele* (competitive games)²³⁴ which were to take place under the auspices of the SA. The games were planned as "National Olympics." According to Hitler's wishes, they should ensure continuation of the Olympic tradition and one day perhaps replace the International Olympic Games.

On December 1, Hitler gave a short talk before the Reich Cabinet, detailing foreign policy. A whole dozen of laws was enacted that day, of which the most remarkable was the “Law Regarding the Hitler Youth.”²³⁵

§1

Within the boundaries of the Reich, the entire German youth is integrated in the Hitler Youth.

§2

Outside of home and school, the entire German youth is to be educated in the Hitler Youth with regard to physical exercise, mental functioning and ethical requirements, in the spirit of National Socialism, for service to the Volk and the Volksgemeinschaft.

It is worth noting that another law enacted that day was directed against economic sabotage. Price levels were frozen and Hitler named Gauleiter Josef Wagner of Breslau as Reich Commissar responsible for price formation.

The next day, Hitler received the Italian Senator Puricelli, an industrialist who was engaged in the construction of roads. They discussed the building of an Autobahn to connect Berlin and Rome. Thereafter Hitler visited Reichsleiter Philipp Bouhler to thank him for his fifteen years of involvement in the NSDAP.²³⁶ At the Chancellery, Hitler received a delegation of female district leaders (*Obergau-führerinnen*) and other female administrators of the BDM.²³⁷

On December 7, Hitler was present at the launch of the 26,000-ton battleship *E Gneisenau* in Kiel.²³⁸ Leaders of the Hitler Youth and of the SA were invited to attend a December 13 speech by Hitler on the new tasks they faced with his new law on the Hitler Youth.²³⁹

The day after the speech, Hitler sent a telegram to the new British King, George VI, congratulating him on his birthday.²⁴⁰

On December 16, Hitler attended a concert given by the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* in the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin.²⁴¹ The following day, Hitler addressed the leading men of the German economy in the Reich Capital and demanded that they increase domestic production in all sectors of the economy. The *Völkischer Beobachter* reported Hitler’s statements:²⁴²

The word “impossible” does not exist here, the Führer declared.

Therefore, he had assigned the accomplishment of the Four-Year Plan to a man of unbending will for whom he knows the phrase “it won’t work” does not exist. This man, his old fellow fighter and Party comrade Göring, would turn his decision and his assignment into reality.

“Trust the man I have chosen,” the Führer continued. “It is the best man I have for this task. A man of supreme willpower and supreme determination. Join forces, all of you, with him. We are thus erecting a firm foundation for a German economy rooted in the strength, in the stability and in the security of the German Reich. If we feel zealously committed to this task, two things will prevail before posterity: the political leadership, because it and its men wanted something and achieved it; and the German economy with all its workers, for they devoted their entire energies to accomplishing this task.”

Around noon on December 24, Hitler participated in a Christmas celebration organized by the Old Fighters of Munich. This time the celebration took place in the Löwenbräukeller. As was his custom, he delivered a short address on the occasion.²⁴³

On December 27, Colonel General von Seeckt died. He had been one of the founding fathers of the Reichswehr, or “100,000-man army,” as Hitler derogatorily referred to it. In the condolence telegram,²⁴⁴ addressed to the Colonel General’s widow, Hitler wrote: “Colonel General von Seeckt will live on forever in our history as a great soldier.” He made no mention of the merit the officer had earned in setting up the Reichswehr. On December 30, Hitler attended von Seeckt’s funeral at the Invalids’ Cemetery in Berlin, where he placed a wreath on the Colonel General’s grave.²⁴⁵ In the evening, the Führer returned to Berchtesgaden.

The year dedicated to the “Restoration of Germany’s Honor” had drawn to a close.

THE YEAR 1937

Major Events in Summary

The year 1937 marked an important turning point in the years of Hitler's rule. It was in 1937 that Hitler's deeds and ambitions turned to an aggressive stance in matters of foreign policy and military strategy. That year also was a crucial one in Hitler's personal development as he began to reassess his relationship to questions of a religious nature. In the course of the previous four years, Hitler had secured nearly all positions of power within Germany that he deemed worthy of his effort. Naturally, there were controversies still outstanding with those leading men of the military who could not reconcile themselves to accepting Hitler's word as the sole truth. Furthermore, the tedious problem of the Soldatenbund¹ remained. This veterans' organization openly advocated transforming the Third Reich into a military dictatorship. Hitler realized that in one way or another he would have to come to terms with this particular interest group. Yet Hitler was in no hurry to resolve either of these issues. As Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, he could force compliance with his wishes if need be. It was an entirely different matter with regard to his intellectual critics. They were not organized in a manner which would allow Hitler to resolve the affair by simply eradicating members of a social circle. Even if he forbade discussion or outlawed the voicing of critical remarks, there was no way in which he could silence his opponents' unspoken disagreement. He sensed their silent criticism, and it drove him to near insanity. He simply could not deal with the intellectuals.

Within the borders of the German Reich, Hitler had achieved everything he could in matters of military policy. The military provisions of the Treaty of Versailles had been reversed and general conscription had been reintroduced to Germany. Once again, the military sovereignty of the Reich encompassed the Rhineland.

Nevertheless, if Hitler indeed insisted upon pursuing further goals in matters of foreign and military policy it was reasonably clear that he would have to wage a war abroad. The time had come for decision. Before the year 1937 was over, Hitler revealed to his generals and to the pertinent ministers that he intended to carry through the foreign

policy goals he had set for himself in 1919. This, in turn, meant only one thing—war!²

Hitler also resolved to take decisive action with regard to a question that may also have been closely linked to his decision about war. He made a clear break with his previous values and norms, still rooted in a Catholic world view, and declared: “Now I feel as fresh as a colt in a pasture.”³ For religious inspiration he now looked up to a mysterious martial deity, who challenged the German Volk’s strength and courage. He understood himself to be the executor of this divine will.

Judging by outward appearances, 1937 was a tranquil, quiet year. Hitler was preoccupied with his own personal concerns. Neither plebiscite nor election were called for, and Hitler refrained from “tilling” his Volk “as the peasant tills his field.”⁴ The sole excitement 1937, afforded was the German naval attack on the Spanish port of Almería on May 31.⁵ Further glamor was lent to that year by the grand ceremonies on the occasion of Mussolini’s visit in September. Outside of these two events, the year passed by quietly, its flow barely disturbed by the customary celebration of state or party holidays. The dates were the usual ones: January 30, February 24, April 20, May 1, the Day of German Art, the *Erntedankfest* (to be celebrated one last time that year), and finally the commemoration of the November Putsch.

But outward appearances can be deceiving at times, and matters were not as calm as they appeared to be; much was brewing beneath the surface. Numerous secret meetings and talks were held behind closed doors. Of the latter, the most important address was the one of November 5, in which Hitler chose to reveal his immediate military ambitions to the Reich Foreign Minister and to the heads of the Wehrmacht.

Thus in many respects the year 1937 passed by like the lull before the storm.

Report and Commentary

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In Berlin, Hitler's New Year's proclamation to the "National Socialists and Party Comrades"⁶ was remarkably short, consisting mostly of platitudinous and sentimental reflections on the past. With the exception of the passage reproduced below, it contained little worthy of note.⁷

The year 1937 finds us National Socialists determined to take up the new and tremendous fight for the self-assertion of the nation in the economic sphere. The Volk, politically liberated from the shackles of the Treaty of Versailles, will cast off its economic shackles as well in the coming four years. Above and beyond the mockery and talk of the others shall once more stand the National Socialist deed!

May the pledge to that deed constitute a solemn oath this New Year. Although there were some few little journalists who believed for four years that they were capable of doing away with the success of National Socialist work with their lies, reality has shown them unequivocal proof of the contrary. If today they attempt to raise doubts as to the success of the approaching four years with the same phrases, we shall impart to that attempt to mislead public opinion the same instruction in National Socialism: at the end of the four years lying before us it will prove true that the products of a determined will and tireless, diligent work are always greater than the results achieved by the actions of cavillers capable of nothing but incessant drivel.

This year Hitler addressed no separate appeals to any of the Party's subdivisions. The Wehrmacht was the only entity honored this way⁸

Soldiers!

Behind us lies a most significant year in the history of Germany's defense. Ever since March 7, 1936, our regiments have stood at the Rhine River once more. The introduction of the two-year conscription has consolidated the Wehrmacht and thereby has strengthened the defenses of the Reich.

I thank you for your dutiful loyalty. May you serve the eternal slogan next year as well: *Alles für Deutschland!*

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

That New Year's Day, a telegram left the Chancellery for Budapest. In it Hitler conveyed his condolences to Archduke Albrecht upon the death of his father, who had always been a favorite with the Führer:⁹

I extend to Your Imperial Majesty my sincere sympathies and those of the German Volk on the death of your father. His merit as a Prussian Field Marshal and leader of German troops in the World War will never be forgotten.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

Each of the editors of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Wilhelm Weiss and Joseph Berchtold,¹⁰ received a telegram from Hitler on January 3. The Führer congratulated both journalists on their tenth anniversary of service with the paper.

The next day, Admiral Paul Behncke died. In the years 1920 to 1924, as the Chief of Navy Command, he had played a pivotal role in the rebuilding of the Reich Navy.¹¹ The Navy had been far more supportive of Hitler in the years prior to 1933 than the Reichswehr had been. Not surprisingly, in the telegram directed to Behncke's widow a day later, Hitler expressed the sincerity of his sorrow far more convincingly than in the telegram he had composed upon von Seeckt's demise a month earlier. This notwithstanding, Hitler did not personally attend Behncke's funeral in Lübeck; he sent Rudolf Hess in his stead.

On January 7, a group of mountain climbers encountered distress on the eastern slope of the Watzmann mountain. From his nearby residence at the Berghof, Hitler dispatched a contingent of fifty soldiers to their rescue.¹² On the same day, the British newspaper publisher Lord Rothermere arrived for a consultation at the Obersalzberg.¹³

With the Führer once again in Berlin, the New Year's reception for the Diplomatic Corps took place at the Chancellery on January 11. Since the Nuncio Orsenigo had been taken ill, the French Ambassador François-Poncet, as senior member of the Corps, relayed its best wishes for the new year to Hitler. In reply, Hitler stated the following:¹⁴

Your Excellency!

It is with sincere thanks that I accept the congratulations which Your Excellency has proffered to me and to the German Volk at the New Year, both on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps and on behalf of the Heads of State represented here. I deeply regret that His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio, is unable to take part in today's New Year's reception due to a serious illness. I may echo your Excellency's wishes for his speedy recovery.

In heartfelt gratitude to Providence which has blessed our work, Germany can look back contentedly upon the year now past. Our endeavors have succeeded in scoring major victories in the internal, hard fight for the

existence of our Volk, while securing in regard to its position in the world those same rights accorded to all great nations. Above all, we feel satisfaction in knowing that we have succeeded in further alleviating the plight of unemployment in Germany that constitutes such an oppressing hardship to so many peoples, and have thus enabled numerous Volksgenossen to rise up spiritually as well as economically from the depths of oppression and even despair.

We are determined to continue this work with all our might in the coming year. If, toward this aim, we further increase and stabilize the economic independence of the German Volk, this is not being done with the purpose of isolating ourselves from the environment, but rather with the belief that a truly healthy world economy can only be built upon healthy individual economies and that the solution to the world economic crisis must primarily take as its starting point the solution of the inner political and economic crises of the individual nations.

By endeavoring to put the German Volk in good repair politically, morally, and economically, we are not only safeguarding our own future; in our view, we are thus also doing a service to the rest of the world. For this bulwark of genuinely European culture and the strong sense of social justice will be a more reliable component in European order and peace than a turbulent state torn apart by many warring opinions and suffering from economic problems. Hence we are thereby contributing to alleviating those anxieties and that unease of which Your Excellency, too, has spoken.

It is my hope that this, our sincere desire to make a significant contribution to the progress of all nations by virtue of our cooperation, will increasingly meet with understanding on the part of the other governments. For the concerns of the present should serve as a reminder and an incentive for all peoples to recognize the dangers threatening peace and hence European development in good time, so that they might apply themselves with determination toward achieving genuine understanding and reconciliation between the peoples, which will afford all countries the opportunity to establish their own economic existence and with it the most stable guarantee for the welfare and progress of the entire human race.

In the hope that the New Year may bring us closer to this goal, I may extend to you, Your Excellency, and you, gentlemen—and to your Heads of State, Governments and peoples—the warmest New Year's greetings on my own behalf and on behalf of the German Volk.

After the reception, Hitler privately met with the French Ambassador for an informal talk. He reassured François-Poncet that Germany entertained no expansionist designs on Spain and Morocco. The French news agency Havas published the content of the conversation the following day:¹⁵

On the occasion of yesterday's diplomatic reception in Berlin, the Reich Chancellor Hitler assured the French Ambassador that Germany has no present intention, nor has it at any point in the past intended, to dispute in

any manner the integrity of either Spain or its possessions. The French Ambassador asserted, in the name of his government, that France is determined, within the framework of the existing treaties, to respect the integrity of Spain and the statutes of Spanish Morocco.

On January 15, Hitler issued a decree, attaching his name to all new National Socialist *Oberschulen* (high schools).¹⁶

Given a request by the NSDAP Reichsorganisationsleiter and the Youth Leader of the German Reich, I consent to the newly constructed National Socialist *Oberschulen*, which simultaneously serve as preparatory schools for the National Socialist Ordensburgen, bearing my name.

Berlin, January 15, 1937

Adolf Hitler

In 1937, Hitler did not attend the annual festivities commemorating the fourth anniversary of the Landtag election in Lippe.

On January 16, on the occasion of the “Day of the German Police” he pronounced:¹⁷

I decree that those members of the Civil Police¹⁸ who belong to the SS, be allowed to have the two victoria runes of the SS embroidered upon their police uniforms below the left shirt pocket.

Berlin, January 16, 1937

Adolf Hitler

In Berchtesgaden two days later, the roofing ceremony took place at the site of the Chancellery’s new office building. State Secretary Lammers¹⁹ expounded upon the indispensability of such a structure to house a branch of the Reich Government by stating, “The Führer is always on duty, no matter whether it is during the week, on the weekend or while he is on vacation.”²⁰ Lammers’ choice of the word “vacation” in this context was most unfortunate. It was Hitler’s personal conviction that since he was always on duty, he could never be “on vacation.” He liked to claim for himself that he had never had more than “three days of leave” in his entire life.²¹ In the course of the festivities, Hitler delivered a ‘secret speech’ to the construction workers, describing himself as “one to have emerged from amongst their ranks.”

On January 21, the public was informed that Hitler wished to reserve for himself the exclusive right²² to retort to British Foreign Minister Eden’s remarks regarding Germany in the latter’s January 19 speech.²³ Speaking before the House of Commons, Eden had emphasized that he assessed the Germans not by their words, but by their deeds.

Ironically, Eden’s reprimand appears to have provoked yet another speech by Hitler on the subject of Germany’s policy in Spain. As head of government, he wished to submit to the consideration of the

Reichstag a “statement of account,” explaining his course of action. To this end, he called upon the Reichstag to meet for a session in Berlin on January 30.

On the morning of that day, Hitler reviewed the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* in the Wilhelmstrasse. Standing in front of the Chancellery building in an open Mercedes SSK, he greeted the troops with his extended right arm raised.²⁴ Before the Reichstag convened at 1:00 p.m., the *SS Leibstandarte* was displayed one more time in front of the Kroll Opera. Hitler, accompanied by Himmler and other high-ranking SS leaders, reviewed a formation of honor guards. The coats of those accompanying Hitler were now adorned with white reverses, corresponding to the red reverses of the Wehrmacht generals.²⁵ Hitler’s speech before the Reichstag was of extraordinary length, lasting nearly three hours. He opened with the following words:²⁶

Men! Deputies of the German Reichstag!

The Reichstag has been convened today, on an important day for the German Volk. Four years have passed since that moment marking the beginning of the great inner cataclysm and reorganization Germany has experienced, four years which I requested from the German Volk as a period of probation and judgment. What would be more logical than to use this occasion to recount in detail all the success and progress these four years have bestowed upon the German Volk? Within the framework of such a short rally it is not even possible to mention all those things which might well be regarded as the remarkable results of this perhaps most astounding epoch in the life of our Volk!

That is a task more fitting for the press and propaganda. Moreover, there will be an exhibition this year in the Reich Capital of Berlin in which the attempt will be made to give a comprehensive and more detailed impression of what has been created, achieved and begun than I could possibly be capable of giving in a two-hour speech. Therefore I wish to make use of today’s historic meeting of the German Reichstag in order to point out, in a retrospective on the past four years, a few of the generally valid insights, experiences and consequences which are important not only for us to understand, but also for posterity.

Hitler’s speech ran one hour longer than had been planned. In his lengthy “party narrative,” he paid particular attention to the claim that the National Socialist Revolution had been the “revolution of revolutions,” and painstakingly stressed that no blood had been shed in its course.

I can say it with a certain amount of pride: this was perhaps the first modern revolution in which not so much as a window pane was shattered. Yet I do not want to be misunderstood: if the course of this revolution was bloodless, it was not because we were not men enough to stand the sight of

blood. For four years, I was a soldier in the bloodiest war of all time. I never once lost my nerve throughout, no matter what the situation or what I was confronted with. This also applies to my fellow workers. But we perceived the task of the National Socialist Revolution not as destroying human life or property but instead as building up a new and better life. It is our greatest source of pride that we carried out this—undoubtedly greatest—cataclysm in our Volk with a minimum of casualties and losses.

Only where the murderous lust of Bolshevism believed itself capable, even after January 30, 1933, of preventing the triumph or the realization of the National Socialist idea by force have we naturally countered with force—and have done so with the speed of lightning. Then again there were other elements.

We recognized their lack of restraint, coupled with the gravest lack of political education, and these we merely took into preventive custody, only to restore to them their liberty after a very short time, generally speaking. And then again there were those few whose political activities served only as a cover for a criminal attitude evidenced in numerous sentences to prison or penal servitude; these we prevented from continuing their devastating work of destruction by urging them to take up a useful occupation, probably for the first time in their lives.

The Führer then claimed that all those persons who remained in the concentration camps were truly hardened criminals, for they had earlier served lengthy terms in prison or penitentiary. Once more returning to a detailed description of the great National Socialist Revolution of 1933, he continued:

In the space of a few weeks, both the political residues and societal biases of the past thousand years in Germany had been cleared away and eliminated. Germany and the German Volk have overcome several great catastrophes. Naturally, there always had to be certain men—I will be the first to admit—who took the necessary steps and who saw these measures through despite the eternal pessimists and know-it-alls. True, an assembly of parliamentary cowards is most ill-suited to lead the Volk forth—away from destitution and despair!

Hitler then discussed economic problems:

My Deputies! When the German economy seemingly ground to a complete halt in the years 1932 and 1933, the following became more clear to me than in the preceding years: the salvation of our Volk is not a financial problem; it is exclusively a problem of utilizing and employing the available work force on the one hand and exploiting available soil and mineral resources on the other.

The Volksgemeinschaft does not subsist on the fictitious value of money but on actual production, which gives money its value. This production is the primary cover for a currency, not a bank or a vault full of gold! And when I increase this production, I am actually increasing the income of my fellow

citizens; if I decrease production, I decrease income, regardless of what salaries are being paid out. [—]

This concerted resolution of economic issues finds its greatest expression in the Four-Year Plan. It assures that once great numbers of German workers are released by the armament industry and re-enter the labor force, these workers shall find secure employment within our economy. [—]

It is quite clear that neither strikes nor lockouts can be tolerated in a sphere where such views prevail. The National Socialist State does not recognize an economic law of the jungle. The common interest of the nation—i.e. of our Volk—has priority over the interests of all its competing components. Therefore we cannot allow that any means suited for utilization in our Volk's training and education be exempted from this shared obligation. The education of youth, Jungvolk, Hitler Youth, Labor Service, Party, Wehrmacht: all of them are institutions for training and educating our Volk. Books, newspapers, lectures, art, theater, film: all are means for the education of the Volk (*Volkserziehung*). What the National Socialist Revolution has accomplished in these areas is astonishing and colossal. One need only think of the following:

Today, our entire German system of education—including the press, theater, film, and literature—is run and organized exclusively by German Volksgenossen. How often were we told before that removing the *Judentum* from these institutions must result in their collapse or deterioration? And what has happened now? In all of these areas we are witnessing a tremendous flourishing of cultural and artistic life. Our films are better than ever before; the performances on the stages of our first-rate theaters are in a world class all their own. Our press has become a powerful instrument serving the self-assertion of our Volk and does its part in fortifying the nation. German science is doing successful work, and tremendous proofs of our creative architectural will shall one day bear witness to this new epoch!

An incredible immunization of the German Volk has been achieved to all the infiltrating tendencies from which a different world is made to suffer. We now already take for granted several of our institutions that were not yet understood even a few years ago: Jungvolk, Hitler Youth, BDM, Frauenschaft, Labor Service, SA, SS, NSKK—and above all the Labor Front with its tremendous organization—are bricks in the proud structure of our Third Reich. This safeguarding of the internal life of our German Volk needed to be complemented by an external safeguard. And I believe that it is here, my Deputies and men of the German Reichstag, that the National Socialist uprising has achieved the most marvelous of its accomplishments!

When, four years ago, I was entrusted with the chancellorship and with it the leadership of the nation, I assumed the bitter obligation to lead back to honor a people who had been compelled to live the life of an outcast among the other nations for fifteen years. The internal order of the German Volk provided me with the requirements for reestablishing the German Army, and these two circumstances likewise made it possible to throw off those shackles which had been felt to be the deepest mark of disgrace ever branded on a people.

Hitler then proceeded to the climax of his “statement of account,” in which he unilaterally abrogated a series of international agreements. The majority of these agreements either pertained to the supposed sole responsibility of Germany for the outbreak of World War I, or the unfairly restricted freedom of the Reichsbahn and the Reichsbank.²⁷ Since Hitler had already annulled the military stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles, these new abrogations were only of an almost declamatory character.

In concluding this process today, I have but a few statements to make.

First: the restoration of German equality of rights was a process that concerned and involved Germany alone. In its course we neither deprived any other people of anything nor did harm to any other people.

Second: I hereby proclaim to you that, within the context of the restoration of German equality of rights, I shall divest the German Reichsbahn and the German Reichsbank of their prior character and place them completely under the sovereign control of the Government of the German Reich.

Third: I hereby declare that, by virtue thereof, the part of the Treaty of Versailles which deprived our Volk of equality of rights and degraded it to an inferior Volk has now been settled in the natural course of things.

Fourth: above all, I herewith most solemnly withdraw the German signature from that declaration extracted under duress at that time from a weak government against its own better judgment, that Germany was to blame for the war!

My Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

This restoration of the honor of our Volk—most clearly evidenced in an external sense in the introduction of conscription, in the institution of a new Luftwaffe, in the re-establishment of a German Navy, in the reoccupation of the Rhineland by our troops—was the most difficult and most daring task and accomplishment of my life.

Today I must bow down in thanks to Providence, whose mercy has enabled me, once an unknown soldier in the World War, to thus help our Volk to win the battle for the restoration of its honor and uprightness!

Unfortunately, not all the necessary measures in this context could be accomplished by way of negotiations. Be that as it may: a Volk cannot attain its honor by negotiating; it must seize its honor—just as its honor cannot be negotiated away, but only taken away!

Thereafter, Hitler commented cynically, that in order to “make it easier” for the other side to accept his decisions, as “they would have had to at any rate,” he had resolved not to consult Germany’s former enemies before taking action.

But he then softened this slap in the face of his adversaries by declaring that “the period of so-called surprises” had come to an end. From the present onward, Germany would cooperate with other states

on all issues in a spirit of loyalty and in recognition of its "role in Europe."

That I took the required action without consulting our former opponents on each point or even informing them, was also due to the knowledge that I had thus made it easier for the other side to accept our decisions, as they would have had to at any rate. Allow me also to add yet another statement, namely, that the period of so-called surprises has now come to an end. As a state with equal rights, conscious of its role in Europe, Germany will cooperate loyally in the future to settle the problems which are a cause for concern to us and to the other nations.

Whenever Hitler made solemn declarations such as these, it was certain that he had already resolved to do precisely the opposite of what he proclaimed in the near future. In the subsequent two years, the world would have ample opportunity to realize how little truth there was to Hitler's declared intent to end the "period of so-called surprises."

Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was among the few Englishmen who early voiced precisely what he thought of Hitler. Naturally, the Führer treated him as the epitome of the senile English statesman. As Hitler had announced on January 21, he devoted the second part of his speech on January 30 to retorting to Eden's statements in the House of Commons. First, Hitler rejected Eden's admonition to Germany to refrain from pursuing its program of autarky. To Hitler, such a shift in policy was far from his present thoughts. He explained:

When I now proceed to take a stand on all these basic questions of the present, it is perhaps most feasible to do so along the lines of the remarks Mr. Eden made recently in the English House of Commons.

In essence, they contain all there is to say on the relationship between Germany and France. Here I would like to express my genuine thanks for the opportunity of replying which was offered to me in the both frank and remarkable comments of the honorable British Foreign Secretary.

I have read these comments carefully and, I believe, correctly. Naturally I do not wish to become absorbed in details; instead I would like to try to extract the major points from Mr. Eden's speech and, for my part, clarify and respond to them.

Initially, I will attempt to put right what appears to me to be a quite regrettable error. Namely, the error that Germany has any intention whatsoever of isolating itself, of passing over the events in the rest of the world with indifference, or that Germany had no desire to show any consideration for general exigencies.

What grounds are there for the view that Germany is adhering to a policy of isolation? If the assumption as to Germany's isolation is concluded from what are alleged to be Germany's intentions, I would like to note the

following: I do not believe that a state could ever intend to consciously take a politically disinterested stand on events in the rest of the world. Particularly not if this world is as small as modern-day Europe. I believe that, if a state is in fact forced to take refuge in such an attitude, then only by virtue of being compelled to do so by an alien will imposed upon it. I would like to assure Foreign Secretary Eden here that we Germans do not in the least want to be isolated and by no means feel isolated.

In the past few years, there have been quite a few political ties which Germany has entered into, re-established, improved and, in the case of a number of states I might even say it has set up close and amicable relations. From our perspective, our relations in Europe are normal to most states, and very friendly to quite a few. At the top of this list I might cite the excellent relations binding us with all those states which have, as a result of hardship similar to our own, arrived at similar conclusions.

By virtue of a series of treaties, we have resolved former tensions and thereby made a substantial contribution to improving European conditions. You will recall for example our agreement with Poland which proved advantageous for both states; our agreement with Austria; our excellent and close relations with Italy; our amicable relations with Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Spain, etc.—and last but not least, our no less friendly relations with quite a number of states outside of Europe.

The agreement Germany concluded with Japan for the purpose of combating the Comintern Movement is graphic proof of how little interest the German Government has in isolating itself and how little it thus does in fact feel isolated.

Moreover, I have expressed more than once the desire and the hope of being able to arrive at equally good and friendly terms with all our neighbors.

Germany—and I solemnly reiterate this here and now—has repeatedly declared that there can be no humanly conceivable contentious issues whatsoever between itself and France, to cite an example. The German Government has moreover assured Belgium and Holland that it is prepared to recognize and guarantee these states at any time as inviolable neutral territories. In the light of all the declarations formerly given by us and the actual state of affairs, I am somewhat at a loss to comprehend why Germany should feel itself isolated or even adhere to a policy of isolation.

Hitler then turned to Germany's economic situation. He argued that he had not willfully isolated the Third Reich, but rather that foreign countries had forced him to seek autarky by refusing to deliver needed raw materials. Under no circumstances would he be willing to abandon his Four-Year Plan.

I do, however, fear that I must interpret Mr. Eden's words as meaning that he regards the implementation of the German Four-Year Plan as one element of Germany's refusal to partake in international relations. Therefore, I wish to leave no doubt whatsoever that the decision to implement this Plan is not subject to any review. The reasons which led us to arrive at this decision were

cogent ones. And I have been unable to detect any recent development which might have moved us to refrain in any way from implementing this decision.

Hitler once again resorted to his favorite strategy of blaming everything on the Bolshevik threat to international security; he even held it responsible for the institution of the Four-Year Plan.

Germany has a tremendous number of people who wish not only to work, but also to eat. In other respects as well, our Volk has a high standard of living. I cannot build the future of the German nation on the promises a foreign statesman gives of providing some kind of international aid; I can build it only on the real foundation of a functioning industry whose products I must sell either at home or abroad! And this is perhaps where I, in my mistrust, differ from the optimistic remarks of the British Foreign Secretary.

If in fact Europe does not awaken from the fever of its Bolshevik infections, I fear that, despite the good intentions of individual statesmen, international trade will not increase, but ultimately decrease. That is because this trade is built not only upon the uninterrupted and thus secured production on the part of one specific nation, but on the production of all nations. Initially, however, one thing is certain: every single Bolshevik disruption will of necessity lead to a more or less lengthy disruption in orderly production. Therefore, I am not able to view the economic future of Europe as optimistically as Mr. Eden apparently believes he can. I am the responsible leader of the German Volk and must look after its interests in this world to the best of my knowledge and belief. Hence I am also under an obligation to assess the situation in accordance with what I believe I can perceive with my own eyes.

The history of my Volk would never acquit me were I to omit—for any reason whatsoever—doing something which is imperative for the preservation of this Volk. I am glad, as are we all, of any increase in our foreign trade. However, in view of the unresolved political situation, I shall not fail to do anything which might serve to guarantee to the German Volk its existence even after other states have succumbed to the Bolshevik infection. Furthermore, I must object when this view is dismissed as being but the product of a feeble imagination. For right now there is no doubt about the following: the honorable British Foreign Secretary is showing us theoretical perspectives on life, while in reality, for one, completely different events are taking place. The revolutionizing of Spain, for example, drove fifteen thousand Germans out of that country and did severe damage to our trade.

If the revolutionizing of Spain were to spread to other European states, the damage would increase, not decrease. If, however—this I must also investigate—the reason behind the opinion that Germany is adhering to a policy of isolation might lie in our withdrawal from the League of Nations, I would like to point out that the Geneva League was never truly a league of all the nations; a number of major nations either never belonged to it in the first place or had withdrawn even before we did, whereas no one claimed they were adhering to a policy of isolation. Therefore I believe Mr. Eden has

evidently misunderstood German intentions and our own views on this issue. For nothing is further from our minds than severing either our political or our economic relations with the other world or even to diminish them. On the contrary, the opposite is more to the point.

I have so often attempted to make a contribution to understanding in Europe, and have quite often assured particularly the English people and its government how very much we desire to cooperate and be on sincere and friendly terms with them. And I mean all of us, the entire German Volk, and last but not least myself!

Yet I do admit there does exist a real and, as I see it, unbridgeable difference between the views of the British Foreign Secretary and our own on one issue. Mr. Eden emphasizes that under no circumstances does the British Government wish to see Europe torn in two halves. It is unfortunate that this desire was not expressed and heard earlier. Today this desire is nothing but an illusion.

For sadly the fracture not only of Europe, but of the entire world into two halves is now an accomplished fact. It is regrettable that the British Government did not take the position it does today—that the fracturing of Europe needs to be avoided under all circumstances—at an earlier point, for then the Treaty of Versailles never would have come about. It was in fact that Treaty which introduced the first fracture to Europe, namely, the division into victorious nations on the one hand and vanquished nations, without rights, on the other.

No one suffered from this fracturing of Europe more than the German people. That this rupture was repaired, at least as far as concerns Germany, is essentially the achievement of the National Socialist Revolution in Germany and thus, to a certain extent, probably mine as well!

The second fracture arose as a result of the proclamation of the Bolshevik doctrine, one of whose integral components is that it does not confine itself to a single people but aims to be forced upon all peoples.

At issue here is not a special form of life indigenous to, let us say, the Russian people; rather, it is the Bolshevik goal of world revolution. The fact that the honorable Foreign Secretary Eden refuses to see Bolshevism as we see it is perhaps related to Great Britain's location, perhaps to other experiences of which we have no knowledge. I do, however, hold that, because we speak of these things not as theoreticians, one cannot accuse us of being insincere in our conviction.

For Mr. Eden, Bolshevism is perhaps something sitting in Moscow; for us, however, Bolshevism is a plague against which we have been forced to defend ourselves in a bloody fight; a plague that has attempted to make of our country the same desert it has made of Spain, that had begun the same shooting of hostages we are now witnessing in Spain! National Socialism did not seek contact with Bolshevism in Russia; rather, the Jewish international Muscovite Bolshevism attempted to penetrate Germany! And it is still attempting to do so today! And we have fought a difficult battle against this attempt, upholding and thus defending not only the culture of our Volk, but perhaps that of Europe as a whole in the process.

Hereupon, Hitler claimed that in 1933 it had been he who had rescued Germany in face of the Bolshevist menace, and through this Great Britain as well.

If in those days in January and February 1933 Germany had lost the last decisive battle against this barbarity, and if the Bolshevist expanse of rubble and corpses had spread to encompass Central Europe, perhaps one might have reached other conclusions on the Thames as regards the character of this, the most horrendous menace to mankind.

Since England must be defended at the Rhine in any case,²⁸ it would now already be in the closest proximity to that harmless democratic Muscovite world whose innocuousness is so constantly and ardently hammered home to us.

One last time, Hitler attempted to convince the English that Bolshevism and the Soviet Union posed the actual threat to Europe. He solemnly pledged himself to never enter into a close relationship with either of these forces and vowed to unrelentingly oppose their expansion.

Thus I would like once more to formally state the following: Bolshevism is a doctrine of world revolution, i.e. of world destruction. To adopt this doctrine, to accord it equal rights as a factor in European life, is tantamount to placing Europe at its mercy. If other peoples choose to expose themselves to contact with this menace, Germany has nothing to say on the matter. However, as far as Germany itself is concerned, I would like to leave no doubt that we

1. perceive in Bolshevism an intolerable world menace; and
2. that we are using every means at our disposal to keep this menace away from our Volk;
3. that we are thus endeavoring to make the German Volk as immune to this infection as possible.

This also entails that we avoid any close contact with the carriers of these poisonous germs and that we are specifically not prepared to dull the German Volk's sense of perception for this menace by ourselves establishing connections more extensive than the requisite diplomatic or economic relations.

I hold the Bolshevist doctrine to be the worst poison which can be administered to a people. I therefore do not want my own people to come into contact with this doctrine in any way. And as a citizen of this Volk myself, I will not do anything I would be forced to condemn in my fellow citizens. I demand from every German worker that he refrain from having any relations or dealings with these international pests, and for his part he will never see me quaffing or carousing with them. In other respects, every additional German contractual tie with the present Bolshevist Russia would be completely useless to us. It would be equally inconceivable for National Socialist German soldiers to ever need fulfill a helpmate function in protecting Bolshevism; nor

would we on our side accept any aid from a Bolshevik state. For I fear that every Volk which reaches out for such aid will find it to be its own demise.

Hitler vowed never to sit down and get drunk with the Russians, i.e. to fraternize with them. As a teetotaler this was an easy pledge to make, and indeed, in his 1939 negotiations with Stalin it was Ribbentrop, not Hitler who sat at the table with the Russians. However, in 1940, Hitler hosted Molotov in a most generous manner during the Russian's visit to Germany.

Eden's challenge to assess Germany in terms of its actions, and not by the words of its leaders or citizens, truly infuriated Hitler. He attempted to distract from Eden's apt observation with a tirade of unfounded allegations against the League of Nations.

I must also take a stand here against the view that the League of Nations might lend its support as such if needed and actually save the individual member states by virtue of its assistance. No, I cannot believe that. Foreign Secretary Eden stated recently that actions speak louder than words. I would, however, like to point out that the outstanding feature of the League of Nations to date has been not actions, but words—with the exception of a single case in which it perhaps would have been better to have been content with words only.²⁹ Moreover, in that one instance—as could be expected—the actions were not able to achieve the desired effect.

Hitler refuted any kind of international armament control, stating:

Mr. Eden holds that, in the future, every state should possess only those arms which are necessary for its defense. I do not know whether and in what form Moscow has been approached with respect to putting this interesting thought into practice, and to what extent promises have already been made from that quarter.

There is, however, one thing I must say: there is no doubt that the amount of the arms required for defense depends upon the amount of the dangers which threaten a country. This is something which each Volk—and each Volk alone—is competent to judge. Thus if Great Britain establishes the limits of its arms today, everyone in Germany will understand this; the only way we can see it is that London alone is competent to decide on the proportions of the protection required by the British Empire. At the same time, however, I would also like to stress that the proportions of the protection and hence defensive arms required by our Volk comprise a matter which falls under our own competence and thus is to be decided exclusively in Berlin.

Hitler countered British claims that the Germans sought to extend their territorial ambitions to Spain by aiding the men rallying around Franco,³⁰ and reasserted Germany's demand for a return of its colonies in Africa and overseas, the majority of which were being administered

by Great Britain. He made this demand simply because he wanted to annoy Eden and the British. That he did not truly desire such a repatriation is evident in *Mein Kampf*.³¹ Here Hitler had proclaimed that Germany's imperial policy of colonial conquest was a policy of the past, to be replaced by a striving to conquer new Lebensraum in Eastern Europe.

The attempt has been made to construe a connection between German sympathy for national Spain and some sort of colonial designs. Germany has no colonial claims against countries which have not taken colonies from it. In addition, Germany has suffered so greatly from the Bolshevik plight that it will not exploit this plight and rob another unhappy people in its hour of need or extract from it some future gain by force.

The German Volk once built up a colonial empire without robbing anyone and without violating any treaties. And it did so without waging war. That colonial empire has been taken away from us. The reasons being brought forth today to rationalize that action are not tenable.

First: "The natives do not want to belong to Germany." Who asked them if they wanted to belong to someone else; and when have colonized peoples ever been asked whether they harbored good will and affection for their former colonial masters?

Second: "The German colonies were not even properly administered by the Germans."

Germany had only gained these colonies a few decades before. Great sacrifices went into their expansion, and they were in the midst of an evolution which would have led to completely different results today than, for instance, in 1914. Yet we had nonetheless developed the colonies to such an extent that others considered them worth waging bloody battles with us to wrench them from our possession.

Third, it is claimed, "Those colonies had no real value."

Were this the case, this lack of value would also apply to other states, and hence it makes no sense that they are depriving us of them at all. Moreover, Germany has never demanded colonies for military purposes, but exclusively for economic ones.

It is obvious that the value of a certain territory may decrease in times of general prosperity; it is, however, just as obvious that such an assessment will undergo an immediate revision in times of distress. And today Germany is living in times of a difficult struggle for foodstuffs and raw materials. Sufficient imports are only conceivable given a steady and continuous increase in our exports. Thus the demand for colonies in a country as densely populated as our own will naturally be put forward again and again.

Subsequently, Hitler once again put forth a new "peace plan." This time, his suggestions to that end consisted of eight items, each one of them a vague and convoluted proposal. One of these ideas was to reorganize the League of Nations to allow it to become "an organ of

revolutionary reason,” and thus be freed from the “reactionary lethargy” crippling it at the moment. Further, he proposed a global approach to the armament question. He claimed this to be imperative to successfully counter “the organized guilds of warmongers” (*Kriegshetzer Gilde*)³² Hitler emphasized that the mutually beneficial relations between Italy and Germany could serve as a precedent for similar agreements among all nations of Europe.

Nearly nine months had passed since the British had inquired in their note of May 7, 1936, whether Germany considered itself in a position to discuss “real contracts.” The inquiry had been transmitted in the aftermath of the military occupation of the Rhineland. Hitler responded that “it was impossible for the German Government to provide an answer to these questions” and that he hoped Great Britain would respect this.

In concluding these remarks, I would like to take a stand on a document the British Government sent to the German Government on the occasion of the occupation of the Rhineland.

At the outset I would like to establish that we hold and are convinced that the English Government did everything in its power at that time to avoid an escalation of the European crisis, and that the document in question owes its existence to the desire to make a contribution toward untangling the situation at the time. It was nonetheless impossible for the German Government to provide an answer to these questions for reasons the Government of Great Britain will certainly appreciate.

We have chosen instead to settle some of these questions the most natural way of all in the practical handling of our relations with our neighboring states, and now that full German sovereignty and equality of rights have been restored, I would like to state conclusively that Germany will never again sign a treaty which is in any way irreconcilable with its honor, with the honor of the nation and the government representing it, or which is otherwise irreconcilable with Germany’s vital interests and thus cannot be upheld for any length of time.³³

I do believe that this declaration will be easily comprehended by everyone.

After this second affront to the British, Hitler continued with a “short look at the tasks of the future, which are headed by the implementation of the Four-Year Plan.”

These were not the only notions he entertained. The Führer had resolved to “make the German Volk healthier and its life more comfortable.” Both ideas referred to his plans to redesign and rebuild cities in Germany. Moreover, he envisioned a new constitution, which was to become “the immortal basic law for all Germans.”

The great tasks which have been commenced beyond this [the Four-Year Plan] shall be continued. Their goal will be to make the German Volk healthier and its life more comfortable. As external evidence of this great epoch of the resurrection of our Volk shall now stand the methodical expansion of several of the Reich's major cities. Enhancing Berlin to become a true and genuine capital of the German Reich is the first priority. Therefore today—just as this is done for our road-building—I have appointed a General Building Inspector for Berlin who will be responsible for the structural enhancement of the Reich Capital and shall ensure that, despite the chaos of Berlin's constructional development, the strong lines will be retained which do justice to the spirit of the National Socialist Movement and the individuality of the German Reich Capital. A period of twenty years has been allotted for the implementation of this plan.

May the Almighty God grant us the peace to be able to accomplish this tremendous task. Parallel to it there will be a large-scale enhancement of the Capital of the Movement, the City of the Reich Party Congresses and the City of Hamburg.

This, however, shall serve merely as a model for the general cultural evolution to which we aspire as the crowning glory of the internal and external freedom of the German Volk.

And finally, it shall be a task of the future to guarantee, in a constitution, for all time to come the true life of our Volk as it has now taken shape in the form of a state, and thus to elevate that life to become the immortal basic law for all Germans.

Hitler was far from finished with his speech. He could not desist from adding a few sentimental reflections on “the three unusual friends in my life,” namely, “poverty, regret, and concern.” Moreover, he alluded in a most mysterious fashion to the manner in which, later in the day, he intended to honor the non-National Socialist ministers and generals at the Chancellery: he had decided to award them the Golden Party Badge.³⁴

When I look back upon the great work of the four years lying behind us, you will understand that my initial feeling can be none other than that of gratitude to our Almighty God who allowed us to accomplish this work.

He blessed our work and enabled our Volk to stride unscathed and confident through all the perils lining its path.

I have had three unusual friends in my life: in my youth Poverty was my companion for many years. When the Great War came to a close, it was the deepest Regret at the collapse of our Volk that overcame me and prescribed my path. Since that January 30 four years ago I have met my third friend, Concern. Concern for the Volk and Reich entrusted to my leadership. It has never left me since, and will probably accompany me now until I am no more. Yet how could a man be capable of bearing up under the weight of this concern if he did not, faithfully trusting in his mission, have the consent of

Him who stands above us all? It is Fate with special tasks that so often compels men to be alone and forlorn. I also wish to thank Providence here and now that it enabled me to find a company of the most loyal fellow fighters who have linked their lives to mine and who have been at my side ever since, fighting with me for the resurrection of our Volk. I am so happy that I need not stride through the German Volk as a lonely man, but that beside me there are men comprising a guard whose name will live on in German history.

At this time I would like to thank my old comrades in arms who stood by me untiringly throughout these long, long years, and who are now giving me their help, either as Ministers, as Reichsstatthalters, as Gauleiters, or in other positions within the Party and the State. At present, there are fateful events taking place in Moscow which really reveal to us how highly that loyalty which binds leading men deserves to be valued.³⁵

I would further like to extend my sincere thanks to those who, although they have not issued from the ranks of the Party, have come in the course of these years to constitute true helpers and companions in the leadership of the Reich Government and in the rest of the Volk. Today they all belong to us, though this very minute they may not yet have the symbol of our community. I would like to thank the men and women who built up our Party organization and have so successfully headed it. Yet above all I must take this opportunity to thank the leaders of our Wehrmacht. They have made it possible to present the National Socialist weapon to the National Socialist State without any disturbance. Thus today the Party and the Wehrmacht constitute the two eternally-sworn guarantors of the assertion of our Volk's life. We are also aware that all our deeds would have been in vain had not hundreds of thousands of Political Leaders, countless civil servants of the Reich and innumerable soldiers and officers stood by us loyally in the spirit of our uprising. And beyond that—had not the broad front of the entire German Volk stood behind us.

On this historic day, I must once again mention those millions of nameless German people who, from every walk of life, from every profession and factory and from every farm, have given of their heart and their love and their sacrifices for the new Reich. And we, too, Men and Deputies of the Reichstag, wish to join together to thank above all the German women, the millions of our mothers who have given the Third Reich their children. For what would be the sense in all our work, what would be the sense in the uprising of the German nation without our German youth? Every mother who has given our Volk a child in these four years has contributed, by her pain and her happiness, to the happiness of the entire nation. When I think of our Volk's healthy youth, my faith in our future becomes transformed into joyful certainty. And I sense with heartfelt fervency the significance of that single word Ulrich von Hutten wrote before he set aside his quill for the last time: *Deutschland*.

Subsequent to Hitler's speech, Göring announced that the Führer had established a 'National Award for the Arts and Sciences.' The story behind the creation of this award had been a most peculiar one. In Oslo

on November 24, 1936, the author Carl von Ossietzky³⁶ who was in a concentration camp at the time, was awarded the 1935 Nobel peace prize.

This led Hitler to create a separate, national German award. No German was allowed to accept a Nobel prize, now and for “all time to come.” The proclamation of January 30, 1937, implementing this measure, is reproduced below:³⁷

In order to prevent similarly embarrassing incidents from repeating themselves in the future, I today decree the establishment of a German National Award for the Arts and Sciences. This National Award shall be granted annually to three deserving Germans and shall carry a remuneration of 100,000 marks respectively.

Herewith all Germans are barred from accepting a Nobel prize for all time to come.

The Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda shall determine the requirements for receipt of a National Award.

Adolf Hitler

At the end of this “memorable” meeting, the Reichstag unanimously voted in favor of a bill to extend the powers granted to Hitler in the 1933 Enabling Act. The only article contained in the bill read:³⁸

The March 24, 1933 law for removing the distress of Volk and Reich (RGBL. 1, p. 141) shall remain in effect until April 1, 1941.

The January 30, 1934 law for the reconstruction of the Reich shall not be affected by this regulation.

A number of decrees issued on January 30, 1937 were of lesser importance and aimed at promoting the further identification of Party and State. The decree affecting the Reich Leader of the Labor Service³⁹ assigned Konstantin Hierl to guide and preside over all concerns pertaining to the Labor Service within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior.

Another degree created the position for a head of the Foreign Organization in the Foreign Office.⁴⁰ The obvious choice for such a post was Gauleiter Ernst Wilhelm Bohle, who already presided over the NSDAP’s Foreign Organization. The task he thus faced was “to ensure the welfare of all citizens of the German Reich in foreign countries.” In accordance with his earlier announcement in a speech before the Reichstag, Hitler issued a further decree on January 30 to enact an earlier statement before the Reichstag,⁴¹ placing a General Building inspector in charge of the Reich Capital. At the same time, Hitler provided the following:⁴²

Berlin, January 30, 1937

Based upon my January 30, 1937 decree ((RGBl. I, p. 103), I appoint the architect Professor Albert Speer to the post of General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

After the Reichstag session had ended, Hitler hurried back to the Chancellery to tend to “urgent official business.” The urgency of this meeting can be measured by the fact that he failed to make even a perfunctory appearance before the cheering crowd which had assembled beneath the balcony. In the Cabinet Hall, the highest ranking men in the Reich had gathered, not only the Reich Ministers and State Secretaries, but also the commanders of the Reichswehr, men who bore titles equivalent to a member of Hitler’s cabinet. The official note describing the “ceremony” began as follows:⁴³

The Führer and Reich Chancellor called upon the ministers of the Reich Government to assemble in the Cabinet Hall of the Chancellery on Saturday afternoon for a session, which consisted of a most impressive celebration of the fourth anniversary of the the constitution of the Hitler Cabinet by Reich President von Hindenburg.

Thereafter, Hitler honored each dignitary present in recognition of his specific efforts and achievements. The second part of the official announcement detailed the following:

In full consideration of the forthcoming rescission of the ban⁴⁴ on Party membership, the Führer has taken the first step toward admitting new members. The Chancellor personally initiated those cabinet members who had not yet enjoyed the privilege of membership in the Party.⁴⁵ As part of this initiation, he presented each new member with the Golden Party Badge, the highest distinction awarded by the Party.

Furthermore, the Führer presented the Golden Party Badge to Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch; to Admiral General Dr. h.c. Raeder; to the Prussian Minister of Finance, Professor Popitz;⁴⁶ as well as to State Secretary and head of the Presidential Chancery, Dr. Meissner. Other recipients of the Golden Party Badge were the following Party comrades: State Secretary Dr. Lammers, State Secretary Funk, State Secretary Körner,⁴⁷ and General der Flieger Milch.⁴⁸

Among the men honored that day was one who possessed the integrity to take a stance against Hitler: Eltz von Rübenach, the Reich Minister of Postal Services and Transportation. He returned the Golden Party Badge to Hitler, declaring that he had no intention of joining the NSDAP. What became of this courageous man who so blatantly dared to affront Hitler? Would he be eliminated or at least sent to a con-

centration camp? After 1945, the leading men of the state, economy, judiciary, etc., should claim that their blind obedience was the only alternative to avoid such a fate. Surprisingly—as well as in 1933 with regard to Hugenberg and in 1938 in the case of General Beck⁴⁹—nothing at all happened to von Rübenach. In this instance, too, Hitler was impressed by the fortitude of a man who was willing to suffer even the loss of his position in order to uphold his personal principles. As long as such a man remained loyal and did not conspire against the Führer, Hitler respected him for his decision.

News of von Rübenach's act never reached the public in any official form. Hitler was able to use the current situation to quietly resolve the von Rübenach affair. Following Hitler's announcement before the Reichstag that the Reichsbahn and the Reichsbank had managed to sever their ties to the world market, it appeared to be a logical move to promote the deserving Director General of the Reichsbahn, Julius Dorpmüller⁵⁰, to replace von Rübenach as Minister of Transportation. Thus, without a scandal, the affair was buried, the only indication that something behind the scenes might be amiss being the markedly cool treatment of the former minister in an official announcement, dated February 2. The note read:⁵¹

On the occasion of the final subordination of the Deutsche Reichsbahngesellschaft to the sovereignty of the Reich Government, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has ordered that the interlocking directorates of the Reich Ministry of Transportation and the Reich Ministry of Postal Services be dissolved. The two ministries shall once again be administered separately, as in former times.

As Reich Minister of Transportation the Führer and Reich Chancellor has named the Director General of the Deutsche Reichsbahngesellschaft, Dr. h.c. Julius Dorpmüller, who, pending the re-establishment of both ministries, will remain responsible for the Reichsbahn as well.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has appointed the current State Secretary to the Reich Ministry of Postal Services, Dr. Ohnesorge, to assume the new position of Reich Minister of Postal Services.

In a letter to the retiring Reich Minister of Transportation, Freiherr Eltz von Rübenach, the Führer has expressed his gratitude for services rendered.

On February 4, Hitler staged a mass rally, attended by twenty thousand railroad workers on the doorsteps of the Chancellery. In staging this rally, Hitler aimed both to make the appointment of Dorpmüller sound more genuine and to distract attention from the Eltz von Rübenach affair, which had somehow leaked to the public. From the balcony of the Chancellery, Hitler addressed the crowd and pro-

claimed:⁵² “Germany now is free of the bonds of a treaty, which attempted to enslave it for centuries.”

Then he expanded upon the subordination of the Reichsbahn to state ownership, explaining the benefits of this change as follows: “No people in the world can claim ownership to such a magnificent enterprise as the Deutsche Reichsbahn.”

The Reich Minister of Economics and President of the Reichsbank, Hjalmar Schacht, paid his respects to Hitler in the Chancellery on February 5 by presenting a document which expressed gratitude for the “liberation of the German Reichsbank from its last ties of bondage to international finance.”⁵³ Two days later, Hitler gave a short honorary speech for the four German officers victorious at the Berlin International Riding and Driving Competition.⁵⁴ On February 11, Hitler inspected the new administration building of the NSDAP at the Königsplatz in Munich. He personally presented the building to the Reich Treasurer Schwarz,⁵⁵ under whose supervision the building was to be placed. Following a tour of its interior, Hitler declared: “It is truly magnificent.”

Afterwards, Hitler returned to the Obersalzberg. There, on February 15, he signed a decree calling for a “Constituent General Synod of the German Protestant Church.” He had grown weary of the constant bickering with Protestant clerics. The decree detailed:⁵⁶

Berchtesgaden, February 15, 1937

Now that the Reich Church Committee (*Reichskirchenausschuss*) has failed to arrive at an agreement among the diverging ecclesiastical groups within the German Protestant Church, the Church shall now see to giving itself a new constitution and thereby a new organization. The complete freedom of self-determination for the parishes shall be preserved.

To this end, I empower the Reich Minister for Church Affairs to prepare for the election of a general synod and to take all steps necessary hereto.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

On the Obersalzberg on February 17, Hitler received a delegation of front-line soldiers from fourteen nations and delivered a speech before the men assembled.⁵⁷

If ever there were any men who knew the significance of the term peace, he declared, then it were those who had experienced upon their own bodies what the term war meant. Any new armed conflict would end in catastrophe for all nations.

The “Law for Preventing Participation in the Spanish Civil War”⁵⁸ was issued the next day. Persons attempting to recruit German citizens

for combat in Spain were advised of legal repercussions. In order to ensure compliance with the law, these measures consisted of the implied threat of jail sentences. Ironically, if Hitler's law had been enforced, all of the Condor Legion—including a number of high-ranking officers in the Army and in the Luftwaffe—would have perforce been incarcerated. Even Hitler himself, along with the commanders in chief of the Wehrmacht, would have been implicated under the section of this law which forbade "instigating individuals to participate" in the civic strife in Spain. However, Hitler did not think of statutes, such as the above mentioned, in terms of a universally applicable system of law. Rather he saw them merely as means to an end. Thus, in 1939 Hitler presented the German veterans of the Spanish Civil War with medals instead of jail sentences.⁵⁹

2

On February 20, Hitler presided over the opening of the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin. His welcoming address⁶⁰ commenced with a lengthy and highly detailed account of efforts connected with the motorization process in the previous four years. Turning to the “tasks of the future,” he stated that the production of the new Volkswagen was a major priority. Evidently the industry continued to be wary of this project, and its opposition to it had yet to be overcome. One more time Hitler had to argue in favor of his brainchild.

I would like to add here that it would be a capital error to believe the production of the cheapest people’s car might in any way reduce the numbers of those who purchase more expensive automobiles. As I have stated, that makes no sense. People do not refrain from buying more expensive and hence better-quality automobiles because they basically want inexpensive ones, but because they are not in a position to afford the expensive ones! And to the extent to which total production figures increase, there will necessarily be a corresponding progressive increase in price reduction. This reflects the constellation of our assets and income! It has, however, invariably been the case in the past that just as the cheaper product aroused and cultivated the attention and interest of the buyers—and consequent owners—in a certain direction, it was from these same classes that buyers for the better products later issued.

Gentlemen! There can thus be only one Volkswagen in Germany, and not ten. Yet in the gap between the forthcoming Volkswagen and the top luxury automobile, there must be a large group of other classes of automobiles corresponding to the economic climb of the buyers.

Hitler employed a markedly sharper tone in his opening address than he had in earlier years. Germany’s leading industrialists were ill at ease with Hitler’s new Four-Year Plan, which was obviously tailored to suit the exigencies of a wartime economy. For them, much was at

risk under the Four-Year Plan: they did not have “everything to win”⁶¹ (as allegedly did the politicians), but rather there was much to be lost indeed. Nevertheless, Hitler reminded them that nothing would keep him from “putting plans once conceived into practice, no matter how.” Here for the very first time he spoke of his “inalterable decision” (*unabänderlicher Entschluss*)—a term that he would employ with increasing frequency, in particular during the years of the Second World War. As time passed, the meaning of this expression would become equivalent to “mad decision.” Yet Hitler was confident that a man such as he—who had “succeeded in rising from an unknown soldier of the World War to the leader of the nation”—would be capable of dealing with whatever the future would bring.

I have no desire to concern myself with those who know only the one well-worn objection to all major decisions: “It won’t work.” For eighteen years I have grown accustomed to hearing this remark as the logical and simple justification for fighting every single new idea, every single new decision and every single new action.

I first encountered this phrase at the time of the November Revolution, when I made the decision to found a new Movement in Germany and use it to seize power: and I heard those same words again when I resolved to build the Reich Autobahn.

Supposedly none of that worked or would work. Since then I have had little trouble dealing with this problem. This phrase “That won’t work” is nothing but the manifestation of that general lethargy that arms itself against every single new idea, every single new concept and every single new action. And I do not need to assure you that a man who has succeeded in rising from an unknown soldier of the World War to the leader of the nation will also succeed in solving any problems to come.

May no man doubt my determination to put plans once conceived into practice, no matter how. [—]

Thus it is my inalterable decision to make the German automobile industry, which is one of our Volk’s greatest industries, independent of the insecurities of international imports, and to place it on its own solid and secure foundation. In one to two years, we will be independent of other countries as regards our needs for fuel and rubber, thus providing a dependable means of existence for countless German Volksgenossen; in similar fashion, we plan to use every means at our disposal to step up the mining of German ore.

Nor let there be any doubt: either the so-called free economy is capable of solving these problems, or it is not capable of surviving as a free economy! Under no circumstances will the National Socialist State capitulate to the idleness, the narrow-mindedness or the ill will of any individual German. Employees and employers both represent contracting parties in the German economic process, and neither has the right to do damage to the interests of the body of the Volk by pursuing one-sided aims.

On February 21, Hitler participated in the festivities surrounding the Heroes' Memorial Day. Subsequent to the official ceremony, which he attended at the State Opera, he placed a wreath at the memorial Unter den Linden. Thereafter he reviewed a defile of troops. This particular celebration was to be the only one in the period 1933 through 1939 whose theme was not eclipsed by a political incident either on the national or international stage.⁶²

On February 24, the usual ceremony in remembrance of the foundation of the Party took place in the banquet hall of the Munich Hofbräuhaus.⁶³ There Hitler spoke of the "marvelous experience of the first fighting years." Then, as if claiming that his eighteen-year involvement with the National Socialist Party were the sole causal factor in the resurgence of Germany, he concluded that "we have today become a world power once again."

Two days later at the Chancellery, he received the past President of the Swiss Confederation, Dr. Schulthess. Hitler conferred with his guest at great length and reassured him that Germany would respect the neutrality of Switzerland.⁶⁴

Come what may, we shall always respect the territorial integrity and neutrality of Switzerland. I am telling you this in earnest. I have never given reason for others to think differently.

Hitler spent the first few days of March 1937 informally attending numerous cultural events.⁶⁵ On March 4, at the National Theater in Munich, he watched a new production of the Richard Strauss opera *Der Rosenkavalier*. The next day, he inspected the construction site of the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg. He again spent several hours at the Automobile Exhibition in Berlin on the following day. On March 9, Hitler attended a ballet performance of *Tanz um die Welt* ("The Dance around the World") by members of the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg. The next day, on the fourth anniversary of the "National Socialist Revolution" in Bavaria, Hitler wired an expression of his gratitude to Minister-President Ludwig Siebert and to the State Minister, Gauleiter Adolf Wagner, thanking both men for their involvement in the Movement.⁶⁶ On March 11, Hitler presented State Actor Heinrich George with an autographed portrait which read:⁶⁷ "To the great German artist Heinrich George on his twenty-fifth anniversary on stage. With the best wishes, Adolf Hitler."

The same day, Hitler hosted the completely assembled Party leadership at an informal gathering in the Chancellery.⁶⁸

On March 12, he paid a personal visit to Dr. Frick in the latter's apartment to congratulate him on his sixtieth birthday. In the afternoon, Hitler analysed the political situation in a ninety-minute speech before a group of NSDAP Gauleiters.⁶⁹ In the evening, he concluded this busy day by receiving four hundred artists at the Chancellery.⁷⁰

On March 13, Hitler delivered an address in celebration of Field Marshal von Blomberg's fortieth service anniversary. Numerous generals and admirals had assembled in the Ministerial Room of the Reich Ministry of War to hear him speak. The *Völkischer Beobachter* described the address in the following manner:⁷¹

The Führer began his address honoring the Reich Minister of War, Field Marshal von Blomberg, by paying tribute to the historic changes in Germany and the world in the past four years. From the very onset, the NSDAP had felt its mission to be the advance of the political, economical, and psychological prerequisites essential to the build-up of a new and mighty Wehrmacht. Field Marshal von Blomberg had contributed greatly both to the rebirth of the Wehrmacht and to the consolidation of the old Army with the young Party. The Reich Minister of War deserves to be lauded for his merger of the two organizations, and especially for his avoidance of friction between the two parties. He has brought this about in precisely the manner the Führer desired.

An army cannot exist devoid of an ideological base from which it can derive its mission. It is the unrivaled accomplishment of the Reich Minister of War that the National Socialist Weltanschauung was able to provide this moral foundation. In this effort, the Reich Minister was aided by his capacity for facile comprehension and his unerring loyalty. Thanks to the principles engendered in the Weltanschauung, it was possible to arrive at the decisions necessary for the rebirth of the German Wehrmacht.

Taking up the achievements of the Reichswehr, the Führer stated: "One thing is certain—with the exception of the immense material and spiritual efforts on the part of the Chiefs of the various Wehrmacht Commands—it would never have been possible to build up today's German Army within such a short time period, had it not been for Field Marshal von Blomberg. And so it will be entered into the book of history!"

In the Führer's words, the entire German Volk is indebted to the Field Marshal for this. The name of the Reich Minister of War shall live on eternally in the annals of the German Army. In the future as well, he shall remain the foremost custodian of the Wehrmacht.

The Führer proceeded to announce the appointment of the Field Marshal as Chief of the Seventy-Third Infantry Regiment and congratulated him on his service anniversary.

After only a few months, Hitler found himself no longer content with von Blomberg's performance and fired his Minister of War in order to assume the latter's position himself.⁷²

While visiting Berlin, the King of Denmark, Christian X, paid his respects to Hitler at the Chancellery on March 15.⁷³ Two days later, Hitler went to see the exhibition *Das deutsche Bühnenbild* (Stage Art in Germany) on display at the Berlin Haus der Kunst.⁷⁴

On March 18, Hitler ordered renewed exercises for the holders of the SA Sports Badge in an effort to preserve the men's fitness for military service "up to an old age." The ordinance stated:⁷⁵

In my February 15, 1935 decree, I defined the SA Sports Badge as a means for combat training of the body and for keeping alive the spirit of defense in the Volk in all walks of life.

In order to assure the fitness for military service among the recipients of the SA Sports Badge up to an old age, I authorize the Chief of Staff of the SA to make the further possession of the SA Sports Badge contingent upon successful participation in certain training exercises. I further upgrade the *Leistungsbuch* (record booklet) of the SA Sports Badge to a document which shall afford information on the corporeal constitution and the *weltanschaulich* attitude⁷⁶ of its bearer.

Berlin, March 18, 1937

Adolf Hitler

On March 25, Hitler's portrait for the first time appeared on a stamp, a six-pfennig stamp sold in sets of four, as announced in the gazette of the Reich Ministry of Postal Services. The new Minister Ohnesorge had only with great difficulty wrested the permission for the printing of the stamp from Hitler,⁷⁷ for the Führer resented almost superstitiously the reproduction of his likeness. This aversion of Hitler is particularly well-documented for the early years of his domestic struggle.⁷⁸

On March 30, Hitler succeeded in claiming an important victory for himself by finally convincing Ludendorff to consider conciliatory talks. Hitler had baited the old warrior by extending to him the promise of easing the regulations restricting his sectarian religious movement "Deutsche Gotterkenntnis" (German Recognition of God). Ludendorff's acquiescence signaled to the public that within Germany, no man of renown and importance could resist coming under the spell of Hitler. The official press release reporting on the meeting between Hitler and Ludendorff described it in the following terms:⁷⁹

Munich, March 30

In the interest of the German Volk and in order to alleviate the existing disagreements and difficulties, exhaustive conciliatory talks took place between the Führer and Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler and General von Ludendorff. These resulted in the desired reconciliation.

The General expressed his appreciation of the Führer's accomplishments that one by one have torn to pieces the articles of the disgraceful Treaty

(*Schandpakt*) of Versailles. Above all, he rejoiced at seeing Volk and State once again fit to fight and Germany as the master of the Rhine. Ludendorff also stated that it was a most advantageous fact that Hitler had succeeded in reuniting the Germans spiritually, and thereby prepared them to face the tasks of the future.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor spoke of his personal experiences and voiced his pleasure at seeing that the Third Reich and its Wehrmacht once again enjoyed the confidence of the great Commander of the World War, reminiscent of the ties between the Fighters of November 9, 1923, and the Old Army.

Ludendorff as well published the above communiqué in his movement's journal, which bore the title of *Am Heiligen Quell Deutscher Kraft* (At the Holy Fountain of German Strength).⁸⁰ However, he added to the above statement the following remarks:

The Führer and Reich Chancellor of the Reich has removed the restraints which up to the present have encumbered my own and my family's *weltanschaulich* activities. Those Germans who profess the "Deutsche Gotterkenntnis" shall now receive equal treatment to the members of other religious communities,⁸¹ which already enjoy the toleration guaranteed in Article 24 of the Party statutes.

I am grateful to the Führer and Reich Chancellor for this. It has now become easier for me to follow my calling, which compels me to endeavor to build up strong foundations for a completely *völkisch* state. I am also confident that this shall render my efforts for the benefit of this State more effective.

I now, in turn, expect that those of you who listen to my words, and in particular of those who are followers of the "Deutsche Gotterkenntnis," and who do not belong to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, but also of those within that Party, that you not lose sight of our original goal. It is our ambition to give strength to the German human being.

We wish to promote unity and accord among the German people in a *völkisch* and total state. It is now that I ask of you to do your utmost to reach this goal. Once and for all we shall thwart the efforts of supranational powers—which have been particularly obvious of late—to undermine our young *völkisch* Reich.

These forces are attempting to extend their all-encompassing grasp over our Volk. I implore the reader of the journal *Am Heiligen Quell Deutscher Kraft* to follow me with a joyous heart on the way to spreading the spiritual message of my house.

As emphasized by the last sentence, Ludendorff cherished "the spiritual message of his house"⁸² more than he did the personality of the Führer and Chancellor. Nevertheless, the Führer was adamant, and finally, a few weeks prior to Ludendorff's demise, Hitler persuaded the stubborn old General to consider himself one of the Old Fighters.⁸³

On March 30, too, a note was published acknowledging Hitler's substitution of von Blomberg for him at the coronation ceremonies of King George VI in London:⁸⁴

Berlin, March 30

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has commissioned Field Marshal von Blomberg to partake in his stead at the coronation ceremonies in London. The Commander in Chief Naval Station of the North Sea, Admiral Otto Schulze, and Major General of the Luftwaffe Stumpff shall constitute the remainder of the German delegation.

The fact that a purely military delegation was to represent Germany at an official state ceremony of such importance was contrary to all diplomatic procedure.⁸⁵ In fact, this was a renewed sharp affront to Great Britain. The act produced the impression that it was Hitler's intent to relay to the English that should they wish to contact him in the future, they had best do so through his Minister of War (!).

The "Greater Hamburg Ordinance,"⁸⁶ which provided for the incorporation of smaller neighboring districts to the city state, became law as of April 1. On this occasion, Hitler exchanged telegrams with the Reichsstatthalter and Gauleiter of Hamburg, Karl Kaufmann. In reply to the greetings extended by Kaufmann, Hitler stated the following:⁸⁷

I thank you for the greetings you sent me on the occasion of yesterday's festivities. I greet you in return, adding the heartfelt desire that the Greater Hamburg Ordinance, which has begun the development of the economic and residential potential of the Lower Elbe region, might bear the richest fruits for the benefit of Hamburg and Germany's economy.

Adolf Hitler

On April 7, Hitler congratulated the industrial magnate and Privy Councillor Emil Kirdorf on his ninetieth birthday in the telegram reproduced below:⁸⁸

I extend to you my heartfelt best wishes on your ninetieth birthday.

In recognition of your great service to Germany's economy, I hereby bestow upon you the highest distinction accorded by the Reich, the *Adlerschild*. Its inscription reads: "Dem grossen deutschen Wirtschaftsführer!" (To the great German leader of industry) .

Along with my best wishes for your future welfare, I extend to you the German salute, and I remain faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

In the course of Hitler's early years, Kirdorf had repeatedly rendered both financial and psychological assistance to him. Hence,

Hitler honored the elderly gentleman by paying him a lengthy visit at his country estate "Streithof," located near Mülheim an der Ruhr.⁸⁹

On April 16, Hitler addressed the Gau Commissioners of the Winterhilfswerk in a speech at the Chancellery.⁹⁰ He expressed his gratitude for their active involvement in the Movement, calling the Winterhilfswerk "a crucial instrument in the educational process of turning the German Volk into a true socialist community."

That same day, the Austrian Minister of the Interior, Glaise-Horstenau, who was well-known for his National Socialist leanings, visited Hitler for a "one-hour confidential talk at the Chancellery."⁹¹ As a former director of the War Archives in Vienna, Glaise-Horstenau had come to attend the opening ceremonies of the Army Archives in Potsdam. Another guest from Austria of a National Socialist persuasion who called on Hitler that very same day was the retired General Alfred Krauss. In the presence of Göring, Hitler discussed the issues of the day with Krauss.⁹²

On April 19, the British Socialist George Lansbury⁹³ visited Hitler in the Chancellery. Inspired by Hitler's numerous "peace proposals," the renowned pacifist had decided to put before the German Chancellor his own ideas pertaining to the best approach to securing world peace. Hitler listened to him with a faraway, unheeding expression on his face. He was bored stiff by this "senile" Englishman. As the interpreter Schmidt noted, Hitler dismissed his guest in a rather rude manner after having made a few vague assurances of his willingness to participate in any peace conference which would possibly convene. To Hitler time was too precious to be wasted on an Englishman's obsessive preoccupation with peace.

Moreover, the Führer had yet to prepare an address he would deliver at 7:00 p.m. on the eve of his birthday. Talk of peace would be most inappropriate in a speech before the Wehrmacht! Prior to Hitler's speaking appearance, a military parade traversed the Wilhelmsplatz and marched past the Chancellery. The Wehrmacht was to receive ninety new troop banners on this occasion. The content of Hitler's speech, which was broadcast on the radio, is reproduced below.⁹⁴

Soldiers!

You are assembled here to receive the new banners. May these banners signify to you threefold:

First of all, may they remind you of the great past. Each of these banners holds that iron Cross which decorated hundreds of thousands of brave officers and troops in so many campaigns. By virtue of this Iron Cross, these

banners shall remind you above all of the greatest campaign of all time, of the World War. Immortal, undying heroism is bound up with this symbol! For the German soldier, there can be no remembrance of this greatest of experiences that is more splendid and more proud than the Iron Cross displayed on your banners.

And secondly, these banners remind you of the great battle of the present. Luckily the old banners were lowered after the collapse of 1918. Hence they were not made to witness the saddest period of German disintegration, German impotence, German weakness, and German humiliation.

Yet even in those years of deepest humiliation, there began a struggle for a new German Reich. While the environment was being shaken up by crises, in Germany, a new Volk, a new nation was born. And this new German Volk manifested itself politically in a new Reich. What centuries before us have yearned for has today become a reality: one Volk, one Reich, one idea, one will, and hence one symbol! The swastika you find on your banners is the symbol of this great inner process of recuperation, the symbol of the rebirth and hence the resurrection of our Volk. And it is also the symbol under which the new German Wehrmacht has come to be. It is the national symbol of the National Socialist German Reich, and you are its soldiers!

The third—the history of the future—you yourselves must now write! You and the generations following you who will enter the Wehrmacht of the German Reich year after year. And this history of the future must be just as proud as the past. It will be easier, because for the first time a German Volk will now shape its own history and destiny. And you, soldiers of the German Wehrmacht, are the representatives of the defense of and struggle for its freedom and honor!

Hence in your hands you hold not only the symbol of a glorious past and of a great struggle in the present, but—be it God's will—moreover that of an even greater future!

This “even greater future” apparently entailed the reaping of laurels in military campaigns.

On April 20, Hitler proclaimed the foundation of the National Socialist Air Corps (Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps, NSFK) and dissolved the German Air Sports Association (which, from 1935 onward, had no longer been needed to serve as a guise for the Luftwaffe). The decree effecting the organization's dissolution read as follows:⁹⁵

I determine the following in order to keep alive and foster the idea of flying in the German Volk, to provide for flying training prior to the military tour of service and to standardize the numerous leisure activities connected to flying in Germany:

1. The registered Deutscher Luftsportverband (DLV) and its subdivisions (Landesgruppen, Ortsgruppen, etc.) are dissolved herewith. They shall be replaced by the Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (NSFK).

2. The Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps shall be a corporation under public law. The Corps Leader of the NSFK shall head the organization. He shall be responsible to the Reich Minister for Air.

3. Association in the NSFK shall be on a volunteer basis. However, members of the NSFK may not simultaneously be members of either SA, SS or NSKK.

4. Members of the NSFK shall continue to wear the present bad weather attires of the DLV, to the left upper arm of which a swastika armband shall be affixed.

5. Administrative agencies, public institutions and other corporations under public law shall grant the same privileges to members of the NSFK that they grant to members of the various subdivisions of the NSDAP. Previous membership in the DLV shall be accounted for in favor of NSFK members.

6. Sports activities connected to aviation shall be conducted in accordance with guidelines issued by the Corps Leader of the NSFK.

7. The Reich Minister for Air shall tend to measures regarding the implementation of this decree.

Adolf Hitler

The NSFK was set up as an autonomous organization of equal importance to the SA, SS and NSKK. Hitler appointed Major General Christiansen as its Corps Leader. Christiansen was a highly distinguished pilot and recipient of a "Pour le mérite" award.⁹⁶

On the morning of April 20, a huge military parade filed by Adolf Hitler in the Berlin Tiergarten. The Commander of Wehrkreis III, General von Witzleben,⁹⁷ once again reported a list of figures to the Führer: 1,550 officers, 13,000 enlisted men, 1,500 horses, and 950 vehicles standing at attention.⁹⁸ After the parade, Hitler flew to Munich and arrived there "completely unexpectedly,"⁹⁹—at least according to the *Völkischer Beobachter's* account.

Two days later, Albert Forster, Gauleiter of Danzig, came to the Obersalzberg for private talks¹⁰⁰ with Hitler. Though the content of the conversation was never made public, it seems reasonably clear that the topics discussed pertained to the latent tensions straining the relationship of Danzig to Poland.

On April 29, Hitler delivered a two-hour 'secret speech' to an assembly of NSDAP Kreisleiters, who had gathered at the Ordensburg Vogelsang in the Eifel mountains for a training course.¹⁰¹ As mentioned before, the primary purpose of the *Ordensburgen* was to educate and train the Political Leaders and their junior staff.¹⁰² In addition to physical tests of bravery, these men submitted to a *weltanschaulich* indoctrination, where information Hitler had approved was presented to them for incorporation into their political belief system or "credo."¹⁰³ At the

Vogelsang castle, Hitler raged for hours on the subject of the “complete insanity of parliamentary democracy.” He also explained that, as a matter of principle, he never called for a plebiscite on an issue unless he had already resolved it. Thanks to this procedural technique, he could demonstrate to the entire world that each and every German was in full support of his policies.

Had I believed that the German Volk was not in complete support of these measures, I would have acted nonetheless—however, without conducting a plebiscite. I would have simply said that this was a risk I had to take!

Toward the end of his speech, Hitler returned to the topic of Spain and alluded to the German participation in the Civil War raging there. However, he assured his listeners that Germany had no intention of turning “Spain into a National Socialist state.”

However, it is desirable for us not to have a Bolshevik state in existence there, which might form a land bridge connecting France and North Africa.

On the last day of April, Hitler spoke before the convention of the Reich Chamber of Labor (*Reichsarbeitskammer*) in Berlin. He spoke on the topic of the new economic and social order Hitler envisioned for Germany.¹⁰⁴ He also bestowed upon thirty firms the honorary title of *NS Musterbetrieb* (exemplary NS enterprise),¹⁰⁵ which he hoped would inspire other firms to strive for excellence as well. In the end, Germany’s entire economy would be made up of exclusively “exemplary National Socialist enterprises.”

That same day, Hitler attended the opening of an exhibition, bearing the title *Geht mir vier Jahre Zeit* (Give Me Four Years’ Time). The show was set up on the fairgrounds in Berlin. First mention of this illustrated documentary on the past four years of National Socialist rule in Germany had already been made in Hitler’s speech before the Reichstag on January 30. The exhibition represented the opening of this year’s festivities, which were focused upon the national holiday.¹⁰⁶

At 9:00 a.m. in the morning of May 1, Hitler spoke in Berlin’s Olympic Stadium, addressing 120,000 boys and girls for whom he had prepared the usual youth rally platitudes:

There is but one German Volk, and hence there can be but one German youth. [—] We want a healthy youth. [—] We want a proud youth. [—] We want manly boys, and we want feminine girls. [—]

We do not want cowards, hypocrites or bootlickers; instead, we want our German youth to become an open and straightforward race. We want you to be a cheerful youth ... [etc., etc.]

Hitler's peroration resounded with the pathos of a mass held in Latin:

And thus this Germany of which you, my dear boys and girls, are so fond, this our Germany shall and must be equally fond of you. You are for us all by far the greatest treasure there is. You are for us all the promise of faith and hope for our Volk. When we see you we have boundless trust and immense confidence in the future of our Volk, the Volk whose youth you comprise, whose men and women you will one day be; the Volk to which we all belong, now and until the end of time.¹⁰⁷

At 11:00 a.m., Hitler attended the customary ceremonial session of the Reich Chamber of Culture in the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg, where the film award was presented to Emil Jannings as best actor, and the National Socialist author Friedrich Bethge received the book award. An hour later, the official celebration began in Berlin's Lustgarten. Here a "mere" 1.2 million people paraded before their Führer. However, their ranks were reinforced by another seven million people from "all over the Reich," who listened to the event on the radio.

Hitler's listeners that day heard a far more aggressive Führer than the one who had spoken on other May Day celebrations in the past. Hitler quite openly voiced Germany's demand for new Lebensraum and he delivered numerous unrelenting attacks on the ruling classes, whose members had hitherto assumed leading positions within Germany. Neither did he spare the church nor his intellectual critics.

The problems of our life are worse than those of other peoples. Perhaps there are peoples who can afford the luxury of waging war at home, of wrangling and bashing each other's heads in. Where Nature has given human beings everything in abundance, they will perhaps accord less importance to the necessity of uniform action and thus of a uniform will. Yet Nature has not been very kind to us Germans here on earth. A great Volk, an infinitely competent Volk, an industrious Volk, a Volk who has a will to live and a right to make demands on life, is living in a space much too tight and too confined to possibly provide to it everything it needs, even given the greatest diligence. When we sometimes hear foreign politicians say, "Why do you need a further, broader scope for life?" we might respond by asking them in turn, "Then why do you place such great emphasis on it?" It is for the very reason that our life-struggle is so much more difficult than elsewhere that we must draw specific conclusions from this fact which constitutes our fate. We cannot exist on phrases, clichés and theories, but only on the fruits of our labor, our ability and our intelligence. [—]

For at the fore of our National Socialist economic leadership stands not the word "theory," nor the word "money," nor "capital," but the word

“production.” Believe me, my Volksgenossen: it requires more brain-work, more effort and more concentration to draw up and implement a Four-Year Plan to secure for our Volk the requisite vital goods for the future than to start up the rotary press to print more paper money.

It is very easy to stride before the public and say, “We’re raising salaries, earnings and wages”—and then tomorrow we shall raise prices. And it is very easy to say, “We’ll shorten working hours—that means output—and raise wages instead.” That may be popular at the moment. But the collapse is inevitable, for the individual does not live on a paper wage but on the total sum of the production of his Volksgenossen. That is the foremost precept of National Socialist economic policy. [—]

Life itself puts every generation under an obligation to wage its own battle for that life. Yet what centuries of prejudice and irrationality have built up cannot be completely eliminated within four years’ time. Everything cannot be accomplished at once! But we have the will to master this problem and, armed with this will, we shall never capitulate! And we are applying ourselves thoroughly to our task; you will have to admit that. In these four years, we have established order; we have ensured that it is not the undeserving who walk off with the wages in the end, but the millions comprising the upright working masses in the cities and the countryside who are able to gain their just reward!

In Germany we have truly broken with the world of prejudices. I may regard myself as an exception. I, too, am a child of this Volk, and did not issue from some palace; I come from the work site. Neither was I a general; I was a soldier like millions of others. It is a miraculous thing that, here in our country, an unknown man was able to step forth from the army of millions of German people, German workers and soldiers, to stand at the fore of the Reich and the nation!

Next to me stand German people from every class of life who today are part of the nation’s leadership: former agricultural workers who are now Reichsstathalters; former metalworkers who are today Gauleiters, etc. Though, mind you, former members of the bourgeoisie and former aristocrats also have their place in this Movement. To us it makes no difference where they come from; what counts is that they are able to work for the benefit of our Volk. That is what matters. [—]

For subordinating oneself is something every person must do. We, too, subordinated ourselves. For nearly six years I was a soldier and never voiced a contradiction, but instead simply obeyed orders at all times. Today Fate has made me the one who gives orders.

And this I must demand of every German: you, too, must be able to obey; otherwise you will never be deserving or worthy of giving orders yourself! That is the prerequisite! It is thus we shall train our Volk and pass over the stubbornness or stupidity of the individual: bend or break—one or the other! We cannot tolerate that this authority, which is the authority of the German Volk, be attacked from any quarter.

This also applies to all the Churches. As long as they concern themselves with their religious problems, the State will not concern itself with them. If

they attempt, however, to presume by virtue of any actions, letters, encyclicals, etc. to claim rights which accrue solely to the State, we will force them back into their right and proper spiritual-pastoral activities. Nor is it acceptable to criticize the morality of a state from that quarter when they have more than enough reason to call their own morality into question.¹⁰⁸ The German leadership of state will take care of the morality of the German State and Volk—of that we can assure all those concerned both within and without Germany. [—]

Hence this May Day is the illustrious holiday of the resurrection¹⁰⁹ of the German Volk from its disunity and its fragmentation. It is the illustrious day of the erection of a new and great Volksgemeinschaft that unites city and country, workers, peasants and intellectuals above and beyond any divisions, allowing the Reich to stand as sole presider over all in full panoply.

What is, therefore, more logical than for us to again wholeheartedly pledge ourselves to our Volk on this day of all days? We cannot renew this pledge often enough: that we wish to belong to this Volk, that we wish to serve it and will endeavor to understand one another; that we wish to overcome all that divides us and thus defeat the stupid doubters, the mockers and the incessant little cavillers; that today above all we wish to renew our faith in our Volk, our confidence that it is a marvelous, competent, industrious, and decent Volk, and that this Volk shall have its future because we are the ones responsible for that future!

As had become his custom on such occasions, Hitler received several delegations of workers from all over the Reich at the Chancellery that afternoon. Later he hosted the winners of the *Reichsberufswettkampf* (Reich Job Competition) and received Jannings and Bethge, the recipients of the film and book award. Subsequently, a delegation of Italian youth leaders and journalists called on Hitler.

In Hamburg, Hitler attended the launch of the KdF ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* on May 5,¹¹⁰ followed the next day by a cruise on the light battleship *Grille* to Cuxhaven and the Kiel Canal. Two days later, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to the Deutsche Zeppelin shipping company upon learning of the explosion of the *Hindenburg* on its approach to the Lakehurst airport in New York.¹¹¹

On May 11, the new British Ambassador Sir Nevile M. Henderson paid his respects to Hitler at the Chancellery and presented his credentials to the German Head of State. At the same time in London, ceremonies began at the coronation of George VI, to which Hitler had sent his Minister of War, von Blomberg—well aware that this was an insult to the new King.

Henderson had been named British Ambassador to Germany on February 5, a few weeks after the accession of George VI to the throne, but arrived to assume his new responsibilities much later, on May 11.

The fifty-five-year-old Eton graduate and member of Britain's diplomatic corps had been Ambassador in Paris in the years 1928 through 1932, and had also served his country in Belgrade and Buenos Aires. Without a doubt, he was one of the most excellent diplomats in Great Britain at the time, and his assignment to Berlin clearly demonstrated the importance the British government accorded its representation there. In any case, the British wanted to be certain that Hitler would never be in a position to accuse the British Ambassador of incompetency should Anglo-German relations deteriorate. Neither could anyone claim that the new British Prime Minister, Sir Neville Chamberlain, had not done his utmost to appease Hitler. Chamberlain was to replace Baldwin toward the end of the month. Henderson pointed out the gravity of his mission in the following words:¹¹²

Dear Herr Reichskanzler!

I am greatly honored to present to you this letter which recalls my predecessor to our country. In it Your Excellency shall also find that my King, my most gracious sovereign, has deigned to send me here as his Ambassador Plenipotentiary to Your Excellency.

I am deeply touched by the honor my King thus bestows upon me in entrusting me with a mission of such importance. It is not merely a phrase when I state that I wish to begin my life among your great German people, so akin to our own, with the resolution to do everything in my power to further understanding between Great Britain and Germany.

Precisely this is the greatest desire of His Majesty, indeed of His Majesty's Government and the entire British people. If my mission is to succeed, I must do the utmost to achieve the fulfillment of this noble wish.

I am convinced that between us stand no matters that could not be resolved by mutual good will and peaceful cooperation. I am confident that my own personal connections to Your Excellency and to Your Excellency's Ministers will permit me to find the support and trusting cooperation so essential to mastery of this demanding task.

Hitler's reply to Henderson was the following:

Your Excellency!

I am honored to receive from Your Excellency's hands the letter of recall of your predecessor, you have presented to me along with a letter of His Majesty, King George VI, accrediting you as His Majesty's Ambassador Plenipotentiary here.

It is with great satisfaction that I listened to Your Excellency's words, with which you have defined your mission here as one of doing your utmost to further British-German understanding, in accordance to the desires of His Majesty the King, the British Royal Government, and of the entire British people.

Let me assure you that I myself, the Reich Government, and the German Volk sincerely welcome this.

Your Excellency has expressed his conviction that there are no differences, separating our two countries, which could not be resolved given mutual good will and peaceful cooperation. This is also my conviction. I would like to add that I regard this peaceful cooperation as a prerequisite to the prosperity of both our peoples, the kinship among which you have stressed in particular, and as crucial in the interest of peace worldwide.

Let me assure Your Excellency, that you can be certain of my personal assistance of your striving to carry out your mission, and that you shall also find the Reich Government most cooperative.

I am most grateful for the warm wishes, expressed and penned by His Majesty, King George VI, in a hand-written note, for the prosperity of Germany and for my personal welfare. I most sincerely return these in kind and bid Your Excellency a heartfelt welcome to the German Reich.

Simultaneously, Hitler sent the following congratulatory telegram to King George VI:¹¹³

May it please Your Majesty to accept the congratulation of both myself and the German Reich Government upon your coronation. Please also accept our best wishes for the future welfare of Your Majesty and the Royal House. May Providence impart upon Your Majesty a long and joyous reign to the benefit of Great Britain, Ireland, India, and the Crown's overseas possessions as well as in the interest of the maintenance of peace throughout the world.

That same day, Hitler welcomed the newly appointed envoy from Guatemala, Gregorio Diaz, who had in the past already officiated as *Chargé d'Affaires* in Berlin, as well as his Mexican colleague General Juan D. Azcarate.¹¹⁴ Later Hitler and his ministers lavished their attention on the Polish Minister of Justice Grabowski and his wife. The couple had come to Berlin so that Minister Grabowski could attend the constituent session of a syndicate concerning questions of legal relations between the Third Reich and Poland.¹¹⁵

On May 20, Hitler delivered yet another two-hour 'secret speech' to a group of workers assembled at the Obersalzberg to celebrate the opening of a communal hall. Here Hitler spoke on the nature of National Socialist economic policy "in a language intelligible even to the least of the workers," as the *Völkischer Beobachter* put it.¹¹⁶ Later that day, Hitler received a delegation of NSKK men, to whom he presented an autographed portrait of himself.¹¹⁷ In addition, he agreed to a discussion of social problems with Abel Bonnard, a member of the Académie Française. The interview was printed in the French newspaper *Le Journal* on May 22. Bonnard reported:¹¹⁸

Everything the Führer told me corresponded exactly to what I had seen in Germany during the past few days. Every word of our conversation pertained to the subject of the social reforms in the country of which he is head of state—with the exception of a remark about former front-line soldiers. To him, these men represented the most trustworthy group in any country because of their great experience and good judgment.

Our talk began with a comparison of the pre-World War society to its present state. Because I consider it a self-evident truth, I had maintained that even if the world had been a more comfortable and agreeable place in former times, granted that the well-being of the individual had been rendered greater justice, the present has its advantages, too. Precisely because it is not an easy life we live, the world today offers us splendid and numerous opportunities to prove our manliness. Today's reality is a harsher and more dramatic one, but it may also be more poetic, as our struggle with reality leads us to greater depths of understanding life and all it entails.

With a wave of his hand, the Führer signals his assent to this, but I still can tell that he is not quite in agreement with my opinion.

"Without doubt," says he, "the world today may provide some men of energy with a thrilling sensation in view of these challenges. I for my part would never have been happy living in the period from 1860 to 1914. However, these feelings apply to very few individuals, and the mass of the people simply is not interested in these problems.

"Certainly one can raise the crowd's awareness so that the people appreciate the vital interests of their Fatherland. However, this in itself does not satisfy the masses. Many people work eight hours a day, subjected to a working environment that may be most unpleasant, and in a profession they themselves did not choose. They need to have an inner drive, a feeling of happiness, that makes life bearable for them. To really improve their lot, it does not suffice merely to change the material conditions of their existence!"

Then the Führer turns to speak of the organization *Kraft durch Freude*, the purpose of which is "to spread joy among the people and teach them to enjoy themselves."

"All in all, I say, a human being ought to be understood in his soul, as in his profession, so that he can arrive at a better understanding of his essence as reflected in his work and in his personality. It is not merely a question of building each citizen a house, one also needs a light to shine inside of it."

The Chancellor continues: "The majority of people abroad seem to believe that we in Germany live under a dictatorship, without realizing that prior to 1933 there was a much greater dictatorship we suffered under. A government like ours could never remain in power without the will of the people to support it. The German Volk stands behind me because it knows that I truly care about its spiritual problems and advocate its concerns."

The Chancellor proceeds to explain what he has done for his Volk already and what he still intends to do. Returning to his comparison of past and present, he maintains that it is an extraordinarily difficult and unprecedented struggle for Germany to attain autarky. Germany is trying to extract sufficient natural resources from its own soil since it cannot obtain sufficient thereof on

the world market to meet its current needs. Foreign countries do not buy enough German products to allow for this.

Next he mentions the general distinction that was commonly made to differentiate between mental and manual labor. He correctly appraised this distinction as one that is not as easy as it may seem at first. There is mental work that is involved in physical tasks; certain mechanics and production line workers do indeed perform mental calculations as well. On the other hand, there is the bookkeeper, who considers himself to perform a mentally trying task while actually most of his work consists of automatic or mechanic routines.

Nevertheless, the Chancellor's train of thought keeps returning to that one key problem, i.e. how to go about instilling the largest social class of the Volk with a different mental approach to its daily life.

Nearly up to the present, he says, there has always been a most striking contrast between the way passengers and the way the men of the crew were accommodated on the luxury liners of the great shipping lines. On the one side, there was everything that could be desired and all sorts of refinement imaginable; on the other, neither comfort nor amenities found their way into the crews' quarters, but rather there were plenty of difficulties engendered in the daily exigencies of life and survival, not to mention those posed by the insanitary and unhealthy surroundings. All our efforts to change this had been for naught. When we demanded that the crew members be given better quarters, the ship owners simply replied that space on a liner was too expensive to accommodate our wishes. When we demanded that there ought to be a deck reserved for the crewmen, where they might catch a breath of fresh air, we received the reply that this posed construction problems that had not yet been resolved by the engineers.

"Today the cabins of the crew members are decent ones. There is a deck at their disposal, equipped with good lounge chairs, with radios for entertainment. Further, there is a saloon where they can dine with the warrant officer—and all these improvements were not that expensive—one just had to will them."

The Führer then turns his attention to the motor vehicle. As he states, the number of cars on German roads is persistently on the rise. He spoke of voyages that workers today can undertake to Madeira or the Canary Islands, or to the island of Rügen, where a beach with a yearly capacity of between 800,000 and 900,000 visitors is being constructed. In this manner, amenities that previously had been reserved for a small and exclusive group are now accessible to the general public. This way the fuel for jealousy is cut back significantly. In Berlin, an enormous luxury hotel is under construction. But at the same time and on the same street, a house for the *Kraft durch Freude* organization will be built, designed to bring light into the lives of the common people.

According to the Führer, it is not a question of taking much from a few but rather of giving a little to the many. The Chancellor speaks in a calm and composed manner, with few pauses. His face is drawn, perhaps because of the gravity of the concerns of which he speaks.

In Berlin on May 25, Hitler participated in a meeting of the Reich Military Research and Development Council, presided over by Artillery General Becker.¹¹⁹ In the course of the next two days, Hitler received two groups of military men as his guests. First, on May 26 he received a group of Japanese naval officers headed by Rear Admiral Kobayashi. The following day, a delegation of naval officers from Argentina led by Rear Admiral Scasso came to call on Hitler at the Chancellery.¹²⁰

On May 29, Hitler had the German Chargé d’Affaires in Rome present an extraordinarily pointed note to the Vatican. Already at the May 1 rally, Hitler had spoken against various encyclicals in an uncharacteristic manner. After a speech by the American Cardinal Mundelein, Hitler seized upon the opportunity to declare “the further conduct of normal diplomatic relations between the German Government and the Curia as being impossible.”

Nevertheless, Hitler’s note did not elicit any reproof nor did it carry with it any consequences. Its text read verbatim:¹²¹

The German Ambassador has recently had to bring before the Holy See remonstrances concerning Cardinal Mundelein, who, in front of a congregation of five hundred priests in the Chicago Archdiocese, has referred to the German Head of State, members of the Reich Government, and to certain church-political happenings in Germany, in a most insulting manner. In particular, the German Ambassador expressed his great displeasure that a prelate of such standing as Cardinal Mundelein would debase himself to decrying the German Head of State in such unqualified a manner. Hereupon the German Ambassador to the Holy See was presented with an oral reply, which was later verified by a written response, to which I replied in the following manner in the name of my Government:

The German Reich Government based its approach to the dispatch issued to its Ambassador in Rome, who completed his task in this spirit, on the premise that, in the interest of the relations between Germany and the Vatican, no one should have a greater interest than the Holy See in discouraging injury, such as has been inflicted upon the relations between Germany and the Curia by the base assaults launched by the Cardinal upon the German Head of State.

The German Reich Government had held it to be self-evident that the Holy See would wish to distance itself from the unfortunate remarks of the Cardinal, correct these, and express its regret over the incident. This has at all times been the custom in the conduct of international relations. To the great consternation and displeasure of the German Government, the Holy See has evidently deemed it appropriate to reply with the completely unsubstantiated and incorrect remark—which is all the more conspicuous—that the Cardinal had at most returned like with like.

Obviously, this was a pretext in order not to have to reply to the note presented by the German Ambassador. The German Reich Government has

hence reached the conclusion that the Holy See has done nothing to amend the unqualified and public defamation, by one of its Curia's most distinguished members, of the person of the German Head of State, which in the eyes of the world must appear as though it approved of it.

The Holy See must realize that, as long as there is no remedy of the situation, its unexpected and incomprehensible demeanor in this issue has made the further conduct of normal diplomatic relations between the German Government and the Curia impossible. The Curia bears sole responsibility for this development.

On May 29, Hitler also delivered an address on the occasion of a commemorative meeting of the "National Club of 1919."¹²²

The next day, Hitler attended the opening of an exhibition of the Reich Food Estate (*Reichsnährstand*) in Munich. During the ceremony, Hitler received notice of an incident in Spanish coastal waters. The night before, a fighter plane of the Spanish government troops had dropped two bombs on the German armored ship *Deutschland*, at Ibiza. There had been both casualties and numerous injured among the crew. Immediately Hitler called the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral General Raeder, to Munich. In addition, a declaration was published in the name of the Reich Government:¹²³

Berlin, May 30, 1937

After Red airplanes bombed British, German, and Italian ships lying in the harbor of Majorca a few days ago and killed six officers on an Italian ship, German ships were forbidden to remain in the harbor any longer. On Saturday, May 29, 1937, the pocket battleship *Deutschland* was lying in the roadstead of Ibiza. The ship belongs to the forces assigned to the international sea patrol. In spite of this, the pocket battleship was suddenly bombed between 6.00 and 7.00 p.m. by two planes of the Red Valencia Government¹²⁴ in a gliding attack. Since the ship was off duty, the crew was in the unprotected crew's quarters forward. One of the Red bombs hit in the midst of the enlisted men's mess, just as in the recent attack on the Italian ship the officers' mess was hit. The result of this criminal attack was that 20 were killed and 73 wounded.¹²⁵ A second bomb hit the side deck but caused only slight damage there. The ship, which is fully operative, sailed to Gibraltar to put the wounded ashore. The ship had not fired on the airplanes.

Since the Red Valencia Government was twice warned by the Non-Intervention Committee and the German Government against further attacks on the ships engaged in the international patrol, this new criminal attack on the German ship compels the German Government to take measures of which it will immediately inform the Non-Intervention Committee.

Neurath

Precisely which "measures" ought to be taken next, was the topic of Hitler's conference with Admiral Raeder in Munich. After returning

to Berlin around 6:30 p.m., it again was the chief concern discussed with von Blomberg, Neurath and Raeder in the Chancellery. From 8:00 p.m. on, they were joined by Göring, who had been brought in with a special plane from Weimar. On May 31, the result of these talks was presented to the world in form of this official German press release:¹²⁶

In retribution for the criminal attack performed by Red bombers on the armored ship *Deutschland*, which was peacefully lying at anchor, the German Naval Forces have in the small hours of this day shelled the fortified seaport of Almería.¹²⁷ Once the port facilities had been destroyed and the hostile Red batteries had been silenced, the retaliatory action was discontinued and the enterprise terminated.

As is officially noted further, additional ships of the German Navy will immediately be put to sea to strengthen our forces in the Spanish waters.

Contrary to the announcement, Hitler did not report these reprisals to the Non-Intervention Committee, but had his representative there present the Committee with the following "Decision of the Reich Government":¹²⁸

The Reich Government will no longer participate in the control system nor will it contribute to the work of the Non-Intervention Committee, unless it is provided with the assurance that incidents of the kind just experienced will not be repeated. As a matter of course, the Reich Government reserves for itself the decision on what measures will have to be taken toward the Red powers in response to this most malicious attack. As long as the situation stands unresolved, the Government, in addition, has instructed its warships in Spanish waters to employ force to ward off any Red Spanish warship and plane approaching them.

From the standpoint of a strict interpretation of international law, Hitler's order to fire upon the seaport of Almería was still within the limits of legality. However, even such actions of retribution against supposedly guilty parties meet with universal disapproval because they violate the same principles as does the shooting of hostages. Italy had not resorted to a reprisal akin to the German shelling of Almería despite the fact that, as mentioned in the May 30 official German note, Italian officers had been killed in a similar incident.

Hitler's blatant display of brutality in this incident portended the cruelty of his wartime reactions. This was precisely the message Hitler wished to convey to the Western Powers. The incident was intended as a foretaste of what lay in store for them if they dared to oppose him. Notwithstanding his firm conviction that such actions would instill terror in the Anglo-Saxon Powers, they were not impressed by his show

of force. This tactic failed him in this instance, exactly as it would in the course of the Second World War.

In Berlin on June 2, Hitler delivered a 'secret speech' to the high-ranking Führerkorps of the Party. He enumerated various foreign policy concerns, discussed economic problems, and spoke on the topic of "spiritual and cultural foundations of the Party."¹²⁹ That same day, he received a delegation of participants in the Eleventh International Congress on Tourism, to whom he related the international significance of travel.¹³⁰ Two days later, Hitler sent Franco a telegram expressing his sorrow over the death of the Spanish general Mola.¹³¹

On June 6, Hitler honored the Gau Party Congress of the Bavarian Ostmark¹³² with his presence at its meeting in Regensburg. That day he also placed a wreath before a bust of Anton Bruckner, which had recently been dedicated in the *Walhalla* (hall of fame). Hitler gave a short address in appreciation of this deed at an official reception in the City Hall in Regensburg.¹³³

At 4:00 p.m., the Führer again spoke at a mass rally, attended by 200,000 men and women.¹³⁴ Once again he lashed out at Germany's past in a "party narrative:"

For us there was the hard choice: either-or! Either relinquishing claim to the remnants of a bad past, remnants that had become as ridiculous as they were harmful—or relinquishing claim to the future of Germany. We would rather relinquish claim to the past and fight for a future!

You are standing here in an ancient German city in which a King once erected the Walhalla with the bequest to unite in it all great German men of our history and hence lend expression to the German Volk's indissoluble bond of blood. We believe that today we have practically accomplished our primary task of creating one Volk; before us stands a goal, and this goal has hypnotized us. It is under the spell of this goal that we march on! Let he who stands in our way not complain if, sooner or later, the march of a nation sweeps over him.

He then explained the economic policy pursued by the National Socialists in the course of the previous years.

We have not practiced a policy of using cheap popular phrases. We have divested money of its phantom-like traits and assigned to it the role it deserves: neither gold nor foreign exchange funds, but work alone is the foundation for money! There is no such thing as an increase in wages if it does not go hand in hand with an increase in production. This economic insight has enabled us to decimate seven million unemployed to approximately 800,000 and to keep prices almost completely stable for all essential vital goods. Today there is work going on everywhere. The peasant is tilling his fields, the worker

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is supplying him with manufactured products, an entire nation is working. Things are looking up!

Taking a stance on both the Ibiza and Almería incidents in Spain, Hitler expounded:

The German Volk is not a Volk that suddenly starts a war today or tomorrow. The German is not only peaceful and peace-loving in his entire being, but above all peaceable. He wants to work.

In our country there are millions of peasants who want to till their fields and harvest their crops; millions of workers want to pursue their work. This Volk does not want to quarrel, but it equally does not want others to look for a quarrel with it. It wants only its right to live—though, mind you, it does not stand for insult or attack from just anyone who comes along. And to anyone who believes that, since the German Volk is so peace-loving, he can drop bombs on German ships underway on international assignments, we will demonstrate that we know how to defend ourselves.

Then Hitler launched an attack on all those who maintained that the German armament policy would spell ruin for its economy,¹³⁵ declaring that: “The German shall wear his steel helmet!”

It is for the protection of our liberty and hence our honor that we have built up this grand, new German Wehrmacht. German man, you no longer need to bow your head; you once again have equal rights and can walk proudly in this world with your head held high. For you know: no one will touch you without the entire Volk coming to your rescue! This equality of rights also constitutes the single prerequisite for the effectiveness of our immeasurable economic labor: would anyone work at all for an economy if he could not be certain that the fruits of his labors can neither be stolen from him nor reduced? Would anyone give thought to the future of financial projects if he lacked the security only liberty can vest in a Volk? There would be no financial enterprise were not the steel shield of the nation’s armor held above it!

If anyone tells us we will not be able to wear it in a short time, may he take note: the German shall wear his steel helmet! In any case as long as the others are able to wear it! Yet should ever the time come when the helmets must truly be removed, we will remove ours, too, with honor—but always be prepared, if necessary, to put them back on our heads immediately. I believe this is absolutely the best way to ultimately promote the cause of peace.

Only a few days ago I was happy to hear from the lips of an English statesman that Great Britain would only be in a position to enforce peace, if a large stock of arms were placed at its disposal. That is also my opinion with respect to Germany.

In scarcely four years, we have dismantled piece by piece the Treaty that was thrust upon us and brought the greatest disgrace upon our Volk; we have liberated the nation and restored to it all the qualities that characterize a free people and a free nation.

The last part of the speech reflected Hitler's personal preoccupation with questions of a religious nature that year. For the first time, Hitler himself employed the term *Gottgläubigkeit* (belief in God), evidently in order to indicate that in the future he, too, could be counted among the adherents of this confession.¹³⁶

I will never allow anyone to ever again tear this Volk asunder, to reduce it to a heap of warring religious camps.

We have gone through enough in German history and need not undergo any more such experiences. They have been the sorriest experiences ever. Once our Volk numbered 18.5 million people; after a thirty years' war, a mere 3.6 million were left.¹³⁷ It is my belief that some of those who are dissatisfied with the fact that we have finally created one Volk will attempt to reestablish that situation in Germany, but this attempt, too, will fail: they will never, ever destroy the German Volk and the German Reich. [—]

Generation after generation of our Volk will march on thus in our history, with this banner always in mind, this banner that places us under an obligation to our Volk, its honor, its freedom, and our community—to our truly National Socialist fraternity. They will then consider it only natural that this German Volk takes but the one path Providence has bade it take by giving these people a common language. We, therefore, go our way into the future with the deepest belief in God (*Gottgläubigkeit*). Would all we have achieved been possible had Providence not helped us? I know that the fruits of human labor are hard-won and transitory if they are not blessed by the Omnipotent (*Allmacht*). Work such as ours which has received the blessings of the Omnipotent can never again be undone by mere mortals. As long as the pillars of the Movement hold this banner fast in their grip, there is not an enemy alive, no matter how powerful, who will ever be able to wrest it from our grasp.

Obviously, Hitler already had arrived at a belief in the divine origin of the Reich he had created. Hence, the empire could not be destroyed by mere mortals. This nascent conviction can be read even more clearly between the lines of his speech in Würzburg on June 27.

On June 13, the Chinese Minister of Finance, H. H. Kung, paid his respects to the Führer at the Chancellery, during a stay in Berlin.¹³⁸

Three days later, an assemblage of 1,300 Italian Youth Leaders—both male and female—marched up the Wilhelmsplatz in front of the Chancellery. Hitler addressed them in the speech below:¹³⁹

Young Italian Comrades!

It is a pleasure for me to greet you today on this square in Berlin. You are paying a visit to a Reich governed by the same principles and ideas which govern your own country. Italy and Germany have sought, under similar circumstances, to find a way—and they found it: a way leading out of national weakness and onward to national power, strength and hence, as we know, to national rights.

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On your trip through Germany, you will sense how strongly these same ideas are expressed in the feelings of friendship and affection here. German comrades have brought these same impressions of Italy back to their homeland before you. Italy and Germany are filled with the conviction that the two pillars of this idea do not stand isolated in the world, that these ideals have found a home not only in these two states, but proceeding from them also hold attraction for other countries and peoples.

Above all, together we are guided in this age by the same defense against one of the greatest perils to the world there is: against Bolshevism.

It makes us feel fortunate to know that Italy, too, is standing by as we are, a country in full panoply, and that this people has now dispatched its youth to Berlin as its representatives. Just as the German Volk is proud of and pleased with its youth, the Italian people, too, can be proud of and pleased with its youth! That, too, is something which links us: a youth that has ideals and is prepared to live for these ideals and, if necessary, to die for them, too! Knowing this makes us proud.

There is no way I can better welcome you to this city and hence to the German Reich than by telling you: millions upon millions see in you the young representatives of a nation we call our friend. *Heil Euch!*

At 11:00 a.m. on June 17, Hitler attended the ceremony in Wilhelmshaven to mourn the dead of the armored ship *Deutschland*. Already on June 1, he had ordered both their remains and the ship to be returned to Germany. In the afternoon of June 17, Hitler also inspected the prostrate ship at the Wilhelmshaven shipyard.¹⁴⁰

The news that Spanish submarines had assaulted the German cruiser *Leipzig* reached Hitler on June 18, while he was at the Rheinhof in Bad Godesberg.¹⁴¹ As a result, he returned to Berlin early that night. According to Hitler's account of the events in his June 27 speech in Würzburg, the *Leipzig* had been torpedoed four times. It is not clear whether this was indeed the case. In any event, this incident provided a pretext for Hitler to permanently withdraw from the Non-Intervention Committee. Germany had returned to this body as recently as June 12. Hitler's disdain for this international agency had persisted since, in his opinion, like all international organizations, it served only to restrict his freedom of action.

When Franco captured the city of Bilbao on June 20, Hitler sent him a congratulatory note, lauding this accomplishment.¹⁴² That same day the State Secretary to the Foreign Office, von Bülow,¹⁴³ died of pneumonia at the age of fifty-two. Hitler wired von Bülow's mother the following telegram:¹⁴⁴

Frau von Bülow, Berlin, Elisabeth Hospital

Please accept my sincere sympathy on the great loss which you, Madam,

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and your daughters have suffered as a result of the unexpected death of your son, the highly revered State Secretary von Bülow.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler also expressed his sorrow at the demise of von Bülow in a telegram of condolence to the Reich Foreign Minister.¹⁴⁵

I extend my sincere sympathy to you, Herr Reich Minister, and to the staff of the Foreign Office on the occasion of the great loss which the Foreign Office has suffered as a result of the death of its State Secretary, Herr von Bülow. The excellent capabilities of the departed and his great personal worth ensure that his memory shall be a lasting and an honorable one.

Adolf Hitler

That same day, Hitler ordered a state funeral in Munich for the late Abbot Schachleitner. Aside from this, Hitler also exchanged telegrams with the Fourth Convention of the Nordic Society, meeting in Lübeck.¹⁴⁶

The Reichsautobahn segment connecting Dresden and Meerane opened for traffic three days later, on June 23. Hitler spoke before the road construction workers there. He lavished praise on them, his laudation carrying him to the point of blatant exaggeration:¹⁴⁷

Of this we are most proud: that in this enormous Reich, we pave the way for any able-minded person—no matter what his background—to the highest positions, provided only that he is capable, energetic, industrious, and determined.

Furthermore, I did not doubt for a second that we would find workers to build the Reich Autobahn network. I know that the work on the Reich Autobahn in all weathers, in blizzards and the blazing sun, is no easy job. Yet the work of our Volksgenossen is difficult everywhere: the miner who toils many hundreds of meters below the surface, and the peasant who slaves away his summers in the fields for twelve or fourteen hours. If we want to survive with our 137 people per square kilometer, we will simply have to make more of an effort than those who occupy a square kilometer with only ten or twelve persons. The German must wring what he can from his barren soil. Therefore, our problems are graver than those in other countries. Yet there is no better worker in the whole world than the German.

Hence we are building roads with the German worker that are nowhere else to be found. Today we can once more witness how this work is progressing. Every year a further 1,000 kilometers are delivered up, and in seven years we will have completed our first portion.

You can all be proud of the fact that you have had a part in accomplishing this task, whether as engineers or as laborers. In it, you are creating a work which will stand even after a thousand years have passed. It is a work which will bear witness to yourselves, even if not as much as a speck of your dust will still exist on this planet. These roads will live on. It is magnificent and

wonderful to live in such an age and be able to take part in such a work. In the future, every single German will come to profit from this work, just as was the case with the railroad. In the space of but a few decades, these roads will witness a vast amount of traffic in which the entire Volk will figure. Millions of our Volkswagens, the large busses of our KdF excursions, and the huge volume of long-distance traffic and tourists will roll along these roads.

In the evening, at the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg, Hitler attended Puccini's *La Bohème* performed by the ensemble of the Milan Scala.¹⁴⁸

On June 26 and 27, the *Reichskriegertag* (Reich Warriors' Convention) took place in Kassel upon the initiative of the Federation of German Veterans' Associations (Kyffhäuserbund). Its Bundesführer, SS Gruppenführer and retired Colonel Reinhardt, extended his greetings to Hitler in a telegram, to which he received the below response:¹⁴⁹

I wish to express my gratitude for the report on the opening of the 1937 German Reich Warriors' Convention and the greetings relayed to me by wire. I hail the old comrades from the front and the soldiers of the Old Army gathered here for the Reich Warriors' Convention in comradely closeness, and I wish to warmly welcome to Germany the foreign front-line soldiers who are attending this rally as guests. It is my sincere desire that your gathering, so infused with soldierly spirit, may contribute to the mutual understanding of front-line soldiers throughout the world and thus constitute your contribution to peace.

Adolf Hitler

At the celebration of the Gau Party Congress of Mainfranken,¹⁵⁰ Hitler spoke at a mass rally on the square in front of the Würzburg Residenz on June 27. In the course of the "party narrative," Hitler called the National Socialist Revolution one of the most ingenious and important of all times. According to him, the Revolution had never transgressed the boundaries of legality.

Hence a new Volk was born—painfully, just as everything which is born can only be born in pain. Yet I believe that we can say, as history is our witness, that in no other case in history was this painful process carried out more intelligently, more reasonably, more cautiously, and with more feeling than here.

The future will one day describe this process as one of the most intelligent—and I may say so myself—one of the most brilliant ever to take place. As one of the most tremendous revolutions ever, the course of which did not abandon the premise of unconditional legality for a single second.

Hitler then proceeded to use the incidents in Spain to again vent his anger at international organizations.

It is the sole desire of National Socialist Germany, while preserving its own rights, to live in peace and enter into friendly cooperation with its environment as a whole. However, we do have reason to doubt the effectiveness of certain international promises or warranties. I have attempted to test the effectiveness of such international agreements in practice in a particular case. You know that only recently Marxist-Bolshevist criminals launched a treacherous attack and bombed a German ship, which cost us thirty-one dead and seventy-three injured. At that time I resolved to immediately relay to those gentlemen of Valencia that specific warning which is, in my opinion, the sole effective way to call such criminals to order and bring home to them that the times when the German nation was treated as such are over and done with once and for all.

Then came the objection that this would be a completely unjustified course of action. In our modern times, the correct thing to do in respect to such measures would be to approach those institutions which presently endeavor everywhere to divest the individual nations of defending their own interests and place this in collective hands.

I complied with this request, and we went back to the Control Commission with the good intention and sincere hope that such plans would now be put into practice. As a result of our declaration that from now on we would fire at any approaching Red aircraft and ocean-going vessels, the Bolshevik criminals were no longer able to attack by sea; therefore the Bolshevik rulers have now gone under water and launched four torpedo attacks on the *Leipzig*. We had expected that international solidarity would initiate collective and mutual action to protect the peace. But you yourselves have seen what happened: commissions were to be formed for the purpose of investigating whether, etc. We had demanded only that the rulers in Valencia be shown—by means of a mutual demonstration of all participating control powers—that they are no longer dealing with a single power only, but with all the powers. And even this modest measure was no longer practicable. This is an indication of what we Germans would have to expect were we ever to deliver the fate of the Reich into the hands of those types of institutions or such agreements. That is one thing of which London may be certain: the experiences we have gained this time are a lesson we will never again forget! From now on we will opt instead to take into our own hands the freedom, the independence, the honor, and the security of the nation and protect ourselves! And thank God today we are in fact strong enough to be able to protect ourselves!

The conclusions we have drawn from this incident will apply for all time to come. In the future, we will no longer be obfuscated by empty promises in parliaments or from the lips of statesmen. We have experienced one attack, seen how it was handled, and have thereby been cured forever!

I did what anyone must have done as his duty. We gave it a try, and today no one in the world can claim that we are in any way maliciously prejudiced against collective agreements.

No! Had this collective agreement of June 12 proved useful, one might have considered continuing nonetheless. But now that even this most minimal agreement has proven unworkable in practice, it should be a warning

to us not to one day experience a similar disappointment yet again in what might be a worse case.

Any cat can burn its paws once, and every human being makes mistakes, but only fools make the same mistake twice!

Neither I nor the German nation have any desire to expose ourselves to that kind of danger again.

Then Hitler spoke of domestic fault-finders and carpers, declaring:

The coming generation—this I can predict to all the former destroyers of the consolidation of the German Volk—is something they will not get! To those carpers who ask, “Who do you think you are to make predictions like that?” [I say:¹⁵¹ Who was I to predict as a soldier in 1919 that I would create a movement that would one day conquer Germany? Who was I to believe in 1933 that we would come to power, that we would rescue Germany once more, that we would rebuild our Wehrmacht, make the economy function, eliminate the individual parties? I was the one who did so because I believed in us! We German National Socialists believe in nothing on this earth—besides our Lord God in heaven—except our German Volk.

What then followed was a type of religious credo, to which Hitler recently had pledged his allegiance. He expressed the essence of his new-found belief with the assertion that his activities in the past five years had not been “the work of man alone.” Rather these years had proved the existence of a supreme being, acting through him. How else, he argued, would he have been capable of navigating the “dizzying paths” to which Fate had led him.

And I can tell those doubters something else, too, namely, that I am well aware of what a human being can accomplish and where his limits lie, but it is my conviction that the human beings God created also wish to lead their lives modeled after the will of the Almighty.

God did not create the peoples so that they might deliver themselves up to foolishness and be pulped soft and ruined by it, but that they might preserve themselves as He created them! Because we support their preservation in their original, God-given form, we believe our actions correspond to the will of the Almighty.

As weak as the individual may ultimately be in his character and actions as a whole, when compared to Almighty Providence and its will, he becomes just as infinitely strong the instant he acts in accordance with this Providence. Then there will rain upon him the power that has distinguished all great phenomena of this world. And when I look back on the five years behind us, I cannot help but say: this has not been the work of man alone. Had Providence not guided us, I surely would often have been unable to follow these dizzying paths. That is something our critics above all should know. At the bottom of our hearts, we National Socialists are devout! We have no choice: no one can make national or world history if his deeds and abilities are not blessed by Providence.

Toward the end of his address, Hitler spoke of the “resurrection of an entire nation,” which was visible on a reduced scale in the city of Würzburg. It was the third time Hitler had spoken there since 1932, although he had never particularly liked the town. Ignoring the official reception which had been prepared at the City Hall, he abruptly returned to his car and proceeded to the military airport on the outskirts of town.

Back in the Chancellery on June 28, Hitler delivered a short address to a delegation of representatives of the International Chamber of Commerce, which had been convening at the German Opera House.

On July 13, Hitler honored his old Munich party comrade, Frau Carola Hoffmann, with a visit on her eightieth birthday.¹⁵² The next day, talks took place in preparation for the “Day of German Art,” which was to be held in Munich on July 18. Numerous activities were scheduled for that day, such as a procession through town depicting “2,000 years of German culture.”¹⁵³ In the presence of the Führer, a performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in the Munich National Theater opened the festivities.¹⁵⁴ The dedication of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in the Prinzregentenstrasse took place on July 19. Hitler had laid the cornerstone there in 1933. The new building was to serve as a replacement for the old “Glass Palace,” which had been an art gallery located at the old Botanical Garden. In former times, art collections had been exhibited in the building until it had been completely destroyed by a fire in 1931. The opening of an art exhibition complemented the dedication of the new building. Another exhibition, entitled *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerated Art), was on display at the same time.

On this occasion, Hitler gave a “culture speech”¹⁵⁵ that was markedly more interesting than his annual “lectures” on the subject, which he delivered at the Party Congresses. Speaking in a building, the construction of which he himself had directed and architecturally influenced, Hitler found inspiration for an unprecedented succinct articulation of his ideas on art. The concepts he expressed in his speech revealed that Hitler’s understanding of art was steeped in the bourgeois mentality of the 19th century. His speech also demonstrated more clearly than ever his determination to see his opinions on the subject prevail—even if coercion was necessary to that end. The “party narrative” on this occasion included a lengthy description of the “decadence of civilization,” which had emerged in the times of the Weimar Republic:

Thus at this time I would like to make the following observation: Before National Socialism acceded to power, there was a so-called "modern" art in Germany, i.e., just as the word itself indicates, a new art every year. National Socialist Germany, in contrast, wishes to re-establish a "German art," and this art shall and will be eternal, just as is every other creative merit of a people. If it lacks such eternal merit for our Volk, then it is today without significant merit as well.

When the cornerstone was laid for this building, it marked the beginning of construction of a temple not for a so-called modern, but for a genuine and eternal German art—or better: a building for the art of the German Volk and not for some international art of 1937, '40, '50, or '60. For art is not established in terms of a time, but only in terms of peoples. Thus the artist does not so much erect a memorial to a time, but rather to his people. For time is something changeable: the years come and go. Whatever would exist only within a certain time would have to be as transient as time itself. And not only what was accomplished before our time would fall prey to this transience; it would also encompass what is being accomplished today or will be shaped at some future time.

We National Socialists acknowledge only one type of transience, and that is the transience of the Volk itself. We know the reasons. As long as a Volk prevails, it constitutes the calming influence in the world of fleeting phenomena. It is that which is abiding and permanent! And hence art, too, as the characteristic feature of this abiding, constitutes an immortal monument, itself abiding and permanent, and thus there is no such criterion as yesterday and today, or modern and out of date; instead, there is but the single criterion of "worthless" or "valuable," and hence "immortal" or "transient." And this immortality lies anchored in the life of the peoples as long as these themselves are immortal, i.e. prevail. [—]

The question has often been asked what it really means "to be German." Among all the definitions which have been put forth by so many men throughout the centuries, there is one I find most fitting; one which makes no attempt whatsoever to provide any basic explanation, but instead simply states a law. The most marvelous law I can imagine as the lifelong task for my Volk in this world is one a great German once expressed as: "To be German means to be clear!" Yet that would signify that to be German means to be logical and above all to be true.

A splendid law—yet also one that puts every individual under an obligation to subordinate himself to it and thus abide by it. Taking this law as a starting-point, we will arrive at a universally applicable criterion for the correct character of our art, because it will correspond to the life-governing law of our Volk.

A deep-felt, inner yearning for such a true German art bearing the marks of this law of clarity has always been alive in our Volk. It inspired our great painters, our sculptors, those who have designed our architecture, our thinkers and poets, and perhaps above all our musicians. On that fateful sixth of June, 1931, when the old Glass Palace went up in flames, an immortal treasure of truly German art perished with it in the fire. They were called

“Romantics” and yet were the most splendid representatives of that German search for the real and true character of our Volk and for a sincere and decent expression of this inwardly-sensed law of life.

What was decisive in characterizing the German being was not only the choice of subject matter they portrayed, but also their clear and simple way of rendering these sentiments.

And thus it is no coincidence that these masters were closest to the most German—and hence most natural—part of our Volk. These masters were and remain immortal, even today when many of their works no longer exist in the original but have been preserved only as copies or reproductions. Yet how far removed were the deeds and works of these men from that pitiful marketing of so many of our so-called modern “creative artists,” from their unnatural smearing and dabbling which could only be cultivated, sponsored and approved of by the doings of characterless and unscrupulous men of letters and which were always completely alien—and in fact detestable—to the German Volk with its sound instincts?

Our German Romantics of yore had not the slightest intention of being or wanting to be ancient or even modern. Feeling and sensing as Germans, they naturally assumed their works would correspondingly be valued permanently—corresponding to the lifetime of the German Volk.

After further statements on the topic, Hitler expressed his great satisfaction that he had erected the building, not his political opponents:

In 1931, the National Socialist takeover was still so far off in the distant future that there was scarcely a chance to provide for the construction of a new exhibition palace for the Third Reich.

In fact, for a while it did seem as though the “men of November” would provide an edifice for the exhibition of art in Munich which would have had as little to do with German art as it, conversely, reflected the Bolshevik affairs and circumstances of their time. Many of you perhaps still recall the plans for that building which was intended for the old Botanical Garden which has now been given such a beautiful design. A building quite difficult to define. An edifice which could just as easily have been a Saxon thread factory as the market hall of a mid-sized city—or perhaps a train station, or then again even an indoor swimming pool. I need not press upon you how I suffered at the thought back then that the first misfortune would be followed by yet another. And that therefore, in this case in particular, I was truly glad, really happy about the fainthearted lack of determination on the part of my political opponents at the time. In it lay perhaps the only chance of maybe ultimately saving the erection of a palace for art exhibitions in Munich to become the first great undertaking of the Third Reich.

Thereafter, Hitler eulogized the late architect Professor Troost:

Now, you will all understand that I am presently filled with truly painful concern that Providence has not allowed us to witness this day with that man

who, as one of the greatest German architects, drew up the plans for this work immediately after the takeover.

When I approached Professor Ludwig Troost, who was already working on the Party buildings at that time, with the request to erect an edifice for exhibiting art on this square, that exceptional man had already produced a number of grandly-conceived sketches for such an edifice—corresponding to the specifications given at the time—on the site of the old Botanical Garden. And these plans, too, revealed his masterful skill!

He nonetheless did not even send these plans to the jury as part of the competition—for the sole reason, as he bitterly confessed to me, that he was convinced it would have been a completely futile endeavor to submit such work to a forum which regarded all sublime and decent art as detestable, and whose sole aim and ultimate purpose was the Bolshevization—in other words, the chaotic infiltration—of our entire German and hence cultural life. Thus the public never became aware of these plans at all. Later it did come to know the new draft which now stands consummated before you.

And this new concept of building—you will all have to concede this today—is a truly great and artistic success. This edifice is so unique and so original that it cannot be compared to anything else.

There is no such thing as a building of which one could say that it is the original, and this here is the copy. As all truly great creative works of architecture, this building is unique and memorable; not only will it remain, in its originality, in everyone's memory—moreover, it is in itself a symbol, yes, I might even say it is a true monument to this city and above and beyond that to German art.

At the same time, this masterpiece is great in beauty and practical in its design and features, without allowing any utilitarian technical requirements to dominate the work as a whole. It is a temple of art, not a factory, not a district heating plant, not a train station, and not an electric reversing plant!

This great and unique artistic structure matches the specifications and the site itself; moreover, the precious materials used and the painstakingly exact execution do so as well. I am talking about the careful execution which is part of the great school of that departed master who wanted this building not to be a market place for artistic goods but rather a temple of art. And it has been in accordance with his wishes that his successor, Professor Gall, has loyally adhered to this legacy and brilliantly continued construction, advised and accompanied by a woman who has a proud right not only to bear the name but also the title of her husband.¹⁵⁶

Master builder Heiger later became the third to join the group. Its plans have now been carried out and completed by the industriousness and artistry of German workers and craftsmen.

Hence an edifice has been built which is worthy of providing the highest accomplishments of art the opportunity to show themselves to the German Volk. And therefore the construction of this building shall also mark a turning point, putting an end to the chaotic architectural bungling of the past. This is one of the first new buildings to take its fitting place among the immortal achievements in the history of German art-life.

Next Hitler's attention turned to the first art exhibition in the new building. He called the event a change which marked the end of art's deterioration and the beginning of its heyday.

You will, however, understand that it cannot suffice to donate this building to the German fine arts, this building that is so decent, clear-cut and genuine that we can rightly call it a Haus der Deutschen Kunst; the exhibition itself must now work toward bringing about a change from the deterioration we have witnessed in art, sculpture and painting.

When I presume at this time to pass judgment, to voice my views and to take action corresponding to these insights, I am claiming the right to do so not only because of my attitude toward German art as such, but above all because of the contribution I myself have made to the restoration of German art. For it was this modern state—which I won over and organized with my fellow fighters in a long and difficult struggle against a world of adversaries—that has provided the great basis upon which German art can blossom new and strong.

It has not been Bolshevik art collectors and their literary henchmen who have laid the foundations for the establishment of a new art or even ensured that art can survive in Germany; we have been the ones, we who breathed life into this state and have been allocating immense sums to German art ever since, funds it needs to ensure its survival and its work, and above all: we are the ones because we ourselves have assigned to art new and great tasks.

Had I accomplished nothing else in my life but this one structure here, I would already have done more for German art than all the ludicrous scribblers in our former Jewish newspapers or the petty art-dabblers (*Kunstkleckser*) who, anticipating their own transience, have nothing to recommend themselves but their own praise of the modernity of their creations.

Yet I know that, quite independent of this new work, the new German Reich will bring about a tremendous blossoming in German art, for never before has it been assigned more gigantic tasks than is the case in this Reich today and will be the case in the future. And never before have the funds thus required been appropriated more generously than in National Socialist Germany.

Yet when I speak before you here today, I am also speaking as the representative of this Reich, and just as I believe in the eternity of this Reich—which is to be nothing other than the living organism comprised of our Volk—I am likewise capable only of believing in and hence working on and for an eternal German art.

The art of this new Reich therefore cannot be gauged by the standards of ancient or modern; rather, as German art, it will have to secure its immortality in our history.

The fact is, art is not a fashion. Just as the essence and blood of our Volk does not change, so must art, too, dispose of its transient character in order to embody instead in its constantly improving creations a graphic and worthy expression of our Volk's course of life. Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism,

Impressionism, etc. have nothing to do with our German Volk. For all these terms are neither ancient nor are they modern: they are merely the affected stuttering of people from whom God has withheld the grace of a truly artistic talent and instead whom He endowed with an ability to talk rubbish and to deceive.

After Hitler had asserted his expertise and expounded his opinions in this matter, he proclaimed his “inalterable decision” to wipe out the so-called modern art.

Therefore I wish to pledge a vow in this hour that it is my inalterable decision to now purge—just as I have the field of political confusion—the life of German art of phraseology. “Works of art” which cannot be understood in and of themselves but require, as justification for their existence, a bombastic set of instructions as to how to finally discover that shy creature who would patiently accept such stupid or insulting nonsense will from now on no longer find their way to the German Volk!

All these catchwords such as, “inner experience,” “strong cast of mind,” “powerful intention,” “promising sensation,” “heroic attitude,” “sympathetic significance,” “time experienced as order,” “primal crudeness,” etc.—all these stupid, false excuses, phrases and prattles will no longer be able to absolve or even recommend themselves for products that show no talent and are hence merely worthless.

If a person has a powerful intention or an inner experience, let him prove it in his work and not in driveling phrases.

Basically, we are all much less interested in so-called intention than in ability. Hence an artist who anticipates exhibiting his work in this building or playing any public role whatsoever in tomorrow’s Germany must have ability. The intention goes without saying from the very onset!

It would be absolutely unthinkable for a person to pester his fellow citizens with works with which he ultimately pursues no aim at all. When these drivellers attempt to make their works attractive by presenting them as the expression of a new age, they must be told that it is not art which creates new times; rather the peoples’ life in general takes on a new shape and therefore frequently attempts to find a new form of expression. Yet those who have been talking about a new art in Germany in the past decades have not understood the new German age. For a new epoch is not shaped by litterateurs but by the fighters, i.e. by those contemporaries who truly shape and lead peoples and hence make history.

These pitiful, muddled artists and scribblers can hardly be deemed as belonging to this group. Furthermore, it is either an insolent affront or a nearly inconceivable stupidity to present works, above all in an age such as ours, which could have been done ten or twenty thousand years ago by a Stone-Age man.

They talk about the primitive nature of art—and completely ignore the fact that it is not the task of art to detach itself backwards from the evolution of a Volk; instead, its task can only be to symbolize the living evolution.

July 19, 1937

Subsequent to further offensive remarks, Hitler declared:

The opening of this exhibition marks the beginning of the end of German infatuation with art (*Kunstvernarrung*) and with it the destruction of our Volk's culture. From now on we will wage a ruthless war to eradicate the last few elements that are subverting our culture.

After directing a few cordial phrases to the established and the coming generation of artists, whose works were on display, Hitler concluded his speech:

And when one day in this field as well, sacred conscientiousness has been restored to its rightful position, I have no doubt that the Almighty will once more choose those few from among the masses of decent artists and elevate them to the heights of the eternal starry skies where the immortal, divinely-gifted artists of great ages dwell.

For we do not believe that, with the great men of past centuries, the age of the creative power of gifted individuals has ended and will, in the future, be replaced by a respective power of the collective masses!

No, we believe that today above all, at a time when superlative individual achievements are being accomplished in so many areas, the most highly-valued power of the individual will once more become triumphantly manifest in the field of art. Therefore, the sole desire I wish to express at this moment is that this new building may be fortunate enough to be able to house within its walls many more works of great artists in coming centuries and to show them to the German Volk, thereby making a contribution not only to the fame of this truly artistic city, but also to the honor and standing of the entire German nation.

With that I hereby declare the 1937 Great German Art Exhibition in Munich open to the public!

That afternoon, Hitler observed an enormous parade in Munich. The next day, he toured the art exhibition one more time.

In reference to the demise of Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of radio telegraphy, Hitler sent Mussolini the following telegram:¹⁵⁷

Berchtesgaden, July 20, 1937

It is with deep regret that I have received news of the death of Marconi, that great son of Italy who, by means of his inventions, did an immortal service to the whole of mankind. I may extend to you and the Italian nation my sincere condolences at this heavy loss.

On July 21, Hitler received the new Soviet Ambassador, Konstantin Yurenev. The diplomat had to make a special trip from Berlin to Berchtesgaden to present his credentials to the Chancellor. Once there, Yurenev addressed Hitler in German:¹⁵⁸

Herr Reichskanzler!

I am honored to present to you these credentials, which the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics have vested in me as its Ambassador Plenipotentiary. May I also tender to you the letter recalling my predecessor, Ambassador Jakob Suritz, to Moscow. Provided that the creation and maintenance of normal diplomatic relations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the German Reich remain in the best interest of both nations, and that these are conducive to the attainment of world peace, I shall direct all my efforts toward the resolution of this mighty task. In so doing, I take the liberty of relying on your assistance and on that of the government which you head.

Hitler replied:

Your Excellency!

I have the honor of accepting from you the credentials by virtue of which you have been certified to me as Ambassador Plenipotentiary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. At the same time, I accept the letter informing me of the dismissal of your predecessor. It is with satisfaction that I have taken cognizance of your statement to the effect that you wish to strive in your endeavors to establish and maintain normal relations between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

I share with you the view that such relations between the German Reich and the Soviet Union will do justice both to the principles of non-intervention, more imperative today than ever before, as well as to the interests of both countries, and can thus represent a contribution to the cause of peace in general. Therefore, I may assure Your Excellency that in carrying out all the tasks you have set yourself, you will be given every necessary support both from myself and from my government.

On July 23, Hitler attended a performance of *Parsifal* at the Bayreuth Festival.¹⁵⁹ On July 30, he inspected the models for the planned new *Grossbauten* (giant buildings) to be constructed in Bayreuth. The *Völkischer Beobachter* proudly proclaimed: "The Führer is building a new Bayreuth."¹⁶⁰

The next day, Hitler once again delivered a 'secret speech' to construction workers employed at the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg.¹⁶¹ Later that day, he journeyed to Breslau and spoke at a one-hour commemoration at the German Sängerbund Festival before a crowd allegedly numbering more than 500,000. Numerous German chapters of the Sängerbund had come from abroad to participate in the festival. Hitler's particular gift no doubt was his facility for arousing nationalistic instincts in his audience. He reminded his listeners that of the ninety-five million Germans, only two thirds enjoyed the privilege of living within the borders of the German Reich. Then he emphasized

the importance of an “ideal” substitute for “the lack of actual political unity.” In his view, this national oneness expressed itself through the common use of the German language and through the German Lied.

As an expression of this view, he assigned the song *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* to a prominent place in the middle of his speech, as if his primary concern were to unite all Germans present through song. His speech is reproduced below.¹⁶²

Germans! German Volksgenossen! My German Singers!

It has not always been the case that the German nation could welcome you at these festivals in the German Reich through the words of *one* man. Today I have the right to both welcome you to this city for your great festival of German song and to congratulate you in the name of these sixty-eight million people who live within the boundaries of the Reich. You who have come here from all the Gaus of the Reich and from those territories lying outside its boundaries in which you nonetheless live as members of our German Volkstum!

It has nearly always been the misfortune of our particular Volk to lack political unification. Even today, millions of Germans live outside the Reich, nearly half the number of those who have their homes and residences within Germany itself. Yet especially a Volk that has not been able to form a political unit for so many centuries must possess other attributes which allow it to compensate, at least in an ideal sense, for the lack of actual political unity.

The first of these is our German language, for it is spoken not by sixty-eight million, but by ninety-five million people.

A second factor is the German Lied, sung not only within the boundaries of the Reich but sounding beyond them, everywhere Germans live throughout the world. This song accompanies us all the way from the cradle to the grave.

It lives in us and with us and, no matter where we are, it conjures up in our mind's eye the image of our ancient homeland, namely of Germany and the German Reich. A bird that has lost its sight tends to sing and express its sorrow and its feelings even more fervently in its song. And perhaps it is no coincidence, either, that the German—so often forced to endure a sorely tormented existence on this earth—has sought refuge in singing in times like those; there he was able to express everything harsh reality denied him.

Today we are perhaps more conscious than ever of that bitter truth. Particularly in these world-shattering and troubled times, German Volkstum as a whole—including its members beyond the Reich's boundaries—is looking to that ancient homeland, to Germany, and in the absence of any other way of establishing a bond, it is seeking a connection in German song! And thus the songs of our Volk are sounding today not only within the Reich, but far beyond its borders, too. They are sung with faithful ardor, for in them resides the hope and yearning of all Germans.

Thus it follows that the song which we Germans perceive as most sacred is a great song about this yearning. There are many, in other countries, who do not understand this: in this song above all they choose to see something

as imperialistic which is as far-removed from their idea of imperialism as can be. What hymn for a Volk can be more splendid than that which constitutes a vow to seek one's fortune and well-being within one's Volk and to place one's Volk above everything else on earth?

And when today you sing this song of the Germans which was born in an age of torment, you are singing it with the joyful feeling that this Germany has now once again become worthy of being our Germany; that in our eyes it once again truly deserves to stand above everything else the world has been able to offer us. Whoever loves his Volk this much, whoever loves his homeland thus cannot be bad! Whoever stands behind his Volk and stands behind his homeland thus will continuously reap new strength from both! This is why the German song has always been a source of strength in the past and why it has today again taken on this role. Today *Deutschland über alles* is a pledge that fills millions with great strength, with the faith that is stronger than any other power on earth can be.

Hence this song also constitutes a pledge to the Almighty, to His will and to His work: for man has not created this Volk, but God, that God who stands above us all. He formed this Volk, and it has become what it should according to God's will, and according to our will, it shall remain, nevermore to fade!¹⁶³

Once again we have before us a proud Volk and a strong Reich, and all those who must leave this city at the close of these days of festivities and cross the boundaries of the Reich will reflect with pride, with joy and with confidence on what they were able to witness here and what was revealed to them. They will all leave with the feeling: a Volk has arisen once more, a Reich has been born anew! The German being has come unto himself. And in doing so, he has acted in accordance with the will of his Creator.

What power would have the right and the strength to block the course of life of a Volk which seeks, in its song, none other than itself: a strong Reich, a proud Volk, so great and so sublime that now every German can once more gladly proclaim: I am a German, and I am proud of it!

And this recognition must come upon us in such a solemn hour! We who are gathered here today from all the German Gaus, from many territories outside the Reich: we all perceive ourselves here as one community. You are singers and thus the spokesmen of German Volkstum!

It is such a pleasure for us to be able to overlook all that divides us in this hour and to perceive ourselves as indissolubly united and belonging together, one for all, and all for one. And I myself am infinitely pleased and proud to welcome you here in this hour on behalf of the Reich and the German nation residing within the Reich, and to be able to thank you not only for cultivating the German song, but also for devoting yourselves with this song to your German homeland and allying yourselves with it.

To you who were not deterred by the lengthy journey, to you who have come to this city from all the corners of Europe and beyond, I may extend a special welcome! May you leave this place with the firm belief: Germany stands strong, and nevermore will this Reich fade!

3

In Berlin on August 1, the NS War Victims Organization (Reichskriegsopferversorgung) held a conference, presided over by its leader Oberlindober. He and Hitler exchanged telegrams on the occasion.¹⁶⁴ At the Chancellery the next day, Hitler received the Turkish Minister of Labor Getinkaya, who was then visiting Berlin.¹⁶⁵

On August 3, the Commander in Chief of the Army, von Fritsch, received the following congratulatory telegram:¹⁶⁶

I transmit to you, my dear Colonel General, my heartfelt best wishes on your fifty-seventh birthday.

I hope that you shall remain in the best of health for your continued blessed work serving both myself and the Fatherland's Army as its leader.

Adolf Hitler

In a few months, Hitler completely forgot about these pious utterances to Fritsch. Likewise, he would fail to recall Blomberg's invaluable service to the Reich, which he had extolled so verbosely on the occasion of his War Minister's fortieth service anniversary. Blomberg and Fritsch were fired on the same day and for the same reason. In November of that year, both men ventured to express doubt over Hitler's foreign policy predictions. The Führer's anger would show consequences on February 4, 1938, when he ousted both his so highly acclaimed assistants.

At the Obersalzberg on August 6, Hitler received Antonio Marquez de Magaz, whom Franco had designated as his Ambassador to Germany. After Marquez de Magaz had introduced himself in a short address, Hitler extended his welcome in the following words:¹⁶⁷

Your Excellency!

I am greatly honored to accept from Your Excellency's hands the letter of His Excellency, Sr. Francisco Franco y Bahamonde, Chief of the Spanish

August 6, 1937

State and Generalissimo of its National Army, accrediting you as his Ambassador Plenipotentiary.

It is to my great joy that I greet you here as the representative of the Spanish people, whose struggle for unity and freedom I have long followed with great sympathy. For centuries the bonds of old friendship have closely tied together the German and the Spanish peoples. These relations have proven themselves strong by withstanding the ragings of the World War. The German Volk follows the heroic struggle of the Spanish people and the building of the Spanish State with great sympathy.

It is the sincere desire of both the German Volk and myself that the Army of your Head of State, General Franco, might succeed in winning the battle for freedom and peace for the Spanish people. Thereby, he might also remove that imminent danger which transcends the borders of your country and threatens all of Europe.

I am in complete agreement with your conviction that our mutual goal of warding off the destructive forces of international communism binds our two peoples. It is also my great desire that a furthering of the economic relations between our countries might be understood to be in the interest of both Germany and Spain.

I hope that the exchange of goods between our countries shall be increased as much as possible. Please rest assured that in your efforts to pursue this goal and to conduct your mission you may always count upon my personal support and the benign disposition of the Reich Government.

On August 13, Hitler greeted the participants of a Franco-German youth camp on the Obersalzberg with a short address.¹⁶⁸ On the same day, he signed the following appeal in a fund-raising drive for the benefit of the Hindenburg association.¹⁶⁹

On the occasion of the forthcoming ninetieth birthday of Hindenburg, the Hindenburg Foundation, for the support of disabled war veterans and war orphans, calls for a fund drive. I hope that many of our Volksgenossen will participate.

Berchtesgaden, August 13, 1937

Adolf Hitler

On August 14, Hitler met with several Reichsleiters to discuss the preparations for that year's Reich Party Congress. The following day, he again toured the Congress Grounds. On August 16, Hitler met with von Blomberg and von Neurath to discuss the upcoming congress.¹⁷⁰ For the first time, both the ambassadors of Great Britain and France accepted an invitation to attend the congress. That day, Hitler sent the Reichsstatthalter General Ritter von Epp the following congratulatory telegram:¹⁷¹

Today, on the fiftieth anniversary of your entry into the Army, my thoughts turn to you in appreciation and gratefulness for the great feats you have

accomplished in times of war and peace for the benefit of Germany. Let me extend to you my best wishes on your anniversary.

With kind regards,

Adolf Hitler

The next day, Hitler attended a performance of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* at the Bayreuth Festival.

On September 1, Hitler again honored his Minister of War von Blomberg with a telegram, phrased in the most congenial terms:¹⁷²

My dear Field Marshal!

I congratulate you on your fifty-ninth birthday both in my own name and in that of the German Volk. May Providence preserve you in the future for the Fatherland and its Wehrmacht.

In appreciative association,

Adolf Hitler

On September 4, it was announced that Mussolini would visit Germany during the second part of the month. The frequency of Hitler's focus upon Italy in his speeches at the Party Congress revealed the extent of his preoccupation with the upcoming event.

The "Reich Party Congress of Labor" began to convene in Nuremberg on September 6. Four days later in a speech before the Political Leaders, Hitler explained the reasoning behind his choice of the above title for the congress: "Now that we have freed Germany within the last four years, we have the right to enjoy the fruits of our labor." This wording apparently signaled that Hitler had no extraordinary decisions to announce for the future, but would self-complacently contemplate the past.

Indeed, the Party Congress was remarkable only for its unusual tranquility, reflecting the mood of the entire year 1937. With the exception of his customary verbal assaults upon world Bolshevism, not even Hitler's words could disturb the apparent peace. Rather, in every one of his speeches,¹⁷³ Hitler relished in eulogies of his successes in the past and his ambitions for the future. The word "gigantic" crossed his lips quite easily during those days.

In his welcoming address at the Nuremberg City Hall on September 6, Hitler announced the construction of additional *Grossbauten*, of which only a few ever materialized:

The gigantic plans for the new Reich Party Congress grounds are becoming step by step a reality. The Luitpold Arena has been completed this year, as has the Zeppelin Field—with the exception of minor indoor installations. The foundations for the Congress Hall have been laid. The inner core of the first wall is growing forth from its base.

The initial construction work on the wide avenue extending from the Märzfeld to the Luitpoldhain has been completed. On the Märzfeld, the first preliminary work has been accomplished, and the artistic architectural design has been finalized. On Thursday, September 9th, the cornerstone will be laid for the German Stadium, the most tremendous arena a Volk has ever erected for the training of its physical strength and beauty. Thus this city, perhaps as a forerunner for the rest of Germany, is being given its form for the future and thus for eternity.

The first part of the proclamation of September 7 contained similar announcements, which were read by Gauleiter Adolf Wagner as usual.

Since then, this city has represented in miniature both how our Movement and Germany have evolved as well as the evolution of this city. A gigantic forum is in the process of emerging. Its parade grounds are the most extensive in the world. As of tomorrow, the cornerstone will be laid for the erection of a stadium the likes of which have never before been seen on earth.

Within a mere two years' time, the shell of the colossal Congress Hall will have risen to constitute the first granite monument to bear witness to the magnitude of the idea to which it owes its design, and to the magnitude of the entire facility. A parade ground and rally site worthy of the demonstrations—initiated by National Socialism—of the greatest transformation in our German history!

Then Hitler expounded upon the necessity of party congresses in general, neglecting, however, to mention the supreme importance of these for his own feelings of self-esteem and lust for power.

How can the peasant in his village, the laborer in his workshop or factory, the employee in his office—how can they all grasp the extent of the total result of their innumerable personal sacrifices and their struggle?

But once a year, on the occasion of the general display of the Party, they will stride forth as one from the modesty of their narrow existence to gaze upon and acknowledge the glory of the fight and the triumph! Then many of them will perhaps experience for the first time the overwhelming certainty that their small-scale troubles and efforts have not been in vain, but that they have been the basis for this tremendous success, and that the many minor setbacks they have experienced were pale in significance when compared to the overall outcome of the fight of the Movement and—today—of their entire Volk.

And when, during these few days, hundreds of thousands march once again to Nuremberg, and hence from all of Germany's Gaus an endless stream of warm life flows into this city, all of them—looking back and around from this elevated site—will be able to come to the same conclusion: we are truly the witnesses of a transformation more tremendous than any the German nation has ever experienced. Collectively, socially, economically, politically, culturally, and racially, we are living in the midst of a gigantic metamorphosis of time. [—]

My Party Comrades!

We are living at an incredibly great time in history.

Admittedly, every century has had its wars or revolutions, by virtue of which people have risen or fallen and states been built up or torn down. However, it is only seldom that a people's life is shaken up by tremors which penetrate as far as the deepest foundations of the structure of the societal order and threaten or even destroy them!

Here Hitler was referring to the evils of "world Bolshevism," which he perceived to be an imminent threat. This danger would, however, be overcome by the National Socialist *Führungsansatz* (leadership elite). Thus the "dear Fatherland could rest assured," as the well-known song read.

Building up a new leadership elite in our nation without the devastating chaotic destruction of existing conditions is one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of our Volk. [—] There is one comforting certainty the German nation can then call its own: even if the whole world around us catches on fire, the National Socialist State will rise forth from the Bolshevik flames like platinum.

Now Hitler continued on the topic of the economic difficulties of the past, present and future:

It is a fact that Germany has solved its most pressing social problem, and solved it absolutely: there are no longer any real unemployed in our country. On the contrary: today there are already shortages in countless areas, particularly of skilled workers. I believe this is a greater social accomplishment than what other countries succeed in doing—just as was also done here in the past—to undermine and destroy production until finally the so-called liberated proletariat has been relieved not so much of its troubles, but of its work and thus of its daily bread.

Addressing all those who continued to doubt Germany's unlimited opportunities, Hitler stated categorically:

May no one deceive himself: a Volksgemeinschaft that succeeds in building up an enormous army, mobilizing a huge labor service running the mammoth organization of the German Reichsbahn, etc., will also be capable of bringing German steel and iron production up to the requisite level! We have been capable of mastering quite different tasks from those laid down in the Four-Year Plan!

And today I would already like to assure you, my Party Comrades, that this work will progress under the direction of Party Comrade Göring at exactly the prescribed speed!

And this was precisely "the speed," at which Hitler wished to proceed. In his eyes, Schacht was too slow, always hesitant and

skeptical.¹⁷⁴ Göring was quite the opposite—there was a man who made for a completely different recipient of orders!

Here, a claim for Germany's lost colonies was imperative, if only to annoy the British.

Therefore the demand for colonial possessions belonging to the Reich is a demand grounded in our financial need, and the position of other powers as regards this demand is simply beyond comprehension.

Germany neither robbed nor stole its colonies from these powers in the past. In a world such as ours today, where people are so saturated with moralistic phrases, it would be only appropriate to take this fact into consideration as well!

Hitler placed his remarks on the reversal of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles in the context of his goal of maintaining security in Europe. On a worldwide scale, this effort relied upon concerted action by Germany, Italy, and Japan.

I would like to cite three facts in closing one chapter of German history today.

First: The Treaty of Versailles is dead!

Second: Germany is free!

Third: The guarantor of our freedom is our own Wehrmacht!

Yet at the same time Germany is not isolated today, but bound in friendship to powerful states. The natural community of interests of National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy has increasingly grown in the past few months to prove itself a factor in safeguarding Europe from the madness of chaos.

In the future, it will be impossible to ignore this community of will in any particular instance, and to simply carry on as usual. Our agreement with Japan serves the same purpose: to join forces in warding off an attack upon the civilized world that might today take place in Spain, tomorrow in the east or the day after perhaps somewhere else.

The development thereafter proved contrary to Hitler's predictions. Just as Franco's Fascist movement, in pursuit of its own interests, had caused the civil strife in his country, the next few years in Germany, Italy and Japan would show that these nations acted not in self-defense, but rather pursued their own aggressive notions and self-serving interests.

Toward the end of the proclamation, Hitler referred to the new German man, making racially-tainted remarks which he had only infrequently done in his earlier years. Despite his complex with regard to the Jews, one may doubt whether Hitler really believed in the racial theories he propounded. In any event, he was more concerned with

power-politics than racial theories. In 1937, however, it seemed to become opportune for him to inject some racial comments into his speeches.

However, the greatest revolution Germany has undergone was that of the purification of the Volk and thus of the races which was launched systematically in this country for the first time ever.

The consequences of this German racial policy will be more significant for the future of our Volk than the effects of all the other laws together. For they are what is creating the new man. They will preserve our Volk from doing as so many historically tragic past prototypes of other races have done: lose their earthly existence forever because of their ignorance as regards a single question.

For what is the sense of all our work and all our efforts if they do not serve the purpose of preserving the German being? And what good is any effort on behalf of this being if we omit the most important thing to preserve it pure and unadulterated in its blood?

Any other mistake can be rectified, any other error can be corrected, but what one fails to do in this area can often never again be amended. Whether our work in this area of purifying our race and thus our Volk has been fruitful is something you can best judge for yourselves here during these few days. For what you are encountering in this city is the German being. Come and see for yourselves whether he has become worse under National Socialist leadership or whether he has not indeed become better. Do not gauge only the increasing number of children being born—gauge above all the appearance of our youth.

How lovely are our girls and our boys, how bright is their gaze, how healthy and fresh their posture, how splendid are the bodies of the hundreds of thousands and millions who have been trained and cared for by our organizations!

Where are there better men to be found today than those who can be seen here? It is truly the rebirth of a nation, brought about by the deliberate breeding of a new being (*bewusste Züchtung eines neuen Menschen*).

In his “culture speech” of that same day, Hitler sharply attacked the art critics and authors concerned with cultural issues within Germany, whom he derided as “bourgeois ballad-singers of freedom.”

The weapons of those bourgeois ballad-singers of freedom (*Freiheitssänger*) were, at worst, pen and ink. Yet the National Socialists were expected to bear a thousand privations. But their struggle gradually brought about genuine freedom. A freedom which is not the product of poetic contemplation, but the result of hard political battles compounded not of essays or leading articles, but of historically established events and hence accomplishments. Of course it was more difficult to arrive at a March 16, 1935, or to occupy the Rhineland than to concern oneself in newspapers or literary pamphlets with theoretical discussions on the true nature of genuine freedom.

In history, however, surely only the factual counts; that means that in history, neither political desire nor theoretical contemplation will be material, but political achievement, and that means the deed itself. It is the task of cultural policy—just as in the area of politics in general—to lead onwards to new and, in this case, cultural achievements! [—]

Therefore the civilized nations have always constituted the counterpole to the nations without culture, just as within them the artist is, in turn, the solitary figure in contrast to the masses of the artistically indifferent, or to people even lacking any understanding whatsoever. This, however, is due to the following: the genius consistently stands out from the masses in that he unconsciously anticipates truths of which the population as a whole only later becomes conscious! [—]

Of all the questionable concoctions of our so-called “Modern Art,” not even five percent would have been able to gain a place in the art collection of the German Volk had it not been that, by means of propaganda having nothing at all to do with art, but oriented along political and *weltanschaulich* lines, public opinion had been talked into them—indeed, even forced into them—by like-minded political factors. The Volk’s deep-seated aversion to the enrichment of its art by virtue of such products is something obvious to anyone from the impressions made upon the viewers of the “Entartete Kunst” exhibition in Munich.

However, a clever and indeed cunning Jewish cultural propaganda has nonetheless succeeded in talking at least his so-called “appointed art experts”—but not healthy individuals—into smuggling these supremely pitiful concoctions into our galleries and thus ultimately forcing them upon the German Volk after all.

The path from the sacred and serious work of our good old German masters to the great painters of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was certainly more difficult than the path from the average decent art of the nineteenth century to the primitive scrawlings of our so-called “Moderns,” whose products basically attract attention only because they are behind modern times by a few thousand years.

We have our litterateurs to thank for this ignominious retrogression. They have succeeded, by perpetually using the word “kitsch” to describe a well-meant,¹⁷⁵ decent, average accomplishment, in breeding those exalted aberrations which, to a blasé literary attitude, might perhaps seem to present an interesting and even phenomenal innovation, but in fact are nothing but a disgraceful reversion, a deterioration of culture which has never before taken place at any time in the past—and never could take place, either, because never before had litterateurs been accorded such an outrageous influence on the performing and visual arts.

In this context, it is now amusing to note that it is least of all the products of these so-called “Moderns” which can be judged as being, for example, “original” or possessing “originality.”

On the contrary, all of these so-called modern artists are the most pathetic and inept copyists of all time. Naturally not copyists of what is decent, but of nonsense!

Above all, Hitler cherished his building projects. While expanding on the topic, he betrayed the true incentives which had prompted him to insist on their construction. In his eyes, they served as pillars and tangible expressions of his authority.

Never before in German history were greater and more noble edifices planned, commenced and completed than in our time. [—]

The authority that is saving the German Volk from collapse in the twentieth century, that has snatched it away from the chaos of Bolshevism, is not the authority of an economic association, but that of the National Socialist Movement, of the National Socialist Party and thus of the National Socialist State! The opponents will sense it, but the adherents above all must know it: it is to fortify this authority that these structures are being built!

Therefore these edifices are neither designed for the year 1940 nor for the year 2000; instead, they are to tower, like the cathedrals of our past, into the millenniums of the future. And if today God perhaps allows the poets and singers to be fighters, He has, in any case, given the fighters the architects who will ensure that the success of this fight finds an immortal substantiation in the documents of a unique and great art! That is something small minds perhaps cannot comprehend, but then again they have not understood our fight on the whole. It may embitter our opponents, but then again their hatred has never yet been capable of thwarting our success, either. One day, however, it will be understood with utmost clarity how very great the blessing is which shines forth throughout the centuries from the tremendous edifices of this history-making age. For they above all will help, in a political sense, to unify and fortify our Volk more than ever before; in a collective sense, they will—for Germans—become part of a proud feeling of belonging together; in a social sense, they will prove the ridiculousness of any other differences of this world in comparison to these tremendous, gigantic witnesses of our sense of community. [—]

This State shall neither be a power without culture nor a force without beauty. For the armament of a Volk is only morally justified when it is the sword and shield of a higher mission. Therefore we are not striving for the brute strength of someone like Genghis Khan, but instead for an empire of strength which is instrumental in shaping a strong social and protected community as the support and guard of a higher culture!

It was because of this “higher mission” that Hitler believed his assault upon Poland, the Soviet Union and other countries to be ethically justified.

Hitler’s September 8 speech before members of the Reich Labor Service, like so many others, leaned toward the grotesque:

The proudest deed which National Socialism has accomplished toward establishing a future German Volksgemeinschaft was its founding the Reich Labor Service! This Party Congress revolves around the theme of labor. The accomplishments you have shown us are themselves only a product of

untiring labor. Your number-one worker, my comrades, is your leader, Party Comrade Hierl! [—]

You, my comrades, have become a part of our Volk within the space of these few years, a part we can no longer imagine doing without. You belong here in this state which the Party has established, just as the Wehrmacht belongs here. We can no longer imagine doing without you, and you will never again be done without!

And for us, it is an edifying thought to know that, long into the most distant future, generation after generation will shoulder the weapon of peace—the spade—and report for duty at the service of our community and thus of our Volk. We feel fortunate in knowing that a guarantor for the eternal strength of Germany and the greatness of our Volk and our Reich has thus been established anew. Today you are no longer a fantasy; instead you now have already become a tremendous reality!

On the occasion of laying the cornerstone to the German Stadium on September 9, Hitler expressed three wishes—none of which was to come true:

Germans!

At this historic moment, when I now lay the cornerstone for the German Stadium, I am filled with three fervent wishes.

First: May this tremendous edifice contribute to the glory and pride of the German Volk.

Second: May it be an eternal witness of a nation united in National Socialism and a powerful Reich.

Third: May it be for all time a reminder to German men and women and lead them to that power and beauty constituting the highest expression of the nobility of genuine freedom.

I hereby declare the National Socialist Competitive Games of 1937 in Nuremberg open to the public.

The day after the speech, Hitler addressed several units of the German police force, which at this Party Congress appeared for the first time as a separate formation. He declared:

In the year 1933, the National Socialist leadership of state immediately undertook the attempt to lessen the burdens of this position [as representatives of the authority of the state] for you. By limiting your arms exclusively to the live weapons,¹⁷⁶ the police have been relieved of that so despised and characteristic feature of the November days. At that time we were of the conviction that it must be possible to enforce and apply the authority of the state, i.e. what the community required of the Volksgenossen, without an appendage as shameful as the rubber truncheon was. At that time we held the view that there were only two alternatives: either it would suffice to enforce the authority of the personality of the individual and the authority of the community, or it would be necessary to use the most effective of weapons

to establish respect and obedience for this authority. It is not, however, an alternative to beat the citizens of a Volk as though they were subservient tribes in some colony and hence disgrace them. [—]

Now a further step is to be taken. The German police shall be increasingly connected with the Movement that not only represents modern Germany in a political sense, but also personifies and leads it. And it is to this end that you are to receive today's banners personally from my hand. This shall constitute a further act demonstrating the visible integration of the German police in the great front line of the German Volksgemeinschaft marching and fighting for the nation.

I know that you will bear these banners just as do all the other associations which have the appointed task of serving the strength and power of the nation. It is in these banners above all that you will perceive the symbol of your alliance with the German Volk that is shaping its new life today under this same banner.

You will thereby be guided by two principal ideas:

First, in being the representative of the State, also being the Volk's best friend.

Second, in being the representative of the State, being the most relentless representative of this Volksgemeinschaft toward those asocial, criminal elements which sin against it.

Subsequent to the speech, Hitler distributed to the police units flags and standards which were markedly similar to those of the SA and SS. Despite initially declaring that he merely wanted to express his "gratitude for the great work accomplished," he launched into a lengthy address to the NS Frauenschaft the same day. Soon he found himself "philosophizing" upon the relationship between man and woman, purporting the following insights:

The more masculine a man is, the more he is undisputed in his sphere of influence from the very start; and the more feminine a woman is, the more her own work and thus her own position is conversely uncontested and undisputed. And the mutual respect of the sexes for each other will ultimately not be achieved by the rules set up by two different formations, i.e. the formation of men and the formation of women; instead, it must be acquired day by day in real life. The more a man is faced with a woman who is truly female, the more his arrogance will be disarmed from the very beginning—so disarmed, that at times it might be unbearable; and conversely the more a man is a whole man and carries out his work and his life-task in the highest sense of the word, the more the woman will find her natural and self-evident place beside him. In this constellation, the two can never cross each other on their life-paths; they will instead join one another in a wholly shared, great mission; and ultimately this mission is none other than preserving the community of mankind as it exists today and ensuring that, in the future, it will be the way we desire it to one day be.

Thus the individual alliance of man and woman will always stand out from this joint alliance of the two sexes. We know that here, too, this alliance—if it is to be really lasting—must equally rest upon the awareness of this great comradeship for life. Yet because this is so, we must also understand that seeking and finding this comradeship for life cannot simply be brought about by commands or orders, either, but that it is moreover ultimately a problem not only of reason, but here an affair of the heart as well. And, therefore, it is also understandable if there are many—particularly women—who do not succeed in solving this problem for the simple reason that the heart cannot always bow to reason. We wish to have a maximum of understanding for this. For there is yet another great task ahead, the work in our community itself.

In the course of such recognition, he naturally could not refrain from making such exclamations as, “everything we do we are ultimately doing for the child!” In his peroration, Hitler extolled the virtues of the leader of the NS women’s organization, Frau Gertrud Scholtz-Klink:

The way you have begun here—and this I can say to you, Party Comrade Scholtz-Klink—is right, and it will help us to more easily achieve this goal [of building a community of the German Volk].

For you have demonstrated a truly remarkable talent for avoiding that the organization of women has created, for instance, a counterpole to men, but on the contrary ensured that the German women’s organization has become a complement to the male fighting organization.

On that same September 10, an appeal was issued to the Political Leaders, whom Hitler increasingly saw as his “disciples,” too. Therefore, he addressed them in words similar to those of the Master recorded by St. John, as he had previously done only when speaking before then of the SA or SS: “You once found your way to me and ... I found you.”

Nevertheless, the physical appearance of the Political Leaders in no way corresponded to the new heroic German man Hitler envisioned for future generations. However, they were completely dependent upon Hitler—nearly every one of them held a position that was in one form or another paid for by the Party or the State. It was precisely this dependence which made the Political Leaders particularly dear to Hitler, even more so than the SA, whose personal ambitions were usually quite modest, the majority of them wishing to be nothing more than true patriots. On September 10, Hitler preached the following “Gospel” to his Political Leaders:

For us zealous National Socialists, these days are the most splendid celebration of the whole year! How much trouble and sacrifice does it mean for the individual; how difficult and strenuous it is for many of you—but for

us, too—to keep coming here! Yet nonetheless, when these days come to their close, we are all struck by a sadness; we are like children who are deprived of a great celebration.

For us, these days comprise a remembrance of the time of our historic struggle for Germany. Among you there are many standing before me who still know the Movement from the time when it was difficult and dangerous to support it. Particularly for these old, true comrades in arms, these days are the most splendid remembrance and, at the same time, a reward. Once a year we see each other face to face again, just as so often before. Once a year you are again with me, as so often before in the battles for Germany. Back then I could go forth in your Gaus, and each of you knew me. Today you must come to me, and here at this place we see each other again and again as the Old Guard of the National Socialist Revolution! [—]

We have chosen the motto of “Labor” for the Party Congress of 1937. There are a scattered few who perhaps—particularly outside of Germany—might raise the question: Why such a slogan? After having liberated Germany within four years’ time, we have the right to rejoice in our labor! [—]

I am so pleased to have my old Fighters before me again once a year. I always have the feeling that, as long as the human being has the gift of life, he should yearn for those with whom he has shaped his life. What would my life be without you! The fact that you once found your way to me and believed in me gave your life new meaning and a new goal! The fact that I found you was the prerequisite for my own life and my struggle! [—]

The German nation, under the leadership of its Party, will protect Germany and never again allow it to fade! And our faith is bound up with this knowledge. It was not the point of the actions of Providence which has accompanied and blessed our miraculous path that now, perhaps in the final act, the fruits of this struggle should be lost. The Almighty has allowed us to take this wonderful path and will continue to bless us. For we are fighting here for a higher right, for a higher truth and for a higher human decency. I can look forward to the future so serenely because we have now in effect put our own affairs in order. [—]

Germany shall not be overrun, neither from within nor from without! And I believe that this fact is one of the highest contributions to peace, because it warns all those who attempt, from their base in Moscow, to set the world on fire.

Afterwards, Hitler held a diplomatic reception in the Deutscher Hof Hotel in Nuremberg. For the first time, ambassadors from France and Great Britain were among the guests.¹⁷⁷ In his address, Hitler stressed “that the Reich Party Congress was not a political Party event, but a national celebration of the entire German *Volk* and to be seen as such.” On September 11, Hitler spoke at a celebration organized by the Hitler Youth. Once again there was no *Hitlerwetter* in sight—it was pouring rain—a fact which Hitler had to account for appropriately in his speech:

My Youth!

This morning I learned from our weather forecasters that, at present, we have the meteorological condition "V b." That is supposed to be a mixture between very bad and bad. Now, my boys and girls, Germany has had this meteorological condition for fifteen years! And the Party had this meteorological condition, too! For the space of a decade, the sun did not shine upon this Movement. It was a battle in which only hope could be victorious, the hope that in the end the sun would rise over Germany after all. And risen it has! And as you are standing here today, it is also a good thing that the sun is not smiling down on you. For we want to raise a race not only for sunny, but also for stormy days!

I would hold all of the training that National Socialism accomplishes to be in vain if the result of this training were not a nation which can prevail at all times, even in the worst of times. And in the future, my youth, you yourselves will be that nation! What you do not learn today you will not know in the future!

We have conceived of other ideals for youth than those held in times past. Once—this is something you do not know—a boy of eighteen or twenty looked different from today. And girls were raised differently, too, than they are now. That has changed. In place of a youth that was formerly raised on pleasure, today a youth is growing up who will be raised on forbearance and sacrifice, and above all raised to breed a healthy, robust body, for as you know, we believe that without such a body, even a healthy spirit cannot rule the nation for any length of time.

That is why, for us National Socialists, the time of struggle back then was good, although the sun did not shine on us; actually, it may well be that in human life one remembers the days of battle and storms longer than the days of sunshine. And I am of the conviction that you will remember this day, too, perhaps for the very reason that it rained, and you are standing here in spite of it.

Hitler concluded his speech with the following observations:

That is the wonderful thing: that you complete the training cycle of our Volk. With you it has begun, and only when the last German sinks into the grave will it end!

Never before in German history has there existed such an inner unity of spirit, of formation of will and of leadership. That is something many generations before us have yearned for, and we are the fortunate witnesses of its fulfillment. But in you, my boys and girls, I see this thousand-year-old dream coming true most marvelously! Just as you are standing before me here today, year for year, centuries from now the young generation will stand before their respective Führers to come. And will again and again pledge that vow to the Germany we have secured today. *Deutschland Sieg Heil!*

Directly from his speech at the youth rally, Hitler proceeded to his next engagement before an assembly of the German Labor Front. Here

too, he opened his address with an excuse for the bad weather and his increasingly hoarse voice:

Party Comrades! My German Volksgenossen!

The fact that I have come to you somewhat late is due to the obligations which are part and parcel of the Party Congress. Therefore, I have asked my friend, Party Comrade Göring, to speak to you in my stead. For I must conserve my voice a little. Now that the weather has become worse, and much speaking must be done outdoors, that wears somewhat on the vocal cords. Now that does not necessarily have to awaken in our foreign correspondents¹⁷⁸ the joyful hope that I have cancer and my voice is gone for good. They will still be hearing it quite often and quite frequently. But basically it makes no difference at all which of us is talking. Because each of us will say the same thing. What we have to say is much more than merely a memorized speech. It is the rendering of our profession of faith.

In the course of his speech, Hitler described the attempt to reeducate the German individual, an attempt which could best be attained by duplicating the methods of the military in the barracks' square. He declared:

If we go so far as to believe that we will have educated everyone or perhaps had educated everyone, others will come after them who need to be educated. That is the same as in the military. One class of recruits has finally, finally been brought to the point that it can stand and walk alone. And then it moves on, and then the next class comes, and then it starts all over again. But that is not such a misfortune after all: on the contrary. The mission of educating is always the best of all. For it is an eternal one, a lasting one.

We had ranks in former times, too, in which the consciousness of rank was hammered (*eingepaukt*) into the people. Now we are hammering into them a consciousness of the Volk in certain organizations. Those are ranks, too. One of these ranks is the Labor Front. Its job is to help hammer home to German Volksgenossen the consciousness of the Volk. It is a consciousness of rank, too! Namely, the consciousness of belonging to the ranks of German Volkstum!

At the moment, this is perhaps inconvenient for some. But when a recruit reports to the barracks for duty, he, too, finds a number of things inconvenient. First he needs a good rubbing-down until he has dispensed with what he had before. And he is usually most attached to what he should not be attached to at all, because it gives him no reason to be proud. It is so difficult to teach him even, let us say, about cleanliness. And things are no different on a larger scale. People are so very attached primarily to what is not at all worth one's having such an affinity with. All of this now needs to be removed. And that is a wonderful task.

And if someone says to me, that has not been accomplished yet—well, we are only in the fifth year of our calendar. Just give us one or two hundred years' time. [—]

This morning I saw some of our youth join the Party. And I must say so myself: it is really wonderful. That is a magnificent young generation we are now getting. And above all, they are coming to the Party from all walks of life. And seriously, one wouldn't know it from seeing them: they have the same brown shirt. No one asks where they come from. But they all look as alike as peas in a pod. Here are children of the proletariat, there are former sons of the bourgeoisie and of entrepreneurs and employees and peasants, etc. But they all look exactly alike. And that is the wonderful thing. They are already growing up like that. And our other organizations will help to cultivate that slowly but surely. That is what the Party is for, and its organizations, the SA and the SS. And then comes the Labor Service. And then comes the military. And thus the individual German is kneaded until he gradually learns to come into actual contact with his neighbor. And all of this takes place not so much perhaps under the heading "ideal." No, no, all of this goes by a much more simple heading, namely the word, "reason."

Now Hitler replaced the term "ideal" with a new expression which he had been fond of using for some time: "reason." In the end, it mattered little which word he employed—the message remained the same: do as the Führer commands. Coming to the conclusion of his speech, Hitler eulogized the professional worker who, he claimed, was generally known to be Germany's "most loyal son."¹⁷⁹

I might not be standing before you now, that is to say I would certainly not be standing before you, had I not once been a soldier and, as a soldier, acquired this absolute faith in the value of my Volk, my Volksgenossen, and above all the workers. For you yourselves know that one could so often hear from bourgeois quarters, "Oh, those people are good for nothing, they're just riff-raff, pure and simple, etc." I have always said that was not true at all.

Those people are comrades. I have experienced that myself many a time. Those are the comrades who, God knows, have risked their lives so often for this Germany. They are all decent people. They are all men who are prepared, if necessary, to sacrifice everything, even their lives, for an ideal—and that too is an ideal, if someone goes out on the battlefield for Germany.

Hitler had indeed correctly assessed the situation. Of the various social groups within Germany, the ordinary worker was the most willing to let himself be carted off to the battlefield.

On September 12, Hitler spoke before an assembly of the SA, the SS, the NSKK, and the NSFK, which he addressed under the umbrella title of "National Socialist Fighting Movement." Here, too, he spoke of the "spirit of reason," which in the fighting days had found itself obstructed by "a conspiracy of baseness and meanness," and continued:

It did not want reason and insight to reside in our Volk. And when the first men stood up in order to preach the new reason of a Volksgemeinschaft

with me and behind me, those whose interest lay in tearing the Volk asunder rose up against us. We all shared but one possession: a boundless love for our Volk and an unshakeable faith in its resurrection. And today Germany has truly risen once again, and its rising is our achievement! [—]

A mere ten or fifteen years ago, these people were only barely able to communicate with one another, and today the entire German nation is following one command, one order! In his life on this earth, man needs external, visible symbols which can be carried before him and which he strives to imitate. For the German, the most sacred symbol has always been the flag; it is not a piece of cloth, but a conviction and a pledge and hence an obligation.

In the long yearn of our struggle for the German being against its adversaries, the flag was carried at your fore, the one which is today the flag of the German Reich. These standards of our struggle at that time were inconspicuous and faded, wholly unprepossessing; yet how we loved our flag regardless, a flag that had nothing to do with the disintegration of the nation but to us seemed to be the sunshine of a new and better German future! How the tens of thousands and later hundreds of thousands of our party comrades clung to this flag, and how they rallied around this flag! There are times when we still see them today, these oldest storm banners of the party, so faded and bleached—and nevertheless shining stars for us all. They accompanied us in the time of a fantastic struggle, the likes of which perhaps has never existed in any other country as it has in our Volk and as it has at such length.

Today they have been raised before us as symbols of the State we have earned and the German Volksgemeinschaft we have fought for and won.

The more Hitler personally distanced himself from religion, the more intensively he duplicated the rites of the Catholic Church through the use of secular symbols (flags, liturgical formulas, etc.). As he turned away from the beliefs of his childhood, a new, peculiar fetish gained a strong foothold in his daily life. Hitler ordered that, from this day on, a portrait of Frederick the Great, which he believed magically endowed its possessor with great strength, be taken with him. Indeed, the portrait accompanied him to the very end in the bowels of the Führerbunker.¹⁸⁰

Later that day, Hitler invited his foreign guests for tea at the Deutscher Hof Hotel. Among these was a delegation of Turkish businessmen, led by State Secretary Kurtoglu, as well as several Iranian and Afghan economists.¹⁸¹

On the morning of September 13, Hitler delivered the address below to members of the Wehrmacht, who had assembled outdoors on the Zeppelin Field to hear him speak.

Soldiers!

For the fourth time now you have assembled here on this field on the occasion of this great day of the nation. Much has changed since then, not for the worse, but all for the better! Today, Germany is more splendid, greater

and above all stronger than back then. You yourselves constitute visible proof of this strength! In a few weeks, some of you will leave the barracks and return to civilian life after two years of service for the German Volk and hence for our homeland. Not only have you given these two years to Germany; you, too, have been given them! For in these two years you have not only become soldiers, but above all men, men of whom the nation has reason to be proud and of whom it shall be proud in the future!

The evolving German Army has made it possible not only to win external freedom for the German Reich but moreover to commence and perform the great works you see in Germany today. Most of all, it has enabled us to preserve peace for our Volk in a time of unrest and general insecurity. Peoples who were weak have never been blessed by peace, but only those who have been strong. The fact that Germany is strong again today is something it owes first and foremost to its soldiers!

Germany is fond of you, and above all, it is proud of you. For it sees in you the pillars of an immortal, glorious past. You, too, have just as much reason to be fond of Germany, for once more you can be proud of your Volk, your homeland and our German Reich! *Deutschland Sieg Heil!*

At noon, in the Kaisersaal of the Nuremberg castle, Hitler held a luncheon reception for the Japanese Prince Chichibu, the brother of Emperor Hirohito.¹⁸²

On the evening of September 13, near the end of the Party Congress, Hitler gave a several-hour valedictory address. In his “party narrative,” he claimed that “seen from a higher vantage point,” it would have been a great disaster for Germany had it indeed won the War in 1914. In order to explain this unorthodox argument, he declared that at the time there had been “an ignorance of the meaning of the blood-related sources of the power of the Volk.”

How often we dwell on the question of what would have happened to Germany if Fate had granted us a swift and easy victory in 1914. What we were all striving for at that time with hearts aglow would presumably—seen from a higher vantage point—have been but a misfortune for our Volk. That victory would probably have had extremely grievous consequences. For in the inner sphere, it in particular would have prevented us from gaining the knowledge that today allows us to look back in horror at the path on which that Germany of the past was already making its way. The perceptive few who were preaching caution had lapsed into ridiculousness.

The State, grounded only in the external military means of power which bore it up, would sooner or later have become the annihilator of its own existence and its own means of existence, wholly ignorant of the meaning of the blood-related sources of the *Volkskraft*! Phenomena such as we have had an opportunity to observe in many other countries after their supposed victory would have descended upon us. Instead of being jerked back from the brink of destruction by a disruption of a catastrophic nature, we would all the more

surely have gradually succumbed to the insidious poisons of inner decay of the Volk! In our case, the accuracy of a wise saying can be said to have been proven true: there are times when Providence demonstrates the deepest love it has for its creatures in an act of punishment!

This fresh interpretation of the World War and the collapse of 1918 failed to mention the “November Criminals.” Further, it omitted to refer to the fact that without these calamities, Hitler’s dictatorship might never have arisen. Instead the listeners were admonished never to forget this “punishment” with which Fate had demonstrated its love for its (German) creatures.

The main topic of the final address revolved around the threat Bolshevism posed to the entire international community. This indeed amounted to a grandiose attempt by Hitler to flood the “Western Europeans” with rhetoric to persuade them—particularly the English—to entrust Hitler with the defense of Europe against Bolshevism. Once assigned this mission, he hoped to obtain *carte blanche* to proceed in the East at his own discretion. Hence Hitler liberally applied his anti-Communist rhetoric, on a scale equaled only in 1932 and 1933. In these years, this tactic had worked miracles for him in winning the favor of the German Nationalists and their adherents. Hitler declared Bolshevism a brain child of the Jews, a symptom of “an all-encompassing, general attack against modern societal order.” Since the “birth of Christianity, the triumphant advance of Mohammedanism or the Reformation,” the world had not seen a similar process.

One would have to be incredibly naive to dispute the fact that Bolshevism does indeed have that international character, i.e. a revolutionary character, in an age when Bolshevism hardly allows a day to pass without stressing its mission of world revolution as the be-all and end-all of its program, and hence the basis for its very existence! Only a bourgeois-democratic politician would refuse to believe what the programmatic¹⁸³ foundation of this Red world movement actually is and what, in reality, is revealed in fact to be the most significant feature of this world movement. National Socialism was not the first to claim that Bolshevism was international; it was Bolshevism itself—the strictest rendering of Marxism—which solemnly proclaimed its international character.

Now, if one of our Western Europeans still insists on denying that Bolshevism is international, i.e. that it uses internationally uniform means and methods to pursue an internationally self-same goal, one is left to fear that, in the near future, we will be hearing from the lips of one such world-wise person correspondingly that National Socialism, contrary to its program, does not intend to stand up for Germany, and neither does Fascism for Italy! I would nonetheless find it regrettable if we were not to be believed. And it pains me

just as much that no one even believes Bolshevism when it itself asserts its intentions and proclaims what it is.

Moreover, he who has no concept of the magnitude of this world menace and above all holds, for reasons of domestic and foreign policy, that he is not allowed to take this menace seriously, will all too easily intentionally overlook everything which might perchance be seen to constitute proof of the existence of this world menace. [—]

As National Socialists, we are fully conscious of the origins and conditions of the fight which is today causing unrest in the world. Above all, we comprehend the extent and dimensions of this struggle. It is a gigantic event in terms of world history! The greatest menace with which the culture and civilization of the human race have been threatened since the collapse of the nations in Antiquity.

This crisis cannot be compared to any of the otherwise habitual wars or any of the revolutions that take place so often. No, this is an all-encompassing, general attack against modern societal order, against our spiritual and cultural world. This attack is being launched both against the essential character of the peoples per se, against their inner organization and against the race's own leadership of these bodies politic, as well as against their spiritual life, their traditions, their economies, and all the other institutions which determine the overall essence, character, and life of these peoples or states. This attack is so extensive that it draws nearly all of the functions of life into the sphere of its actions. The duration of this battle is unforeseeable. One thing which is certain is that, since the birth of Christianity, the triumphant advance of Mohammedanism or the Reformation, nothing of this type has ever before taken place in this world. [—] What others profess not to see because they simply do not want to see it, is something we must unfortunately state as a bitter truth: the world is presently in the midst of an increasing upheaval, whose spiritual and factual preparation and whose leadership undoubtedly proceed from the rulers of Jewish Bolshevism in Moscow.

When I quite intentionally present this problem as Jewish, then you, my Party Comrades, know that this is not an unverified assumption, but a fact proven by irrefutable evidence.¹⁸⁴

Hitler then presented a racial interpretation of the states within Europe and portrayed Russia in a manner that corresponded little to the historic reality.

All our European states originated in what were initially small racial cores but which are to be regarded as the truly powerful and hence determining factors in this constellation. This fact is most pointedly demonstrated in those states in which, as late as our modern times, the formed and guided masses and the forming and guiding powers were not brought into a balance—or perhaps they could not be, but probably this was not even intended. One of these states was Russia. A very thin—not Russian-*volklich*, i.e. not Slavic—layer of leadership pieced this state together from an assortment of small and even smaller communities to form a virtual colossus of a state, which was

seemingly impregnable, but whose greatest weakness always lay in the discrepancy between the number and merit of its ruling class—non-Russian in terms of blood—and the number and merit of its national Russian elements.

Therefore it was particularly easy for a new racial core to successfully penetrate and attack; it intentionally manifested itself as a *volklich* leader in disguise in contrast to the old, official leadership of state. Here the Jewish minority, which was in no way proportionate to the Russian Volk itself in terms of numbers, took the detour of appropriating the leadership of the national-Russian proletariat to succeed not only in ousting the former social and state leadership from its position, but in exterminating it without further ado.

Yet for this reason in particular, the Russia of today is basically no different from the Russia of two hundred or three hundred years ago. A brutal dictatorship by a foreign race which has seized utter control of genuine *Russentum* (Russian civilization) and is exercising that control commensurately.

To the extent that this process of forming a new state came to its conclusion in Russia, one might be able to simply take cognizance of the fact as a historic reality just as with any other similar situation, and leave it at that. Yet now that this Jewish racial core is seeking to bring about the same effects in other peoples and thereby views modern Russia as its already conquered base and bridgehead for further expansion, this problem has exceeded the dimensions of a Russian problem and become a world problem which will be decided one way or another, because it must be decided.

After this digression into his version of Russian history, Hitler returned to the present and delivered an attack upon Jews, who aimed at plunging democracy into the chaos of Bolshevism.

While one part of the “Jewish fellow citizens” demobilizes democracy via the influence of the press or even infects it with their poison by linking up with revolutionary manifestations in the form of peoples’ fronts, the other part of Jewry has already carried the torch of the Bolshevik revolution into the midst of the bourgeois-democratic world without even having to fear any substantial resistance. The final goal is then the ultimate Bolshevik revolution, i.e. not, for example, consisting of the establishment of a leadership of the proletariat by the proletariat, but of the subjugation of the proletariat under the leadership of its new and alien master.

Once the incited, insane masses—gone wild and supported by the asocial elements released from the prisons and penitentiaries—have exterminated the natural, indigenous intelligence of the peoples and brought them to the scaffolds to bleed to death, what will remain as the last bearer of—albeit miserable—intellectual knowledge is the Jew. For one thing should be made clear here: this race is neither spiritually nor morally superior, but in both cases inferior through and through. For unscrupulousness and irresponsibility can never be equated with a truly brilliant disposition. In terms of creativity, it is an untalented race through and through. For this reason, if it seeks to rule anywhere for any length of time, it is forced to undertake the extermination

of the former intellectual upper classes of the other peoples. Otherwise it would naturally be defeated by their superior intelligence within a very short time. That is because, in everything that has to do with true accomplishment, they have always been bunglers, and bunglers they will remain. In the past year, we have shown in a series of alarming statistical proofs that, in the present Soviet Russia of the proletariat, more than eighty percent of the leading positions are held by Jews. This means that not the proletariat is the dictator, but that very race whose Star of David has finally also become the symbol of the so-called proletarian state.¹⁸⁵

And incidentally, we have all experienced the same thing in Germany, too, of course. Who were the leaders of our Bavarian soviet republic? Who were the leaders of Spartakus? Who were the real financial backers and leaders of our Communist Party? Now that is something even the most well-meaning Mister World-Democrat can neither do away with nor change: it was none other than the Jews! That is the case in Hungary, too, and in that part of Spain which the truly Spanish people has not yet recaptured.

Finally arriving at the topic of Spain, Hitler, unrestrained by any consideration of good taste, declared that not Franco, but the “usurpers” in Valencia bore the responsibility for the bloodiness of the revolution.

As you know, in Spain this Jewish Bolshevism proceeded in a similar fashion starting with the detour of democracy up to open revolution. It is a crass misrepresentation of the facts to claim, as is being done, that the Bolshevik oppressors of the Volk there were vested with legal power, while the fighters of national Spain were illegal revolutionaries.

No! We regard General Franco’s men as the genuine and above all lasting Spain, and the usurpers of Valencia as the international revolutionary troop hired by Moscow, a troop which today is ravaging Spain and tomorrow may be ravaging a different state.

Hitler then responded to the accusations of the British and the French in connection with Germany’s intervention in the Spanish Civil War. Britain and France feared that this imperiled the balance of power within Europe.

In England and France, one professes to be worried about the idea that Spain might even be occupied by Italy or Germany; we are just as appalled in the face of the possibility that it might be conquered by Soviet Russia! By no means would this conquest have to be effected in the form of an occupation by Soviet Russian troops; rather, it will become a *fait accompli* at that moment when a Bolshevized Spain has become a section, i.e. an integral component, of the Central Bolshevik Office in Moscow—a branch which receives both its political directives and its material subsidies from there. In any case, we principally regard every attempt to further expand Bolshevism in Europe as a shift in the European balance of power. [—]

I am merely stating a fact! Therefore we have a serious interest in preventing this Bolshevik plague from spreading even further in Europe. In other respects, in the course of history we have naturally had a number of confrontations with, for instance, national France. However, somehow and somewhere, we still belong together in the great European family of peoples, most of all when we all look deep into our innermost selves.

It is then I believe that, in essence, we do not really want to miss any of the truly European civilized nations. We have each other to thank not only for a certain amount of aggravation and suffering, but also for an incredible cross-fertilization. We have given each other models, examples, and lessons—just as, on the other hand, we have also given each other a certain amount of pleasure and many things of beauty. If we are just, we have every reason to harbor mutual admiration instead of hate! In this community of the civilized European nations, international Jewish Bolshevism is a totally alien element which has not the slightest contribution to make to our economy or to our culture, but instead wreaks only havoc; which has not a single positive accomplishment to show for itself in an international perspective on European and world life, but merely propagandistic tables of forged figures and rabble-rousing posters.

Hitler followed with an imperious reference to the confrontation between Berlin and Moscow. He recalled the great achievements that Germany had already attained in its historic struggle against Bolshevism and added subtle threats of military repercussions should any foreign power dare to attack Germany.

Furthermore, to us Germans the thought that this Europe could be guided or ruled by Moscow of all places is simply unbearable. The fact that, in other countries, this type of presumptuousness is tolerated as a political demand, is something which we can only register with astonishment and regret. For us, at any rate, the mere idea of taking orders from a world so very far beneath us is just as ridiculous as it is outrageous. Furthermore, the stated goal of an uncivilized, Jewish-Bolshevist, international league of criminals to rule over Germany—an established member-country of European civilization—from a base in Moscow is yet another insult. Moscow can remain Moscow, and Soviet Russia can remain Soviet Russia, for all we care. Our German capital is Berlin in any case, and what is more: Germany, thank God, will always remain Germany! Thus let no one allow himself to be deceived on one point: National Socialism has banished the Bolshevik world menace from within Germany. It has ensured that the scum of Jewish litterateurs alien to the Volk does not dictate over the proletariat, i.e. the German worker, but that instead the German Volk finally comprehends its own destiny and finds its own leadership. It has moreover made our Volk and the Reich immune against Bolshevik contamination.

Apart from this, it will not shrink from countering any repetition of former attacks from within on the sovereignty of our Volk with the most determined means available. We National Socialists grew up fighting this foe. It took us

more than fifteen years to destroy it in Germany spiritually, *weltanschaulich*, and in point of fact. Neither countless murders and other acts of violence it performed, nor the support it received from the Marxist rulers of the Reich at the time were able to halt our triumphal march. Today we are keeping a close and careful watch to ensure that such a menace will never again descend upon Germany. Yet should anyone have the audacity to bring this menace to or into Germany from without, may he bear in mind that the National Socialist state has also produced the weapon with which it can crush such an attempt in the speed of lightning.

The fact that we were good soldiers is something the world has certainly not yet forgotten. The fact that today we are even better soldiers is something they can take our word for. But the fact that the National Socialist state will stand up and fight for its existence with a different zeal than the bourgeois Reich of old is something no one should doubt!

The age when the German Volk suffered from parliamentary infirmity is over, to return no more. We all have one great desire, that Fate might give us the necessary peace and all the time to bring the inner regeneration and the work of our great inner reconstruction to a close, and that means bringing it to a close in a Europe that has once more come to its senses. It is not our intention to thrust our ideas or ideals on anyone else; but let no one attempt to force his opinion upon us. Above all, let the criminal Muscovite sovietism finally cease continuing to expand its barbarism and, if possible, make us unhappy as well. The age is over when one could unreasonably demand everything from a defenseless Volk.

The bombs that fell on our armored ship not only hit the vessel—called *Deutschland*—but also met with the response which, from now on, will be dealt out immediately in answer to any such attempt.

Although Hitler cloaked his words in anti-Bolshevist rhetoric, his true intention was unmistakable—to warn the Western Powers not to intervene militarily. To this end, he strove to intimidate them by alluding to the frightful military retaliation such a step would entail.

His tactics were thinly veiled, particularly considering that the Soviet Union had not imposed upon the defenseless German Volk. Furthermore, the Reichswehr and the Red Army had been cooperating, subsequent to the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo until the early 1930s, in the secret rearmament of Germany. The Western Powers, however, were completely unmoved by Hitler's tirade against the Bolsheviks in his final speech. Neither threats and entreaties nor gruesome stories of the revolting dangers Bolshevism posed to the entire world conjured the reaction Hitler had intended. His endless harangues, the immense efforts he expended in his speeches—all had once again been for naught. Western Europe showed no inclination to subordinate itself to Hitler simply to ward off the Bolshevik bogey.

Hitler concluded his speech with a review of the events of the Party Congress. He then proceeded to proclaim the birth of a “Germanic Empire of the German Nation.”¹⁸⁶

Today it is so easy to admire the overall outcome, but so difficult to sense how much work, sacrifice, industry, and initiative was required to reap these results. What are a mere 100,000 men! They stood here group after group, standard after standard, company after company, battalion after battalion, and regiment after regiment. Behind them stand just as many millions of comrades and soldiers, and all of this has been called to life and come to be in the space of a few years, in part from out of nothing, from out of turmoil, and from out of decay.

This tremendous demonstration alone is the result of immeasurable labors. Now do you understand, why, my Party Comrades, in the face of such brilliant products of human ability and industry, we have given this celebration the name “Party Congress of Labor”? [—]

In a few short hours, the trains with their hundreds of thousands of participants will roll back out into the German Gaus. The peasants and their sons will return to their villages; workers, employees and civil servants will return to their plants and their offices; the soldiers will report to the barracks; youth will go to school—but all of them will think back with throbbing hearts on this further great demonstration of the National Socialist Party and the National Socialist State.

And they will take with them the proud feeling of having again been witnesses of the internal and external uprising of their Volk. Yet may they be conscious that therein a hope of millenniums and the prayer of many generations, the confidence and faith of innumerable great men of our Volk have finally achieved their historic realization. The German nation has been given its Germanic Empire after all.

4

On September 19, Hitler reviewed Wehrmacht maneuvers in Mecklenburg. These exercises were the dress rehearsal for the demonstration of military might which he intended to stage a week later for Mussolini, who doubtless would stand in awe of him. At the same time, Hitler named Foreign Minister von Neurath as an “Honorary SS Gruppenführer” so that the latter, too, would have a uniform to wear when this important guest arrived.¹⁸⁷

A special decree¹⁸⁸ was promulgated, declaring September 25 in Munich and September 28 in Berlin to be a state holiday in honor of the “Royal Italian Head of Government, Benito Mussolini.”

At 9:00 a.m. on September 25, the Duce arrived at the border station of Kiefersfelden. Reich Minister Frank, who spoke fluent Italian, and Rudolf Hess welcomed Mussolini to Germany in the name of the Führer. Both men accompanied Mussolini on his journey to Munich. Their special train arrived at the main station at 10:00 a.m. Mussolini was greeted at the gate by the Führer himself.

Immediately thereafter began the various military reviews, parades, and events in honor of the distinguished guest which characterized Mussolini's stay in Germany. Within the halls of the train station, an honorary contingent of the Party stood at attention when Mussolini stepped toward the exit. All branches of the Wehrmacht had posted guards of honor just outside the train station to pay their respects to the ruler of Italy. Thereafter, the dictators drove through the streets of Munich. The crowd on both sides of the road demonstrated a lack of enthusiasm which greatly displeased its head of state. Unlike other German cities, Munich had far too often witnessed Hitler's theatrics to be easily impressed by such pomp.¹⁸⁹

For the duration of his stay in the Bavarian capital, Mussolini resided at the Prince Carl Palace in the upper part of the Prinz-

regentenstrasse. This was not far from Hitler's private quarters at 16 Prinzregentenplatz, where Mussolini called on Hitler at 11:30 a.m.

On this occasion, the Italian dictator presented Hitler with a document naming him "Honorary Corporal in the Fascist Militia."¹⁹⁰ While this indeed was the highest distinction bestowed by the Fascist Party of Italy, it irritated Hitler in two ways. First, as the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, the title of Honorary Corporal had a belittling ring to it, especially since it had been years since Hitler had been a mere corporal in the First World War. Moreover, Hitler's particular dislike of militia units was widely known.¹⁹¹

In all likelihood, Mussolini did not become aware of the pejorative implications of this "honor," for Hitler knew how to betray his feelings. Indeed, he gave such deference to Mussolini that he actually wore the insignia bearing this title¹⁹² during his visit to Italy the next year. He also sported the dagger which clearly marked him as an Honorary Corporal. In Germany on the other hand, Hitler never wore such symbols of the positions he held within Party, State, and Military.

Mussolini remained with Hitler at the latter's Munich apartment for little over an hour. The Duce's itinerary, bristling with social engagements, left no time for more extensive private consultations between the two statesmen. At noon, they laid wreaths at the pantheon honoring the dead. An official brunch at the newly completed Führerbau at the "Königlicher Platz" was followed by a reception in the banquet hall which numerous renowned German and Italian figures attended upon invitation. For an entire hour Party formations goosestepped past the Führerbau as Hitler and Mussolini looked on from its balcony. At 5:30 p.m., Hitler returned Mussolini's morning call with a visit to the Prince Carl Palace. Here the Führer presented Mussolini with a replica of the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle,¹⁹³ as well as with the golden sovereign symbol of the Party which hitherto was reserved for Hitler himself.

Afterwards, the dictators proceeded to an art exhibition through which Hitler ushered Mussolini. This excursion was followed by a social function at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, a meeting with numerous artists, businessmen, and scholars. At 7:00 p.m., the statesmen returned to the main train station, where they again were met by guards of honor.

Shortly thereafter, they left Munich in two separate special trains. The DNB reported: "Thus ended the greatest day in the history of the Capital of the Movement."¹⁹⁴

On September 26, Hitler and Mussolini were present at Wehrmacht maneuvers in Mecklenburg, near the villages of Belitz, Stielow, Tolzin, and Wustrow.¹⁹⁵ In the morning of the next day, Mussolini submitted himself to a tour through the "Reich's Armory," the Krupp factory in Essen. Alfried Krupp himself led the dictators through the industrial complex. In Hanover that afternoon, the recently developed new synthetic product Buna¹⁹⁶ was displayed to Mussolini.

The two special trains left Hanover and headed for Berlin, traveling along parallel rails at precisely the same speed. They arrived at the Heerstrasse station in the capital at 5:40 p.m. The reception was nearly perfect. Once again, the statesmen stepped by a guard of honor awaiting their arrival. They drove up Wilhelmstrasse, passing through a corridor of applauding people. Mussolini resided for the duration of his stay in Berlin at the House of the Reich President.

Later that night, Hitler held a banquet at his official residence (Reichskanzlerhaus) "in the honor of the Italian Head of Government and Leader of Fascism, Benito Mussolini." Among the guests at the banquet were numerous Italian ministers including Starace, Alfieri, and Ciano. Also present were the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico; all the members of the Reich Cabinet; the leading men of the Party, State, and Wehrmacht; and representatives of the sciences, arts and business. In front of his two hundred guests, Hitler toasted his guest of honor:¹⁹⁷

Your Excellency!

As Führer and Chancellor of the German Volk, today it is an honor to me and my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to Your Excellency in the Capital of the Reich. The German nation joins me in this solemn hour to hail you as the brilliant creator of Fascist Italy, the founder of a new empire (*Imperium*).

On your journey through Germany, Your Excellency will have concluded from the great enthusiasm with which all the classes of the German Volk greeted you that your visit means more to us than a mere diplomatic event and hence a purely conventional meeting.

In an age in which the world is full of tensions and uneasy confusion, in which the most dangerous elements are attempting to attack and destroy the old culture of Europe, Italy and Germany have joined in sincere friendship and mutual political cooperation.

This cooperation is supported not only by the same indestructible will for life and self-assertion common to the Italian and the German peoples, but, moreover, by strongly affiliated political ideals as well, which in our opinion constitute a foundation for the internal strength and solidity of our nations. The fact that these shared basic political views act as a sturdy bond linking our two peoples is further complemented by the fact that, as regards the real vital interests of Italy and Germany, there are no elements dividing the two,

but only those which supplement and join. The talks Your Excellency and I have had these past days have served to verify this anew.

We are confident, in this context, that our political work of safeguarding the peace and the full flower of European culture cannot be interpreted as the formation of a block directed against other European states. On the contrary: we are of the conviction that, by virtue of our joint efforts, we are best serving the interests of our two countries and, furthermore, the goal so close to our hearts—that of a general international understanding.

It is in this spirit that Italy and Germany, side by side, will weigh and approach the coming political tasks, in order to thereby counter any and all attempts to divide these two nations or to play them off against each other.

I may raise my glass and drink to the health of His Majesty, the King of Italy, the Emperor of Ethiopia, your esteemed sovereign, and the personal well-being of Your Excellency himself, and to the glory and prosperity of the Fascist Italian nation.

Excerpts of Mussolini's reply are reproduced below:

In the person of the Führer and Chancellor of the Reich, I greet the combatant who has restituted consciousness of its greatness to the German Volk. In his person, I greet the man who has refashioned a nation which shares such manifold bonds of common spirit and shared work with Fascist Italy. The Fascist Revolution and the National Socialist Revolution have been, and always will be, creative revolutions. On their soil, Germany and Italy have erected great monuments testifying to cultural achievement and progress. New, and by no means inferior, feats will be accomplished in the future.

The German-Italian solidarity is a lively and active one. It has not come about as a product of political opportunism or diplomatic engineering, but rather is the expression and result of an inherent feeling of solidarity and mutual interest. It is not and never will be a reclusive or exclusive alliance which fearfully and suspiciously hides itself away from the rest of the world. Italy and Germany are willing to work together with all other peoples, provided they demonstrate their good will. All both our nations seek is respect and understanding of our needs and justified demands. All we ask in return for our friendship to all nations is that no one seek to question the principles upon which our glorious European culture is based.

My talks with Your Excellency have reinforced the friendship between our nations and thereby have made it immune to attempts to undermine it and to efforts to drive a wedge between us, no matter what their origin.

As I return to Italy, I take with me memories of your powerful troops, your mass rallies and the great feat the German Volk has accomplished under its Führer, both with regard to spiritual and technical aspects of the reconstruction of your homeland.

On September 28, the day which had been designated a public holiday because of the occasion, Mussolini saw the Berlin Zeughaus (armory) and then admired the sights of Potsdam. In addition, he

delivered a short address before the *Fascio*, an organization formed by Italian Fascists living in the German capital.

On the Tempelhofer Feld, a mass rally began at 7:00 p.m. that night. The official news release called it the “people’s demonstration of the 115 million.”¹⁹⁸ Goebbels greeted the crowd in his capacity as the Gauleiter of Berlin. Hitler followed Goebbels’ opening words with the statement below:¹⁹⁹

Men and Women!

At present we are witnesses of a historic event which is unprecedented in this form and in such magnitude! More than one million people have gathered here for a rally in which 115 million members of two races are participating with fervent emotion, and which hundreds of millions of people in the rest of the world are following as more or less interested listeners! What moves us all first and foremost at this moment is the great joy we share in the knowledge of having as a guest in our midst one of those rare men of the ages whom history does not put to the test, but who themselves make history!

Secondly, we sense that this rally is not merely another of the assemblies that are always taking place elsewhere; instead, it is expressing a pledge to shared ideals and shared interests. A pledge being made by two men which a million people are hearing here, but which 115 million are anticipating and affirming with hearts aglow! And hence this evening is no longer a public assembly, but instead a rally of the nations.

The most profound purpose of this rally of the nations lies in the sincere desire to guarantee for our countries the peace which is not the reward for the cowardice of resignation, but rather the result of having responsibly secured our *volklich*, spiritual and physical—as well as our cultural—characteristics and values.

Here, too, we believe that we are best able to serve those interests which, above and beyond our two peoples, should truly be the interests of all of Europe.

The fact that we are in a position today to hold this rally is something which enables us to gauge how the times lying behind us have changed. No Volk can yearn more for peace than the German Volk, but neither has any other Volk come to know the terrible consequences of feeble credulity more than ours has! For behind us, prior to the National Socialist accession to power, there lies a period of fifteen years which comprised a single succession of suppression, of extortion, of rights denied, and hence of unspeakable spiritual and material distress.

In our country, the ideals of Liberalism and Democracy have not rescued the German nation from the worst violations conceivable in history. Therefore, National Socialism has had to establish a new and more effective ideal in order to restore to our Volk those basic human rights which had been denied it for one-and-a-half decades. In that time of bitterest trials—this is something I must state this evening before the German Volk and the entire world—Italy,

and especially Fascist Italy, had no part in the humiliation of our people. During those years, it proved itself capable of showing understanding for a great nation's demands for equal rights, for the bare necessities of life, and not least of all for its honor as a Volk.

Thus it filled us with genuine satisfaction that the hour came in which we were able to remember this—and, I believe, we have remembered it!²⁰⁰ From the mutuality of the Fascist and National Socialist Revolutions, there has developed today a mutuality not only of views, but of actions as well. This is fortunate in an age and a world in which the currents of destruction and deformation are visible at every turn. Fascist Italy has become a new imperium by virtue of the brilliant, creative work of a constructive man.

You, Benito Mussolini, will have ascertained one thing about the National Socialist State after having seen it with your own eyes, namely, that Germany, too, by virtue of its *völkisch* attitude and its military strength, has become a world power once again. The force of these two empires today constitutes the strongest guarantor of the preservation of a Europe which still possesses a sense of its cultural mission and is not prepared to succumb to the decay caused by destructive elements!

For all of you who are gathered here in this hour or are listening in the world must acknowledge that here two autocratic national regimes have found their way to one another and are standing by one another, in a time in which the ideas of a democratic and Marxist International have nothing to show but demonstrations of hatred and hence of disunion.

Every attempt to break apart or dissolve such a community of peoples by playing one against the other, by raising suspicions or by imputing false aims will likewise be defeated by the desire of those 115 million who, in this hour, comprise this rally of community, and above all by the will of the two men who are standing here before you and speaking to you!

After Hitler had finished, Mussolini delivered a lengthy address in German. Before he managed to close, however, torrential rain began pouring down. To Hitler, this should have appeared as a bad omen for the newly created Italo-German friendship. Mussolini emphasized that he was speaking primarily in his capacity as “leader of a national revolution” and declared:

As stated before, there are no ulterior motives for my visit to Germany. No web of intrigue has been woven to widen the gap between the already sufficiently divided nations of Europe. The ceremonious reaffirmation of the Rome-Berlin Axis is not directed against other states.

All of us, National Socialists and Fascists, desire peace and are always willing to work for peace, for a viable and fertile peace. We endeavor to resolve—and not tacitly to ignore—the problems that naturally come about when so many nations live together. In response to the world that is fixing its worried eyes upon Berlin to see whether war or peace will be the result of our meeting, the Führer and I can turn to and confidently declare: It will be peace! [—]

Without economic autonomy, the political independence of a nation cannot be guaranteed, and even a people of great military strength can be victimized by an economic blockade. We have come into direct contact with the effects of such a situation, when we had to face the criminal economic sanctions upon which the fifty-two states assembled in Geneva had decided. The latter saw to the strict and unrelenting implementation of these measures, which, however, completely failed them in the pursuit of their goal. Indeed, their only result was to give Fascist Italy the opportunity to prove to the world its power of resistance. In spite of international pressure, Germany did not heed the call to impose economic sanctions upon Italy. We will never forget this.²⁰¹

Precisely at this point, the compatibility—yes, indeed, the need—for National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy to stand together became apparent for the very first time. What has come to be known throughout the world as the Rome-Berlin Axis was developed in the autumn of 1935. In the course of the last two years, it has led to an increasing rapprochement between our two peoples, and thus it has greatly strengthened the efforts to ensure peace in Europe on an ever larger scale.

Fascism has its own ethical principles to which it strives to remain true, and these ethics are mirrored in my own personal morals: to speak clearly and frankly. And when you have a friend, to march alongside him till the end!

Indeed, Mussolini did remain true to his maxim, He did so until he was ruined by the aftereffects of this exercise.

In his speech, the Duce concluded explanations of the terms dictatorship, democracy, and Bolshevism with the statement:

When words no longer suffice and circumstances necessitate it, one must take up arms! This was the case in Spain, where thousands of Italian Fascist volunteers died in defense of European culture.

Then he closed with the words:

It has been for twenty years now that your great Führer has hurled at the masses the uplifting cry that was to become the battle cry of the entire German Volk: *Deutschland erwache!* Germany has awoken. The Third Reich is here.

I do not know if and when Europe will awaken. This has been a bone of contention at the Party Congress in Nuremberg. Though well known to us, there are secret forces at work, striving to turn a civil war into a worldwide sea of flames. What is important is that our two great nations—which today comprise the enormous sum of 115 million people, a figure that is constantly on the rise—stand together as one in our single unshakeable determination. Today's gigantic rally serves as proof to the entire world of our ambition.

As is apparent from these excerpts, Mussolini had already assumed a role subservient to Hitler. The loquacious Italian had met his master. Times had changed since their first encounter in 1934. Mussolini had come to realize that in the future it would be Hitler's word that counted.

Nothing made a greater impression on the Duce than displays of military power. As if uncertain whether the abundance of such displays in the last few days were sufficient to impress Mussolini, Hitler led him from the rally on the Tempelhofer Feld to the nearby stadium, where the tattoo ending the day reinforced its military theme.

The next day at 10:00 a.m., the military festivities resumed in Berlin. The first took place on the new Paradeplatz in front of the Technical University. General von Witzleben²⁰² began as usual with an inventory of the parade participants: 591 officers, 13,095 noncommissioned officers and enlisted men, etc. It was 1:00 p.m. when the various branches of the service had passed in front of the Führer. After the parade, Hitler hosted Mussolini for a late breakfast at the Chancellery. At 3:51 p.m., Hitler finally bade his guest farewell at the Lehrte station in Berlin.

Without question the goose step had made the greatest impression on Mussolini during his stay in Germany. His disgust at any expression of liberalism and his efforts to turn Italy into a sort of Latin Prussia²⁰³ were further reasons why, immediately after his return, he introduced the goose step as the “Passo Romano” to all military contingents.

After Mussolini’s departure, Hitler delivered an address at the Kroll banquet hall to the one thousand German workers who had built the German exhibit at the Paris World’s Fair of 1937.²⁰⁴

On October 2, Hitler went to see an exhibition in Düsseldorf, entitled *Schaffendes Volk* (Creative People).

A day later, the *Erntedankfest* was celebrated on the Bückeberg near Hamelin. No one, least of all Hitler himself, had any premonition that their celebration was to be the last harvest festival to take place in the history of the Third Reich.²⁰⁵

Hitler’s speech revealed a lingering engrossment with Mussolini’s visit. It would be wrong to assume that Mussolini was the only one to leave this meeting of dictators profoundly affected, Hitler was exuberant as well. In spite of initial difficulties, he had succeeded in bringing about an alliance between Germany and Italy. For him this was the final shred of evidence that his conduct of foreign policy was beyond reproach. He was confident that a similar alliance with Great Britain was feasible as well, and that the conquest and establishment of colonies in Eastern Europe were merely a matter of time.

In the course of his “party narrative,” Hitler once again stressed that only one man could command the nation, naturally himself:

Hence there is no such thing as freedom for the individual, just as there is no freedom for a class. What does that mean, my dear peasants, freedom for the individual? You yourselves know how very strongly you are forced by Nature and by the requirements of your profession to perform certain tasks, whether you want to or not. In good weather or bad! Nature continually compels man to perform tasks he does not relish and work he does not always find pleasant. Yet perhaps life would not be good at all if everything went the way the individual happens to want it to at the moment. On the contrary: overcoming obstacles is the supreme triumph of life. [—]

Where would even the smallest farm end up if no one wanted to bear the responsibility? The community of the Volk is no different from a family: one person must have an overall perspective, one person is responsible not only for the organization of production, but for coordinating consumption, too!

Next he turned to the topic of German colonies:

If we say today that our Lebensraum is too small and that, therefore, it is essential for us to supplement it by way of colonies, some wiseacre will appear from somewhere in the world and say, "Why do you need colonies? Colonies would do you no good at all! You have purchasing power!" Frankly, we ourselves are smart enough to buy what we can when we have money. But one should not have cleaned us out for fifteen years first—then we could buy things today!

There are rich people who say, "Wealth is a very heavy burden to bear! Let no one wish that he, too, might be encumbered by this burden!" Now one might think that, if wealth is such a heavy burden, they would be glad to give some of it away. That, however, is something they do not want to do, either. And there are foreign statesmen who say, "Colonies are a heavy burden." Yet they do not want to give away any part of this burden! They say, "Colonies have no value at all!" Yet under no circumstances are they willing to restore this "worthless" possession to its rightful owner! And when I talk about "rightful owners," it is in a time and in a world pervaded by the ideals of morality and modesty laid down by the League of Nations. And it was in accordance with these ideals that we Germans once acquired our colonies, but in accordance with different principles—such as, from the moral perspective of the League of Nations, would deserve to be utterly condemned—that we lost them.

Then Hitler addressed military questions:

There is a reason why, at every *Erntedankfest*, I have the Wehrmacht perform exercises for you. You shall all be reminded that we would not be standing here if sword and shield were not standing guard over us. Yes indeed, we have peace only because the new German weapon is being held over it. That gives us peace, that gives us security, and that gives us the prerequisites for doing our job. [—]

The prerequisite for every success, however, is that the will of he who represents the will is also respected. As long as every rank of the German

nation remains subject to one will, any problem can be solved! We have solved them in the past, have we not? But I was only able to solve them because the German Volk was standing behind me! Only because you were marching after me was I able to march ahead!

When I gave the order to occupy the Rhineland last year, the important thing was not that the soldiers were marching, but that the German Volk went along, that the entire nation was backing me. To it you owe the success!

In the course of the speech, Hitler further maintained that he had never made the German Volk a promise he could not keep:

It is so easy to promise people something, but so infinitely difficult to keep one's word. I might well say of myself that I have never promised the German Volk anything I was not able to really deliver. I even think I have delivered more in these five years than I once promised! But if so, only because I succeeded in teaching the German Volk to be reasonable and go along with me!

Had Hitler restricted the scope of his pretentious assertions to issues of domestic policy, one might have disregarded them. However, since he did not desist from making these assertions in the realm of foreign policy, his capability of fulfilling them became an important question. The German people were soon to catch the brunt of the ramifications of Hitler's grandiose assertions. Hitler's summons of the Almighty, who assuredly would not desert him in the end, proved of little use in the face of the harsh realities to come. The closing words of Hitler's final address on the Bückeberg made clear the extent to which he had already succumbed to these delusions:

If we adhere to this path, decent, industrious, and honest, if we do our duty so bravely and loyally, it is my belief that the Lord will help us again and again in the future as well. He does not abandon decent people for any length of time! While He may sometimes put them to the test or send them trials, in the long run He will always allow His sun to shine upon them and ultimately give them His blessing. [—]

If we all stick together in the city and the country, if each and every person decently does his duty in the place he occupies and thinks not only of himself but of his fellow humans as well, then you can trust that there is nothing which could break us asunder. We shall prevail! In the year to come, and in the decades to come!

We have a magnificent sun today. A year ago, we had pouring rain. What next year will bring is something I do not know. But that we will be standing here over and over again, that is something I do know, no matter what the weather! When we meet here again after a year has passed, we will once more be able to pledge anew: the year is over, and once again everything has gone well. Everything has become even more splendid. And we are fortunate to be allowed to live in Germany.

To Our German Reich and our German Volk—*Sieg Heil!*

October 5, 1937

A year later, Hitler no longer stood on the Bückeberg, but led the march of his troops into the Sudetenland. This precluded an *Erntedankfest* celebration in 1938. The war, which was planned to have begun on October 2, 1938, broke out in 1939, making further harvest festivals impossible.

On the occasion of the opening of the new Winterhilfswerk on October 5, Hitler addressed the following appeal to the German Volk:²⁰⁶

Berlin, October 5, 1937

In 1933, the government of the new Germany, confronted with an army of unemployed far exceeding the six-million mark, turned for the first time to the nation in order to help the victims of the vanquished system survive the worst trials of winter. At that time, the German Volk laid the cornerstone for the Winterhilfswerk, the greatest social achievement of all time. In total, the contribution made by the Winterhilfswerk since 1933/34 has amounted to RM 1,490,760,834.

The winter battles of the past years constitute glorious chapters in our Volksgemeinschaft, irrefutable testimony to the success of the National Socialist work of education. The goal in the winter of 1937/38 is to surpass our results to date. German Volk, help me!

The Führer and Reich Chancellor and the entire Reich Government

That night in the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin, the annual drive for the Winterhilfswerk was launched as the “greatest social aid society of all time.” Goebbels spoke first before the 20,000 involved in the effort, reading a report on the foundation’s accomplishments during the past year. Goebbels appeased Hitler’s absurd penchant for lists of figures by presenting a seemingly endless itinerary of items distributed by the organization including such details as: the quintals of potatoes (5,487,019) and coals (21,271,790) distributed; the fact that the Winterhilfswerk had bought up 3,734,752 movie and theater tickets; RM 124,080,304.02 worth of foodstuff and consumer goods, ... [etc., etc.] Once Goebbels had finished his account, Hitler himself took the floor and stated the following right at the beginning of his speech:²⁰⁷

German Volksgenossen!

You have just been given an idea of last year’s accomplishments of the greatest social aid society of all time. It is gigantic in its scope and enormous in the depth of its effects. I believe that the reward for all who are working in this society lies in the success of the work itself.

Further, Hitler declared that the volunteers laboring for the WHW were the only true Christians of action:

Sometimes when I see shabbily dressed girls, shivering with cold themselves, collecting with infinite patience for others who are cold, then I have the feeling that they are all apostles of a certain Christianity! This is a Christianity which can claim for itself as no other can: this is the Christianity of a sincere profession of faith, because behind it stands not the word, but the deed!

With the aid of this tremendous society, countless people are being relieved of the feeling of social abandonment and isolation. Many are thus regaining the firm belief that they are not completely lost and alone in this world, but sheltered in their *Volksgemeinschaft*; that they, too, are being cared for, that they, too, are being thought of and remembered. And beyond that: there is a difference between the theoretical knowledge of socialism and the practical life of socialism. People are not born socialists, but must first be taught how to become them.

Now one statement followed that Hitler had already voiced repeatedly,²⁰⁸ that the contributions made to the Winterhilfswerk represented an “insurance program against lack of political common sense.”

People in the bourgeois era before us insured themselves against everything: against fire, against theft, against hailstorms, against burglary, etc.—but they forgot one kind of insurance, insurance against lack of political madness, insurance against lack of political common sense, that first tears a Volk asunder and then allows it to become powerless to fulfill its lifetasks. And this one omission made all the other types of insurance pointless.

We, however, place at the fore of all types of insurance the insurance of the German *Volksgemeinschaft*! It is for this we are paying our donation, and we know that it will be reimbursed a thousand times over! For as long as this *Volksgemeinschaft* remains inviolate, nothing can threaten us! Therein lies the guarantee for the future not only of the life of the nation, but hence of the existence of every individual as well.

Therefore, it is just to demand from each individual a premium corresponding to his income. Wanting to establish a general lump sum for this premium is a sign of an indecent cast of mind. The little old woman who sacrifices five or ten pfennigs in Moabit or somewhere out in the country casts in more than someone who puts in one hundred or one thousand or perhaps ten thousand marks.²⁰⁹ Had our so-called intellectual classes initiated these premium payments prior to the war, a certain amount of misfortune could later have been avoided.

Hitler closed his speech with the remark that there might be additional sacrifices—though of a different nature—that Fate might ask of the German Volk in the future.

May God forbid that Fate puts us to the utmost test once again. Yet even then—that is something we know—millions of Germans would be willing to

immediately and unconditionally make this last sacrifice to the nation, the eternal Volk. What is this sacrifice we are making today in comparison? Above all, do your duty in being mindful of those millions who once did their duty for all.

On October 15, Hitler delivered an address on the anniversary of the “Day of Coburg,” in which he explained:²¹⁰

At that time, our recipe was: if you do not want to let [us] talk of your own accord, we will use force to make you do it. [—]

That battle of the force of reason versus the democracy of force lasted for two days, and after two days this reason, supported by the will of a thousand German men, came away with the victory! It was thus that the battle for this city became a milestone in the evolution of our Movement. This was the recipe we used throughout the Reich to clear the way for the National Socialist idea and thus to conquer Germany. [—]

Loyalty and obedience, discipline and self-sacrifice: if the German Volk continues to devote itself to these ideals in the future as well, it will solve every problem and master every task!

Hitler concluded:

Back then, millions might still have been able to doubt; yet who can continue today to doubt his Volk, Germany and its future? We old fighters, we know that we have always reached our goal until now! And in the future, Germany will reach its life-goal, too, for our Movement is Germany, and Germany is the National Socialist Movement!

On October 20, Prince Aga Khan III, leader of the Indian Muslims and Imam of the Ishmaelite sect, called upon Hitler in Berchtesgaden. Despite derogatory comments on the traveling representatives of India in *Mein Kampf*,²¹¹ Hitler spoke to Aga Khan in a rather open manner about his future plans: close relations to Austria, settlement of the Sudeten German question, the Danzig problem and the Polish Corridor. “If England gives us a free hand on the continent, we will not meddle in its affairs overseas.”²¹² Hitler considered this proposal to Aga Khan a “most generous one.” Evidently, he hoped it would be relayed to London.

On October 22, Hitler received the Duke and the Duchess of Windsor at the Obersalzberg.²¹³ Prior to his abdication, the Duke had borne the title of Edward VIII, King of Great Britain and Ireland. Hitler was convinced that the Duke of Windsor was sympathetic to the National Socialist cause. However, Paul Schmidt, present at the meeting as interpreter, expressed his reservations regarding Hitler’s conviction in the following manner.²¹⁴

Based on my observations at the talk, it was difficult to discern whether the Duke of Windsor was truly as sympathetic to the National Socialist world view as Hitler fancied because of the apolitical nature of the conversation. In my opinion, there was no indication of such a conviction on the part of the Duke. He did not comment on any political topic, with the exception of expressing admiration for the measures implemented within Germany in the realm of social work.

At the Chancellery on October 28, Hitler received a call from the newly appointed Hungarian Minister Döme Sztójay. The latter presented him with a gift from Horthy, a china set.²¹⁵

That same day marked the fifteenth anniversary of the Fascist march on Rome. On this occasion, Hitler sent Mussolini the following telegram:²¹⁶

In grateful recollection of the days I was allowed to spend in Your Excellency's company in Germany, my thoughts today are specially focused upon the festivities in Fascist Italy.

The entire German Volk today remembers the magnificent march which you led on Rome fifteen years ago to date. This day marked a turning point in the history of Italy as well as the beginning of a new development in European history. To my congratulations, I would like to add my best wishes for your personal welfare, your work in the service of the Italian nation and our mutual endeavors to further culture and peace in Europe.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler dispatched Rudolf Hess to Rome at the head of the delegation representing Germany at the anniversary festivities. A few days later, he was followed by Julius Streicher, whose mission was most likely to update Mussolini on the Jewish question and to advise the Duce on several practical measures proposed by Berlin which aimed at resolving the issue in Italy.

On October 29, Hitler personally called on Goebbels in his Berlin apartment to congratulate him on his fortieth birthday.²¹⁷

October was a crucial month for Hitler. Mussolini's visit erased the last vestiges of doubt with regard to the timing and method he sought to employ in the implementation of his ambitious designs for the future. He had achieved nearly all his political and military goals within the borders of the Reich. In foreign affairs, he now determined to employ force in his drive to conquer "new Lebensraum."

5

It is no coincidence that in these days as well, Hitler decided to leave the remnants of his former private life behind and to sever all ties to the Catholic faith.

A number of Hitler's 'secret speeches' during this time, while not revealing all his inner thoughts, tell us a great deal. The majority of these speeches consisted of little more than hackneyed phrases and concepts Hitler had already presented in earlier speeches and in *Mein Kampf*. Nevertheless, on occasion Hitler dropped certain clues to the "secrets" he harbored, but only when facing the appropriately impressionable audience, such as the Political Leaders or, typically, a group of workers. The Führer reasoned that those in his audience would feel all the more obliged to remain loyal to him once given the honored role of keeper of his secrets.

However, Hitler kept the true "secrets" to himself. Speaking to his closest advisers, he never attempted to veil this fact. Whenever a conversation touched upon a topic he did not care to discuss, he would shroud himself in a cloak of mystery and end the conversation in a manner similar to Jesus Christ when he had said to his disciples: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."²¹⁸

Hitler still proceeded according to his old maxim. In 1932, he had explained it to Lüdecke in the following terms:²¹⁹

I have an old principle, only to say what must be said to him who must know it, and only when he must know it.

A "Basic Directive" issued to the Wehrmacht in 1940²²⁰ articulated this even more pointedly:

No one, no office and no officer may gain knowledge of secret affairs, lest their duty absolutely necessitates this or be informed of either more or earlier than is absolutely necessary.

Late in October and early in November 1937, Hitler deemed it “absolutely necessary” to reveal to a small group his new religious convictions and his plans for a policy of aggression.²²¹ He did this in two ‘secret speeches,’ one in Berlin before the propaganda leaders of the Party, the other before an assembly of the Commanders in Chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht and in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister.²²²

While speaking before the propaganda leaders, Hitler’s topics included the following:²²³

1. He, Hitler, would not live much longer, at least as far as this was accessible to the human mind. In his family, men did not grow old. Also both his parents had died young.

2. It was hence necessary to face the problems which absolutely had to be resolved (Lebensraum) as quickly as possible—so that this would occur while he was still alive. Later generations were not capable of accomplishing this. His person alone was in a position to do this.

3. After long and bitter mental battles, he finally had divorced himself from the religious convictions that still existed from his childhood. “Now I feel as fresh as a colt in the pasture.”

Hitler had quite frankly discussed with Aga Khan on October 20 precisely the direction his foreign policy and military strategy would take him in the near future. He first intended to move into Austria, then enter Czechoslovakia, and from there he would proceed on toward Danzig and the Polish Corridor. A close look at the boundaries of the Third Reich at the time suffices to make clear that in order to pursue the military conquest of new Lebensraum in Eastern Europe (i.e. Poland and Russia), it was imperative to deal with Austria and Czechoslovakia beforehand. If these could not be annexed to Germany, it remained necessary nonetheless to integrate these states in some manner into the Reich’s system of defense.

As far as Austria was concerned, it looked as though it might be possible to annex this country to the Reich by peaceful means. At the very least, it would not be difficult to encourage a National Socialist takeover in Vienna, provided that Mussolini was not opposed to such a plan. As early as January that year, Hitler had sent Göring to Rome in an attempt to feel out how Mussolini would react to such an event.²²⁴ When Göring had broached the subject, Mussolini had violently shaken his head in dissent.²²⁵ Since then, however, relations between Germany and Italy had markedly improved, particularly in the wake of Mussolini’s visit to Germany. It appeared as though Italy had finally

given up on Austria. It was possible as well that Italy would no longer, as it had in July of 1934, threaten to forcibly resist such a venture on the part of Germany. The fact that Hitler still doubted Italy's stance is revealed by the exuberance with which he thanked Mussolini on March 13, 1938.²²⁶

On the other hand, Hitler was quite confident that he would be able to take Austria without bloodshed. He refrained from activating "Case Otto" and from issuing any concrete orders to the military.²²⁷ However, his preparations for the invasion of Czechoslovakia clearly envisioned a military invasion, as detailed in "Case Green." Later, in "Case White," he would proceed in a similar manner prior to preparing for the attack upon Poland. In Austria, Hitler was determined to resort to force only if a peaceful resolution eluded him. However, if the situation deteriorated and the circumstances necessitated a military intervention, Hitler knew he could rely upon his talent for improvisation.

However, because he remained a faithful believer in his thesis on the conquest of new Lebensraum, Hitler considered no option other than the use of brute force in the form of a military intervention, i.e. war. The type of life-and-death struggle he envisioned entailed bloodshed by its very nature. In *Mein Kampf*²²⁸ he already had expressed this theory unambiguously. The possibility that Czechoslovakia might voluntarily cede the Sudeten territories to Germany never entered his mind. The concept of the basic human right of all people to "self-determination," which he would invoke so frequently the next year, merely served as a means to an end. For him, the idea was a marvelous justification for a military intervention in Czechoslovakia. He did not believe that the League of Nations, or any other international body, was capable of enforcing the concept of "self-determination," a principle which he derided as the "soft" principle undermining the League's effectiveness.

Hitler's belief that war with Czechoslovakia was certain led him to foster the development of an international situation conducive to such an armed intervention. To this end, he considered the alliance with Italy—extended to a "world-encompassing triangle"²²⁹ Berlin-Rome-Tokyo—to be of primary importance. Further, the continued neutrality of Poland was essential. Indeed, Germany would maintain friendly relations with the Polish Government until it, too, became a victim of Hitler's expansionism.

Prior to revealing his true intentions to the generals, Hitler thought it necessary to further clarify relations with Poland and Italy. On

November 4, he sent Ribbentrop to Rome to add the finishing touches to an agreement bringing Italian membership in the Anti-Comintern Pact. In all likelihood this paper had been prepared during Mussolini's visit.²³⁰

A day later, Hitler signed a declaration pertaining to the treatment of the Polish minority in Germany.²³¹ This document mirrored the identical Polish Government's publication on the same day concerning the German minority in its country. On the occasion, Hitler received at the Chancellery representatives of the Polish Association in Germany, namely, Dr. Jan Kaczmarek, Stefan Szcepaniak, and Dr. Bruno von Openkowski. At this meeting Hitler explained the following in a short address:

The concurrent German-Polish declaration on the mutual protection of each country's foreign ethnic minorities which is being published today by both countries shall serve to improve and reinforce the friendly relations between the two peoples. The practical implementation of the guidelines this declaration contains can make a significant contribution toward achieving this goal.

The efforts of the Reich Government are aimed at creating a cohabitation of harmony and inner peace between the Polish ethnic minority and the German national populace.

I would like to point out that the intention of the Reich Government to provide bread and work for every citizen of the Reich also applies and has been put into practice as regards members of the Polish minority. In an age of grave unemployment and grave privations to which members of the German ethnic minorities in Europe are still exposed to a great extent, the Polish minority is profiting in every way from the economic recovery of the Reich; the same progress is being made in the cultural activity of the Polish minority, as is demonstrated in its many-faceted organizational institutions and most recently in the erection of a Polish secondary school in Germany. The Polish people in Germany must, however, constantly bear in mind that the granting of protective rights entails both loyally fulfilling the obligations to be performed for the State and abiding by the laws.

The protection of the German minority in Poland, above all securing its right to be given work and to remain on its ancestral soil, will also contribute toward safeguarding the Polish minority in Germany. The high objective of the pact I concluded earlier with the great Polish Chief of State, Marshal Józef Piłsudski, has come closer to becoming a reality by virtue of this mutual German-Polish declaration on the minorities question.

Thereafter, Hitler granted an interview to the Polish Ambassador Lipski in which he expressed his satisfaction with the finalized German-Polish Declaration on the Minorities Question. In the conversation with Lipski, the problem of Danzig again was brought up.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* commented:²³²

Right at the beginning, there was agreement that the Danzig question should not perturb German-Polish relations.

This was a rather nebulous rendition of Hitler's actual words. According to Lipski, Hitler twice declared: "Danzig is bound up with Poland."²³³ At this point, Hitler was only interested in assuring the Polish of his friendship and doubtlessly would have been willing to make even more far-reaching concessions. Indeed, why should he not, since he never felt obliged to keep his word.

Hitler had taken all the precautions he believed vital to his Czechoslovakian enterprise. With Italian membership in the Anti-Comintern Pact assured and the German-Polish Declaration on the Minorities Question signed, Hitler finally felt ready to ask the highest ranking generals of the Wehrmacht (Blomberg, Fritsch, Göring, Raeder) and Foreign Minister Neurath to a meeting at the Chancellery. On November 5, Hitler delivered an address to the generals in a closed session. It lasted from 4:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The only surviving record of the discussion are the notes taken at the meeting by Hitler's adjutant Friedrich Hossbach, who transcribed them on November 10, 1937.²³⁴ The "Hossbach minutes," discovered by the Allies at the end of the war, played a key role in the proceedings before the international Military Tribunal in Nuremberg.²³⁵

Of course, these notes only give a rough sketch of the thoughts the Führer entertained at the time. Naturally, at a conference of such length, Hitler preceded his actual talk with a "party narrative." This time it lasted nearly an hour, its duration serving the purpose of lowering the psychological resistance of the audience. As usual, Hitler gave a detailed account of his achievements prior and subsequent to his accession to power.

He then discussed at great length Germany's economic and demographic policies. The exigencies of the situation led Hitler to speak of the necessity of conquering new colonies to serve as Lebensraum for the German people. Here he drifted into a description of the weakness of Great Britain, asserting that the country was no longer capable of defending the far reaches of its empire.

Finally Hitler approached the heart of the matter and declared that the "German question" could be resolved only by the use of force. The only questions remaining were "where" and "when" this was to happen. He declared that it was his "inalterable decision" to resolve the

matter of territorial acquisition at the very latest in the period 1943 through 1945. Hitler explained that he had cited this date because the present, modern German armament would then start to become obsolete (case 1). Moreover, the “secrecy of *‘special weapons’* (*Sonderwaffen*) could not be preserved forever.”

However, he stated that, should an opportune moment arise, it might become necessary to act at an earlier date. Such an opportunity might come about as a result of a civil war in France (case 2). Another advantageous situation might consist of an armed entanglement, in which an Anglo-French alliance opposed Italy. A similar conflict could develop as an outgrowth of the tensions in the Mediterranean (case 3).

Hitler thought the latter scenario to be the most likely, and predicted that if this were the case such a war would break out by the summer of 1938. For Germany, this would signal a magnificent opportunity to assault both Czechoslovakia and Austria.²³⁶

In any event, Hitler maintained that the attack on Czechoslovakia would have to proceed “with lightning speed” (*blitzartig schnell*). Military intervention need not be feared since Great Britain could not risk entanglement in armed conflict, and undoubtedly, the French would follow suit.

Hossbach’s minutes are reproduced verbatim below:

MEMORANDUM

Berlin, November 10, 1937

Minutes of the conference in the Reich Chancellery, Berlin,
November 5, 1937, from 4:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Present:

The Führer and Reich Chancellor,
Field Marshal von Blomberg, Minister of War,
Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, Commander in Chief, Army,
Admiral Dr. h.c. Raeder, Commander in Chief, Navy,
Colonel General Göring, Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe,
Freiherr von Neurath, Foreign Minister,
Colonel Hossbach.

The Führer began by stating that the subject of the present conference was of such importance that its discussion would, in other countries, certainly be a matter for a full Cabinet meeting, but he—the Führer—had rejected the idea of making it a subject of discussion before the wider circle of the Reich Cabinet just because of the importance of the matter. His exposition to follow was the fruit of thorough deliberation and the experiences of his 4 1/2 years of power. He wished to explain to the gentlemen present his basic ideas concerning the opportunities for the development of our position in the field of foreign affairs

and its requirements, and he asked, in the interests of a long-term German policy, that his exposition be regarded, in the event of his death, as his last will and testament.

The Führer then continued:

The aim of German policy was to make secure and to preserve the racial community (*Volksmasse*) and to enlarge it. It was therefore a question of space.

The German racial community comprised over 85 million people and, because of their number and the narrow limits of habitable space in Europe, constituted a tightly packed racial core such as was not to be met in any other country and such as implied the right to a greater living space than in the case of other peoples. If, territorially speaking, there existed no political result corresponding to this German racial core, that was a consequence of centuries of historical development, and in the continuance of these political conditions lay the greatest danger to the preservation of the German race at its present peak. To arrest the decline of Germanism (*Deutschtum*) in Austria and Czechoslovakia was as little possible as to maintain the present level in Germany itself. Instead of increase, sterility was setting in, and in its train disorders of a social character must arise in course of time, since political and ideological ideas remain effective only so long as they furnish the basis for the realization of the essential vital demands of a people. Germany's future was therefore wholly conditional upon the solving of the need for space, and such a solution could be sought, of course, only for a foreseeable period of about one to three generations.

Before turning to the question of solving the need for space, it had to be considered whether a solution holding promise for the future was to be reached by means of autarchy or by means of an increased participation in world economy.

Autarchy:

Achievement only possible under strict National Socialist leadership of the State, which is assumed; accepting its achievement as possible, the following could be stated as results:

A. In the field of raw materials only limited, not total, autarchy.

1) In regard to coal, so far as it could be considered as a source of raw materials, autarchy was possible.

2) But even as regards ores, the position was much more difficult. Iron requirements can be met from home resources and similarly with light metals, but with other raw materials—copper, tin—this was not the case.

3) Synthetic textile requirements can be met from home resources to the limit of timber supplies. A permanent solution impossible.

4) Edible fats—possible.

B. In the field of food the question of autarchy was to be answered by a flat "No."

With the general rise in the standard of living compared with that of 30 to 40 years ago, there has gone hand in hand an increased demand and an increased home consumption even on the part of the producers, the farmers.

The fruits of the increased agricultural production had all gone to meet the increased demand, and so did not represent an absolute production increase. A further increase in production by making greater demands on the soil, which already, in consequence of the use of artificial fertilizers, was showing signs of exhaustion, was hardly possible, and it was therefore certain that even with the maximum increase in production, participation in world trade was unavoidable. The not inconsiderable expenditure of foreign exchange to insure food supplies by imports, even when harvests were good, grew to catastrophic proportions with bad harvests. The possibility of a disaster grew in proportion to the increase in population, in which, too, the excess of births of 560,000 annually produced, as a consequence, an even further increase in bread consumption, since a child was a greater bread consumer than an adult.

It was not possible over the long run, in a continent enjoying a practically common standard of living, to meet the food supply difficulties by lowering that standard and by rationalization. Since, with the solving of the unemployment problem, the maximum consumption level had been reached, some minor modifications in our home agricultural production might still, no doubt, be possible, but no fundamental alteration was possible in our basic food position. Thus autarchy was untenable in regard both to food and to the economy as a whole.

Participation in world economy.

To this there were limitations which we were unable to remove. The establishment of Germany's position on a secure and sound foundation was obstructed by market fluctuations, and commercial treaties afforded no guarantee for actual execution. In particular it had to be remembered that since the World War, those very countries which had formerly been food exporters had become industrialized. We were living in an age of economic empires in which the primitive urge to colonization was again manifesting itself; in the cases of Japan and Italy economic motives underlay the urge for expansion, and with Germany, too, economic need would supply the stimulus. For countries outside the great economic empires, opportunities for economic expansion were severely impeded.

The boom in world economy caused by the economic effects of rearmament could never form the basis of a sound economy over a long period, and the latter was obstructed above all also by the economic disturbances resulting from Bolshevism. There was a pronounced military weakness in those states which depended for their existence on foreign trade. As our foreign trade was carried on over the sea routes dominated by Britain, it was more a question of security of transport than one of foreign exchange, which revealed, in time of war, the full weakness of our food situation. The only remedy, and one which might appear to us as visionary, lay in the acquisition of greater living space—a quest which has at all times been the origin of the formation of states and of the migration of peoples. That this quest met with no interest at Geneva or among the satiated nations was understandable. If, then, we accept the security of our food situation as the principal question, the space necessary to insure it can only be sought in

Europe, not, as in the liberal-capitalist view, in the exploitation of colonies. It is not a matter of acquiring population but of gaining space for agricultural use. Moreover, areas producing raw materials can be more usefully sought in Europe in immediate proximity to the Reich than overseas; the solution thus obtained must suffice for one or two generations. Whatever else might prove necessary later must be left to succeeding generations to deal with. The development of great world political constellations progressed but slowly after all, and the German people with its strong racial core would find the most favorable prerequisites for such achievement in the heart of the continent of Europe. The history of all ages—the Roman Empire and the British Empire—had proved that expansion could only be carried out by breaking down resistance and taking risks; setbacks were inevitable. There had never in former times been spaces without a master, and there were none today; the attacker always comes up against a possessor.

The question for Germany was simple: where could she achieve the greatest gain at the lowest cost?

German policy had to reckon with two hate-inspired antagonists, Britain and France, to whom a German colossus in the center of Europe was a thorn in the flesh, and both countries were opposed to any further strengthening of Germany's position either in Europe or overseas; in support of this opposition they were able to count on the agreement of all their political parties. Both countries saw in the establishment of German military bases overseas a threat to their own communications, a safeguarding of German commerce, and, as a consequence, a strengthening of Germany's position in Europe.

Because of opposition of the Dominions, Britain could not cede any of her colonial possessions to us. After England's loss of prestige through the passing of Abyssinia into Italian possession, the return of East Africa was not to be expected. British concessions could at best be expressed in an offer to satisfy our colonial demands by the appropriation of colonies which were not British possessions—e.g., Angola. French concessions would probably take a similar line.

Serious discussion of the question of the return of colonies to us could only be considered at a moment when Britain was in difficulties and the German Reich armed and strong. The Führer did not share the view that the Empire was unshakable. Opposition to the Empire was to be found less in the countries conquered than among her competitors. The British Empire and the Roman Empire could not be compared in respect of permanence; the latter was not confronted by any powerful political rival of significance after the Punic Wars. It was only the disintegrating effect of Christianity, and the symptoms of age which appear in every country, which caused ancient Rome to succumb to the onslaught of the Germans.

Beside the British Empire there existed today a number of states stronger than she. The British motherland was able to protect her colonial possessions not by her own power, but only in alliance with other states. How, for instance, could Britain alone defend Canada against attack by America, or her Far Eastern interests against attack by Japan!

The emphasis on the British Crown as the symbol of the unity of the Empire was already an admission that, in the long run, the Empire could not maintain its position by power politics. Significant indications of this were:

- (a) The struggle of Ireland for independence.
- (b) The constitutional struggles in India, where Britain's half-measures had given to the Indians the opportunity of using later on as a weapon against Britain, the half-fulfillment of her promises regarding a constitution.
- (c) The weakening by Japan of Britain's position in the Far East.
- (d) The rivalry in the Mediterranean with Italy who—under the spell of her history, driven by necessity and led by a genius—was expanding her power position, and thus was inevitably coming more and more into conflict with British interests. The outcome of the Abyssinian War was a loss of prestige for Britain which Italy was trying to accelerate by stirring up trouble in the Mohammedan world.

To sum up, it could be stated that, with 45 million Britons, in spite of its theoretical soundness, the position of the Empire could not in the long run be maintained by power politics. The ratio of the population of the Empire to that of the motherland of 9:1, was a warning to us not, in our territorial expansion, to allow the foundation constituted by the numerical strength of our own people to become too weak.

France's position was more favorable than that of Britain. The French Empire was better placed territorially; the inhabitants of her colonial possessions represented a supplement to her military strength. But France was going to be confronted with internal political difficulties. In a nation's life about 10 percent of its span is taken up by parliamentary forms of government and about 90 percent by authoritarian forms. Today, nonetheless, Britain, France, Russia, and the smaller states adjoining them, must be included as factors (*Machtfaktoren*) in our political calculations.

Germany's problem could only be solved by means of force and this was never without attendant risk. The campaigns of Frederick the Great for Silesia and Bismarck's wars against Austria and France had involved unheard-of risk, and the swiftness of the Prussian action in 1870 kept Austria from entering the war. If one accepts as the basis of the following exposition the resort to force with its attendant risks, then there remain still to be answered the questions "when" and "how." In this matter there were three cases (*Fälle*) to be dealt with:

Case 1: Period 1943-1945

After this date only a change for the worse, from our point of view, could be expected.

The equipment of the Army, Navy and Luftwaffe, as well as the formation of the officer corps, was nearly completed. Equipment and armament were modern; in further delay there lay the danger of their obsolescence. In particular, the secrecy of "special weapons" (*Sonderwaffen*) could not be preserved forever. The recruiting of reserves was limited to current age groups; further drafts from older untrained age groups were no longer available.

Our relative strength would decrease in relation to the rearmament which would by then have been carried out by the rest of the world. If we did not act by 1943-45, any year could, in consequence of a lack of reserves, produce the food crisis, to cope with which the necessary foreign exchange was not available, and this must be regarded as the "waning point of the regime." Besides, the world was expecting our attack and was increasing its counter-measures from year to year. It was while the rest of the world was still preparing its defenses (*sich abriegeln*) that we were obliged to take the offensive.

Nobody knew today what the situation would be in the years 1943-45. One thing only was certain, that we could not wait longer.

On the one hand there was the great Wehrmacht, and the necessity of maintaining it at its present level, the aging of the movement and its leaders; and on the other, the prospect of a lowering of the standard of living and of a limitation of the birth rate, which left no choice but to act. If the Führer was still living, it was his unalterable resolve to solve Germany's problem of space at the latest by 1943-45. The necessity for action before 1943-45 would arise in cases 2 and 3.

Case 2:

If internal strife in France should develop into such a domestic crisis as to absorb the French Army completely and render it incapable of use for war against Germany, then the time for action against the Czechs had come.

Case 3:

If France is so embroiled by a war with another state that she cannot "proceed" against Germany.

For the improvement of our politico-military position our first objective, in the event of our being embroiled in war, must be to overthrow Czechoslovakia and Austria simultaneously in order to remove the threat to our flank in any possible operation against the West. In a conflict with France it was hardly to be regarded as likely that the Czechs would declare war on us on the very same day as France. The desire to join in the war would, however, increase among the Czechs in proportion to any weakening on our part and then her participation could clearly take the form of an attack toward Silesia, toward the north or toward the west.

If the Czechs were overthrown and a common German-Hungarian frontier achieved, a neutral attitude on the part of Poland could be the more certainly counted on in the event of a Franco-German conflict. Our agreements with Poland only retained their force as long as Germany's strength remained unshaken. In the event of German setbacks a Polish action against East Prussia, and possibly against Pomerania and Silesia as well, had to be reckoned with.

On the assumption of a development of the situation leading to action on our part as planned, in the years 1943-45, the attitude of France, Britain, Italy, Poland, and Russia could probably be estimated as follows:

Actually, the Führer believed that almost certainly Britain, and probably France as well, had already tacitly written off the Czechs and were reconciled

to the fact that this question would be cleared up in due course by Germany. Difficulties connected with the Empire, and the prospect of being once more entangled in a protracted European war, were decisive considerations for Britain against participation in a war against Germany. Britain's attitude would certainly not be without influence on that of France. An attack by France without British support, and with the prospect of the offensive being brought to a standstill on our western fortifications, was hardly probable. Nor was a French march through Belgium and Holland without British support to be expected; this also was a course not to be contemplated by us in the event of a conflict with France, because it would certainly entail the hostility of Britain. It would of course be necessary to maintain a strong defense (*eine Abriegelung*) on our western frontier during the prosecution of our attack on the Czechs and Austria. And in this connection it had to be remembered that the defense measures of the Czechs were growing in strength from year to year, and that the actual worth of the Austrian Army also was increasing in the course of time. Even though the populations concerned, especially of Czechoslovakia, were not sparse, the annexation of Czechoslovakia and Austria would mean an acquisition of foodstuffs for 5 to 6 million people, on the assumption that the compulsory emigration of 2 million people from Czechoslovakia and 1 million people from Austria was practicable. The incorporation of these two States with Germany meant, from the politico-military point of view, a substantial advantage because it would mean shorter and better frontiers, the freeing of forces for other purposes, and the possibility of creating new units up to a level of about 12 divisions, that is, 1 new division per million inhabitants.

Italy was not expected to object to the elimination of the Czechs, but it was impossible at the moment to estimate what her attitude on the Austrian question would be; that depended essentially upon whether the Duce were still alive.

The degree of surprise and the swiftness of our action were decisive factors for Poland's attitude. Poland—with Russia at her rear—will have little inclination to engage in war against a victorious Germany.

Military intervention by Russia must be countered by the swiftness of our operations; however, whether such an intervention was a practical contingency at all was, in view of Japan's attitude, more than doubtful.

Should case 2 arise—the crippling of France by civil war—the situation thus created by the elimination of the most dangerous opponent must be seized upon whenever it occurs for the blow against the Czechs.

The Führer saw case 3 coming definitely nearer; it might emerge from the present tensions in the Mediterranean, and he was resolved to take advantage of it whenever it happened, even as early as 1938.

In the light of past experiences, the Führer did not see any early end to the hostilities in Spain. If one considered the length of time which Franco's offensives had taken up till now, it was fully possible that the war would continue another 3 years. On the other hand, a 100 percent victory for Franco was not desirable either, from the German point of view; rather were we interested in a continuance of the war and in the keeping up of the tension

in the Mediterranean. Franco in undisputed possession of the Spanish Peninsula precluded the possibility of any further intervention on the part of the Italians or of their continued occupation of the Balearic Islands. As our interest lay more in the prolongation of the war in Spain, it must be the immediate aim of our policy to strengthen Italy's rear with a view to her remaining in the Balearics. But the permanent establishment of the Italians on the Balearics would be intolerable both to France and Britain, and might lead to a war of France and England against Italy—a war in which Spain, should she be entirely in the hands of the Whites, might make her appearance on the side of Italy's enemies. The probability of Italy's defeat in such a war was slight, for the road from Germany was open for the supplementing of her raw materials. The Führer pictured the military strategy for Italy thus: on her western frontier with France she would remain on the defensive, and carry on the war against France from Libya against the French North African colonial possessions.

As a landing by Franco-British troops on the coast of Italy could be discounted, and a French offensive over the Alps against northern Italy would be very difficult and would probably come to a halt before the strong Italian fortifications, the crucial point (*Schwerpunkt*) of the operations lay in North Africa. The threat to French lines of communication by the Italian Fleet would to a great extent cripple the transportation of forces from North Africa to France, so that France would have only home forces at her disposal on the frontiers with Italy and Germany.

If Germany made use of this war to settle the Czech and Austrian questions, it was to be assumed that Britain—herself at war with Italy—would decide not to act against Germany. Without British support, a warlike action by France against Germany was not to be expected.

The time for our attack on the Czechs and Austria must be made dependent on the course of the Anglo-French-Italian war and would not necessarily coincide with the commencement of military operations by these three States. Nor had the Führer in mind military agreements with Italy, but wanted, while retaining his own independence of action, to exploit this favorable situation, which would not occur again, to begin and carry through the campaign against the Czechs. This descent upon the Czechs would have to be carried out with "lightning speed."

Evidently, Hitler was convinced that his disclosure of these revelations meant that he was doing the German generals present a favor. Politically, he had suffered numerous disappointments at their hands in the past. The events of 1923 had forced upon him the realization that the generals would much rather bow to the despised legal government in place than cast their lot with a nationalist revolutionary. Moreover, Hitler greatly disliked the elitist attitude displayed by the officers' corps. Nevertheless, throughout, Hitler had retained his firm belief that the generals shared his convictions in their areas of expertise—at the least in military affairs. He could not fathom

that historic, ethical and religious factors played a role in their considerations. Rather, he saw them as “bloodhounds” just waiting to be unleashed to pounce upon the perceived or actual adversary.²³⁷

Up to this point, this understanding had been central to Hitler’s military policy formation. He had conspired in the 1934 murder of some of his closest friends within the SA, sacrificing them in an attempt to appease the generals. And what happened now? The generals failed to welcome his plan for the rape of Czechoslovakia with the proper enthusiasm! The Führer had not anticipated such a reaction. Moreover, he found himself faced by Blomberg and Fritsch, who rose to voice doubts concerning the military analysis presented by their Supreme Commander. Evidently, hours of exposition had not dulled their sense of perception. Neither of the two officers was persuaded by Hitler’s argument that France would remain neutral in the event of a German offensive against Czechoslovakia. Both military men voiced concern about a strategy based upon such a notion. Fritsch was so upset by Hitler’s exposition that he offered to delay his November 10 vacation. Hitler even had to reassure him by insisting that the entire issue was not so immediate!

Subsequently, Hitler continued to insist that neither France nor Great Britain would intervene in the event of a German move against Czechoslovakia. For his part, Neurath doubted the possibility of a war between Italy and a coalition of French-British forces at any time in the immediate future. Raeder made no contribution to the debate. Ever since 1932, Raeder had been a staunch National Socialist and thus knew only too well that he was expected to offer no opposition to Hitler’s position. On the other hand, Göring immediately carried Hitler’s thoughts further and suggested that Germany curtail its involvement in Spain. Hossbach described the discussion as follows:

In appraising the situation Field Marshal von Blomberg and Colonel General von Fritsch repeatedly emphasized the necessity that Britain and France must not become our enemies, and stated that the French Army would not be so committed by the war with Italy that France could not at the same time enter the field with forces superior to ours on our western frontier. General von Fritsch estimated the probable French forces available for use on the Alpine frontier at approximately twenty divisions, so that a strong French superiority would still remain on the western frontier, with the role, according to the German view, of invading the Rhineland. In this matter, moreover, the advanced state of French defense preparations (*Mobilimachung*) must be taken into particular account, and it must be remembered apart from the insignificant value of our present fortifications—on which Field Marshal

von Blomberg laid special emphasis—that the four motorized divisions intended for the West were still more or less incapable of movement. In regard to our offensive toward the southeast, Field Marshal von Blomberg drew particular attention to the strength of the Czech fortifications, which had acquired by now a structure like a Maginot Line and which would gravely hamper our attack.

General von Fritsch mentioned that this was the very purpose of a study which he had ordered made this winter, namely, to examine the possibility of conducting operations against the Czechs with special reference to overcoming the Czech fortification system; the General further expressed his opinion that under existing circumstances he must give up his plan to go abroad on his leave, which was due to begin on November 10. The Führer dismissed this idea on the ground that the possibility of a conflict need not yet be regarded as so imminent. To the Foreign Minister's objection that an Anglo-French-Italian conflict was not yet within such a measurable distance as the Führer seemed to assume, the Führer put the summer of 1938 as the date which seemed to him possible for this. In reply to considerations offered by Field Marshal von Blomberg and General von Fritsch regarding the attitude of Britain and France, the Führer repeated his previous statements that he was convinced of Britain's non-participation, and therefore he did not believe in the probability of belligerent action by France against Germany. Should the Mediterranean conflict under discussion lead to a general mobilization in Europe, then we must immediately begin action against the Czechs. On the other hand, should the powers not engaged in the war declare themselves disinterested, then Germany would have to adopt a similar attitude to this for the time being.

Colonel General Göring thought that, in view of the Führer's statement, we should consider liquidating our military undertakings in Spain. The Führer agrees to this with the limitation that he thinks he should reserve a decision for a proper moment.

The second part of the conference was concerned with concrete questions of armament.

Hossbach

Certified correct: Colonel (General Staff)

Hitler was deeply disappointed in Blomberg and Fritsch for advocating such contrary views. No longer did he refer to them as "my dear Field Marshal" and "my dear Colonel General." He realized that, given their apprehensions, he could not rely on them for the implementation of his plans. He decided to rid himself of them at the next occasion. Neurath also incurred Hitler's displeasure for his attitude and the Führer decided to remove him from office as well. The ministers in Hitler's Government could voice objections to his policies, but only if they were willing to resign from their positions as a consequence. If they did not comply voluntarily, as had Hugenberg

and Eltz von Rübenach, then obviously they required a little assistance in the process.

There have been attempts to discredit the "Hossbach minutes." These attempts are based on two facts. First, Hossbach did not write down his recollections of the meeting and the ensuing discussion until five days later. Furthermore, the minutes bear no signature by Hitler attesting to the validity of their content. However, the second criticism is weakened by the fact that Hitler's signature on such documents was neither required nor part of any standard bureaucratic procedure.

Those who question the validity of the Hossbach minutes aim to undermine the evidence which implies that, as early as November 5, Hitler had already determined to use force in both Czechoslovakia and Austria. However, the further course of events lends credibility to Hossbach's recollections. First of all, those members of Hitler's military staff who had, as Hossbach detailed, opposed his radical approach at the conference were shortly thereafter dismissed from office.²³⁸ Secondly, the credibility of the Hossbach minutes is further reinforced by the fact that the later military build-up along Germany's southeastern border reflects the policy aims expressed in the meeting. Finally, in the months immediately preceding the annexation of Austria, Hitler repeatedly articulated in public the aims listed in Hossbach's notes.

According to public statements by the Gauleiter of Mainfranken, Otto Hellmuth, in Würzburg on March 4, 1938 (i.e. even prior to Schuschnigg's Innsbruck appeal) Hitler had contemplated the following:²³⁹

He [Hellmuth] had just returned from a conference with Hitler in Berlin. The Führer had explained to him that for the time being the goals of the Reichskolonialbund (Reich Colonial League)—namely the conquest of colonies in Africa—were a dead issue. The resolution of the difficult situation faced in both Austria and Czechoslovakia had complete priority. Hitler was determined to resolve the matter "one way or another."

Hellmuth added that he naturally could not expand upon these comments by Hitler. Nonetheless, with a sweeping gesture he reassured his audience that the problems would be resolved in either "one way" (by peaceful means) or "another." It was obvious to every one of Hellmuth's listeners that the second option meant war. The general public, however, was left in the dark regarding the Führer's aspirations during the last two months of 1937. With the exception of an increase in the number of references to the question of Lebensraum in his speeches, there were no signs that Hitler had resolved for war.

On November 6, Italy acceded to the Anti-Comintern Pact thereby formally binding itself to Japan and Germany. On this occasion, Hitler sent Mussolini the following telegram:

On this day of Italy's accedence to the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact, I warmly welcome the Fascist Government as a new member of this community of nations. It is with great joy that I welcome the fact that Italy now has formalized its stance with Germany and Japan in the mutual defense against the corrosive forces of world Bolshevism which imperils the inner security of each nation.

Adolf Hitler

That day Hitler also wired a telegram to Japan's Prime Minister, Prince Konoye. Its content is reproduced below:²⁴⁰

On this day of Italy's accedence to the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact, I wish to express to Your Excellency the great joy that yet another member has been gained for the community of peoples united in their stance in the defense of their inner security against the corrosive forces of world Bolshevism which imperils each nation.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler did not claim to fear "world Bolshevism" himself. In his speech before the generals a day earlier, he had not mentioned any such danger, but spoken mostly of the "two hate-inspired antagonists" (*Hassgegner*) Britain and France. The Anti-Comintern Pact, in Hitler's eyes, actually aimed not at Bolshevism. He had pushed for the alliances with Italy and Japan as part of his "tactics of slaps in the face" to shock the British into a more "reasoned" approach, in other words, to become completely subservient to his will. Ribbentrop made no effort to disguise the anti-British nature of the Pact, stating to Mussolini that "the Pact will be interpreted as the alliance of the aggressive nations against the satisfied countries." According to Ciano, the Duce added that "American ill-humour will be increased by an agreement with Japan, which is considered, for no apparent reason, to be the United States' traditional and potential enemy."²⁴¹

On November 6, Hitler also toured the International Hunting Exhibition in Berlin.²⁴² Two days later, he traveled to Munich to honor with his presence the commemorative celebration of the 1923 Putsch. In the Bürgerbräukeller on the evening of November 8, he explained the following in an address to the Old Fighters:²⁴³

When I took over the leadership five years ago, Germany was the least respected state in the world—but today every German can travel abroad with

his head held high in pride; he no longer has to be ashamed of being a German!

Today Germany is no longer isolated! We all share the pleasant confidence that the isolation which surrounded us for more than fifteen years is now over. And not by virtue of some irrelevant participation in meaningless international committees, but by virtue of the significance which Germany has once more gained for itself.

For us, this significance gives rise to new relations which one might not view as compatible with the ideology of the League of Nations. In any case, they are compatible with us and with our interests! And they are compatible with the interests of the other peoples who have entered into these relations with us! The most dependable guarantor of the permanence of such relations lies not in some kind of slogans, but in the sober and clear knowledge of expediency. It was because of this expediency that three states have come together today. First a European axis, and now a great international political triangle! I am of the conviction that the attempts of our old adversary²⁴⁴ to spread unrest throughout the world will be hampered to the very same extent to which this triangle becomes stabilized. For it is comprised not of three powerless structures, but of three states which are prepared and resolved to exercise their rights and look after their vital interests with determination.

The great extent to which the German Volk has granted its approval to this policy—in an inner sense as well—is something we experienced but a few weeks ago in Germany, when the great representative of a nation we call our friend paid a visit to Germany for the first time. There we witnessed that the peoples can indeed grant their warm approval when genuine interests are being supported. And just as we in Germany were enthusiastic and happy about this visit, the Italian people, too, was happy and enthusiastic about its course and its outcome.

Hitler continued to state that by striking four days prior to “the other side” on November 8, 1923, he had spared Germany a “certain catastrophe.” Asserting that this had been the correct manner in which to proceed at the time, Hitler proclaimed that it had been “the greatest good fortune in his life” that the Putsch of 1923 had failed in the end. This particular assertion complemented his September 13 declaration that Germany’s loss in the World War had been to its good fortune.

That the attempt failed after all back then was perhaps the greatest good fortune in my life and the greatest good fortune for the German nation! What happened then had to happen! In any case, the fragmentation of Germany had been prevented. For in order to come to terms with us, one needed the help of Northern Germany. This prevented the break. And they were not able to silence us then, and instead our ideas were hurled all over Germany as in an explosion. My decision was thus justified!

On November 9, the usual ceremonies took place: the march to the Feldherrnhalle and from there to the pantheons at the Königsplatz.

Blomberg certainly could not have known that this would be the last time he would march alongside Hitler, a man whose unforgiving wrath he had incurred only four days earlier. But Hitler's disappointment with Blomberg was compensated for by the successful exchange of telegrams with Ludendorff on that November 9.²⁴⁵ By sending him the telegram below to his home at Lake Starnberg, Hitler had finally managed to break through the General's usual reserve:

To His Excellency, retired infantry General Ludendorff, Tutzing
Your Excellency!

On the occasion of today's commemoration, my thoughts turn to you with great appreciation and reverence for your dedicated service in the elevation of the German nation.

With my heartfelt best wishes,

Adolf Hitler

Ludendorff's reply read:

I thank you for your thoughtfulness and your heartfelt wishes. My thoughts return fondly to our shared struggle as we sought together to foster Germany's uplifting. I send my best wishes for your activities in the elevation of our Volk.

Yours, Ludendorff

At midnight, Hitler spoke before recruits of the SS Verfügungs-truppe²⁴⁶ in front of the Feldherrnhalle. Before they took their oath of loyalty, he reminded them of their duty to sacrifice.

You shall be the pillars of the honor and prestige of our Volk, and everywhere and at every hour shall you be mindful of this. Then all the sacrifices which our struggle has required until now will not have been for naught.

For from them has risen forth what innumerable German generations have yearned for in vain: one Volk, one Reich, one national honor, and a willingness to protect and defend this honor, if necessary, with one's life.

In Berchtesgaden on November 19, Hitler received the Lord President and future British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax and conferred with him at great length.²⁴⁷ Halifax had come to Germany to see the international Hunting Exhibition but had been asked by Prime Minister Chamberlain to sound out Hitler on several political issues as well. He did not submit any new British suggestions to Hitler for consideration. Chamberlain responded to Hitler's repeated calls for colonies with a desire to receive more concrete demands from Germany. However, Hitler had only used the demand for the return of Germany's overseas possessions as a tactical device. By no means

was he willing to substitute African soil for the coveted new Lebensraum in Eastern Europe. Therefore, Hitler did his utmost to avoid committing himself on the subject. He much preferred to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia and Austria instead and declared:

Again and again the Western Powers are placing obstacles in my way in Southeastern Europe, and ulterior political motives are being imputed to me that I do not have.

Halifax replied that Great Britain was willing to investigate any solution proposed, as long as this solution did not entail the use of force. This offer was also extended to the cases of Austria, the Polish Corridor, and Danzig.

As the interpreter Schmidt recalled later, Hitler put on a great show, self-confidently striving to reassure the Englishman that, no matter what the circumstances, Germany would not resort to force. Göring continued the talks at his private residence “Karinhall” the next day.

Actually, Hitler had little interest in a viable contractual agreement with Great Britain. This was particularly evident in the memorandum on Halifax’ visit.²⁴⁸ Here Hitler declared to be “a fanatic enemy of conferences which were doomed to failure from the start.” He believed his old recipe of confrontation and “slaps in the face” to be far more effective.

On November 20, Hitler embarked on a small tour through the Swabian region in Bavaria. In the evening, he attended the reopening of the rebuilt Theater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich, where he saw a performance of the Johann Strauss operetta *Die Fledermaus*.²⁴⁹

The next day, Hitler delivered a speech in Augsburg at the fifteenth anniversary of the NSDAP Ortsgruppe.²⁵⁰ After concluding the obligatory “party narrative,” Hitler once again turned against his opponents within Germany, denying there a “right to criticism:”

We have criticisms, too, but here the superiors criticize the subordinates and not the subordinates their superiors!

After yet another recapitulation of the achievements of the past fifteen years (“The National Socialist German Worker’s Party is the greatest organization man has ever built up!”), he directed his attention to the new tasks faced and addressed the subject of the “too confined Lebensraum of the German Volk:”

I may say so myself, my old Party Comrades: our fight was worth it after all. Never before has a fight commenced with as much success as ours. In these

fifteen years, we have taken on a tremendous task. The task blessed our efforts. Our efforts were not in vain, for from them has ensued one of the greatest rebirths in history. Germany has overcome the great catastrophe and awakened from it to a better and new and strong life. That we can say at the end of these fifteen years. And there lies the reward for every single one of you, my old Party Comrades!

When I look back on my own life, I can certainly say that it has been an immeasurable joy to be able to work for our Volk in this great age. It is truly a wonderful thing after all when Fate chooses certain people who are allowed to devote themselves to their Volk.

Today we are facing new tasks. For the Lebensraum of our Volk is too confined. The world is attempting to disassociate itself from dealing with these problems and answering these questions. But it will not succeed! One day the world will be forced to take our demands into consideration.

I do not doubt for a second that we will procure for ourselves the same vital rights as other peoples outside the country in exactly the same way as we were able to lead it onwards within. I do not doubt that this vital right of the German Volk, too, will one day be understood by the whole world!

I am of the conviction that the most difficult preliminary work has already been accomplished. What is necessary now is that all National Socialists recall again and again the principles with which we grew up. If the whole Party and hence the whole nation stands united behind the leadership, then this same leadership, supported by the joined forces of a population of sixty-eight million, ultimately personified in its Wehrmacht, will be able to successfully defend the interests of the nation and also to successfully accomplish the tasks assigned to us!

When he delivered his speech in Augsburg, Hitler had already determined to apply force to the effort of resolving the problems faced by Germany in the future. In his address, he once again articulated the principles which had driven him onward ever since his accession to power on January 30, 1933 and which would continue to inspire him up to the last days of the Second World War:

I do not doubt for a second that we will procure our vital rights outside the country in exactly the same way as we were able to lead it onwards within.

In content this remark corresponded to a statement which Hitler would make later in the course of the War:²⁵¹

I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally!

This assumption that the analysis of problems and situations in the domestic realm could be superimposed upon international affairs, indeed, that both spheres were fundamentally equivalent, would slowly but surely precipitate the fall of Hitler and his regime.

On November 22, Hitler toured the Messerschmitt Flugzeugwerke in Augsburg,²⁵² unaware that it would, on May 10, 1941, be the point of take-off for his deputy Rudolf Hess' mysterious escape flight across the Channel.

The day subsequent to his tour of the Messerschmitt factory, Hitler attended the inauguration of the Ordensburg Sonthofen in the Allgäu, which was the third to open its gates. There, before all the Kreisleiters and Gauamtsleiters assembled, Hitler delivered a two-hour 'secret speech' on "the structure and organization of the leadership of the Volk" (*Volksführung*).²⁵³ The content of this address has been preserved for us.²⁵⁴

In the introduction, Hitler presented an overview of his version of German history over the last three hundred to four hundred years. He continuously attempted to substantiate his claims with numbers, carelessly juggling enormous figures (the majority of which were incorrect). Needless to say, he could not resist citing his favorite historical example, which claimed that of the 18.5 million Germans at the outbreak of the 'Thirty Years' War only 3.6 million survived. Further "historical observations" on his part culminated in a comparison of the relations between the people of Austria and Prussia and the similar bonds that existed between the English and the German people. He explained these ties in the following manner:

Since in international life there are only natural, sober interests, it should be based neither on gratitude nor on family connections. Family connections were as useless in preserving Prussia and Austria from war as they were for Germany and England.

In Europe, we have more difficult obstacles to overcome than those, for instance, which exist for England—which only [!] needed its naval supremacy to occupy large living spaces with relatively little loss of blood.

Nonetheless: we had Europe once before. We only lost it because our leadership lacked the initiative that would have been necessary to not only maintain our position, on a long-term basis, but also to expand it.

Then Hitler turned to the "Germanic Empire of the German Nation," the birth of which he himself had proclaimed at the Reich Party Congress of September 13.

Now he declared:

Today a new state is being established, the unique feature of which is that it sees its foundation not in Christianity and not in a concept of state; rather, it places its primary emphasis on the self-contained Volksgemeinschaft.

Hence it is significant that the "Germanic Empire of the German Nation" now puts this supremely capable concept of the future into practice, merciless

against all adversaries, against all religious fragmentation, against all fragmentation into parties.

This observation was followed by a mystical recollection of the German past:

If we regard our German history in a very extensive sense from our most dim and distant past up to today, we are the richest Volk in Europe. And if, with utmost tolerance, we allow our great German heroes to march by, all our great leaders of the past, all our great Germanic²⁵⁵ and German emperors—for they were great without exception—England would have to shrink before us.

However, Hitler soon returned to the present, that is, to his own claim to power, and remarked:

It is this unification of the German nation which gives us the moral justification to step before the world with vital demands. The fact is that ultimate justice resides in power. And power, in international life, resides in the self-containment of the nations themselves. Today the German nation has finally been given what it has lacked for centuries, namely, the organization of a leadership of the Volk. [—]

Today *we* are laying claim to the leadership of the Volk, i.e. we alone are authorized to lead the Volk as such—that means every man and every woman. The lifelong relationships between the sexes is something *we* will organize. *We* shall form the child!

In this context, Hitler also commented on questions of a religious nature which preoccupied him in particular this year. He addressed the Churches formally:

We are giving you unconditional freedom in your teachings and in your views on what God is. For we are well aware that we ourselves know nothing of these things.

Yet let one thing be quite clear: the Churches may determine the fate of the German being in the next world, but in this world the German nation, by way of its leaders, is determining the fate of the German being. Only if there is such a clear and clear-cut division can life be made bearable in a time of transition.

At the bottom of our hearts, we National Socialists are religious. For the space of many millenniums, a uniform concept of God did not exist. Yet it is the most brilliant and most sublime notion of mankind, that which distinguishes him most from animals, that he not only views a phenomenon from without, but always poses the question of why and how.

This entire world, a world so clear-cut in its external manifestation, is just as unclear to us in its purpose. And here mankind has bowed down in humility before the conviction that it is confronted by an incredible power, an Omnipotence, which is so incredible and so deep that we men are unable to fathom it. That is a good thing! For it can serve to comfort people in bad times;

it avoids that superficiality and sense of superiority that misleads man to believe that he—but a tiny bacillus on this earth, in this universe—rules the world, and that he lays down the laws of Nature which he can at best but study. It is, therefore, our desire that our Volk remains humble and truly believes in a God. Hence an immeasurably large scope is given for the Churches, and thus they should be tolerant of one another!

God did not create our Volk that it be torn apart by priests. This is why it is necessary to ensure its unity by a system of leadership. That is the task of the NSDAP. It is to comprise that order which, beyond the limits of time and man, is to guarantee the stability of the German development of opinion and hence of the political leadership.

It would have been most interesting to hear precisely what magic potion Hitler had in store and how he intended to secure this stability “beyond the limits of time and man.” It soon became all too apparent that this cure was none other than the one he always counseled, namely, blind obedience to the absolute authority Adolf Hitler.

The NSDAP is the largest organization the world has ever seen. All counted, it encompasses a total of twenty-five million people²⁵⁶ and has 300,000 functionaries. It is quite obvious that an organization that is only eighteen years beyond its founding cannot be the same as it would be after one hundred years. Yet the important thing is that we equip it with the law according to which it came to power and which it shall retain. Here we have established the basic rule of absolute obedience and absolute authority. Just as the Army—the weapon—cannot prevail without this law of the absolute authority of each and every superior to those below him and his absolute responsibility to those above, neither can the political leadership of this weapon prevail. For what is gained by the weapon is ultimately subject to political administration, and what the political administration wants, the weapon is to procure. The leadership of the Volk in former times, the Church, also recognized only this one law of life: blind obedience and absolute authority.

At the end of his ‘secret speech,’ Hitler expatiated upon the requirement of Political Leaders in addition to blind obedience: bravery.

Old Germany was overthrown because it did not possess this zealous blind will, did not have this confidence and this serenity. New Germany will be victorious because it integrates these virtues and at present has already integrated them in an extremely difficult struggle. I know quite well that this is independent of the individual. I know quite well that, were anything to happen to me today, the next one would take my place and continue in the same fashion, just as zealously; because that, too, is part of this Movement.

Just as it is not possible to instantly turn a political bourgeois association into a fighting group of heroes, it will be equally impossible to ever turn this

Movement, which was built up from the very beginning on courage and initiative, into a bourgeois association.

That is also the future task above all of these schools: to conduct this test of courage over and over again, to break with the opinion that only the soldier must be brave. Whoever is a political leader is always a soldier, too! And whoever lacks bravery cannot be a soldier. He must be prepared for action at all times. In the beginning, courage had to be the basic prerequisite for someone to find his way to the Party—and it really was, otherwise no one came.

Today we have to install artificial obstacles, artificial trenches over which the person has to jump. That is where he now has to prove whether he is brave. Because if he is not brave, he is of no use to us.

This truly was an “ingenious solution.” All that was asked of future Political Leaders was that they combine obedience with bravery in order to please Hitler. Mastery of these virtues could be proven simply by “jumping across artificial trenches.” Without doubt the somewhat corpulent Kreisleiters and Gauamtsleiters assembled were relieved that the Führer did not demand any such “tests of courage” in order to ascertain their valor.

On November 24, Hitler attended a reception in the Japanese Embassy, given by the Japanese Ambassador Mushakoji in Berlin on the anniversary of the Anti-Comintern Pact.²⁵⁷

At the Chancellery the next day, the Hungarian Minister-President Darányi and his Foreign Minister Kánya consulted Hitler at great length.²⁵⁸ There was no doubt that Hitler was trying to explore the Hungarian position toward Czechoslovakia. The communiqué on the meeting was phrased in most cordial terms and emphasized complete agreement on conceptual matters, close cooperation and mutual pursuit of peace. That night, Hitler held a reception for his Hungarian guests at the Chancellery.

On November 26, Hitler reshuffled responsibilities in his cabinet. Göring was assigned to take over Schacht's position for the next six weeks as head of the Reich Ministry of Economics. On January 15, 1938, he would name Funk to succeed Schacht officially, taking over Göring's temporary position. During his short tenure, this extraordinary arrangement enabled Göring to unite under his personal control all key positions in the economic realm. The once powerful office Funk entered had become an unimportant, powerless department. Schacht remained in the cabinet as Minister without Portfolio, continuing to serve as a member of the government mostly for appearances' sake.

November 26, 1937

Indeed, this procedure recurred many times as Hitler rid himself of his bourgeois ministers. The letter Hitler addressed to Schacht that day is reproduced below.²⁵⁹

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

Berlin W8, November 26, 1937

Dear Herr Schacht,

On July 30, 1934, you declared yourself willing to assume responsibility for the conduct of the affairs of the Reich Ministry of Economics for the duration of the illness afflicting the then Reich Minister of Economics, Dr. Schmitt. Since that time, you have rendered me and the new German Reich extraordinary services in this position. This was the reason why I could not heed your request for resignation from the ministry, which you had placed before me repeatedly in the course of the last few years. Due to the recent merger with the Ministry of Economics, rendered necessary by the build-up of the apparatus for the implementation of the Four-Year Plan, I am now in a position to fully consider the motivation behind your renewed request for release from your post as Reich Minister of Economics. As I comply with your wishes, allow me to express my deep gratitude for your most excellent performance. Further, I am most content with the knowledge that you shall be at the disposal of the German Volk and myself for yet many years as you continue to serve us in your function as President of the Reichsbank Directorate. Thereby, in the future as well, we shall all benefit from your great knowledge, expertise, and untiring fervor. Greatly rejoiced that you wish to continue your service as my personal adviser, I appoint you Reich Minister as of this day.

With the German salute!

Your Adolf Hitler

The official report on the reshuffle of ministerial posts was issued on November 26.²⁶⁰

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has relieved the President of the Reichsbank Directorate, Dr. Schacht, of his duties in the conduct of affairs of the Reich and Prussian Ministry of Economics at his own request. Reich Minister Schacht remains in his position as President of the Reichsbank Directorate. In recognition of his extraordinary merits, the Führer has appointed him Reich Minister without Portfolio .

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has appointed the State Secretary to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Press Chief of the Reich Government, Walther Funk, to head the Reich and Prussian Ministry of Economics as of January 15, 1938. The Führer has entrusted the Commissioner for the Four-Year Plan, Minister-President of Prussia, Colonel General Göring, with the conduct of affairs in the Reich and Prussian Ministry of Economics.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has further appointed the Ministerialdirektor to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Karl Hanke,²⁶¹ State Secretary in this Ministry. This provision shall go into effect on January 15, 1938.

On the same date, the Reich Press Chief of the NSDAP, Dr. Otto Dietrich, will assume office as State Secretary to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda and Press Chief of the Reich Government. The Führer has decreed that the Chief of the Reich Chancellery now shall, in the place of his previous title as "State Secretary and Chief of the Reich Chancellery," bear the title of "Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery." As an immediate result of this decree, the Führer has appointed the Chief of the Reich Chancellery, State Secretary Dr. Lammers, Reich Minister.

What was remarkable about these complicated appointments was that the Reich Press Chief of the NSDAP had now become Press Chief of the Reich Government as well. Another step had been taken toward a complete *Gleichschaltung* of Party and State.

On November 27, Hitler laid the cornerstone to a new building which was to house the Faculty of Defense Technology at the Technical University in Berlin. On this occasion, Hitler proclaimed that the beginning of construction at this site marked a starting point in an effort to redesign the city in a manner that would define its character for the next one thousand years. Once again Hitler had arrived at an "inalterable decision." He resolved to bestow upon Berlin the "streets, edifices, and public areas it needs to allow it to be fitting and worthy of being the capital city of the German Reich." It is characteristic of Hitler that his attempt to reshape Berlin began with "a monument," which he thought attested "to German culture," but was fundamentally of a military nature. Furthermore, like many of his grandiose projects, it was curtailed by the outbreak of war. The verbatim content of Hitler's speech is reproduced below.²⁶²

Today marks the beginning of a period of architectural renewal in Berlin which will radically change the image and—it is my belief—also the character of this city. The former residence of the Hohenzollern princes, kings, and emperors shall now become the eternal capital of the first German Reich of the Volk. In it, that plight will be banned for all future which led one great historian to make the astute observation that it had always been the misfortune of the Germans to in fact have capital cities, but never to have one true capital. For a truly lasting national formation of a *volklich* community only seems conceivable to us, in view of all our insights and all our historic experience, if the leadership of such a community also possesses an undisputed, leading center at a certain locality. It was for this reason that, as regards the great states of the past, their establishment was frequently bound up not only with the birth, but also with the very name of their capital cities.

The opinion that the downfall of these states was caused by the expansion of their dominant capital cities as organizational centers for every aspect of life, is based upon a false conclusion. For the states of antiquity in particular

did not perish because of their cities; the cities of antiquity perished because of a failure to recognize and respect the laws of blood which conditioned them and thus formed their foundation. Hence the Roman Empire did not decline because of Rome, for without Rome as a city, there never would have been a Roman Empire! The most natural course of the foundation of most of the great states almost always commences, in its initial stage, with a point at which the political and subsequently the cultural life crystallizes, which very often then lends the entire state its name as the capital city!

Yet because the German Reich is the belated product of an eventful struggle of various German tribes and states for a national-political unification of our Volk, it is for this reason above all that this long-awaited foundation of the state lacks the natural outstanding center of political power. For we intend, as regards the significance of such a capital city, to place less emphasis on the number of its inhabitants and more on the size and extent of its scope as a whole and hence its merit as a whole. In terms of inhabitants, with its four-and-a-half million people, Berlin is unquestionably the capital of the Reich. Yet, if we furthermore compare the importance of its cultural and monumental significance and structure to the similar merits of other German cities, it is not.

Therefore, it is my inalterable intention and decision to now bestow upon Berlin the streets, edifices, and public areas it needs to allow it to be fitting and worthy of being the capital city of the German Reich. The size of these facilities and works shall not be calculated to fit the needs of the years 1937, 1938, 1939, or 1940; rather, they shall be determined by the knowledge that it is our task to build a thousand-year city equal to a thousand-year Volk with a thousand years of historic and cultural past for the unforeseeable future lying before it. Hence an evaluation of the work which will be accomplished to this end for the next twenty years in Berlin is something we are consciously denying the present; we are submitting this work instead to the judgment of those generations which will one day come after us. No matter how this judgment turns out, one should not be able to deny us one justification: in accomplishing this work, we were not thinking of ourselves, but of those who will come after us.

In this sacred conviction I now lay the cornerstone for the Faculty of Defense Technology at the Technical University in Berlin as the first edifice which is being built in realization of these plans. It shall be a monument to German Culture, German knowledge and German strength.

On December 3, Hitler sent Franco a telegram congratulating him on his birthday²⁶³ On December 6, he wired his best wishes to Mackensen on the Field Marshal's eighty-eighth birthday.²⁶⁴ The next day, Hitler visited the gravely ill General Ludendorff in the Munich Josephinum hospital.²⁶⁵

On December 11, Italy announced its withdrawal from the League of Nations. In 1935, such a decision would have been a comprehensible reaction to the League's imposition of sanctions against Italy. In a similar manner, Japan had left the League of Nations in 1933, after the

League had condemned its attack upon China. However, the Italian decision to withdraw in 1937 merely reflected the extent to which Mussolini had succumbed to Hitler's influence. On December 12, Hitler issued an official statement which both assured Italy of Germany's sympathy for its cause and derided the League of Nations at great length. Among his accusations were the following:²⁶⁶

This [Italy's withdrawal] shall provide to the League of Nations its just reward for its political achievements. At no time during its existence has it proven itself capable of making a useful contribution toward settling the respectively relevant problems of world politics.²⁶⁷ On the contrary: it has constantly had only a harmful and indeed dangerous influence on the entire political development of postwar times. [—]

Today, the utter failure of the League of Nations is a fact which requires no further proof and no further discussion. The hopes which were placed in the League of Nations, above all by certain lesser states²⁶⁸ have progressively dwindled with the growing awareness that the Geneva policy of collective security has led, in reality, to a collective insecurity. Today, unlimited support of the ideals of Geneva can only be heard from Moscow. [—]

The attempts which are made here and there to ascribe the institution's downfall to its lack of universality constitute a quite obvious case of confusing cause and effect. The reasons which have forced first Japan, then Germany and now Italy to leave the League of Nations are quite evident proof of where the radical error in its construction lies and where the political currents are which rule it.²⁶⁹[—]

Whether or not the Great Powers remaining in Geneva are still willing to include the League of Nations as a serious factor in their policies is their affair. However, they no longer have the right to present the League of Nations as the appointed representative of the nations of the world and as the highest organ of international cooperation.

In any case, the Reich Government—in complete consensus with the Italian Government—will allow nothing to sway it in the conviction that the political system of Geneva has not only miscarried, but is, moreover, corrupt. Therefore, Germany's return to the League of Nations is out of the question for all time to come.

On December 17, Hitler spoke before an assembly of Autobahn workers who had come together for a celebration in the 'Theater des Volkes' in Berlin. He expressed the great pride he felt for the 2,000 kilometers of Autobahn they had built and proclaimed this feat to have been "the greatest enterprise worldwide to this day."²⁷⁰

That day as well, Hitler received sixty-five aspiring young SA leaders at the Chancellery.²⁷¹ In addition, he had an extensive private conversation with Georges Scapini, the president of the Franco-German committee "France-Allemagne."²⁷²

On December 18, Hitler attended a Christmas celebration for the staff members of the Chancellery.²⁷³

At the Josephinum hospital on December 20, the seventy-three-years-old General Ludendorff died of a circulatory debility. Hitler issued the following commemorative note:²⁷⁴

Germans!

With the death of General Ludendorff, an historic phenomenon has gone from us. His name will be bound up for all time to come with the greatest heroic battle of the German Volk.

Isolated in the midst of a both weak and rootless political environment, this man attempted, at the side of the Field Marshal in the Great War, to wrench the nation's power of resistance onward to unparalleled achievements with the aim of preserving the liberty of the Germans and their Reich.

After lack of character and deplorable weakness had brought about its downfall, Germany collapsed and plummeted to the ignominy of Versailles. In those years of the worst humiliation, Ludendorff, the commander of the World War, joined forces with the fighters to re-erect the nation both within and without. From then on, it was for this freedom that he struggled and fought in his own way.

These so great and exclusive goals were commensurate with the zealous devotion of this man. His love and his prayers belonged to our Volk; his hatred to his foes!

As is the case with all uncompromising fighters in this world, his personality will have a more conscious impression on posterity than on many modern contemporaries. With his phenomenal figure, the hall of fame of our history will gain yet another witness to the greatness of the German nation!

Adolf Hitler

He also addressed a telegram of condolence to the general's widow, Frau Dr. Mathilde Ludendorff:²⁷⁵

I extend to Your Excellency my heartfelt sympathy on the great loss you have suffered through the passing away of your husband. With the great soldier and Commander Ludendorff, the German Volk loses one of its best and most loyal sons, whose work was dedicated to Germany's welfare in times of war and peace. His name will live on forever in German history. I and the entire National Socialist Movement are forever indebted to him since it was he who, in a time of great need, at the risk of life and limb stood with those fighting for a better future for Germany.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler wished to have Ludendorff interred in a national monument, as he had for Hindenburg, thus giving him leave to "enter into Valhalla."²⁷⁶ However, Ludendorff's widow was opposed to Hitler's plans and interred her husband according to his wishes in Tutzing, the

family's last place of residence. Despite her opposition, Hitler would not desist from staging a magnificent state ceremony in front of the Feldherrnhalle in Munich on December 22.²⁷⁷ All dignitaries of Party, State, and Wehrmacht were instructed to attend the service. Field Marshal von Blomberg delivered the commemorative address. Hitler stepped up to the coffin, which had been placed on a bier. He stood at attention and called out in a stentorian voice: "General Ludendorff! In the name of the unified German Volk, I place this wreath before you in deep gratitude."

A nineteen-gun salute was fired after the wreath had been laid. The funeral procession then passed through the city, without Hitler.

On December 23, Hitler inspected the progress at the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg and spoke to construction workers. In the evening, Hitler attended a performance of Lehndr's *Die lustige Witwe* at the Nuremberg Opera House.²⁷⁸

On December 24, as was his custom, Hitler delivered a one-hour speech to the Old Fighters, who had assembled in the great hall of the Löwenbräukeller in Munich.²⁷⁹ The next day, Hitler wired birthday congratulations to the commander of the former frontier guard in Silesia, retired Lieutenant General Hoefer.²⁸⁰ Hitler's last official deed in 1937 was the issuing of a short appeal to the Wehrmacht:²⁸¹

Berlin, December 31, 1937

Soldiers!

I express to you my gratitude and appreciation for your dutiful, dedicated and selfless performance this past year. In the knowledge that the Wehrmacht shall perform its duty in the future as well, I extend to all of you my best wishes for the New Year.

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht: Adolf Hitler

THE YEAR 1938

Major Events in Summary

Hitler had set his mind to making 1938 a year of activity and advancement once again. The months of restraint and caution had ended. With the singular exception of the bombing of Almería, 1937 conspicuously lacked any great event, both within Germany and abroad. There had not even been one plebiscite. Nothing at all had happened that Hitler would have deemed worthy of such “great times” as these. Now he felt himself obliged to make up for the lack of excitement in 1937. The “period of so-called surprises,” that he pronounced dead on January 30, 1937, had come again.

First Hitler sought to consolidate his domestic support to give himself freedom to maneuver in foreign affairs. Thus he turned upon the only remaining opposition still functioning within Germany: the reactionary generals. On February 4, after elaborate intrigues had been staged in preparation, Hitler relieved both the Minister of War, Field Marshal von Blomberg, and the Commander in Chief of the Army, Freiherr von Fritsch, of their duties. Hitler himself assumed control of the Wehrmacht. Göring, still his “best man,”¹ was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal. This made Göring the highest ranking officer in the Wehrmacht. In addition, Hitler had the remaining generals “move”—in a literal sense. No less than sixty of them were either assigned new responsibilities or completely removed from active duty through forced early retirement.

In order not to push his luck, Hitler decided to refrain from destroying the Soldatenbund, the group which aimed to transform the Third Reich into a pure military dictatorship.² However, in only six weeks an opportunity to dissolve the Soldatenbund arose. Within a week following March 10, this organization ceased to exist.

On February 4, Hitler also got rid of Foreign Minister von Neurath, whose unreliability had displeased him. Hitler named the German Ambassador in London, Joachim von Ribbentrop, to fill the vacancy created by von Neurath’s dismissal. The appointment of a man so obviously subservient to his Führer signaled that in the realm of foreign affairs Hitler also intended to take personal control.

To make matters perfectly clear, Hitler simultaneously recalled the Ambassadors Hassel from Rome, Dirksen from Tokyo, and von Papen from Vienna. In particular, von Papen's removal from office left little doubt as to Hitler's intent to treat Austria more severely. Schuschnigg immediately grasped the foreboding significance of von Papen's dismissal. He declared himself willing to see Hitler at the Obersalzberg to make a plea for the maintenance of good relations between the two states.

On February 12, Hitler seized upon the occasion of Schuschnigg's visit to admonish the Austrian for his "un-German" (*undeutsch*) behavior. After hours of reproof, Hitler handed Schuschnigg a three-day ultimatum. The document demanded that the Austrian Federal Chancellor release all Austrian National Socialists, be they in prison or in *Anhaltelagers*. Further, it instructed him to appoint a second National Socialist minister to his cabinet and to restore legality to the National Socialist Movement in his country. Schuschnigg had no choice but to agree to comply. In the event that he failed to do so Hitler threatened to invade Austria. This threat was all the more significant since Mussolini could no longer be relied upon for support.

Nonetheless, behind the scenes Schuschnigg actively searched for a way out of this dilemma. Misjudging the possibilities that lay before him and underestimating the support an Anschluss enjoyed within the Austrian populace, he decided to call for a plebiscite on March 13, a fateful step as time would prove. He announced this in Innsbruck on March 9. The plebiscite was to rally Austrians in the defense of a free, independent, and Christian Austria. However, this undertaking backfired completely on Schuschnigg, as Mussolini had aptly predicted.

After Schuschnigg's attempt to step out of line, Hitler decided to go ahead with the military intervention. As early as March 12, the entire Vaterländische Front had collapsed in Vienna. The Austrian National Socialists assumed power for one day, awaiting the arrival of Hitler and the German troops to take over.

By the next day, the annexation of Austria to the German Reich was a fait accompli. At the same time, Hitler called for a new election to the Reichstag. All went according to plan and the election on April 10 was a complete success, with the Austrian annexation providing Hitler with a great deal of popular support.

Still, Hitler did not allow himself to rest on his laurels. He quickly focused his energies on staging his masterstroke of 1938: the war against Czechoslovakia. As early as April 21, he instructed the military to prepare for an assault upon the country. Returning from a visit to

Italy in May and perceiving an escalation in the Sudetenland crisis, Hitler resolved to do away with this unloved neighbor once and for all, before winter set in. A line of fortification to the West was to ensure that no foreign power intervened in his Czechoslovakian enterprise. Yet events proved to be not quite as simple as Hitler had envisioned.

To anyone aware of the true power structures at the time, it was clear that if indeed Hitler set out to do battle he would end up fighting both Great Britain and France. This Hitler refused to acknowledge. To him, the senility of the British was a self-evident truth, that could be shaken by no considerations. In his eyes, events at the height of the crisis only proved the validity of his hypothesis.

The British had resolved to comply with Hitler's demands with regard to Czechoslovakia, on the condition that this was by some stretch of the imagination congruent to the principles of international law and provided that Hitler would agree to abide by contractual obligations. Though nearly seventy years old at the time, the British Prime Minister Sir Neville Chamberlain repeatedly flew to Germany to discuss the issue of the Sudetenland. The British statesman offered Hitler his services in an effort to resolve the Sudeten German question by means of negotiation.

Again and again in his speeches, Hitler had clamored for a resolution of the issue at hand, justifying the Reich's claims by referring to the principles of international law. As he later admitted, Hitler himself had never seriously considered a scenario in which his demands would actually be met.³ Indeed, from the outset Chamberlain's behavior reinforced his beliefs in the decrepitude of British statesmanship, to an extent Hitler himself had not thought possible. As a result, he treated Chamberlain—"that little worm"⁴—with even less respect than he had the German Nationalists in the early 1930s.

Pressured by Mussolini, Hitler finally agreed to a conference in Munich. However, he remained convinced that agreement on the promised territorial cessions was not possible. If indeed he was correct in his assessment, then at least the failure of negotiations could serve as a pretense for him to rush to the rescue of the suppressed Germans in the region. In the process, his march to Prague would transform all of Czechoslovakia into a sea of flames. Yet his appraisal of the situation turned out to be a faulty one. Both the British and the French statesmen yielded to every single one of his demands with regard to the Sudetenland. In the end, Hitler found himself cornered and grudgingly signed the treaty.

The entire world held its breath and stood in awe of what it considered to be Hitler's most astounding victory yet. Without firing a single shot, he had brought three and a half million Germans of Czechoslovakian citizenship "home to the Reich." Moreover, he had gained valuable territory upon which stood the entire fortification system of the Czechoslovakian state.

However, there was still one man who was not at all content with the situation—Hitler. Quite to the contrary, he was furious. He felt himself outwitted, if not to say outright duped. In his eyes, the Sudeten German territories were of little use if he was precluded from laying his hands on the entirety of the Czechoslovakian territory as he had planned.

After all, the country played a pivotal part in the most decisive of his envisioned future conquests. He had intended to launch these campaigns from its territory in his drive towards the east. He was incensed by what he considered to be a great embarrassment for him: he had not been allowed to conquer the territories in question himself. Instead, he had only an international forum to thank for them. The agreement in Munich appeared to be an accurate re-enactment of what had infuriated Hitler so much in the case of the Saarland, where international bodies ceded territories to him without according him the opportunity to act independently prior to the transfer of property.

Hitler did have a point—given his perception of the developments at the time. It was true that he had stumbled into a trap at Munich. For the first time, he had been maneuvered into voluntarily signing an international agreement. In 1936, he had solemnly vowed to abide by all contractual obligations which he had signed. He had claimed that, after all, his signature carried with it the weight of sixty-eight million people. As long as one of these men and women remained alive, he or she would uphold the treaty. Furthermore, Hitler had repeatedly pledged never to place his signature beneath a treaty if he was not completely certain that Germany was capable of complying with its exigencies.⁵ However, by signing the agreement of September 29, he had subjected himself to the manipulation of foreigners. The treaty not only ran contrary to his schemes, it also made their realization impossible.

Yet Fate had still other "rainy" days in store for Hitler. In Munich on the next day, Chamberlain called at the Führer's private apartment at the Prinzregentenplatz. The interpreter Schmidt immediately noticed Hitler's disconcerted demeanor.⁶ In a rotten mood and absent-

minded, he passively submitted to the civilities of the British Prime Minister. Then Chamberlain procured a piece of paper, which proved to be an already polished statement by Great Britain and Germany ascertaining consultation between the two states. The draft amounted to a non-aggression pact. In this instance as well, Hitler uncharacteristically yielded to Chamberlain's urging and signed the document.

Reading the newspapers the next morning, Hitler must truly have felt as though he had been duped once again. In particular, the manner in which Chamberlain had been received back in London and the Prime Minister's comments on the British-German declaration helped foster this impression. In Hitler's opinion, the British had just demonstrated at Munich that they neither desired nor were able to wage a war against him. To this end, no separate declaration would have been necessary since the farthest thing from Hitler's mind was to become entangled in an armed conflict with England. Nonetheless, not only had Chamberlain dared to propose mutual consultations on all topics that pertained to both states, but Hitler had even agreed to this proposal. This occurred despite the fact that as a matter of principle, Hitler never discussed his decisions with anyone. He did not consult even the most intimate of his co-workers; and he did not ask his friend Mussolini's opinion. Least of all would he stoop to ask the advice of a decrepit old Englishman.

However, far worse to Hitler was the fact that the British now held in hand two documents bearing his signature to which they most certainly would point accusingly the minute he undertook any step of an aggressive nature. Nevertheless, he was determined to show these British and the world Jewry standing behind them who was the master at this game! Just how incensed Hitler was by the manner in which Chamberlain, "*dieser Kerl*,"⁷ had gotten the better of him in Munich was apparent again and again in many of his speeches and actions during the latter months of 1938.

On October 9, barely two weeks after the Munich Agreement, Hitler vented his anger at the British in a speech at Saarbrücken, furiously raging, "We will no longer tolerate any schoolmarm patronizing us!"⁸ To lend credence to his statement with regard to the military, Hitler announced the construction of a new line of fortification to the west. Clearly, Hitler had reverted to his tactics of "slaps in the face." On October 21, Hitler issued an ordinance to the Wehrmacht to prepare for the military liquidation of the "remainder of Czechoslovakia" (*Rest-Tschechei*).

Again in the Bürgerbräukeller on November 8, Hitler expressed his genuine displeasure with the British and cried out: "We will not stand for being supervised as if by a schoolmaster!"⁹

The night of November 9, 1938, ushered in the Jewish Pogrom in Germany. A young Jew of German origin, Herschel Grynszpan, had assassinated the German legation counsellor in Paris, Ernst vom Rath. This time Hitler reacted in a completely different manner than he had in the markedly similar case of Wilhelm Gustloff over two years earlier.¹⁰ In the Gustloff case, Hitler had been forced by tactical considerations to content himself with a funeral oration protesting the incident. However, in the case of vom Rath, he resorted to far more drastic measures. On the one hand, he wanted to teach the Jews a lesson for the glee with which they had followed the unfolding of the Sudetenland crisis. More important was Hitler's desire to spread terror among the members of the supposed secret Jewish world government. He wanted them to have good reason to pressure the Anglo-Saxon Powers to embrace a more lenient stance toward him, for the sake of the German Jew.

On November 10, Hitler advised the representatives of the German press in a 'secret speech' to prepare the German people for war. They were to instill the masses with a fervent belief in the final victory. The journalists were no longer to advocate concerns for peace.

As 1938 drew to an end, Hitler resolved to make up for the "setback" suffered at Munich the next year. Never again should the British keep him from claiming hold of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Neither would they prevent him from waging his war to the east in the struggle for new Lebensraum.

The year 1938 was to be the last year of Hitler's great speeches. One last time, the year 1938 afforded him the opportunity to pour forth monstrous speeches at the Party Congress and in the course of his speech-making campaigns. Early that year, the Austrian Anschluss and the spring Reichstag election had provided opportunities for speeches. Later in the year, Hitler again spoke publicly in the aftermath of the occupation of the Sudetenland and the retroactive Reichstag election conducted there in autumn.

These were to be his last great speaking appearances at mass rallies. Especially in Austria and the Sudetenland, there still existed large population groups that would flock to his speeches and would submit themselves without reservation to Hitler's verbose oratory. They had not yet learned to differentiate between Hitler's words and actions.

After five years of his rule, most people living in the old Reich territory had grown increasingly skeptical. At speaking engagements, Hitler was beginning to feel that the tide had turned against him. Therefore, he chose to speak only at carefully orchestrated and staged mass rallies in the Old Reich. Nevertheless, in the newly annexed regions he eagerly took advantage of spontaneously appearing before genuinely enthusiastic crowds. As in his earlier days, he would literally become intoxicated at the opportunity to apply his rhetorical prowess. Once again, he basked in the exalting thunderous applause, relishing the enraptured expression on the faces of his audience.

With the year 1938, Hitler's series of successes came to a close. From 1939 onward, the German train of Government, whose wheel the Führer had sworn never to abandon,¹¹ set out on a journey to destruction.

Report and Commentary

1

In 1938, Hitler's "New Year's Proclamation to the National Socialists and Party Comrades" was delivered in Munich.¹² Hitler added a new dimension to the customary overview of the past achievements in the existence of the Movement by changing his attribute of Germany from "great power" to "world power."

Today we can counter the sum of all our opponents' prophecies with the proud fact that the order of the German Volk is now healthier, its culture richer and its standard of living higher.

This change is most evident, however, in the Reich's position in the world today as compared to 1933. Then a nation trampled upon, despised, and without rights; today a proud Volk and a strong state, protected by a great Wehrmacht at its service. By allying itself with strong friends, this new German world power has helped to create an international element of self-confident order in contrast to the meanderings of those dark powers which Mommsen once described as the enzyme of decomposition for all peoples and all states. It is this new framework of true cooperation between the peoples which will ultimately be the downfall of the Jewish-Bolshevist world revolt!

This astonishing re-erection of the German nation and the Reich was achieved—and this fills us all with a special pride—exclusively by the efforts of our Volk itself. Neither foreign love nor foreign aid have made us great once more, but the National Socialist will, our insight, and our work.

In his appeal, it was remarkable how little attention Hitler accorded to the Wehrmacht and how much emphasis he put on the Party. In reference to the Party he stated:

The eternal, immortal achievement of the National Socialist Party is that it was capable not only of mobilizing this mass of millions, but also of instilling in it a common way of thinking, and of positioning its tremendous unified bulk behind the leadership of state. Hence in the coming centuries, being the highest politically authorized leadership of the German nation, it shall act as the guarantor of the great future of our Volk. To serve this future and prepare for it is the aim of our work in the coming year as well.

Let the motto be to strengthen the nation in every area of its life! In terms of domestic politics, this means reinforcing National Socialist education and strengthening the National Socialist organization! In terms of economic policy: increased implementation of the Four-Year Plan!

As regards foreign policy, this will entail the expansion of the German Wehrmacht. For we believe that it is only as a strong state that we will be able, in such an age of unrest, to further preserve for our Volk in the future that possession which, to us, is the dearest of all—peace. For the re-erection of the German nation has been brought about without launching a single attack beyond our borders, but instead solely by virtue of our Volk's accomplishments within them. May the rest of the world, knowing this, finally do their part in making a contribution to peacefully solving those problems whose objective and moral justification lies anchored both in reason and in the basic concept of what is right.

No matter how great the accomplishments of mankind may be, man will never be able to boast of having achieved final victory if Providence does not bless his actions. May it be our uttermost request that the mercy of the Lord God accompany our German Volk in the coming year on its fateful path.

Long live the National Socialist Movement! Long live our German Volk and Reich!

Munich, January 1, 1938

Adolf Hitler

Mussolini received the telegram reproduced below from Hitler, wishing him well on New Year's Day.¹³

May Your Excellency accept my heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and the continued success of your historically so significant work at the beginning of this New Year.

The following official note was published, concerning the customary exchange of telegrams with various heads of state:¹⁴

In the customary manner, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has wired New Year's greetings to a number of foreign statesmen on this New Year's Day. Such an exchange of telegrams took place with the royal houses of Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Norway, Romania, Sweden; and with the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia; the Regent of the Hungarian Kingdom; the President of Guatemala; the Austrian Federal Chancellor; the President of Czechoslovakia; and with General Franco, the Chief of the Spanish National Government.

Similarly, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has extended in his name and that of the Reich Government best wishes for the New Year to the Pope. The Pope thanked him and reciprocated with New Year's wishes for the Führer, the Reich Government, and the German Volk.

Furthermore, the Führer and Reich Chancellor received New Year's greetings from the King of Afghanistan and the Shah of Iran, for which he thanked them by wire. Moreover, the Führer has returned the best wishes extended by the Minister-Presidents of Canada and Hungary.

On January 7, the itinerary for Hitler's visit to Italy in the spring was published. His travels would lead him to Rome, Naples and Florence.¹⁵ Hitler spent the first days of January 1938 at the Obersalzberg and in Munich. It is probably correct to assume that three concerns dominated Hitler's mind during those days. First was the issue of the removal of Blomberg and Fritsch. Second, in a general sense the outstanding controversy involving the reactionary forces within the Wehrmacht had yet to be resolved. Finally, Hitler no doubt pondered how best to go about destroying the Soldatenbund.

He spent the time not dedicated to the resolution of these three problems at various theater performances in Munich. On January 7 at the Theater am Gärtnerplatz, Hitler once again saw the ballet *Tanz um die Welt*, a guest performance of the German Opera House of Berlin-Charlottenburg. At the Munich National Theater the next day, Hitler attended a rendition of *Aida*.¹⁶

On January 11, there was a well-attended open house at the Chancellery in Berlin. The first guest to be received by Hitler was the newly appointed Japanese Ambassador, Shigenori Togo, who had come to present his credentials. Hitler addressed the topic of Japanese-German friendship in his speech welcoming the diplomat and declared:¹⁷

I warmly welcome the fact that Your Excellency regards it as your personal mission to further expand upon the good relations between our countries by taking advantage of your position of prominence in order to add profundity to the warm friendship that so fortunately ties together Japan and Germany. I am certain that, given the fact that Your Excellency in your previous position was instrumental in bringing about the German-Japanese Agreement directed against the Communist International, Your Excellency is as pervaded by the spirit of this pact as I am myself.

Please rest assured, Your Excellency, that your striving to expand upon this foundation of Japanese-German friendship will always have my full support.

That same day, the official annual New Year's reception took place at the House of the Reich President.¹⁸

At 11:00 a.m., Blomberg and the respective Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht came to extend their best wishes to Hitler. It was to be the last time these gentlemen would appear before Hitler in this particular configuration. Subsequently, Hitler received the Mayor and President of the City of Berlin, Dr. Lippert, and the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, Himmler.

At 12:15 p.m., the reception of the diplomatic corps began. The Apostolic Nuncio Orsenigo spoke in French, expressing the corps' best wishes for the new year. Attired in a tailcoat, Hitler responded:

Your Excellency!

May I express my very best thanks to Your Excellency—and to the Diplomatic Corps on behalf of which you are speaking—for the New Year's wishes you have extended to the German Volk and myself on behalf of the Heads of State you represent here.

The peace Your Excellency wishes for the individual peoples at home and for the world as a whole on this threshold of the new year is likewise the goal of my own efforts and those of the Reich Government. As you gentlemen have certainly all been able to see for yourselves, Germany is seeking with all its might, by bringing into a balance all the ostensibly opposing social and societal interests that threaten to disrupt the inner unity of the peoples, to provide for the German Volk the good fortune of a fraternally-bound community; to strengthen the low-income class by gladly-given aid; and to promote all of the healthy and positive impulses in order to improve both the material and spiritual welfare of the Volk as a whole.

It is with this same attitude which determines our actions at home that we wish to settle our relations with foreign countries. We believe that the tasks which Providence has assigned in respect to the cohabitation of this world by the various peoples must be solved in the same spirit; for this reason we are prepared to undertake earnest and trusting cooperation with all those nations and all those states who share this view, and also to put these ideals into practice. Hence, from the bottom of its heart, the German Volk prefers the genuinely constructive work of peace toward the goal of general progress to any and all battles serving only to destroy the peoples.

May this yearning lead to a truly mutual consideration and hence to a real peace of justice and trust. And may these desires fill not only the peoples in the year 1938, but also be vividly expressed in the actions and deeds of their governments. The German leadership of Volk and State is confidently looking forward to this type of sincere international understanding.

It is in this spirit that I may cordially extend to you, Your Excellency, and to you gentlemen as well as to the Heads of State, Governments, and peoples you represent, my own and the German Volk's warmest wishes for the New Year.

On January 12, the forty-fifth birthday of both Göring and Rosenberg, Hitler visited them in their respective apartments in Berlin to extend his best wishes.¹⁹

That same day the campaign against Blomberg and Fritsch was launched. The goal pursued was a rather simple one—their removal from office. As mentioned earlier, both military men had begun to offer opposition to Hitler at the November 5 meeting. The fate that Hitler had in store for them was precisely that which he always employed when

confronted with signals of similar insubordination on the part of an Unterführer. He simply dismissed the man in question, and—insofar as the deposed man's position was a powerful one—named himself as successor. He had proceeded in the 1930 case of the SA according to this blueprint. After he had summarily dealt with his predecessor as OSAF, Captain Pfeffer von Salomon, Hitler himself had taken control of the SA. Another example of Hitler's tactics was the 1932 removal of Strasser from his position as head of the Political Organization. As Hitler had taken over Strasser's position and duties, so he planned to proceed in the case of the Wehrmacht leaders.

However, at first there was no plausible rationale in sight to serve as a pretext for the dismissal of Blomberg. Since 1933, this man had dedicated himself to serving Hitler and to molding the Wehrmacht into a body completely loyal to the Führer. This utter subservience had prompted both his fellow officers and the public to nickname him "Hitler Youth Quex."²⁰ Nonetheless, Blomberg had made it plain that he was not willing to second Hitler's war plans. Hence he had to be removed from office.

It was Blomberg's naivety that led him straight up to the scaffold. Hitler had contrived a trap that was itself a small marvel of intrigue. The Field Marshal had long been friendly with a certain lady by the name of Erna Gruhn whose "past" was well documented in police files. Blomberg was actually contemplating marrying the former demimondaine. He was well aware that such a step would entail difficulties for him because of the strict code of conduct governing the lives of German officers. If nothing else, he had to obtain his superior's permission prior to the marriage. In this case that meant he had to procure Hitler's blessing. On this matter, Blomberg sought advice from Göring, whom he trusted. Göring encouraged Blomberg's marriage plans, and Himmler had safely secured the police file "Erna Gruhn" for Göring in time.

It would be a mistake to presume²¹ that Göring had acted on his own in advocating Blomberg's marriage with the aim of compromising the War Minister and being named Blomberg's successor. Neither Himmler nor Göring would have dared to do any such thing without Hitler's implied consent. A like enterprise could well have cost them their own heads.

Neither is it likely that Hitler had not been the very first to know of the police file in question. After all, Hitler accorded great attention to even the most minute details regarding the private lives of his

exposed subordinates. It was one of the main tasks of Himmler, and of Hitler's adjutant, SS Gruppenführer Schaub, to keep him informed on these matters.²² Without doubt, Hitler also vividly recalled the decisive role the private life of Groener had played in the latter's 1932 purge from his post as Minister of Defense.²³ At the time, Hindenburg had been scandalized by the fact that General Groener's first child had been born rather too quickly after the Minister's wedding. In any event, Hitler was only too ready to allow Blomberg's envisioned marriage. He was well aware that such a step by a military man in the position of Minister of War would make it easy to remove Blomberg from office. To push matters even further, Hitler himself "magnanimously" offered to act as witness to the Blomberg wedding, in concert with Göring.

A day after the marriage in Berlin, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following official account of the memorable occasion:²⁴

On Wednesday, January 12, the Minister of War Field Marshal von Blomberg wed Fräulein Gruhn. The Führer and Reich Chancellor, and Colonel General Göring served as witnesses to the ceremony.

Field Marshal von Blomberg may rest assured that the entire German Volk extends its heartfelt, best wishes to him and his wife.

Above all, it was Hitler who congratulated himself on the event. Within three weeks time, this "bomb" would detonate. No doubt it would then cause an avalanche of measures in domestic policy that would considerably reinforce Hitler's position in power.

However, for the time being, various visits by foreign dignitaries captured the attention of the German public. On January 14, Hitler had a lengthy conversation in the Chancellery with Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, at which the Polish Ambassador Lipski and Minister von Neurath were also present.²⁵ Hitler was most congenial at the meeting, striving to keep the Polish in good spirits for 1938.

On January 15, the Yugoslavian Prime Minister Milan Stojadinovic and his wife arrived in Berlin for a visit of several days. Hitler's attractiveness to politicians in the Balkans had increased greatly. Yugoslavia was also eager to jump on the band wagon while there still was time. On the occasion of the state visit, the newspapers in Belgrade and in Zagreb emphasized that Yugoslavia had, "as one of the first countries, realized the true significance of the greatness of the new Germany."²⁶

After visits to Neurath and Göring, Stojadinovic was received by Hitler at the Chancellery on January 17.²⁷ The official press release spoke of "extensive talks that took place in an atmosphere of trust and

genuine friendship.” Subsequently, Hitler greeted the representatives of the Yugoslavian press, who were in Germany to cover the Stojadinovic visit. That evening, Hitler gave a magnificent dinner in honor of his Yugoslavian guests. Exalted commentaries in the Yugoslavian media celebrated the meeting of the two statesmen.

Like Mussolini before him, Stojadinovic had to subject himself to a most thorough tour of the Krupp factory in Essen. In its halls, surrounded by great cannons, the Yugoslavian Premier would be certain to fully appreciate the true greatness of the Third Reich. On January 22, Hitler met with his Yugoslavian guests in Munich where the German Architecture and industrial Art Exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst was being inaugurated. The exhibition was dedicated exclusively to models of envisioned monumental construction projects. In addition, furniture was displayed that one day would be housed within the buildings. Hitler was overjoyed at the opportunity to demonstrate the extent of the magnificence of Germany as mirrored in these pieces of art. For once, he was hosting foreign guests who truly admired him, and his opening speech²⁸ resounded of the pride he felt at the occasion:

The merits of every great age are ultimately expressed in its architecture. When peoples internally experience great times, they also lend these times an external manifestation. Their word is then more convincing than the spoken word: it is the word of stone!

As a rule, the environment’s understanding of great works of creativity more often than not fails to keep pace with the evolution of these works. It may often be that centuries pass before the magnitude of an age is understood from the visible documentation its architecture provides. One good example is this city.

It did not understand the king who once created its greatest edifices, nor did it understand the edifices which were the product of his spirit. Today this is assessed differently. We have reason to hope that we, too, will one day be able to count on such a merciful retrospective assessment. What makes this exhibition appear so remarkable is the following:

1. This is the first time ever that an exhibition of such scope is being shown to mankind!

2. This exhibition marks a turning point in time. It documents the beginning of a new era.

3. Since the construction of our cathedrals, we see here for the first time a truly great architecture on display, an architecture which does not consume itself in the service of petty, day-to-day orders and needs, but is instead an architecture that far surpasses the scope of daily life and its requirements. It has a right to assert that it will withstand the critical appraisal of millenniums and remain, for millenniums, the pride of the Volk which created these works.

4. For this reason there are no projects being exhibited here; instead you see here plans, some of which are already being turned into reality, some of which are soon to be commenced. Everything, however, is destined to become reality—and will become reality!

5. What you see here is not the product of a few weeks' or a few months' work, but the product, in part, of years of effort, albeit which took place secluded from the public eye. For it is a National Socialist principle not to approach the public with difficult problems to allow it to debate them, but to first allow such plans to fully ripen, and then to present them to the Volk. There are things which cannot be subject to debate. Among these are all the eternal values. Who would presume to be able to apply his own limited, commonplace intelligence to the work of really great characters endowed by God? The great artists and master builders have a right to be removed from the critical examination of small-minded contemporaries. Their work will be given its final appraisal and assessment by the centuries, not by the limited understanding of short-lived apparitions.

Hence all these works did not come to be yesterday or the day before; the artistic talent of architects both young and old has been trying itself on them for years now. Furthermore, this exhibition is remarkable first and foremost because, in it, a series of new names are being disclosed to the nation for the first time. Here, too, the new state has been fortunate in finding fresh personifications of its artistic will, and believe me, these names which today are still unknown to many Germans will one day number among the cultural riches of the German nation!

And finally, do not forget: the curtain is being opened this very hour—for the first time before the eyes of a large audience—to reveal works which are destined to leave their mark not on decades, but on centuries! At this very moment they shall undergo the consecration so splendidly expressed in the *Meistersinger*: "Ein Kind ward hier geboren" (here a child was born). These are architectural achievements of intrinsic eternal value and ones which will stand forever according to human standards, firm and unshakeable, immortal in their beauty and in their harmonious proportions!

This exhibition does not, however, show the great picture of the evolution of the Capital of the Reich and the Capital of the Movement. Neither Berlin nor Munich are exhibiting the great plans designed to enhance these cities. They will not be unveiled before the public until their basic planning can be deemed finished. This exhibition shows more of Nuremberg and a great work in Hamburg. I cannot cite the names of all the architects here. They were headed by the master of our time, Professor Troost. A second deceased is represented here with an eternal work: Professor Ruff from Nuremberg. Then come Gall, Speer, Brinkmann, Haerter, Giessler, Kreis, Sagebiel, Klotz, and many more.

Of the works exhibited here, the edifices of Nuremberg are, in our opinion, even now works for eternity: the stadium, the congress hall, the Märzfeld, and the Zeppelinfeld which has already been completed. From Hamburg, you now see here for the first time the bridge spanning the Elbe which, in an overall assessment, can be called the most tremendous bridge

complex in the world. From Berlin, there is essentially only one great new work, the airport. The new Munich airport as well is already part of the exhibition. KdF and Labor Front are exhibiting the seaside resort on the island of Rügen and the new KdF steamers. From Weimar you see the model of an enormous restructuring of this city and, from the same architect, a great Ordensburg on display. The Wehrmacht is demonstrating that today its edifices no longer have anything in common with the type of structure which, in various bad examples from the past, had earned the name "barracks architecture." The Luftwaffe, the Army, and the Navy are also expressing their attitude toward the new state as embodied in their architecture.

It is a special pleasure for us to see how the German youth movement is integrating itself artistically in the new state. The Capital of the Movement and the City of German Art is represented almost exclusively in works which already exist, and with very few lesser works which are only in the planning stage. I hope, however, that the coming great works can be exhibited to the public next year. Arts and crafts have joined these achievements as a fitting partner.

When I now ask you to view this exhibition, I am at the same time expressing the hope that you will be followed by hundreds of thousands of German Volksgenossen who will here take note of what is being planned and accomplished in Germany. May they thus be able to gauge the greatness of an age which they are fortunate enough to be able to witness. In this spirit, I hereby open today's exhibition to the public.

Subsequently, Hitler himself explained each and every piece exhibited to his guests. After additional festivities in their honor, Stojadinovic and his wife departed Munich on January 23, most content with their visit to Germany.

In the interim, the bomb planted at the Blomberg wedding exploded in Berlin. When apprised, the Wehrmacht generals were incensed at this most scandalous match. The Commander in Chief of the Army, Freiherr von Fritsch, appeared at Hitler's office demanding the dismissal of the Minister of War and Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht. Obviously, Fritsch was ignorant of the fact that his name was the next one on Hitler's list. His own removal had been decided upon for a long time already, and together with Blomberg he would be forced to sink into oblivion.

On January 26, in the course of a briefing of Colonel General von Fritsch, Hitler disclosed to him that he was being accused of being homosexual.²⁹ Regardless of whether the claim was justified or not, such an accusation being voiced by Hitler carried with it a special weigh. As a pretext, it even could be tantamount to a death sentence being passed upon the perpetrator, a fact that clearly stood out in light of the Röhm Purge.

It was obvious that for Hitler, Fritsch was a far more formidable opponent than Blomberg had ever been. His appearance alone personified Germany's feudal upper class, not only because he wore a monocle and bore the noble title of baron, but also because Fritsch's intellectual stance presented a true challenge to Hitler. It was well known that the baron had resigned himself to Hitler's rule only through the necessity of circumstance and because the Führer's policies had been advantageous for the Officers' Corps.

Since Schleicher, Hitler had not been faced with such a distinguished challenger from the ranks of the generals. There is little doubt that had the opportunity arisen, Hitler would have dealt with Fritsch in precisely the same manner he had employed in Schleicher's case.³⁰ However, the conference with Fritsch on January 26 did not produce any results, despite the fact that Hitler confronted Fritsch with a "witness" procured by the Gestapo. This "witness" was Hans Schmidt, a man who had supposedly had observed Fritsch engaging in homosexual activities.³¹

On January 28, Colonel Hossbach, Hitler's adjutant with the Wehrmacht, was removed from his post. Evidently, Hitler no longer deemed him worthy of his confidence.³²

That same day, the German race car driver Bernd Rosemeyer died in a crash at Langen-Mörfelden on the Darmstadt-Frankfurt Autobahn during an attempt on the record. His Auto-Union racing car had been swept off the road by a gust of wind. Hitler sent Rosemeyer's widow, the aviator Elly Beinhorn-Rosemeyer, the following telegram expressing his sorrow at her loss:³³

I have been profoundly shaken by the news of your husband's tragic fate. I extend to you my sincere condolences. May the thought soothe your great sorrow that he died in a sortie for the German cause.

Adolf Hitler

One outcome of the Wehrmacht crisis was that the commemoration day of January 30 passed rather quietly. Given the circumstances, the Reichstag did not convene that day.

Later Hitler would attempt to explain the rescheduling of the session by arguing that it had been his intention to implement the changes in personnel after January 30 rather than earlier. He claimed that a delay had become indispensable because he had first wished to clear up matters with regard to foreign policy. What he evidently had in mind here was Austria.³⁴

At 10:00 on the morning of January 30, Hitler stood in an open Mercedes SSK, reviewing his *SS Leibstandarte* as they marched past the Chancellery, wearing their full-dress uniforms with white leather straps and belts. An hour later inside the building, Hitler honored the first recipients of the German National Award for the Arts and Sciences, an award he had established the previous year as a counterbalance for the Nobel Prize:³⁵ Frau Professor Troost; Alfred Rosenberg; the Asia expert and explorer, Dr. Wilhelm Filchner; the surgeon, Professor Ferdinand Sauerbruch; and Professor August Bier. The names of the award's recipients had already been published at the Culture Convention of the Party Congress of Work in 1937. Now Hitler presented to each beneficiary the Golden Medal of Honor.³⁶

On the same day, Hitler donated yet another award, the "Loyal Service Medal" (*Treudienst-Ehrenzeichen*), which was distributed among deserving members of the administration, civil service employees, workers, members of the *SS Verfügungstruppe*, the police, the fire department, and the air-raid protection.³⁷ In addition, Hitler awarded the titles "Professor," "State Actor" and "General Music Director" to numerous artists and scientists. That evening, a formation of the Party marched past the Chancellery, drawing the day of commemoration to a fitting end.

On January 31, Hitler received the senior general, Gerd von Rundstedt,³⁸ and the Chief of the General Staff, General Ludwig Beck.³⁹ Both generals wished to protest the disrespectful manner in which Fritsch had been treated. However, in seeking remedy of his case, they had come to the wrong man. Hitler repudiated their petition by stressing that even generals were soldiers, and as such they were obliged to unquestioningly obey their superior.

On February 2, Hitler called upon the Swedish King Gustav V at the Swedish Legation, where the latter had stopped over for a short visit in Berlin.⁴⁰ That same day, the Reich Foreign Minister von Neurath celebrated both his sixty-fifth birthday and the fortieth anniversary of his service with the Diplomatic Corps. Hitler congratulated him in person and bestowed upon him the recently established gold medal for loyal service.⁴¹

It is possible that on this occasion von Neurath may have remarked upon the fact that he was now nearing retirement age. Even if indeed he had done so, he certainly would have been surprised at how speedily Hitler heeded his request. Within two days of his birthday, von Neurath was placed on the retirement list.

On February 4, Hitler had the personnel changes which he had effected made public. The news created great turmoil in Germany. Even small newspapers ran special editions. In the media, Hitler's take-over of the supreme command of the entire Wehrmacht and the Ministry of War was described as the "greatest accumulation of political, military and economic power in the hands of the Supreme Führer." Hitler issued one decree, ordinance, promotion and open letter after the other on that day, listed below according to the sequence in which they were issued.

A decree concerning the leadership of the Wehrmacht ("Erlass über die Führung der Wehrmacht") marked the beginning:⁴²

I shall personally assume immediate command of the entire Wehrmacht henceforth, The present Wehrmacht Office in the Reich Ministry of War shall assume its responsibilities as the "High Command of the Wehrmacht" (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW). As my military staff it shall be placed under my immediate control.

The present chief of the Wehrmacht Office shall head the staff of the High Command of the Wehrmacht as "Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht." His rank shall be equivalent to that of a Reich Minister.

The High Command of the Wehrmacht simultaneously shall resume the business of the Reich Ministry of War. On my behalf, the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht shall be granted the authority previously accorded to the Reich Minister of War.

In peacetime, the High Command of the Wehrmacht shall ensure the coordinated preparation for defense of the Reich in all fields, in accordance with my instructions.

Berlin, February 4, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Dr. Lammers

The Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Keitel

According to the official rendition, Field Marshal von Blomberg and Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch had requested not to be considered for re-assignment because of "ill health." In addition, letters from Hitler addressed to Blomberg and Fritsch were published. The only discrepancy in comparison with earlier correspondence was that the heading of the letters no longer read "My dear Field Marshal" or "My dear Colonel General." Furthermore, the published contents of this correspondence did not contain the respective last paragraphs of the letters. The letter to Blomberg read verbatim:⁴³

Ever since the restitution of Germany's full military and territorial sovereignty carried through in 1936, you have repeatedly asked me to relieve

you of your duties which pose a great strain on your health. Now that the fifth year subsequent to the restoration of the German Volk and the German Wehrmacht has drawn to a close, I will heed this desire which you have once again expressed. May you be restored to health in this time of repose that lies before you, and which, far more than any other man, you so richly deserve.

Standing before me on January 30, 1933, you, the Field Marshal, were the first officer of the new Reich to take the oath of loyalty to the National Socialist State leadership. Undaunted, you have upheld it for five years. In this time period occurred the most significant reorganization of the military in all of German history. Your name shall remain connected to this project for all time in the annals of history.

In this hour, let me once again assure you of the deep gratitude of the German Volk and myself.

Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch received the following correspondence:⁴⁴

In consideration of your feeble health, you have seen yourself forced to ask me to relieve of your duties. Now that a recent sojourn to the South has not brought about the desired recovery, I have determined to heed your request. On the occasion of your departure from active duty, I would like to express deep gratitude and appreciation for your excellent performance in the service of the rebuilding of the Army. The reconstruction and strengthening of the German Army in the time period March 1935 to February 1938 shall remain connected to your name for all time in the annals of history.

In addition, a series of military appointments went into effect:⁴⁵

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has bestowed the baton of a field marshal upon the present Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, Colonel General Göring.

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has appointed the Artillery General von Brauchitsch,⁴⁶ at present Commander in Chief of Army Group IV, as the new Commander in Chief of the Army, while simultaneously promoting him to the rank of Colonel General.

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has appointed the former Chief of the Wehrmacht Office, Artillery General Keitel,⁴⁷ as "Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht."

These were not the only personnel changes that Hitler saw to that day. As would become evident in due course, he literally moved the generals around by assigning forty-six of the Wehrmacht's leading men to new command posts. Fourteen other generals found themselves forced into an early retirement. The fact that on March 1 Hitler sent each

of them an autographed photograph of their Führer was probably of little consolation to them.⁴⁸

Hitler showed restraint solely with regard to the Soldatenbund. As soon as another event had captured the attention of the German public, Hitler would quietly eliminate the organization as if in passing. He proceeded with tactics similar to those he employed in the earlier case of the Stahlhelm.

Additional announcements issued that day pertained to the Foreign Office. They read:⁴⁹

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Chancellor has relieved the Reich Minister Freiherr von Neurath of his duties as Foreign Minister, while simultaneously providing that Freiherr von Neurath remain "Reich Minister." The Führer has named him president of the newly formed Cabinet Privy Council.

On this occasion, the Führer and Chancellor has ordered that all remaining Reich Ministers who previously were not administering a specific ministry and who—according to earlier statutes—had been titled Reich Minister "without Portfolio," are to discard this classification and in the future be addressed as "Reich Ministers."⁵⁰ In the Führer's opinion, the specification of the title as "without Portfolio" is impossible and does not render justice to them. These Reich Ministers fulfill certain important tasks within the Reich Government in their capacity as advisers to the Führer and Chancellor. In particular this is true in the case of the Führer's deputy, Rudolf Hess.

With von Neurath, Hitler proceeded in precisely the same manner he had tried to apply—though unsuccessfully—to Hugenberg.⁵¹ Notwithstanding, this mode had served him well in the Schacht case.⁵² For appearances' sake, Neurath would be allowed to remain in the cabinet—but only after being deprived of all influence. There was no doubt as to Hitler's intent, and the deletion of the epitaph "without Portfolio" could not veil this fact. Neither could von Neurath's appointment to the position of president of a "Cabinet Privy Council" conceal Hitler's true designs. As was to be expected, this council never convened.⁵³ The verbatim content of the decree establishing the Council follows:⁵⁴

I establish a Cabinet Privy Council to advise me on the conduct of foreign affairs. I appoint Reich Minister Freiherr von Neurath president of the Cabinet Privy Council.

I assign the following men as members of the Cabinet Privy Council:

Joachim von Ribbentrop, Reich Foreign Minister;

Field Marshal Hermann Göring, Prussian Minister-President and Reich Minister of Air and Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe;

February 4, 1938

Reich Minister Rudolf Hess, the Führer's Deputy;

Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda;

Dr. Hans Heinrich Lammers, Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery;

Colonel General Walter von Brauchitsch, Commander in Chief of the Army;

Rear General Erich Raeder, Commander in Chief of the Navy;

Artillery General Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command;

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery conducts the current affairs of the Cabinet Privy Council.

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Dr. Lammers

To Neurath himself, Hitler sent a carefully composed letter, the content of which was the following:⁵⁵

On the occasion of the completion of the first half of a decade of National Socialist State leadership, you have once again requested a release into the retirement you covet. In consideration of your indispensable assistance, I cannot accede to this even with due regard to your recent sixty-fifth birthday and fortieth service anniversary.

Your advice and opinion have become indispensable to me in the five years of our association. Therefore, it is in order to preserve for myself an adviser in the future that I appoint you the president of the Cabinet Privy Council while relieving you of the conduct of daily affairs in the Reich Foreign Ministry. You are an adviser who has stood loyally by my side through the most difficult past five years. Today I feel compelled to thank you for this with all my heart.

A further decree by Hitler that day concerned both the appointment of Ribbentrop as Foreign Minister and the recall of Germany's ambassadors from Rome, Tokyo, and Vienna. The official announcement had the following verbatim content:⁵⁶

Berlin, February 4

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has recalled the Ambassador in London, von Ribbentrop, from his present post and has appointed him Foreign Minister. Simultaneously, the Führer and Reich Chancellor has recalled the ambassadors von Hassel from Rome, von Dirksen from Tokyo and von Papen from Vienna, and has placed them at his disposal.

By issuing this decree, Hitler made it perfectly clear that in the future he himself would preside over the conduct of Germany's foreign affairs. Like Keitel, Ribbentrop was little more than a secretary to Hitler.⁵⁷ He eagerly listened to Hitler's every word, and in "blind

obedience” followed through on his Führer’s instructions, even if he himself did not concur with the latter’s opinion.

Hitler was always anxious to avoid speaking at mass rallies whenever he found himself confronted by a difficult situation or when he was enacting less than universally accepted measures. In the Röhm Affair it had taken him nearly two weeks before he could make a public appearance and explain his actions. In the present instance as well, he postponed taking a stance in the Reichstag for nearly fourteen days. For the time being, he had the following official announcement issued:⁵⁸

Berlin, February 4

The German Reichstag is called upon to convene in Berlin on Sunday, February 20. On the agenda is a declaration to be delivered by the Reich Government.

By this date Hitler counted on having sufficient successes to his credit, in particular his victory in Austria, to facilitate suppressing any resentments that may have persisted over the measures enacted on February 4.

Once he had taken care of matters for the immediate future, Hitler delivered an address to clarify his views before the Reich Cabinet on the evening of February 5 in which he took a stand on the latest events. The official note published on the occasion was the following:⁵⁹

Berlin, February 6

The Reich Cabinet was in session Saturday night. The Cabinet accepted a report on the political situation by the Führer and Reich Chancellor. The Reich Cabinet expressed its great satisfaction with the results of the Führer’s recent decisions, namely, with the concentration and strengthening of the political, military, and economic powers of the Reich.

The first reaction abroad to the events in Germany arrived in the form of a congratulatory telegram from Mussolini on February 5:

Both in my capacity as Minister of the Italian Armed Forces and personally, I would like to express the joy I felt, as did all the Italian people, upon learning of Your Excellency’s assumption of direct and supreme command over the entire Wehrmacht of the Reich. I regard this event as conducive to the reinforcement of the solidarity between both our armed forces and our regimes.

With the most friendly regards,

Mussolini

That same day, Hitler replied to the Italian chief of government’s message in the telegram below:⁶⁰

February 5, 1938

With all my heart, I thank Your Excellency for the thoughtfulness accorded to me in the telegram sent on the occasion of my assumption of supreme command over the Wehrmacht of the Reich. I shall regard it as my task, in the future as well, to further strengthen the political and *weltanschaulich* bonds which already exist between Italy and Germany, in order to serve the maintenance of peace and culture in the world.

In returning your greetings in the most sincere friendship, I remain Your Excellency's faithful,

Adolf Hitler

On February 6, Franco also sent a note congratulating Hitler:

I warmly congratulate Your Excellency on the assumption of the supreme command over the Wehrmacht in Germany in the conviction that Your Excellency herewith has further contributed to strengthening the cordial relationship that forms a bond between Spain and your great country.

Hitler thanked Franco in the following wired reply:⁶¹

I thank Your Excellency for the warm wishes extended to me by wire on the occasion of my assumption of supreme command of the German Wehrmacht.

I return your greetings with my heartfelt best wishes for the prosperity of Nationalist Spain.

Adolf Hitler

When on February 4 and February 5 respectively, the measures taken were made public in Germany, the news spawned an indignant public outburst. Not since the days of the Röhm Purge had an event caused a similar sensation. The public grasped immediately that Hitler had struck out at the generals.

Needless to say, without doubt the SA men were the most content with this development. They remembered only too well the events of 1934 from which the generals had greatly benefited. "What happened to us on June 30, 1934 has now happened to the generals," the SA Gruppenführer Berchtold, leader of the *Stosstrupp Hitler* in the 1923 Putsch, declared in Munich.⁶² Strikingly similar in both cases was the behavior Hitler displayed in their aftermath. Following the pattern he had set in the Röhm Purge, Hitler again immediately embarked upon his mission against Austria in order to detract public attention.⁶³

2

The fact that there was no prior notice given in the recall of the Ambassador Extraordinary von Papen from Vienna on February 4—even to the Ambassador himself—betrayed Hitler’s determination to employ more pointed means in his dealings with Austria. If necessary, he had resolved to employ force to execute the Anschluss. Needless to say, the measure was directed primarily against Schuschnigg, who immediately grasped the true nature of the game. The dismissal of the moderate and affable von Papen could mean only one thing: a change of strategy on the part of Hitler. This in turn might result in the deployment in Vienna of a representative completely loyal to Hitler, such as the National Socialist expert on Austrian affairs, Wilhelm Keppler.⁶⁴

Schuschnigg had a bit of a guilty conscience because of the lax implementation of the German-Austrian Agreement of July 11, 1936. He feared that the German Chancellor would increase the pressure on Austria by stepping up measures directed against Austria. In an attempt to save what was left of German good will, he agreed to a meeting with Hitler on February 12 on the Obersalzberg.

Accompanied by Ambassador Extraordinary von Papen and the Austrian State Secretary Guido Schmidt, Schuschnigg left Salzburg for the Berghof in a clandestine manner. Hitler had been busily preparing an impressive scenario for the arrival of the Austrian Chancellor. He had ordered a number of generals, whose comportment was of a particularly martial nature,⁶⁵ to the Obersalzberg to function as extras on the setting.

Early in the discussion,⁶⁶ Hitler met Schuschnigg with an angry tirade that took the Austrian’s breath, and left him so unnerved that he was unable to state his case persuasively. Hitler raged on, insisting that Austria’s entire history was one of continued treason to the detriment

of the German Volk. The present situation reaffirmed this beyond doubt.

"And one thing I can tell you, Herr Schuschnigg," Hitler screamed, "I am firmly resolved to put an end to all that. The German Reich is a major power, and no one can or will try to interfere when it puts things in order at its borders."

A two-hour monologue followed, in which Hitler gave detailed consideration to the remarkable life he had led, to his accomplishments and his successes. He paid particular attention to his ability to achieve any feat, once he had set his mind to it. Sentimental flash-backs gave way to angry attacks on Schuschnigg, whom he accused of entertaining "anti-German" machinations and of supposedly having ordered precautionary military steps against Germany. Finally, Hitler categorically declared that if not all of his demands were met immediately, he would resolve the issue by the use of force.

During a break for lunch, Hitler slipped back into his role as the amiable host, agreeably entertaining his guest at dinner. Nevertheless, he could not pass up the opportunity of surrounding Schuschnigg with his fearsome generals at the dinner table.

That afternoon, Hitler left the task of continuing deliberations with Schuschnigg and Schmidt to Ribbentrop and Papen. In the meantime, Hitler conferred with Keppler and other National Socialists. Then he returned to the conference room where he resumed his talks with Schuschnigg. Suddenly, he interrupted himself, threw open the doors and cried out for General Keitel. Obviously, he intended to create the impression that he was on the verge of giving last minute instructions for a pending foray into Austria.

In retrospect, one may wonder if these theatrics were truly necessary. They appear not in the least appropriate to the situation at hand, especially if one keeps in mind the further course of events. Austria was but a tiny country, strongly dependent upon Germany. Its military was most certainly not in a position to put up a fight. Either Austria would have to accede voluntarily, or indeed the dictator would resort to force. Such a step against his *Brudervolk*, was something, however, he wished to avoid if at all possible. Besides, preparations to that end would take time, and he was in a hurry to arrive at a settlement of the Austrian affair.

After all, it was already February 12, and by the time he had to justify his actions before the Reichstag on February 20, he needed tangible results in hand.

Hitler had envisioned Schuschnigg playing a role similar to that of von Papen in the years 1932-33. Schuschnigg was to open the doors for a National Socialist cabinet in Austria, while at first staying on as federal chancellor of the country. Later on, he would quietly step down to become vice-chancellor, a position he would hold for appearances' sake only.

In the aftermath of the Anschluss of Austria, as he spoke before the Reichstag on March 18, 1938, Hitler would explain the goals that he had pursued in this February 12 meeting with Schuschnigg in the following terms:⁶⁷

I asked him to spare German-Austria, the German Reich, and himself a situation that sooner or later would necessarily lead to very serious disputes. In this context, I suggested a path to him which could lead to a gradual reconciliation not only between the people within Austria, but also between the two German states.

In a speech in Königsberg on March 25, 1938, Hitler added the following explanation regarding the conference with the Austrian Federal Chancellor:⁶⁸

In the course of this winter, there were many signs which have led me to believe that, in the long run, this situation had become untenable and that there were only two possibilities: either a structured settlement or an unstructured outbreak of revolution. I wanted to avoid the latter, and I invited this man to come to see me in spite of the fact that, toward me, he had no mandate whatsoever to represent this territory. I bade him to come to me, and in all earnestness I confronted him with the inevitable consequence of continuing to maintain this tyranny [in Austria].

I said to him, "Herr Schuschnigg, you are oppressing a country! You have no right to do so! This country is my homeland, too, just as much as it is yours! Who do you think you are to keep violating this country? I am prepared, in concert with you, to submit to a referendum of the people. The two of us shall stand as candidates.⁶⁹ The Volk shall decide." He found this would not be possible on constitutional grounds. However, I warned him to seek a peaceful way of lessening the tension, because otherwise no one could guarantee that the tortured soul of the people would not cry out. And there was one thing about which I could leave no doubt: no more shots will be fired against German Volksgenossen at the German borders!⁷⁰

On the afternoon of February 12, Ribbentrop and von Papen detailed to Schuschnigg precisely which "peaceful way of lessening the tension" he was to pursue. Hitler's demands can be summarized as follows: legalization of the National Socialist Movement in Austria within the framework of the Vaterländische Front; amnesty for all detained National Socialists; acceptance of a second National Socialist as

member of the Austrian Cabinet, Arthur Seyss-Inquart,⁷¹ who was also to be named Minister of the interior; and, finally, the maintenance of close economic and military ties with Germany.

Schuschnigg was to accept these conditions as a base for future good neighborly relations between the two states. He was not permitted to take exception to any one of them, and was instructed to at once place his signature beneath them. In the course of the subsequently renewed talks with Hitler, Schuschnigg declared that—even if he had wanted to—he could not sign into law the proposed agreement on the spot because of the exigencies of the Austrian Constitution. Instantly, Hitler thought out the Federal Chancellor's argument. The Führer realized that a continued insistence upon an immediate signature might jeopardize the action legally and hence might disagreeably prolong matters beyond February 20. Thus, he assumed a more congenial demeanor, magnanimously according Schuschnigg three days' time to settle matters. Impassioned, he declared:

For the first time in my life, I have decided to revise a decision I once made. Listen here! I am repeating it for you: it is absolutely the last attempt. I expect the execution within three days' time!

On the ride back to Salzburg, Schuschnigg and his aide Schmidt sat in silence, while von Papen tried to console them by saying: "Yes, the Führer can be like that, as you've just seen for yourselves. However, the next time you come, you'll be far more at ease speaking with him. The Führer can be remarkably charming."

In reference to the meeting of Hitler and Schuschnigg, the following communiqué was released:⁷²

On Saturday, the Austrian Federal Chancellor Dr. von Schuschnigg paid a visit to the Führer and Reich Chancellor, who had invited him to the Obersalzberg. Dr. Schuschnigg journeyed there, accompanied by the Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Guido Schmidt, and the German Ambassador von Papen. They met in the presence of the German Reich Foreign Minister Ribbentrop. This unofficial encounter fulfilled a mutual desire to discuss frankly all matters concerning the relationship between the German Reich and Austria.

Even though the information contained in this publication was meager, it attracted great attention in Germany. Many people were confounded by the statement that the two men, who had openly fought each other up to this point, had agreed to meet for an "unofficial encounter."

Involuntarily, people were reminded of a press release published on January 4, 1933 that had announced the meeting of the two declared enemies von Papen and Hitler. Hitler would have been well pleased had the meeting of February 12, 1938, entailed consequences similar to the earlier one.

One man, who also derived his sole knowledge of the event from the note, was the Italian head of state. The Führer had chosen not to inform his friend Mussolini of this action in advance. The Italian probably had mixed feelings with regard to the announcement. Obviously, Hitler was not given to consult anyone in these matters, and the Duce realized that he, too, would simply have to resign himself to being informed of Germany's planned actions no earlier than a few hours prior to their implementation—usually in the middle of the night.

Hitler was not inactive during the three days allotted to the Austrian Federal Chancellor to secure his government's approval of the proposed agreement. Hitler took great care to foster the fear of an imminent German military intervention in Austria. Displays of military might were followed by the recall of German military attaches from Vienna, the concentration of troops along the border, special regulations restricting railroad traffic, and similar measures.⁷³

On February 16 at 2:30 a.m., the new composition of the Viennese cabinet was made public. It satisfied all of Hitler's requests:⁷⁴

Federal Chancellor: Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg; Vice-Chancellor: retired Field Marshal Ludwig Hülgerth; Foreign Minister: Dr. Guido Schmidt; Minister of Finance: Dr. Rudolf Neumayer; Minister of Commerce: Engineer Julius Raab; Minister of Social Services: Dr. Josef Resch; Minister of the Interior and Security: Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart; Minister for Agriculture: Peter Mandorfer; Minister of Education: Dr. Hans Pernter; Minister of Justice: Dr. Ludwig Adamovich; Federal Ministers without Portfolio: Guido Zernatto, Dr. h.c. Glaise-Horstenau, Hans Rott; State Secretary for Military Affairs: Infantry General Wilhelm Zehner; of Security: Dr. Michael Skubl; of Labor and Employee Protection: Adolf Watzek; and for Industrial Affairs: retired Lieutenant Colonel Ludwig Stepsky-Doliva.

The German Reich Government published the following statement on the German-Austrian Agreement:⁷⁵

Berlin, February 16, 1938

The discussion between the Führer and Reich Chancellor and the Federal Chancellor Dr. Schuschnigg, which took place on the Obersalzberg on February 12, dealt in a most thorough manner with all questions pertaining to the relationship of the German Reich to Austria. It was the goal of this exchange of views to resolve the difficulties that have arisen due to the

implementation of the agreement of July 11. Both parties concurred in their determination to hold fast to the principles embodied in this document. Further, both states regard it as a base for a satisfactory development of their mutual relations.

It was with this in mind that both parties to the discussion on February 12 have resolved to see to the immediate implementation of measures which guarantee the establishment of such close and friendly relations between both states as provided for by the history and the self-interest of the German Volk. The statesmen share the conviction that the measures decided upon also represent an important contribution to the peaceful development of the situation in Europe.

The Austrian Government has issued a proclamation of similar content.

Simultaneously, the Government in Vienna announced a total amnesty for all politically motivated crimes that had been perpetrated prior to February 15, 1938. Hitler's success in Austria appeared to have been complete.

Already on February 17, Wilhelm Keppler greeted the new Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior and of Security Seyss-Inquart upon his arrival in Berlin. Thereafter, he ushered the Austrian politician to the Chancellery to pay Hitler "a short visit." Only a small note and a photograph were published on the topic of the consultation with Hitler, which generally was interpreted as a summons of the Austrian by Hitler. However, given the subservient demeanor of Seyss-Inquart, this photograph betrayed more than words could possibly have.⁷⁶

On February 18, Hitler delivered an address at the opening of the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin.⁷⁷ In the course of a most detailed "party narrative," Hitler repeated his arguments of previous years in favor of the Volkswagen, which in essence was "to make the automobile accessible to millions of new buyers from the lower income ranks." Further, he stated:

Let us therefore ensure that, by providing a tremendous number of inexpensive German Volkswagens in the future, the wishes of those will be satisfied who are willing, out of their love for and pleasure in automobiles, to invest a part of their income for that purpose. This will above all result in the fact that the automobile will no longer be the symbol of a certain class of those with higher incomes; it will instead increasingly become the general means of transportation for everyone in Germany.

And then all this tremendous propaganda work we are accomplishing toward the motorization of our Volk in a both material and non-material sense will not have been in vain. In a material sense, by virtue of building the best roads in the world; and in a non-material sense, by virtue of a sporting activity which has regained for our German production of engines, automobiles, and motorcycles its good reputation throughout the world. It is painful for us to

know that the young life of one of the absolute best and most courageous of these pioneers in establishing world renown for German engine and automobile production, Bernd Rosemeyer, was so recently put to an end.

Yet he and all the men who sit at the steering wheels of our cars and on our motorcycles in this tough race are also joining in the fight to win bread for the German worker and provide for him a wage and earnings which can then be exchanged for other things of value.

Thereafter, Hitler announced the foundation of a "German Motor Sports Badge" and predicted that within a short time period, Germany would produce not only "the best, but also the most inexpensive cars in the world."

This is the reason why I have decided to create the "German Motor Sports Badge" as an external symbol of my tribute and that of the whole German Volk, which is to be awarded for the extraordinary achievements and self-sacrificing dedication of the men who perform German motor sports and who fight year for year for Germany's reputation and Germany's recognition, whether it be on the world's racetracks, in challenging records, in long-distance and endurance races, or in cross-country motor sports. Above all, this most prestigious award shall be an incentive for German youth interested in motor sports. Corps Leader Hühnlein, the head of automobile sports, will issue the conditions governing the conferral of the award. As ever, I am filled this time, too, with sincere gratitude to all those whose work we will once more be able to admire in a few minutes' time.

There is no doubt: we owe the best cars in the world to our directors, engineers, foremen, workers, and merchants. Today I am certain: within a short time, we will also produce the most inexpensive car. Yet at the same time I believe that it is the duty of every single German to profess his faith in the work of his Volksgenossen. With this request, I hereby declare the 1938 International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin to be open.

After delivering his speech, Hitler went on a three-hour tour of the exhibition halls.

At 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 20, the time had come for Hitler's great speech before the Reichstag. The session was not only broadcast on the radio, but also for the first time transmitted live to the greater cinemas of Berlin, an unprecedented event. Also for the very first time, the Austrian radio stations aired a speech by Hitler. The Reichstag deputies and the general public had eagerly awaited this particular speech. They hoped for more detailed information on both the events of February 4 and the meeting between Hitler and Schuschnigg. At first, it seemed as though Hitler intended to be merciful and relate early in his speech what everyone was waiting for. Perhaps the audience would not be kept in suspense for too long. He began:⁷⁸

My Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

I know that you, and with you the German Volk, expected to be called together for a commemoration of the fifth anniversary of our take-over that you, as the duly elected representatives of the Reich, might commemorate with me that so memory-laden beginning of a new historic departure of our Volk. The decision to convene the Reichstag today instead was made for two reasons:

1. I held it to be fitting to make a number of personnel changes not prior to, but after January 30; and
2. I felt it was necessary to bring about beforehand an urgently required clarification regarding a certain aspect of our foreign relations.

For you all have good reason to expect that such a day will provide not only a retrospective on the past, but also a glimpse into the future. Both of these shall be the objective and the content of my speech to you today.

However, the next sentence already revealed that Hitler had no intention of doing without his “party narrative,” not even on an occasion such as this one.

When, at noon of January 30 five years ago, Reich President and Field Marshal von Hindenburg entrusted to me the chancellorship and hence the leadership of the Reich, we National Socialists perceived this to constitute a turning point for the fate of Germany.

This particular “party narrative” was extraordinarily lengthy and culminated in the observation:

The day I entered the building on the Wilhelmsplatz⁷⁹ as the head of the largest opposition party and emerged as the Führer and Chancellor of the nation was a turning point in the history of our Volk, then, now, and for all time to come.

As the “party narrative” appeared to be nearing its end, and one had hope that Hitler might finally get to the point in the central part of his speech, Hitler read off a monstrous list of figures, the like of which the audience had never heard. This indeed was the lengthiest and most detailed account he would ever deliver, never to be surpassed at a later date. This time Hitler had set out to put his audience through the worst, so that by the time he would explain the Wehrmacht crisis and his stance on foreign policy, he would be facing a completely exhausted audience, no longer capable of judgment.

Hitler commenced this part of his speech with the following introductory statements:

When in a country hundreds of thousands of peasants are faced with the loss of their buildings and land—when hundreds of thousands of industrial workers lose their daily bread—when tens of thousands of companies are

forced to close their gates, and their staff and workers are dismissed—when an army of more than six million unemployed, which is steadily increasing, weighs ever heavier on the finances of the Reich, the Länder and the communities, and in spite of this support can scarcely afford the bare necessities of life—when a spiritual proletariat evolves for which the education they have enjoyed turns out to be more a curse than a blessing when old, flourishing industrial cities decay, and large sectors virtually begin to become extinct for lack of markets for their products—when in others, the children do not have teeth at three or four years old as a result of horrendous poverty and its ensuing undernourishment—when neither bread nor milk can be procured for them—when the remark of a hard-hearted foe⁸⁰ to the effect that twenty million people too many are living in our German Volk is nearly proven true by the horrors of reality, then such a Volk will not cry out for journalistic scribes or parliamentary gabblers; it will not cry out for investigation committees, for international debates, for ridiculous referenda, or for the shallow clichés of foreign and domestic so-called “statesmen!” No! It cries out for the action that will bring salvation, beyond talk and stupid newspaper articles. It has no interest in the literary treatises of drawing-room-Bolshevist international correspondents; its interest lies solely in the help which will jerk it back from the outermost edge!

And above all: he who feels himself called upon to take on the task of leading a Volk in such an hour is not responsible to the laws of parliamentary procedure, nor is he under obligation to a certain democratic standpoint; he is bound exclusively to the mission assigned to him. And he who interferes with this mission is an enemy of the people—regardless of whether he attempts to interfere as a Bolshevik, a democrat, a revolutionary terrorist, or a reactionary dreamer.

In such a time of crisis, he who lazily meanders across the land quoting the Bible and spending the live-long day either doing nothing or criticizing the actions of others, is not acting in the name of God; instead, it is he who lends his prayer the most sacred form which connects a man to his God: labor! And when today I account for myself before the German Volk, I can proudly and openly face all those hundreds of thousands and millions who are forced to work themselves to earn their daily bread in the city and the country.

In these past five years, I too have been a worker. Yet my personal concerns were multiplied by the concern for the existence and the future of sixty-eight million others. And just as these others rightly refuse to tolerate that their work is disrupted by good-for-nothings or layabouts, I too refused to tolerate that my work be obstructed by good-for-nothings, n’er-do-wells, or malicious or lazy elements.

I had a right here to turn against anyone who, instead of doing his part, regarded his mission as consisting solely in the critical observation and appraisal of our work. Neither does faith relieve one of the obligation to fall into line with the work of those who are accomplishing the salvation of a nation. The fact that I had a right to protect my work and the work of all of us from such public troublemakers is something I would now like to docu-

ment in the fruits of this work. They are undisputed, yet above all: they are all the more remarkable because, in most cases, I did not have the models of past achievements to rely upon as examples; I had only my own sound common sense and the earnest desire to never capitulate before obstacles, but instead to spite them with courage and bravery.

At this time I would also like to make another observation: if today Germany has in fact been rescued economically, the German Volk owes this solely to its own leadership and its own effort. Foreign countries have had no part in this at all. With the exception of hate-filled rejection or a stupid know-all manner, we are aware of nothing which could even be seen as a positive interest for Germany, not to mention help. [—]

Allow me now to give you a short excerpt from our economic life which proves in plain figures whether and to what extent National Socialism has solved these problems.

It took Hitler an entire hour to deliver this “short excerpt” (!). He read off rows of figures and statistical calculations, without stopping to catch his breath even once. This time he spoke not only of the usual thousands and millions but of billions as well.

He started off with a description of the national income situation in the Reich. While in 1932 it had amounted to 45.2 billion marks, it had risen to 46.6 billion in 1933, and to 68 billion in 1937. Figures pertaining to the standard of living followed. These in turn were superseded by the value of factory production in the above sequence of years: 37.8 billion first, then 39.9 billion and finally 75 billion. This had led to an increase in turnover from 9.5 billion to 10.1 billion and then to 22 billion. Thereupon followed an account of retail trade (21.8 billion etc.) and of agricultural production (8.7 billion etc.). Then Hitler turned to a detailed description of the “gigantic increase” in industrial production, beginning with the production of paper, and proceeding on the topics of diesel fuel, mineral coal, fuel oil, crude oil, artificial silk, kerosene, steel, lubricating oil, gasoline, aluminium, and so on. The millions of tons produced in the years 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, and 1937, tumbled onto the audience. Hitler even deemed precise data on magnesite, fluorite, arsenic ore, iron pyrites, and other specific substances, as “worthy of public attention.”

Thereupon, he placed before the German Volk the “results in other specific fields.” These figures showed an increase in the number of automobiles, of the millions of tons of goods traded on the high seas as well as on the waterways inland, of the millions of ton kilometers in the railway system, of the 6.4 billion letters handled by the Reichspost, of money deposited on postal checking accounts, of airmail

consignments, of transportation by postal motorbus services, and finally of the increased annual service of airmail traffic, etc.

These figures were followed by the millions of cubic meters of earth moved in road construction, the millions of newly constructed apartments, the total of theater tickets sold, the KdF trips on land and on sea, etc. There was nothing too minute or too insignificant to be listed by Hitler that day. The only true importance in each figure listed was that it took up speaking time to allay his listeners and satisfied his fetish for numbers. The series of accounts culminated in figures detailing the surplus of children who had been conceived since 1933:

And when I now round out this picture of the upswing of German life which I wish to show you, using only very few proofs and figures taken from the huge number available, I can find no closing more splendid than the one illustrated in our increasing number of births! In the year 1932, 970,000 children were born. This figure was increasing annually and reached the mark of 1,270,000 in 1937. All told, since National Socialism took power, approximately 1,160,000 more children have been bestowed upon the German Volk! Not only are they a reason for us to be proud of our German women; they are also a reason to be grateful to our Providence. To enable the nation to accomplish its incomparable work in peace, 1,160,000 young new Volksgenossen were bestowed upon it in the space of five years, living proof of the tremendous work of the National Socialist uplifting of our Volk and the blessing of our Lord God.

My Deputies! Men of the Reichstag! In this very brief excerpt, I have attempted, by presenting stark and plain figures, to lay before you and the German Volk documentary evidence for the work of construction, a work which is unique in terms both of its dimensions and its effect. My entire staff and I myself—and with us the entire German Volk—can be proud of five years in which such gigantic achievements were accomplished in every area of our economic life. How ridiculous, in comparison, is the criticism of all those who have nothing to offer in the face of the National Socialist work of reconstruction other than the mumbling (*Gestammel*) of their stupidity or their spitefulness!

Then Hitler launched a few attacks upon foreign journalists. At this point, Hitler finally at least alluded to the central issue of the day—which he was supposed to be discussing in the first place—namely, the present crisis within the Wehrmacht:

In the past few weeks, you have been hearing certain foreign journalists with their, for us, simply incomprehensible talk, in which they claim—in 1938—that the influence of National Socialism has just spread to the Foreign Office, or that at present there is a struggle going on between the Reichswehr—the fact that, in the meantime, there is a German Wehrmacht is something these miserable wretches (*armselige Tröpfe*) have apparently missed out on—

and the Party, or that the National Socialist “wing” is about to draw the economy into its sphere of influence, and more of the same nonsense. How little they understand the essence of our National Socialist Revolution!

Now, one might have expected Hitler to expand upon these statements. No such luck! After these initial tidbits, he started off on yet another “party narrative,” the second one of the day: “When I took power five years ago, I already was the leader of by far the strongest party,” etc. Once again, the audience had to listen to how Hitler had “hated and therefore eliminated all those institutions” that had “helped foster in the German Volk a petty manner of thinking.” Hitler then summed up the net result of this undertaking in one sentence:

Thus within the space of but a few years, National Socialism has compensated for what centuries before it had omitted, and put right what countless generations before it had done wrong.

Thereafter, he finally came to speak of the events of February 4, and expressed his disgust with “military dictatorship,” by referring to it in the same breath as to the despised “parliamentary democracy.”

One of these accomplishments [of National Socialism] is above all the formation of a leadership of the Volk and State that is as far removed from parliamentary democracy as it is from a military dictatorship. In National Socialism, the Volk has been given the leadership which, as a party, has not only mobilized but also organized the nation, and organized it such that the supremely natural principle of selection would appear to indicate that the continued existence of a secure political leadership is guaranteed. And this is perhaps one of the proudest chapters in the history of the past five years. Contrary to what a small international scribe perhaps believes, National Socialism did not conquer the Foreign Ministry in Germany on February 4; it has possessed Germany in its entirety since that day I emerged from the building on the Wilhelmsplatz five years ago as Reich is Chancellor, and possessed it totally and without exception. There is not a single institution in this state which is not National Socialist. [—]

In terms of leadership, the greatest safeguard of the National Socialist Revolution at home and abroad lies in the fact that the National Socialist Party encompasses, in a comprehensive sense, the Reich and all its facilities and institutions. The Reich’s protection against the world, on the other hand, lies in the new National Socialist Wehrmacht.

Now the time had come for Hitler to be more direct in his choice of words in order to demonstrate the extent of his power and to demand of the Wehrmacht “blind faith and blind obedience.” At the same time, he openly admitted that the recent measures had served “to achieve within the shortest space of time that reinforcement of our

military instrument of power which the general circumstances of our time indicate to be advisable today.”

Party Comrades!

At this time eighteen years ago I first announced the program of the Party. Back then, in the time of utter German humiliation, of the greatest impotence and unimaginable misery, I proclaimed the goal of the National Socialist Party as being, among other things, the elimination of the mercenary army forced upon us by the Treaty of Versailles, and the formation of a great, strong German *Volksheer*.

It was as an unknown German soldier at the front that I put together this bold program, fighting for it for fourteen years in opposition to a world of domestic foes and foreign haters, and in the space of five years I have now turned it into reality! I do not need to go into detail on this, the greatest accomplishment of the new Reich. I only want to announce the following: The German peace army has been assembled! A tremendous German Luftwaffe is protecting our homeland! A new power at sea is protecting our shores! In the midst of a gigantic increase in our general production, it has been possible to build up an armament beyond compare!⁸¹

If it serves as an inner comfort to the wise men abroad, then as far as we are concerned, let them believe that there are God knows how many disputes between the Wehrmacht and National Socialism in Germany. We would be the last to deprive them of this type of inner self-satisfaction. Yet if they should ever come to other conclusions beyond these, let them be told the following: In Germany there is no such thing as the problem of the National Socialist State and the National Socialist Party, nor of the National Socialist Party and the National Socialist Wehrmacht. In this Reich, everyone who holds any type of responsible position is a National Socialist!

Every man wears the sovereign symbol of National Socialism on his brow.⁸² Every institution in the Reich is under the command of the supreme political leadership, and all the institutions of this Reich are sworn to and united in the will and the resolve to represent this National Socialist Germany and, if necessary, to defend it to their last breath. May you not be persuaded to believe otherwise by those elements who have already revealed themselves in Germany to be the worst prophets. The Party is leading the Reich politically and the Wehrmacht is defending this Reich militarily. Every institution in this Reich has its appointed task, and there is no one in any responsible position in this state who has any doubt that I am the authorized leader of this Reich and that the nation has given me a mandate, by virtue of its trust, to represent it at all times and at all places.

Just as the German Wehrmacht is dedicated to this National Socialist State in blind faith and blind obedience, this National Socialist State and its leading Party are likewise proud of and pleased with our Wehrmacht. In it we see the crowning glory of a National Socialist education which captivates the German man from youth onwards. What he learns in the political organizations and in his political and spiritual attitude is supplemented here by the training and education to become a soldier. In this hour I cannot help paying tribute to

those men who, as trustees of the Wehrmacht, the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe, have helped me to shape this magnificent instrument.

I was forced to respect the wish of Field Marshal von Blomberg that, upon the completion of the first great phase of formation, his weakened health [!] be spared, now that there have been so many aggravations in his private life. However, at this time I would like to express my thanks and the thanks of the German Volk for the so infinitely faithful and loyal work this soldier has accomplished for the new Reich and its Wehrmacht. In history, this work will never again be able to be divorced as such from the history of the founding of this Reich. The same applies to the work and outstanding achievements of Colonel General Fritsch. And of all those who, in an utterly noble spirit, placed their positions at the disposal of younger political and military personnel within the scope of the rejuvenation of our political and military leadership corps.

We know what the 100,000-man army of the former Reichswehr accomplished in the way of prerequisites for the so very swift rearmament of the German Wehrmacht. Yet we also know that, to accomplish the new and tremendous tasks, an ever-replenished stream of young men is required. And above all we know that the tasks of the future will necessitate a stronger consolidation of the political and military power of the Reich than was perhaps requisite in the past. Therefore my decision, following Field Marshal von Blomberg's retirement, to exercise my power of command over the three branches of the Wehrmacht first-hand and put the Wehrmacht Office, as the Highest Command of the Wehrmacht, under my personal control, is one which I hope will enable us to achieve within the shortest space of time that reinforcement of our military instrument of power which the general circumstances of our time indicate to be advisable today.

There is one promise I would like to make before the German Volk today as its elected Führer: as much as we are attached to peace, we are just as attached to our honor and the inalienable rights of our Volk. As much as I advocate peace, I will just as strongly ensure that never again will that instrument of our Volk be weakened or much less taken away which, in my opinion, is the only means which can most safely and successfully preserve the peace in these so troubled times!

And as much as I can convey to the world the promise of the German Volk's sincere and deep love for peace, I am just as determined not to leave any doubt that this love of peace has nothing to do with either limp surrender or dishonorable cowardice.

Addressing the world at large with these assurances, Hitler added a threat of lightning action that would ensue if any foreign powers deigned to intervene. Curiously, despite the presence of foreign correspondents, Hitler defended the German officers' corps and their reactionary activities.

However, he did so in a somewhat disrespectful terminology. He proclaimed that there existed only "*one* type of German officer."

If ever the international smear campaign and well-poisoning should attempt to disrupt the peace of our Reich, steel and iron shall stand up for the German Volk and the German homeland. And then the world will instantly (*blitzschnell*) see how very much this Reich—Volk, Party, and Wehrmacht—is filled with one spirit and zealously fanaticized in one will. In other respects, it is not my intention to take a special stand for the honorable German Officers' Corps against the slander of a certain international journalism. Moreover, there is no reason to do so. For journalists happen to be divided into two different types of people: those who love the truth, and on the other hand hypocritical, inferior swindlers, traitors to the peoples, and warmongers. But there is only *one* type of German officer!

Now that he felt he had sufficiently dealt with the crisis of the Wehrmacht, Hitler paused for a while, i.e. he went on to deliver yet another “party narrative,” the third one that day. In a verbose narration he told the story of the economic measures he had implemented in the years since 1933. He spoke of his elimination of unemployment, and the policies he had pursued to solve the currency problem. This returned him to other favorite subjects—the call for colonies, the Peace Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. He made the latter the butt of his ridicule, declaring:

Our reason for not being in the League of Nations lies in our belief that it is not an institution of justice, but more an institution for the defense of the injustice of Versailles. [—]

Were the League of Nations to last for one hundred years, this would lead—because it is obviously incapable of grasping historic or economic necessities and of meeting the resultant demands; and conversely because the interests of the peoples, as far as concerns their existence or non-existence, are ultimately stronger than formal considerations—to a strange situation in the world.

For in the year 2036, new nations might very easily have been established or others become things of the past without Geneva having been capable of registering this new state of affairs.

Germany was once forced, by virtue of its membership in the League of Nations, to take part in one such unreasonable action. In what threatened to become the second such case, it was able, as a result of its withdrawal from the League—thanks and praise be to God—to act in accordance with reason and fairness. However, gentlemen, today I wish to inform you that I have now resolved to make the necessary correction dictated by history in the first case as well. Germany will recognize Manchukuo. I have decided to take this step in order to here, too, draw the final line between a policy of the fantastically inconceivable and one of sober respect for the facts of reality.

Hence, in Summary I would like to declare once more that Germany—and above all following Italy's withdrawal from the League of Nations—has no further intention whatsoever to ever return to this institution.

After having extensively dealt with the League of Nations, Hitler once again brought up the topic of Bolshevism, the horrors of which he intended to spare Europe. Directed to the ignorant British, he went on:

We perceive Bolshevism, even more than in the past, as the incarnation of the human drive for destruction. [—]

Since Great Britain quite frequently proclaims through the mouthpieces of its responsible statesmen that it is interested in maintaining the status quo in the world, then this should also apply there.

Every Bolshevization of a European country constitutes a change in this status quo. For these Bolshevized territories are then no longer autocratic states with a national life of their own, but sections in the Muscovite Center of Revolution. I am aware that Mr. Eden does not share this view. Mr. Stalin shares it, and openly admits it, and in my opinion, at present Mr. Stalin is personally a more reliable expert on and interpreter of Bolshevik ideas and intentions than a British minister!

After additional remarks on the Bolshevik threat, Hitler celebrated the friendships with Japan and Italy, and declared that in any event, he intended to side with the Japanese in East Asia.⁸³

No matter when and no matter how the events in the Far East come to their ultimate conclusion, in its position of defense against Communism, Germany will always regard and value Japan as a safeguarding factor—namely, in safeguarding human civilization. [—]

The friendship between Germany and Italy has gradually evolved for certain reasons to become a factor serving to stabilize European peace. The relations of both states to Japan comprises the largest obstacle by far to a further penetration of Russian-Bolshevik violence.

In the following sarcastic remarks Hitler revealed how annoyed he was with the manner in which the British press had reported on the Wehrmacht crisis:

Therefore, I am also no longer prepared to sit idle and tolerate that unrestrained method of constantly denigrating and insulting our country and our Volk. From now on we will respond, and respond with National Socialist thoroughness. What has been strewn about only these past few weeks in the way of altogether crazy, stupid and reckless allegations about Germany is simply outrageous. What can one possibly say, when Reuters invents attacks on my life, and English newspapers talk about huge waves of arrests in Germany, about the closing of the German borders to Switzerland, Belgium, France, etc.; when yet other newspapers report that the Crown Prince has fled Germany, or that a military putsch has taken place in Germany; that German generals have been taken prisoner, and on the other hand that German generals have stationed themselves with their regiments in front of the Reich Chancellery; that a quarrel has broken out between Himmler and Göring on

the Jewish question, and as a result I am in a difficult predicament; that a German general has established contact with Daladier via intermediaries; that a regiment has mutinied in Stolp; that 2,000 officers have been dismissed from the army; that the entire German industrial sector has just received orders to mobilize for war; that there are extremely strong differences between the Government and private industry; that twenty German officers and three generals have fled to Salzburg; that fourteen generals have fled to Prague with Ludendorff's corpse; and that I have completely lost my voice, and the resourceful Dr. Goebbels is presently on the lookout for a man capable of imitating my voice to allow me to speak from gramophone records from now on. I take it that tomorrow this journalistic zealot of truth will either contest that I am really here today or claim that I had only made gestures, while behind me the Reich Minister of Propaganda ran the gramophone.

In a recent speech, Mr. Eden waxed eloquently on the various liberties in his country. However, one particular liberty was left out: the liberty of journalists to insult and slander other peoples, their institutions, men and governments without reprimand or restriction! One thing which increased—if this is even possible—our liking for Italy is the fact that there, the leadership of state and the policies of the press go hand in hand, instead of letting the leadership of state talk about understanding while the press is launching a smear campaign in the other direction! This chapter on the disruption of international relations should also include the audacity to write letters to a foreign head of state with the request for information on court judgments.⁸⁴ I recommend that the deputies of the British House of Commons concern themselves with the verdicts of British courts-martial in Jerusalem instead of with the judgments of German people's courts. While we might be able to understand an interest in German traitors, it does not help to improve the relations between England and Germany.

Furthermore, let no one delude himself that he might be able to influence German courts or the German penal system by such tactless meddling. In any case, I will not allow deputies of the German Reichstag to worry themselves with the affairs of British justice. The interests of the British world empire are certainly quite extensive, and we recognize them as such. But as regards the concerns of the German Volk and Reich, the German Reichstag and I myself as the delegate of the Reichstag decide, and not a delegation of English letter-writers. I think it would be a commendable deed were one able to internationally outlaw not only the dropping of toxic, incendiary, and explosive bombs on the civilian population, but above all to ban the distribution of newspapers which have a worse effect on the relations between the states than toxic or incendiary bombs could ever have.

Since this international smear campaign of the press must naturally be interpreted not as a reconciling element, but as one presenting a threat to international peace, I have resolved to undertake the reinforcements of the German Wehrmacht which will lend us the certainty that this wild threat of war against Germany will not one day be transformed into a bloody reality. These measures have been in progress since February 4 of this year and will be continued with speed and determination.

Hitler blamed the responsibility for the military measures and preparations for war that he had been forced to take, on the “international smear campaign of the press.” On the one hand, these accusations could be disregarded as just one of the numerous attempts on the part of Hitler to find a scapegoat for his actions. On the other hand, it does appear as though Hitler indeed greatly overestimated the importance of the press, as he did propaganda in general. Hitler’s interpreter Schmidt recalled that whenever Hitler received an Englishman, the Führer complained of the stance espoused by the British press. Hitler would be particularly piqued when his guest replied by referring him to the principle of the freedom of the press. Later, as Hitler moved against Czechoslovakia and Poland, he accorded the German press a significance far beyond its capabilities.

After hours of expounding mostly peripheral topics, Hitler believed he had wearied his audience sufficiently to come to the second major point in the speech: the measures taken against Austria and Czechoslovakia. He quite openly spoke of the “ten million Germans” who were closed in by the two states bordering their territory. One really did not need any extraordinary powers of foresight to perceive that Hitler’s words revealed that he was contemplating annexation. However, one must here recall that the Anschluss was a very popular concept in Germany at the time. This was due largely to the repressive measures that the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime had imposed upon the German minority living in Austria.

By contrast, there was little enthusiasm for an annexation of the Sudetenland at this point. Very few Germans thought it worth the risk nor a necessary step by any means. The “ten million Germans” of whom Hitler spoke, meant little to the German public at the time. Many did not even know what the Führer was talking about and assumed the reference was to Danzig and the Polish Corridor. At this point, however, Hitler was not interested in the latter subject since he was making an all-out effort to court the friendship of Poland, a friendship crucial to his designs upon Czechoslovakia. Therefore, he endeavored to play down the Danzig issue and to portray the situation in a most favorable light.

Hitler also spoke fondly of Schuschnigg that day. He hoped to thereby remind the Austrian of his duties to the nation, that he was to serve the German people and to abide by the terms of the recently reached agreement. Up to this point, Schuschnigg had failed to display enthusiasm similar to that of von Papen in 1933.

The verbatim content of the second major part of the speech that day is reproduced below.

The strong yearning for true neutrality which we have been able to observe in a number of European states fills us with deep and sincere satisfaction. We believe that we can interpret this as a sign of increasing reconciliation and hence increasing security. Yet on the other hand, we are also aware of the painful consequences of the confusion introduced to the European map and the economic and political constellation of the peoples by the insane act of Versailles. Two of the states at our borders alone encompass a mass of over ten million Germans. Until 1866, they were still united with the German race as a whole in a political federation. Until 1918, they fought shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of the German Empire in the Great War. Against their own free will, they were prevented from uniting with the Reich by virtue of the peace treaties. This is painful enough in and of itself. Yet let there be no doubt in our minds about one thing. The separation from the Reich under public law must not lead to a situation in which the races are deprived of rights; in other words, the general rights of *völkisch* self-determination—which, incidentally, were solemnly guaranteed to us in Wilson's Fourteen Points as a prerequisite for the Armistice—cannot simply be ignored because this is a case concerning Germans! In the long run, it is unbearable for a world power to know that there are Volksgenossen at its side being constantly subjected to the most severe suffering because of their sympathy or affiliation with their race, its fate, and its world view!

We well know that it is scarcely possible to establish borders in Europe which will satisfy everyone. Hence it would be all the more important to avoid unnecessarily tormenting national minorities in order not to add to the pain of political separation the further pain of persecution for belonging to a certain Volkstum. The fact that it is possible, given good intentions, to find ways to achieve a balance or lessen the tension, has been proven.

Yet he who wields force in attempting to prevent a balance from being achieved in Europe in that the tensions are lessened⁸⁵ will at some point inevitably call violence into play between the peoples. It cannot be denied that, as long as Germany was powerless and defenseless, it had no choice but to tolerate this unrelenting prosecution of German beings at its borders. However, just as England looks after its interests in every corner of the earth, modern Germany, too, shall know how to look after and protect its—albeit much more limited—interests. And these interests of the German Reich include protecting those German Volksgenossen who are not, of their own power, in a position to secure for themselves on our borders the right to general human, political, and *weltatnschaulich* freedom!

In the fifth year following the first great foreign policy agreement of the Reich, it fills us with true satisfaction to be able to say that, particularly as regards our relations with the state with which we would perhaps have the greatest differences, not only have tensions lessened; moreover, in the course of these past years, an ever friendlier rapprochement has come about. I well know that this was due first and foremost to the fact that, at the time, Warsaw

did not have a Western parliamentarianism but a Polish Marshal who, being an outstanding figure, sensed how very significant a lessening of German-Polish tensions was for Europe. The work of that time, which many questioned, has proven itself in the interim; and I may well say that, when the League of Nations finally abandoned its unrelenting attempts to cause disruption in Danzig and furthermore appointed a new commissioner⁸⁶ who was a man of personal stature, this very spot that presented the greatest threat to European peace lost its dangerous significance.

The Polish nation respects the national conditions in this state, and this city and Germany both respect Polish rights. Hence it was possible to pave the way for an understanding which, starting with Danzig, has been capable of completely removing the poison from the relationship between Germany and Poland, transforming it into one of truly friendly cooperation—despite the attempts of troublemakers here and there.

I am pleased to be able to tell you, gentlemen, that within the past few days a further settlement has been reached with the country with which we have a special affinity for various reasons. Not only is it the same Volk; it also has a long, kindred history and a shared culture which link the Reich and German-Austria.

The difficulties arising in connection with the execution of the July 11 agreement necessitated that the attempt be made to do away with misunderstandings and obstacles to a final reconciliation. For it was obvious that a situation that had become intolerable in and of itself would one day, with or without premeditation, be capable of evolving into a very grave catastrophe. It is usually no longer within the power of human beings to bring the wheels of fortune to a halt once they have been put in motion by neglect or lack of circumspection!

I am happy to be able to note that these ideas also coincided with the views of the Austrian Chancellor, whom I had invited to see me. The idea and intention were to bring about a lessening of the tensions in our relations by granting to that part of the German-Austrian Volk which is National Socialist in terms of its views and Weltanschauung those rights within the limits of the law which are the same as those to which other citizens are entitled.

In this context, a great pacification shall come about in the form of a general amnesty and a better understanding between the two states, prompted by closer amicable relations in the various sectors of political, personal and concrete economic cooperation—all of which is a supplement to the agreement of July 11. At this time, I would like to express before the German Volk my sincere gratitude to the Austrian Chancellor for the great consideration and warm-hearted readiness with which he accepted my invitation and endeavored, with me, to find a solution doing equal justice to the interests of both countries and the interests of the German race as a whole, that German race whose sons we all are, no matter where the cradle of our homeland stood. I believe that we have thereby also made a contribution to European peace. The most conclusive proof for the accuracy of this assertion lies in the outraged anger of those democratic world citizens who, although they are always talking about peace, never miss an opportunity to agitate for

war. They are infuriated and incensed by this act of reconciliation. Hence one has every reason to assume that it is good and right.

Perhaps this example may serve to bring about a gradual lessening of tension in Europe on a larger scale. Germany in any case, supported by its friendships, will do everything to preserve that possession which constitutes the prerequisite for the tasks we envision for the future: peace.

My Party Comrades, I may assure you here once more that our relations with the other European and nonEuropean states are either good and normal or very friendly. I need only draw attention to our altogether warm friendship with, for instance, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and many other states. Our foreign trade balance has given you a vivid picture of the magnitude of our economic cooperation with other peoples. The main emphasis lies on our cooperation with the two major powers⁸⁷ which, like Germany, have recognized Bolshevism to be a world menace and are thus resolved to counter the Comintern movement with a united defense. It is my utmost desire that this cooperation with Italy and Japan may grow ever more intense. In other respects, we gladly welcome any lessening of tension that can be brought about in the general political situation.

For no matter how great the achievements of our Volk, we have no doubt that the positive effects for the well-being of all might be increased if international cooperation could be intensified. With every shred of its being, the German Volk is not a warlike, but a soldierly Volk; i.e. it does not desire war, yet it does not fear it, either. It loves peace, but it equally cherishes its honor and its liberty. Fifteen terrible years which lie behind us are both a warning and a lesson which, in my opinion, the German nation will forever heed and never forget.

Hitler concluded his marathon speech with a series of selfless and pious assurances and admitted—for a change—that even his own creations were but of a transitory nature.

My Party Comrades! Deputies! Men of the Reichstag!

It is to you who once established for me the foundation for my work by ratifying the Enabling Act,⁸⁸ that I have accounted for five historic years in the life of the German Volk. I cannot conclude without having assured you of how great my confidence is in the future of the Volk and Reich we all so dearly love. What once moved me as an unknown soldier to take up the battle for the German resurrection was, at the very bottom, faith in the German Volk. A faith not in its institutions, nor in its societal order and social classes, in its parties, in its governmental or political power, but a faith in the eternal inner values of this Volk. And above all, a faith in those millions of individual men and women who—just as I was in the past—are merely nameless pillars upon which rests the community of our life and Volk. It was for it, too, that I endeavored to build up this new Reich. For this Reich shall belong neither to a certain class, nor to a certain rank: it shall be the sole property of the German Volk. The Reich shall help it to more easily find its life-path on this earth and enable it to make its existence more pleasant. What I summoned

to life during this time does not claim to be an end in itself. Nothing is or ever will be immortal. What remains for us is the body of flesh and blood called the German Volk. The Party, the State, the Wehrmacht, and the economy are all institutions and functions which are valuable only as being a means to an end. In the eyes of history, they will be judged on the basis of the services they performed toward this goal.

Yet their goal is always the Volk. They are short-lived phenomena compared to those which alone are everlasting. To serve these latter with all my might has been and continues to be my life's good fortune. To me, it is a pleasurable duty to thank the many outstanding members of my staff without whom this work could never have been accomplished. In this hour I would like only to ask the Lord God that, in the years to come as well, He might bestow His blessings upon our work and our actions, our insight and our resolve; that He might allow us to find the straight and narrow path which He, in His wisdom, has assigned to the German Volk; and that He might always grant us the courage to do what is right and never to falter or retreat from any form of force or danger.

Long live the National Socialist Movement, long live the National Socialist Army, long live our German Reich!

On February 21 came the resignation of the British Foreign Secretary Eden, the very British statesman Hitler had relentlessly attacked the day before in his address to the Reichstag. By replacing Eden with Lord Halifax, the English wished to signal that they were also willing to accommodate Hitler in questions of personnel if only he refrained from starting a war. This same intent had also been evident in the earlier replacement of the British ambassador in Germany, and was reflected in the stance personified in the new Prime Minister Chamberlain. The previous year, the latter had succeeded Baldwin, whom Hitler had disliked. Precisely the same reasons had been the cause of a change in the personnel of the Foreign Office. This may have led Hitler to believe that merely a word on his part would suffice to have the British Foreign Secretary "fired."

On February 24, the traditional festivities in Munich celebrated the anniversary of the foundation of the Party. Hitler's address on this year's occasion was quite a meager one. He had exhausted himself in the speech before the Reichstag four days earlier. Only the "international," i.e. the British "smear campaign"—with regard to the Austrian Legion⁸⁹ in this case—had to bear the brunt of his wrath that day. The *Völkischer Beobachter* reproduced the following excerpt from Hitler's speech:⁹⁰

In the course of his exposition, the Führer once again spoke of the smear campaign in the international press. The latter had not even had the decency to let eight days pass after his speech of February 20, to renew its campaign

of lies and slander against Germany. For instance, the *News Chronicle* was not ashamed to report that, in spite of the Berchtesgaden agreement, Germany was concentrating 40,000 men of the Austrian Legion along the border to Austria.

Supposedly exhibited at the Legion's headquarters, as the *News Chronicle* maintains, certain maps revealed that an advance upon Austria was to be launched from three different sides. The columns were to converge outside of Vienna and then to march on the Austrian capital together. An additional unit of 10,000 men stood ready to invade Czechoslovakia. All these military formations had supposedly been put together recently, after February 4.

Against a background of thunderous applause, the Führer branded these renewed brazen accusations by the *News Chronicle* as filthy lies from beginning to end. They once again revealed how the Jewish international poisoners fabricated and spread their lies.

"We can learn a lesson from this. We shall move against the Jewish agitators in Germany unrelentingly. We know that they are representatives of an International, and we shall treat them all accordingly. They can but lie, defame, and slander, while we know very well that not one of these Jewish agitators would ever join the fight in a war, even though they are the only ones to profit from these wars!"

In Munich on February 25, Hitler signed into law a decree concerning the position of General Brauchitsch:⁹¹

The Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, holds a rank equal to that of a Reich Minister, such as the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral General Raeder, does already. In accordance with my instructions, the Commanders in Chief of both Army and Navy shall participate in meetings of the Reich Cabinet.

The following day, Hitler gave an evening reception for the Party and delivered a short address at the new Führerhaus at the Königsplatz in Munich.⁹² Details on Hitler's planned eight-day visit to Italy in May were published on March 1.

That same day, Hitler received Göring at the Chancellery, where he presented him with the Marshal's Baton.⁹³ As mentioned earlier, Hitler simultaneously expressed his gratitude for services rendered in letters sent to the deposed generals of February 4, in which he enclosed an autographed photograph of himself.

On March 2, Hitler issued an appeal to the Party and the State, pertaining to the establishment of Hitler Youth Centers.⁹⁴ He also sent a telegram to Mussolini, in which he conveyed his condolences upon the death of the Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio.⁹⁵ One day later, Hitler received the newly appointed Ambassador of the United States of America, Hugh. R. Wilson, at the House of the Reich President.

In reply to Wilson's address, Hitler observed:⁹⁶

It is a most fortunate circumstance that you are not in Germany for the first time and that, due to your previous diplomatic service here, you have become well acquainted with the German Volk. This will greatly facilitate the pursuit of your goal to further greater understanding among both peoples. Let me assure Your Excellency that I and the Reich Government entertain similar ambitions and that we shall do everything in our power to assist you in the attainment of your goal. I am truly grateful for the best wishes for the prosperity of the German Volk, extended by the President of the United States of America, to whom I would like to respond in kind.

On March 5, Hitler rendered a second extensive visit to the international Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibiton.⁹⁷ On March 8, at the Chancellery, Hitler spoke with the former President of the United States, Herbert Hoover, who was traveling in Europe.⁹⁸

During these first days of March, Hitler also had several lengthy conversations at the Chancellery with the British Ambassador.⁹⁹ Henderson explained the British proposal to satisfy the German demand for colonies through territorial cessions in Central Africa. But Hitler had other things on his mind at the time. He was in the process of creating the prerequisites for a conquest of new Lebensraum for Germans in the East, and to this end he wished to convert Austria and Czechoslovakia into military bases for the venture. At a time like this, he simply could not bother with one of these "senile" Englishmen, who was rambling on about Africa. Thus, he declared that the colonial question was not a matter calling for immediate attention.

Far more important to him at the present was that Great Britain did not become involved "in matters that were none of its business." Here he was referring to Austria and the Sudetenland. Now that Hitler dominated the conversation, he indulged in an agitated discussion of the situation there. He claimed that Schuschnigg was supported by only a small percentage of the people and that the Sudeten Germans were oppressed. Further, he demanded autonomy of the Sudeten Germans within the Czechoslovakian federation.

Hitler also spoke of the Czech-Russian Mutual Assistance Pact, which naturally was a thorn in his side. He declared that it was a criminal act for one of the European nations to throw open the door to Soviet expansion into Central Europe. With this forceful "final remark," Hitler dismissed the British Ambassador.

3

On March 9, Hitler had announced that he would take part in the March 12 launching of a new KdF ship in Hamburg.¹⁰⁰ However, that same March 9 brought about an event that threw off the timing of Hitler's plans. Already the day before, Hitler had been notified that Schuschnigg intended to conduct a separate plebiscite in Austria, but had not believed the rumor.¹⁰¹ However, when he heard the radio address of the Austrian Federal Chancellor in Innsbruck that night, Hitler had to admit that he had misjudged Schuschnigg. On Sunday, March 13, Schuschnigg called upon the Austrian population to decide upon "a free and German, independent and social, Christian and united Austria."¹⁰²

It was obvious that the Austrian Chancellor's intent was to prevent the annexation envisioned by Hitler.¹⁰³ Schuschnigg, whose Vaterländische Front was a pale copy of the National Socialist Movement—including its uniforms, organizations, etc.,—believed he could duplicate Hitler's tactics by resorting to a plebiscite in a situation like this. However, he overlooked the fact that he enjoyed very little support in the populace. The pull of the mighty German Reich was far too strong, and the Austrian people's willingness for an Anschluss was much greater than Schuschnigg had estimated.¹⁰⁴ Annexation had been a topic in 1918—and even before the First World War—and had been reinforced considerably by the economic crisis in Austria. The *Anhaltelagers* and the methods of oppression used under his regime made a bad impression on non-National Socialists as well. Schuschnigg had underestimated Hitler, believing that he would simply wait for the plebiscite maneuver to run its course. Mussolini proved to be a better judge of character than Schuschnigg. The Italian assured the Austrian Envoy, who had informed him of Schuschnigg's plan on March 7: "This bomb will blow up in his own face!"¹⁰⁵

As Schusehnigg's designs to deceive him were revealed to Hitler on the evening of March 9, he began to pace up and down in long strides, immersed in thought. There was no doubt about it: his attempt to resolve the Austrian question without the use of force had failed. The whole theatrical performance of February 12 had been for naught; his rhetorical prowess had not borne any fruit. Now he reluctantly felt he had no choice but to proceed with military measures. He had ventured too far already to turn back. If he let Schuschnigg's gambit pass unchecked, doubts of the military capacities he claimed to possess could arise, and he would unquestionably lose much prestige as a result. This consideration proved decisive on his decision to intervene. In the March 25 address in Königsberg, Hitler enumerated the reasons that had prompted him to issue the order to march on Austria: the item at the top of his list was that of a demonstration to the entire world of Germany's military might.¹⁰⁶

I did it first of all to show the world that I was now in bitter earnest and that nothing could keep me from taking this step. They had more than enough opportunities to settle these problems.¹⁰⁷ They missed them and had to know that the times were over when Germany could be blackmailed.

Hitler called for his generals on March 10 and ordered the partial mobilization of troops in Bavaria. This order affected the Military Districts and Army Corps VII (Munich) under General von Reichenau, or rather General von Schobert¹⁰⁸ in this instance, and XIII (Nuremberg) under General von Weichs.¹⁰⁹ Both the army corps and their wartime reinforcements were to form the Eighth Army and would be under the command of General von Bock,¹¹⁰ with whom they were to march on Austria shortly. On the evening of March 10, the order for mobilization reached the respective command posts of the military districts. At the same time, the active troops were put on alert.¹¹¹ Shortly later, the motorcyclists were on their way to inform the respective cities and villages of the call-up.

As the inhabitants of Bavaria's cities stepped outside their doors on the morning of March 11, 1938, they were confronted with a sight the like of which they had not seen since World War I: mobilized civilians were reporting for duty at their barracks. Peasants brought their requisitioned horses and rack wagons to the collection points indicated. At all public places, the men of the Wehrmacht assembled the confiscated trucks and cars to form military convoys. Motorized troupe contingents and their vehicles rolled through the cities heading southeast.

When Hitler ordered the partial mobilization on March 10, the affair did not absorb him so much that he forgot about other issues. Rather it seemed to him to be a most opportune moment in which to deal a final blow to the Soldatenbund. The Wehrmacht would in “one way or another” gain new glory and fame in the Austrian venture. Thus the generals could do wonderfully well without the Soldatenbund, and simultaneously they would have to bury their hopes to establish a military dictatorship. Once again Hitler resolved two problems in one lightning blow. On March 10, he ordered the dissolution of the Soldatenbund and all remaining associations within the Wehrmacht, as well as the integration of their members into the Reichskriegerbund (Kyffhäuser) under the leadership of SS Gruppenführer Reinhardt. This new federation was placed directly under Hitler’s control.¹¹² Thus ended the generals’ dream, which had envisioned building up a military state by keeping all active personnel and reservists under the military’s direct supervision.

That same March 10, Hitler also extended Schacht’s presidency of the Reichsbank for another four-year period.¹¹³ Schacht’s term did not expire until March 16, but circumstances dictated the Führer’s actions, for he was not sure whether he would be in Berlin on that date!

Early on the morning of March 11, the order was issued to proceed with “Operation Otto,” the armed invasion of Austria. The instruction read as follows:¹¹⁴

1. Should all other means fail to bring about the desired result, I intend to have the Armed Forces invade Austria, to establish a situation congruent with the Constitution, and to put an end to atrocities directed at the pro-German (*deutschgesinnt*) population.

2. I assume command of the entire enterprise. In accordance with my instructions, the Commander in Chief of the Army will lead the operations on land with the Eighth Army in the composition and strength I proposed and with the Luftwaffe, SS and police contingents, which can be inferred from the enclosures. The Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe will lead the operations in the air with the forces I proposed.

3. Tasks:

- a) Army: The invasion of Austria is to proceed in the manner I detailed. The goal for the Army is primarily to occupy Upper Austria, Salzburg, Lower Austria, Tirol, the quick taking of Vienna, and the securing of the Austro-Czechoslovakian border.

- b) Luftwaffe: The Luftwaffe is to display and to disseminate propaganda material, to occupy Austrian airports for a possible reinforcement of troops, to support the Army to the extent necessary, and to maintain task forces for special missions.

4. Those Army and Luftwaffe units to participate in the operation must be ready to be deployed and to march by noon on March 12, 1938, at the latest. I reserve for myself the final decision on the time when to cross the border on land and in the air, and the permission hereto.

5. The comportment of the troops must account for the fact that we do not wish to lead a war against a *Brudervolk*. It is in our interest that the entire venture be conducted without the use of force, in the manner of a peaceful entry, welcomed by the population. Therefore, any form of provocation is to be avoided. Should resistance be encountered, however, it is to be broken with utmost ruthlessness by force of arms (*mit größter Rücksichtslosigkeit durch Waffengewalt*). Austrian units surrendering are to be placed under German command immediately.

6. For the time being, there are no security measures to be taken along Germany's borders to other countries.

Adolf Hitler

As stated earlier, Hitler wanted to avoid bloodshed in this venture. On March 11, he was still eagerly trying all sorts of ways in which to exert pressure on the men in power in Vienna. It was his goal to have the Austrian Government forbid the Austrian army and police units to fire upon the advancing German military contingents. He would much prefer the Austrian Government to "cry for help" of German troops. After all, he had placed two National Socialists in the Schuschnigg cabinet already. While the one (Seyss-Inquart) controlled the police force through his post of Minister of Security, the other (Glaise-Horstenau) had good connections to the Austrian Army, having served as a colonel and as Director of the Army Archives in Vienna. However, the question remained whether these two men would have any decisive impact on the Austrian Government in Vienna with regard to the upcoming events.

It was a lucky coincidence that Glaise-Horstenau had just held a lecture at the German Foreign Institute in Stuttgart. He immediately was called to Berlin, instructed by Hitler and flown back to Vienna. In his pocket, he already carried the final version of the "cry for help," which had been presented to him in Germany.

On March 11, Hitler also assigned numerous men of the party leadership to Vienna. Prior to the actual military invasion, there was to be a veritable invasion of the city by leading National Socialists. Their arrival in the Austrian capital was noted in the Vienna newspapers as if it were the most ordinary event.¹¹⁵ First, there was a mention of Gauleiter and Councilor of State Bürckel flying into Vienna early on the morning of March 11 on a special mission. He had been received shortly thereafter by the Federal President. As a veteran of the Saar

annexation, Bürckel was an “experienced man,” and Hitler was considering him for the post of Reichskommissar for Austria.

That afternoon at 5:00, the “adviser of the Reich Chancellor, Engineer Wilhelm Keppler,” flew into Vienna on a special flight, landed at the Aspern Airport, and from there immediately drove to the Federal Chancellery. Around the same time, a train pulled into the West Train Station in Vienna, bearing aboard the “Reich Chancellor’s Deputy, Reich Minister Rudolf Hess.” He proceeded to the Federal Chancellery for consultations immediately upon arrival. As officially reported, on March 12 at 5:00 a.m., the Reichsführer SS Himmler arrived in Vienna, coming from Munich. Among others he was accompanied by: the Chief of the Security Police, SS Gruppenführer Heydrich;¹¹⁶ and by the Chief of the Civil Police, SS Obergruppenführer General Daluge.

Assigned to serve as acting deputy for the time of Hitler’s absence from Berlin, Göring was to survey and to influence the course of events in Vienna by telephone. The content of the calls to Vienna on March 11 were taken down in shorthand by Göring’s Research Department (*Forschungsamt*), and were among the papers discovered by the Allies after the War.¹¹⁷ They provide a remarkable record of the pressure exerted on Vienna. Seyss-Inquart, in company of the recently returned Glaise-Horstenau, had seen Schuschnigg as early as 9:30 a.m. to demand a postponement of the plebiscite. Bürckel, Keppler, and Hess came to their aid later that day. After consulting the Federal President, Schuschnigg had the postponement of the plebiscite announced in a radio broadcast in the late afternoon.

At 8:00 p.m., Schuschnigg himself stepped up to the microphone and declared the resignation of his cabinet with the following words:¹¹⁸

I am facing a most difficult situation. The German Government has given an ultimatum to the Federal Government of Austria to appoint a federal chancellor of its choice and to compose the Austrian Government according to the instructions of the Reich Government. Otherwise an invasion by German troops is immanent. Allegations that there has been civil unrest and bloodshed among the working class are pure fabrications. The Austrian Government would have been capable of ensuring law and order in the country by itself.

The Federal President has asked me to inform the Austrian people that we yield to force. We have ordered the [Austrian] Wehrmacht to withdraw without offering resistance because we do not wish to shed German blood. In the event of an invasion, General Schilhawsky will be entrusted with the command over Federal troops.

At this hour, I bid my farewell to the German Volk in Austria, desiring that I be granted one last wish: *Gott schütze Österreich!*

In his calls to Vienna, Göring now repeatedly demanded the nomination of Seyss-Inquart as Federal Chancellor, threatening German invasion if his demand was not met. Federal President Dr. Miklas¹¹⁹ at first stood fast and refused, even though Hitler's adviser Keppler and the German Military Attaché Muff persistently urged him to consent to the appointment.

In the late evening hours, the Official News Agency spread word that Seyss-Inquart had been entrusted with the conduct of governmental affairs. Nonetheless, Göring insisted that the provisional Austrian Government send Berlin a telegram requesting the assistance of German troops. However, Seyss-Inquart did not yield to the pressure. Finally Göring himself dictated the verbatim content of the telegram,¹²⁰ and around 10:00 p.m., Keppler called him back to inform him that Seyss-Inquart had finally agreed to go along and send the prepared telegram. Its text read as follows:

To the Führer and Reich Chancellor, Berlin

The provisional Austrian Government, which, after the resignation of the Schuschnigg government, considers it its task to restore law and order in Austria, urgently requests the German Government to support it in its task and to help it to prevent bloodshed. For this purpose it asks the German Government to send German troops as soon as possible.

Seyss-Inquart

When Göring accepted total responsibility for this act as he was confronted by the Military Tribunal in Nuremberg on the issue, he even declared that the affair had been his idea. Naturally, this was more due to his personal vanity than to the historic truth. In a sense, he wanted to retroactively claim credit as the creator of the Greater German Reich, and as such to enter into the book of history. There is no doubt that Hitler had left precise instructions for Göring on how to proceed before he left Berlin, and that the aforementioned telegram preventing bloodshed had been contrived by Hitler. After all, Göring was "his best man," known for his quick grasp of the full intent of Hitler's instructions and for his energy in executing an order as though the idea had been his own. And as mentioned earlier, Hitler had already handed Glaise-Horstenau a version of the telegram prior to his departure from Berlin.

Around midnight, Miklas' resistance broke down, and he appointed Seyss-Inquart Federal Chancellor. The leader of the Austrian National Socialists, Major Hubert Klausner,¹²¹ gave a radio address at 1:15 a.m. on March 12, in which he proclaimed, markedly moved by the events: "*Osterreich ist frei, Osterreich ist nationalsozialistisch!*"

Hitler and the Austrian National Socialists had been completely victorious—all their demands were met and the threat of an invasion by German troops appeared to be far removed. However, Hitler intended to show the world now that he was “in bitter earnest,” and that nothing could stop him.¹²² He made matters even more clear on April 6, 1938, in Salzburg: “It was an irrevocable decision which can no longer be reversed! Once German soldiers march, their mission cannot be rescinded!”¹²³ This sentence reflected clearly what was to be expected from Hitler in the future.

On March 11, however, Hitler still entertained certain doubts with regard to his “irrevocable” decision on the envisioned military invasion. These concerns pertained primarily to the stance of Mussolini in this matter. The Italian had declared that he would “march till the end”¹²⁴ alongside his friend Hitler. However, Hitler was skeptical, as usual. He assumed that Mussolini would not tolerate such a move, as he most certainly would not in the latter’s place. Hitler could also ruefully recall both the attitude the Duce had displayed on July 25, 1934, and his persistent “shaking of the head” in January of 1934, when Göring had asserted to him the necessity of an Anschluss of Austria.

As a man well versed in the art of letter writing, Hitler was confident that he could dispel Mussolini’s concerns. He wanted to approach the matter by raising a sensitive issue for Mussolini, the possibility of a reinstitution of the Habsburg Monarchy. Hitler quickly dictated a lengthy letter to the Duce. In it, he maintained that the obvious intent of Schuschnigg’s plebiscite was to precipitate the restoration of the House of Habsburg;¹²⁵ further, that Schuschnigg was already conspiring with Czechoslovakia in order to “throw upon the scales the weight of at least twenty million people to bear against Germany;” Hitler claimed that for years Schuschnigg had repressed the nationalistically minded majority of the Austrian people; in Berchtesgaden, Schuschnigg had promised to better his ways only to break his promise; a revolution and hence anarchy were imminent; Hitler had, therefore, decided to restore law and order to his homeland, and to offer the Volk the possibility to decide upon its fate itself.

To make the affair more palatable to Mussolini, Hitler enclosed three solemn assurances in his letter.¹²⁶

I feel compelled to solemnly assure Your Excellency, the Duce of the Italian people, and Fascist Italy:

1. Consider this action as one of national self-defense and therefore as an action which, in my place, any man of character would have executed in

precisely the same manner. Your Excellency also would have reacted no differently had the destiny of the Italian people been at stake. As Führer and National Socialist, I cannot act any differently.

2. In a critical hour for Italy,¹²⁷ I have proven the steadfastness of my feelings. You need not doubt that anything in the future could possibly change this.

3. Whatever the ultimate result of the upcoming events may be, I have drawn a clear line delineating the border with France and I am now doing the same along the border to Italy. The border is the Brenner.

This decision shall be neither doubted nor challenged. I have not arrived at this decision in 1938, but rather immediately after the World War, and I have never made a secret of this.

The fact that Hitler went to such trouble is ample proof of the extent of his worries at the time. He handed the letter over to Prince Philip of Hesse,¹²⁸ whom he had summoned, and who was one of the sons-in-law of the King of Italy. Immediately the Prince was dispatched on a special mission and flown to Rome.

There is no way of ascertaining whether Hitler's letter had any impact once it reached its destination. Some time earlier, Mussolini had grown weary of his role as guardian of Austrian independence and had reached the conclusion that it was best to respond in a positive fashion to things which were really out of his purview. In any case, Mussolini read the letter of his dictator friend to the Grand Council of Fascism during a session on the evening of March 11. As was announced later,¹²⁹ the body acknowledged the content of the letter with great interest. In the official note, Mussolini betrayed a sort of malicious joy at Schuschnigg's fiasco. The announcement noted that Schuschnigg had not informed the Italian Government on the topic of his February 12 meeting in Berchtesgaden and that he had not heeded Mussolini's advice, which cautioned against the plebiscite.¹³⁰

At 10:25 that same night, Prince Philip of Hesse phoned Hitler and reported the positive reaction of Mussolini.¹³¹ At the other end of the line, Hitler was beside himself with joy, and shouted ecstatically into the receiver:

Then please tell Mussolini that I will never forget him for this. [—] Never, never, never, no matter what happens. [—] When the Austrian matter has been cleared up, I am prepared to go through thick and thin with him; it is all the same to me. [—]

Listen—I would sign any agreement now—I no longer feel like I am in that terrible situation we just had, in the event I wouldn't have been able to decide. You can just tell him that. I want you to really thank him for me; I will never, ever forget what he has done. [—]

I will never forget him for this, no matter what happens. If ever he needs anything or is in any kind of danger, he can be certain that I will stand by him, come hell or high water (*auf Biegen oder Brechen*), no matter what happens, even if the whole world joins forces against him.

Meanwhile in Berlin, von Neurath had been called back to the Foreign Ministry, since Ribbentrop was in London bidding farewell to the British King. Neurath was summoned to be at hand to accept the protests which the British and French ambassadors were expected to voice with regard to the invasion of Austria. In the eyes of the foreign journalists in Berlin at the time, the call for Neurath created the impression that the Cabinet Privy Council which had been formed on February 4 was to convene, and that Neurath had been requested to preside over the proceedings.¹³² However, as noted before, Hitler had no intention of actually convening this body.

Also on the evening of March 11, Göring held a banquet at the Haus der Flieger. He took advantage of the intermissions between the artists' performances to brief the British Ambassador Henderson and the Czechoslovakian Envoy Mastny on the events in Austria. He did not refrain from giving his word of honor that no like measures were being planned for Czechoslovakia. After midnight in the Chancellery, Hitler accepted the first congratulatory notes on bringing about a turn in the Austrian situation.

As was officially reported, at 8:00 on the morning of March 12, motorized German troop units moved across the border of Austria for a "goodwill visit."¹³³ The Austrian General Schilhawsky, who had been placed in command of the Austrian army the previous day by Schuschnigg, instructed the Austrian army to "give a heartfelt welcome" to their German comrades.

It has to be noted that up to March 12, no one in Austria had considered effecting an all-inclusive annexation of Austria to the German Reich. Neither Glaise-Horstenau, nor Seyss-Inquart, had entertained any such ambitions at first. Austria was a National Socialist country now, and there seemed to be nothing left to be desired. No one had given much thought to the legal repercussions of this venture. A few had contemplated the establishment of a union of the leadership personnel of the both states that, for example, the office of Federal President of Austria might be offered the German Führer. At first Hitler also, judging by his statements made in public on that twelfth day of March 1938, thought only of conducting a plebiscite in Austria, albeit under the control of the German occupational forces. It was not until

the night of March 12, that he appears to have decided upon the immediate and complete annexation of Austria.

Before Hitler left Berlin on March 12, he published the following official note:¹³⁴

The Führer has assigned Field Marshal Göring to function as his deputy for the time period of his absence from Berlin, which the events to date have necessitated.

What Hitler was announcing in this note was that he intended to leave the country to assume control of activities in Austria himself. In addition, Hitler dictated a lengthy appeal to the German people, which Goebbels was to read over the radio at noon.

At 10:00 a.m., Hitler arrived at the Oberwiesenfeld Airport in Munich. First he drove into town and went directly to the Headquarters of the Eighth Army, to see General Bock. For the trip into town, Hitler rode in his special three-axle, cross-country, gray-colored Mercedes. He had ordered the car with remarkable foresight so that it was at his disposal for future journeys as the victorious battle commander of his troops. That day, he sported a new leather coat of a military cut, worn over his uniform. However, the more important point was that on his cap there was a new symbol: a cockade, surrounded by the golden oak leaves of the Wehrmacht. Prior to this appearance, Hitler had worn a peaked cap at the top part of which there had been the national eagle; the center had remained empty, which had resulted in a rather odd denuded look, at least to German eyes at the time. Now he had placed the Wehrmacht's cockade with the oak leaves there. This was to symbolize that from this point onward he would not be the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht in name only, he would be its warlord in the battlefield, and even more so its sole and independent decisionmaker! In appearance, this amounted only to a slight change, which not many people noted, but those who knew Hitler and were familiar with his fervent belief in the power of symbols, realized that the time had come.

As agreed upon, Göring read Hitler's proclamation at noon, broadcasting it on all German and Austrian radio stations. Its verbatim content was the following:¹³⁵

Germans!

It is with deep grief that, for years now, we have been witnessing the fate of our Volksgenossen in Austria. An eternal, historic bond which was broken for the first time by the year 1866 but was sealed anew in the World War, has

made Austria a part of the community of race and destiny common to all Germans. The pain inflicted upon this country, first from without and then from within, we experienced as our own; just as we know, conversely, that the misfortune of the Reich was the object of the same concern and sympathy for millions of German Austrians!

When in Germany—thanks to the victory of the National Socialist idea—the nation found its way back to the proud self-confidence of a great Volk, in Austria there began a new period of suffering and of the bittermost trials. A regime totally lacking any sort of legal mandate attempted to maintain its existence—which was rejected by the overwhelming majority of the Austrian Volk—with the utterly brutal instruments of terror and of physical and economic castigation and destruction. Hence, as a great Volk, we witnessed that more than six million people of our own lineage were suppressed by a numerically small minority which was adept at gaining possession of the instruments of power it needed.

This political gagging and deprivation of rights had its counterpart in an economic deterioration which stood in crass contrast to the flourishing new life in Germany. Who could blame these unhappy Volksgenossen that they focused their gaze longingly on the Reich? On that very Germany that had been bound to their ancestors for so many centuries, with which it had once fought the worst war of all time shoulder to shoulder, whose culture was its culture, to which it had contributed its own highest values in so many areas? Suppressing this awareness meant nothing other than condemning hundreds of thousands of people to uttermost spiritual torment.

Yet although, years ago, this suffering was still borne with patience, with the increasing prestige of the Reich, the will to put an end to the oppression grew ever stronger.

Germans! In the past few years, I have attempted to warn the former rulers in Austria not to continue on this route of theirs. Only a lunatic could believe that suppression and terror can permanently rob people of their love for their ancestral Volkstum. European history has proven that such cases serve to breed an even greater fanaticism. This fanaticism then compels the oppressor to resort to ever harsher methods of violation, and these in turn increase the loathing and hatred of the objects of those methods.

I have further attempted to convince the rulers responsible for this that, in the long run, a great nation in particular is incapable—because undeserving—of constantly being made to look on while people belonging to the same race are oppressed, persecuted, and imprisoned only because of their ancestry or their declared affiliation with this Volkstum, or because they hold fast to an idea. Germany alone has had to take in more than 40,000 refugees, while 10,000 more have landed, in this small country, in prisons, dungeons and interim camps; hundreds of thousands have been reduced to beggars, are destitute and impoverished. No nation in the world would be able to tolerate these conditions at its borders for any length of time unless it deserved nothing but disdain. In 1936, I attempted to find some course which might hold the promise of being able to alleviate the tragic fate of this German brotherland, and thus to perhaps bring about a true reconciliation. The

agreement of July 11, however, was signed only to be violated the next minute. The overwhelming majority was left without rights as before; their degrading position as a pariah in this state was not changed a whit. He who openly supported German Volkstum was prosecuted as before, regardless of whether he was a National Socialist streetworker or an aged and deserving commander of the World War.

I have now made yet another attempt to bring about an understanding. I endeavored, with the representative of that regime with whom I myself, as the Führer elected by the German Volk, was dealing and who had no legitimate mandate whatsoever—I endeavored to make it clear to him that this situation could not prevail for any length of time because the rising indignation of the Austrian Volk could not be suppressed forever by an escalation of force; and that here, after a certain point, it would also be intolerable for the Reich to look on in silence while such a violation took place.

In today's age, when colonial problems are made contingent upon the question of self-determination with respect to the inferior tribes involved, it is intolerable that six and a half million members of an old and great civilization are practically subjected to lesser rights by the type of its regime. Thus I had intended to achieve in a new agreement that all Germans in this country be accorded the same privileges and the same obligations. This agreement was to constitute the fulfillment of the treaty of July 11, 1936.

Only a few weeks later, we were unfortunately compelled to realize that the men comprising the Austrian Government of the time had no intention of abiding by the spirit of this agreement. In order to procure for themselves an alibi for their unremitting violations of the equal rights of Austrian Germans, a petition for a referendum was devised with the purpose of completely depriving the majority of this country of its rights! The procedural details of this plan were to be unique. A country that had had no elections whatsoever for many years, which did not even possess any documentation for determining who was eligible to vote, schedules an election which is to take place within a scarce three and a half days!

There are no lists of voters, no voter cards. There is no such thing as checking a voter's eligibility; there is no obligation as to the confidentiality of the ballot; there is no guarantee for the impartial conduct of the election; there is no supervision when the ballots are counted, etc. If these are the methods designed to lend a regime the character of legality, we National Socialists must have been idiots for fifteen years! We went through hundreds of election campaigns and toiled to gain the approval of the German Volk.

When the deceased Reich President finally summoned me into the Government, I was the leader of the strongest party in the Reich by far. Since then, I have made repeated attempts to have the German Volk verify the legality of my presence and my actions, and I was given this verification. Yet if the methods Herr Schuschnigg is trying to use are the right methods, then that plebiscite in the Saar back then was sheer harassment, rendering the return of a Volk to the Reich even more difficult. We are of a different opinion here. I believe we can all be proud that, particularly by virtue of this ref-

erendum in the Saar, we have been given the trust of the German Volk in such an indisputable fashion.

Finally the German Volk in Austria itself has arisen in protest against this unparalleled attempt to put on a fraudulent election. Yet if the regime once again plans to crush the protest movement with brute force, the result could only be a new civil war.

From now on, the German Reich, however, will no longer tolerate that Germans are persecuted in this territory because of their affiliation with our nation or their open support of certain ideas. The Reich wants peace and order. I have, therefore, decided to place assistance from the Reich at the disposal of the millions of Germans in Austria.

Since this morning, the soldiers of the German Wehrmacht have been marching over all the borders of GermanAustria.

Tank troops, infantry divisions, and the SS formations on the ground, and the German Luftwaffe in the blue skies above, summoned by the new National Socialist Government in Vienna, shall guarantee that the Austrian Volk will now be given, as quickly as possible, the opportunity to shape its future and thus its own fate in a genuine referendum of the people. Behind these formations stand the will and resolve of the entire German nation.

It will be a personal pleasure to me, as Führer and Chancellor of the German Volk, to now once more be able to set foot, as a German and free citizen, in that country which is, at the same time, my home. Let the world conclude for itself that the German Volk in Austria is spending these days in the most blissful joy and stirring emotion it has ever experienced.

Long live the National Socialist German Reich! Long live National Socialist German-Austria!

Berlin, March 12, 1938

Adolf Hitler

At 3:50 p.m., Hitler crossed the Austro-German border at Braunau. The following members of his staff accompanied him: the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, General Keitel; the Reich Press Chief, Dietrich; Reichsleiters Bormann¹³⁶ and Bouhler,¹³⁷ and finally Gauleiter Bürckel. As Hitler passed through the streets of his native town, all church bells chimed, and he was greeted with thunderous applause of a gathering numbering in the tens of thousands.

In Linz, an enormous crowd had gathered at the market place to await Hitler's arrival. Tremendous enthusiasm was evident in Ward Price's impressive live radio report. Speaking in German on the Austrian broadcast services, the British journalist congratulated the Austrian people on the advent of this day.

Hitler's triumphant ride from Braunau to Linz took nearly four hours, since the Mercedes could barely work its way through the jubilant crowds. Fifteen kilometers out of Linz, Seyss-Inquart, Glaise-Horstenau and Himmler, together with other National Socialists,

awaited the Führer. When his car finally reached Linz, it was dark. Hitler stepped out upon the small balcony of the City Hall in Linz and listened to the welcoming address by Seyss-Inquart. Thereupon, Hitler gave a speech that was frequently disrupted by thunders of applause from the audience below:¹³⁸

Germans! German Volksgenossen! Herr Bundeskanzler!

I thank you for your words of greeting. But above all I thank you who have assembled here and testified to the fact that it is not the will and desire of only a few to establish this great Reich of the German race, but the wish and the will of the German Volk!

May there be those among you this evening, our reputed international truth-seekers, who will not only perceive for themselves this reality, but admit it afterwards, too. When I first set forth from this city, I carried within me exactly the same devout pledge that fills me today. Try to fathom my inner emotion at having finally made this faithful pledge come true after so many long years.

The fact that Providence once summoned me forth from this city to the leadership of the Reich, must have meant it was giving me a special assignment, and it can only have been the assignment of restoring my cherished home to the German Reich! I have believed in this assignment, I have lived and fought for it, and I believe I have now fulfilled it! May you all witness and vouch for this!

I do not know when you yourselves will be summoned. I hope the time is not far off.¹³⁹ Then you shall be asked to stand up to your own pledge, and it is my belief that I will then be able to point to my homeland with pride before the entire German Volk.

The outcome must then prove to the world that any further attempt to tear this Volk asunder will be in vain. Just as you will then be under an obligation to make your contribution to this German future, the whole of Germany is likewise willing to make its contribution. And this it is already doing today!

May you see in the German soldiers who are marching here this very hour from all the Gaus of the Reich fighters willing and prepared to make sacrifices for the unity of the great German Volk as a whole, and for the power and the glory and the splendor of the Reich, now and forever! *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

Thereafter, Hitler set up quarters in the Weininger Hotel on the shores of the Danube River. Without a doubt, he had scored a great success that day. No one had stood in the way of the German invasion, and no one would rise in opposition in the course of the following days. Both the ambassadors of Great Britain and France had formally registered their protest to the move with Neurath in Berlin, however, it was obvious that the German and Austrian people desired unification. The right to self-determination of a people that undoubtedly had not been done justice in Article 88 of the Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain,¹⁴⁰

had made itself heard in a most impressive manner. It was in light of this fact, and not of the display of military might as Hitler deemed, that the Western Powers had given in.

At the Weininger Hotel, Hitler granted an interview to Ward Price for the *Daily Mail*¹⁴¹ in which he touched upon the surprising turn of the events in Austria the previous day. Not even on this extraordinary and most unusual occasion did Hitler miss an opportunity to refer to the Polish in the most friendly terms. He acknowledged Poland's right of free access to the Baltic Sea in spite of the fact that this access transgressing German territories was painful to Germany. Poland's stance was extraordinarily important to him because of his designs on Czechoslovakia.

Ward Price's first question had been whether in his—Hitler's—mind the events in Austria the day before would have any impact on the upcoming German-British negotiations. Hitler answered:

For our part, not in the least, and I do hope not for the British, either. What injustice have we done to any foreign country, whose interests have we violated, when we concur with the desire of the overwhelming majority of the Austrian population to be Germans?

To the question on how he stood on the issue of the Franco-British note of protest, Adolf Hitler replied that he could not fathom what had prompted such a measure on their part.

These people here are Germans. A protest note from other countries on my action in Austria has no more significance than a note of the Reich Government would have in which it protested against the relations between the British Government and Ireland.

I assure you in all earnestness that, four days ago, I had no inkling of any of what was to happen here today or that Austria was to become a German Land, just as Bavaria or Saxony. I did this because I was deceived by Herr Schuschnigg, and deception is something I will not tolerate. When I shake hands and give my word on something, then I adhere to it, and I expect from everyone who enters into agreements with me that he does the same. I had agreed with Herr Schuschnigg that he was to discontinue his oppression of the majority in his country. I treated him with total fairness in my speech to the Reichstag.

I gave him the opportunity to say, "I have reached an understanding with the Reich Government and will abide by the provisions of the agreement in loyal cooperation." Instead, Herr Schuschnigg attempted to conduct this referendum he had planned for his country. In the beginning, I could hardly believe the news. I dispatched an envoy to Vienna to ascertain whether it could possibly be true. He informed me that it really was true. Hence I decided to take immediate action and arrange that I would make the unification of

Austria with Germany an accomplished fact the same day Schuschnigg planned to conduct his referendum.

This unification will be subjected to a different, national referendum. You will see the outcome for yourself. It will be an overwhelming majority as in the Saar. This is my homeland. I was long grieved by seeing the Volk to which I belong by birth oppressed and suffering. More than 2,000 members of this Volk have lost their lives. Many have been in prison. Some of them were hanged for their political views and for their faith in the German ideals. A minority of 10 percent suppressed the majority of 90 percent.

I put an end to that. I went even further. I prevented the majority from taking revenge upon their oppressors. I hope that the world will understand that what I have accomplished here is a work of peace. If I had not intervened and the Schuschnigg government had attempted to conduct its fake referendum, a bloody revolution would have taken place here. Austria could then have quite easily become a second Spain in the very heart of Europe.

I am a realist. Take a look at my relations to Poland. I am fully prepared to admit that Poland—a country with thirty-three million inhabitants—needs an outlet to the sea. It is a bitter thing for us that this access to the sea must be created at the expense of a corridor through German territory. Yet we understand what this means for Poland. There are Germans living under the Polish Government, and Poles live under German rule. If the two countries were to enter into a conflict, each country would oppress its minorities. It was a far better solution to resolve our differences by way of an agreement. It is my hope that all the nations will recognize, from what has just taken place in Austria, how senseless it is to oppress their national minorities. Wait a while, and you will see what I will do for Austria. Come back here in four years' time, and you will discover that the number of unemployed in Austria has been greatly reduced. You will also see how much better the Austrian Volk is faring, and how much happier it will be.

In Linz, there was only one question of importance for Hitler—how to proceed. Should he let events run their course, hold a plebiscite and then have both states slowly grow together? There would have been great acclaim for such an approach.

However, after such an astounding victory, Hitler slipped into a frame of mind which did not allow for any such considerations. He clearly saw before him all that he wished to accomplish: to resolve the Czechoslovakian problem by the end of 1938; to move on to take Danzig and the Polish Corridor, and thereafter to conquer Poland and Russia!—All of a sudden, he had not a minute to lose. Suspicion set in that something might happen to rob him of the fruits of victory, which he had acquired so easily.

And so it came about that Hitler, already on March 13, 1938, at the Weinzing Hotel, signed the "Law on the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich." Its verbatim content is reproduced below:¹⁴²

The Reich Government¹⁴³ has decided upon the following law, which is promulgated herewith.

Article I

The Federal Constitutional Law, dated March 13, 1938, by which the Austrian Government has effected the reunion of Austria with the German Reich, hereby becomes a Law of the German Reich. It has the following verbatim content:

By virtue of article III, section 2, of the Federal Constitutional Law, concerning extraordinary measures in the realm of the Constitution (Bundesgesetzblatt, I, no. 255/1934), the Federal Government has resolved:

Article I. Austria is a Land of the German Reich.

Article II. On Sunday, April 10, 1938, a free and secret plebiscite will be held among all German men and women in Austria over twenty years of age on the reunion with the German Reich.

Article III. A majority of the ballots cast shall decide the plebiscite.

Article IV. The regulations necessary to the implementation and supplementation of Article II of this Federal Constitutional Law shall be issued by decree.

Article V. This Federal Constitutional Law shall enter into force on the day of its publication.

The execution of this Federal Constitutional Law shall be entrusted to the Federal Government.

Vienna, March 13, 1938.

Seyss-Inquart, Glaise-Horstenau, Wolff, Hueber, Menghin, Jury,
Neumayer, Reinthaler, Fischböck

Article II

The law at present in force in Austria shall remain in force until further notice. The introduction of Reich law to Austria shall be reserved to the Führer and Reich Chancellor or to the Reich Ministers empowered by him.

Article III

The Reich Minister of the interior shall be authorized, in concurrence with the Reich Ministers involved, to decree the legal and administrative regulations necessary to the implementation and supplementation of this law.

Article IV

This law shall enter into force on the day of its publication.

Linz, March 13, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor
The Reich Minister of the Interior
The Reich Foreign Minister
The Deputy of the Führer

On the 1938 *Heldengedenktage*, Hitler effected the "reunion" of Austria with the German Reich. He set the plebiscite for April 10, 1938. The Federal Government of Austria had received instructions from Hitler to sign into law the above cited Federal Constitutional Law

sanctioning the integration of Austria into the German Reich and to call for the plebiscite envisioned. Seyss-Inquart was ordered to effect the resignation of the Federal President.¹⁴⁴ Hitler himself announced that the Austrian Federal Army (Bundesheer) henceforth would be under his orders, and the soldiers were to take their loyalty oaths immediately. The decree read as follows:¹⁴⁵

1. The Federal Government of Austria has just passed a law effecting the reunion of Austria with the German Reich. The German Reich Government has acknowledged this decision by issuing a law today.

2. Hence I decree: From this day onward, I assume command of the Austrian Bundesheer as part of the German Wehrmacht.

3. I appoint Infantry General von Bock, Commander in Chief of the Eighth Army, to lead the now German Wehrmacht forces within the national borders of Austria.

4. All members of the previously Austrian Bundesheer are immediately to be sworn in on my person as their Supreme Commander. Infantry General von Bock is immediately to see to the measures necessary hereto.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler made clear that he was not willing to allow the Austrian National Socialists an influential role in the further development of the political situation. Therefore, on March 13, he appointed Bürckel to lead the country. The respective decree had the following content:¹⁴⁶.

1. I assign Gauleiter Bürckel, Saarpfalz, to reorganize the NSDAP in Austria.

2. Gauleiter Bürckel is entrusted with the preparations for the plebiscite in his capacity as acting leader of the NSDAP in Austria.

I have granted Gauleiter Bürckel full power of attorney to resort and order all measures necessary to allow for a responsible completion of his assignment.

Linz, March 13, 1938

Adolf Hitler

At noon, Hitler went to Leonding, a small town outside of Linz, to place flowers on the grave of his parents. After returning to the city, Hitler met with various Austrian National Socialists and conversed with them on the topic of politics and private affairs. That day, Hitler sent the following exuberant telegram to Mussolini:¹⁴⁷

To His Excellency the Italian Prime Minister and Duce of Fascist Italy, Benito Mussolini. Mussolini, I shall always remember you for this!

Adolf Hitler

Mussolini's telegram in reply was written in a significantly more sober tone, reflecting how little Hitler's earlier lengthy letter had affected Mussolini's stance. The Duce almost seemed insulted by

Hitler's lack of trust in him. The telegram of March 14, that in knowing foresight had been addressed to Hitler in Vienna, read:

Hitler, Vienna. My stance is determined by the friendship between our countries, as sealed in the axis agreements.

Mussolini

On March 14, Hitler left Linz shortly after 10:00 a.m., taking the old *Nibelungenstrasse*, which passes by the Abbey of Melk and ends in Vienna. Enthusiastic crowds hailed him all along the route. In the meantime in Vienna, people were preparing for the reception of Hitler. The entire city was in an ecstasy of joy. The Vaterländische Front had been completely forgotten, as though it had never existed.

Some of the men, who had been in power in Austria up to this time, escaped across the border to Hungary or Czechoslovakia. The Gestapo, as well as the SS, immediately arrested and liquidated others. Even von Papen's secretary Wilhelm von Ketteler could not escape this fate.¹⁴⁸ A short time after his arrest, his body was retrieved from the Danube Canal.

On the other hand, the former Federal President Miklas, who had resigned his post, was not bothered in the least. However, Schuschnigg was incarcerated. For some time, there was talk that he would be put on trial. However, this particular court-hearing materialized no more than those of the supposed "November Criminals." Rumor had it that there was apprehension on the part of the prosecutors to statements Schuschnigg might be liable to make in reference to Mussolini.¹⁴⁹

That day as well, a man who had played a most dubious role in the revolt in the Federal Chancellery of July 1934, the former Minister of Security and Leader of the Heimwehr, Major Fey, committed suicide with his entire family.¹⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the ecstatic citizens of Vienna were waiting for Hitler. Finally around half past five in the afternoon, he entered the city that had once been the capital of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, passing the Schönbrunn Palace. The church bells here also chimed for him, and "the demonstrations of enthusiasm that accompanied Hitler's entry into the city defied description," as the *Neue Basler Zeitung* wrote.¹⁵¹

Hitler stayed at the imperial Hotel at the Ring. Since the jubilations and the chorus of the crowd outside of the hotel would not abate, Hitler stepped onto the balcony around 7:00 p.m. together with the aged Austrian General Krauss and delivered a short address:¹⁵²

My German Volksgenossen!

What you are feeling now is something I myself have felt to the bottom of my heart in these five days. It is a great, historic change which our German Volk has undergone. What you are witnessing at this moment is something the whole German Volk is experiencing with you; not only two million people in this city, but seventy-five million members of our Volk, in one Reich. They are all deeply stirred and moved by this historic turning point, and they all consecrate themselves with the vow: no matter what may happen, the German Reich as it stands today is something no man will ever again break asunder and no man will ever again tear apart!

There is no crisis, no threat, and no force that might break this vow. Today these are the devout words of all German beings from Königsberg to Cologne, from Hamburg to Vienna!

On March 15 around 11:00 a.m., hundreds of thousands of people assembled on the Heldenplatz in front of the Hofburg to hear a "proclamation of liberation." Two little boys greeted Hitler upon his arrival. Between them they carried a banner which bore the slogan: "The Sudeten Germans greet the Führer." On the balcony of the Hofburg, Hitler gave the following address:¹⁵³

Germans! Men and Women!

Within a few short days, a radical change has taken place in the German Volksgemeinschaft, whose dimensions we might see today, yet whose significance can only be fully appreciated by coming generations. In the past few years, the rulers of the regime which has now been banished often spoke of the special "mission" which, in their eyes, this country was destined to fulfill. A leader of the legitimists outlined it quite accurately in a memorandum. Accordingly, the so-called self-sufficiency of this Land of Austria, founded in the peace treaties and contingent upon the mercy of foreign countries, was to perform the function of preventing the formation of a genuinely great German Reich and hence block the path of the German Volk to the future.

I hereby declare for this Land its new mission. It corresponds to the precept which once summoned the German settlers of the *Altreich* to come here. The oldest Ostmark of the German Volk shall from now on constitute the youngest bulwark of the German nation and hence of the German Reich. For centuries, the storms of the East broke on the borders of the Old Mark in the turbulent times of the past. For centuries into the future, it shall now become an iron guarantor of the security and freedom of the German Reich, and hence a safeguard for the happiness and peace of our Great Volk. I know the old Ostmark of the German Reich will do justice to its new task just as it once performed and mastered the old.

I am speaking on behalf of millions of people in this magnificent German Land, on behalf of those in Styria, in Upper and Lower Austria, in Carinthia, in Salzburg, in Tirol, and above all on behalf of the city of Vienna, when I assure the sixty-eight million other German Volksgenossen in our vast Reich

listening this very minute: this Land is German; it has understood its mission, it will fulfill this mission, and it shall never be outdone by anyone as far as loyalty to the great German Volksgemeinschaft is concerned. It will now be our task to devote our labor, diligence, shared dedication, and joint strength to solving the great social, cultural and economic problems; yet first and foremost to make Austria ever grow and expand to become a fortress of National Socialist willpower.

I cannot conclude this address to you without calling to mind those men who, together with me, have made it possible to bring about this great change—with God's help¹⁵⁴—in such a short time. I may thank the National Socialist members of the government, with the new Reichsstatthalter Seyss-Inquart at their fore. I may thank the innumerable party functionaries; I may thank above all the countless anonymous idealists, the fighters of our formations who have proven in the long years of persecution that the German, when put under pressure, only becomes tougher.

These years of suffering have served but to strengthen me in my conviction of the value of the GermanAustrian being within the framework of our great Volksgemeinschaft. At the same time, however, the splendid order and discipline of this tremendous event is proof of the power of the idea inspiring these people. Hence in this hour, I can report to the German Volk that the greatest orders of my life have been carried out.

As the Führer and Chancellor of the German nation and the Reich, I now report to history that my homeland has joined the German Reich.

After delivering this “report to history,” Hitler stood at attention and saluted as though he were indeed facing an imaginary superior. At the Ring that afternoon, a huge military display took place. At first, Hitler approached the monument of the Unknown Soldier at the outer gate of the Hofburg, where he placed a huge wreath in honor of the dead of the World War. He was accompanied by General Keitel and Seyss-Inquart. Thereafter, Hitler proceeded to the rostrum at the Ring. Here he granted an interview to the Italian journalist Filippo Bojano, Viennese correspondent of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

The Italian paper published the following article on the interview:¹⁵⁵

“Believe me,” said the Führer to Bojano, “under no circumstances will I ever forget what Italy has done. The entire German Volk”—his hand made a sweeping gesture, as if he were attempting to include all Germans from the Baltic Sea to the Danube River—“will never forget what Mussolini and Italy have done. Our friendship is beyond all formality. The Axis is strong and firm, more than ever.”

After a short pause, the Führer added: “We are willing to demonstrate our friendship and gratitude to you, if one day Italy should need it.”

Then the Führer made appropriate comments on the subject of Austria, which he put in the following words, according to Bojano: “This Volk of Austria felt an internal drive to be united with Germany. Have you seen how

the Austrians reacted to our coming? Have you seen the enthusiasm? The Austrian Volk had been duped and oppressed by a handful of men for a long time.”

Standing next to Hitler on the rostrum, waiting for the troops were the following men among others: Colonel General von Brauchitsch; Reichsführer SS Himmler, attired in a gray field uniform; General der Flieger Milch, and the Austrian General Krauss, who wore civilian clothes. Similarly attired that day was also Seyss-Inquart, who had been named Reichsstatthalter of Austria by Hitler, even though he had already been promoted to SS Gruppenführer at an earlier date.

Among the men present, there was one who had occupied a key position in Viennese politics for many years, but had played no part in the recent events, Hitler’s Ambassador Extraordinary Franz von Papen. Notwithstanding the fate of his secretary Wilhelm von Ketteler, von Papen still desired to watch the parade at the very least and to do so properly clad. Given the fact that, contrary to Neurath,¹⁵⁶ von Papen had not been appropriated a uniform by his Führer yet, he was attired with his old Lieutenant Colonel uniform that still hung in his closet as a relic from the First World War and wore the just awarded Golden Party Badge. The Führer, however, accorded little attention to the former Reich Chancellor on this occasion.

During the first fifteen minutes of the parade, Luftwaffe groups soared by overhead. Standing at attention in a motor vehicle, General von Bock headed his Eighth Army, as it approached the reviewing stand. After General von Bock had reported to the Führer properly, Hitler promoted the Army Commander to the rank of Colonel General on the spot. Then, the troops goose-stepped past Hitler: armored regiments, artillery, motorized troops, and infantry, followed by Austrian infantry and cavalry units. The last soldiers to file by the rostrum were the men of the SS Verfügungstruppe, attired in their gray field uniforms which on the occasion of the Anschluss were adorned with the national emblem embroidered on the left sleeve of their tunics. It was obvious that they had long been prepared to exchange their black peacetime uniforms for this textile war equipment.¹⁵⁷

The national euphoria that swept the city of Vienna as well as the remainder of the country ironically grasped hold even of a man of such standing as the Catholic Archbishop, Cardinal Innitzer. Although the Cardinal had supported Schuschnigg’s Vaterländische Front as an outspoken critic of the National Socialists, on March 15, 1938, he called upon Hitler at the Imperial Hotel to pay his respects to the Führer.

The official note published on this occasion detailed the following on the topic of the cleric's visit:¹⁵⁸

The Cardinal and Archbishop of Vienna, Dr. Innitzer, visited the Führer on Tuesday at the Imperial Hotel in Vienna. He expressed his rejoicing at the unification of German-Austria with the Reich and declared the Catholic population willing to actively join in the German reconstruction work.

As if this did not suffice, the Cardinal took care that the Austrian dioceses of Vienna and Salzburg issued solemn declarations of sympathy. On March 18, he enclosed these in an official note sent to Gauleiter Bürckel, to which he personally affixed a *Heil Hitler!*¹⁵⁹

Hitler left Vienna by plane around 5:00 p.m. on March 15. He arrived at the Oberwiesenfeld Airport in Munich two hours later. There Reichsstatthalter General von Epp welcomed him. As Hitler proceeded to his apartment at the Prinzregentenplatz by car, throngs of enthusiastic people crowded the roads. Although not one battle had been either lost or won during the Austrian campaign, the *Völkischer Beobachter* proclaimed the return of Hitler as that of "a victorious warlord coming home."¹⁶⁰

On March 16, Hitler took off from Munich at 2:50 p.m. and landed shortly after 5:00 p.m. at the Berlin Tempelhof Airport. Göring greeted Hitler with the following speech:

Mein Führer!

May I greet you today on behalf of the entire Volk, its Reich Capital, its Reich Government and the Wehrmacht. On this day, there are no words which can express, mein Führer, what every single one of us feels today. You have brought to us all of Germany today. Our brothers are free. Not by force, rather with your heart did you bring us your homeland. This is the moment, mein Führer, in which I may return to your hands the power of attorney you entrusted to me during these days. Mein Führer, let me greet you in the name of all!

Goebbels, too, gave an address, in which he maintained that in Berlin "hundreds of thousands, yes, one may say millions" of people had come to greet the Führer. Set against a background of chiming bells throughout Berlin, it took Hitler almost one hour to complete his triumphant drive through the city.¹⁶¹ At the Chancellery, he stepped onto the balcony and addressed the crowd below in the following words:¹⁶²

My Volksgenossen!

You can appreciate how I have felt since these past few days and what I am feeling now. I am so happy that Fate has chosen me to bring about this

great consolidation of the German Volk, and I am pleased to know and to see here that today the whole German Volk is happy—here and in all the other places where Germans are, most of all in that Land which was the most unhappy of all until a few days ago, and today is the happiest of all.

Our new community—and to all of us, this is a certainty—will never again be dissolved. Whoever might still not believe this can witness the final confirmation on April 10. Germany has become and will remain Greater Germany, and that will be ensured by the German Volk in its entirety, from East to West, and now from the South all the way here to Berlin. *Heil!*

On March 18, the dissolution of the Soldatenbund was made official. The High Command of the Wehrmacht published the following note:¹⁶³

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has effected the reorganization of the Federation of German Veterans' Associations (Reichskriegerbund, Kyffhäuser), with the instruction that the existing associations within the Wehrmacht are to be absorbed by the new Reichskriegerbund (Kyffhäuser).

This new Federation will be under the direct control of the Führer and will renounce all its former ties. The reorganization is to be effected by September 30, 1938. Instructions on the execution thereof will follow.

Berlin, March 18, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

At the same time, Hitler promoted the leader of the Reichskriegerbund, the SS Gruppenführer retired Colonel Reinhardt, who was celebrating his fiftieth service anniversary, to the rank of Major General and addressed the following letter to him:¹⁶⁴

Dear General Reinhardt,

I extend to you my congratulations on the day you celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of your entry into the Army. In appreciation of the service you have rendered to the cultivation of the concept of defense (*Wehrgedanke*) in the German Volk, I award you the brevet rank of retired Major General, with the privilege of wearing the uniform of the present Army. I rejoice that this token of appreciation enables me to place such an officer, who has proven to be utterly efficient in wartime, and at the same time to place this general of the new Wehrmacht at the fore of old and young soldiers who are to be organized in the Reichskriegerbund to tend to the cultivation of soldierly virtues.

With comradeship and the best wishes for the future success of your endeavors, I remain yours faithfully,

Adolf Hitler

At 8:00 p.m. on March 18, Hitler spoke before the Reichstag in the Kroll Opera, beginning with the following words:¹⁶⁵

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

I have had you summoned to attend this short session today, myself moved to the depths of my heart, in order to give you a report on the events whose significance you all appreciate. Furthermore, I must inform you of decisions affecting the German Volk and the German Reichstag itself.

When I was able to speak to you a few weeks ago, I gave you an account of the five-year work of constructing the National Socialist State, which may well be described, in terms of overall outcome, as beyond compare.

The “party narrative” that ensued was relatively short, yet it afforded Hitler the opportunity to complain that the German Nation had been denied the right of self-determination:

Wilson’s right of self-determination of the peoples, which was used in part to persuade our Volk to lay down its arms, was replaced by the most brutal national violation of countless millions of German Volksgenossen. Rights which were self-evidently accorded to the most primitive colonial tribes were withheld from one of this world’s old civilized nations for reasons as unacceptable as they were insulting.

In my speech on February 20, I explained that it will hardly be possible to reach a settlement concerning the *völkisch* and territorial conditions in Europe to the satisfaction of everyone involved; i.e. we do not believe that it should be the objective of a national leadership of state to use every means available, be they protests or actions, of enforcing territorial claims which, although motivated by national necessities, ultimately cannot lead to general national justice. The countless *völkisch* enclaves in Europe make it, to a certain degree, simply impossible to establish borders which do equal justice to all the interests of the peoples and states. However, there do exist political structures that so strongly embody the character of conscious and intentional national injustice that they cannot be maintained for any length of time except by means of the most brutal force.

Hitler had two states in mind: Austria and Czechoslovakia. In vivid phrases Hitler described the “violation” of the Germans living in Austria in 1919. While he did not make any mention of Czechoslovakia that day, his statements regarding Austria would have been appropriate for the Czechoslovakian case, too.

The formation of a new, mutilated Austrian state was also a measure which signified a naked violation of the right of self-determination of six and a half million people belonging to the German race. This violation was admitted with cynical frankness—for it was of no importance whatsoever at that time, either to the reputed inventors of the right of self-determination, the independence, and the freedom of nations, nor to the extremely curious, pious world rulers who otherwise profess to be so very concerned about justice being done on this earth—that the free will of six-and-a-half million people was simply cut off by the so-called peace *Diktats* and that these

people were being coerced by force to surrender to the robbery of their right of self-determination and to accept their unnatural separation from the great common motherland.

When the decision was nonetheless made in Austria at that time to hold referenda on the Anschluss—and I might particularly remind the Mister Democrats in London and Paris of the fact that this was a tune at which National Socialism existed neither in Germany nor in Austria—and the referenda resulted in more than 95 percent of all votes in favor of unification, the apostles of the new international law simply made use of the power of brutal force to prohibit without further ado this peaceful demonstration of the true desire of unhappy people who are separated from their Volk.

The tragic part about it was that, from the very beginning, this state of Austria was simply not viable! The economic distress was horrendous as could be anticipated; the annual mortality rate rose alarmingly. Alone in a city such as Vienna, there were 24,000 fatalities and only 10,000 births. I am not saying this in the belief that it might make an impression on democratic world Philistines, because I know that their hearts are completely hardened to such things. They can calmly look on while half a million people are butchered in Spain without being moved in the least. At the same time, they are equally capable of feigning profound indignation without blushing in the least, when in Berlin or in Vienna some Jewish agitator is divested of his means of doing business. No, I mention this only in order to ascertain in all objectivity how the perpetrators of the peace *Diktats* succeeded, by the simple fact of establishing this inviable figment of state, in passing a sentence of slow but sure death for millions of people.

Hitler once again expressed his disgust with international institutions, above all with the League of Nations. He spoke of the League of Nations' supervision of the Saar plebiscite which, as mentioned earlier, had particularly enraged him.¹⁶⁶ On this topic he maintained:

The fact that the Saar—with the exception of a few thousand people of French nationality—is inhabited exclusively by Germans was proven in the plebiscite conducted there under international supervision. However, the fact that these few percent nonetheless sufficed to coerce a territory to submit to a plebiscite before its reunification with the Reich was allowed is a crass contradiction to the attitude taken when millions upon millions of German beings are involved. In that case, complying with their wish to return to their fatherland is simply rejected as inopportune for the democracies, and indeed the mere hope is virtually branded as a crime. In the long run, a violation of rights of this sort cannot be glossed over with the transparent morals of certain international institutions! Justice will be done, even if Germans are concerned! And who would not be surprised that the peoples who are being stubbornly denied this right ultimately see themselves compelled to procure their human rights for themselves. The nations are created according to God's will and are everlasting, but the League of Nations is a highly dubious construction of human fallibility, human greed, and human bias.

And one thing is certain: just as the peoples have been existing for countless millennia without a League of Nations, there will come a time when the League of Nations is a thing of the distant past, and the peoples will nevertheless prevail throughout the millennia.

As early as in the above address, Hitler had announced that he intended “to procure the human rights” himself if they were refused to him. In other words, he aimed to invade countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland, or indeed, any country where Germans resided. The same sentiment is evident in the following excerpt as well:

Germany has once again become a world power. Yet which power in the world would calmly tolerate for any length of time that, before its very gates, a mass of millions (*Millionenmasse*) belonging to its own national race are so bitterly abused? There are moments when it becomes simply impossible for a self-confident nation to bear that sight any longer!

In addition, “a mass of millions” of Germans inhabited Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, and the Balkans. It was merely a question of time before it became “simply impossible for a self-confident nation to bear that sight any longer.” However, for the time being, Hitler continued to concentrate on the topic of Austria and on his Berchtesgaden meeting with Schuschnigg.

It was for these reasons I had decided to arrange for that conference in Berchtesgaden with the former Chancellor Schuschnigg of which you are all aware. In all earnestness, I confronted him with the fact that a regime totally lacking in legitimation, which was governing virtually by force alone, would, in the long run, necessarily come into ever greater conflict with the will of the Volk running diametrically opposed to its own currents. I endeavored to make it clear to him that this situation must ultimately lead to an ever increasing opposition on the one hand and to an ever mounting use of force on the other. Yet particularly in consideration of the great power of the resurrected German Reich, revolutionary uprisings were impossible to be ruled out. Under these circumstances, the only consequence was a further increase in terror. And in the end, a situation would arise making it impossible for a major power with a sense of national honor to patiently stand by any longer, much less to take an indifferent standpoint.

I left no doubt in Herr Schuschnigg’s mind that there was not a single German-born Austrian with national decency and a sense of honor who would not, at the bottom of his heart, yearn and be willing to strive for a unification with the German Volk. I asked him to spare German-Austria, the German Reich and himself a situation that, sooner or later, would inevitably lead to very serious disputes. In this context, I suggested a path to him which could lead to a gradual lessening of tensions internally and, hence to a slow reconciliation not only among the people within Austria themselves, but also between the two German states!

I pointed out to Herr Schuschnigg that this would be the final attempt on my part and that I was resolved, in the event that this attempt were to fail, to protect the rights of the German Volk in my homeland with the only means ever left on this earth when human insight closes itself off from the precepts of common justice: for no decent Volk has ever sacrificed its life for the sake of democratic formalities. And, by the way, this is something which is out of the question in precisely those democracies where there is the most talk about it.

On February 20, I offered my hand to former Chancellor Schuschnigg before the German Reichstag. Even in his initial reaction, he rejected my offer of reconciliation. Indeed, he began to only haltingly fulfill the obligations he had assumed as soon as it became evident that certain other states were propagating a negative attitude. Moreover, we are now in a position to know that a part of the campaign of lies being launched against Germany was inspired by Herr Schuschnigg's own press office. There could no longer be any doubt that Herr Schuschnigg, who had no legal justification whatsoever for his existence and who had been ravaging German-Austria with a dwindling minority's reign of terror, was determined to violate this agreement.

On Tuesday, March 8, the first reports on plans for a referendum appeared. They were so fantastic and so unbelievable that they could only be dismissed as rumors. Then on Wednesday evening, by way of a truly astonishing speech, we were made aware of an attempted assault not only against the agreements reached between us, but above all, against the majority of the Austrian population. In a country which has not held a single election for years, in which there are neither voters' registration nor lists of voters, an election was scheduled to take place within scarcely three days' time. The question at issue was to be worded such that a rejection would seem to be punishable as a criminal offense according to the prevailing legislation in Austria at the time.

There were no voters' lists; hence it was impossible to examine such lists from the very beginning; there was no way of contesting the results; secrecy was neither guaranteed nor desired; the "nay" voters were stigmatized from the very beginning; the "yea" voters were provided with every opportunity to falsify the results; in other words: Herr Schuschnigg, who was perfectly aware that only a minority of the population was behind him, attempted to procure for himself, by means of an unprecedented election fraud, the moral justification for an open breach of the obligations he had undertaken. He wanted a mandate for continuing to oppress—with even more brutal force—the overwhelming majority of the German-Austrian Volk.

The fact that he both broke his word and resorted to this measure could but lead to rebellion. Only someone who was crazy and blind could believe this could possibly serve to silence a tremendous majority of the Volk, allowing him to create a legal foundation upon which he could present his illegal regime to the world. Yet the rebellion which was undoubtedly to come and which did, in fact, announce itself immediately, would have led to renewed—and this time terrible—bloodshed. For once the embers of a passion fanned by such a permanent state of injustice begin to flame,

experience has always shown that they can only be extinguished by blood. Of this, history has given us sufficient examples.

I was thus resolved to put an end to the further violation of my homeland! Hence I immediately initiated that the requisite measures be taken designed to ensure that Austria could be spared the fate of Spain.

The ultimatum which the world suddenly began to complain of consisted solely of the firm assurance that Germany would no longer tolerate any further oppression of German-Austrian Volksgenossen—and hence of a warning not to choose a path which could only have led to bloodshed.

The fact that this attitude was right is proven by the fact that, in the midst of the intervention which had nonetheless become necessary, within the space of three days my entire homeland came rushing to meet me without a single shot having been fired and without a single casualty, as far as I know—naturally to the great disappointment of our international pacifists. Had I not complied with the wishes of the Austrian Volk and its new National Socialist Government, in all probability circumstances would have evolved in such a manner that our intervention would subsequently have been necessary in any case. I wanted to spare this magnificent country endless misfortune and suffering. For when hatred has once begun to smolder, reason is obscured. Then a just assessment of crime and punishment becomes a thing of the past. National wrath, personal vindictiveness, and the primitive instincts of egotistical drives together raise the torch and frenziedly go about their mad hunt for victims with total disregard for what is right and total ignorance of the consequences!

Perhaps Herr Schuschnigg did not believe it possible that I could make the decision to intervene. He and his followers can thank the Lord God for that. For it was my resolve alone that probably saved his life and the lives of tens of thousands of others, a life they by far do not deserve, given their complicity in the deaths of innumerable Austrian victims of the Movement, but which the National Socialist State generously gives them as a sovereign victor! I am also happy that I have thereby now become the one to fulfill this supreme historic assignment.

Can there be a prouder satisfaction for a man in this world than to have joined the people of his own homeland to the greater Volksgemeinschaft? And you can all appreciate my feeling of joy that I did not need to conquer a field of corpses and ruins for the German Reich, but that I have been able to bestow upon it an intact Land filled with overjoyed people! I have acted in the only way for which I can assume responsibility as a German before the history of our Volk, before the past and living witnesses to our Volksgemeinschaft, before the holy German Reich, and before my cherished homeland!

Seventy-five million people are standing behind the decision I have made, and before them stands, from now on, the German Wehrmacht!

Then Hitler turned to international public opinion on the Anschluss of Austria. Even though the Western Powers had displayed marked restraint, he was still not satisfied with their performance. On the other hand, Hitler had much praise for Poland, the country which he

intended to keep in good spirits as he prepared for his envisioned foray into Czechoslovakia. He spoke highly of Hungary and Yugoslavia as well, but failed to mention Czechoslovakia in any way, in spite of the fact that it had displayed benevolent neutrality similar to that of the other two countries. Italy and its leader Mussolini were assured yet one more time that Hitler would never forget their stance regarding the Anschluss. A peace declaration coupled with a threat of force followed. In Hitler's words:

It is almost tragic that an event that, at bottom, merely eliminated a tension in Central Europe which in time would have become unbearable, has met with such an utter and complete lack of understanding, particularly on the part of our democracies. Their reactions were in part incomprehensible and in part insulting. However, a number of other states had declared from the very beginning that the matter was no interest of theirs, while others expressed their hearty approval. This was the case as regards not only the majority of the smaller European countries, but many of the larger states as well. Of these, I might mention the dignified and sympathetic attitude of Poland, the warm-hearted approval of Hungary, the declarations submitted by Yugoslavia in cordial friendship, and the assurances of absolutely sincere neutrality on the part of many other countries.

Yet I cannot conclude my enumeration of these votes of friendship without going into more detail on the stand taken by Fascist Italy. I had felt myself under an obligation to explain in a letter to the leader of the great Fascist state, who is a close personal friend of mine, the reasons for my actions and, moreover, to assure him that not only would nothing change in Germany's attitude toward Italy subsequent to this event, but that moreover, just as this was the case as concerned France, Germany would regard the existing borders to Italy as given.

At this time I would like to express our warmest thanks to this great Italian statesman, on behalf of the German Volk and on my own behalf! We know what Mussolini's attitude during this time has meant for Germany. If any further reinforcement had been possible in the relations between Italy and Germany, it has now come about. What was originally a mutuality based on *Weltanschauung* and interests has now become, for us Germans, an indissoluble friendship. For us, the land and borders of this friend are inviolable.

I may repeat that I will never forget Mussolini for taking this attitude! Let the Italian Volk know that the German nation backs up my word! Hence once again the axis which joins our two countries has done a supreme service for the cause of world peace. Germany desires only peace. It does not intend to do harm to other peoples. Yet under no circumstances will it tolerate that harm is done to itself; it is prepared at all times to go to the bitter end in defense of its honor and its existence. May no one believe that these are empty words, and may it be, above all, understood that no great Volk with a sense of honor can sit by idle and look on while great masses of millions who share its blood are subjected to unremitting oppression!

After this ill-disguised threat to use force should “a mass of millions” of Germans be repressed somewhere in any way, Hitler returned to the topic of domestic policy. He dissolved the Reichstag and announced a general plebiscite in the entire Reich to be held on April 10. Then he asked for another four years’ time to mold the new “German Volksreich” together into an indissoluble unit.

As a matter of fact, the plebiscite he called for was to be the last one of Hitler’s career. He explained:

I believe that—in these great and historic hours when, thanks to the power of the National Socialist idea and the strength which it gives to the Reich, an age-old dream of Germans has come true—not only one part of our people can be called upon to verify, by its affirmation, the tremendous feat of the long-awaited foundation of a truly great Reich of the German Volk. On April 10, millions of German-Austrians will make their pledge before history to the great German common destiny and the great German Volksgemeinschaft. And they shall not be alone in taking this first great step in the new German Reich. They will be accompanied from now on by the whole of Germany. For beginning with March 13, their path will be the same as the one taken by all the other men and women of our Volk. Hence on April 10, for the first time in history, the entire German nation, to the extent that it is today a part of the great Reich of the Volk, will come forward and make its solemn vow. Not six and a half million will be asked, but seventy-five. [—]

I am thereby dissolving the Reichstag of the old German Reich and ordering elections to be scheduled for the representatives of Greater Germany. This date I am also setting for the 10th of April.

I am thereby calling upon nearly fifty million of our Volk eligible to vote and asking them to give me a Reichstag which will enable me, with the generous help of the Lord God, to accomplish our great, new tasks. Now the German Volk shall once more weigh and consider what I have achieved with my staff in the five years since the first Reichstag election in March of 1933. It will come to the conclusion that these achievements are historically beyond compare. I expect of my Volk that it has the insight and the power to make a decision both honorable and unique!

Just as I asked the German Volk in 1933, in view of the tremendous work lying ahead of us, to give me four years’ time to solve the greatest problems, I must now request of it a second time:

German Volk, give me another four years so that I can consummate the consolidation which has now been performed externally in an internal sense as well, for the benefit of all. When this term has expired, the new German Reich of the Volk shall have grown to become an indissoluble unit, firmly anchored in the will of its Volk, under the political leadership of the National Socialist Party, protected by its young National Socialist Wehrmacht, and rich from its flourishing economic life.

When today we see the boldest dreams of so many generations coming true before our very eyes, we are filled with a feeling of boundless gratitude

to all those who have done their part, by their labors and above all by their sacrifices, to help us achieve this highest goal. Every German tribe and every German landscape has made its own painful contribution to make this work a success. In this moment, let there rise from the dead before us those who constitute the last victims for the cause of German unification—all those many fighters who, in the old Ostmark which has now come home to the Reich, were the faithful heralds of the German unity we have achieved today and, as blood witnesses and martyrs, gasped with their dying breath those last words which shall, for us, be more sacred now than ever before: one Volk, one Reich. *Deutschland! Sieg Heil!*

Hitler inaugurated a new election campaign in Königsberg on March 25. He had no idea that this was to be the last one of his life. First he held an official reception at the Königsberg Castle, where in a short address he celebrated the bonds that tied Austria and East Prussia together.¹⁶⁷

You yourselves are well aware that a not insignificant part of this German province¹⁶⁸ in particular is composed of members of the brother tribe that was annexed to and hence became an integral part of the German Reich only a few days ago.

At a mass rally in the city of Königsberg (Schlageterhalle), Hitler delivered a speech beginning with the following words:¹⁶⁹

German Volksgenossen!

Only a few days ago, I was in the major city in the south of our newly united German Volk and Reich, and there I proclaimed that the entire German Volk supported this consolidation. In that context, I also mentioned the most northeasterly province of our Reich. Today I have come here with the purpose of urging you to back up my word and to keep it on April 10! I have also come here in order to begin the election campaign in the city in which I ended my first campaign after the takeover in 1933. I came to this German borderland with the conviction that I would nowhere find such sympathy for my actions as in a territory which was formerly made to suffer so much from the feeling of being neglected and abandoned. You yourselves have experienced the whole range of feelings one has in fighting for what seems to be a lost cause—yet also the feelings one gets when one knows that now the great and concerted power, faith and resolve of an entire nation is behind one.

The ensuing “party narrative” was directed primarily against the Peace Treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain, and culminated in the following statement:

In an age in which it is self-evident that all the peoples of the earth are accorded the right of self-determination, one has denied this right of self-determination to the members of a great civilized Volk and robbed them of it. Today we share a feeling of community which is far stronger than one

founded in political or economic interests ever could be. It is the feeling of a community determined by blood. Today man has neither the capacity nor the desire to be separated from his *Volkstum*, he clings to it with obstinate love. He will endure even the worst distress, he will endure misery, but he shall be with his Volk! [—]

Blood binds more firmly than business! [—]

The National Socialist idea extends far beyond the borders of a small Germany. We certainly have no desire for proselytes in foreign peoples. But no one can prevent the National Socialist doctrine from becoming the creed of all Germans!

Hitler then addressed the topic of Austria and declared with regard to its previous system of government:

The crisis in Austria was nonetheless growing ever more extreme. And in this part of Germany things were exactly as they are in all the other parts! The people were all the more attached to Greater Germany, they wanted to join the great Volksgemeinschaft, they belong to it in terms of blood, and their will is the same! And then one day there came the hour when one had to make the decision before one's own conscience, before one's own Volk, and before an eternal God who created the peoples. And I made this decision two weeks ago, and it could not have been any different! For when people become deaf to every precept of justice, the individual must take the law into his own hands! For then he must recall that ancient commandment: "God helps him who helps himself!" And God has helped us!

What exactly was the situation in Austria?

As soon as the National Socialist Movement commenced preparing to take power via the path of legality, the custodians of democracy abandoned this route and established a dictatorship of naked tyranny. The government was truly a dictatorship, because the majority of the population no longer supported it. When other countries repeatedly make it seem as though Germany were suffering from a dictatorship in comparison to the democratic regime in that country, I can only reply as follows:

I am standing in the midst of my Volk. Yet where were these men standing who abused and oppressed the Volk in Austria as the democratic agents of their interests and ideas? For many years, they had no longer dared to approach the Volk. I do not believe there is a state in existence whose regime is more firmly established than ours and which yet has so often turned to the Volk and had its mandate verified.

This has not been done in Austria for years now. In fact, it could not be done, for any referendum would have finished these men in an instant. Initially, a group of tyrants in possession of the instruments of power proclaimed themselves rulers of the state; then they had this group lay down a new constitution, and ever since, the Volk has been denied any opportunity to object and any opportunity to judge or assess its leaders.

The person who was acting as agent for this small group in control was a man named Schuschnigg. In the course of this winter, there were many signs

which led me to believe that, in the long run, this situation had become untenable, and that there were only two alternatives: either a structured settlement or an unstructured outbreak of revolution.

I wanted to avoid the latter, and I invited this man to come to see me in spite of the fact that he had no mandate whatsoever to represent this territory. I bade him to come to me, and in all earnestness I confronted him with the inevitable consequence of continuing to maintain this tyranny. I said to him, "Herr Schuschnigg, you are oppressing a country! You have no right to do so! This country is my homeland, too, just as much as it is yours! Who do you think you are to keep violating this country? I am prepared, in concert with you, to submit to a referendum of the people. The two of us shall stand as candidates. The Volk shall decide." He found this would not be possible on constitutional grounds. However, I warned him to seek a peaceful way of lessening the tension, because otherwise no one could guarantee that the tortured soul of the people would not cry out.

And there was one thing about which I could leave no doubt: no more shots will be fired against German Volksgenossen at the German borders! I attempted in all earnestness to make it clear to him that it was the only remaining way to perhaps bring about a peaceful settlement of the crisis. I left him in no doubt that, if this attempt should miscarry, the events would take their course one way or another. And I bade him to have no doubt that I was serious in my intention to provide assistance from the Reich to the oppressed Volksgenossen, and to have no doubt in my resolve if this route were abandoned and hence a crisis were to arise. He did, however, doubt the seriousness of my word; apparently that is also why he broke the agreement.

Today we have evidence; we have found correspondence in which, one day before my speech to the Reichstag on February 19, he writes that on his part the whole affair was a purely tactical move designed to gain time so that he could wait and see whether the situation abroad might become more favorable. That means he was hoping to be able to stir up foreign feeling against Germany in a more propitious hour. As moral justification for his plan, this man invented the farce of a referendum which is most pointedly unmasked for what it is by the fact that we have now been able to confiscate leaflets and posters in which the results of the referendum were published eight days before the referendum itself! That was an incredible feat of deception from a country which has not had an election and has been deprived of voting rights for years. It was obvious that, were this new fraud to be successful, the world would have declared without batting an eye, "Now this regime is legitimated!"

And then the German Volk in Austria finally began to rebel, and it turned upon its persecutors. It stood up for itself! And then I had to lend my support to this Volk. I gave orders to comply with the Volk's wishes.

I gave the orders to march!

I did it first of all to show the world that I was now in bitter earnest and nothing could keep me from taking this step. They had more than enough opportunities to settle these problems. They missed them and had to know that the times were over when Germany could be blackmailed.

Yet then came the great danger—and that was the second reason I gave the order to march: Austria had been oppressed too long; the people had been abused too long not to be filled with a desire for revenge. I openly admit that, in view of the horrible persecution, the thought occurred to one that it would only be right if the Volk would finally wreak its vengeance on its persecutors. But I nonetheless resolved to avoid that, for one thing I knew: there are those in the ranks of our opponents who are so depraved that they must be deemed lost to the German Volksgemeinschaft; on the other hand, there are also many who are blind or mad and who have simply jumped on the bandwagon. They have perhaps not been made fully aware of what is happening. And above all: who can guarantee that, once the frenzy has taken hold, the private passions, too, will not begin to rage, and that private scores are settled under the motto of political action?

And above all: just as I once staked my entire pride on bringing about the revolution in Germany with a minimum of casualties—because I held that the National Socialist State would win over the good men and had nothing to fear from its incorrigible foes—here, too, it was my wish to keep the reunification from being burdened down with unnecessary suffering and stained with unnecessary blood.

I am quite certain that many would have deserved it. They sentenced to death many of our Volksgenossen who were guilty only of loving their country and their great German Volk more than anything else. They did not even grant them the consideration of a bullet. No, they were hanged! In Vienna alone there are thirteen graves of victims hanged by the noose. More than 400 murdered and 2,500 shot are the regrettable victims¹⁷⁰ of this most despicable and foul oppression against our Volk in modern times.

Yet although they deserved it, it is my conviction that it was right to spare this country from civil war. It is a beautiful country. I did not want to see it destroyed. We will be able to deal with those incorrigible foes using the normal powers of our state, too. Some of them will leave of their own accord and go to where all the European “men of honor” of this type have assembled in recent years. And we are happy that some have already left. I can only hope and anticipate that the rest of the world, which has such deep-felt sympathy with these criminals, might at least be generous enough to turn this sympathy into practical assistance.

On our part, we are prepared to ship those criminals to these countries on luxury steamers, for all I care. The joy that has overwhelmed us during these few days has made us forget any desire for revenge.¹⁷¹

I have spoken with many men and women from my homeland who tell me, “We all had someone we hated so much that we were certain that, when the hour of liberation comes, these criminals must be banished. And when the hour came at last, we were all so overwhelmed by joy, we were so drunk on the miracle, that we completely forgot. We only want to be spared the sight of them! We are all so happy that we belong to Germany now, that we have been taken into the German Volksgemeinschaft and that our country has now become a part of the German Reich, and that our Wehrmacht is now a part of the German Wehrmacht.”

I wanted to spare this country the horrors of Spain. And that was the second reason why I gave orders to march. And there was a third: I had to help. I had been summoned. I would not have been able to bear the responsibility before German history had I not given the orders to occupy the country. When certain foreign newspapers are now writing that we launched a cruel invasion, I can only say that they cannot stop lying, even on their deathbeds. [—] In the course of my political struggle, I have been given a great deal of love from my Volk. Yet when I recently crossed the former border of the Reich, I met with a wave of love stronger than I have ever before experienced.

Not as tyrants have we come, but as liberators. An entire Volk cried out in joy. In doing so, it also provided evidence and proof of the power of the idea. For there are two things we must never forget:

First: this never would have happened without the National Socialist idea. It has conquered these people and cast its spell over them. It is the idea that has made Germany great and shown these people the great ideal they are now serving. During these past few days, it has been a wonderful sight to see how our Movement has risen again like a phoenix one has long believed dead; how it has spread to cover an entire state within but a few hours; how all these careworn faces of the National Socialists are now beaming with joy, how they took public power into their own hands, and how they have become representatives of this state within a few short hours. That was accomplished by the power of the idea.

And second: I believe that the power of this idea also served to inspire our divisions and regiments in their march. It showed them all what it means to be instruments of a great faith. It was not brutal force which triumphed here, but our swastika. When these soldiers marched into the country, I remembered a song from my youth. Back then I frequently sang it, with faith in my heart, this proud battlesong: "The people are rising, the storm is breaking loose."¹⁷² And in fact now a people has risen up, and a storm has broken loose.

The enormous impression this has made on me has moved me to decide not to wait until April 10, but to bring about the unification immediately. I am able to do this because I have seen this Volk myself. And I have dared to do it because I knew that on the tenth of April my faith would not be proven in vain, but quite the opposite: the entire Volk will profess its support of my deed. Above all, I wanted to make it quite clear to those around us that there is to be no further discussion on this point.

Naturally one might now ask, "Why are you holding a referendum at all? Why should this GermanAustria vote at all now?" We want this act to go down in German history. The Volk shall choose and take a stand. I am a better democrat here at home than many of the democrats around us. The Volk in Austria shall be given the opportunity to rise up, and I want to know whether it will not indeed choose the son of its own homeland and the Führer of the German nation. And it shall thereby take a stand for all time. For we National Socialists continue today to swear, as in the past:

What we once possess we will never again surrender! Where our banners are driven into the earth, there stands before them a living wall of German

beings!¹⁷³ You ask why I am now allowing a referendum to take place in Germany itself as well?

My Volksgenossen! Within a few days' time, we have wrought a miracle. It would be all too easy for some Germans to underestimate the full importance and significance of this act. Within a few days, we have won more than could be brought home in the victorious wars of the past: 84,000 square kilometers and 6.8 million people. It is an enormous gain for our Reich. Today Germany is larger in terms of territory than in 1914. It has nearly seven million more inhabitants. That is a tremendous, tremendous conquest. That is something Germany must know and appreciate, and that is something the German nation shall always remember. Hence this time it shall be a sacred vote. The whole of Germany must step forward and pledge its faith! Therefore, all of our Volksgenossen will now be asked to join us on our path. It will be short compared to the distance the National Socialist Movement has covered in its battles; short compared to the distance hundreds of thousands and millions of men of the SA were made to march in these long years so that Germany might become what it is today. It will be short compared to the route which generations of German soldiers took to establish and maintain the Reich. And it will be short compared to the distance our troops have just put behind them. Yet if German divisions have accomplished daily marches of sixty kilometers and more these past few days, the whole of Germany is also under an obligation to march to the polls and pledge its faith in its Führer and its soldiers.

Let no man and no woman be allowed to stay home; they shall all step forward and, just as their conscience bids them, they shall cast their vote. I believe that it can only be in favor of the preservation of our *Volkstum* and the strengthening of our Reich. And above all: this new *Grossdeutschland* shall thereby be given its first Reichstag.

What has happened in these past weeks is the result of the triumph of an idea, the triumph of will, and even a triumph of persistence and tenacity, and above all it is the result of a miracle of faith, for only faith could have moved these mountains. I once went forth with my faith in the German Volk and took up this immeasurable struggle. With faith in me, first thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and finally millions have followed after me. With faith in Germany and in this idea, millions of our Volksgenossen in the new Ostmark in the south of our Reich have held their banners high and remained loyal to the Reich and German Volkstum.

Today I have faith in that tenth of April. I am convinced that, on that day for the first time in history, the whole of Germany will truly be on the march. They shall march not only in the Alpine valleys from Carinthia and Tirol, from Styria or Bavaria; not only shall they march at the Danube, but at the Rhine and in the marshes of Schleswig-Holstein, too; they shall march in the cities and in the villages, and above all here in this province. And on this day, I shall be the Führer of the greatest army in world history. For when I put my vote into the ballot box on this 10th of April, I will know that fifty million will follow me, and that they all recognize one motto, my motto:

Ein Volk and ein Reich—Deutschland!

On March 26, Hitler gave another campaign speech in Leipzig, where he once again described the great suffering of Austria before the "liberation" on March 12, concluding:¹⁷⁴

We Germans have found ourselves again on this day. It was neither the insight nor the accomplishments of other states and peoples, rather the concentrated force of the nation which brought about this feat. Now order has returned to the Reich territory.

Prior to his third speech of the campaign, a speech he would deliver in Berlin, Hitler conducted an important meeting with Konrad Henlein in the Chancellery on March 28. Henlein was the leader of the Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia. The Sudeten German question constantly occupied Hitler's mind, even during the campaign. Already at this early date, Hitler had issued instructions on how to proceed. The existing information on the meeting between Hitler and Henlein is derived from the "top secret" minutes of a session held in the Foreign Office at noon on March 29.

Ribbentrop summarized these instructions to Henlein and his assistants, in the presence of the German Envoy in Prague, Dr. Eisenlohr, and other leading figures. The recording of the session states in its introduction:¹⁷⁵

The Reich Foreign Minister emphasized at the beginning the necessity of keeping the appointed discussion strictly secret and then stated, with reference to the principles imparted to Konrad Henlein yesterday afternoon by the Führer personally, that there were two questions above all others which were important for the conduct of the policy of the Sudeten German Party: 1) The Sudeten German element must know that behind it stood a people of seventy-five millions who would tolerate no further suppression of the Sudeten Germans by the Czechoslovak Government.

2) It was for the Sudeten German Party to present to the Czechoslovak Government those demands, the fulfillment of which they considered necessary for the attainment of the freedom they desired.

With regard to this, the Reich Foreign Minister said that it could not be the duty of the Reich Government to make detailed suggestions to Konrad Henlein, who was the expressly recognized leader of the Sudeten German element, recently confirmed by the Führer, as to what demands should be put to the Czechoslovak Government. It was a matter of drawing up a maximum program which would guarantee as its final aim total freedom for the Sudeten Germans. It seemed dangerous to accept prematurely promises of the Czechoslovak Government, which on the one hand could give the impression abroad that a solution had been found, and on the other would only partially satisfy the Sudeten Germans themselves. Caution was chiefly necessary also because previous experience had shown that no confidence would be placed in the assurances of Beneš and Hodža.¹⁷⁶ The final object of the negotiations

to be conducted by the Sudeten German Party with the Czechoslovak Government could be, by the scope and step-by-step specification of their demands, to avoid entry into the Government.

These guidelines are clear proof of what Hitler sought to effect in Czechoslovakia; namely, the prevention of the consolidation of any Government through the participation of the Sudeten German Party. By constantly presenting new demands, the Sudeten German Party would contribute to the development of an increasingly chaotic situation, which would provide a pretext for Germany's forced entry into the country.

In the evening of March 28, Hitler spoke at a campaign rally in the Berlin Sportpalast.¹⁷⁷ At first Hitler again delivered a lengthy "party narrative," relating the "early stages of National Socialism." He concluded his convoluted description thereof with the profound observation:

Both bourgeoisie and proletariat were left behind, and the German nation is the sole victor.

Turning to the situation in Austria, Hitler spoke of the bloodshed there and maintained:

The tiny country of Austria alone can claim more murdered National Socialists than all of Germany.¹⁷⁸

Hitler then described his negotiations with Schuschnigg in great detail and recounted precisely how he had dealt with the Austrian after the latter had broken his promise:

I was frank with him. [—] He thought today's Germany to be the Germany of yesterday. That was the biggest mistake he ever made in his life! [—]

What happened within these past three weeks is a miracle, a miracle in our history. In only three days a Volk rises up, within two days it crushes a regime, and within one day it greets its liberator! This is the greatest victory ever scored by an idea!

At the end of his campaign speech in Berlin, Hitler referred to the upcoming plebiscite and the elections to the Reichstag in the following terms:

I myself have done my duty. And now I expect of every German man and of every German woman to do likewise this April 10. March 13 witnessed the creation of Greater Germany, and April 10 will witness its affirmation!

On March 29, Hitler's train pulled into the Dammtor station in Hamburg at 2:00 p.m. He had come to that city to attend the launching of the second KdF ship,¹⁷⁹ *Robert Ley*, initially scheduled for March 12. The launch had been delayed because of the events in Austria.

Hitler himself gave the address at the ship's christening,¹⁸⁰ speaking of the German Volksgemeinschaft as a problem largely of education and then expanding on the subject of the National Socialist Community *Kraft durch Freude*. With regard to the name chosen for the ship, Hitler called Ley "the greatest idealist among German workers." At the reception at the City Hall of Hamburg, Hitler declared in a short address:¹⁸¹

I am particularly happy that this mightiest and largest German port pledges its allegiance to the entire German Reich in such a forceful manner. I believe that this realization is not the product of material considerations but rather that it is an expression of heartfelt desire and of an innermost conviction.

That evening, Hitler spoke at a mass rally in the Hanseatenhalle.¹⁸² He took advantage of the occasion to once again speak on the topic of the "careers, doubters and faultfinders" who were "proven completely wrong today." The "party narrative" that day was held in an aggressive tone of voice. Hitler proclaimed:

First of all, domestic political order had to be restored to the Volk. Only then was it possible for the economy to revive. Only then was it possible for the Volk to become a decisive factor once more in foreign policy. Events proved us right. What could a Volk expect that had neither trust nor confidence in itself? Could it expect that others would rate it more highly than it rated itself? First, one had to get rid of all this cronyism and rubbish about an economically bankrupt system just as one had to discard obsolete economic doctrines and terminology. These had to be replaced with simple and fundamental principles and realizations. Only what a nation produces as a whole will benefit the nation as a whole. What it does not produce, it does not possess. Money can never replace inadequate production, rather—in this case—it becomes merely a means of duping the nation. [—]

Those who base their politics on corrosion shall be mercilessly exterminated.

At the end of the "party narrative," Hitler again referred to the KdF ship, explaining its mission:

Thousands of German workers will sail the seas aboard this German ship, a ship so beautiful that people abroad will be tempted to think all those aboard are millionaires in disguise. And now we are building yet another Volkswagen factory. All these accomplishments cost much in terms of labor and sweat, but they bring pleasure to millions. And in this fashion, we are building up Germany on the basis of solidarity and Volksgemeinschaft, and no one can deny that Germany has become all the more beautiful in these past five years.

Then Hitler painted a vivid picture of the untold suffering of the Austrian National Socialists to express his disdain for democracies.

Frequently, people abroad have claimed that we were making propaganda, while in truth it was the idea that propagandized itself. It holds great attraction especially for those who are of the same blood. It does not matter whether or not this pleases the democrats.

Ideas cannot be imprisoned. States can be torn apart, but the bonds of a Volksgemeinschaft are indissoluble. And once the sparks of these ideas begin to fly, they inflame every man whose blood links him to them as though it were an internal antenna. And this is precisely the case with National Socialism. Austria's National Socialists were persecuted, hundreds of them were murdered and thousands were shot. They were hanged as though they were murderers lacking any feeling of honor although their only crime had been their belief in their Volk.

And the world remained silent and uttered not a word of condemnation. You can judge for yourselves the meaning the word democracy took on for us. It became the embodiment of lies and injustice, the pinnacle of hypocrisy. But the minute—be it in Berlin or Vienna—we cause one of those Jewish agitators to close his shop for a while and to go somewhere else, then democracy becomes incensed and speaks of an assault upon holy rights.

Hitler then concluded the campaign speech in Hamburg:

Wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain. I have called upon the Austrian Volk to pass judgment on April 10, so that even the jurists will believe it. I have called upon Germany to confirm this. Today's Germany is larger than the Germany of 1914; it has more inhabitants than it did then, and this fact alone merits that the German nation be asked to go to the polls. Every man and every woman must come. I have a right to demand this since I made sacrifices myself—as did so many others—in the times of struggle in Germany. My path will lead me further than to the voting box, the box into which I know the German Volk will step on April 10.

From the balcony of the City Hall, Hitler spoke to the assembled crowd one last time;¹⁸³

Since, oddly enough, the rest of the world believes only what it sees printed in black and white, on April 10 we will give it something to look at in black and white. While the politicians and statesmen can no longer change it [the Anschluss of Austria] anyway, I hope the jurists will also be content at last.

Hitler visited Cologne on March 30. He arrived at the main station at 5:30 p.m., and from there proceeded to the City Hall, where a reception was held in his honor. Hitler replied to the welcoming words of the city's Mayor Dr. Schmidt in a short address.¹⁸⁴ In it he recalled the restitution of German sovereignty to the Rhineland two years earlier. It was not until this move that the area had finally been rescued and restored to Germany.

A second lovely and beautiful German stream has come to Germany as the stream of the Nibelungs. In Vienna, I pointed out that it is my conviction that the enthusiasm will be an immeasurable one—in particular here in the West, in Cologne.¹⁸⁵ [—]

You can well imagine how happy I am that Fate has chosen me to bring about this historic turn.

At 9:00 p.m., Hitler delivered a campaign speech¹⁸⁶ to a crowd of 60,000 in the Exhibition Hall in Cologne. Hitler concluded the lengthy “party narrative” with the following observation:

The point was to make a unified whole again out of this German body politic, a body that was torn by inner conflicts. Only in this manner was it possible to save the nation, by the force of an ideal, an ideal that inspires all of us. Reason can never replace idealism nor can it ever stand in opposition to idealism. To create a new Volk and a *volklich* ideal and to unite the Volk under this ideal—that, too, was the prerequisite for economic recovery.

God has created us not that we should perish, but that we should sustain ourselves.

The remaining part of the speech was devoted to a rendition of the events that had taken place in Austria.

On March 31, Hitler was greeted ceremoniously in the Kaisersaal of the City Hall in Frankfurt. In reply to the welcome extended by the Mayor, Dr. Krebs, Hitler declared:

I am happy that today I am able to enter this city as the man who has realized a yearning which once found its most profound expression in this location. Above all, I am happy that—for the first time in my life—I am able to stand in this magnificent hall. The cause for which our ancestors struggled and shed their blood ninety years ago may now be regarded as accomplished. I am firmly convinced and confident that this cause—the new Greater German Reich—will remain in existence for all time to come, for it is supported by the German Volk itself and founded upon the eternal yearning of the German Volk to possess one Reich.

That evening, at a mass rally in the Festival Hall in Frankfurt, Hitler began his campaign speech with the following words:

In these historic times, I come into this historic city in which ninety years ago the attempt was launched to bestow upon the German Volk one Reich.

Hitler continued to describe the history of the development of the concept of a Greater Germany. This idea had first been evident in the parliament of 1848, which had convened in the Frankfurt Paulskirche. Bismarck had expanded upon the idea, and up to the year 1918, the thought had been nurtured. Hitler then continued with the obligatory, longwinded “party narrative.” At its conclusion, Hitler proclaimed:

I have been in power for five years. And in this time period I have torn page upon page from the book of the disgraceful Treaty of Versailles. I have done so not in defiance of law, but rather as a man who preserves law and order, a man who is not in breach of contract, but rather as a man who refuses to acknowledge a shameful *Diktat* as a holy contract!

After a detailed rendition of the events in Austria, Hitler ended his speech on the following note:

I have taken great risks for our Volk. In my youth, I knew nothing but the German Volk. In the Great War, I fought for it, and afterwards I went on a pilgrimage throughout Germany, always filled by the only desire to bring about the resurrection of this Volk. The story of my life lies like an open book before every one of my Volksgenossen. I have done my duty! Now German Volk do yours!

After the rally, Hitler left Frankfurt and continued his tour, which next took him to Heidelberg. There he spent the night at the Europäischer Hof Hotel. At 3:00 p.m. on April 1, Hitler arrived in Stuttgart on a special train. In the City Hall, the Mayor Dr. Stroelin greeted Hitler at a reception held in his honor.¹⁸⁷ Hitler replied to this welcome in a short address, emphasizing that the concept of a Greater Germany was nowhere as lively and vibrant as in Stuttgart, “the city of Germans living abroad.”¹⁸⁸ At 9:00 p.m., Hitler delivered another campaign speech at a mass rally in Stuttgart.¹⁸⁹ Following the “party narrative,” he again turned to the events in Austria: “We have all forgotten what it means to be compelled to live outside of the German Volksgemeinschaft!”

By the time Hitler delivered his speech, the supposed number of National Socialists who had sacrificed their blood to the Austrian cause had mysteriously increased: at this point, Hitler already claimed that “10,000 had been injured, 2,500 shot, 400 murdered, and 16 hanged.” Thereafter, Hitler announced that the Reich Government had succeeded in securing a letter written by Schuschnigg. The Austrian Chancellor had addressed it to a Landeshauptmann (head of the government of an Austrian province),¹⁹⁰ and had informed him—in reference to the meeting at Berchtesgaden—that he had accepted Hitler’s demands only for appearances’ sake. He had done so only to gain time “until the attitude abroad changed.” At such a time, he would take the offensive.

We knew that this was what Schuschnigg was thinking: for he thought too loudly. [—] I have taken the ancient path history has imparted upon me, and I believe that the German Volk will reaffirm this mission. I, the so-called dictator, ask the German Volk to pass judgment!

During those days, the headlines of German newspapers were filled with sensational reports on Hitler's speeches and other events connected with the campaign. This flood of propaganda was such that one easily could have overlooked a small DNB report, dated April 1, concerning the case of Fritsch and—in a sense—symbolizing the rehabilitation of the Colonel General as a result of the meager findings of the March 17 court-martial. The note had the following verbatim content:

Berlin, April 1. The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has expressed his best wishes to Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch in a handwritten note, on the occasion of the latter's restoration to health.

This was the extent of Hitler's statements in public with regard to the affair. The content of the handwritten note was never published. There was no thought of reappointing the former Commander in Chief to his previous post. Naturally, the German public neither heard of this nor was it ever informed of the type of "disease" from which Fritsch had supposedly recovered.

On April 2, Hitler spoke at a campaign rally in the exhibition halls near the Theresienwiese in Munich.¹⁹¹ This particular speech was nothing more than a "party narrative." From the beginning, Hitler reminded his audience that Munich had been the site of the inauguration of his "crusade against lethargy, unreason, and dishonesty" twenty years earlier. He concluded his monologue by describing his efforts of the past five years as Reich Chancellor.

The German Volk itself brought about this miracle as it trustingly followed my lead year after year. [—] I place my trust in you, German Volk, so that I may stand before the world to say that I did not accomplish this feat alone, but rather that seventy-five million people willed it.

After Hitler had campaigned for the plebiscite in eight major German cities, he concentrated his efforts on cities in Austria. Ever since the campaign for the election to the Reichstag in 1936, a certain ritual had been observed in the various electoral districts. A campaign appearance of Hitler in a city was treated as a state visit and staged in connection with official receptions and ceremonies. This custom was emulated by the capitals of the Austrian Under and Gaus, which had possibly even improved upon it.

Hitler's tour started on April 3 in the city of Graz. Its citizens had demonstrated strong National Socialist proclivities in the previous years and, therefore, had already been expecting a visit by the Führer

for a long time. In his speech at a mass rally in the city,¹⁹² Hitler excused his late attention to the capital of Styria and maintained that he had intended to visit Graz far earlier. He mustered all of the persuasive powers at his disposal in an effort to impress his audience. As he drew to a conclusion of his “party narrative,” he appeared to be quite pleased with himself and declared with great pathos:

The German Volk carries it head high once again. With great pride, it looks to its Wehrmacht once again, and it is convinced that no power on earth shall be able to vanquish it ever again.

This statement was followed by a detailed description of the events in Austria, beginning with Berchtesgaden and ending with the Anschluss.

I made it clear to Schuschnigg that the minute the Federal Chancellor issued orders to fire upon Germans once more—simply because of their convictions—German regiments will cross the border. [—]

Within three days the man, who thought himself capable of stemming the tide of Germany’s ascent, collapsed together with all his cohorts. [—]

The song I had faithfully sung so often in my youth became reality: *Der Sturm brach los, das Volk stand auf!*¹⁹³[—] And on this day, German-Austria’s true mission was imparted upon it: to serve as bulwark and foothold for the German Reich as the Ostmark of the historic Germania!

Hitler emphasized the following about Mussolini’s stance during the critical days in Austria:

We shall never forget this and we unconditionally pledge our word. Yugoslavia espoused the same stance and so did Hungary. We are happy to call four borders our own, borders that relieve us of the burden of having the military protect them.

Hitler concluded his speech with a pious appeal for the votes to be cast on April 10:

The Lord created all peoples. What God has placed together, let no man put asunder.¹⁹⁴ And as a holy symbol of this truth the whole German nation will step forth on April 10! I have called upon the nation to do so not only here, but in the entire Reich. And it will do so.

Today I stand at the fore once more as I did during the times of my struggle and wrestle for the German individual. On April 10, we will jointly pass judgment. For the first time in the history of our Volk, a Reich is being constructed in accordance to the will of the Volk. And I desire to be nothing other than what I have been in the past: the warner of my Volk, the instructor of my Volk, the Führer of my Volk! In the future as well, I will bow to one single commandment only, a commandment which has compelled me ever since I was born: *Deutschland!*

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That same April 3, the celebrations for the “Day of the Legion” took place in Vienna. Three weeks after the Anschluss of Austria, Hitler had allowed all Austrian National Socialists to return to their native land. Beginning in 1934, many adherents of National Socialism in Austria had fled their country and had escaped to Germany. As mentioned before, Hitler had various reasons¹⁹⁵ for not permitting his Austrian followers to return to their homeland at an earlier date in the course of the Anschluss.

Naturally, they were more eager to do so at this point than they had ever been. At a speaking engagement on the Heldenplatz in Vienna, Gauleiter Bürckel read them the following, none too warm appeal by Hitler:¹⁹⁶

Men of the Austrian Legion!

Once, following a most difficult fight which circumstances had rendered hopeless, you stepped across the border into Germany to form a training unit for a future Austrian SA in compliance with my instructions.

Despite great longing for your homeland, you loyally and obediently bowed to my command for many years. Now the hour of liberation has come and with it comes the hour of your return home. From now on you shall place your knowledge and expertise at the service of the resurrection of the Austrian SA. At the Nuremberg Party Congress, I will review the progress you made for the first time.

Today already I am assured in the knowledge that you will then stand out as examples of obedience, discipline, and dedication to the National Socialist Party’s cause, and hence to the cause of Greater Germany. Above all, you will form an inseparable link to those thousands of brave SA men who were not as fortunate as you, who could not express their convictions freely in the course of these years and who remained loyal to the Movement in spite of prosecution and terror. Let me express my gratitude to you as well as to all other Austrian SA men. From this day onward, you will once again be called: German SA men of the National Socialist Party.

Adolf Hitler

On April 4, Hitler triumphantly entered the city of Klagenfurt. In the banquet room of the City Hall, the Prince Bishop Dr. Heffter and the Mayor of Klagenfurt greeted Hitler and feted him as the liberator of Austria. In a short address,¹⁹⁷ Hitler recalled the hard times that Klagenfurt had known in the aftermath of the World War and in the subsequent times of political turmoil.

It shall be the foremost task for all of us to allow these wounds to heal gradually and to reintegrate this wonderful and beautiful country as a pearl in the chain joining together the lands of our equally wonderful and beautiful German *Vaterland*.

At a mass rally in the festival hall, Hitler delivered a two-hour speech.¹⁹⁸ While speaking, he touched upon the topic of the National Socialist uprising of July 25, 1934. At the time, Hitler had simply discarded his faithful adherents who had heeded his call to rally. On several occasions in the past, he had solemnly disavowed any involvement on his part in the affair.¹⁹⁹ However, now he declared:

You can take my word for it, I suffered with you back then. I could not help you, but I made an oath to myself then, and now I have kept it.

Hitler ended the address in Klagenfurt with an unmistakably clear reference to his God-given mission. He proclaimed:

Whoever believes in God must avow: when the fate of a Volk is changed within three days' time, then this could only have come about as a result of divine intervention, an ordeal. [—]

The election on April 10 will not be one in the ordinary sense of the term: it will be a pilgrimage made by the entire German nation.

Not only Austria, but all of Germany, from the Arctic Ocean to the Karawanken, must stand up to bear witness before history to the creation of the Greater German Reich. [—]

German Volk, hold it tightly in your fist now, and never allow it to be wrung from you!

On April 5, Hitler gave a short address at a reception in the Tirolean Landhaus (parliament) in Innsbruck. That evening, he followed with a campaign speech, transmitted by radio. Hitler paid particular attention to the fact that it had been in the city of Innsbruck that Schuschnigg had announced his plans for a plebiscite.

How could these men be so blind as to believe that here an entire Volk would turn a blind eye to the rise of Germany, and on the other hand, how could these men believe that I would remain blind and deaf in light of the suffering of this country. [—]

After all, it is only natural that a man who loves his great Vaterland more than anything in the world, that such a man is not capable of forgetting the country from which he himself once came. Only someone lacking in character could fathom so great a lack of character on the part of someone else as to divest himself from the fate of his own homeland. I would not deserve the love, trust, and loyalty of so many Germans in our Old Reich if I myself did not know loyalty and love for my homeland. I have suffered everything that my homeland suffered. [—] When the day of April 10 draws to a close, the entire world will have to acknowledge that on March 13, one man united one Volk; one month later, that Volk affirmed that man.

At the very beginning of the campaign speech he delivered at the Salzburg Festspielhaus on April 6, Hitler exclaimed:²⁰⁰

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For years I dreamt of liberating this country, despite all those who feared this hour—and now I am here!

Then Hitler expanded upon the concept of the Reich and cried out:

In the beginning stood the Volk, was the Volk, and only then came the Reich!²⁰¹

Subsequently, he again described in great detail the recent events in Austria and proclaimed:

When Fate leads a young man forth from his homeland, and leads him to a position such as the one in which I find myself today, then it is only natural that the thoughts of this man turn time and time again to his homeland. I believe that the period of my leadership of Germany is one of historic greatness for the German Volk.

I believe that one day posterity and German history will affirm that in the time in which I conducted the affairs of the German state, I rendered the greatest service to the German Volk. A man of like convictions must naturally desire that his homeland should partake in the blessings he brought about. I was convinced that I would be able to better lead this country in unison with the German Reich than Herr Schuschnigg or anyone else possibly could. This is not arrogance on my part.

When a man manages to bring a state of sixty-eight million to such height as Germany has attained in the past five years, then that man can well entrust himself with the resolution of such a problem. This was my conviction and this makes me particularly happy—millions of my fellow countrymen shared this conviction. [—]

I regard Herr Schuschnigg as one of those power which always wills the Bad but which Fate has preordained to work the Good in the end.²⁰² [—]

With all my heart I have desired to absolve the former Austrian Federal Army from its—in my eyes—untenable position and to declare it part of the German Wehrmacht.

What today remains set apart by different uniforms is of the same blood anyway and in a few years' time will have become one—indistinguishable in its uniform as well.

However, the true reason why Hitler had moved so swiftly to integrate the Austrian Federal Army into the German Wehrmacht was his well-known preoccupation with questions of power politics. He did not wish this potent instrument to be left to its own devices for even a minute. Whenever questions of military power arose, Hitler became totally ruthless. This is evident in the careful wording he chose to justify his decision to march on Austria, despite of the fait accompli he had affected in the political situation there:

It was an irrevocable decision which can no longer be reversed! Once German soldiers march, their mission cannot be rescinded!²⁰³

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In the course of the remainder of his speech in Salzburg, Hitler turned to the issue of an economic integration of Austria into the Reich:

We have a most magnificent goal before us, the goal of rendering this Volksgemeinschaft more profound and to integrate this country economically in the enormous cycle of our great economic life—a truly magnificent goal. I am so happy that I was allowed to create this goal and to work on it.

In only a few months' time, the tide of new creativity and new economic activity will surge through this country. In a few years, thoughts of Social Democracy and Communism will have faded like the memory of an evil spirit from a distant past, and these ideas will be laughed at. [—]

Never before have I stepped before the nation with a clearer conscience or with greater pride and confidence. I am certain: on April 10 the entire German Volk will make its greatest avowal in history. It will solemnly pledge its allegiance to the new Reich and the new community. For only if all Germans form part of a sworn-in and unified community can Germany's future be assured for all time. Our children and grandchildren shall not have to be ashamed of their ancestors. One day they shall, with all due respect, look back to those who lived before them, to those who protected the Reich, the Reich which gives life and sustenance to them. By then, April 10 will have become one of the great days in German history. All of us greatly rejoice in the knowledge that Providence has chosen us to fashion this day.

On April 7, Hitler attended the breaking of new ground at the Walserberg near Salzburg for the Reich Autobahn, which one day was to connect the cities of Salzburg and Vienna. In front of an assembly of construction workers, Hitler delivered a short address, declaring:²⁰⁴

Here, too, we will begin with action immediately. I will hold you responsible, Herr Generalinspekteur [Todt], not only for commencing work here on this very day, but also for completing this first section within three years. You, my fellow workers, will help him. This bond shall tie together all of Germany and it shall serve as proof to the world that a Volk and a Reich capable of seeing through such an enormous undertaking—that these can never be separated. Now I myself will commence this work.

Subsequently, Hitler himself inaugurated the construction by digging the ceremonial first spadeful. Nonetheless, his wish did not come true that the Autobahn might be completed “within three years.” As with many of his other enterprises, the war was to end the construction work prematurely.

Later that afternoon in Linz, Hitler delivered another campaign speech. Here he declared:²⁰⁵

Ever since March 13, the city of Linz has been indelibly engraved in the annals of German history. This obliges all of you to do your duty on the 10th of April. [—] As a boy I ventured forth from here to the capital of what was

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then Old Austria. There I could not settle either as I was unrelentingly drawn to the great Reich: I simply had to find my way there, my way to the country of my dreams and yearnings!

Then Hitler paid most detailed attention to the topic of the *kleindeutsch* Reich. He observed that Bismarck had forged Smaller Germany together out of the molten iron of rivaling tribes and lands by unifying them, or rather by forcing unity upon them. Therefore, Hitler drew the conclusion:

In all likelihood, only a German from the South could have brought about this second unification. After all, he had to return a large parcel of territory to the Reich, a parcel which had been lost to the Reich in the course of our history.

Now it was time again for a lengthy “party narrative.” Hitler declared that what had enabled him to fulfill his mission had been his experience in the school of “harsh training as a German soldier.”

Those six years as a soldier instilled in me the foundations for tenacity, steadfastness, and persistence. Everything I gained in terms of virtues and values during this time I owe to the once unrivaled German Army.

In the further course of his speech, Hitler magnanimously praised his own accomplishments and proclaimed:

The Germany of misery and plight, of profound despair, and above all the Germany of defenselessness and helplessness is a Germany of the past. Today we once again possess an enormous Reich; a strong Wehrmacht protects us; no power on earth shall ever vanquish us. The National Socialist leadership of state has wrought miracle upon miracle within the past five years thanks to the nation standing as one behind it. [—]

An iron will has created this Reich of today. Iron and steel will protect it against any foe. The German Volk has finally triumphed over the German states. [—]

For I know what I am bringing home [to the Old Reich]: a most beautiful country! For me natural resources and material goods do not count. For me only one thing counts: those six and a half million men, German men, whom I am integrating into the German Volksgemeinschaft as the Führer and Chancellor of the Reich. This is the proudest contribution a man can make to his Volk and to his Reich. April 10 will witness the whole of Germany pledging itself to the one resolution: on this day, we say yes to Germany, to our Germany!

On April 9, Hitler was ceremoniously received in the banquet hall of the City Hall of Vienna by the new Mayor Dr. Neubacher. There Hitler expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome in the following words:²⁰⁶

Mr. Mayor!

I thank you for your welcome. I hold this to be a welcome extended both by the city of Vienna and by all of German-Austria. Rest assured that this city remains a pearl in my eyes. I will restore it in a manner worthy of it, and I will place it in the care of the entire German Reich and of the entire German nation. This city as well will witness a new bloom.

We all sense the import of the historic events which we were allowed to witness and which tomorrow we will bring to a close. It is my conviction that this city will say yes to this close as well.

This yes is both historic and irrefutable. For all that must remain and will remain, both has been and is the German Volk. And it will remain so for all time to come. I entrust the future fate of this city and of this country to the German Volk.

That evening, Hitler's last speech of the election campaign in the hall of the Northwest train station in Vienna was broadcast throughout Germany.²⁰⁷ As he explained in his introductory comments, this address was to parallel two earlier ones, delivered in Königsberg on March 4, 1933,²⁰⁸ and in Cologne on March 28, 1936,²⁰⁹ respectively. At the end of those campaigns, Hitler had also directed one last appeal to the German Volk.

As a matter of fact, Hitler's speech in Vienna turned out to be far worse than those of 1933 and 1936. He was edgy and in the course of the "party narrative" insinuated how much it infuriated him that he had been forced to bide his time for so long before he was allowed to take power. The Führer reveled in sentimental recollections of the ordeal that he and the German Volk had to submit to in the years 1918 through 1933. He grew increasingly bitter as he spoke and finally uttered a statement against which his better judgment ought to have cautioned him;²¹⁰ "I have wasted my best years in this struggle!"

Indeed, Hitler had this sentence deleted from the text of the speech so that it would not be published. Perhaps he himself felt that there was not much to be expected in the future from a man who already had "wasted his best years." The latter part of the speech revealed how much Hitler still thought it necessary to justify his presence in Vienna, as well as the fact that he spoke in this city. Listing five points to that effect, he enumerated the following reasons:

First of all, this land is a German land, and its people are German! Here the Reich once established its Ostmark. The Reich's people moved here and throughout the centuries fulfilled their duties in the Ostmark of the Reich. Not only did they remain German, they became what one might term bearers of the shield for Germany.

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Secondly, this land cannot exist without the Reich for any period of time. What are 84,000 square kilometers today? What are six and a half million people? No one takes notice of them. Here, too, the realization applies that each German tribe by itself can be destroyed easily but once all tribes stand united they are invincible.²¹¹ Reality has proven that this land and these six and a half million people cannot exist in seclusion. This tiny country is incapable of solving the problems of its 300,000 unemployed and hundreds of thousands of dispossessed. And this proves that so small a country is not a viable unit. The greatest evidence yet for the lack of all prerequisites for life lies with the development of birth and mortality statistics. No one can deny that this is the country with the lowest birth rates and the highest mortality rates.

Third, this Volk never wanted to be separated from the Reich. The instant that its mission as leader of the peoples of the Reich was rendered obsolete, the voice of its blood spoke out. After the 1918 collapse, German-Austria desired to return to the Reich immediately. The democratic world prevented the Anschluss of German-Austria. Now the Volk has turned against this world. As the banner of National Socialism rose in Germany, the people here as well began to increasingly look to this symbol. In their hearts, hundreds of thousands pledged their allegiance secretly. Then came the time when this Volk suffered abuse at the hands of a group that could claim neither numerical superiority nor moral supremacy to justify its leading position.

Fourth, all I can say to those still not content: it is my homeland! I fought as a decent German soldier, and once this war was over, I went on a pilgrimage through Germany, and I won this country for me, this country so dear and lovely. When Germany was in despair, I was so proud to be German. I fought and struggled for this Volk, and I won its trust. I have wasted my best years in this struggle! This Reich has become so dear to me. It should come as no surprise that I yearned to integrate my own homeland in this dearest of Reichs.

Fifth, all I have to say to those who still remain untouched: I stand here today because I fancy that I can do better than Herr Schuschnigg!

In the thirteen speeches Hitler delivered in the course of the campaign, he endeavored to make the events in Austria appear as though they had been willed by God himself, thus making his mission appear divinely inspired. He had spoken of a "trial by ordeal" that had come to pass; of the "miracle" of these past few weeks; of "God who had helped"; of "a sign from heaven"; of a "sacred election" which he now demanded of the people; and finally of a "pilgrimage of the nation."

Now that he was speaking in Vienna, he intended to surpass the story of these religious, mystical assertions by claiming that Providence had called upon him to act:

I believe that it was also God's will that from here a boy was to be sent into the Reich, allowed to mature, and elevated to become the nation's Führer,

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thus enabling him to reintegrate his homeland into the Reich. There is a divine will, and all we are is its instruments.

When Herr Schuschnigg broke his word on March 9, at that very instant I felt that Providence had called upon me. And all that happened in the next three days could only have come about because Providence willed and desired it. In three days the Lord struck them down!²¹² And it was imparted upon me to reintegrate my homeland into the Reich on the very day of its betrayal. [—]

When one day we shall be no more, then the coming generations shall be able to look back with pride upon this day, the day on which a great Volk affirmed the German community. In the past, millions of German men shed their blood for this Reich. How merciful a fate to be allowed to create this Reich today without any suffering!

Now, rise, German Volk, subscribe to it, hold it tightly in your hands! I wish to thank Him who allowed me to return to my homeland so that I could return it to my German Reich! May every German realize the importance of the hour tomorrow, assess it and then bow his head in reverence before the will of the Almighty who has wrought this miracle in all of us within these past few weeks!

After this final appeal, Hitler left Vienna on a special train at 10:00 that evening. He arrived at the Anhalt train station in Berlin at 1:25 the following afternoon. It was April 10, the day of the plebiscite. In the election booth erected at the station, Hitler cast his own vote. The ballot read:²¹³

Are you in agreement with the reunion of Austria with the German Reich as effected on March 13, and do you vote for the list presented by our Führer Adolf Hitler?

When the returns of the plebiscite had come in, its official result showed that of the 49.3 million voters, 48.8 had voted in favor of the proposition, corresponding to 99.08 percent. Naturally, the result of the plebiscite in Austria would have to look even better than that achieved in the Old Reich.

As officially announced, 4.2 million Austrians cast their vote for Hitler, which amounted to a percentage of 99.75, a result similar to that attained in the 1936 Saar plebiscite, in which 99.9 percent of the electorate had supposedly supported Hitler.

As had been the case in the Saar, it was Bürckel once more who reported the Austrian election results to Hitler—albeit from Vienna in this instance. His report contained the following statement: “These 99.75 percent mean: we are Germans, and to the end of time we belong exclusively to Germany and its Führer!” Hitler replied in the following radio address:²¹⁴

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Gauleiter Bürckel! German-Austrians!

I expected much of my homeland. The results of this plebiscite here as well as throughout the Reich, however, exceed even my greatest expectations.

I am very happy in face of this avowal at long last of German-Austria's true innermost convictions and of the trust placed in me. For this historic affirmation of the reunion of Austria and the Reich affected by the entire German Volk also, after all, signals the complete sanctioning of all my actions. For me, this hour is the proudest in my entire life. I feel compelled to thank, with all my heart, the entire German Volk and, in particular, my own dear homeland.

4

On April 11, Göring celebrated his fifth anniversary as Prussian Minister-President. On this occasion, Hitler sent him the following congratulatory telegram:²¹⁵

Dear Field Marshal Göring,

Five years ago today you entered office as Minister-President of Prussia. With heartfelt gratitude, I honor your loyal cooperation in the rebuilding of Germany. The feats you have accomplished within the past five years in the service of strengthening Germany belong to history. It is my sincere desire that I may continue to count upon your loyal assistance for many years to come.

Yours in old friendship,

Adolf Hitler

At the Chancellery the next day, Hitler received the SA member Hannes Schneeberger, the first man to raise the swastika flag on Grossglockner mountain.²¹⁶ On April 15, Hitler wired a congratulatory note to General von Lüttwitz on the occasion of the latter's sixtieth military service anniversary.²¹⁷

On April 20, Hitler celebrated his forty-ninth birthday in Berlin. At 9:00 a.m., the Ministers and Reichsleiters congratulated him. An hour later, Hitler watched the SA Standarte *Feldherrnhalle*²¹⁸ parade by on Wilhelmstrasse. At 11:00 a.m., there was a military review of greater magnitude conducted on the square in front of the University. At 7:00 p.m., Hitler attended the first showing of Leni Riefenstahl's documentary *Olympiade* in the Ufa cinema at the Zoo. In the Reich Ministry of Propaganda there was a special reception in honor of the occasion, at which Hitler also appeared.²¹⁹

In the Chancellery the next day, Hitler conducted a most important discussion with General Keitel. The topic of their conference was the envisioned military aggression directed against Czechoslovakia. Hitler believed that the time had come to issue precise instructions to prepare for "Case Green."²²⁰ The content of the meeting and the issues on its

agenda have been preserved in the “Summary of the Discussion Führer/General Keitel on April 21, 1938,”²²¹ drawn up by Hitler’s new Wehrmacht Adjutant Schmunt.²²² The verbatim content of these “Basic principles Regarding the Study ‘Case Green’” was the following:

A. Political

(1) Idea of strategic attack out of the blue without cause or possibility of justification is rejected. Reason: hostile world opinion which might lead to serious situation. Such measures only justified for elimination of last enemy on the Continent.

(2) Action after a period of diplomatic discussions which gradually lead to a crisis and to war.

(3) Lightning action based on an incident (for example the murder of the German Minister in the course of an anti-German demonstration).²²³

B. Military conclusions

(1) preparations to be made for political contingencies 2 and 3. Contingency 2 is undesirable because “Green” security measures will have been taken.

(2) The loss of time through transport by rail of the bulk of the divisions—which is unavoidable and must be reduced to a minimum—must not be allowed to divert from lightning attack at the time of action.

(3) “Partial thrusts” toward breaching the defense line at numerous points and in operationally advantageous directions are to be undertaken at once. These thrusts are to be prepared down to the smallest detail (knowledge of the routes, the objectives, composition of the columns according to tasks allotted them).

Simultaneous attack by land and air forces.

The Luftwaffe is to support the individual columns (for instance, dive bombers, sealing off fortification works at the points of penetration; hindering the movement of reserves; destruction of signal communications and thus isolating the garrisons).

(4) The first 4 days of military action are, politically speaking, decisive. In the absence of outstanding military successes, a European crisis is certain to arise. *Faits accomplis* must convince foreign powers of the hopelessness of military intervention; call in allies to the scene (*Teilung der Beute!*—sharing the booty); demoralize “Green.”

Hence, bridging the period between first penetration of enemy’s lines and throwing into action the advancing troops by the determined ruthless advance of a motorized army (for instance through Pi [Pilsen] past Pr [Prague]).

(5) If possible, separation of the transport Movement “Red”²²⁴ from “Green.” A simultaneous deployment of “Red” might cause “Red” to adopt undesirable measures. On the other hand operation “Red” must at all times be ready to come into action.

C. Propaganda

(1) Leaflets for the conduct of the Germans in “Green” territory (*Grünland*).

(2) Leaflets with threats to intimidate the “Greens.”

Schm[undt].

At nearly the same time that Hitler was drawing up these instructions for the military, Konrad Henlein announced in Karlsbad on April 24 that, in accordance with the guidelines he had received on March 28, the Sudeten German Party had drafted an "Eight-Point Program," which demanded complete autonomy within the Czechoslovakian state.²²⁵ In this way, the conflict here, too, was intensified so that a hostile act at any time could result in the boiling-over of tensions.

In Berlin on April 22, Hitler delivered various addresses on the occasion of the respective receptions of the newly appointed Peruvian Envoy Gildemeister, the Romanian Envoy Djuvara and their Bulgarian colleague Draganov.²²⁶

The next day, Hitler turned his attention back to the situation in Austria. Barely two weeks had passed since that "proudest hour" of his life when 99.75 percent of the Austrians had voted in his favor. Nevertheless, the Führer considered that the time had come to pass a measure that was not in the least to the liking of his adherents in Austria. That April 23, Hitler appointed Gauleiter Bürckel to the decisive post of "Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich." Up to this point, Bürckel had solely been in charge of the conduct of the plebiscite and the reorganization of the NSDAP in Austria. In his new position, Bürckel commanded the administration of Party and State in Austria and was directly responsible only to Hitler. By the end of Bürckel's service in this post on May 1, 1939, nothing was to remain of the ancient concept of "Austria." The federation of the various Austrian Provinces around the central power in Vienna was to cease, and even the name "Austria" was to be eradicated.²²⁷

Hitler's decree of April 23, 1938 read verbatim:²²⁸

Article 1. As Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich, I appoint Gauleiter Bürckel (Saarpfalz).

Article 2. The Reichskommissar shall ensure the political organization and the administrative, economic, and cultural reintegration of Austria into the German Reich.

Article 3. The Reichskommissar's official residence shall be in Vienna. He is directly subordinate to me and has to fulfill his task on my instructions until May 1, 1939. On this day, his task shall end.

Article 4. The Reichskommissar is empowered to issue directives to the administrative departments of the German Reich within the Land of Austria, to the authorities of the Land of Austria and the former Austrian Federal States, as well as to the offices of the National Socialist German Labor Party, its

subdivisions, and connected organizations in the Land of Austria. He supervises the public institutions and corporations in the Land of Austria.

Article 5. The Reich Minister of the interior shall head the implementation of the reunion of Austria with the German Reich and take his measures, in particular with regard to legal questions, in accordance with the Reichskommissar.

The Reich Commissioner (Reichsbeauftragter) for Austria²²⁹ (§ 2, section 2 of the decree to the Law on the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich of March 16, 1938; RGBI. I, p. 249) shall be affiliated with the Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich.

Simultaneously, Hitler addressed the letter below to the Reichsstatthalter in Austria, Seyss-Inquart:²³⁰

The Führer and Reich Chancellor
Berlin W 8, April 23, 1938
Herr Reichsstatthalter,

I have appointed Gauleiter Bürckel as Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich, effective as of this date as detailed in the enclosed copy of today's decree. I remark the following in reference thereto:

The Reichskommissar shall be directly subordinate to me. For the period of one year, during which time the Reunion of Austria with the Reich must be largely accomplished, the Reichskommissar shall function as my intermediary to assist both myself and you in implementing the reintegration of Austria into the Reich in the realm of politics, law, economics, and culture. In particular, it shall be his mission to play a pivotal role in the process of introducing and assimilating Reich law to the Austrian legal system, doing this in cooperation with the central agency for the Reunion of Austria with the Reich under the aegis of the Reich Ministry of the Interior. Further, he shall assist you in investigating and determining for the Reich Government and the Party the extent and timing with which Reich law shall be either introduced to the various Austrian legal realms or Austrian law shall be recast to correspond to Reich law.

As Reichsstatthalter authorized to head the Austrian Land Government, it shall be your task to implement the new law in Austria. When, after a year's time, the reintegration of Austria into the German Reich has essentially been attained, I shall appoint you as a member of the Reich Government. In this capacity, you shall then continue your service to Austria within the Greater German Reich.

Adolf Hitler

Bürckel was not the only new master that Hitler imposed on the Austrians. With Bürckel came a veritable army of political leaders from the Old Reich. The majority of these men were not well educated and had never set foot on Austrian soil; nor did their knowledge of the country and its people extend much beyond hearsay—usually of a pejorative nature.

April 27, 1938

Placed in the most influential positions, these political leaders behaved as though they were administering an occupied territory. In addition, they endeavored to instill “German orderliness” and “work ethic” in the “sloppy” Austrians. It took less than half a year for the majority of Austrians to wake from their national euphoria of March to the harsh realities of Hitlerian methods.²³¹ In September, the people were further sobered by the prospect of war with Czechoslovakia.

Routine returned to Berlin as the eventful days of March and April came to a close. Hitler sent the Japanese Emperor a birthday telegram on April 27.²³² On the same day in Munich, the Führer proclaimed a so-called party amnesty in the aftermath of the creation of Greater Germany. Its verbatim content was the following:²³³

1. Within the hierarchy of the Party justice system, there shall be no prosecution for actions perpetrated prior to April 10, 1938, provided that punishment for these acts would not have resulted in expulsion from the Party.

2. To the same extent, cases pending shall be dismissed and sentences shall be remitted if they have not yet been served in their entirety.

3. Restrictions on Party membership for former Freemasons shall be removed, provided the applicants had not served with the Lodge as highdegree members. It shall be immaterial at what time the member left the Freemasons.

4. Instructions on the implementation of this ordinance shall be issued by the Supreme Judge of the Party.

Munich, April 27, 1938

Adolf Hitler

Walter Buch, Supreme Judge of the Party

On April 30, Hitler issued an appeal for donations to the Youth Hostel Association.²³⁴ On May 1, Hitler himself established a “medal in commemoration of March 13, 1938.”²³⁵ At 9:00 a.m. on May Day, Hitler addressed the German youth in the Olympic Stadium. The verbatim content of his speech that day is reproduced below:²³⁶

My Youth! My German Boys and Girls!

You have the great fortune to live in an age of which the German nation shall never have to be ashamed. In your youth you have witnessed the rise of our Volk. Your young hearts were set aglow and became impassioned by the historic events of these last weeks and months which stood under the spell of the reunion of the German Volk. This outward development was, my boys and girls, only the outcome of an inward development in our German Volk reflecting its union. And today we celebrate the day of this union of our Volk!

For centuries, our Volk was torn and at odds with itself, and hence it was incapacitated in its outside dealings; it was unhappy, lacking means of defense and a sense of honor. Ever since the victory of the Movement, under the banner of which you stand today, the inner union of the German people has been accomplished. And now Providence allows us to reap the fruits of our labor: Greater Germany! This union did not come about as a matter of coincidence, but rather as the result of the National Socialist Movement's systematic education of our Volk. The Movement has absolved this Volk from its division into a wild agglomeration of parties, classes, confessions, and ranks and has made an entity of it. And this educational process begins at an age where the individual's views are not yet encumbered by prejudice.

Our youth is the building block of our Reich! You are Greater Germany! For it is in you that the German Volksgemeinschaft constitutes itself. At the fore of the Reich there stands a Führer; at the fore of the Reich there stands a Volk; and at the fore of this one Volk stands our German youth!

Seeing you here, my belief in Germany's future becomes boundless and unshakeable! For I know that you will fulfill all our expectations!

So on this May Day, I greet you in our new great Germany! For you are our springtime! Through you shall and must be accomplished what has been fought for by generations throughout the centuries: *Deutschland!*

An hour later at 10:00 a.m., Hitler attended a ceremonial session in the Reich Chamber of Culture at the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg. This year's recipient of the film award was Leni Riefenstahl. The reward for the best book went to a collection of poems entitled *Das Lied der Getreuen* ("Song of the Faithful"), poetry written by anonymous Austrian Hitler Youth boys in the years 1933 through 1937. The award's remuneration was dedicated to the construction of a youth hostel in Austria. At noon, Hitler delivered a speech at the official ceremony in the Lustgarten, where a large crowd had gathered.²³⁷ After a lengthy "party narrative," Hitler declared:

Earlier there were people who declared, "An end to the battle! Never again war!"—while internally they let the battle rage on. I know that motto, "Never again war." It is my own motto as well. It is to that end that I made Germany strong once more and had it stand on its own feet.

However, in order to remain so strong and steadfast, so that no tumult abroad can endanger peace at home, it is necessary to end that fight for all time which otherwise will prevent us from making our strength felt abroad.

Not "never again war" should be our motto, but rather "never again civil war! Never again class struggle! Never again internal fighting and discord!"

I have acted in accordance with these realizations—and you, my Volksgenossen, see the results before you. In a few years, we resolved those problems which were earlier held to defy resolution. So once again we celebrate the first of May and this time it is the occasion of particularly great rejoicing. Six and a half million Germans have joined us within the borders

of our holy Reich. And they, too, are listening at this hour, as far south as the Karawanken, and they are happy that they now form part of our great community as well. Now we must take these new lands of the Reich into our strong community. They are to sense that they have become part of a meaningful order. We take pride in this order and through it we shall master all problems in the shortest time possible. This will bring about the same bloom there that we have already witnessed in the Old Reich.

Hence I appeal to you on this first of May: do not dwell on what might still separate us, but rather be happy about what we have already achieved. Focus on what we already have in common!

No Volk is born within five years' time, and neither is a state constructed in five years' time. However, we have placed the cornerstone and it is this occasion that we now celebrate on this first of May.

Ours was the conviction; ours is the will! What remains to be accomplished will be accomplished if only the advocates of our great ideal are courageous and reliable and unerringly follow the path laid before them! Today we celebrate the day of this ideal, the day of the German Volksgemeinschaft and hence the day of German labor in which we all take such great pride in the cities as well as in the countryside. Once every year we wish to rejoice in that for which this day was created in the first place as the celebration of the German Volksgemeinschaft. *Deutschland—Sieg Heil!*

Hitler's wording in this speech revealed that he wanted "no internal discord" since this would preclude "making our strength felt abroad." In other words, he feared this would endanger his plans to conquer the East. When Hitler repeatedly declared that he did not desire a war, he was referring exclusively to the Western Powers. With them, he honestly did not wish to be at war. Such a conflict, he thought, was not worthwhile. He believed they were headed for disaster anyway because of their "senility"; all he asked of them was to give him carte blanche to conquer Eastern Europe.

The May Day festivities had barely ended when Hitler made final preparations for his journey to Italy. Once again, he named Göring as his acting deputy for the time of his absence. On the afternoon of May 2, a convoy of cars left the Chancellery to see Hitler and his entourage to the special train that awaited them at the Anhalt station. Accompanying Hitler on his way south were a good number of ministers, Reichsleiters and generals, including the following: Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Frank, Lammers, Keitel, Himmler, Bouhler, Amann, Otto Dietrich, Lieutenant General von Stülpnagel, Rear Admiral Schniewind, Sepp Dietrich, and Major General Bodenschatz. Göring gave a short farewell speech at the station, climaxing in the following exclamation: "May the Lord preserve you until you return!" At 4:44 p.m., the special train pulled out of the Berlin station.²³⁸

Shortly after 8:00 on the morning of May 3, the Duke of Pistoia, a cousin of the King, welcomed Hitler to Italy on the Italian side of the Brenner Pass. That evening at 8:30, the special train pulled into the Ostia station in Rome. King Victor Emmanuel III, Mussolini, and Ciano were present to greet Hitler.

Hitler was wearing his brown uniform and his peaked cap, knee boots and knee breeches. The King, Mussolini and Ciano were clad in uniforms as well. Thereafter, the King and Hitler rode to the Quirinal Palace in the royal carriage. Mussolini had to remain behind since he was not a head of state as Hitler was.

The next day, Hitler received Mussolini at the Quirinal Palace at 10:00 a.m. Thirty minutes later, they placed wreaths on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and at the Pantheon, and thereafter inspected four thousand militiamen. Above the swastika armband on his left sleeve, Hitler wore the insignia of an Honorary Corporal in the Fascist Militia. It consisted of a triangle of cloth with a fascio in its center. The honorary dagger of the Fascist Militia adorned his leather belt. In spite of the known fact that Hitler despised militia units, he was most patient that day, submitting to the ordeal without complaint for the sake of his friendship with Mussolini.

At 11:00 a.m., Hitler and Mussolini laid a wreath at the monument to the dead of the Fascist Movement. This monument was located in a small memorial chapel in the Palazzo Littorio, the headquarters of the Fascist Party. Here Hitler was honored by the Italian Fascists with a gift, a vase dating from the fourth century B.C. with the swastika insignia. At noon, Hitler visited the Palazzo Venezia²³⁹ and presented Mussolini with the following certificate of honor:²⁴⁰

As Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich, I ask Benito Mussolini, the Duce of this Volk, to which the world owes the great inventor and scholar Galileo Galilei, to accept this Zeiss telescope, complete with the entire equipment for an observatory, as a present and as a symbol of reverence and friendship.

At 4:30 p.m., the two dictators attended performances by 50,000 Fascist youths in Centocelle (Campo Roma). These exercises were exclusively of a military and paramilitary nature, conducted by the Young Fascists and the *Avantguardisti*, all of whom were only between fourteen and eighteen years old.

At 6:00 p.m., Hitler addressed 6,500 Germans living abroad who had congregated in the Basilica of Maxentius:²⁴¹

May 4, 1938

Party Comrades! My German Volksgenossen! My youth!

I have been greatly moved by the events of these past hours which I was allowed to experience here. It makes me happy in particular that I may greet you, my German Volksgenossen, here in this most hallowed city of mankind. On this day, I wish to express to you my gratitude for your loyal devotion, devotion you have shown not only to the Reich itself, but above all to the Reich of today. We have created this Reich, and it bears the imprints of our traits of character, traits closely related to those of your host country. In particular, I wish to thank you for your avowal of faith in this new Germany, a faith you have professed so forcefully a few weeks ago. I had expected no less of you. For a citizen of the Reich who has a strong character can be nothing other than a National Socialist!

I usually do not have the opportunity to convey my thanks to the German Reich citizens abroad for their avowal of faith and I am happy to be able to do so at this hour. Many of you have been so fortunate as to return to the Reich from time to time, to see it with your own eyes and to witness the progress made by it. Many of you, however, are not this lucky. They can but look to the Reich from afar, read about it or see it in pictures. However, its spell shall never desert them nor shall the power of the National Socialist Weltanschauung ever set them free. To the contrary, the further away they are from their homeland, the more fervent their dedication to it and the more resounding their avowal of that Weltanschauung which has converted their homeland, once so despised, oppressed, and trod upon, into a Reich of honor and dignity—because of character again!

You who have been so fortunate as to live in this country, you shall find many traits familiar to you so that it is easier for you than for any other group of Germans abroad to comprehend the essence and import of today's Reich. You yourselves live in a state that glorifies those virtues and ideals so dear to us. I have come here to say this to you in few words and to remind you to form a Volksgemeinschaft on a small scale here away from home such as the entire German nation forms at home—a Volksgemeinschaft of mutual aid and support. Rest assured that no matter where a German brings sacrifices to his Volksgenossen, these sacrifices shall be weighed and valued in the same manner and these shall be regarded as sacrifices to the entire Volksgemeinschaft.

You have never forgotten Germany; I know it well! Germany is happy about this and shall never forget you either! We will take care of you and I am happy to be able to say this in a country which makes the administration of such care so easy. We will take care of you because we are convinced that the bonds of this Volksgemeinschaft can never and nowhere be severed! Let us now turn to what fills our hearts at this moment: our dear homeland, our dear German Reich. *Sieg Heil!*

An hour later, Victor Emmanuel III held a banquet at the Quirinal Palace in the honor of Hitler. The Italian King proposed a toast to him, in which he declared among other statements:

Führer!

It is to our particular pleasure that we extend our most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you, our highly esteemed guest. Italy greets in your person the head of state of a great friendly nation, the Führer who has restituted to Germany its greatness and the realization of its cultural mission. The enthusiasm, which greeted your passage from the Italian border to Rome and which our capital had afforded your reception upon your arrival here, has allowed you to assess for yourself how deeply rooted are the feelings of friendship for your person and your Fatherland here in Italy.

We acknowledge that the German Volk fully shares these sentiments. Let us express our actively felt best wishes for this Volk, who has made such great contributions to Europe with its culture and its creativity, and whom you will lead onward with a steady hand toward a glorious future.

Hitler replied to the King's address in the following words:²⁴²

Your Majesty!

Please accept my deep-felt gratitude for the heart-warming welcome bestowed upon me. Your Majesty's kind words convey to me the Italian people's great sympathy for our cause which I have already witnessed in the course of my journey throughout Italy and Rome. I am greatly honored by the reception bestowed upon my person. For this was far more than the customary outwardly expression of hospitality: this was a demonstration of the profound bonds between our two peoples, their shared ideals and ambitions. I hence regard myself as most fortunate to function as the ambassador of my own Volk at this moment, a Volk filled with sincere sympathy and deep friendship for Your Majesty and the Italian people. With me, the entire German Volk greatly admires the extraordinary successes which Italy fought for and achieved in all realms of its national life under the wise reign of Your Majesty and under the leadership of its genius of a reorganizer and head of government in the face of a contrary world.

Your Majesty has also spoken of the profound bonds tying the new Italy to the new Germany. The overwhelming welcome given to me in this country is proof that Fascist Italy feels that it has found an earnest and steadfast friend in National Socialist Germany.

This mutual friendship is not only a guarantee for the security of our two peoples; it also remains a guarantor of general peace. It is in this spirit that I raise my glass and toast the health of Your Royal and Imperial Majesty, Her Majesty the Queen and Empress, and Your High Royal House as I toast the prosperity and good fortune of the great Italian nation.

At 10:30 p.m., Hitler's special train left the Termini station for Naples. On the next day, the display of the Italian battleships began off the coast of the city. Hitler attended the naval exercises and the ensuing naval review from aboard the armored ship *Cavour*, accompanied by the Italian King, the Crown Prince, and Mussolini. In the course of the festivities, an attempt was made upon the life of Eva

Braun.²⁴³ As she, along with her traveling companion Frau Dreesen and Hitler's personal physician Dr. Brandt, boarded the ship which had been assigned to them, a crush of people was staged. The assassin, striking with a knife, did not injure Eva Braun but instead stabbed Frau Dreesen in the back. Not severely wounded, she was hauled aboard and, following the naval maneuvers, taken ashore to a hotel. The assassin escaped and the incident was officially ignored. Nevertheless, when he appeared shortly thereafter at the hotel, Hitler appeared to be very agitated.

That afternoon, an enormous crowd of people hailed the German guests at a mass rally on the Piazza del Plebiscito. That evening, the Italian heir to the throne, Crown Prince Umberto, gave a banquet in Hitler's honor at the Royal Palace in Naples. The reception was followed by a performance of *Aida* at the Teatro San Carlo.

From Naples, the train returned to Rome. At 10:00 a.m. on May 6, a great military review took place along the Via dei Trionfi. Here the Italian troops displayed to Hitler their newly acquired "Passo Romano," the Italian version of the German goose step. That afternoon, Mussolini accompanied Hitler to the Augustus Exhibition and various other sights. At 5:40 p.m., Prince Colonna, the Governor of Rome, held a reception in their honor at the Capitoline Palace. That evening, they attended performances of the *Dopolavoro* organization in the park of the Villa Borghese and a concert given on the Piazza di Siena.

On the evening of May 7, Mussolini gave a dinner in the honor of Hitler at the Palazzo Venezia, where he delivered an address from which the following is excerpted:

The hundred years that have passed in history since Germany and Italy stood up to lay claim to their right to national unity, for which they fought revolutions with weapons in hand, are proof of the parallel nature of their principles and of the solidarity with these interests.

In the same faith and with the same determination, Italy and Germany have battled for a foundation of their unity; they have labored to render it strong and secure; they have freed themselves from destructive ideologies in recent times in order to build up this new people's regime, which is the mark of this century. Down this preordained path, our two people march side by side, united in their loyal ambition and with the strong confidence that stems from the knowledge of having passed the tests of these years of peace and agreement between both nations. Fascist Italy knows only one moral code with regard to friendship, the one which I pronounced before the German Volk assembled on the Berlin Maifeld. The cooperation between National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy has abided by this law, abides by it at present, and will abide by it in the future.

May 7, 1938

Führer! Vividly I recall the wonderful picture of work, peace, and strength which presented itself to my eyes while I visited your country last autumn. I have not forgotten this nation which you have restored on the basis of the virtues of discipline, courage, and tenacity which epitomize a great Volk. I have not forgotten, nor will I forget the reception bestowed upon me by you, the authorities and the Volk. The most fervent wishes I and Fascist Italy extend to the mighty project of reconstruction which you have undertaken.

Hitler replied to Mussolini's address as follows:²⁴⁴

Duce!

Deeply moved by the heart-warming words of welcome spoken by you, I thank you for the welcome bestowed upon me in the name of the Italian Government and the Italian people. I am happy to be here in Rome, the city in which witnesses to a past of unequaled greatness ally themselves naturally with the mighty tokens of the young Fascist Italy. Ever since I stepped upon Italian soil, I sensed a wave of friendship and sympathy everywhere, and it touched me deeply. It was the same inner movement which the German Volk expressed last autumn as it greeted your person as the creator of Fascist Italy, as the founder of a new empire and at the same time as a great friend of Germany. The National Socialist Movement and the Fascist Revolution have created two new powerful states, states which stand fast as structures of order and healthy progress in a world of civil unrest and dissolution. Germany and Italy have a common interest and are deeply intertwined through their shared Weltanschauung. Thereby a block of one hundred and twenty million people was created in Europe. These people are determined to ensure recognition of their eternal vital rights and to assert themselves against any powers which may attempt to stand in the way of their natural evolution.

A heartfelt friendship between our two peoples grew out of the struggle in which Germany and Italy were forced to stand together in defense against a world which neither understood nor accepted them. The developments in these past few years have proven the steadfastness of this friendship. These developments also proved to the world that one must account for the inalienable vital rights of great nations in one way or another. It is hence only natural that, in permanent cooperation, both our peoples should expand and intensify the friendship which has proven itself time and time again in the past years in the future as well.

Duce! Last autumn on the Maifeld in Berlin, you proclaimed an ethical maxim which is holy in your eyes and in the eyes of Fascist Italy, namely, "To speak openly and honestly and, if one has a friend, to march with him to the end." In the name of National Socialist Germany, I, too, profess allegiance to this maxim. Today I can respond to you in the following manner: to the best of our knowledge, Romans and Germans first encountered each other two millenniums ago. Standing upon these hallowed grounds testifying to the great history of mankind, I feel it to be a great tragedy that Providence failed to draw clear lines of division between these two highly talented and worthy races. Unspeakable suffering throughout many generations was the consequence. Today, nearly 2,000 years later, thanks to the historic efforts of you,

Benito Mussolini, the ancient Roman state once more emerges from a vaguely remembered past and is restored to new life. And to your north, numerous tribes forged a new Germanic Reich.

In light of experiences made during two millennia, both of us acknowledge, now that we have become immediate neighbors, that border which Fate and history have so obviously drawn to separate Germany and Italy. This frontier will not only serve to delineate the Lebensraum of Italy and Germany, guaranteeing peaceful future cooperation, but will also serve as a bridge for mutual assistance and support. It is my unshakeable will which I bequeath upon the German Volk that the border drawn by nature in the Alps be recognized as eternal and inviolable. I am certain that this will ensure for both Rome and Germania a prosperous and great future.

Duce! Just as you and your people stood fast in your friendship to Germany in those crucial days, my people and I shall prove our friendship to Italy in difficult times.

The magnificent impressions I have already gathered looking at the powerful youth, the willingness to work and the proud spirit of the new Italy, shall remain with me forever engraved in my memory. Unforgettable is the sight of your soldiers adorned by recent fame, your black shirts, your fleet, and the verve of your great Air Force. In my eyes these ascertain that your magnificent reconstruction work shall be crowned by success in the future as well, accompanied by my best wishes. Hence I raise my glass to toast your health, the prosperity and greatness of the Italian people, and our unwavering friendship.

On May 8, Hitler was present for maneuvers of the Italian Air Force close to Civitavecchia. Subsequently, he was a guest of the King at the Villa Rospigliosi outside of Santa Marinella. Hitler also visited the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico, who happened to be in Rome at the time. At night, there was a huge fireworks display followed by a dinner with Mussolini at the Villa Madama.

The next day, Victor Emmanuel III accompanied his guest to the Termini station, from where Hitler's special train left at 9:33 a.m. Mussolini followed shortly thereafter. The two dictators met at 2:00 in the afternoon in Florence and proceeded together to the Palazzo Pitti. Thereupon followed the usual sight-seeing, placing of wreaths, and other ceremonies. At 7:45 p.m., Mussolini held a banquet at the Palazzo Riccardi, at which Hitler congratulated him on the second anniversary of the foundation of the Italian-Abyssinian Empire. Afterwards, both statesmen attended a performance of Verdi's *Simone Boccanegra* in the City Theater. Around midnight, Hitler bid Mussolini farewell and departed.

This was the end of the exigencies of protocol of Hitler's visit to Italy. The tightly packed itinerary left little time for talks on political

matters. Undoubtedly the Italians would have preferred the visit to have taken place prior to the Anschluss of Austria. Now Germany was the decidedly mightier party to the Axis agreement. Without a doubt, this was part of the reason why there had been little mention of the events in Austria in the official speeches in Italy.

Another embarrassing aspect of the visit had been Hitler's snubbing of the Vatican. Even statesmen whose countries entertained no official relations with the Holy See usually did not fail to pay their respects to the Pope, since he was a temporal head of state as well. Germany not only maintained diplomatic relations with the Vatican, but had even concluded a concordat with it. Pius XI had pursued a very accommodating course with the Third Reich, and Hitler exchanged telegrams with him each New Year's Day. Contrary to Napoleon, however, Hitler intended to ignore the Holy Father during his stay. This decision caused much embarrassment to his hosts, and Pius XI left Rome for the duration of Hitler's visit.

Hitler had been deeply affected by his stay in Rome and Florence. For a long time, he would relish the architectural details he had observed in these cities.²⁴⁵ However, he had been far less favorably impressed by the fact that Mussolini was not always in the limelight and at times had to leave the floor to the King. It was particularly annoying to Hitler that Mussolini had to, on occasion, defer to the King. Later Hitler would, most incorrectly, claim that the fall of Mussolini had been caused by intrigues of the Italian royal family.²⁴⁶

Nonetheless, while crossing the Italian-German border on May 10, Hitler sent the following telegram to Victor Emmanuel III to thank him for his hospitality:²⁴⁷

To his Majesty the King and Emperor, Rome

As I depart Italy, I feel compelled once again to express my deep gratitude to Your Majesty and Her Majesty the Queen and Empress for the hospitality bestowed Upon me.

I shall always recall the unforgettable and heartwarming reception I was given by the Fascist Volk and the marvelous displays by the Italian Armed Forces, the latter defying all words of praise.

The days I spent at the sites which testify to the most honorable past and its proud, self-confident present shall rank among the most precious of my lifetime recollections.

In the spirit of the strengthened friendship of Italy and Germany, I would like to ask Your Majesty to accept my best wishes for the welfare and future happiness of Yourself, the Queen and Empress, and of the Italian people.

Adolf Hitler

Both Mussolini and the Italian Crown Prince Umberto were honored by the receipt of telegrams, in which Hitler expressed his gratitude to them. The respective verbatim contents of the telegrams were the following:²⁴⁸

To his Excellency the Duce, Benito Mussolini, Rome

The impressions gathered during the days which I was allowed to spend at your side in your magnificent country are ineradicably imprinted in my memory. I greatly admire your colossal achievements in erecting the empire.

I saw the reflection of Italy's magnificence, a country you refashioned in the spirit of Fascism, in its Armed Forces' awareness of its own strength. I observed the stupendous attainments of your Fascist associations.

Foremost, however, these days have afforded me the opportunity to become acquainted with your Volk, Duce. I see its youth as the guarantor of Italy's future greatness. The ideological kinship between Fascism and the National Socialist Movement assures that the loyal comradeship which binds us both shall forever remain in the heritage of our peoples. Please let me express once again my deep gratitude and greetings in parting.

Adolf Hitler

To his Royal Highness, the Prince of Piedmont, Naples

Upon my return to Germany, I would like to ask Your Royal Highness and Her Royal Highness, the Crown Princess, to accept my gratitude for the hospitality extended to me.

Adolf Hitler

That same day, Hitler granted an interview to a member of the Italian Agenzia Steffani on the topic of his stay in Italy.²⁴⁹

The Führer emphasized the sincere friendship and sympathy the Italian Volk had extended to him throughout the country. He stated that this in particular had touched him deeply. In addition, he had much praise for the excellent organization and the appearance of strength conveyed by army, navy, and air force. He mentioned the deep impression that the city of Rome had made upon him and expressed his regret that there had been little time at his disposal to see the entirety of magnificent monuments in the city.

In warm words, the Führer finally expressed his joy at the mutual understanding between both peoples, uniting National Socialism and Fascism. A like friendship could never be created artificially.

Hitler's special train returned to the Berlin Lehrte station at 10:45 p.m. on May 11. Throngs of people stood to both sides of the street as Hitler's car made its way back to the Chancellery. A directive to the members of the Wehrmacht, issued immediately upon his return,²⁵⁰ constituted Hitler's first administrative step to forcibly institute the "German salute" (i.e. right arm raised and extended in greeting) with

the armed forces, when greeting their Führer. Evidently, Hitler had been greatly annoyed by the fact that in the course of his travels in Italy, German officers had consistently saluted in the usual military fashion.²⁵¹

Later that day, Hitler wired to the British King his condolences for the tragic mining accident at the Markham mine close to Chesterfield.²⁵² Subsequently, Hitler spent his time at the Obersalzberg to recover from the strenuous trip. Since he claimed to be “on duty constantly,”²⁵³ he used the time he allotted himself for recuperation to contemplate the pending military move against Czechoslovakia. On May 20, he drafted a new ordinance pertaining to “Case Green.” The instructions began with the following statement:²⁵⁴

In the absence of a provocation, it is not my intention to crush Czechoslovakia militarily in the immediate future lest an unavoidable development in Czechoslovakia’s domestic political situation necessitates this.

This addition, in effect, annulled the earlier announcement and indicated the distinct possibility of a strike in the near future, since every day could bring about the “unavoidable development” which Hitler had mentioned in the ordinance as a possible cause for a move at his personal discretion.

On May 22, Hitler signed the following decree pertaining to the commemoration of Richard Wagner’s birthday:²⁵⁵

On the 125th birthday of Richard Wagner, I decree the establishment of the Richard Wagner Research Institute in Bayreuth. It shall serve the study of his life and works.

On the same day at 11:00 a.m., Hitler attended the opening ceremonies for work on the subway at the Goetheplatz. In 1936, Hitler had claimed to build such subway systems “just in passing.”²⁵⁶ He was angered by the accomplishments that Moscow had achieved in the construction of its new subway system—which, much to his displeasure, had been praised by newspapers worldwide. Nonetheless, it had already taken him quite some time to see his project in Munich commence.²⁵⁷ Not a single kilometer of the planned subway system was ever completed, since the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 precluded construction work. For the entire duration of the war, a huge ditch in Lindwurmstrasse obstructed traffic.

After the Third Reich had met its end, the ditch was filled in without much ado. On May 22, 1938, however, Hitler announced boastfully: “There must not be a problem which we cannot resolve ourselves!”

Absolutely nothing did he want "to leave up to the children." The verbatim content of the speech is reproduced below:²⁵⁸

Within the past five years, a series of construction projects has been undertaken in Munich and now that some of these projects have already been completed, on this day we commence a new project. I am certain it is the greatest yet for the expansion and beautification of this city.

The task which we have resolved to undertake is one that has been around for generations. Already prior to the War, people were aware that Munich's railroad facilities were not only disgraceful but also could not keep up to the demands of technological advance. However, there was a shortage of power to arrive at a true solution for the problem. At the time, this was due to the disintegration of the Reich and to the eternal bickering in the parliaments of the Länder.

The question of an underground for Munich was already on the table in times of peace.²⁵⁹ Following the War, the issue was raised again, and a superficial plan was drawn up. In order to preserve the old Munich and the Munich of the times of King Louis I, it is necessary to arrive at a solution which keeps at least part of the traffic off the streets. Therefore, there is only one possible way to go, the way under the earth.

As soon as the amount of traffic has doubled or tripled, the streets in the inner part of the city will no longer suffice to handle this massive flow of traffic. However, the flow of traffic will not only triple or quadruple but, let me assure you, it will increase by a factor of six or eight. Today it is our obligation to anticipate this development and its consequences instead of waiting until a catastrophe occurs and it will have become impossible to master the problem. The men before us did not have the force of character to take this realization seriously and to implement the measures necessary for its resolution. However, today, the maxim of the National Socialist Movement applies to this issue as well: never to capitulate in face of difficulties!

Acknowledging the exponential growth of the flow of traffic demands us to take timely precautions today that shall allow us to smoothly channel the flow of traffic in the future. Here this shall be done in an uncommonly generous fashion.

At this point, I would like to thank the gentlemen of the Reichsbahn, and especially its brilliant chief Dr. Dorpmüller, for not broaching this problem with half-hearted attempts at resolution, but rather seeking a real solution for a real problem and ensuring its implementation.

Therefore, the city receives an exemplary net of suburban fast trains linking the surrounding areas with the center. In a few years, it will be possible to remove the streetcars from the city center and hence to make the streets calmer than is the case today. I would like to point out right away that, of course, some streets will be tumultuous in the next few years. Other big cities have had to go through this, too! Wherever there are subways, there is noise for an initial period. However, once construction is complete, the noise will disappear, and you will not hear a thing. In this or that street, where the underground will be built, there will be some noise for about a year. But one

has to take that upon oneself to have peace for the next five hundred or thousand years. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the humor of our Munich people will help them over the initial period.

Besides that, we experienced something similar when we laid the foundation for the Haus der Deutschen Kunst and 1,600 cement pillars had to be driven into the earth. At the time, it was as noisy there as it will be noisy here in a moment. Some may have shaken their heads back then, and certainly there were some particularly annoyed by the commotion, but I believe that there is not one man among Munich's citizens today who is not proud of his Haus der Deutschen Kunst.

We have now determined to find a generous solution for the traffic problems of the city of Munich. And you should know me well enough by now: whatever we begin, we will finish.

At the latest in five or six years, this task will be accomplished. Munich then will call an exemplary rapid mass transportation system its own as well as enormous railroad constructions surrounding the great new central railroad station. The same thing will happen in Berlin. I hope that both cities will enter into a noble competition of the kind where each attempts to outdo the other in realizing the necessity of the problems posed. The resolution of the traffic problems is the first step toward the resolution of other major problems facing us in Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg.

The second reason is the following: up to now it has been customary for everyone in Germany to build how and where he liked. This caused the disharmony in the overall design of German cities. Do you think a Ludwigstrasse would ever have been constructed had it been up to the citizens and other institutions of Munich? Great architectural solutions can only come about through a central plan, and this is the way it will be once again today.

All architectural projects, be it those of the Reich, of the Länder or communities, of insurance companies or private buildings, will be placed under one single central planning authority. This will be done in due consideration of aesthetic conditions and exigencies, of the needs of the cities and of traffic flow. And this is how it will be done in this city.

In addition, there will be a plan to secure those culturally important buildings which are essential in defining Munich's character as a city of the arts. Here, too, the maxim applies: idleness rusts the mind. When you review the new projects, you must admit efforts are being made constantly to improve the physical appearance of the city.

Thirdly, we wish to resolve these problems in the spirit of our times, a spirit of concern for the future of our German Volk. I desire that these construction projects we are undertaking today will be considered magnificent for centuries to come. A few statistics reveal that our ancestors also shared these concerns for magnificence: when the boulevard 'Unter den Linden' was built in the 17th century, Berlin had less than 40,000 inhabitants. And when the Ludwigstrasse was built, Munich had scarcely 70,000 inhabitants. Today Munich has a population of more than 800,000 and Berlin has more than 4,500,000. Nobody shall dare to come up to me to say that the new streets we are building are too wide.

The tasks we have to solve today simply cannot be of too grandiose a nature. As a National Socialist I have from the very first day divorced myself from the bourgeois and sluggish attitude of, "Yes, this street has to be constructed, but we shall leave that to our children." I have always followed the one maxim that says: there is no such thing as a problem requiring resolution which we do not resolve ourselves.

In just a few years' time, a new Berlin will have become a metropolis synonymous with the German Reich and its leadership, and a new Hamburg a metropolis synonymous with German trade. A new Nuremberg will come into being, symbolizing the festive spirit of the National Socialist Movement. A new Munich will come into being as the great city of German art and as the capital of our Party, of the National Socialist Uprising.

I have taken great care to choose four cities at once so that no one can claim receiving special treatment. No, everyone has to say to himself: if the others can bear it, so can we. Whoever feels himself unfairly burdened by the constant noise of piledrivers or the like, to him all I can say is: "My dear friend, it would sound entirely different if you had to stand next to it or had to work down there. If thousands of German workers can bear it, so can you!" It will take five years, perhaps six, and no more than one year per street, and then the great feat shall be accomplished, a feat of which generations to come will be proud and which will place the great creations in our great and beautiful city in an even more favorable light.

Now as we begin this enormous work, we realize time and again that all this is only possible because the concentrated force of seventy-five million people stands behind it. It is not Berlin building Berlin, not Hamburg building Hamburg, not Munich building Munich, not Nuremberg building Nuremberg, but rather Germany building its cities—its beautiful, proud, and magnificent cities!

And that is why once again our thoughts turn to our Germany to which we loyally pledge our life and soul. In this spirit, let us begin our work!

5

After Hitler had officially commenced the construction of the subway system in Munich, he returned to the Obersalzberg. There he was briefed by Henlein on the incidents that had taken place over the weekend in Czechoslovakia. Somehow, London and Prague had gotten wind of Hitler's preparations for an assault upon Czechoslovakia. The rumors had caused a veritable psychosis in Prague on May 20 and 21. The government, or more precisely President Beneš, had ordered the partial mobilization of troops. In the regions along the German-Czechoslovakian border, people were becoming increasingly nervous. Close to the town of Eger, two Sudeten German motorcyclists had been shot at by the state police, leaving one dead and the other seriously injured. A special train was being prepared to evacuate British diplomatic personnel from Prague. Moreover, the British Ambassador in Berlin inquired at General Keitel's office as to the extent and type of the German military measures. And all this had occurred while not a single German soldier had yet been mobilized and while the situation along the German side of the border was completely normal.

For Hitler, this news was welcome. Such a development was precisely what he had been waiting for! Now he could deal his hand as he pleased. He played the offended wrongly accused, whose feelings had been hurt. He termed the partial mobilization of troops by Beneš as an "unbearable provocation for the German Reich,"²⁶⁰ which could be made up for only by severely punishing the offender, or rather the Czechoslovakian state. He intended to do this much in the manner the Austro-Hungarian Empire had employed to "discipline" Serbia for the assassination in Sarajevo in 1914, by declaring war upon the country. On May 28, therefore, Hitler called for a conference of the generals in Berlin, at which he would announce the military ramifications of his decisions.

Beforehand, however, Hitler had to attend the placing of the cornerstone at the new Volkswagen factory in Fallersleben on May 26. On this occasion, he announced that the new Volkswagen car was to be christened "KdF car." In addition, he declared: "I hate the word 'impossible.' It has at all times been the distinguishing mark of the coward who dared not to realize great ideas." Hitler's speech on the occasion of the dedication of the new Volkswagen factory²⁶¹ had the following verbatim content:²⁶²

As the National Socialist Movement came to power in 1933, it seemed to me that this area was particularly well suited to open the campaign against unemployment: the problem of motorization! Here the German Volk was the most in arrears. Not only by comparison to production figures in America, but also in comparison to those of other European countries, the production of automobiles in Germany had remained at a ludicrously low level: barely forty-six thousand cars a year! This did not correspond in the least to the motorization needs of the German Volk. It is only logical therefore that, in a time when seven million unemployed weighed down our life, there would have to be radical and immediate change in this area.

The first step toward motorization was a divorce from those precepts which claimed that a car was a luxury. Of course, this is true in a country where there are no more than two, three or four hundred thousand cars. However, the German Volk does not need two or three hundred thousand cars, it needs six or seven million! The crucial point is to adjust the costs for buying and maintaining this means of transportation—the most modern there is—to the income level of the Volk.

At the time, I was told, "This is impossible!" My only reply to this is, "What is possible in other countries, is also possible in Germany." I hate that word "impossible" since it has always been the mark of people not daring enough to make and to implement great decisions.

The automobile must become the means of transportation for the Volk! Since this ambition could not be realized given the price range of automobiles to date, I had already resolved, even prior to our takeover of the government, to use the precise moment in which we rose to power to push for production of a car at a price which would make it accessible to the broad masses. Only then would the automobile cease to be a distinction of class.

There was yet another reason why I looked to motorization in particular. Given the limits imposed upon the production of foodstuffs in a country with 140 persons per square kilometer, a catastrophe would ensue if the German Volk invested its earnings in foodstuffs only. Therefore it is necessary to divert the buying power of the German Volk in other directions.

In former times, our political economists never bothered themselves with such questions. We, however, have to face the facts and solve the problems which result from them. The Volkswagen forms part of a series of measures aimed at channeling the buying power of the German Volk toward other products of equal value. Every year hundreds of thousands of marks will be

invested in pursuit of this goal. These needs can be satisfied based on our work alone, on our own raw materials, our ores and our coal, and so on. Few today realize the true significance of this project and its consequences. The Volkswagen will not enter into competition with the cars produced by the automobile industry to date. After all, a man who buys this car and not a Mercedes does not do so simply because he might be an opponent of the Daimler factory, but because he cannot afford to buy a Mercedes.

What forces the buyer to turn to cheaper goods are simple and level-headed considerations. Whoever can afford the more expensive good will buy it anyway! For the broad masses, however, this is not possible! It is for these broad masses that this car has been designed. It is to correspond to their need for transportation, and it is in this context that it is to bring enjoyment to the people.

Hence I believe there is only one name that can be given to this car, a name I shall give to it on this very evening. It shall bear the name of that organization which strives to instill both joy and strength in the masses. The name shall be: *KdF-Wagen!*

As we build this greatest of Germany's automobile factories, we shall also build an exemplary German worker settlement. It shall also serve as a prototype for the future of social housing projects and city design. We wish to demonstrate how National Socialism sees, approaches, and resolves such problems.

It is at this point that I wish to thank those men who deserve recognition for their efforts in planning and hence in implementing this project; in particular to a man from the automobile industry who has labored to represent and implement my views and who has loyally stood by me in these past years: our old Party Comrade Jakob Werlin. And further let me thank those men who shall join forces with him in the practical implementation of this project: our great idealist Party Comrade Robert Ley, the brilliant engineer Porsche and finally Dr. Lafferentz.²⁶³ Those are the men to whom we will owe, in a large part, the realization of this enormous project! Hence I proceed to lay the cornerstone for this factory which, I am certain, shall become a symbol of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft!

After the speech, Hitler took a seat in a Volkswagen convertible and had himself chauffeured for an honorary ride.

On May 28, Hitler presided over the announced meeting of the generals. Among the military men present were: Göring, Keitel, Brauchitsch, Raeder, Chief of Staff Beck, as well as Ribbentrop and Neurath. Given the "German thoroughness" with which even touchy occasions and secret meetings were recorded during the Third Reich, all the proceedings of this conference are available in notations.²⁶⁴ It is, however, not necessary to resort to these notes. On September 12, Hitler would announce in public²⁶⁵ the measures decided upon on this May 28.

You will understand, my Party Comrades, that a great power cannot tolerate such a base incursion [the partial mobilization of Czechoslovakian troops on May 20/21] a second time. As a consequence, I have taken the necessary precautions. I am a National Socialist and as such I am accustomed to strike back at any attacker. Moreover, I know only too well that leniency will not succeed in appeasing, but will merely encourage the arrogance of so irreconcilable an adversary as the Czechs.

Let the fate of the Old German Reich be a warning to us. Its love for peace drove it to the brink of self-destruction. Nonetheless, the Old Reich could not prevent the war in the end. In due consideration thereof, I took steps on May 28 which were very difficult:

First, I ordered a far-reaching intensification and the immediate implementation and execution of the reinforcements announced for Army and Luftwaffe. Second, I ordered the immediate expansion of our fortifications to the West. I can assure you that ever since May 28, the construction of one of the most gigantic fortresses of all time has been underway there.

To this end, I entrusted Dr. Todt, the Generalinspekteur for road construction in Germany, with a new commission. Within the framework of the projects undertaken by the fortress construction inspectorate, he has achieved one of the greatest accomplishments of all time, thanks to his extraordinary organizational talents. [—]

I have made this greatest effort of all time in the service of peace. Under no circumstances, however, am I willing to quietly stand by and observe from afar the continued oppression of German Volksgenossen in Czechoslovakia.

On January 30, 1939,²⁶⁶ in a speech before the Reichstag, Hitler again referred to the conference of May 28 and openly declared:

Because of this unbearable provocation [the partial mobilization in Czechoslovakia on May 20/21], which was exacerbated by the truly infamous persecution and terrorization of our Germans there, I have decided to resolve the Sudeten German question in a radical manner and to resolve it once and for all.

On May 28, I issued orders:

- a) for the preparation of a military intervention against this state on October 2,
- b) for the intensification and expansion of our fortified line of defense to the West.

For the remainder of the confrontation with Herr Beneš and for the defense of the Reich against any attempts to influence or threaten it, there was a plan for the immediate mobilization of ninety-six divisions, to be reinforced if necessary by a great number of additional units within a short time period. The developments during the summer months and the situation of the Germans in Czechoslovakia proved these precautions to have been appropriate.

As Hitler openly admitted, he had envisioned October 2, 1938, as the date on which to initiate military action against Czechoslovakia.

May 28, 1938

Judged in light of military considerations.²⁶⁷ October was the last month in which to launch a campaign before winter. Hitler was convinced that the Western Powers would not intervene. At the sight of the reinforced line of fortification in the West (*Westwall*), supposedly “the mightiest of all time,” they would soon lose their appetite for such a venture, provided such an intent still lurked somewhere in the recesses of English or French minds.

Based on the results of the conference on May 28, Hitler signed new instructions to proceed with “Operation Green.”²⁶⁸

Berlin May 30, 1938

OKW No. 42/38. g. Kdos. Chefsache (Top Secret, Military) L I

By order of the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, part 2, section II of the directive on the combined preparations for war of the Wehrmacht of June 24, 1937 (OKW No. 55/37, Top Secret, Mil. L I a) / (War on Two Fronts With Main Effort in the Southeast, Strategic Concentration “Green”) is to be replaced by the attached version. Its execution must be assured by October 1, 1938, at the latest.

Alterations of the other parts of the directive are to be expected during the next few weeks.

Keitel
Chief of the OKW

Appendix

II. War on Two Fronts With Main Effort in Southeast (Strategic Concentration “Green”)

1) Political Assumptions

It is my unalterable decision to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the near future. It is the business of the political leadership to await or bring about the suitable moment from a political and military point of view.

An unavoidable development of events within Czechoslovakia, or other political events in Europe providing a suddenly favorable opportunity which may never recur, may cause me to take early action.

The proper choice and determined exploitation of a favorable moment is the surest guarantee of success. To this end preparations are to be made immediately.

2) Political Possibilities for Commencing the Operation

The following are necessary prerequisites for the intended attack:

- a) A convenient apparent excuse and, with it,
- b) Adequate political justification,
- c) Action not expected by the enemy which will find him in the least possible state of readiness.

Most favorable from a military as well as a political point of view would be lightning action as the result of an incident which would subject Germany

to unbearable provocation, and which, in the eyes of at least a part of the world opinion, affords the moral justification for military measures.

Moreover, any period of diplomatic tension prior to war must be terminated by sudden action on our part, unexpected in both timing and extent, before the enemy is so far advanced in his state of military readiness that he cannot be overtaken.

3) Conclusions for the Preparation of Operation "Green"

a) For the military operations it is essential to make the fullest use of the surprise element as the most important factor contributing to victory, by means of appropriate preparatory measures, already in peacetime, and an unexpected swiftness of action.

Thus it is essential to create a situation within the first two or three days which demonstrates to enemy states which wish to intervene the hopelessness of the Czech military position, and also provides an incentive to those states which have territorial claims upon Czechoslovakia to join in immediately against her. In this case the intervention of Hungary and Poland against Czechoslovakia can be expected, particular if France, as a result of Italy's unequivocal attitude on our side, fears, or at least hesitates, to unleash a European war by intervening against Germany. In all probability attempts by Russia to give Czechoslovakia military support, particularly with her air force, are to be expected.

If concrete successes are not achieved in the first few days by land operations, a European crisis will certainly arise. Realization of this ought to give commanders of all ranks an incentive to resolute and hold action.

b) Propaganda warfare must on the one hand intimidate the Czechs by means of threats and wear down their power of resistance; and on the other hand it must give the national racial groups indications as to how support our military operations and influence the neutrals in our favor. Further instructions and determination of the appropriate moment are reserved to me.

4) Tasks of the Wehrmacht

Wehrmacht preparations are to be carried out on the following principles:

a) The whole weight of all forces must be employed against Czechoslovakia.
b) In the West, a minimum strength is to be provided as cover for our rear, as may become necessary; the other frontiers in the East against Poland and Lithuania are only to be held defensively; the southern frontier remains under observation.

c) The army formations capable of rapid employment must force the frontier fortifications with speed and energy, and must break very boldly into Czechoslovakia in the certainty that the bulk of the mobile army will be brought up with all possible speed.

Preparations for this are to be made and timed in such a way that the army formations most capable of rapid movement cross the frontier at the appointed time simultaneously with the penetration by the Luftwaffe, before the enemy can become aware of our mobilization. To this end a timetable is to be drawn by the Army and Luftwaffe in conjunction with the OKW and submitted to me for approval.

5) Tasks for the Services of the Wehrmacht

a) Army

The basic principle of surprise attack on Czechoslovakia must not be endangered by the time unavoidably needed for transportation the bulk of the field army by rail, nor must the more rapid deployment of the Luftwaffe fail to be to be exploited.

The first task for the Army is therefore to employ as many assault columns as possible simultaneously with the attack by the Luftwaffe. These assault columns organized in conformity with their tasks, must be composed of troops which can be rapidly employed because of their proximity to the frontier, their motorization, and their special measures of readiness.

It must be the purpose of these thrusts to break into the Czech fortified lines at numerous points and in a strategically favorable direction, in order to penetrate them or to take them from the rear. For success, cooperation with the Sudeten German frontier population, with deserters from the Czechoslovak Army, with parachutists or airborne troops, and with units of the sabotage service is our importance.

The bulk of the Army has the task of frustrating the Czech defense plan, preventing a withdrawal by the Czech Army into Slovakia, forcing it to battle and defeating it, and swiftly occupying Bohemia and Moravia. To this end a thrust into the heart of Czechoslovakia must be made with the strongest possible mechanized and armored units, exploiting the first successes of the assault columns and the effect of the Luftwaffe's action.

The rear cover provided for the West must be limited in quantity and quality in accordance with the existing state of the fortifications.

Whether the formations assigned for this purpose will be at once transferred to the western frontier, or be held back for the time being, will be decided by my special order.

Preparations must, however, be made to enable security detachments to be brought up to the western frontier, even during the strategic concentration "Green." Independently of this, a first security garrison must be improvised from the engineers and formations of the Labor Corps employed at the time on the construction of fortifications.

The remaining frontiers, as well as East Prussia, are only to be weakly guarded. According to the political situation, however, the transport of a part or the bulk of the active forces of East Prussia by sea to the Reich must be envisaged,

b) Luftwaffe

While leaving a minimum force for a defensive role in the West, the main strength of the Luftwaffe is to be employed for a surprise attack against Czechoslovakia. The frontier is to be crossed by aircraft at the same time as it is crossed by the first units of the Army (see No. 5 a). The most important task of the Luftwaffe is the destruction of the Czech Air Striking Force and its supply bases in the shortest space of time, to prevent its employment and, should the case arise, that of the Russian and French Air Forces, against the German Army during its deployment and invasion and against the German *Lebensraum*.

The paralyzing of mobilization, of the conduct of civil affairs and the direction of the armed forces, as well as delaying the development of the Czech Army by attacks on its communication system and on centers of mobilization and government, will also be of vital importance for the initial success of the Army. Where in the frontier region stronger Czech Army formations or the depth of the defense systems may render a speedy and successful break-through of the German land attack doubtful, the employment of adequate air formations must be ensured.

As far as the course of operations at all permits, Czechoslovak industrial establishments are to be spared.

Reprisal attacks upon the population are subject to my approval.

Main centers for anti-aircraft defense are to be organized in Berlin, the industrial region of Central Germany, and the Ruhr district, and are to be gradually prepared from now in an inconspicuous fashion.

c) Navy

The Navy will take part in the operations of the Army by the employment of the Danube flotilla. For this purpose the flotilla is placed under the command of the Commander in Chief of the Army.

As regards the conduct of naval warfare, at first only such measures are to be taken as seem necessary for securing the North Sea and the Baltic against a surprise intervention by the other states in the conflict. These measures are to be limited to the absolute essentials. Their concealment must be ensured. In this it is of decisive importance to avoid all actions which might adversely affect the political attitude of the European Great Powers.

6) Economic warfare tasks

In the economic warfare it is essential that in the sphere of the armament industry a maximum deployment of forces should be made possible through increased supplies.

In the course of military operations it is important to help to increase the total economic war effort by rapidly collecting information about important factories and setting them going again as soon as possible.

For this reason the sparing, as far as military operations permit, of Czech industrial and engineering establishments may be of decisive importance for us.

7) All preparations for sabotage and insurrection will be made by the OKW. They will be made in agreement with and according to the requirements of the branches of the Wehrmacht so that their effects in both time and place will harmonize with operations by the Army and Luftwaffe.

Adolf Hitler

Certified true copy: Zeitzler,²⁶⁹ Lieutenant Colonel, General Staff

On May 29, a day after the conference with the generals in the Chancellery, Hitler went to Dessau to attend the local Gau Party Congress. At 2:30 p.m., he reviewed the Party formations that marched

down Kavalierstrasse. At night, Hitler was present at the opening of the new theater in Dessau, the first building of its kind to have been completed during the rule of the National Socialist regime.²⁷⁰

Initially, Hitler himself had intended to speak at the general appeal of the Gau of Magdeburg-Anhalt that was to take place at noon. On May 28, he had asked Goebbels to speak in his place. It seems likely that Hitler had changed his mind and planned to use the morning of May 29 to put the top secret preparatory instructions on the assault upon Czechoslovakia in even greater detail. Within the Party the rumor was spread that, "The Führer no longer speaks, he gets things done now."²⁷¹ Even if Hitler had reached a similar decision for refrain from speaking, he evidently did not manage to keep to his resolve for very long. Already on July 12 in Stettin, and two days later in Berlin, he was back at the podium again, delivering two lengthy speeches.

In addition, Hitler had resolved to dedicate that year to giving his 'culture speeches' once again. He did not wish to be disturbed during his preparation, not even by concurrent measures of a military nature. Before doing so, however, Hitler went to Munich. There, on May 30, he issued an ordinance on the award of the Blood Order to Austrian party members. Its verbatim content was the following:²⁷²

In the course of the struggle for the Greater German Reich, hundreds of men were murdered, thousands sustained injuries and were incarcerated. May these most courageous, self-sacrificing and bravest of all men of the Movement stand out as a shining example to our descendants.

I decree the following to lend visual expression to this imperative:

1. The Blood Order, the recipients of which up to this point had to have participated actively in the November 9, 1923 events, shall now as well be awarded to such Party comrades who suffered either of the following while fighting for the cause of the Movement both in the Old Reich and in the Austrian Gaus:

a) being condemned to death, though their sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment;

b) serving a prison sentence for the duration of one year at a minimum, this applying to time spent in Austrian *Anhaltelagers* as well;

c) sustaining severe injuries.

2. The Blood Order shall remain in the possession of the family even subsequent to the bearer's demise.

3. The NSDAP Reich Treasurer shall be responsible for the administration of all affairs related to the Blood Order. Upon application by the Reich Treasurer, I shall then personally award the Blood Order.

4. The NSDAP Reich Treasurer shall issue details on the provisions to implement this decree.

Munich, May 30, 1938

Adolf Hitler

The next day in Berlin, as a suitable preliminary to his ‘culture speeches’ and the “Day of German Art,” Hitler enacted a law regarding the “confiscation of works of degenerated art.” This measure having already been enacted in 1937—had not yet been applied to Austria. The verbatim content of the decree is reproduced below:²⁷³

The Reich Government has enacted the following law, which hereby is officially made public:

§1

Products of degenerated art, which prior to this law taking effect have been secured in museums or other collections accessible to the general public, and objects that have been designated as products of degenerated art by the appropriate administrative office determined by the Führer and Reich chancellor may be confiscated by the Reich without compensation. This shall apply to such pieces of art that were in the possession of Reich citizens or local legal persons at the time of confiscation.

§2

(1) The Führer and Reich Chancellor shall give orders for confiscation. He shall determine the future disposition of the items transferred to the possession of the Reich. He may delegate the authority granted in the above two sentences to others.

(2) Under exceptional circumstances, steps may be taken to alleviate undue financial hardship.

§3

In agreement with the respective Reich Ministers, the Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda shall decree the legal and administrative measures necessary for the implementation of this law.

Berlin, May 31, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Dr.
Goebbels

On June 3, Hitler received the Austrian General Krauss and his wife at the Chancellery.²⁷⁴ Krauss had been of significant assistance to Hitler in the years of the Schuschnigg regime. At this meeting, Krauss wore the Wehrmacht uniform which Hitler had granted him the privilege to wear in recognition of his services. Not being aware of the current circumstances, Krauss donned a “Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Tunic”²⁷⁵ with his tailored uniform.

At the June 9 reception in the House of the Reich President, honoring the newly appointed Swiss Envoy Frölicher, Hitler delivered an address in which he referred to the political neutrality of Switzerland as an “important aspect of world peace.” He gave another address that same day at the reception of the recently appointed Envoy Rios,²⁷⁶ the

representative of Guatemala in Berlin. As always at receptions, Hitler was attired in a tailcoat. The next day, Hitler congratulated the Reich Minister of Postal Services, Ohnesorge, in a telegram on his sixty-sixth birthday.²⁷⁷

Two days later, on June 12, Hitler attended the Gau Party Congress in Pomerania and spoke at the Stettin Landhaus.²⁷⁸ There he opened his speech by praising the accomplishments of Gauleiter Schwede-Coburg.²⁷⁹ The laudatory comments were followed by a "party narrative," which Hitler concluded:

It is the goal of the National Socialist Movement to provide a focal point for the aggregate power of the Volk and to apply this power in a step-by-step manner to the resolution of numerous tasks. [—]

We have not yet resolved all the tasks we took upon ourselves. The more Germany consolidates itself and the greater the upswing in the economic and social sphere, the greater the German realization of precisely what remains to be done.

And we are happy about this! After all, we are men of action and we will remain so for all eternity! Therefore, we are happy about each new task which faces us!

We will continue in the same vein as we have to date: strengthening the peasantry, reinforcing our national economic life and, particularly, building up our social community! After all, our great accomplishments were possible only because they led the masses and, above all, the German worker, to place their trust in us. We regard it as our foremost and most beautiful task to free him from the precepts which, only a few years ago, enslaved him and tied him to a despicable ideology. In this manner, we labor and strive for the creation of a socialist Germany ever the more.

And I know that you, Herr Gauleiter, are one of the great masters in this field.

Today I venture into Germany's Gaus with a great feeling of satisfaction and pride. Throughout the lands, a picture of great and enormous advance presents itself. All the more I am permeated by the realization that it is absolutely necessary to fortify the two pillars upon which our state rests: on the one hand, its eternal political support afforded by the National Socialist Party, and on the other hand, the German Wehrmacht.

The German nation can confidently look to its future in precisely that measure in which these two pillars stand united in support of Germany's fate!

On June 13, Hitler inspected training troops of the Luftwaffe and attended performances along the Pomeranian coastline. The Führer was accompanied by Göring, Brauchitsch and Raeder.²⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Keitel was en route to Budapest, in an effort to strengthen the ties with the Hungarian Army in preparation for the envisioned Czechoslovak venture.

On June 14, Hitler attended the laying of the cornerstone for the House of German Tourism on Potsdamer Strasse in Berlin and delivered a lengthy address at this location.²⁸¹ He called the building the first structure along what would become “the widest street in the Reich Capital.” In his address, Hitler paid great attention to details of the traffic problems which the future would entail, declaring:

Once more we National Socialists cannot leave the resolution of such important issues, which we today can already anticipate, to posterity. It has always been our principle to approach such problems ourselves and to resolve them ourselves! It is for this reason that the newly constructed roads were not built for the years 1938, 1939, or even 1940. Rather they were constructed to account for the gigantic increase in flow of traffic certain for the coming decades, indeed for the coming centuries.

Yes, it is at this time—now that we can more easily deal with these issues—that we see to avoiding in Berlin the traffic problems we are witnessing today in many another metropolis. One day posterity will judge what many perhaps cannot comprehend today as a beneficial decision and its implementation as a most fortunate occurrence.

And so we are building not only great traffic circles in this city, but also we are constructing two great veins of traffic flowing through Berlin: one in the East-West direction and one in the North-South direction.

Parts of the East-West axis are already under construction and, in all likelihood, they will be opened for traffic within a few months’ time. Completing the corresponding connection to the East will be a task for the coming years. And today, in a sense, we find ourselves placing the cornerstone for the North-South axis at this location as well. These great sections will later be connected to the great Reichsautobahn ring. In the future, they will lead the motorist from outlying areas directly into the heart of the city of Berlin. Again both stretches are not planned for the year 1940, but for centuries to come. For I believe in an eternal Germany, and hence I believe in its capital! I believe that just as we today are grateful to those men who three hundred years ago planned and brought to life the Unter den Linden Avenue, posterity will be grateful to us three hundred years from now! With this road system, we will find a generous solution for the suburban fast train traffic which no doubt will remain the primary means of transportation for the masses. Millions of people already utilize these trains to go to work each day and people will use them increasingly in the future. Thus this problem, too, has found a most generous solution for the immediate future.

There is yet another consideration which compels us to carry through this project: we want to introduce a planned order into cultural construction. My Volksgenossen, all which will be built here within the next ten, fifteen or twenty years, would be built in any event. However, as experience has shown, everyone would build precisely as he wished and where he wished to build. With this plan, all these construction projects will be synchronized, planned and more correctly carried through. Furthermore, buildings and constructions

June 14, 1938

designed to bring benefit to the inner city, but which were consistently postponed, will he built. [—]

Just imagine where it would lead if everyone—the Reich, the Land, the Movement, the community, economy, trade, industry, etc.—built as he pleased in such a city, choosing a spot somewhere and putting up his house there. That could only lead to complete chaos. It is here that I intervened and led construction in this city into more orderly avenues! And on this foundation the new Berlin will be built!

In addition, there is the necessity to create new residential areas and to link these tip to the suburban fast train system that leads into the city. For the first time in over one hundred and fifty years, methodical order will be restored to the appearance of the city of Berlin!

And thus it is a day of great pride for me as I lay the cornerstone to the first building in this city, a building that owes its existence to the new planned order. The Haus des deutschen Fremdenverkehrs justly deserves to be the first in a series of new buildings in the inner city of Berlin. After all, everything we are building here today will one day lead to an immense increase in foreigners visiting Germany. The mighty structures we are erecting in the Reich today will pay off in the end as Germany increasingly becomes the center for tourism we imagine. The world will come to see us and will above all want to ascertain that this Germany is indeed a stronghold of European culture and human civilization. [—]

I am placing this cornerstone for the remodeling of the Haus des deutschen Fremdenverkehrs in Berlin, and hence I order commencement of the restructuring work for Greater Berlin!

It appeared to have completely slipped Hitler's mind that he had already claimed that the day of the laying the cornerstone to the Faculty of Defense Technology of the Technical University in Berlin had marked the beginning of the "period of the constructional redesigning" of Berlin.²⁸²

On June 14, the following order was published:²⁸³

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has accorded the brevet rank of Major General to the retired Brevet Colonel in the General Staff, Glaise-Horstenau, while simultaneously according him the right to wear the uniform of the present army.

Major Klausner,²⁸⁴ of the former Seventh Infantry Regiment, is relieved of active duty as of June 30, 1938, while simultaneously being accorded the brevet rank of a Lieutenant Colonel and the right to wear the uniform of the present Seventh Infantry Regiment.

Retired Captain Leopold²⁸⁵ of the former Austrian Sixth Infantry Regiment has been accorded the title of Major and enjoys the right to wear the uniform of the Sixty-Seventh Infantry Regiment.

The *Völkischer Beobachter* added the headline "Adolf Hitler honors deserving Austrian fighters" to the announcement.

June 14, 1938

These men had certainly served Hitler well in the past by their involvement in the National Socialist Movement and in the Anschluss of Austria. Nevertheless, Hitler was not in the least willing to, therefore, permit them to exercise decisive influence in the political arena of their native country. By bestowing upon them the above honorary, but politically insignificant ranks, he was able to rid himself of them.

On the Obersalzberg on June 25, Hitler presented the mountain rescue service with four new cross-country cars.²⁸⁶ Three days later, he sent a telegram of congratulations to the University of Cologne for the 550th anniversary of its foundation.²⁸⁷ Around June 25, Hitler attended maneuvers on the training grounds at Grafenwöhr, close to the Czechoslovakian border.²⁸⁸

While spending the second half of June mainly on the Obersalzberg, the Führer reflected upon further constructions along the *Westwall*, which was to become “the most gigantic line of fortification of all time.” This preoccupation was much to Hitler’s taste, and on the night of June 30, he even composed a memorandum on the construction of fortresses in general, and specifically on the measures concerning the West Wall.²⁸⁹ In it, Hitler expressed the conviction that fortresses were not primarily to offer cover, but rather to ensure the application of weapons.

It is not the purpose of a fortress to guarantee the lives of a certain number of fighters under all circumstances, but rather to warrant the maintenance of overall fighting strength.

In the course of events at later dates, Hitler would display just how little regard he had for German life and how carefree he was regarding its expenditure. In the memorandum, Hitler then turned against the “five enemies” of the fortifications: infantry, artillery, tanks, gas poisoning, and mine-blasting.²⁹⁰ In the conclusion of his elaborate exposition, he claimed that his suggestion was the only realistic resolution of the problem.

All of the thoughts and suggestions taken down in this memorandum represent one approach, which need not necessarily be the right one to improving upon fortifications as such. However, in light of the time allotted, and in consideration of our overall capabilities with regard to material and manpower, this approach is the only one feasible today.

Under the present circumstances, this approach alone can assure for the Reich a high degree of resistive capacity and therefore security.

Berchtesgaden, July 1, 1938

Adolf Hitler

However, even the most profound memorandum could not change facts, nor could it increase Germany's potential beyond all bounds. In spite of Hitler's indomitable energy and oratory efforts, Germany's possibilities to arm had real limits. The exorbitant construction of fortresses inevitably must have had a negative influence on other "most gigantic projects of all time," such as the construction of the Autobahn system, the building of cities and of facilities for party congresses.

Upon Hitler's insistence, Göring had issued a "decree to secure the strength necessary for projects of particular interest to national policy" on June 22.²⁹¹ This had been nothing less than the proclamation of a general compulsory war conscription in the midst of peace. Workers were pulled out of their factories and transported like modern slaves either to the west to work on the construction of fortifications, or to the northern and eastern parts of Bavaria, where they were needed for the building of strategically important roads.²⁹² Buses were requisitioned, and hut camps were erected. Not only the military was affected by the measures. Within a few weeks' time, civil life in Germany took on a distinct flair strongly reminiscent of wartime. It was already in the summer of 1938 that construction on many *Grossbauten* that were to serve cultural or social purposes came to a premature end. However, Hitler appeared not in the least to be bothered by these developments.

Once he had committed his ideas on the construction of fortifications to paper and had ordered the generals and engineers to charge forward at top speed, he turned his attention back to issues of a cultural nature. From July 8 through July 10, various activities took place in Munich to celebrate the Day of German Art. Hitler took upon himself to stage the first of the events by holding a reception at the Führerhaus, located at the Königsplatz. He had invited numerous renowned artists and other celebrities figuring in the cultural life of Germany.²⁹³

On July 9, Hitler attended a ceremonial session of the Reich Chamber of the Fine Arts in the festival hall of the Deutsches Museum. At 12:30 p.m., he delivered a short address²⁹⁴ on the occasion of a ceremonial act in the Glyptothek.

As a personal gift, Hitler presented the museum with Lancelotti's rendition of the *Discobolus* (Discus Thrower) by Myron. The statue had been acquired from an Italian's private collection, and already King Louis I of Bavaria had vied for it. Hitler expressed his joy at having succeeded in its acquisition, and emphasized that its leaving Italy had been made possible only by the close and friendly relations of both countries, stating:

July 9, 1938

Without them, we would not be standing here admiring this magnificent work. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my heartfelt thanks to the Italian Government and in particular to its brilliant chief.

At 6:00 in the evening, Hitler attended a gala performance of *Lohengrin* at the National Theater. Afterward, he held a reception at the Künstlerhaus, which he had ordered renovated as “a present to the artists.” On the morning of July 10, Hitler placed a wreath at the grave of Professor Ludwig Troost. Thereafter, he continued on to the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, at which he was scheduled to speak at the opening ceremony at 11:00 a.m. Before he delivered the opening speech on the occasion of the Second German Art Exhibition, he called for his court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. The latter had been in charge of the organizational details of the exhibition. Hitler named Hoffmann Professor “in recognition of his outstanding achievements at the service of the Great Exhibition of German Art” and presented him with a certificate to this effect. Then Hitler began his great ‘culture speech’²⁹⁵ with an unparalleled laudation of himself.

Scarcely six years have passed since the National Socialist Movement, following many years of struggle, was finally entrusted with the leadership of the Reich. Nonetheless, today we can already state that rarely in the history of our Volk has there been a comparably eventful period of peace as in these past five and a half years, an epoch of National Socialist leadership which was inaugurated on that memorable January 30, 1933. How many realms of our lives have witnessed radical change since then, a resurgence of life which had been declared completely impossible just a few years earlier by those who had felt themselves “called upon.” The Party which had been decried as a threat to the inner peace in fact bestowed true inner peace upon the German Volk in the first place.

A regime that supposedly would precipitate economic collapse pulled the German Volk back from the brink of economic ruin and saved it. That very National Socialism, which was assumed to spell a disastrous defeat in matters of foreign policy, has uplifted the German Volk from the most dreadful defeat in its entire historical existence, has restored its proud self-confidence and has led Germany to become a highly-respected force in the world. There is hardly one realm in which the prophecies of our opponents were not revealed as lies.

In the ensuing “party narrative,” Hitler spoke mainly of the cultural and economic decline that had pervaded the years prior to 1933. He used to ridicule Dadaists, Cubists, etc. only to place his own accomplishments in a better light. While lacking any sense of humor himself, Hitler nonetheless was most liberal in his use of sarcasm, cynicism, and mockery.

July 10, 1938

During these months, we have borne witness to the fact that the economic philosophy of National Socialism, which ten years ago had been decried as pure stupidity and only five years ago was termed a criminal act or madness at least, that this philosophy is now gradually being adopted by other states as well—albeit in omission of copyright charges. [—]

The cultural program of this new Reich is of an unparalleled grandeur in the history of our Volk. Success will come about as a matter of consequence as it already has in all other realms of our lives. However, we are fully aware that in this instance the initial time period by nature will be a longer one than the ones to date.

Slowly Hitler drew closer to the central point of his speech, consisting of the administrative measures envisioned or already implemented in the domain of art. The core of his arguments was tantamount to a renewed justification of the law effecting the confiscation of products considered as “degenerated art.”

In the twentieth century, the German Volk is a Volk of a resurrected affirmation of life, enchanted in its admiration of the strong and beautiful and hence of what is healthy and capable of sustaining life. Power and beauty are the slogans of our time. Clarity and logic reign supreme in our efforts. Whoever wants to be an artist in this century must wholeheartedly pledge himself to this century.

There is no room for any Neanderthal culture in the twentieth century, no room for it at least in National Socialist Germany. We rejoice that the democracies are opening their progressive doors to these degenerated elements for, after all, we are not vindictive. Let them live, we do not mind! For all we care, let them work—but not in Germany! In 1937, I felt the time to have come for a clear decision in this matter as well. Naturally, this entailed a severe intervention. Whether or not we can today call geniuses of eternal standing our own is as always difficult to judge, but in the end it is of little consequence for our actions. What is of great consequence, however, is the preservation of an environment in which true genius can be nurtured. To this end, it is imperative to uphold the solid and decent underpinnings of the common artistic heritage of a people out of which develops true genius. Genius is not synonymous with insanity, and above all genius is not synonymous with fraud. To the contrary, genius manifests itself through extraordinary accomplishments which are easily differentiated from the common.

In the further course of his arguments, Hitler even made an attempt to defend the much-abused nineteenth century, but quickly returned to his own time and age.

This prejudice threatened to pervade the entire nineteenth century [in the time of decline]. The decent, or let me say well-intentioned naive average of that century, has nonetheless furnished that ground from which arose many

a great artist. A century that can claim so many great musicians, great poets and thinkers, renowned architects, wonderful sculptors and painters, towers way above the stupid profanities of an epoch of noise-makers in the Dadaist tradition, formers of plaster in the Cubist mode and colorers of futurist screens. Of course, the nineteenth century also brought forth many an average performance and even more performances ranking below average. However, that is the mark of any century of achievement. How many people wander through life and how few of them are able to run a marathon, and how many actually win the race? Yet these victors are but the fastest runners of humankind. However, if these men would hop around crazily instead of walking like ordinary men, then their performance would equal that of our cultural geniuses of the time of disintegration. They would be no better than these because they, too, would lack the basis for the creation and assessment of supreme achievements.

Hence in the course of the past year, I resolved to clear a passage for the honest and decent average performance. Already at the exhibition prior to the last, we warranted the joyful premonition that one or the other artist was well capable of even greater achievement in the future. Developments since then have proven this assessment correct. Our suspicions were, moreover, reinforced by the winter exhibition on German architecture and the products of our arts and crafts.

Close to the end of his speech, Hitler returned to the subject of the newly acquired statue by Lancelotti. For the benefit of the audience, he explained its importance in the following words:

These days I greatly rejoice in having been able to afford the German Volk this magnificent work of eternal beauty to be placed in the capital of its arts thanks to the truly magnanimous permission granted by the Italian Government. May none of you who visit this house fail to go to the sculpture gallery. May you all then realize how glorious man already was back then in his corporeal beauty, and that we can speak of progress only if we have attained like perfection or if we manage to surpass this level.

Above all, may the artists appreciate how great the sight and the artistic ability of this Greek named Myron must have been as it reveals itself to our eyes today. How marvelous an achievement of that Greek who created a statue two and a half millenniums ago, a statue the Roman copy of which still elicits stunned admiration on our part. And may all of you take this to heart as a standard for the tasks and accomplishments of our time. May you all strive for beauty and perfection so that you shall also stand the test of time both before the Volk and the ages. [—]

I have no doubt that you will be moved by the same sensations that moved me when I first saw this unparalleled testimony to eternal beauty and achievement.

You will perhaps then, too, be able to sense what I feel on this day as I declare open this second art exhibition in the Reich and as I compare it to what existed just a few years before we came.

July 10, 1938

At the end of the festivities in Munich that afternoon, a great procession passed through the city's streets, celebrating "2,000 years of German culture." Since Hitler was in the city, he received the Secretary General of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Numan Menemencioglu²⁹⁶ who was visiting there.

On the occasion of the signing of a treaty of friendship between Germany and Manchukuo on July 12 in Berlin, Hitler exchanged telegrams with the Emperor of Manchukuo.²⁹⁷ At the House of the Reich President the next day, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Soviet Union, Marekalov, and the recently named new Egyptian Envoy, Sir Ahmad Pasha, called on Hitler to present their credentials.²⁹⁸ Hitler gave the usual addresses, the contents of which were not subsequently published as had been standard procedure up to this point.

On July 13 as well, the Führer's patron, the industrial magnate and Privy Councillor Emil Kirdorf,²⁹⁹ died at the age of ninety-two at his place of residence, the Streithof near Mülheim. Hitler sent his widow the following telegram of condolence:³⁰⁰

Please accept this expression of my sincere heartfelt sympathy at the great loss you and your family have suffered. I shall never forget your husband for the services he has rendered to Germany's economy and the resurrection of our Volk.

Adolf Hitler

On July 16, Hitler attended the mourning service for Kirdorf at the Rhein-Elbe coal mine in Gelsenkirchen.³⁰¹ On July 23, he arrived in Bayreuth, as every year, on the occasion of the Richard Wagner Festival.³⁰² On July 28, Hitler sent a telegram to Mussolini congratulating him on his birthday:³⁰³

Duce!

On your birthday today, I think of you warmly and extend to you my sincere best wishes for both your personal welfare and your work, the latter of which simultaneously serves both the greatness of Italy and peace in Europe. On this day, on which my thoughts are with you in particular, you may proudly reflect upon the greatness of the work accomplished by you as well as upon the greatness of the Fascist Empire. I am most content that, at the end of this most successful year in your life, we have further strengthened the Rome-Berlin Axis and our friendship by meeting on the soil of your empire. *Heil Duce!*

Your Adolf Hitler

On July 31, Hitler made an appearance at the German Athletic Competition games that took place in Breslau. Konrad Henlein was

present as well. As it had been on the occasion of the German Sängerbund Festival the year before, this city again was used as a setting for National Socialist demonstrations.³⁰⁴ This year, these were quite openly directed against Czechoslovakia. While Hitler did speak on August 1, 1937 in Breslau, he appeared on this occasion merely as a representative of the Reich Government and an honorary guest. The time had not yet come for Hitler to deal a deathly blow to Beneš and his state in a great address. Hitler would wait until the Party Congress in September to settle this account.

On the morning of July 31, Hitler greeted groups of Germans living abroad and also conversed with four German mountaineers who had braved the climb of the Eiger mountain wall. Further, Hitler watched a festive parade moving through the city. Then he observed the athletes line up for an appeal on the Friesenwiese and honored the victorious among them. For once, Hitler refrained from speaking and left the floor to both the Reich Sports Leader von Tschammer and Osten as well as to Gauleiter Josef Wagner.³⁰⁵

On August 1, the first Viennese edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter*³⁰⁶ was published in the same format employed in the Reich. This first Party paper to appear on Austrian soil contained the following prefatory note by Hitler:

In the many years of our struggle for power, the *Völkischer Beobachter* was one of our Movement's most potent weapons. Therefore, with great satisfaction, I rejoice in the fact that this official NSDAP organ now possesses, in addition to its Munich and Berlin editions, a new Viennese edition, an edition which is worthy of our German Ostmark and recognizes its importance.

On the day that witnesses the first publication of the *Völkischer Beobachter* in Vienna, in a format that we have become so accustomed to, I would like to extend my best wishes for the continued success of our eldest Party paper at the service of the Movement of the Greater German Reich.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler spent the majority of his unstructured time on the Obersalzberg during August observing maneuvers or inspecting fortresses. On August 5, Hitler received a delegation of British front-line soldiers; led by General Sir Jon Hamilton.³⁰⁷

On August 10, Hitler met for a new conference with the generals at the Berghof.³⁰⁸ A few days previously, Brauchitsch had handed Hitler a memorandum by their Chief of Staff, General Ludwig Beck. In it, Beck maintained that the German Army was by no means ready to enter into an armed conflict.³⁰⁹

At the conference of August 10, Hitler held a three-hour marathon talk, in which he maintained what he called his “inalterable decision” to do away with Czechoslovakia before the end of 1938. He then insisted upon his argument that there was no reason to fear military intervention by either Great Britain or France: the line of fortifications to the West by itself precluded such an action.

Several of the generals, however, entertained grave doubts on precisely this part of Hitler’s argument. Speaking for his Group Commander General Adam as well as for his own person, General von Wietersheim maintained that the fortresses to the West could not stave off the French for a time period in excess of three weeks. Such an insubordinate challenge to the authority of the Supreme Commander naturally resulted in a Hitlerian fit of rage. Hitler screamed:³¹⁰

I assure you, General, the position will not only be held for three weeks, but for three years.

Nevertheless, the conference at the Berghof had one tangible result. Given the attitude of the generals, Hitler believed this to be an opportune moment to raise their spirits by rehabilitating the former Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Fritsch.

Thus Hitler appointed Fritsch commander of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment and sent him the following congratulatory note in a telegram, dated August 11:³¹¹

In addition to your promotion to Commander of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment, which I have decreed in the enclosed document, I extend to you my heartfelt best wishes and express my appreciation of your great merit which you have proven in times of war and peace.

On today’s occasion, my thoughts turn in particular to your untiring efforts in the rebuilding of the German Wehrmacht.

Extending to you my best wishes for your personal welfare, I remain faithfully yours,

Adolf Hitler

Hitler held a tea party in honor of the Italian Minister of Air, Marshal Italo Balbo, on August 13 at the Berghof.³¹² On August 16, Hitler inspected the progress being made on the Party Congress construction site in Nuremberg. There he discussed preparations for the Reich Party Congress with several Unterführers. Hitler chose the title *Grossdeutschland* for the congress of that year.³¹³

With the Czechoslovakian venture looming on the horizon, August 17 seemed an opportune moment for Hitler to effect a more concrete

separation of the Wehrmacht and the SS Verfügungstruppe, namely, to place the latter exclusively at his own personal disposal. In the course of events in Austria, the SS Verfügungstruppe, in field-gray uniforms, had appeared as a separate entity involved in the occupation of the country. At the time, however, the SS Verfügungstruppe had formed part of the Eighth Army and had, therefore, been placed under the command of Colonel General von Bock. Now the Führer was determined to decisively settle the delegation of responsibility in the Army. He feared that ambiguities in this respect could well endanger the successful conduct of wars in the future. Therefore, on August 17, Hitler decreed that the SS Verfügungstruppe formed a part neither of the Wehrmacht nor police; rather it was "a regular armed troop" and was to be placed at his "exclusive disposal." In case of armed opposition of a general to him, Hitler would have the authority to employ the SS Verfügungstruppe to immediately subdue the uprising. The composition and training of this armed unit closely resembled that of an elite troop. Hitler's decree on the subject read verbatim:³¹⁴

The Führer and Reich Chancellor

Berlin, August 17, 1938

I have created the basis for a standardization and administrative reorganization of the German Police Force through the appointment of the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police within the Reich Ministry of the Interior on June 17, 1936 (RGBl. I, p. 487).

Thereby the Schutzstaffeln of the NSDAP, which previously had already been placed under the supervision of the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, have now entered into a closer relationship to the tasks of the German Police.

Hence, in order to accommodate and delimit these mutual tasks, shared by the SS and the Wehrmacht, I order the following principles in summary:

I. General

(1) The SS in its entirety, as a political organization of the NSDAP, requires no military internal organization or training in order to fulfill its political tasks. It shall remain an unarmed force.

(2) For specific tasks connected to matters of domestic policy, tasks that I will assign to the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police on a case-by-case basis, as well as for purposes of mobile deployment, the SS units enumerated below are exempt from the provisions of Article 1:

SS Verfügungstruppe; SS Junkerschulen; SS Totenkopfverbände; reinforcements for the SS Totenkopfverbände (police unit reinforcements).

In peacetime, these units shall be placed under the command of the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, who (with the exception of the cases noted in Section II) is solely responsible for their organization, training, equipment and full readiness for deployment for domestic missions

I shall present to him. In this context, an organizational linkage to the Wehrmacht in times of peace does not exist. Regarding the event of mobilization, the instructions in Section I and II apply.

Provided remuneration, the Wehrmacht shall procure weaponry, ammunition, equipment, gear, and military manuals to the armed SS units.

II. Armed SS Units

A. The SS Verfügungstruppe

(1) The SS Verfügungstruppe forms part of neither the Wehrmacht nor the police. It is a regular armed troop exclusively at my disposal. As such and as a formation of the NSDAP, the Reichsführer SS shall select its members, shall educate them according to the guidelines, instructions of a weltanschaulich and political nature, which I issued for the NSDAP and the Schutzstaffeln. The Reichsführer SS shall supplement the troop's membership from a pool of volunteers. These must have satisfied the two-year labor service requirement and must be of conscription age, and shall serve for four years. This service period may be extended for SS Unterführers. The legal requirement for active and compulsory military service (§ 8 of the Military Service Act) is considered to be satisfied by an equally long tour of service with the SS Verfügungstruppe.

The SS Verfügungstruppe shall be funded through the Reich Ministry of the Interior. Its budget must secure approval by the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

The further sections of the decree pertained to technical details of which only the following are of interest:

The SS Verfügungstruppe shall serve a dual function in the event of mobilization:

1. Within the scope of the wartime army, it shall be headed by the Commander in Chief of the Army. While being subjected exclusively to military laws and regulations, the SS Verfügungstruppe shall remain a political subdivision of the NSDAP.

2. In the event of a domestic emergency, it shall heed my instructions. It shall then be subordinate to the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police.

That same day, August 17, Hitler was present at the autumn maneuvers at the Infantry School in Döberitz.³¹⁵

The next day at the Chancellery, Hitler received the Chief of Staff of the French Air Force, General Vuillemin, who had been invited by Göring to inspect German airplane construction plants and military airfields.³¹⁶ This invitation attempted to sway the French General with a display of German military might not to intervene in the case of a war against Czechoslovakia.

One day later, on August 19, Hitler attended maneuvers of the Second Army Corps at Gross-Born in Pomerania, which he concluded with a review of the soldiers.³¹⁷

The Hungarian Regent, Admiral Horthy, arrived in Germany for a five-day official visit on August 21. During this visit, Hitler attempted to lure Hungary to participate in a war against Czechoslovakia, primarily by tempting Horthy with the offer of his share in the “booty”—as Hitler had phrased the matter in his instructions to “Case Green.”³¹⁸ Hitler offered Hungary the chance to regain most of its territories lost in the aftermath of the First World War, which at the present formed part of the Czechoslovakian state (within the limits of his geopolitical scheme). The pretense for the German-Hungarian conference was the launching of a new German cruiser in Kiel. Horthy attended the launching in his capacity as a former AustroHungarian Admiral. Initially, the ship was to have been christened *Tegetthoff*.³¹⁹ Because of the possible anti-Italian connotations this name might entail, the ship was finally called *Prinz Eugen*.

Shortly after 9:00 a.m. on August 22, Hitler met his Hungarian guest at the main station in Kiel.³²⁰ The Führer presented flowers to Horthy’s wife and kissed her hand. Also accompanying Horthy were his Foreign Minister Kánya and his War Minister von Ratz. Thereafter, the company proceeded to the Germania shipyards, where Seyss-Inquart delivered the address at the baptism, while Mrs. Horthy formally christened the new battle cruiser.

That afternoon in Kiel Bay, Hitler and Horthy observed a great naval display from aboard the light battleship *Grille*. That night, the party journeyed to Brunsbüttelskoog, passing through the Kiel Canal. On the next day, they traveled in the Hapag steamer *Patria* to Helgoland.

At 9:00 a.m. on August 24, Hitler and his guests arrived in Hamburg, where the usual sightseeing and a reception at the City Hall awaited them. Subsequently they traveled to Berlin. In the evening of the same day, Hitler held a dinner in honor of Admiral Horthy and his wife at the Chancellery. Toasting his two guests, Hitler proclaimed the German-Hungarian border to be a final one.³²¹

Your Highness,

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to bid Your Highness, the Regent of the Hungarian Kingdom, and Her Highness, Your highly revered wife, welcome in the capital of the German Reich.

In the person of Your Highness I greet the head of the Hungarian nation that is tied to the German Volk by an old and dear friendship. Many-faceted are the relations that formed between our two peoples in the course of centuries and that allowed them to become friends. These relations go back to the times of King Saint Stephen and they have stood fast and become closer throughout the eventful fates of our nations.

In more recent years, comradeship in arms during the most difficult times in the great War and the shared struggle for a better future have once more strengthened and sealed our friendship of old. This community, relying as it does on steadfastness and unshakeable trust in one another, will be of even greater value to both our peoples now that, following the recent historic developments, we have delineated the final historical borders separating us as neighbors. I am convinced that this community not only serves the interests of both our peoples, but also that, in cooperation with the Italy we befriended, it will serve as a guarantee of an honorable and just peace worldwide.

I entertain the hope that Your Highness has, in the course of your sojourn in Germany, seen how deeply rooted the warm-hearted sentiments are which the German Volk affords both your own person and your fatherland. Rest assured that Germany and its Government are truly sympathetic to the great work of national resurrection begun under your Highness's wise reign—despite the difficult situation subsequent to the War—a work which continues to be crowned by great success. My own best wishes as well as those of the German Volk accompany this work which has borne great fruits in all realms of Hungary's national life.

I raise my glass to toast the health of Your Excellency and that of Her Highness your wife, as I wish the Hungarian people, who remain bound to us in eternal friendship, prosperity and good fortune.

On Charlottenburg Avenue, one of "the greatest displays of troops that Germany has witnessed since the creation of the new Wehrmacht"³²² took place on August 25. General von Witzleben, as always, read off row after row of figures. Because of bad weather, the planned flight of the Luftwaffe groups had to be canceled. The next day, after additional sightseeing, Hitler accompanied Horthy to the Berlin train station for his 3:30 p.m. departure. The talks of the two statesmen during the few days of Horthy's visit were to bear fruit within a short time period. Subsequent to his return to Hungary, on September 4, Horthy introduced general conscription in his country, defying the Treaty at Trianon.³²³

In order to prove his concern for the interests of the Germans living abroad—particularly in countries to the East—Hitler sent out various telegrams. One greeted the German East Exhibition in Königsberg on August 22. Another was addressed to the Reich Convention of Germans Living Abroad, which took place in Stuttgart on August 28.³²⁴

The Chief of the General Staff, Ludwig Beck, after failing again to affect the Führer's stance with a new memorandum on August 16, stepped down from his post on August 27. In his letter of resignation, Beck plainly stated that he could no longer support the policy of aggression advocated by the Führer and Supreme Commander.

However, Beck was the only one of the generals who stood up to protest and express his opposition to Hitler's designs for war with Czechoslovakia.

After the Second World War, various publications dealt with the attitudes and goals of the German generals during the so-called Sudeten crisis of the summer months of 1938.³²⁵ A reader who is not well acquainted with this particular subject might be misled to conclude that, at the time, the generals had been close to mutiny. It might appear as though their failure to carry out the revolt and to incarcerate Hitler was due only to the positive outcome of the Munich Conference.

A few points should be clarified here. For one, had there been no conference in Munich or had talks failed in September 1938, a declaration of war by Great Britain and France would with absolute certainty have followed: Hitler had set the initial date for the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the Western Powers were determined to declare war on him the minute he fired the first shot. In 1939, exactly this happened.

Where was the German general with the courage to imprison the Supreme Commander and Warlord before the deadly struggle began—especially in a situation where a declaration of war by Great Britain and France was imminent? There is no question that in the summer of 1938 such a coup was being contemplated in military circles. But contemplation is far from action.

In this context, the result of the Munich Conference really did not make much of a difference. While there would not be any conference in 1939 like the one at Munich, the generals still reacted to Hitler in precisely the same inactive manner as before. There is no doubt that the German people would have been as overjoyed then, too, had war been avoided, as it was the year earlier when Chamberlain's and Daladier's intervention prevented the outbreak of armed conflict. However, it is not the place of the generals to decide upon either war or peace. Ever since the evolution of organized states in the Middle Ages, this function has been reserved for the heads of states of the nations involved. Further, one cannot compare the German generals to their more revolutionary minded colleagues in South America and in the Balkans. In Germany, the generals trod down the path of legality, even if this meant serving a regime with which they had no sympathy. This behavior has repeatedly been observed in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Germany. Even in 1812, Yorck³²⁶ had intended

neither to become a revolutionary, nor to overthrow his King. Based on his experiences during 1923, the Führer was fully aware of the generals' loyalty and complete subservience to the state.

The persistent rumor that in the years 1933 to 1945 the German generals had seriously contemplated employing force to remove Hitler is only a myth. Of the three thousand generals and admirals³²⁷ who were either appointed or promoted by Hitler, not one dared to face him with gun in hand. Perhaps they discussed the matter, but once Hitler entered the room, they would snap back to stand at attention, as was proper in the presence of the Supreme Commander.

All the reflections, plans and appeals of the generals opposing Hitler, were based on the assumption of his prior demise or on the disintegration of government authority. Those generals who took action on July 20, 1944, did so because they presumed Hitler to have been assassinated by Colonel von Stauffenberg. This mistaken assumption proved to be a fatal tragedy. Nonetheless, they deserve our respect and appreciation, as do so many others murdered by Hitler.

From a legal point of view, no one can blame the generals for not having killed or imprisoned Hitler. After all, the Nuremberg Tribunal did not attempt to judge the generals on this basis. Soldiers must be judged according to different set of rules.

Even though Colonel General Halder once lamented³²⁸ that Hitler demanded complete obedience from his General Staff, the question nonetheless remains how the military could have functioned, if the generals violated the military's set of rules and concept of authority. In addition, they already enjoyed privileges that ordinary officers and soldiers did not. At any time, when a general believed he could not support a specific measure of the supreme leadership, he had the choice to either ask for an early retirement or transfer to the so-called *Führerreserve*.³²⁹

These two options were at the disposal of the generals even in the course of the Second World War! A number of generals did exit by means of these official escape routes. Others who were convinced that it was their duty to stand fast for the love of their fatherland, paid a heavy price for remaining in the presence of Hitler, even before the Third Reich had collapsed. For Hitler was not only liberal in the distribution of medals, promotions, and money to his generals; he was also well versed in harassing, degrading, hanging, shooting, or driving them to commit suicide. The majority of the generals finally suffered a horrible fate—due in part to their Führer's demonic nature, but also

because of ingrained features of the military system itself. In this context, one can truly speak of a “self-sacrifice of the generals.” However, to retroactively elevate the generals to self-sacrificing revolutionaries—as numerous lower-ranking officers truly had been—would not be historically correct.

As mentioned earlier, the resignation of General Beck on August 27, 1938, was a protest against the German policy of aggression with regard to Czechoslovakia. Such an independent stance always impressed Hitler, in particular if its perpetrator took upon himself to suffer the consequences, as Beck in this case by leaving office. Thus, there were no repercussions for Beck in the aftermath of his action, since Hitler had no reason to suspect the general of not remaining loyal to his Führer in the future. Because of the current political situation at the time, Beck’s resignation was kept secret at first. Hitler ordered General Halder to assume the post of Chief of the German General Staff from September onward. Beck’s decision did not bring about any significant changes, however, one must nonetheless give it credit as an effective display of opposition.

As August gave way to September, the French author Alphonse de Châteaubriant visited Hitler at the Obersalzberg, where he was granted an interview. In the wake of the occupation of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936, Hitler had claimed that one of the considerations which had prompted such speedy action on his part, had been the signing of the Franco-Russian Pact. At the time, he had maintained that the Pact proved beyond all doubt that France was securely on its way to becoming a Bolshevik state³³⁰ Such a bold argument seemed inopportune to him now, in light of his upcoming venture against Czechoslovakia. Thus he proclaimed that the French had successfully warded off this danger. Indeed, France and Germany would do better to look at each other with admiration than to insist upon fighting each other on petty arguments. In this elegant turning of phrases, Hitler cloaked his attempt to pull the moral foundation for French assistance to Czechoslovakia from under the feet of the French statesmen. He explained the matter to Châteaubriant:³³¹

The greatest threat to Europe is that of a Bolshevik permeation, a threat similar to that in Germany at the time. I no longer think that such a permeation is possible in countries such as Holland, Belgium, and France. These countries have vanquished the Russo-Asiatic communism. While internal crises may and will take place there yet, France will not, for instance, fall prey to this philosophy of destruction. As long as each European state is concerned

exclusively with the conduct of its affairs to its own advantage, the economic situation in Europe will continue to breed discontent and discord. The nations of Europe were created to work together in the interest of the welfare of their peoples. We must regard those wars, such as the last one in particular, which split Europe up in an arbitrary assignment of territory and peoples, these wars we must regard as baneful errors committed by the said nations. In the realm of economic policy, as well as in all other realms, peoples should think primarily of productive cooperation.

Germany is being accused of severing its ties to the world and of becoming a recluse in the pursuit of its economic interests. Apparently no one considers that Germany was far more severely affected by the collapse of the international economy than others because of its restricted economic space and its overpopulation. Moreover, it was not until we had realized that comprehensive trade agreements with other nations were not possible that we resolved to fashion Germany's economic system to be independent of foreign economies. New ways had to be found. It is because of this that our Four-Year Plan endeavors to attain self-sufficiency for Germany. It is not our goal to isolate ourselves. In the course of our history we fought many a battle with France: nonetheless, we remain peoples of one family. I turn to all of Germany to say: bonds exist between us, bonds we cannot simply erase from our memory.

We have exchanged ideas, set examples for one another, and learned lessons from each other. Let us be honest: we have little reason to hate each other and all the more reason to admire one another.

On September 2, Hitler received Konrad Henlein on the Obersalzberg. At the request of Lord Runciman, Henlein was to inform the German Führer on the progress in the negotiations with the Prague Government. The British had already on June 14 pronounced themselves in favor of the right to self-determination of the Sudeten Germans.³³² Early in August, they had assigned Lord Runciman to function as mediator at the Prague talks between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechoslovakian Government.

Lord Runciman had done his utmost to settle the conflict by according equality of rights to Czechs and Sudeten Germans within the framework of the existing Czechoslovakian state. However, little progress was made. On the one hand, in accordance with the instructions he had received from the Führer, Henlein continuously voiced new demands. On the other hand, the Czechoslovakian Government did not want to succumb completely to his demands either.

It was against this background that Henlein and Hitler met on September 2, 1938, to exchange views. Immediately prior to the meeting, Hitler decreed the mobilization of reservists throughout

Germany. He was preparing to leave for the Nuremberg Party Congress, where he intended to deal his final blow to Czechoslovakia. Most certainly, he was not, at the time, in a mood to discuss theoretical issues at great length.

Naturally, it was not Henlein who dominated the conversation on that second day of September, 1938. When Hitler heard Beneš' suggestions to resolve the Sudeten German question in Henlein's report, he saw them as nothing more than "little presents to appease in the fashion of Geneva."³³³ And, Hitler felt, it should not be left to Beneš to distribute "presents" among the Sudeten Germans; rather, the Sudeten Germans should demand what was theirs by right. One had best not imagine where things would end up, if one allowed Germans and Czechs to live side by side, being treated equally. This would come close to precipitating the creation of a "second Palestine in the heart of Germany." Hitler was not willing to stand for such a development. He sent Henlein back to Czechoslovakia that very same day.

The official press release reporting on the meeting of the two men described it in the following terms:³³⁴

Berchtesgaden, September 2

The Führer received the leader of the Sudeten German Party, Konrad Henlein, at the Obersalzberg on Friday [September 2]. Lord Runciman had requested Henlein to report on the present developments at the negotiations with the Government in Prague. The Führer received the information with great interest and agreed completely with Henlein's appraisal of the current situation. Konrad Henlein stayed for lunch at the Führer's house and then left the Berghof in the afternoon.

6

The Party Congress *Grossdeutschland* began on September 5 in Nuremberg. The imminent conflict with Czechoslovakia dominated the rally. Since early August, an intensified press campaign had been directed against this state.³³⁵ The headlines in the newspapers reported alleged atrocities against individuals and entire groups of Sudeten Germans nearly every day. Gruesome details were reported on bloody assaults, shooting, and bludgeoning of innocent onlookers, women, children, and elderly people. Supposedly, there had been raids on Reich German customs and border police posts. The campaign was not only intended to feed hatred in the German people, but also to prepare foreign opinion for the upcoming German military move against Czechoslovakia.

Right at the beginning of the Party Congress, the news of a call-up of French reservists reached Nuremberg and caused great consternation. This French response to the secret mobilization of troops in Germany revealed signs of strain in Hitler's thesis on the weakness of the French and the senility of the British. The assumption that neither France nor Great Britain would actively oppose a German assault upon Czechoslovakia seemed at least doubtful, and Hitler reacted in a subdued fashion to the news. On September 6, the German News Agency published the following official statement:³³⁶

The report on the French military measures along our Western border is rendered all the more conspicuous since it comes at a time in which there is talk of a general relaxation of tensions. Germany has never challenged the right of any other country to take all the precautionary steps it deems necessary to its defense. Germany assumed this attitude as well with regard to the fortress construction of the Maginot Line.³³⁷ On the other hand, Germany has a claim as well to exercise this right as a preventive measure, and has, therefore, ordered similar defensive measures to be implemented along its Western border.³³⁸ Since Germany did not regard the precautionary

steps taken by France as a direct and conscious threat to its safety, it follows that France cannot derive a threat to its safety on the basis of Germany's measures, precautions which merely correspond to France's own actions. It would be in the self-interest of France not to allow its measures to transgress these boundaries.

Hitler saved his "final reckoning with Czechoslovakia" for his last speech at the Party Congress on September 12. Although he had not mentioned the subject up to that point, the presence of Konrad Henlein at the Party Congress reminded the audience of the matter's unfailing currency. Apart from the customarily long-winded "party narratives," Hitler's other speeches primarily addressed the Party's Austrian comrades who were attending the Nuremberg Congress for the first time. Hitler had returned the ancient insignias of the Holy Roman Empire³³⁹ to the Franconian city from Vienna, where they had been in safekeeping ever since the late eighteenth century. From 1424 to 1796, however, the Reich insignias had resided in the Nuremberg fortress. In reference to these historical facts, Hitler stated the following in his address at the City Hall of Nuremberg on September 5:³⁴⁰

In no other German city do past and present of the Greater German Reich symbolically unite as happily as in Nuremberg, the Reich capital of past and present. The ancient German Reich entrusted this most worthy city with the insignias of the Reich. Nuremberg shall once again take possession of these silent witnesses to the power and glory of the Old Reich. Today Nuremberg stands as the city of the Reich Party Congresses, a rock of German strength and German greatness within a new German Reich!

On September 6, 1938, as in the previous years, Gauleiter Adolf Wagner read Hitler's proclamation to the Party Congress audience:

Party Comrades! National Socialists!

Moved more deeply than ever, we marched to Nuremberg. In the past years, the Reich Party Congresses have developed from being an occasion of great rejoicing and celebration and of great pride to being an occasion for somber inner reflection. The Old Fighters come here in the anticipation of finding many old acquaintances once more, acquaintances made in the long years of the struggle for power. And hence in this city old comrades in arms greet one another again and again as veterans of the greatest of all German revolutions.

For the first time, our circle has been extended infinitely this year. The National Socialist Reich has taken in new German Volksgenossen. Many of them are in our midst today for the very first time. Many others flowing along in the stream of the Movement, lose themselves to the magic of this city and of these uplifting hours. Others—as members of the fighting organizations—will march for the first time with their brothers from all over the German Reich

and in their hearts they will once more pledge themselves to never again let go of this greatest of all communities.

These remarks were followed by the “party narrative.” In it, Hitler declared that the “gigantic turn of fate” which had taken place in the years since 1933, had been due to a change in “German leadership.”

Germany’s leadership has changed. National Socialism has built it up through a relentless process of selection. However, insofar as it still consists of members from the times of struggle, it represents a pinnacle which cannot be replaced by either external or material value or by political or military might. And this leadership has become the bearer of the German uprising. The miracle that took place between 1805 and 1813 was no different. The Prussian men and women of the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig were no different from those Prussian men and women of the days of Jena and Auerstedt. Then, too, a weak leadership of state and armed forces was replaced by a heroic one in the span of a few years. Names such as vom Stein and Blücher, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, Yorck and Clausewitz, and of countless others, alone suffice to explain the miracle of Prussia’s great rise. There is no other way of looking at the miracle of Germany’s rise today. The National Socialist Party has been the creative force behind this ascent. It has done the enormous work required so that Germany could once again find the strength to resume its position in the world. It had to break down and eliminate the other parties.

It had to make war relentlessly on a world filled with prejudices of class and social standing. It had to assure that each German of willpower and ability could make his way to the top in disregard of his birth and origin. It had to cleanse Germany of all those parasites who drank at the well of the despair of Vaterland and Volk. It had to acknowledge the eternal values of blood and earth, and it had to elevate these principles to become the leading imperatives in our lives. It had to begin the fight against the greatest enemy which threatens to destroy our Volk: the international Jewish world enemy!

Hitler then emphasized the creation of Greater Germany:

Just a few weeks ago, one English newspaper wrote that I harbored the burning desire to arrive at some sort of pact with various states on various topics or else I would not be able to step before this year’s Reich Party Congress. I never had this intention nor do I have it now. I step before you today, my old Party Comrades, with no pact in hand, but I bring you my homeland—the seven new Gaus of Germany. It is Greater Germany that steps into the limelight for the first time here in Nuremberg. When the insignias of the Old Reich have returned to this old German city, then they have done so because they were carried back by six and a half million Germans who accompanied them in spirit and whose spirit unites them today with all of the men and women of our Volk. These days all of them are all the more conscious of the great happiness of being part of a great indissoluble community. What one amongst them bears, all of them bear. Therefore, that which must be borne by all is all the more easily borne by the individual.

Speaking on the subject of the "Ostmark," Hitler turned to economic issues. He announced the elimination of unemployment in Austria, and proclaimed that he sought the guarantee of sufficient nutrition "under all circumstances." He argued that, in the case of war, an economic blockade of Germany would be "a dead issue":

The unemployment crisis in the Ostmark of the Reich will, as well, have been completely resolved by the end of next year. Today, we have only two real economic concerns:

a) the concern over manpower, in particular that of skilled laborers for industrial work, and

b) the concern over manpower in the countryside.

If other states regard these concerns as certain evidence for a supposedly persistent economic weakness of the Third Reich, then we shall gladly compare the criticism of our lack of manpower at home to the unemployment in the democracies.

If today I can point to the lack of manpower as the sole economic concern in Germany, then this is so because of two facts:

1. The grace of the Lord has bestowed upon us a bountiful harvest this year. Despite crop failures during the past years, it was possible nonetheless to stock up considerable reserve supplies for the new year—thanks to the unrelenting steps taken by our Party Comrade Göring. We shall not have to fear for our food stocks for many years to come thanks to these reserve supplies and thanks to this year's bountiful harvest. Nevertheless, we will proceed with economy. It is our will to accumulate large reserves in wheat so that we shall be spared destitution under any and all circumstances.

2. The fruits borne by the Four-Year Plan are becoming increasingly noticeable. What I believed and forecasted in earlier years has come true: once the national economic prerogatives were pointed out to the leaders of Germany's economy and to our inventors in particular, the ingenuity and expertise of our chemists, physicists, mechanical engineers, technicians, foremen, and organizers have achieved a success which no one had anticipated and which—I may assuredly say—has been simply astounding.

Here, too, Hitler entertained the deluded notion that, with the assistance of German inventors, he could achieve anything, perform miracles, and overcome all boundaries imposed by nature upon man. He continued:

We are building up Germany's economy in such a fashion that it can, at any given time, function independently of other countries and stand on its own feet. And this we have achieved. An economic blockade against Germany has become a dead issue. With its own peculiar energy, the National Socialist State has drawn the ultimate consequence from the World War. We will remain true to our principle rather to limit ourselves in one domain or another, should this be necessary, than to ever again become dependent upon other countries. Above all, one resolution will reign supreme in all our

economic enterprises: the security of our nation has priority. Hence its material existence must be completely secured within the confines of our Lebensraum and our capacity for self-sufficiency. Only then can the German Wehrmacht guarantee the protection of the Reich, its interests, and freedom of action, under any and all circumstances. And only then does Germany become of interest and value to others as a friend and ally.³⁴¹

When I pronounce this on the occasion of the tenth Reich Party Congress, then I do this in the confident knowledge that the time of Germany's political and economic isolation has come to an end. The Reich has befriended strong and great world powers.

Naturally, he loaded his speech with platitudes on the Bolshevik threat to the world, and heaped praise upon Italy's new anti-Semitic stance:³⁴²

Party Comrades! More threatening than ever, the danger of Bolshevik destruction of all peoples looms on the horizon. A thousand times over we have witnessed the activities of the Jewish agitators prodding this global pestilence.

I believe that this is the time and place to, on my own behalf and the behalf of you all, pronounce with great inner movement how we rejoice at the fact that another great European power has realized this, too. On the basis of its own experiences, its own reflections, and its own approach, it has arrived at the same conclusions as we have, and has drawn the consequences with a truly admirable determination.

Hitler concluded his proclamations with an expression of gratitude to all fighters, men, women, and soldiers, and, most of all, to the "Almighty" who had allowed that "the banner of the new Reich be carried across the border on March 12." He declared:

Above all, let us thank the Almighty for the successful union of the old Ostmark and the new Reich. Through this He bestowed upon the German Volk a great happiness and upon the Reich a great success. It was He who allowed for this without us having to place at risk the life and limb of any of our Volksgenossen. Without the aggregate forces of the entire nation contained in National Socialism this would never have been possible: may all Germans never forget this! It was no longer a symbol of conquest, the banner of the new Reich which was carried across the border in the morning hours of March 12, rather it had become a symbol for the age-old union encompassing all Germans.

This banner which our Wehrmacht carried forth into our new Gaus had become an icon of belief in victory for our brothers in the course of a most difficult struggle. And so it was that in this case, it was foremost an idea that conquered and unified the Volk!

From this day onward, to all of us and to all coming generations, this Reich of Germans will forever be known as *Grossdeutschland!*

At the Culture Convention that same day, Hitler once again presented his views on the essence of culture and art at great length. He spoke of the “culturally completely unproductive Jews” and of the “blasé attitude” of the pseudo-intellectual upper class. The latter he referred to with great disdain in the following stark words:

I want to differentiate here between the Volk, i.e. the healthy, full-blooded mass of Germany loyal to the Volk, and a decadent, so-called high society, unreliable because only conditionally linked by blood. It is sometimes casually referred to as the “upper class,” being, however, in reality no more than the scum produced by a societal mutation gone haywire from having had its blood and thinking infected by cosmopolitanism.

There was nothing new about his use of such terminology. In this instance as well, it was clearly Hitler’s intent to put an end to the preposterous ideas of Rosenberg³⁴³ and Himmler. Their importunate efforts to revive a Wotan cult had long been a thorn in the side of Hitler. Their attempts consisted of constructing sites for the worship of mystical Germanic cults with the goal of exchanging Christian rituals for “Nordic” consecration ceremonies—including different marriage and burial rites. Such aspirations could only detract from what Hitler believed to be the crucial mission of National Socialism: to expand upon and maintain its power base.

Starting from the assumption of the pernicious “mysticism of Christianity,” he announced that the “cultural work of the German Volk” strove to fulfill “one mission” [Hitler’s]. This undertaking must perforce be achieved in the pursuit of the commands issued by “one spirit”—which, of course, was again that of Hitler. The “subversion by occult mystics in search of an afterlife” could not be tolerated. Cult facilities, cult sites, cult performances and rituals were dangerous. There must be only one teaching of a “*völkisch* and political” nature and the “brave fulfillment of the duties entailed.”

While Hitler did not mention the names Rosenberg or Himmler, everyone knew that the admonishment was aimed specifically at these two adherents of mysticism. Hitler detailed the following considerations:

In this period of the most inward orientation, Christian mysticism demanded an approach to the solution of structural problems and hence to an architecture whose design not only ran contrary to the spirit, of the time, but which also helped produce these mysterious dark forces which made the people increasingly willing to submit themselves to cosmopolitanism. The germinating resistance to this violation of the freedom of the spirit and the will of man which lasted for centuries immediately found an outlet in the force-

ful expression of a new form of artistic design. The cathedrals' mystical narrowness and somberness gave way to more generous room and light, reflecting the increasingly free spirit of the time. More and more the mystical twilight gave way to light. The uncertain and probing transition to the twentieth century finally led to the crisis we face today and which will find its resolution in one way or another. [—]

And in this manner the cultural evolution of a Volk resembles that of the Milky Way. Amongst countless pale stars a few suns radiate. However, all suns and planets are made of the same *one* material, and all of them observe the same laws. The entire cultural work of a Volk must not only be geared toward fulfillment of one mission, but this mission must also be pursued in *one* spirit. National Socialism is a cool and highly-reasoned approach to reality based upon the greatest of scientific knowledge and its spiritual expression. As we have opened the Volk's heart to these teachings, and as we continue to do so at present, we have no desire of instilling in the Volk a mysticism that transcends the purpose and goals of our teachings.

Above all, National Socialism is a Volk Movement in essence and under no circumstances a cult movement! Insofar as the enlightenment and registration of our Volk demands the use of certain methods, which by now have become part of its traditions, these methods are rooted in experience and realizations that were arrived at by exclusively pragmatic considerations. Hence it will be useful to make these methods part of our heritage at a later date. They have nothing to do with other borrowed methods or expressions derived from other viewpoints which have to this date constituted the essence of cults. For the National Socialist Movement is not a cult movement; rather, it is a *völkisch* and political philosophy which grew out of considerations of an exclusively racist nature. This philosophy does not advocate mystic cults, but rather aims to cultivate and lead a Volk determined by its blood. [—] Therefore we do not have halls for cults, but halls for the Volk. Nor do we have places for worship, but places for assembly and squares for marches. We do not have cult sites, but sports arenas and play areas. And it is because of this that our assembly halls are not bathed in the mystical twilight of cult sites but rather are places of brightness and light of a beautiful and practical nature. In these halls, no cult rituals take place, they are exclusively the site of Volk rallies of the type which we conducted in the years of our struggle, which we have become accustomed to, and which we shall preserve in this manner.

Hence the National Socialist Movement will not tolerate subversion by occult mystics in search of an afterlife. They are not National Socialists but something different, and in any event, they represent something that has nothing to do with us. At the heart of our program you will not find any mysterious presentiments, rather you will find succinct realization and hence open avowal. Since we place the sustenance and securing of a creature created by God at the center of this realization and avowal, we sustain God's creation, and it is in this manner that we serve this will. We do not do so at a new cult site bathed in mysterious twilight, but rather, in the open, for the Lord to see.

There were ages when twilight was the prerequisite for the propagation of certain teachings. In this day and age, however, light is the prerequisite if

our work is to succeed. God have mercy on him who attempts to subvert our Movement and our State by insisting upon convoluted orders or introducing vague mystical elements to them. It suffices for this lack in clarity to be contained in words only.

It is already dangerous to order the construction of a so-called cult site because this already entails the necessity of coming up with cult games and rites at a later date. The only cult we know is that of a cultivation of the natural and hence of that which God has willed. We stand in complete and unconditional humility before the divine laws as revealed to man. These laws we respect and our prayer is one of brave fulfillment of the duties entailed. We cannot be held responsible for acts of worship; after all, that is the domain of the churches! [—]

Therefore, truly great solutions to the problems of architecture today can only be found if architecture is charged with great and timely tasks. To abandon this principle would render the undertaking hideous. The attempts at resolution would become artificial, dishonest, and wrong and hence would lose their significance for present and future.

In the same manner, one cannot ask music to resolve problems the fulfillment of which transcends its domain. Music as a form of pure art continues to obey laws unknown to us. [—]

Finally, it is absolutely impossible to express a *Weltanschauung* scientifically in terms of music.

After Hitler had shown the deviant cult followers of Rosenberg and Himmler who was their true master in his “culture speech,” he delivered an address before bluecollar workers (*Arbeitsmänner*) the following day. In this rhetorical outpouring, he employed short but equally grotesque words, culminating:

We are proud of you! All of Germany loves you! For you are not merely bearers of the spade, but rather you have become bearers of the shield for our Reich and Volk!

You represent the most noble of slogans known to us: “God helps those who help themselves!”

I thank you for your creations and work! I thank your Reich Leader of Labor Service for the gigantic build-up accomplished!

As Führer and Chancellor of the Reich, I rejoice at this sight, standing before you, and I rejoice in recognition of the spirit that inspires you, and I rejoice at seeing my Volk which possesses such men and maids! *Heil Euch!*

That afternoon, Hitler held a reception for the diplomatic corps³⁴⁴ in Nuremberg at the Deutscher Hof Hotel. Even the representative of Czechoslovakia attended. The only states that were still missing were the Vatican and the Soviet Union. Hitler gave a welcoming address in which he pointed out that increasing numbers of heads of diplomatic missions participated in the Party Congresses of the NSDAP. The

French Ambassador François-Poncet expressed the gratitude of the diplomatic corps.

Hitler's speech before the Political Leaders on September 9 was rather short compared to other years. While greeting "among the ranks of our old loyal revolutionary guard, our comrades in arms from our Ostmark," he touched upon the topic of the tense atmosphere at the time. He maintained that the present (foreign policy) situation of Germany corresponded to the domestic struggle of former times, and thus was bound to develop along similar beneficial lines. Once again, he found himself expounding upon the applicability of domestic policy to the international realm.

You all certainly feel how strong we are in this community. At a time like this when there are clouds on the horizon, I rejoice doubly at seeing myself surrounded by a guard of millions of undeterred, zealous National Socialists whose spiritual leaders you are!

Just as I used to rely upon you blindly in the long years of struggle for power in Germany, I am certain that Germany and I can rely upon you today. All those who for fifteen years anticipated the collapse of our Movement, all those were wrong. The Movement emerged all the stronger from every trial and tribulation! And all those who today hope for a weakening of Germany, they will be proven wrong, too!

As I speak to you today, I do not see 140,000 Political Leaders standing before me; no, you are the German nation. A Volk is worth no more and no less than its leadership. Our leadership shall be of a benign nature—it is this that we promise the German Volk!

On September 10, Hitler spoke before the German youth and announced the following:

A new movement had to come along, a movement that would educate and, therefore, prepare our Volk. And even if March 12 and March 13, 1938, were all that National Socialism had achieved in its historical existence, that alone would suffice to justify its existence for the millennium! [—]

You were placed in the middle of this community of fate. In it you shall grow and one day you shall support it yourselves. One day, your steadfastness shall be used as a rod for the steadfastness of Germany. I have confidence in you, and I count upon you blindly.

Once Providence chooses to take me from my Volk, then I will bequeath upon the coming Führer a Volk of iron, steadfast in its unity that can never again be separated or torn apart. It will stand together without yielding; it will be happy in times of rejoicing and spiteful in times of need.

In my eyes, each of you boys and each of you girls are a life guarantee for this.

Throughout the German lands, those who rely upon the united German Volk fare the best. And you are the German Volk!

On September 11, Hitler addressed the “fighting formations” of the Party. Naturally, he greeted the SA and SS men from the Ostmark first. He deliberately avoided using the word Austria and made no mention of the “Austrian Legion,” a group which he had on April 3 promised to present with a statement of appreciation and an assessment of their new function at this Party Congress.³⁴⁵ Instead, Hitler referred to the sports competitions which he wanted to place at the center of the SA’s work. He then repeatedly alluded to other future battles and to those Germans (the Sudeten Germans) who did not yet enjoy the privilege of living within the boundaries of the Reich. He declared:

What stands here today is the best political fighting troop of the German Volk ever. At times like these, we must remind ourselves that National Socialism did not rise to power as a result of some vague hope but as a result of a concrete battle. And National Socialism stands determined to preserve its present position and the position of the Reich which it has created under any and all circumstances! [—]

And so this time the champions of the games stand amongst you. I greet them in particular, and I expect that, over the next few years, these competitive games will develop into a gigantic event. This event will be crowned by the completion of an enormous stadium to the right of the new congress hall, a stadium for the German Volk. [—]

This Germany stands before us now and we have the great fortune to live in it. Other Germans are not this fortunate right now. Our hearts reach out to them, and we know that in their hearts they are with us at this hour!

Before he could proceed to reckon with the Czechs on September 12 at the final congress, Hitler delivered an address to the soldiers of the Wehrmacht. In a preface to the customary military reviews, Hitler stepped upon the stone rostrum on the Zeppelin Field, turned to the soldiers, and proudly declared that all military victories up to this point had been attained not through conferences, negotiations or agreements, but by means of the “power of our own weapons!”³⁴⁶ The verbatim content of the speech is reprinted below:

Soldiers of the German Wehrmacht!

As in years past, you have assembled in Nuremberg for this year’s Reich Party Congress. For the first time, you stand here as soldiers of the Greater German Reich! We owe it to two facts that this age-old dream has become reality:

First, the highly successful creation of a truly German Volksgemeinschaft. It was the prerequisite for the realization of this dream.

Second, the build-up of the new German Wehrmacht whose soldiers finally realized the dream through their invasion. We can draw two conclusions from this:

First, we acknowledge the necessity of the existence of the Movement, the Movement which in less than two decades' time succeeded in liberating the German Volk from its greatest inner confusion and chaos and leading it to the unity which we see today. The teachings of National Socialism and of the Party are guarantors of this inner German Volksgemeinschaft.

Second, the lesson we have learned from this is how important it is that the internally restructured German Volksgemeinschaft be outwardly protected. This depends exclusively on the power of our own weapons and, therefore, depends upon the carriers of those weapons themselves.

No negotiations, no conferences and no other agreement has accorded us Germans the natural right to unity. We had to take justice into our own hands, and we were able to do so thanks to your existence, my soldiers!

And it is thus that the two greatest institutions of our Volk must fulfill two identical missions. National Socialism has to educate our Volk within to form this Volksgemeinschaft. The Wehrmacht has to instruct this same Volk to defend this Volksgemeinschaft outwardly. So it is you, my soldiers, who were immediately charged with the fulfillment of a mission in this new Reich. And this fulfillment has earned you the love of the German Volk. It relied upon you and it has realized that it can rely upon its sons in uniform. For you carry the best weapons available today, you receive the best training, and I know that you also possess the best of character.

You fit in well with the eternal, everlasting front constituted by Germany's soldiers. In the past months, I repeatedly had the opportunity to convince myself of this. I saw it at the maneuver sites, shooting stands, and training camps, and it was with great contentment that I realized that the German nation can once more look to its soldiers with great pride. And it is that for which I thank you!

Yet, we do not serve for the sake of gratitude, praise, or recompense unless this gratitude, praise and recompense is at the service of what we value the most in this world: our Volk and our German Reich!

Deutschland—Sieg Heil!

On the last meeting of the Party Congress, Hitler began his tensely awaited address with a lengthy "party narrative." His reminiscence of the early fighting days concluded:

And yet we look back upon these times with the greatest feeling of pride. Today we feel doubly close to those times because first of all, in our midst we see the fighters of the eldest German Ostmark who until recently were subject to a like persecution because of their National Socialist conviction. They stand amongst us today as Volksgenossen and citizens of the German Reich. What have they not had to go through, suffer through?! How many of their comrades were slain, how many injured in body and spirit, how many lost their livelihoods for many years, and how many ten thousands were imprisoned in jails, penitentiaries and Anhaltelagers?!

The second reason for which we reflect upon these times with particular emotion is the fact that the events we experienced and suffered in our own

nation at the time are precisely those we are witnessing on the world stage today. And above all: our enemies today remain *weltanschaulich* the very same ones.

Next Hitler drew parallels between these enemies of the past and their present respective counterparts. He equated the German Nationalists and the Center Party with the Western democracies. Then he likened German Communism to the Soviet Union:

Almost every year, we could step before the nation with quiet confidence and await its judgment.³⁴⁷ The greatest approval ever granted the leadership of a Volk became ours on April 10 of this year.³⁴⁸ The Volk acknowledged and confirmed that it regards the new form of state and its leadership as institutions that strive to the best of their abilities to serve the Volk and to lead it once more to freedom and greatness and to ensure its economic well-being.

And still, what we are witnessing today on a larger scale is precisely the same we experienced in the decades of internal struggle. Ever since the day we assumed power, we have been surrounded by a hostile environment. The connivance between the gilded, capitalist democratic movement in our parliament on the one hand and with Marxism on the other in their war on National Socialism is today mirrored in a like conspiracy, albeit on a larger scale, involving the democracies and the Bolshevists as they make war on the state constituted by the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft.

Perhaps the most persuasive evidence of the insincerity of their fight against the National Socialist Party as it struggled for power at the time is the fact that no matter whether they were bourgeois nationalists, capitalist democrats, or Marxist internationalists, they formed a unitary front against us in all decisive battles. At the time, many of our Volksgenossen were forced to realize just how dishonest the political battle was and of how little import morals were in this fight as they saw those parties fighting us on nationalist grounds, yet were not reluctant to conspire with Marxist internationalists to that end.

And vice versa, our Volksgenossen had to realize just how dishonest and fraudulent those parties were who claimed to persecute us for socialist reasons and then went to ally themselves with the worst proponents of capitalism prior to entering into the unitary front against us. The Center Party claimed to be fighting us because we were hostile to the Church, and yet to this end it entered into a holy alliance with atheist Social Democrats and did not shrink from uniting with the Communists. And on the other hand, Communists fought us because, as they claimed, we represented the Reaktion in their eyes. Yet they cast their ballot together with the true reactionaries against the vote of the National Socialist Party in the Reichstag.

It was indeed a display of such duplicity that one could only turn from it in disgust. Today we feel equally repelled as we watch the so-called international world democracies who supposedly advocate liberty, fraternity, justice, the right to self-determination of the peoples, etc., as we see these states ally themselves with Bolshevik Moscow.³⁴⁹ One day, perhaps someone

will ask why we concern ourselves so much with the democracies and why we treat them in so negative a manner. This is the case because:

First, as those attacked we are forced to counter.

Second, the conduct of these phenomena is so revolting.

Dishonesty sets in the minute these democracies claim to represent government by the people and decry authoritarian states as dictatorships. I believe that I can confidently state that today there are only two world powers who can honestly claim to have 99 percent of their people backing the government. What in other countries goes by the name of democracy is in most cases little other than the apt manipulation of public opinion by means of money and the press, and the equally apt manipulation of the results hereby achieved. How easily, however, are these supposed democracies stripped bare of their pretenses when one takes a close look at their stance in matters of foreign policy which constantly change to suit the purpose of the moment. There we witness how truly repressive regimes in small countries are actually being glorified by these democracies if it suits their needs. Yes, they even go so far as to fight for them, while on the other hand, they themselves actively repress inconvenient rallies in those states where such protest does not suit them. They fail to acknowledge this activism, attempt to subvert it or simply misinterpret its significance. And this is not all: these democracies even glorify Bolshevik regimes if it happens to suit their purpose, and this in spite of the fact that the latter style themselves as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In other words, these supposed democracies decry regimes that are backed by 99 percent of their constituents as dictatorships, while at the same time they praise other countries as highly respectable democratic institutions even though these call themselves dictatorships and even though these can only subsist on the basis of mass executions, torture, etc. Is it not one of the greatest ironies in history that in the midst of upright prototype democrats in Geneva, the blood-drenched proponent of one of the cruelest tyrannies of all time moves about freely as a highly respected member of the Council?³⁵⁰

We in Germany have already witnessed the alliance of Jewish capitalism with an abstract version of communist anti-capitalism, and we have seen the *Rote Fahne*, the *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* march hand in hand here. It is the same all over the world. Bolshevik Moscow has become the highly revered ally of capitalist democracies! [—]

For fifteen years, they have acted in gruesome defiance of the most natural interests of their peoples, yes, acting contrary to any standards of human dignity. Indeed, they drew up *Diktats* with a pistol in hand only to, at a later date, lament the “unilateral” transgression of holy rights and the breach of all the more holy contracts. Without so much as a thought for the opinion of the natives, they have led a drive for the bloody subjugation of entire continents. However, the minute that Germany mentions the return of its colonies, they declared that—out of concern for the indigenous people there—one could not possibly abandon the natives to so horrid a fate. At the same time, they did not distance themselves from dropping bombs out of planes onto their own colonies. And all this to use the force of reason to persuade the dear colored compatriots to submit to the foreign rule a hit longer. Of course, the

bombs thus employed were bombs with civilizing warheads which one must absolutely not confuse with those brutal ones Italy used in Abyssinia.

Throughout the democratic countries, one laments the unimaginable cruelty with which first Germany, and now Italy as well, are striving to rid themselves of the Jewish element. However, all these great democratic empires have altogether little more than a few persons per square kilometer. In Italy and in Germany this number exceeds 140 persons. For decades, Germany nevertheless took in hundreds of thousands upon hundreds of thousands of Jews without batting an eyelid.

Now that the burden has become overbearing and the nation is no longer willing to have its life blood sucked out of it by these parasites, it is now that there is great lament abroad. However, not a word is heard in these democratic countries about replacing this hypocritical lamentation with a good deed and assistance. No, to the contrary, all one hears is cold reasoning claiming that in these states there is regrettably no space either! Evidently, they expect us to bear up under this burden of Jewry despite our 140 persons per square kilometer, while the democratic world empires with their few people per square kilometer could not possibly shoulder this burden. Alas, no help. But morals!

And thus we find the National Socialist Reich faced with the same phenomenon and forces that we had fifteen years to get to know as a party. Insofar as this is indicative of the hostile attitude of the democratic states toward Germany, this matters little to us. Besides, why should we fare any better than the Reich before us? On a side note, I will admit quite openly that I find it easier to bear insults from someone who can no longer rob me than to be robbed by someone who praises me for letting it happen. Today we are insulted. Yet we are in a position—praise the Lord—to prevent Germany from being ravaged and raped. The state before us was blackmailed for fifteen years. For this, admittedly, it received compensation—the somewhat sparse recompense, at least in my eyes—of praise for having been a good little democratic state.

This comportment becomes unbearable for us the minute a major part of our Volk is placed at the mercy of impertinent abusers, ostensibly without any means of defending itself, while the brunt of democratic rhetoric pours forth as a threat to our Volksgenossen. I am speaking of *Czecho-Slovakia*.³⁵¹

Now Hitler had finally reached the central part of his speech. As was to be expected, he showered the Czechoslovakian state with accusations, but did not spare Western statesmen either:

This state is a democracy, that is to say it was founded on democratic principles. The majority of its people was simply forced to submit to the structure construed at Versailles without any one asking for its opinion. As a true democracy, this state immediately began to suppress the majority of its people, to abuse there and to rob them of their inalienable rights. Gradually, one attempted to impress upon the world that this state had a special military and political mission to fulfill.

The former French Minister of Aviation, Pierre Cot,³⁵² has explained this to us recently. According to him, Czechoslovakia exists for the purpose of providing a base, in the event of war, for launching aerial attacks and dropping bombs upon German cities and industrial plants. Needless to say, we may assume that these will once again be equipped with those warheads of the famed civilizing variety.

However, this mission stands in opposition to the desires of the majority of the inhabitants of this state, and is alien to their philosophy of life and contrary to their vital interests. That is why the majority of its citizens were silenced. Any protest against this fate would have been an assault upon the aims incarnate in this state and hence would have been in violation of its constitution. Drawn up by the democrats, this constitution was less suited to realizing the rights of the people affected and was instead more tailored toward accommodating the political expediencies of the people's oppressors. Political expediency necessitated as well that a structure be construed that accorded the Czech people a position of preeminence in this state. Whoever protested against this usurpation became an "enemy of the state" and hence, in accordance with democratic norms, he was outlawed. Providence has thus called upon the so-called people of the Czech state—admittedly voicing its intent through the good offices of the architects at Versailles—to stand guard lest someone rise in opposition to this ultimate purpose of the state.

Should someone nevertheless venture to step forth from amongst the majority of the oppressed peoples in this state and voice opposition to this end, then it is naturally permissible that he be beaten back with the full force at the state's disposal and, if so desire or need be, he could also simply be murdered. If this now did not concern us, if this were some foreign affair, we, like so many others, might take note of it simply as a most interesting display of the democrats' understanding of the rights of peoples to self-determination. However, the nature of the affair involves an obligation of us Germans.

Amongst the suppressed minorities in this state, there are also three and a half million Germans, roughly as many people of our race as Denmark has in inhabitants.³⁵³ These Germans are God's creatures as well. The Almighty has not created them so that the construction arrived at in Versailles might place them at the mercy of an alien power they hate. And He has not created seven million Czechs either so that they may reign over these three and a half million, keep them in tutelage, and even far less did He create them to ravage and torture.

The situation in this state has become unbearable, as is well known. In a political context, three and a half million people there are robbed of their right to self-determination in the name of the right to self-determination as construed by a certain Mister Wilson. In an economic context, these people are being ruined methodically and hence are subject to a slow but steady extermination. The misery of the Sudeten Germans defies description. One desires to destroy them. In a humanitarian context, they are being oppressed and humiliated in an unprecedented fashion.

When three and a half million members of a Volk of eighty million may not sing a song they like because the Czechs dislike it, when they are beaten

until they bleed simply because they wear stockings which the Czechs care not to see, when they are terrorized and abused because they greet one another in a fashion the Czechs cannot bear even though they were merely greeting one another and no Czech, when they are persecuted because of every little detail connected to the expression of their nationality, and when they are hunted down as though animals, yes, then this may leave those renowned representatives of democracy cold, who knows, they might actually enjoy it since those affected are a mere three and a half million Germans. All I can say to these representatives of democracy is that this does not leave us cold, no, if these tortured creatures can find neither justice nor help by themselves, then they will receive both from us. There must be an end to the injustice inflicted upon these people!

I have already stated this quite openly in my speech of February 20. It was a short-sighted enterprise which the architects of Versailles conceived when they gave birth to the abnormal structure of the Czechoslovakian state. It could pursue its mission to ravage and rape a mass of millions of other nationalities only as long as the brother nations themselves suffered from the abuse inflicted upon the world at Versailles.

However, to believe that such a regime could continue to sin eternally and endlessly means to succumb to an inconceivable delusion. In my speech before the German Reichstag on February 20, I had pointed out that the Reich will no longer stand for any further oppression and persecution of these three and a half million Germans. And I implore all foreign statesmen not to think this mere rhetoric.

For the sake of peace in Europe, the National Socialist State has made enormous sacrifices, enormous sacrifices for the entire nation. It did not harbor any thoughts of so-called revenge; rather, it has banished all such thoughts from all private and public spheres of life. In the course of the seventeenth century, France slowly penetrated Alsace-Lorraine and took it from the Old German Reich in the midst of peacetime.

Following a dreadful war in 1870–71 which had been forced upon Germany, the Reich reclaimed these territories, and they were returned to it. They were lost once more after the World War. To us Germans, the cathedral in Strasbourg means a lot. And when we did not pursue the matter any further, we refrained only in the service of a lasting peace for Europe. No one could have forced us to cede these claims voluntarily had we not wished to give them up in the first place!

We gave them up because we willed an end to this constant argument with France once and for all. The Reich has espoused a similar stance and has taken similarly determined steps along its other borders as well. Here National Socialism acted highly responsibly and set an example. We made the greatest of sacrifices and distanced ourselves voluntarily from any further demands so that Europe might enjoy a peaceful future and so that a passage might be cleared, at least on our part, for reconciliation of all peoples worldwide. We acted in an exceedingly loyal fashion.

Neither press, silver screen, nor stage were allowed to propagate a diverging opinion. Not even in literature did we allow for an exception. In

a related spirit, I offered solutions for a reduction of tensions in Europe, an offer that was refused for reasons we still fail to comprehend. We voluntarily restricted our power in this important realm in the hope that we should never again be forced to use arms against this one other state in question.³⁵⁴ This did not happen because we would not have been able to produce 55 percent more ships; it occurred because we wished to contribute to a final reduction of tensions and to a pacification of the situation in Europe. Since we found a great patriot and statesman in Poland willing to enter into an agreement with Germany, we immediately seized the opportunity, and arrived at a treaty that no doubt is of far greater import to peace in Europe than all the talk in the halls of the League of Nations' temple in Geneva.

Germany today possesses many a completely pacified border and Germany is determined, and has stated as much, to accept these borders as inviolable and unchangeable in order to give Europe a feeling of security and peace. Apparently, however, this self-denial and self-discipline on the part of Germany has been misinterpreted as a sign of weakness. Hence today I would like to set things right:

I do not believe that we would be rendering peace in Europe a great service if we pronounced our disinterest in all European affairs. In particular, Germany would not be doing anyone a great service if it remained unmoved by the suffering and plight of three and a half million Volksgenossen and if it did not take an interest in their fate. We understand when England and France pursue their interests in the world.

I wish to point out to the statesmen in Paris and London that there are German interests as well and that we are determined to pursue these under all circumstances. At this point I would like to remind them of my speech before the Reichstag in 1933, in which I openly avowed before all the world that there were questions of national concern in which our path was clearly predetermined. I would rather submit myself to any ordeal, danger, or torment than to fail in the fulfillment of such prerogatives.

No European state has done as much as Germany in the service of peace! No one has made greater sacrifices! One must bear in mind, however, that there is a limit as to how much one can sacrifice, and one should not confuse National Socialist Germany with the Germany of Bethmann-Hollweg and Herding.³⁵⁵

Now Hitler addressed the issue of the Czechoslovakian partial mobilization of May 20 and 21. He maintained that this move had been intended as a "brutal policy of intimidation" towards the Sudeten Germans during the local elections. In addition, it had been "an encroachment" on the sovereignty of the German Reich.

When I make this declaration, I do so because of an event that occurred in the course of this year, an event that forces all of us to reconsider our stance to date. As you well know, my Party Comrades, Czechoslovakia has finally announced local elections to be held this year after infinitely postponing any form of plebiscite. Even Prague has finally admitted to the untenable nature

of its present position. It fears the unity of the Germans and of the other nationalities. It is convinced that it has to resort to extraordinary measures in order to exert pressure in the election process and thus to manipulate the outcome of the election. Evidently, the Czechoslovakian Government has concluded that this can be achieved only through a brutal policy of intimidation. Apparently, the Czech state felt that a display of its military might was particularly well suited to this end.

This was especially geared toward the Sudeten Germans to serve as a warning not to speak up for their national interests and to vote accordingly. In order to somehow justify this attempt at intimidation before the eyes of the world public, the Czech Government, i.e. Herr Beneš, fabricated the lie that German troops had been mobilized for an invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In this context, let me today state the following: the creation of such lies is nothing new. About a year ago, the press in a certain country invented a story according to which 20,000 German soldiers had landed in Morocco.³⁵⁶

The Jewish proponent of this lie in the press hoped to thereby cause a war. At the time, it had sufficed to address a short statement to the French Ambassador to resolve the situation. And in this instance as well, we immediately assured the ambassador of another great power of the falsehood of the Czech allegations. The statement was issued once more, and the Prague Government was immediately informed of its content. Nevertheless, the Government in Prague exploited this deception as a pretext for its terrorist blackmail and manipulation of the election.³⁵⁷

All that I can do in retrospect is to assert that, for one, not one German soldier had been called up other than those serving anyway at this point in time. Secondly, not one regiment, not one additional unit, had marched to the border. Indeed, not one soldier served in a garrison other than the one assigned to him for peacetime during this period.

To the contrary, orders were issued to avoid taking any steps that might be construed as a means for exerting pressure on Czechoslovakia on our part. Nonetheless, a base and vile campaign against us was launched in which all of Europe was organized in the service of a government in pursuit of criminal goals. This government's sole ambition lay in the manipulation of the election by the exertion of military pressure in an effort to intimidate its citizens and thus rob them of their right to vote. And all this was merely a means of obtaining moral legitimacy which this government felt it needed. Indeed, it had no scruples to cast suspicion on one great state, to alarm all of Europe and to, if need be, plunge Europe into a bloody war.

The Reich Government undertook no such steps, and, in fact, Germany had no such intentions; quite to the contrary, it was convinced that the local elections would do justice to the Sudeten German cause. This lack of activity was then construed as a sign that the German Government stepped down because of the determined stance of the Czechs and of the early intervention by England and France.

You will understand, my Party Comrades, that a great power cannot tolerate such a base incursion [the partial mobilization of Czechoslovakian troops on May 20/21] a second time. As a consequence, I have taken the

necessary precautions. I am a National Socialist and as such I am accustomed to strike back at any attacker. Moreover, I know only too well that leniency will not succeed in appeasing, but will merely encourage the arrogance of so irreconcilable an adversary as the Czechs.

Let the fate of the Old German Reich be a warning to us. Its love for peace drove it to the brink of self-destruction. Nonetheless, the Old Reich could not prevent the war in the end. In due consideration thereof, I took steps on May 28 which were very difficult:

First, I ordered a far-reaching intensification and the immediate implementation and execution of the reinforcements announced for Army and Luftwaffe. Second, I ordered the immediate expansion of our fortifications to the West. I can assure you that ever since May 28, the construction of one of the most gigantic fortresses of all time has been underway there.

To this end, I entrusted Dr. Todt, the Generalinspekteur for road construction in Germany, with a new commission. Within the framework of the projects undertaken by the fortress construction inspectorate, he has achieved one of the greatest accomplishments of all time, thanks to his extraordinary organizational talents.

Hitler's boasts about the barely three-month-old fortifications in the West were quite ill-founded. The military men in the audience were not the only ones to realize that within such a short time, no fortifications of the enormous proportions Hitler claimed could possibly have been built. Nevertheless, Hitler thought he could bluff both his listeners at home and those abroad, in particular the "senile" British.

In cases such as this, Hitler enjoyed presenting awesome figures to his audience, the mere sound of which intoxicated both the masses and himself. On September 12, he recounted the numbers of the workers employed in the construction effort, the daily train loads and the amount of gravel used in the West Wall construction.

Let me point out a few figures to you. At present at work on the fortification of our Western frontier, a project actually begun over two years ago, are:

278,000 laborers in the Todt organization in addition to 84,000 [other] laborers, in addition to 100,000 men of the Reich Labor Service and numerous pioneer battalions and infantry divisions. Besides the materials that are brought to the construction sites via different transportation routes, the German Reichsbahn alone transports 8,000 freight cars a day.

The daily consumption of gravel amounts to over 100,000 tons. The fortification of Germany's western border will be completed prior to the onset of winter. Its defensive capacity is already assured as of this day. Once completed, it will consist of over 17,000 armored plates and concrete structures. The German Volk in arms stands behind this front of steel and concrete made up of three fortified lines and in some locations actually consists of four fortified lines up to fifty kilometers deep. I have made this

greatest effort of all time in the service of peace. Under no circumstances, however, am I willing to quietly stand by and observe from afar the continued oppression of German Volksgenossen in Czechoslovakia.

It's all tactics. Herr Beneš talks, wants to organize negotiations. He wishes to resolve the question of procedure in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and hands out little favors to placate the people. Things cannot go on this way! This is not a question of empty diplomatic phrases. This is a question of right, the question of a right not granted. What we Germans demand is the right to self-determination, a right every Volk possesses, and not an empty phrase. Herr Beneš is not supposed to grant the Sudeten Germans any favors. They have a right to their own way of life, just as any other people do.

The consequences will be grave ones should, perchance, the democracies persist in their conviction that they must continue to, by any and all means, accord their protection to the oppression of German men and women! I believe it to be in the service of peace, if I leave no doubts as to this fact.

I am asking neither that Germany be allowed to oppress three and a half million Frenchmen, nor am I asking that three and a half million Englishmen be placed at our mercy. Rather I am simply demanding that the oppression of three and a half million Germans in Czechoslovakia cease and that the inalienable right to self-determination take its place.

We would truly regret if this were to cloud or damage our relations to the other European states. Yet the fault would not be ours. It is the business of the Czechoslovakian Government to come to terms with the true representatives of the Sudeten Germans and, in one way or another, to reach some form of understanding with them. Nevertheless, it is my business and, my Volksgenossen, it is the business of all of us to take care that justice not be perverted into injustice. After all, this matter involves our German Volksgenossen. I am not in the least willing to allow foreign statesmen to create a second Palestine right here in the heart of Germany. The poor Arabs are defenseless and have been abandoned by all. The Germans in Czechoslovakia are neither defenseless nor have they been abandoned. Please note this fact.

I feel compelled to broach this topic at that Party Congress in which the representatives of our German-Austrian Gaus participate for the first time. Better than anyone else they know how painful it is to be separated from the mother country. Easier than anyone else they will grasp the full import of my exposition on this day. With greater enthusiasm than any, they will agree with me when I state before the entire Volk that we would not deserve to be Germans if we were not willing to take such a stance, and to bear up under the consequences one way or another.

What Hitler obviously meant when he spoke of the "consequences in one way or another" was the use of brute force and military might. To make things perfectly clear, Hitler again spoke of the "intolerable impertinence," that the small Czechoslovakian state had perpetrated against Germany by effecting the partial mobilization of May 20 and

21. That such an insult had been possible was probably due, as Hitler argued, to the mistaken impression that Germany was merely a “peace-loving upstart” country. However, now that the “resurrection” of the German Volk had been attained, there was “no power on earth” that could ever erase the “Germanic-German Reich” from the map. Hitler’s peroration of September 12 is reproduced below.

When we bear in mind the intolerable impertinence with which even a small state dared to approach Germany in the last months, then we realize that the only explanation possible is revealed in the unwillingness to recognize that the German Reich is more than just a peace-loving, upstart state.

Standing in Rome in the springtime, I felt deep inside that we assess historic developments in far too restricted a manner, investigating time periods far too short to be revealing. One thousand or fifteen hundred years are no more than a few dynastic successions.

What exhausts itself in a certain period, can rise again in the same time period. Today’s Italy and today’s Germany are living proof of this. Both are nations that have regenerated, indeed, that might be regarded as new nations in this context. However, their roots spring not from the grounds of more recent ages but rather they reach back into ancient history. The Roman Empire breathes once more. The phenomenon of Germany as a state is not new either, although it has made its appearance more recently.

I had the insignias of the Old German Reich brought to Nuremberg for a reason. I wish to call to mind, and this not only for the benefit of the German people but also for that of all peoples, that more than half a millennium prior to the discovery of the new world, a gigantic Germanic-German Reich³⁵⁸ stood on these grounds. Dynasties came into being and dissipated. Outward forms changed. Yet while the Volk has been rejuvenated, its essence has remained the same it has always been. The German Reich has long been dormant.

Now the German Volk has awakened and once more bears its crown of 1,000 years high on its head. All of us who bear witness to this historic resurrection feel great pride and happiness. We stand before the Almighty in humble gratitude.

For the rest of the world this should be an inspiration as well as a lesson learned, an inspiration to reflect upon history from a more elevated point of view, and a lesson not to succumb to the same mistakes as in the past.

In truth the new Roman-Italian empire and the Germanic-German Reich are ancient structures. You need not love them and yet no power on earth shall ever again remove them.

Party Comrades! National Socialists! The first Reich Party Congress of Greater Germany ends at this hour. All of you are still under the spell of the great historic events of these past days. This demonstration of our Volk’s power and determination has reinforced the nation’s pride and your confidence in it. Return to your homes now and carry in your hearts that same faith which you have cherished throughout almost two decades as Germans and as National Socialists.

September 12, 1938

You now have the right to proudly carry your heads high again as Germans. It is the duty of all of us to never again bow our heads to any alien will. To this let us pledge ourselves, so help us God!

Hitler's speech not only marked the end of the "First Reich Party Congress of Greater Germany," but also proved to be the last such speech, for the NSDAP was not to hold a party congress ever again. Although the next annual congress had already been scheduled for September 1939, bearing the most appropriate title of "Reich Party Congress of Peace," the outbreak of the Second World War precluded its convocation.

7

After Hitler's final address, peace and quiet returned for a day. The Western part of the world was reflecting upon the options at its disposal. It was obvious that Hitler contemplated initiating a war within a very short time. This had not only been betrayed by his speech, but could also be felt in the tense atmosphere in the streets of Germany. Although no official mobilization order had been issued, final preparations were proceeding at top speed. Reservists reported for duty at barracks and assembly sites, while the normal life of the ordinary citizen took on a distinctly military character—not to mention the constant air-raid drills and blackouts. It seemed to be a replay of the military measures the citizens of Bavaria had experienced prior to the invasion of Austria on March 11, this time on a national level. Civilian trucks and cars were requisitioned to form part of military convoys. Peasants brought the horses and wagons which had been confiscated in rural areas to the military assembly sites in the cities. Troops fully equipped for battle and prepared for the move against Czechoslovakia left their garrisons in the cities to proceed to their points of concentration.

Hitler undoubtedly would give the signal to invade Czechoslovakia under the pretext of rushing to the aid of the Sudeten Germans to force the accordance of their right to self-determination. This would lend the most convenient moral justification to his venture, since there was no doubt that this right had been denied the Sudeten Germans ever since 1919. However, the question the Western Powers still faced was whether Hitler honestly cared about the Sudeten Germans' right to self-determination, or whether he coveted the Sudetenland only to enable him to carry out a later conquest of the remainder of the Czechoslovakian state. Indeed, its territory would represent a most crucial and highly welcome base from which to launch future military attacks in the East.

Hence, it is not surprising that in the course of the following weeks, British statesmen strove to discern Hitler's true intentions. They attempted to prevent him from moving against Czechoslovakia by binding him with an international treaty. But it was not a pleasant task, nor an easy one. To this end, it was necessary for a British politician to confront Hitler in person in an effort to unearth his true designs. Even if Hitler were successfully persuaded to enter into a treaty settlement of the Sudeten German issue, this would nonetheless be tantamount to the complete destruction of Czechoslovakia as a viable political entity. After all, cession of the Sudeten German territories not only meant the loss of a significant part of its territory but also of its most formidable defenses. The Czechs would then be at the complete mercy of Hitler's Germany.

Notwithstanding these certainties, such a treaty settlement as the British pursued would force Hitler's hand. It would remove all doubt as to his ambitions. It would reveal whether the right to self-determination of a people truly held any meaning for him or whether this right was applicable only to Germans. In spite of the fact that Hitler had clamored vigorously for the right to self-determination in Germany, the West needed to clarify whether he would uphold this principle in the Czech case as well. Later events would justify the British actions during September 1938, even though at the time they were incomprehensible to many. The following official press release was published on September 14:³⁵⁹

Berlin, September 14

The British Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, today forwarded the following communication to the Führer and Reich Chancellor via the British Ambassador in Berlin:

"In view of the increasingly critical situation I propose to come over at once to see you with a view to trying to find a peaceful solution. I propose to come across by air and am ready to start tomorrow.

Please indicate earliest time at which you can see me and suggest place of meeting. I should be grateful for a very early reply.

Neville Chamberlain."

The Führer and Reich Chancellor has replied to the above communication saying that he is quite ready to meet the British Prime Minister on the 15th of this month. Mr. Neville Chamberlain is accordingly expected on the Obersalzberg tomorrow, Thursday afternoon.

The German public was greatly surprised at the news and the speculation immediately arose. Was this conference intended to bring results similar to both the January 4, 1933, von Papen-Hitler talks and

Hitler's February 12, 1938, summons of Schuschnigg? Was Chamberlain about to submit to Hitler, or would the British statesman come to give Hitler a timely last warning not to precipitate a general war?

The man who had been the most surprised at this step on the part of the British Prime Minister was, without a doubt, Hitler himself—he was thunderstruck.³⁶⁰ Hitler had always been a firm believer in the “senility” of the British, but he did not believe they were so decrepit that they would actually assist him. To Hitler, this visit meant only one thing: a repetition on the international stage of the capitulation of the German Nationalists in 1933. Finally, his bluffs of the Bolshevik threat and the insurmountable military might of Germany had borne fruit!

Hitler agreed to the meeting on September 15, while at the same time resolving to treat Chamberlain no better than he would a German Nationalist Privy Councillor, and making certain to lecture him. He was not willing to travel as far as one kilometer to greet the British statesman, who was old enough to be his father. No, it was to the remotest corner in the southeast of Germany that the Prime Minister would have to come to meet him. Now the sixty-nine-year-old Englishman would, for the first time in his life have to make an arduous airplane journey, to meet the terms of the Führer. Wearied by the flight, Hitler believed Chamberlain would not be able to resist his verbal onslaught.

In addition, Hitler called for General Keitel to come to the Berghof for the duration of the visit, certain that the General's presence would be a trump card to play at a later point in the negotiations. Hitler refrained from ordering other generals of martial appearance, such as Sperrle and Reichenau, whom he had relied upon for the psychological tormenting of Schuschnigg.³⁶¹ Evidently, the Führer believed that General Keitel would suffice to instill fear in the elderly Chamberlain.

At 8:35 on the morning of September 15, Chamberlain boarded a Lockheed aircraft at the Heston Airport near London. He arrived at the Oberwiesenfeld Airport in Munich at 12:30 p.m. In his company were Sir Horace Wilson, his political adviser, and William Strang, the head of the Central European Department in the Foreign Office. On his drive through Munich, en route to the train station, the citizens burst into spontaneous applause and greeted Chamberlain with genuine enthusiasm. The interpreter Schmidt accompanied Chamberlain on the three-hour train ride to Berchtesgaden. From the window of the train, it would have been difficult for them not to notice the incessant transports of troops by rail and military vehicles.

Around 5:00 p.m., Chamberlain's party finally arrived at the Obersalzberg. Hitler did not even deem it worth his while to come down farther than to the bottom of the stairs to greet the British Prime Minister. Following the customary greetings and introductions, tea was served in the great hall where General Keitel came to join the guests.³⁶² The scene was nearly identical to the staging of Schuschnigg's reception in February.

However, Chamberlain requested to speak to Hitler alone, and the Führer graciously consented. Hitler, Chamberlain and the interpreter ascended to his study on the second floor, where they conferred in private.³⁶³ Keitel, Ribbentrop, Wilson, and Strang stayed below. In his office, Hitler immediately set out to deliver a "party narrative" to tire his visitor.

In full length, he expanded upon the idea of German-British cooperation, a subject which had preoccupied him ever since his youth. Then he recounted his accomplishments from 1933 onward: the attainment of equality of rights, the settlement with Poland, the naval agreement, his resolution of the Alsace-Lorraine problem, and his persistent appeals for peace. Finally, he came to speak of the issue at hand and categorically stated that the Sudeten Germans simply had to be returned home to the Reich. In spite of the long and tedious journey and subjection to Hitler's oratory, Chamberlain did not in the least appear to be tired. He immediately countered Hitler's statement by insisting that he was willing to consider any possible solution to the problem, as long as such a proposal excluded the use of force.

"Who is talking about force?" boasted Hitler, "Herr Beneš uses force against my countrymen in the Sudetenland. Herr Beneš mobilized in May—not I. I am not putting up with this any longer," Hitler cried out, utterly excited. "I will take the initiative in resolving this matter shortly, one way or another."

At this instance, Hitler dropped his mask: he wished to act independently and did not wish to be bound by any international agreements. He wanted all the spoils of victory with no obligation to thank the League of Nations, as he had in the case of the Saar. He had employed the phrase "one way or another" so frequently in his speeches before that there remained no doubt as to its meaning: it signaled that Hitler would use force. At this point, Hitler appears to have expected Chamberlain to react as had the German Nationalists and Schuschnigg had done, by faltering and capitulating. In response to Hitler's "one way or another," however, the British Prime Minister retorted:

If the Führer is determined to settle this matter by force without waiting for a discussion between ourselves to take place, what did he let me come here? I have wasted my time.

Now Hitler found himself cornered and had to backtrack in order not to be held responsible later for the failure of the talks. After hesitating a few moments, Hitler proposed:

If you are willing to recognize the principle of self-determination of the peoples as the basis for the treatment of the Sudeten German question, then we can subsequently talk about how to apply this principle to this case.

Needless to say, Hitler of course was convinced that such a voluntary cession of the Sudeten German territories by the Czechoslovakian Government was utterly impossible and that such an act could never be achieved either through negotiation or through the offices of an international body. Ever since 1919, Hitler had cherished the belief that Germany could only make territorial gains by shedding blood.³⁶⁴ In Chamberlain's presence, however, Hitler maintained the appearance of a true believer in the right of a people to self-determination. He aimed to have Chamberlain engage in fruitless negotiations with the Czechoslovaks, so that Chamberlain would then have to bear the responsibility for the failure of the talks.

The British Prime Minister agreed to discuss with his cabinet the issue of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans and the cession of all areas in which the German inhabitants made up more than half of the population. Thereafter, he was willing to meet again with Hitler to inform him of the situation. Before he left, however, he procured Hitler's word of honor that he would not enter into any armed conflict with Czechoslovakia in the interim. The meeting, which had not developed as Hitler had envisioned, ended around 8:00 p.m. Chamberlain then returned to the Grand Hotel in Berchtesgaden, where he granted a short interview on his meeting with Hitler to the *Daily Mail* correspondent Wilson Broadbent:³⁶⁵

Our conversation was a very friendly one. I will return to London tomorrow to report to my cabinet. I hope to return to Germany to meet again with Herr Hitler in the near future. I reckon that would be in a few days, maybe in a week or so.

At 5:30 p.m. on September 16, Chamberlain arrived safely back at Heston Airport and upon arrival stated the following :³⁶⁶

I have returned earlier than I had thought. I would have enjoyed the journey had I not been so very busy. Yesterday afternoon, I consulted with

Herr Hitler at great length. It was an open, yet friendly, conversation and I am most satisfied that now each of us fully comprehends what the other wants. Of course, you cannot expect me to make any comments on the outcome of our talks at the present time. All I need to do now is to confer with my colleagues on the issue. I advise you not to hastily accept as truth any unauthorized reports on the content of the talks. Tonight, I will discuss the conversation with my colleagues and others, above all with Lord Runciman. Later, perhaps in a few days, I will have another talk with Herr Hitler. He has assured me that this time he will meet me halfway. Herr Hitler wishes to save an old man such a long journey.

Hitler himself had the following official note published on the meeting:³⁶⁷

The Führer and Reich Chancellor had a conversation with Mr. Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, on the Obersalzberg today, during the course of which there was a comprehensive and frank exchange of views on the present situation. The British Prime Minister is returning to England tomorrow to confer with the British Cabinet. In a few days a new conversation will take place.

Two days after Chamberlain's visit to the Obersalzberg, Hitler granted an interview to Ward Price for the *Daily Mail*. Hitler declared that no one in Germany was even considering a war with the Western Powers. It would be insane for such a war to break out on account of Czechoslovakia. To facilitate visualizing the full extent of such "insanity" to the Western Powers, Hitler maintained that "half a million workers are building a gigantic fortification line in record time." At the same time, he drew attention to Polish and Hungarian claims to Czechoslovakian territory. The interview was reproduced in the following manner:³⁶⁸

"The Czechs say they cannot conduct a plebiscite, since there are no provisions for such a measure in their Constitution. But to me it seems as though their Constitution provides for one thing only, that seven million Czechs shall oppress eight million members of minority peoples. This Czech illness must be dealt with once and for all, immediately. It is like a cancer in the entire organism of Europe: if allowed to grow, it will infect international relations until they finally break down.

"This situation has lasted for twenty years. No one can estimate how much it has cost the peoples of Europe in this time. As an ally of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia points like a dagger at the heart of Germany. It has reinforced my determination to create a mighty German Luftwaffe. This in turn drove Great Britain and France to build up their own air forces. Recently, I have doubled the Luftwaffe forces because of the present situation in Czechoslovakia. If we do not succeed in resolving the crisis now, Field Marshal Göring would soon be asking me to double the German Luftwaffe's forces once again, and

then, in turn, Great Britain and France would double theirs as well, and so the insane race would go on.

"Do you believe that I enjoy having to halt my great building and job creation plans throughout the country, to send half a million workers to the Western Front, to build a gigantic fortification line in record time? I would prefer to deploy them in the construction of workers' quarters, superhighways, new schools, and social institutions, instead of in the construction of unproductive fortifications. However, as long as Czechoslovakia is responsible for the European fever caused by the oppression of a German minority, I must be prepared for all eventualities.

"I have studied the Maginot Line, and I have learned much in the process. Nonetheless, we have built something according to our own ideas which is even better and which will resist any power in the world should we, when attacked, actually choose to remain on the defensive.

"However, all of this is insanity since no one in Germany thinks of attacking France. We do not harbor any resentments against France; to the contrary, there is a strong feeling of sympathy for the French people in Germany. Neither does Germany want a war with Great Britain.

"Good Lord, all the things I could do in Germany and for Germany, if it were not for this Czech oppression of millions of Germans, which must end. And it will end!"

The promise that French ministers have made to stand by Czechoslovakia up to this point, Herr Hitler continued, starkly contradicts their own deeds in the past. France has allowed the Saar to disassociate itself from French control, and this in spite of the fact that the Saar was of great economical, political and strategical importance to France.

"However, now some people in France are talking about unleashing the dogs of war for a country in which they have neither economic nor any other direct interests at stake.

"And they are doing this simply to allow the Czechs to refuse the Sudeten Germans the right they themselves have accorded the Saarlanders. In the same manner, Great Britain granted complete autonomy to Southern Ireland, and guaranteed the full independence of Holland and Belgium a hundred years earlier. "The Czechs have never been an autonomous people:"³⁶⁹ it was not until peace treaties raised them to an unmerited and artificial supremacy over minorities which are more numerous than they themselves. Bohemia was a German electorate in the Middle Ages. The first German university was founded in Prague two hundred years before the days of Queen Elizabeth. The modern German language itself was derived from the language of the diplomats who served in the governmental offices of that city, the site that the German Emperor had made his capital for a time. Only in the course of the Hussite wars were the Czechs independent for any period of time. They made use of their independence in the same manner the Bolsheviks do, plundering and pillaging until the Germans roused themselves and fought back.

"The creation of this heterogeneous Czechoslovakian Republic after the war was complete insanity. It does not have any characteristics of a nation, either from an ethnological or linguistic point of view, or from an economic or strategic one.

“It was a deed of insanity and ignorance to have a handful of obviously inferior Czechs rule over minorities which belong to the German, the Polish and the Hungarian people, people who can look back upon a culture one thousand years old. The Sudeten Germans have absolutely no respect for the Czechs and will not submit to their rule.

“Following the War, the Allies declared the Germans not worthy to rule over blacks, while at the same time placing a second-rate people like the Czechs in control of three and a half million Germans, people of a most noble character and culture.

“Had there been a strong Germany at that time, this would never have been possible, and as soon as Germany regained its strength, the Sudeten Germans began to speak out. The Czechoslovakian Government is making a desperate attempt to pit the European superpowers against one another—else the Czech state would no longer exist. But it is impossible to maintain such an unnatural configuration through political and diplomatic trickery!”

Herr Hitler spoke bitterly and indignantly of the hatred the Czech Government had for Herr Henlein.

“If Henlein is imprisoned, I will be the leader of the Sudeten Germans, and then let us see for how long Dr. Beneš will manage to issue his decrees. Hopefully, he will not have me jailed as well! Had the Czechs a great statesman, he would long have permitted the Sudeten Germans to link up with the Reich and would have been glad to have secured continued autonomy for the Czechs themselves. But Dr. Beneš is a politician, not a statesman.”

In reply to the question of whether the visit of the Prime Minister had succeeded in rendering a peaceful resolution of the Sudeten German problem more likely, Hitler stated: “I am convinced of the honesty and good will of Mr. Chamberlain.”

The military preparations for war against Czechoslovakia continued. On September 17, Hitler facilitated the constitution of a “Sudeten German Freikorps,” made up of refugees that had come across the border.³⁷⁰ That same day, Henlein issued the appropriate appeal hereto.³⁷¹ On the 18th, five German armies were instructed to position themselves along the Czechoslovakian border.³⁷²

On September 20, Hitler received the Hungarian Minister President Imrédy at the Obersalzberg, along with his Foreign Minister Kánya and the Hungarian Chief of the General Staff, General Keresztes-Fischer. With them, he discussed the possibilities of Hungarian participation in a strike against Czechoslovakia. The German News Bureau made a revealing comment when it reported that “the visit served the purpose of discussing the intolerable situation in Czechoslovakia.”³⁷³

That same day, Hitler received the Polish Ambassador in Berlin, Josef Lipski, for a conference, again at the Obersalzberg.³⁷⁴ Poland had

been enticed by the prospect of obtaining the Teschen region, which presently belonged to Czechoslovakia—despite the fact that the majority of its population was Polish-speaking.

In September of 1938, the military relations between Poland and Germany were extraordinarily friendly. On September 1, for instance, a delegation of Polish Front-Line Soldiers had come to Berlin to place a huge wreath at the memorial Unter den Linden. The German Wehrmacht saw to the appropriate military ceremonies for the occasion.

Hitler's September 20 meeting with the Polish Ambassador resulted very quickly in concrete measures. Already the next day, the Polish demanded allowance for a plebiscite in the Teschen region. The Slovaks began to rummage at this point as well. On September 20 yet, they demanded complete autonomy within the confederation of states.

On September 21, the former Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, celebrated his fortieth service anniversary. As part of his effort to keep the generals in good spirits for the planned war against Czechoslovakia, Hitler sent Fritsch the following congratulatory telegram:³⁷⁵

I wish to extend to you my heartfelt best wishes on this day on which you celebrate the fortieth anniversary of your entry into the Armed Services. I wish to express both my sincere gratitude for your accomplishments in the rebuilding of the Wehrmacht and my best wishes for your future personal welfare.

Adolf Hitler

In the interim, Chamberlain had not only conferred with his colleagues on the topic of his conversation in Berchtesgaden, in London on September 18, he had also consulted with the French Premier Daladier³⁷⁶ and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bonnet,³⁷⁷ on the subject. The next day all parties agreed to counsel the Czechoslovakian Government to accept Hitler's demands to cede the Sudeten German territories to Germany. In return, the Great Powers would guarantee the newly established Czechoslovakian borders.

At 5:00 p.m. on September 21, the Hodža government decided to accept the Anglo-French proposals and published an official declaration:³⁷⁸

The Czechoslovakian Government has yielded to the insupportable pressure exerted upon it by the British and French Governments, and has been forced to accept the proposals drafted in London, even though it is very painful for it to do so.

Now that Germany's desires appeared to be satisfied, Chamberlain's second visit, which was to resolve pending details, was officially announced.³⁷⁹

The Führer and the British Prime Minister have agreed to resume their talks, initially held on the Obersalzberg, on Thursday, September 22, at 3:00 p.m. in Godesberg.

As Hitler himself admitted³⁸⁰ he had not thought it possible that Prague would submit to ceding the Sudeten German territories. But he was confident that he would find some pretext for proceeding with the envisioned military move against Czechoslovakia. All he needed was some simple means of sabotaging a peaceful international settlement.

In Godesberg on September 22, the new round of talks between the British Prime Minister and Hitler took place at the Rheinhôtel Dreesen, as had been announced earlier.³⁸¹ Chamberlain flew into Cologne at 12:30 p.m. From there he proceeded to the health-resort hotel on Petersberg Mountain near Königswinter, where he resided during the conference. While only the Rhine river separated the two hotels, it soon became evident that the opinions of the two statesmen were further apart than the banks of the mighty river.

After Chamberlain crossed the river on a ferry and arrived at the Dreesen Hotel at 4:00 p.m., he was met by a most congenial Hitler. They ascended to a conference room on the second floor, where the British Prime Minister presented Hitler with a very detailed plan for the cession of the Sudeten German territories by Czechoslovakia. The procedure for districts in which more than half of the population was of German descent was straightforward. In the remainder of the territory, plebiscites under international supervision would be conducted to determine whether such a return was desired in these regions, too. The new borders of the Czechoslovakian state would then be guaranteed by Great Britain, France, and Italy. Chamberlain had already secured approval of the plan from both the French and the Czechoslovakian Governments. Should Hitler not deign to agree to the plan, the Englishman had labored upon so diligently, the British statesman at the very least expected to be presented with a different proposal. However, Hitler had decided not to have his great designs disturbed by any pretty British ideas. In a completely calm manner, Hitler replied:

I am truly sorry, Mr. Chamberlain, that I cannot comment on these matters any longer. The development of these last few days has made such a solution impossible.

This brusque insult was too much even for Chamberlain. He was willing to withstand a great deal—as long as he succeeded in getting Hitler to sign an agreement in the end. Now his face flushed with anger, he stared at Hitler with flashing eyes. Forcing himself to remain calm, he demanded the reason for this sudden rejection of the proposals. At first, Hitler's reply was evasive. He referred to the Hungarian and Polish territorial claims³⁸² which would have to be accounted for in any type of settlement. Finally he proclaimed:

"The occupation [by German troops] of the Sudeten German areas to be ceded must take place immediately."

Chamberlain objected that this was a completely new demand. The atmosphere grew increasingly icy. However, this was precisely what Hitler intended. The time had come for him to stage another great scene. He began to voice various accusations regarding the behavior of the Czechoslovakians. "The oppression of the Sudeten Germans and the terror instigated by Beneš against them allow no further delay," he cried in a hoarse voice with rolling "r's."

At 7:50 p.m. after Hitler was done with his theatrical performance, agreement was reached to continue discussions the next morning. At this point, however, it was questionable that there indeed would be another session at all. The next morning, the following letter arrived instead of the British Prime Minister:³⁸³

As from Hotel Petersberg, Godesberg
My dear Reichskanzler!

September 23, 1938

I think it may clarify the situation and accelerate our conversation if I send you this note before we meet this morning.

I am ready to put to the Czech Government your proposal as to the areas, so that they may examine the suggested provisional boundary. So far as I can see, there is no need to hold a plebiscite for the bulk of the areas, i.e. for those areas which (according to statistics upon which both sides seem to agree) are predominantly Sudeten German areas. I have no doubt, however, that the Czech Government would be willing to accept your proposal for a plebiscite to determine how far, if at all, the proposed new frontier need be adjusted.

The difficulty I see about the proposal you put to me yesterday afternoon arises from the suggestion that the areas should in the immediate future be occupied by German troops. I recognize the difficulty of conducting a lengthy investigation under existing conditions and doubtless the plan you propose would, if it were acceptable, provide an immediate easing of the tension. But I do not think you have realized the impossibility of my agreeing to put forward any plan unless I have reason to suppose that it will be considered by public opinion in my country, in France and, indeed, in the world gen-

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erally, as carrying out the principles already agreed upon in an orderly fashion and free from the threat of force. I am sure that an attempt to occupy forthwith by German troops areas which will become part of the Reich at once in principle, and very shortly afterward by formal delimitation, would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force.

Even if I felt it right to put this proposal to the Czech Government, I am convinced that they would not regard it as being in the spirit of the arrangement which we and the French Government urged them to accept and which they have accepted. In the event of German troops moving into the areas as you propose, there is no doubt that the Czech Government would have no option but to order their forces to resist, and this would mean the destruction of the basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together, namely, an orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by the use of force.

It being agreed in principle that the Sudeten German areas are to join the Reich, the immediate question before us is how to maintain law and order pending the final settlement of the arrangements for the transfer. There must surely be alternatives to your proposal which would not be open to the objections I have pointed out. For instance, I could ask the Czech Government whether they think there could be an arrangement under which the maintenance of law and order in certain agreed Sudeten German areas would be entrusted to the Sudeten Germans themselves—by the creation of a suitable force, or by the use of forces already in existence, possibly acting under the supervision of neutral observers.

As you know, I did last night, in accordance with my understanding with you, urge the Czech Government to do all in their power to maintain order in the meantime. The Czech Government cannot, of course, withdraw their forces nor can they be expected to withdraw the State Police so long as they are faced with the prospect of forcible invasion; but I should be ready at once to ascertain their views on the alternative suggestion I have made and, if the plan proved acceptable, I would urge them to withdraw their forces and the State Police from the areas where the Sudeten Germans are in a position to maintain order.

The further steps that need be taken to complete the transfer could be worked out quite rapidly.

I am, Yours faithfully,

Neville Chamberlain

As is well known, Hitler had a masterful command of the fine art of composing political letters. After having received Chamberlain's notice, he dictated a lengthy reply immediately. He took up the topic of Wilson's Fourteen Points, and maintained that theoretical assurances could not be relied upon. He insisted upon immediately according his "protection" to the areas in question. The Sudeten Germans "are not coming back to the German Reich in virtue of the gracious or benevolent sympathy of other nations, but on the ground of their own

will based on the right of self-determination of the nations, and of the irrevocable decision of the German Reich to give effect to this will." It would have been close to impossible for Hitler to voice his contempt for international agreements in more trenchant terminology. He had determined to use force, no matter what the circumstances. He wanted to possess all of Czechoslovakia, and the "insincerity of Czech assurances" was to serve as his pretext. Hitler's letter in response to Chamberlain read as follows:³⁸⁴

Bad Godesberg, September 23, 1938

Your Excellency!

A thorough examination of your letter, which reached me today, as well as the necessity of clearing up the situation definitely, leads me to make the following communication:

For nearly two decades the Germans, as well as the various other nationalities in Czechoslovakia, have been maltreated in the most unworthy manner, tortured, economically destroyed, and, above all, prevented from realizing for themselves also the right of the nations to self-determination. All attempts of the oppressed to change their lot failed in the face of the brutal will to destruction of the Czechs. The latter were in possession of the power of the State and did not hesitate to employ it ruthlessly and barbarously. England and France have never made an endeavor to alter this situation. In my speech before the Reichstag of February 22,³⁸⁵ I declared that the German Reich would take the initiative in putting an end to any further oppression of these Germans. I have in a further declaration during the Reich Party Congress given clear and unmistakable expression to this decision.

I recognize gratefully that at last, after 20 years, the British Government, represented by Your Excellency, has now decided for its part also to undertake steps to put an end to a situation which from day to day, and, indeed, from hour to hour, is becoming more unbearable. For if formerly the behavior of the Czechoslovak Government was brutal, it can only be described during recent weeks and days as madness. The victims of this madness are innumerable Germans. In a few weeks the number of refugees who have been driven out has risen to over 120,000. This situation, as stated above, is unbearable, and will now be terminated by me.

Your Excellency assures me now that the principle of the transfer of the Sudeten territory to the Reich has, in principle, already been accepted. I regret to have to reply to Your Excellency that, as regards this point, the theoretical recognition of principles has also been formerly granted to us Germans. In the year 1918 the Armistice was concluded on the basis of the Fourteen Points of President Wilson, which in principle were recognized by all. They were, however, in practice broken in the most shameful way. What interests me, Your Excellency, is not the recognition of the principle that this territory is to go to Germany, but solely the realization of this principle, and the realization which both puts an end in the shortest time to the suffering of the unhappy victims of the Czech tyranny, and at the same time corresponds to the dignity

of a Great Power. I can only emphasize to Your Excellency that these Sudeten Germans are not coming back to the German Reich in virtue of the gracious or benevolent sympathy of other nations, but on the ground of their own will based on the right of self-determination of the nations, and of the irrevocable decision of the German Reich to give effect to this will. It is, however, for a nation an unworthy demand to have this recognition made dependent on conditions which are not provided for in treaties nor are practical in view of the shortness of the time.

I have, with the best intentions and in order to give the Czech nation no justifiable cause for complaint, proposed—in the event of a peaceful solution—as the future frontier, the nationalities frontier which I am convinced represents a fair adjustment between the two racial groups, taking also into account the continued existence of large language islands. I am, in addition, ready to allow plebiscites to be taken in the whole territory which will enable subsequent corrections to be made, in order—so far as it is possible—to meet the real will of the peoples concerned. I have undertaken to accept these corrections in advance. I have, moreover, declared myself ready to allow this plebiscite to take place under the control either of international commissions or of a mixed German-Czech commission. I am finally ready, during the days of the plebiscite, to withdraw our troops from the most disputed frontier areas, subject to the condition that the Czechs do the same. I am, however, not prepared to allow a territory which must be considered as belonging to Germany, on the ground of the will of the people and of the recognition granted even by the Czechs, to be left without the protection of the Reich. There is here no international power or agreement which would have the right to take precedence over German right.

The idea of being able to entrust to the Sudeten Germans alone the maintenance of order is practically impossible in consequence of the obstacles put in the way of their political organization in the course of the last decade, and particularly in recent times. As much in the interest of the tortured, because defenseless, population as well as with regard to the duties and prestige of the Reich, it is impossible for us to refrain from giving immediate protection to this territory.

Your Excellency assures me that it is now impossible for you to propose such a plan to your own Government. May I assure you for my part that it is impossible for me to justify any other attitude to the German people; since, for England, it is a question at most of political imponderability, whereas, for Germany, it is a question of primitive right of the security of more than 3 million human beings and the national honor of a great people.

I fail to understand the observation of Your Excellency that it would not be possible for the Czech Government to withdraw its forces so long as they were obliged to reckon with possible invasion, since precisely by means of this solution the grounds for any forcible action are to be removed. Moreover, I cannot conceal from Your Excellency that the great mistrust with which I am inspired leads me to believe that the acceptance of the principle of the transfer of Sudeten Germans to the Reich by the Czech Government is only given in the hope thereby to win time so as, by one means or another, to bring about

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a change in contradiction to this principle. For if the proposal that these territories are to belong to Germany is sincerely accepted, there is no ground to postpone the practical resolution of this principle.

My knowledge of Czech practice in such matters over a period of long years compels me to assume the insincerity of Czech assurances so long as they are not implemented by practical proof. The German Reich is, however, determined by one means or another to terminate these attempts, which have lasted for decades, to deny by dilatory methods the legal claims of oppressed peoples.

Moreover, the same attitude applies to the other nationalities in this State. They also are the victims of long oppression and violence. In their case, also, every assurance given hitherto has been broken. In their case, also, attempts have been made by dilatory dealing with their complaints or wishes to win time in order to be able to oppress them still more subsequently. These nations, also, if they are to achieve their rights, will, sooner or later, have no alternative but to secure them for themselves. In any event, Germany, if she—as it now appears to be the case—should find it impossible to have the clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation, is determined to exhaust the other possibilities which then alone remain open to her.

Yours sincerely,

Adolf Hitler

No time remained to translate the letter. Thus the interpreter Schmidt was assigned to personally hand the letter to Chamberlain at 3:00 p.m. and to translate it orally. Chamberlain agreed to send a written reply. Already at 6:00 p.m., Sir Horace Wilson and Ambassador Henderson delivered the relatively short response:³⁸⁶

As from Hotel Petersberg, Godesberg

September 23, 1938

My dear Reichskanzler!

I have received Your Excellency's communication in reply to my letter of this morning, and have taken note of its contents. In my capacity as intermediary, it is evidently now my duty—since Your Excellency maintains entirely the position you took last night—to put your proposals before the Czechoslovak Government.

Accordingly, I request Your Excellency to be good enough to let me have a memorandum which sets out these proposals, together with a map showing the area proposed to be transferred, subject to the result of the proposed plebiscite. On receiving this memorandum I will at once forward it to Prague and request the reply of the Czechoslovak Government at the earliest possible moment. In the meantime, until I can receive their reply, I should be glad to have Your Excellency's assurances that you will continue to abide by the understanding, which we reached at our meeting on September 14³⁸⁷ and again last night, that no action should be taken, particularly in the Sudeten territory, by the forces of the Reich to prejudice any further mediation which may be found possible.

Since the acceptance or refusal of Your Excellency's proposal is now a matter for the Czechoslovak Government to decide, I do not see that I can perform any further service here, while on the other hand it has become necessary that I should at once report the present situation to my colleagues and to the French Government. I propose, therefore, to return to England.

Yours faithfully,

Neville Chamberlain

It was an easy task for Hitler to do Chamberlain that favor and compose the requested memorandum. He simply had to find the appropriate combination of demands which would both appear to be workable and justified to posterity and yet be practically unworkable in the present. He could assure that his demands would not be accepted by imposing upon them impossibly stringent exigencies. The impossibility of executing his requests was the most crucial aspect of the memorandum, for it afforded him a pretext for proceeding by the use of force in the Czechoslovakian issue. One year later, he employed the same tactics as he drafted a memorandum to Poland.³⁸⁸ Hitler, however, was not aware of the British pressure forcing Czechoslovakian acceptance of his terms in the Munich Agreement. Once he learned of this adverse development, his fury knew no bounds.

Hitler's paper of September 23 read verbatim:³⁸⁹

Memorandum

Reports which are increasing in number from hour to hour regarding incidents in the Sudetenland show that the situation has become completely intolerable for the Sudeten German people and, in consequence, a danger to the peace of Europe. It is therefore essential that the separation of the Sudetenland agreed to by Czechoslovakia should be effected without any further delay. On the attached map (the map will be brought along by the delegation) the Sudeten German area which is to be ceded is shaded red. The areas in which, over and above the areas which are to be occupied, a plebiscite is also to be held are drawn in and shaded green.

The final delimitation of the frontier must correspond to the wishes of those concerned. In order to determine these wishes, a certain period is necessary for the preparation of the voting, during which disturbances must in all circumstances be prevented. A situation of parity must be created. The area designated on the attached map as a German area will be occupied by German troops without taking account as to whether in the plebiscite there may prove to be in this or that part of the area a Czech majority.

On the other hand, the Czech territory is occupied by Czech troops without regard to the question whether, within this area, there lie large German language islands, the majority of which will without doubt avow their German nationality in the plebiscite. With a view to bringing about an immediate and final solution of the Sudeten German problem the following proposals are now made by the German Government:

1. Withdrawal of the whole Czech armed forces, the police, the *gendarmérie*, the customs officials, and the frontier guards from the area to be evacuated as designated on the attached map, this area to be handed over to Germany on October 1.³⁹⁰

2. The evacuated territory is to be handed over in its present condition (see further details in appendix). The German Government agrees that a plenipotentiary representative of the Czech Government or of the Czech Army should be attached to the headquarters of the German military forces to settle the details of the modality of the evacuation.

3. The Czech Government discharges at once to their homes all Sudeten Germans serving in the military forces or the police anywhere in Czech State territory.

4. The Czech Government liberates all political prisoners of German race.

5. The German Government agrees to permit a plebiscite to take place in those areas, which will be more definitely defined, before at latest November 25. Alterations to the new frontier arising out of the plebiscite will be settled by a German-Czech or an international commission. The plebiscite itself will be carried out under the control of an international commission. All persons who were residing in the areas in question on October 28, 1918, or who were born there prior to this date will be eligible to vote. A simple majority of all eligible male and female voters will determine the desire of the population to belong to either the German Reich or to the Czech State. During the plebiscite both parties will withdraw their military forces out of areas which will be defined more precisely. The date and duration will be settled by the German and Czech Governments together.

6. The German Government proposes that an authoritative German-Czech commission should be set up to settle all further details.

Godesberg, September 23, 1938

Appendix

The evacuated Sudeten German territory is to be handed over without destroying or rendering unusable in any way military, commercial, or traffic establishments (plants). These include the ground organization of the air service and all wireless stations.

All commercial and transport materials, especially the rolling stock of the railway system, in the designated areas, are to be handed over undamaged. The same applies to all public utility services (gas works, power stations, etc.).

Finally, no foodstuffs, goods, cattle, raw material, etc. are to be removed.

Hitler named September 26 as the date for the Czechoslovakian Armed Forces to begin evacuation of the Sudeten German territories. This evacuation was to be completed by September 28, leaving the Prague Government less than forty-eight hours to effect the operation—a time frame which, from a technical point of view, was nearly impossible to keep.

In response to Hitler's invitation, Chamberlain, accompanied by Wilson, Henderson and Kirkpatrick, reached the Dreesen Hotel after

10:30 p.m. that same night. Here he was presented with the memorandum, addressed to the Czechoslovakian Government, which he was to forward to Prague. The interpreter Schmidt translated the document sentence by sentence for the British Prime Minister. Chamberlain was aghast. He declared that it was too much to ask of him to present the Czechoslovakian Government with such an "ultimatum," a "Diktat," as Henderson assisted. Even if it were willing, by no means could it ever carry through such an action within the indicated time period.

To my great disappointment and profound regret, I must conclude, Herr Reichskanzler, that you have not made any attempt to assist me in my efforts to preserve peace in Europe.

Hitler countered feebly that the document did not contain an ultimatum, since its heading read "Memorandum."

At this juncture, a written message was brought to the men in the conference room. Earlier, at 10:22 p.m., the Prague radio station had aired the mobilization order by President Beneš. His true motivation may never be known, because already at the time there were various versions of the rationale behind this announcement.³⁹¹ Nevertheless, for Hitler, the Czechoslovakian mobilization decree furnished a most opportune affirmation of his claim that the Prague Government had never seriously considered a voluntary cession of the Sudeten German territories. He was completely certain now that he would be in a position to carry out his plan as scheduled and also have a good pretext for the launch of his military assault: the Czechs had proved to be unyielding and had unilaterally mobilized. This gave Hitler the chance to revert to a genial bearing, acting the part of a man prepared to make concessions—now that concessions would no longer be accepted and could therefore have no meaning. He declared:³⁹²

As a favor to you, Mr. Chamberlain, I will make concessions on the issue of time. You are one of the few men for whom I have ever done anything of the sort.³⁹³ October 1 as the date of the evacuation is fine with me.

Hitler set his own hand to changing the date in the memorandum. Chamberlain changed course and consented to present it to the Czechoslovakian Government. Hitler was in high spirits; he was certain that the invasion would be launched on time, that is on October 2. The fault for such a development would without a doubt be placed with the Prague Government. This would force the hand of the British and they would have to assume a neutral stance in the affair. Indeed, they

would even have to admit that the German action was justified. Perhaps the two meetings with Chamberlain marked the beginning of a new era, that would bring about the German-British alliance that Hitler had always dreamed of—provided that he could dominate the relations!

Hence Hitler's parting words in Godesberg, as he bid farewell to the British Prime Minister at 1:30 a.m. on September 24, resounded of a future harmony between the two states, as Hitler envisioned it:

There need be no controversy between us. We will not stand in the way of the pursuit of your interests outside of Europe and, if you give us a free hand in Central and Southeastern Europe, it will not be to your detriment.

At one point, the colonial question will need to be resolved, but there is time yet, and I do not see any reason why this should lead to war.

He had the following official press release published on the subject of the talks in Godesberg:³⁹⁴

The talks between Hitler and the British Prime Minister, which had been conducted in a cordial fashion, ended today with the presentation of a German memorandum containing Germany's final stance on the situation in the Sudetenland. The British Prime Minister has assumed the task of forwarding this memorandum to the Czech Government.

Prior to his departure from Königswinter, Chamberlain himself declared the following on this topic:³⁹⁵

Within the next few days, responsibility will weigh heavily upon all of those concerned, who will have to tend with great care to the questions that were discussed. There are still mighty tasks ahead of us in an effort to secure peace in Europe.

For Hitler, all was in order for the upcoming campaign against Czechoslovakia. In addition, the first steps had been taken toward a future alliance with the British.

Hitler now envisioned the following course of events within the next days: first, he would return to Berlin to see to the last preparations for the operation "Green" himself. Then he would stage a great speech at the Sportpalast on the 26th of September, offering Beneš one last ultimatum with which the Czechoslovakian leader naturally could not comply. Hitler would then let October 1 pass quietly, to demonstrate to the world once again his unparalleled restraint and love of peace. At 8:00 a.m. on October 2,³⁹⁶ he would order German troops to begin the invasion of Czechoslovakia, coming from the north, west, and south. Within a few weeks' time, he would march into Prague as the victorious warlord.

However, later events would prevent Hitler from abiding by this timetable. But on September 25, everything remained on schedule. The Bulgarian King Boris III called on him, displaying his steadfast loyalty to Germany—particularly when it found itself in a critical position.³⁹⁷

Early on September 26, the Führer received the head of the British Legion, Sir Frederick Maurice. Having secured Chamberlain's prior approval, Hitler's guest offered the Legion's services as an impartial observer in the Sudeten German territories, where it would oversee the conduct of the plebiscites.³⁹⁸ Although Hitler was in no mood to again submit to a process similar to that of the Saar, he nonetheless assured his visitor that he assented to the proposal.

The next visit by an Englishman later that day was far less to Hitler's liking. Shortly before 5:00 p.m., Sir Horace Wilson appeared at the Chancellery to present Hitler with a personal letter addressed to him by Chamberlain.³⁹⁹ In it, Chamberlain informed Hitler that the Czechoslovakian Government had sent him word that it considered the German proposals, as enumerated in the memorandum, to be completely unacceptable. To prevent the outbreak of open hostilities, Chamberlain suggested that German-Czechoslovakian negotiations be initiated immediately, perhaps presided over by the British.

One can easily imagine how angry Hitler must have been upon receipt of the letter. The Czechoslovakians had simply refused—and nothing more could be said! Hitler could not comprehend why the British insisted upon further discussion, he bolted out of his chair and cried: "There is no sense at all in negotiating any further!" He started for the door as though he intended to exit the room, leaving Wilson and his colleague Kirkpatrick behind.⁴⁰⁰ However, Hitler reconsidered, returned to his seat and listened to the remainder of the letter, which closed with the words:

Convinced that your passionate wish to see the Sudeten German question promptly and satisfactorily settled can be fulfilled without incurring the human misery and suffering that would inevitably follow on a conflict, I most earnestly urge you to accept my proposal.

Now Hitler delivered a veritable barrage of abuse against Beneš and Czechoslovakia. In a sense, this was the dress rehearsal for the imminent speech at the Sportpalast. He was outraged when Wilson hinted that any military action directed against Czechoslovakia would be certain to entail a declaration of war by both Great Britain and France. He challenged Wilson to attend the speech at the Sportpalast

so that he could observe first hand what the Germans really felt.⁴⁰¹ “Now it is no longer the Führer, nor any single man speaking; it is the German Volk that speaks out now.” This phrase epitomized what Wilson was to hear at the Sportpalast.

After the British diplomats had left, Hitler began to get ready for his speech. In it, he would announce to the German people that events were coming to a head, and then make the most momentous statement of the day: “Now I march before my Volk as the first of its soldiers!” Hitler already felt himself to be a soldier. In all likelihood, he had the field-gray uniform tunic already at hand in his closet, the one which he had always claimed to be the “holiest and dearest” to him.⁴⁰² Naturally, the tunic was not the same he had worn as a corporal up to the years 1918 and 1920. For one, the cut was different, and further, he was to wear it as the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. One of the most significant distinctions of this tunic was the national emblem on the left sleeve⁴⁰³ which adorned the otherwise plain uniform. By wearing it the same way as did the SS Verfügungstruppe, Hitler wanted the generals to take note that there was no doubt on whose side he stood in the event of any domestic trouble between the Army and the SS.

In any case, Hitler was planning to wear the new field-gray uniform tunic on the first day of the war, completely dedicating himself to his role as warlord. For the speech at the Sportpalast, he still wore his brown double-breasted uniform tunic and black pants, a suit he always wore at social occasions. He did not want to appear before his audience in the same knee breeches, straps and belts, an attire he always sported at reviews and demonstrations at party congresses. Rather he would clad himself in a modest fashion in order to emphasize in his outward appearance the most “moderate” stance he espoused. Everyone should clearly see how peace-loving he actually was and how much he regretted having to recourse to the sword.

Once he had arrived at the Sportpalast around 8:00 p.m., he was greeted by Goebbels in an address. The latter knew this to be the last occasion on which Hitler would speak publicly prior to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. He put much effort into assuring Hitler that the German Volk was prepared for war and proclaimed:

You can rely upon your Volk, just as it relies upon you. It stands behind you as one man. We are aware that no threat and no pressure, from whatever source, can keep you from pursuing your and our inalienable rights. The

entire German Volk shares this spirit and firm conviction. Many times we have stated and pledged ourselves to this in the historic hours of our nation. Now in this hour of difficult decisions, we repeat it before you with all our heart, full and strong: *Führer befehl, wir folgen.*

We greet you, mein Führer, with our old battle cry: Adolf Hitler, *Sieg Heil!*—The Führer speaks.

That evening, Hitler was fully aware of the importance of this particular appearance. He knew that numerous foreigners, diplomats and journalists were present in the hall. He summoned all of his rhetorical talent and acting ability to convincingly play the part of a man who was filled with holy zeal and determination to be prepared for anything, while nonetheless radiating a firm belief in the justice of his cause. He began his speech with the following words:⁴⁰⁴

German Volksgenossen!

Speaking before the German Reichstag delegates on February 20, I pronounced, for the first time, a demand based on an irrevocable principle. Back then the entire nation heard me and understood me! *One* statesman did not understand. He has been removed, and I have made true my promise given at the time! At the Reich Party Congress, I spoke on the topic of this demand for the second time. And once more the nation heard this demand. Today I step before you to speak directly to the Volk for the first time just as in the days of our great struggles, and you know well what that means! The world may no longer have any doubts: it is not one Führer or one man who speaks at this point, rather it is the German Volk that speaks!

As I now speak for this German Volk, I know that this Volk of millions joins in the chorus of my words, reaffirms them, and makes them a holy oath in its own right. Some of the other statesmen might do well to consider if this is the case with their people as well.

The question which has moved us so profoundly within the last few months and weeks is an old one. It reads not so much “Czecho-Slovakia,” but rather “Herr Beneš.” This name unites all that moves millions of people today and which lets them either despair or instills in them a zealous determination. How could such a question rise to such supreme importance? I wish to reiterate before you, my Volksgenossen, a short summary on the essence and goals of Germany’s foreign policy.

As one can tell, not even on the eve of war, on a most crucial occasion, was Hitler willing to do without his “party narrative.” It began with the Treaty of Versailles and ended with Hitler’s numerous “peace proposals.” When he spoke of the armament he had undertaken, he claimed that none like it had yet been seen on the face of the earth.

After two years of having made offer upon offer to the world and receiving rejection upon rejection, I gave orders to rearm the German Wehrmacht and to bring it to the highest level possible. Today I can openly admit: we rearmed

to an extent the like of which the world had not yet seen. I offered to disarm as long as this was possible. After yet another rejection, I decided to go all the way. I am a National Socialist and an old German front-line soldier!

If the world does not want disarmament, so be it: now German Volk carry your weapons as well. Germany can be proud of its Wehrmacht!

Indeed, I did rearm within the past five years. I spent billions on it.⁴⁰⁵ That the German Volk has a right to know. I took care that the new army carried the newest, most modern weapons that exist. I ordered my friend Göring: now build up a Luftwaffe for me capable of protecting Germany against any onslaught conceivable.

And so we built up a Wehrmacht of which the German Volk can be proud today and which the world will respect whenever it shall be introduced. We have created for ourselves the best anti-aircraft defense and the best anti-tank defense ever seen on the face of this earth!

Once Hitler believed he had done justice to the task of frightening the Western Powers by describing the military might of Germany, he praised his friendship pact with Poland. He claimed that it was worth more than “all the idle talk in the League of Nations’ Palace in Geneva.” He continued:

We worked night and day during these five years. On one topic only did I succeed in bringing about an understanding. I shall speak of this later. Nevertheless, I continued to pursue the ideas of limiting armament and of a disarmament policy. In these years, I truly pursued a pragmatic policy for peace. I approached any and all topics, firmly determined to resolve them peacefully—even if this should involve great sacrifices on the part of Germany. I myself am a front-line soldier and know the hardships of war. I wished to spare the German Volk this experience. I approached each and every problem firmly determined to attempt anything to bring about its peaceful resolution.

The most pressing problem I was faced with was the relationship between Germany and Poland. The danger was present that the idea of a “hereditary enmity” would take hold of our Volk as well as of the Polish people. I wanted to avoid this. I know only too well that I should not have succeeded had Poland had a democratic constitution at that point in time. For these democracies dripping all over with their peace rhetoric, they are the most blood-thirsty of all warmongers. Democracy did not reign in Poland, one man did! With him we reached an accord within one year’s time, an accord that, for the time being, eliminates a clash between both countries in principle for the duration of ten years. All of us are convinced that, in time, this accord will prove to be one of substance. All of us realize that these are two peoples that need to exist side by side and that neither can eliminate the other.

A state of thirty-three million will always strive for an outlet to the sea. Hence, we had to arrive at some sort of settlement. And we did arrive at a settlement which is constantly being improved upon. What is decisive in this instance is that both governments and all reasoned and rational people in both

countries have the firm will to increasingly improve relations. This deed was truly in the service of peace, worth substantially more than the idle talk in the League of Nations' Palace in Geneva.

Then Hitler addressed the topic of Great Britain. After a few friendly remarks upon the Naval Agreement, Hitler expressed his displeasure at the British threat of war should Germany employ force. He wished never again to hear the like of what Great Britain had told him through the offices of Wilson that afternoon. Hence he proclaimed:

In this time period, I also attempted to improve relations to other nations and to make these durable.

We gave guarantees to all Western states and have assured all countries bordering on us that Germany will respect their territorial integrity. This is not just empty talk. This is our holy will. It is not in our interest to disturb their peace. These offers on the part of Germany encountered increasing good will.

Gradually, more and more states divorce themselves from the insanity produced in Geneva which, if I may say so, does not serve the interests of peace, but rather entails an obligation to war. These states divorce themselves from it and begin to reflect upon problems in a more rational manner. They are willing to negotiate, and they desire peace.

I went even further and offered my hand to England! In order to afford the British Empire a feeling of security, I voluntarily renounced entering into a naval armament race with Great Britain. I did so not because I would not have been capable of producing additional ships—let no one be deceived. Rather, I did so for the sole reason of wishing to secure peace between the two peoples, a peace of permanence.

Of course, certain conditions have to be met. It is simply not possible for one side to say: "I will never again lead a war, and to this end I offer you the voluntary reduction of my weapons to 35 percent," while the other side declares: "Whenever I feel like it I may lead a war on occasion." Impossible! Such an agreement is morally tenable only then if both peoples pledge never to make war on each other again. Germany has that will! We all hope that among the British people those will prevail who share that will!⁴⁰⁶

Having dealt with Great Britain, Hitler now spoke of France and Italy:

Again I went further. Immediately subsequent to the return of the Saar to Germany by way of the plebiscite, I approached France and informed it that there were no longer any differences between us. The question of Alsace-Lorraine no longer existed as far as we were concerned. It is a border area. The people there have never really been asked their opinion during the past decades. It is our impression that the inhabitants of the area would be the most happy if all the fighting about them ended. We do not wish for war with France. We want nothing of France! Nothing at all! And once the Saar had returned to the Reich, thanks to the integrity of France in interpreting the contracts which I must give it credit for, I solemnly declared: now all

differences on territorial matters between France and Germany have been resolved. I do no longer see any differences between us today. All that is there are two great peoples both wishing to work and live. And they will live best once they work together.

After this unprecedented and irrevocable renouncement I turned to yet another problem, one easier to resolve than others because a shared *weltanschaulich* belief facilitates mutual understanding: the relationship between Germany and Italy. Of course, the resolution of this problem is only in part my own achievement because the other part is the achievement of a great man whom the Italian people have the great fortune to call their leader.

This relationship long ago transcended the boundaries of economics and politics as such, and, after countless contracts and alliances had been concluded, it has developed into a friendship from the heart. Two peoples with shared ideals, *Weltanschauung*, and politics have formed a friendship and an axis, the strength of which defies separation. In consideration of my responsibility to my *Volksgenossen* here, too, I have carried through a unique and final measure. I have solved a problem which henceforth no longer exists. No matter how bitter this might be for the individual: the common interest of the *Volk* ranks above all of us. And this interest means: to be able to work in peace. This work in the service of peace, my *Volksgenossen*, it is not an empty phrase, rather this work is supported by facts which no liar can deny.

Now that Hitler felt he had proven his policy to be one of pure restraint, he turned to more contemporary subjects, declaring that he must now once and for all end his eternal "leniency."

Two problems remained to be solved. Here I had some reservations, however. Ten million Germans found themselves outside of the boundaries of the Reich in two principal areas of settlement; Germans who wished to return to their homeland! Ten million is not a negligible figure. In France, ten million make up a quarter of its total population.

Given that for over forty years, France never relinquished its claim to the few million Frenchmen in the Alsace-Lorraine region then, before the eyes of God and of the world, we also had a right to maintain our claim on these ten million Germans.

My *Volksgenossen*! Leniency had reached its limits, any further leniency would have been construed as a most fatal weakness. I would not have had the right to appear in the annals of German history, had I nonchalantly abandoned these ten million to their fate. I would not have had the moral legitimacy to be the Führer of this *Volk*. I had made sacrifices, and I had shown great restraint. Now I had reached the point beyond which I could not have gone. The plebiscite in Austria proved me right. A most fervent avowal was made then, an avowal that the rest of the world had most certainly not anticipated. Have we not witnessed it time and time again how in the eyes of democracies a plebiscite becomes irrelevant and even detrimental to their cause the moment it does not produce the desired results? Despite all this, the problem was resolved to the benefit of the entire great German *Volk*.

Hitler followed this introduction with the vow that the Sudeten German question was the last that required an immediate solution. He was brazen enough to make the unguarded statement that "it is the last territorial demand that I shall make in Europe." He continued with a spiteful tirade against Beneš, the "father of the lie."⁴⁰⁷ He accused the Czechoslovakian of having "slaughtered thousands of Germans," and lambasted his partial mobilization of May 20 and 21. Neither could Hitler resist taking sideswipes at Great Britain and the United States. On the other hand, he had much praise for Mussolini:

And now we face the last great problem that must be resolved and that will be resolved! It is the last territorial demand I shall make in Europe. It is a demand which I shall insist upon and a demand which I will satisfy so God will!

A short history of this problem: Waving the banner of the right to self-determination of the peoples, Central Europe was torn apart in 1918 as certain crazed statesmen set to redraw the political landscape. Atomized and divided, new states were arbitrarily created in Central Europe in complete disregard of the origins of their peoples, their national desires, and of economic necessities. It is to this process that Czechoslovakia owes its existence.

The Czech state was born a lie. The name of the father of the lie was Beneš. He made his great appearance in Versailles, claiming that there was such a thing as a Czechoslovakian nation. He resorted to this lie to make his own people sound, despite their meager numbers, more important and to lend credence to its demand for greater influence. At the time, the Anglo-Saxon powers, renowned for their great lack of knowledge in geographic and *völkisch* matters, did not deem it necessary to investigate Beneš' claim. Otherwise they most certainly would have realized that there is no such thing as a Czechoslovakian nation.⁴⁰⁸ All there is are Czechs and Slovaks and the Slovaks have little desire of being with the Czechs, rather . . .⁴⁰⁹

In the end, thanks to the efforts of Herr Beneš, the Czechs annexed Slovakia. Since this state did not appear to be a viable structure, they simply took three and a half million Germans in clear defiance of the rights and desires of the Germans for self-determination. Since that evidently did not suffice, the Czechs took another million of Magyars, adding a number of Carpatho-Russians and several hundreds of thousands of Poles.

That is the state that would later call itself Czechoslovakia. It exists contrary to the clear desire and will of the nations thus raped and in clear defiance of their right to self-determination. As I speak to you today, I naturally have pity on the fate of these oppressed peoples. I am touched by the fate of these Slovaks, Poles, Hungarians, and Ukrainians. Yet I can only be the voice of the fate of my Germans.

As Herr Beneš was busily cementing this state on a foundation of lies, naturally he promised to construct a state on the Swiss canton model, for after all there were a few among the democratic statesmen who were plagued by a guilty conscience. All of us know how Herr Beneš resolved the matter of

cantons. He built up a regime of terror! Back then already, a number of Germans attempted to protest against this arbitrary rape of their people. They were summarily executed. Ever since, a war has been waged to exterminate the Germans there. Nearly 600,000 Germans were driven from their homes during these years of "peaceful development" in Czechoslovakia. The reason for this is a fairly simple one—they would have starved otherwise!

The entire development since 1918 is proof of one thing only: Herr Beneš is determined to exterminate *Deutschum* slowly but surely. He has been successful to a certain degree. He has plunged countless numbers into unspeakable despair. He managed to make millions shy and afraid. Thanks to his unceasing terror campaign, he has managed to silence these millions while at the same time leaving no doubt as to the "international" mission of his state. There was little effort to conceal the fact that, if necessary, it was to be used against Germany. One man who expressed this in a rather frank manner was the French Minister of Aviation, Pierre Cot, who said: "We need this state as a base from which to launch bombs with greater ease to destroy German's economy and its industry." And now Bolshevism resorts to this state as a means of entry. It was not us who sought contact with Bolshevism, rather it was Bolshevism that used this state to open venues to Central Europe.

And it is at this point that we bear witness to the greatest brazenness imaginable. This state, resting upon a minority as support for its regime, forces the various nationalities to partake in a policy which one day will force them to shoot at their own brothers. Herr Beneš demands of the German man: "If I go to war with Germany, then you will have to shoot at Germans. If you should not be willing to do this, then you become a traitor, and I will have you shot." He demands the same of the Hungarian and of the Polish man. He demands of the Slovaks to defend policies which are completely irrelevant to Slovakia's situation. The Slovak people wish to live in peace, they have no wish to become involved in adventures. Herr Beneš, however, manages to portray these people either as traitors to their state or as traitors of their people's cause. Either they agree to shoot at their compatriots and to betray their people, or Herr Beneš tells them: "You are traitors to your country, and because of that I will shoot you."

Can you imagine greater brazenness than to demand of other people to shoot their own compatriots if the circumstances warrant this? And all this simply because a rotten, disgusting, and criminal regime demands this of them? Let me assure you that as we occupied Austria, the first order I issued was that no Czech need to, that no Czech be allowed to serve in the German Army. I did not want to place him in this predicament.

Whoever opposes Herr Beneš will always be silenced by the application of economic pressure. This is a fact those democrats and apostles of a better world cannot lie about. In this state of Herr Beneš the consequences for the various nationalities have been dreadful ones. I speak for the Germans only. Amongst them, infant mortality is the highest, and the lack of progeny is the greatest among all of Germany's Volk tribes. The unemployment rate affects them terribly. How long is this to go like this? For twenty years, the Germans in Czechoslovakia as well as the German Volk in the Reich have had to stand

by and watch. They did not do so because they accepted this state of affairs. No, they did so because they were powerless and helpless faced with their torturers, abandoned in this world of democracies. Yes, if there is a traitor locked up here or someone is placed under surveillance cursing down from his pulpit, then the English are outraged, and the Americans are incensed. These are the same prototype world democrats (*Patentweltdemokraten*) who utter not a word when hundreds of thousands are driven from their homes, when tens of thousands are thrown into prison or when thousands are slaughtered. We learned a great lesson in the course of these past years. We have only disdain for them now.

We see merely one great power in Europe headed by one man who understands the despair of the German Volk. It is my great friend, I believe I may call him this, Benito Mussolini. What he has done for us in these difficult times and how the Italian people stands to us, we shall never forget! And if there is ever an hour of equal need in Italy, then I will stand up before the German Volk and demand that it do the same. And then, too, it will not be two states defending themselves, but one single block defending itself.

In my speech before the Reichstag on February 20 of this year, I declared that there had to be a change in the lives of the Germans living outside of the borders of the Reich. Indeed, Herr Beneš has changed their lives in the meantime. He launched an even more repressive campaign against them, terrorizing the German minority to an even greater extent. He heralded a time of dissolution, prohibition, confiscation, and the like. And things went on like this until May 21 came along. My Volksgenossen, you cannot deny that we displayed exemplary patience. But this May 21 was insupportable. At great length, I reiterated its history at the Reich Party Congress. At long last, there was to be a plebiscite in Czechoslovakia, a plebiscite that could not be put off any more.

Undaunted, Herr Beneš, came up with a way of intimidating the Germans there: the military occupation of the territories in question. And he plans to persevere with this military occupation in the hope that no one can be found to stand up to him as long as his henchmen are around. It was that unbelievably brazen lie of May 21, which claimed that Germany had mobilized on that day, that now had to serve as an excuse, to gloss over and to serve as a disguise for the Czech mobilization.

You all know what came then: a virulent international campaign. Germany had not called up one man. It was not even contemplating resolving this matter militarily. I still entertained hopes that, at the last minute, the Czechs would realize that this tyranny could not go on any longer. Herr Beneš was still convinced that, supported by France and Great Britain, he could do whatever he wished with Germany. What could happen to him? And after all, he could still turn to the Soviet Union, should all else fail.⁴¹⁰

Thus he was encouraged in his reaction to all those he did not fancy: shoot them, jail them, lock them up. It was then that I made my demand in Nuremberg. For the first time, I demanded clearly that, now twenty years after President Wilson's pledges, the right to self-determination must become reality for these three and a half million as well. And once more Herr Beneš

responded in his customary manner: more dead, more imprisoned, more incarcerated. Germans were forced to flee.

And along came England. I was perfectly open with Mr. Chamberlain as to what we considered the sole solution possible. It is the most natural there is. I know that none of the various nationalities wish to remain with Herr Beneš. Yet, I am but the speaker of the Germans. For them I spoke, as I asserted that I was no longer willing to stand by silently without intervening as this crazed man continues to believe that he can maltreat three and a half million people as he sits there in Prague.

I left no doubts as to the fact that Germany's patience had reached its limit. I left no doubt that while it may be a characteristic trait of us Germans to bear up under something for a long time and with great patience, once our patience has reached an end, that is the end!

And it is now that England and France have finally demanded of Czechoslovakia what is the sole solution possible to this situation, to release the German areas and to cede them to the Reich.

Today we have intelligence of what Herr Beneš discussed during this time. Faced with England's and France's declared intent to divorce themselves from the fate of Czechoslovakia should not the fate of these peoples be changed and these areas be ceded, Herr Beneš found yet another loophole. He ordered the cession of these territories. That he declared! Yet what did he do? He is not ceding the territories, rather he is driving the Germans from them. This is the point at which his game is up!

Barely had Herr Beneš finished his declarations when yet another campaign of oppression by the military was launched, the only difference being that its nature was intensified this time around. We see the gruesome figures: one day there might be 10,000 refugees; the next day 20,000; yet another day later 37,000; and yet another two days later 41,000; then 62,000; and then 78,000; now that amounts to 90,000; 107,000; 137,000; and today we count 214,000. Entire regions are depopulated, villages burnt to the ground, and with grenades and gas the Germans are driven out. Beneš, however, sits in Prague and is comfortable believing: "Nothing can happen to me. England and France will always back me."

And now, my Volksgenossen, I believe the time has come to tell him what's what. You simply cannot deny that someone truly loves peace when he has borne up under such shame, such disgrace, and so pitiful a fate for twenty long years, as we have done. When someone displays such unending patience as we have demonstrated, then truly you cannot accuse him of being a warmonger. After all, Herr Beneš may have seven million Czechs, but here there is a Volk of seventy-five million.

Hitler's arguments betrayed his conception of "heroism" and revealed the true basis of his "credentials as a warlord" as he pitted seventy-five million Germans against seven million Czechoslovakians. In this misconceived spirit of fairness, he challenged Beneš to a "duel" and divulged that the "secret" of his military success consisted of

nothing other than brute numerical superiority. When dealing with the greater powers, he would proceed with moderation until he felt he had attained numerical superiority over them as well.

In his speech, Hitler then turned to the topic of his September 23 memorandum. He endeavored to prove to his audience what enormous restraint he had exercised in making one last proposal for the maintenance of peace, the same tactic he would employ eleven months later in Poland. However, Beneš had insisted that he could not withdraw from the territory in question. "That's over now," cried Hitler. The time had come for the duel between Herr Beneš and Hitler:

I have placed a memorandum at the disposal of the British Government, a memorandum representing the last and the final proposal on the part of Germany. This memorandum demands nothing other than the implementation of what Herr Beneš already promised. The contents of this memorandum are quite simple: any territory which is German according to its populace and which wants to come to Germany belongs to Germany. And we shall not wait until after Herr Beneš has had a chance to drive one or two million Germans from it; it shall come to Germany now and immediately! The border I have redrawn does justice to the realities of the decade-old distribution of ethnic and linguistic groups in Czechoslovakia. Yet, I am a man more just than Herr Beneš, and I do not wish to abuse the power at present in our hands. That is why, from the very beginning, I made it clear that a territory will come under the sovereignty of the Reich only if the majority of its inhabitants are German. The final demarcation of the border I leave to the vote of our Volksgenossen there! I have, therefore, decided to conduct a plebiscite in the area in question. And just so no one can come and claim that this is not fair, this plebiscite will be held in accordance with the statutes of the Saar plebiscite.

I have always been willing, and I am still willing, to conduct plebiscites in the entire region if need be. However, Herr Beneš and his friends were opposed to this. They desired that plebiscites were to be held in certain regions only. All right, here I showed leniency. I even agreed to having an international commission survey the conduct of the plebiscites. I went even further and agreed to having a Czech-German commission draw the border. Mr. Chamberlain asked if this could not be done by an international commission instead. I agreed to that as well. I was even willing to withdraw our troops from the region for the duration of the plebiscite. Today I even agreed to invite the British Legion to these territories as it had offered to ensure law and order there in the interim period.⁴¹¹ I was willing to go further and to have the final course of the border determined by an international commission and to have the details negotiated by a commission made up of Germans and Czechs alike.

This memorandum is nothing other than the implementation of what Herr Beneš promised, calling upon the most formidable of international guarantees. Now Herr Beneš claims that this memorandum places him in a completely

“new situation.” And of what does this “new situation” consist in reality? The only thing new about this situation is what Herr Beneš has promised is to be kept for a change. That is, indeed, a completely “new situation” for Herr Beneš. The promises that man has made in his life—none of which he kept! Now for the first time, he will have to keep a promise.

Herr Beneš says: “We cannot withdraw from the area.” Evidently, Herr Beneš understood the cession of the area to imply that the Reich assumed the legal title of the land while it continued to be raped by the Czechs.

That’s over now!

Now I demand that Herr Beneš be forced to honesty after twenty years. He will have to give over the territories on October 1.

Herr Beneš now places his last hopes in the world, and he and his diplomats do little to disguise this. They declare: “It is our only hope that Chamberlain be overthrown, that Daladier be done away with, that there are overthrows all over.” They place their hope with the Soviet Union. He still believes he can escape fulfillment of his obligations.

All I can say to this: “There are two men facing each other down. Over there stands Herr Beneš. And here I stand!” We are two entirely different men. While Herr Beneš danced on the world stage and hid himself there from his responsibilities, I was fulfilling my duties as a decent German soldier. And as I face this man today, I am but a soldier of my Volk.

After Hitler had introduced himself in his capacity as a soldier, he added a few polite words of thanks to Chamberlain. He solemnly assured that he had no intention of laying hold of the remainder of the Czechoslovakian state in the process of resolving the Sudeten German issue. “We do not want any Czechs at all,” he exclaimed.

I have little more to add. I am grateful to Mr. Chamberlain for his efforts. I have assured him that the German Volk desires nothing but peace. Yet, I have also told him that I cannot retreat behind the lines drawn by our patience.

I have assured him further that, and this I repeat here before you, once this issue has been resolved, there will no longer be any further territorial problems for Germany in Europe!

I have assured him further that I will take no more interest in the Czechoslovakian state once that country has resolved its internal problems, that is once the Czechs have dealt with the other minorities there in a peaceful manner and not by means of oppression. And I will guarantee this for him! We do not want any Czechs at all. Yet I do declare before the German Volk that my patience is at an end with regard to the Sudeten German problem! I have put forth an offer to Herr Beneš, an offer that is nothing other than the realization of his promises. The decision is his now! Be it war or peace!

He can either accept my offer and give the Germans their freedom, or we Germans will go get it for ourselves.

The world must avow that in my four and a half years in the War, and in the long years of my political life, no one could ever have accused me of one thing: I have never been a coward!

Without a doubt, Hitler's remark that he had never "been a coward" aimed to impress both the German people and international public opinion. He reassured his listeners that he would lead their march as Germany's "first soldier."

Now I march before my Volk as the first of its soldiers. And behind me, let it be known to the world, marches a Volk, a Volk that is a different one than that of 1918! Even though, at the time, a wandering scholar⁴¹² succeeded in poisoning the Volk with democratic phraseology, let it be known that the Volk of today is not the Volk of that time! Such phraseology touches us no more than stings of bees; we have become immune to them. At this hour, the entire German Volk unites itself with me.

It will regard my will as its will, just as I regard the Volk's future and fate as the mandate of my actions. And we now want to strengthen this common will so that it might stand as strong as in the fighting times, a period in which I strode forth as a simple, unknown soldier and set out to conquer a Reich, a time in which I did not doubt the certain success and the final victory. Then a group of brave men and women congregated around me. And they marched with me. And today I implore you, my German Volk: stand behind me man by man, woman by woman.

At this hour, let all of us resolve a common will. It shall be stronger than any despair and danger imaginable. And once this will has become stronger than any despair and danger, then one day it will vanquish despair and danger.

We stand determined! May Herr Beneš now make his choice.

Towards the end of his speech, Hitler's words left him in a veritable state of ecstasy. He repeatedly gazed to the heavens, overwhelmed by the historic greatness of the moment and his own words. Nearly every one of his sentences was followed by roars of applause. When he stopped speaking, the frenzied crowds burst out in prolonged storms of thunderous applause. The crowd reverberated Goebbels' introductory chant: "*Führer befehl, wir folgen.*"

Hitler then returned to his seat and left the floor to Goebbels, who declared:

Mein Führer!

In this historic hour I shall speak in the name of the entire German Volk, as I solemnly declare: the German nation is solidly behind you to carry out your orders loyally, obediently, and enthusiastically. The German Volk has once again a feeling of national honor and duty. It will know how to act accordingly. Never again will a November 1918 be repeated. Whoever in the world counts on this, has miscalculated. Once you call upon it, our Volk will move strongly and unrelentingly into battle in order to defend the life and the honor of the nation to its very last breath.

This we swear to you, so help us God!

Actually, what Goebbels repeated was nothing other than Hitler's own words in the guise of a loyalty oath. Nonetheless, Hitler believed that he would have to once again prove his theatrical abilities. William L. Shirer who was in Berlin as a radio journalist at the time, has rendered us the following description of Hitler's acts:⁴¹³

Goebbels . . . shouted: "One thing is sure: 1918 will never be repeated!" Hitler looked up to him, a wild, eager expression in his eyes, as if those were the words which he had been searching for all evening and hadn't quite found. He leaped to his feet and with a fanatical fire in his eyes that I shall never forget brought his right hand, after a grand sweep, pounding down on the table, and yelled with all the power in his mighty lungs: "Ja." Then he slumped into his chair exhausted.

When Hitler finally left the Sportpalast, the crowd began to chant the nearly forgotten patriotic song from the wars of liberation against Napoleon: "*Der Gott, der Eisen wachsen liess, der wollte keine Knechte!*" (The God who made iron grow did not want any servants.)⁴¹⁴ Those who had staged this "spontaneous" outburst wanted to recreate the war enthusiasm of 1914. However, the 20,000 ecstatic listeners from Berlin whom Goebbels had called together, in no way represented the entire German Volk. The majority of Germans were of a completely different comportment, which Hitler would discover the very next day.

For the time being, Hitler was very content with his appearance at the Sportpalast. Because of the radio broadcast of his speech reached so many people, he was convinced that he had created great enthusiasm for war throughout the Reich. It was in this exalted mood, that Hitler composed his reply to Chamberlain. He wished to have it ready to present to Sir Horace Wilson during his second visit the next morning. The note summarized the arguments he had expounded upon at the Sportpalast. Toward the conclusion, Hitler intimated that Chamberlain's efforts in Prague would be completely naught:⁴¹⁵

Berlin, September 27, 1938

Dear Mr. Chamberlain!

I have in the course of the conversations once more informed Sir Horace Wilson, who brought me your letter of September 26, of my final attitude. I should like, however, to make the following written reply to certain details in your letter: The Government in Prague feels justified in maintaining that the proposals in my memorandum of September 23 went far beyond the concession which it made to the British and French Governments and that the acceptance of the memorandum would rob Czechoslovakia of every guarantee for its national existence. This statement is based on the argument that

Czechoslovakia is to give up a great part of her prepared defensive system before she can take steps elsewhere for her military protection. Thereby the political and economic independence of the country is automatically abolished. Moreover, the exchange of population proposed by me would turn out in practice to be a panicstricken flight.

I must openly declare that I cannot bring myself to understand these arguments or even admit that they can be regarded as seriously put forward. The Government in Prague simply passes over the fact that the actual arrangement for the final settlement of the Sudeten German problem, in accordance with my proposals, will be made dependent, not on a unilateral German decision or on German measures of force, but rather, on the one hand, on a free vote under no outside influence, and, on the other hand, to a very wide degree on German-Czech agreement on matters of detail to be reached subsequently. Not only the exact definition of the territories in which the plebiscite is to take place, but the execution of the plebiscite and the delimitation of the frontier to be made on the basis of its result, are in accordance with my proposals to be met independently of any unilateral decision by Germany. Moreover, all other details are to be reserved for agreement on the part of a German-Czech commission.

In the light of this interpretation of my proposals and in the light of the cession of the Sudeten population areas, in fact agreed to by Czechoslovakia, the immediate occupation by German contingents demanded by me represents no more than a security measure which is intended to guarantee a quick and smooth achievement of the final settlement. This security measure is indispensable. If the German Government renounced it and left the whole further treatment of the problem simply to normal negotiations with Czechoslovakia, the present unbearable circumstances in the Sudeten German territories, which I described in my speech yesterday, would continue to exist for a period, the length of which cannot be foreseen. The Czechoslovak Government would be completely in a position to drag out the negotiations on any point they liked, and thus to delay the final settlement. You will understand after everything that has passed that I cannot place such confidence in the assurances received from the Prague Government. The British Government also would surely not be in a position to dispose of this danger by any use of diplomatic pressure.

That Czechoslovakia should lose part of her fortifications is naturally an unavoidable consequence of the cession of the Sudeten German territory agreed to by the Prague Government itself. If one were to wait for the entry into force of the final settlement, in which Czechoslovakia had completed new fortifications in the territory which remained to her, it would doubtless last months and years. But this is the only object of all the Czech objections. Above all, it is completely incorrect to maintain that Czechoslovakia in this manner would be crippled in her national existence or in her political and economic independence. It is clear from my memorandum that the German occupation would only extend to the given line, and that the final delimitation of the frontier would take place in accordance with the procedure which I have already described. The Prague Government has no right to doubt that

the German military measures would stop within these limits. If, nevertheless, it desires such a doubt to be taken into account, the British and, if necessary, also the French Government can guarantee the quick fulfillment of my proposal. I can, moreover, only refer to my speech yesterday in which I clearly declared that I regret the idea of any attack on Czechoslovak territory and that, under the condition which I laid down, I am even ready to give a formal guarantee for the remainder of Czechoslovakia. There can, therefore, be not the slightest question whatsoever of a check to the independence of Czechoslovakia. It is equally erroneous to talk of an economic rift. It is, on the contrary, a well-known fact that Czechoslovakia, after the cession of the Sudeten German territory, would constitute a healthier and more unified economic organism than before.

If the Government in Prague finally evinces anxiety also in regard to the state of the Czech population in the territories to be occupied, I can only regard this with surprise. It can be sure that, on the German side, nothing whatever will occur which will preserve for those Czechs a similar fate to that which has befallen the Sudeten Germans consequent on the Czech measures. In these circumstances, I must assume that the Government in Prague is only using a proposal for the occupation by German troops in order, by distorting the meaning and object of my proposal, to mobilize those forces in other countries, in particular in England and France, from which they hope to receive unreserved support for their aim, and thus to achieve the possibility of a general warlike conflagration. I must leave it to your judgment whether, in view of these facts, you consider that you should continue your effort, for which I should like to take this opportunity of once more sincerely thanking you, to spoil such maneuvers and bring the Government in Prague to reason at the very last hour.

Adolf Hitler

When Wilson called on Hitler on the morning of September 27, he carried with him Chamberlain's new proposal,⁴¹⁶ which had arrived the night before. It contained the British guarantee of the timetable schedule for the evacuation of the Sudeten German territories. Hitler laconically replied that the Czech Government now had only two alternatives, either to accept or to refuse the German memorandum.

In the latter case, I will smash Czechoslovakia (*werde ich die Tschecho-Slowakei zerschlagen*). If the Czech will not fulfill my demands until Wednesday, September 28, 2.00 p.m., I shall march into the Sudeten German territories with the German Army on October 1.

Hitler took Wilson's objection, that this would inevitably result in a declaration of war by Great Britain and France, for a bluff. He replied:

If France and Great Britain insist upon striking, then let them. It's all the same to me. I am prepared for all eventualities. I can only take note of the situation. Well, then all of us will find ourselves at war next week.

In order to reinforce his words, Hitler repeated his ultimatum that the memorandum be accepted by the Government in Prague at the latest at 2:00 p.m. on September 28. That date still was entrenched in his mind, even though he himself had crossed out the date and changed it to October 1. When Wilson had left, Hitler composed a reply to Roosevelt.⁴¹⁷ The day prior, the President of the United States had sent an identical telegram to the Heads of State of Germany, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, and France and called for peaceful negotiations to resolve the crisis. At the same time he indicated that, should open hostilities ensue, the United States could not guarantee remaining neutral in the long run.

Roosevelt's telegram read verbatim:

Washington, September 26, 1938

To His Excellency Adolf Hitler,
Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich, Berlin.

The fabric of peace on the continent of Europe, if not throughout the rest of the world, is in immediate danger. The consequences of its rupture are incalculable. Should hostilities break out, the lives of millions of men, women, and children in every country involved will most certainly be lost under circumstances of unspeakable horror. The economic system of every country involved is certain to be shattered. The social structure of every country involved may well be completely wrecked.

The United States has no political entanglements. It is caught in no mesh of hatred. Elements of all Europe have formed its civilization. The supreme desire of the American people is to live in peace. But in the event of a general war they face the fact that no nation can escape some measure of the consequences of such a world catastrophe.

The traditional policy of the United States has been the furtherance of the settlement of international disputes by pacific means. It is my conviction that all people under the threat of war today pray that peace may be made before, rather than after, war.

It is imperative that peoples everywhere recall that every civilized nation of the world voluntarily assumed the solemn obligations of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 to solve controversies only by pacific methods. In addition, most nations are parties to other binding treaties obligating them to preserve peace. Furthermore, all countries have today available for such peaceful solution of difficulties which may arise treaties of arbitration and conciliation to which they are parties.

Whatever may be the differences in the controversies at issue, and however difficult of pacific settlement they may be, I am persuaded that there is no problem so difficult or so pressing for solution that it cannot be justly solved by the resort to reason rather than by the resort to force.

During the present crisis the people of the United States and their Government have earnestly hoped that the negotiations for the adjustment

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of the controversy which has now arisen in Europe might reach a successful conclusion. So long as these negotiations continue, so long will there remain the hope that reason and the spirit of equity may prevail and that the world may be thereby escape the madness of a new resort to war.

On behalf of the 130 millions of people of the United States of America and for the sake of humanity everywhere, I most certainly appeal to you not to break off negotiations looking to a peaceful, fair, and constructive settlement of the questions at issue.

I earnestly repeat that so long as negotiations continue differences may be reconciled. Once they are broken off, reason is banished and force asserts itself. And force produces no solution for the future good of humanity.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Such appeals and warnings meant little to Hitler, and he verbosely replied with a telegraphic outpouring twice as long as Roosevelt's initial telegram:

Berlin, September 27, 1938

To His Excellency the President of the United States of America,
Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, Washington.

In your telegram received by the on September 26 Your Excellency addressed an appeal to me in the name of the American people, in the interest of the maintenance of peace, not to break off negotiations in the dispute which has arisen in Europe, and to strive for a peaceful, honorable, and constructive settlement of this question. Be assured that I can fully appreciate the lofty intention on which your remarks are based, and that I share in every respect your opinion regarding the unforeseeable consequences of a European war. Precisely for this reason, however, I can and must decline all responsibility of the German people and their leaders, if the further development, contrary to all my efforts up to the present, should actually lead to the outbreak of hostilities.

In order to arrive at a fair judgment regarding the Sudeten German problem under discussion, it is indispensable to consider the incidents in which, in the last analysis, the origin of this problem and its dangers had its cause. In 1918 the German people laid down their arms in the firm conviction that, by the conclusion of peace with their enemies at that time, those principles and ideals would be realized which had been solemnly announced by President Wilson, and just as solemnly accepted as binding by all the belligerent Powers. Never in history has the confidence of a people been more shamefully betrayed than it was then. The peace conditions imposed on the conquered nations by the treaties concluded in the *faubourgs* of Paris have fulfilled none of the promises given. Rather they have created in Europe a political regime which made of the conquered nations world pariahs without rights, and which must have been recognized in advance by every discerning person as untenable.

One of the points in which the character of the dictates of 1919 was most clearly revealed was the founding of the Czechoslovak State and the

establishment of its frontiers without any consideration for history or nationality. The Sudetenland was also included therein, although this area had always been German and although its inhabitants, after the destruction of the Habsburg Monarchy, had unanimously declared their desire for Anschluss to the German Reich. Thus the right of self-determination, which had been proclaimed by President Wilson as the most important basis of national life, was simply denied to the Sudeten Germans.

But that was not enough. In the treaties of 1919 certain obligations with regard to the German people, which according to the text were far reaching, were imposed on the Czechoslovak State. These obligations too were disregarded from the first. The League of Nations has completely failed in the task assigned to it of guaranteeing the fulfillment of these obligations. Since then the Sudetenland has been engaged in the severest struggle for the maintenance of its German character.

It was a natural and inevitable development that, after the recovery of strength of the German Reich and after the reunion of Austria with it, the desire of the Sudeten Germans for preservation of their culture and for closer union with Germany increased. Despite the loyal attitude of the Sudeten German Party and its leaders, differences with the Czechs became ever stronger. From day to day it became more evident that the Government in Prague was not disposed seriously to consider the most elementary rights of the Sudeten Germans. On the contrary, they attempted by increasingly violent methods to enforce the Czechization of the Sudetenland. It was inevitable that this procedure should lead to ever greater and more serious tension.

The German Government at first did not intervene in any way in this development and maintained its calm restraint even when, in May of this year, the Czechoslovak Government proceeded to a mobilization of their army, under the purely fictitious pretext of German troop concentrations. The renunciation of military counter-measures in Germany at that time, however, only served to strengthen the uncompromising attitude of the Prague Government. This was clearly shown by the course of the negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Sudeten German Party with the Government. These negotiations produced the conclusive proof that the Czechoslovak Government was far removed from treating the Sudeten German problem in a fundamental manner and bringing about an equitable solution.

Consequently, conditions in the Czechoslovak State, as is generally known, have in the last few weeks become completely intolerable. Political persecution and economic oppression have plunged the Sudeten Germans into untold misery. To characterize these circumstances it will suffice to refer to the following:

We reckon at present 214,000 Sudeten German refugees who had to leave house and home in their ancestral country and flee across the German frontier, because they saw in this the last and only possibility of escaping from the revolting Czech regime of force and bloodiest terror. Countless dead, thousands of wounded, tens of thousands of people detained and imprisoned, and deserted villages, are the accusing witnesses before world opinion of an outbreak of hostilities, and as you in your telegram rightly fear, carried out

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for a long time by the Prague Government, to say nothing of German economic life in the Sudeten German territory systematically destroyed by the Czech Government for 20 years, and which already shows all the signs of ruin which you anticipate as the consequence of an outbreak of war.

These are the facts which compelled me in my Nuremberg speech of September 13 to state before the whole world that the deprivation of rights of 3 million Germans in Czechoslovakia must cease, and that these people, if they cannot find justice and help by themselves, must receive both from the German Reich. However, to make a last attempt to reach the goal by peaceful means, I made concrete proposals for the solution of the problem in a memorandum delivered to the British Prime Minister on September 23, which in the meantime has been made public. Since the Czechoslovak Government had previously declared to the British and French Governments that they were already agreed that the Sudeten German settlement area should be separated from the Czechoslovak State and joined to the German Reich, the proposals of the German memorandum aim at nothing else than to bring about a prompt, sure, and equitable fulfillment of that Czechoslovak promise.

It is my conviction that you, Mr. President, when you realize the whole development of the Sudeten German problem from its inception to the present day, will recognize that the German Government have truly not been lacking either in patience or in a sincere desire for a peaceful understanding. It is not Germany who is to blame for the fact that there is a Sudeten German problem at all and that the present untenable conditions have arisen from it. The terrible fate of the people affected by the problem no longer admits of a further postponement of its solution. The possibilities of arriving at a just settlement by agreement are therefore exhausted with the proposals of the German memorandum. It now rests, not with the German Government, but with the Czechoslovak Government alone, to decide if they want peace or war.

Adolf Hitler

After receiving this message, Roosevelt sent another telegram, now directed to Hitler alone, on 10.00 p.m. of September 27, 1938. He reinforced his appeal for a settlement by negotiation, stressing that "the question before the world today is not the question of errors of judgment or of injustices committed in the past; it is the question of the fate of the world today and tomorrow."

Unmoved, Hitler began to prepare for the review of a demonstration of military might in front of the Chancellery. The march down Wilhelmstrasse was to offer proof of the enthusiasm for war among the German population. On that morning of September 27, Hitler ordered the High Command of the Wehrmacht in Berlin to publish an announcement that in the afternoon, the Second Motorized Division would drive through the Reich Capital and that the division would

come from Stettin en route to Saxony (i.e. heading in the direction of Czechoslovakia!). On its way through Berlin, the convoy was scheduled to pass along Wilhelmstrasse, in front of the Chancellery building.

Hitler had been convinced that such an announcement would suffice to bring throngs of enthusiastic people to the front of the Chancellery. He had awaited a frenzy similar to the incredible war enthusiasm of August 1914. Without doubt, he had been prepared to step upon the balcony of the Chancellery to deliver a last rousing appeal to his Volk, as Emperor William II had done from the balcony of his Berlin palace.

However, he had forgotten to include public opinion in his calculations. The atmosphere that day was completely different from the night before at the Sportpalast. The man in the street was ill pleased with the political situation, and Hitler's envisioned war on Czechoslovakia was decidedly unpopular both in the Old Reich and in Austria. In the beginning of Hitler's rule, the people had rallied to him because the heads of the Weimar Republic had failed to resolve the young republic's economic distress. Later, by eliminating unemployment, Hitler had managed to greatly improve the lot of the common man. However, the people were not enthused to exchange the economic despair of unemployment for the even greater despair of war.

At 4:00 p.m., only a very small crowd gathered in front of the Chancellery to observe the several-hour defile of troops. They stood in silence, barely greeting the troops: not the faintest "*Heil!*" broke the silence nor were any nationalistic songs to be heard. Even Berndt, the deputy of the Reich Press Chief, had to concede:⁴¹⁸ "The people in the street raise their arms in greeting, but they are silent and grave. What is going through their minds?"

It is easy to imagine, on the other hand, what was going through Hitler's mind as, half hidden behind a curtain, he peered out to the street.

8

In principle, the amount of enthusiasm of a people at the outset of a war does not determine its outcome. People do not decide upon issues of war or peace themselves, rather they can only accept the decisions of their leaders. Since these ideas run contrary to Hitler's own conception, the poor showing that day infuriated him. He wondered whether the failure of the rally was the result of his speech at the Sportpalast the night before. After all, for over five years he had labored to instill in the German Volk "blind obedience" and "bravery."

It was characteristic for Hitler not to reflect for very long upon his own conduct as a possible source of his failures. Rather, he would quickly redirect the blame upon the Jews. In his mind, the secret world conspiracy of Jews, Freemasons, Illuminates, etc. must have employed some mysterious means to exert a pernicious influence upon the German Volk. Hitler also believed that they had, through their hideous influence on the Western governments, in particular the English and the Crown, affected their stance. He felt himself reaffirmed in this suspicion by the latest news from abroad:⁴¹⁹ contrary to his predictions, the Western Powers had indeed mobilized and renounced neutrality.

A great number of Jews in Germany had blatantly displayed their satisfaction over Hitler's difficulties. To Hitler, this imprudence was sufficient cause to seek revenge. In reaction to the "shameful" display on the Wilhelmstrasse that day, Hitler swore that he would take new repressive action at the earliest possible date, action which would tighten the thumbscrews on the Jews.

September 27 was not a day to Hitler's liking. It is probable that Chamberlain, as well, looked apprehensively to the future that day. His policy of pursuing an international agreement through maximal appeasement of Hitler had not shown any success to date. The situation was no different from prior to his hurried visit to Berchtesgaden. There

was no doubt that Hitler would launch his assault on Czechoslovakia on either October 1 or 2, and would be in a position to justify his action through international law and by accusing the Czechoslovakians of intransigence. France was obligated to enter the conflict because of the Franco-Czechoslovakian Mutual Assistance Pact. Britain's relationship with France would draw it as well into the conflict, even though no mutual assistance treaty existed between the United Kingdom and Czechoslovakia.⁴²⁰ For the time being, Hitler held all the cards. Great Britain was not in a position to resolve the "larger issues" (i.e. the final reckoning with Hitler) at this particular point.

Nevertheless, Chamberlain had not completely abandoned hope on realizing his ambitions. At 8.00 in the evening of that September 27, he delivered a radio address, in the course of which he declared:⁴²¹

It seems still more impossible that a quarrel which has already been settled in principle should be the subject of war ... However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbour, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in a war simply on her account. If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that ... but if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted.

In a situation that offered little hope, Chamberlain continued his diplomatic efforts. He planned to ask the French Ambassador in Berlin, François-Poncet, to intervene on his behalf in an attempt to sway Hitler to abandon his unyielding attitude. If this should fail, he would ask the same of Mussolini. On September 28, François-Poncet called upon Hitler at 11:00 a.m., pointing out the following:⁴²²

You are mistaken, Herr Reichskanzler, if you believe you can constrain the conflict with Czechoslovakia to a local level. Once you attack this country, you will have set aflame all of Europe. Why do you wish to place yourself at such great risk when your demands could, in essence, be satisfied without recourse to a war?

François-Poncet brought with him a well-drawn map of the various phases of the withdrawal of Czechoslovakia from the areas in question which appears to have impressed Hitler.

One hour prior to the meeting, Lord Perth, the British Ambassador in Rome, appeared at the Palazzo Venezia to ask Mussolini to function as a mediator. Lord Perth requested that the Italian head of state counsel Hitler to accept the British proposal for a conference.

As usual, Hitler had neither informed Mussolini on his true intentions, nor even consulted with him on the matter. The Duce,

through frequent repetition of this type of treatment, had become accustomed to this procedure, and was little affected. He remained so eager to assist Hitler in the crisis that he had delivered speeches nearly every day since the middle of September,⁴²³ in which he emphasized that "Italy's place had already been chosen." But these words appear to have been the extent of his efforts. Mussolini would claim later⁴²⁴ that he had undertaken gigantic military precautions in the month of September. However, his reactions to the Polish crisis a few months later provide ample reason to doubt his assertions.

Mussolini was unquestionably relieved when Lord Perth called on him on September 28 to ask for his assistance in an enterprise to prevent the outbreak of war, a war for which Italy was not prepared. Immediately, Mussolini phoned the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, Attolico, and instructed him to venture to change Hitler's mind.

When Attolico reached the Chancellery, it was already noon. He called Hitler out of his conference room, where the Führer had still been discussing matters with François-Poncet, and reported completely out of breath:

Just now the British Government has instructed its Ambassador in Rome to relay that it accepts the Duce's mediation in the Sudeten German question. Differences have been reported to be minimal. The Duce wants you to know that whatever you shall resolve, Führer, Fascist Italy will back you. The Duce, however, believes that acceptance of this proposal would be advantageous and asks you to refrain from mobilizing.⁴²⁵

Hitler stared at the Italian Ambassador, wondering if the entire world had conspired to prevent him from starting his war! However, if even his friend Mussolini preferred peace—so be it, for goodness' sake. In response to Attolico, he said: "Tell the Duce that I accept his proposal." It is likely that he nonetheless still entertained the hope that the conference would collapse only to reopen the doors that led to the military enterprise.

The further course of events was predictable. François-Poncet, who was still waiting to continue his talks, was informed of the Führer's decision. The British Ambassador Henderson was also informed. Shortly thereafter, Henderson presented Hitler with a new letter from Chamberlain in which the Prime Minister made detailed suggestions to prepare for the conference.

That afternoon, Mussolini again phoned Berlin, instructing Attolico to ask for the Führer's approval of the British proposals for the conference. As Mussolini further stated, he was "convinced that Hitler

will succeed this time, scoring a success which, both in light of the present situation and considering worldwide prestige, I would not hesitate to call splendid."⁴²⁶

Attolico returned Mussolini's call around 3:00 p.m. to say that Hitler would agree to the conference only if the Duce would attend as well. Hitler would leave it to Mussolini's discretion whether the meeting was to take place in either Frankfurt am Main or in Munich. Mussolini opted for the Bavarian capital.

Meanwhile, Chamberlain briefed the House of Commons on the latest developments. During his address, a slip of paper was handed to him, and he interrupted himself to say:⁴²⁷

That is not all. I have something further to say to the House yet. I have now been informed by Herr Hitler that he invites me to meet him at Munich tomorrow morning. He has also invited Signor Mussolini and Monsieur Daladier. Signor Mussolini has accepted, and I have no doubt Monsieur Daladier will accept. I need not say what my answer will be.

At 7:40 p.m., the following official notice was issued:⁴²⁸

Berlin, September 28, 1938

The Führer has invited Benito Mussolini, the Head of the Italian Government; Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Great Britain; and Daladier, the French Prime Minister, to a conference. The statesmen have accepted the invitation. The discussion will take place in Munich on the morning of September 29.

Both the Government of Great Britain and the French Government have today submitted new proposals for the solution of the Czechoslovak crisis. In this connection Mr. Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, has offered to meet the Führer again for a personal discussion.

At the same time Mussolini has offered his assistance in the search for an immediate solution. In view of the inevitable German reaction to the terror in the Sudeten German territory, the Czechoslovak crisis allows of no further delay; on the contrary, the position categorically demands an immediate solution. Having regard to this state of affairs and to the fact that the proposals to date do not meet the situation as regards justice, prompted by the desire to make a last effort to bring about the peaceful cession of the Sudeten German territory to the Reich, the Führer has invited the Heads of Government of Italy, France, and Great Britain to a personal conference.

It is to be hoped that, even at the eleventh hour, this conference will lead to an agreement on the measures to be put into effect immediately for the transfer of the Sudeten territory promised by the Czechoslovak Government.

The stilted wording of this official note betrayed Hitler's not-yet-abandoned hopes that the conference would end in failure.

At 9:30 a.m. on September 29, Hitler stood at the platform of the Kufstein train station, awaiting the arrival of his friend Mussolini. When Mussolini and Ciano stepped off the train, they greeted Hitler in their new uniforms, which were cut in the Nazi German style. Already in May, Mussolini had presented Hitler with the Italian version of the German goosestep, the “Passo Romano.” Mussolini and his entire entourage now sported the peaked cap which Hitler so cherished.⁴²⁹

Mussolini boarded Hitler’s special train, allowing the two friends to converse at leisure and without interruption on their trip to Munich. Ciano later recalled⁴³⁰ that it was at this point that they agreed “not to allow the conference to drift off to the problematic realm of dialectics and procedure, but rather to advocate a quick resolution.”

Similar to his 1937 sojourn in Munich, Mussolini resided at the Prince Carl Palace. Daladier’s plane touched down at Munich shortly after 11:00 a.m. Thereafter, he was chauffeured to the Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel. A few minutes before noon, Chamberlain arrived and immediately set out for the Führerbau at the Königsplatz, the site of the Munich Conference.

Although four statesmen took part in the conference, Hitler and Chamberlain dominated it, leaving Mussolini and Daladier in the background, like seconds in a duel. The negotiations, with several interruptions, continued until dusk. Most of the discussion concerned technical aspects of subjects such as the various phases of the Czechoslovakian evacuation, the determination of the zones, etc. Hitler and Chamberlain differed on the question of property rights, but, as in other questions, the issue was resolved through acquiescence to Hitler’s demands.

Shortly before midnight, the Four-Power Agreement was signed in the Führerbau, crushing any hopes Hitler may have still entertained that an international agreement could be avoided. The contractual settlement was similar to the resolution applied to the Saar. Again international commissions were set up and plebiscites held under international supervision. The Saar experience, which had infuriated Hitler, showed that he despised such measures. His dilemma was that he had no option other than to sign. He had ventured too far by playing along with the conference to retreat now.

Adolf Hitler was the first to put his signature beneath the agreement, followed by Neville Chamberlain, Édouard Daladier, and Benito Mussolini. The verbatim text of the Munich Agreement and its additional declarations read as follows:

Agreement reached on September 29, 1938,
between Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy

Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, taking into consideration the agreement, which has been already reached in principle for the cession to Germany of the Sudeten German territory, have agreed on the following terms and conditions governing the said cession and the measures consequent thereon, and by this agreement they each hold themselves responsible for the steps necessary to secure its fulfillment.

- 1) The evacuation will begin on October 1st.
- 2) The United Kingdom, France, and Italy agree that the evacuation of the territory shall be completed by October 10th, without any existing installations having been destroyed, and that the Czechoslovak Government will be held responsible for carrying out the evacuation without damage to the said installations.
- 3) The conditions governing the evacuation will be laid down in detail by an international commission composed of representatives of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia.
- 4) The occupation by stages of the predominantly German territory by German troops will begin on October 1st. The four territories marked on the attached map will be occupied by German troops in the following order: the territory marked number I on the 1st and 2d of October, the territory marked number II on the 2d and 3d of October, the territory marked number III on the 3d, 4th, and 5th of October, the territory marked number IV on the 6th and 7th of October. The remaining territory of preponderantly German character will be ascertained by the aforesaid international commission forthwith and be occupied by German troops by the 10th of October.
- 5) The international commission referred to in paragraph 3) will determine the territories in which a plebiscite is to be held. These territories will be occupied by international bodies until the plebiscite has been completed. The same commission will fix the conditions in which the plebiscite is to be held, taking as a basis the conditions of the Saar plebiscite. The commission will also fix a date, not later than the end of November, on which the plebiscite will be held.
- 6) The final determination of the frontiers will be carried out by the international commission. This commission will also be entitled to recommend to the four Powers, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, in certain exceptional cases, minor modifications in the strictly ethnographical determination of the zones which are to be transferred without plebiscite.
- 7) There will be a right of option into and out of the transferred territories, the option to be exercised within 6 months from the date of this agreement. A German-Czechoslovak commission shall determine the details of the option, consider ways of facilitating the transfer of population and settle questions of principle arising out of the said transfer.
- 8) The Czechoslovak Government will, within a period of 4 weeks from the date of this agreement, release from their military and police forces any

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Sudeten Germans who may wish to be released, and the Czechoslovak Government will within the same period release Sudeten German prisoners who are serving terms of imprisonment for political offenses.

Adolf Hitler

Ed. Daladier

Mussolini

Neville Chamberlain

Munich, September 29, 1938

Annex to the Agreement

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government have entered into the above agreement on the basis that they stand by the offer, contained in paragraph 6 of the Anglo-French proposals of September 19th, relating to an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak State against unprovoked aggression. When the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia has been settled, Germany and Italy for their part will give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia.

Munich, September 29, 1938

Additional Declaration

The four Heads of Government here present agree that the international commission, provided for in the agreement signed by them today, shall consist of the State Secretary in the German Foreign Office, the British, French, and Italian Ambassadors accredited in Berlin, and a representative to be nominated by the Government of Czechoslovakia.

Munich, September 29, 1938

Additional Declaration

The Heads of the Governments of the four Powers declare that the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, if not settled within 3 months by agreement between the respective Governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the Heads of the Governments of the four Powers here present.

Munich, September 29, 1938

Supplementary Declaration

All questions which may arise out of the transfer of the territory shall be considered as coming within the terms of reference to the international commission.

Munich, September 29, 1938

Placed ahead of the Agreement's wording, a communiqué was published in Germany:⁴³¹

The conversations of the Heads of State of Germany, Italy, France, and Great Britain which had commenced on Thursday afternoon, have come to a close in the late evening. The resolutions set down in the following documents have been immediately transmitted to the Czechoslovak Government.

At 1.00 a.m. on September 30, Hitler concluded the meeting with a short address in which he expressed his appreciation for the foreign statesmen's endeavors. The occasion was distinctly reminiscent of the first day of March 1935, when Hitler had to thank the three members of the League of Nations's commission in Saarbrücken.⁴³²

A rapport between Hitler and Daladier developed, even though the Frenchman had told Hitler some rather unpleasant truths in the course of the day. Hitler remained aloof to Chamberlain, however, eagerly agreed as the British Prime Minister asked to speak with him privately around midday.

News of the signature of the agreement led to great rejoicing among the inhabitants of Munich. That night and the following day, they cheered Chamberlain far more than they did Hitler. They knew that it had been Chamberlain's effort alone that had averted the outbreak of war. They hoped that now the Western Powers would stand firm to prevent Hitler from carrying through his imperialist designs. For Bavaria, the September events had signaled the second mobilization order since March. Hitler's plans for war were transparent. After all, the citizens of Munich knew only too well what a discrepancy there was between his saccharine words and his deeds. Earlier than others in the German Reich, they developed an intense dislike of Hitler, and did little to mask their feelings.⁴³³ With the ability to do so, they would have long ago treated Hitler as they had King Louis II of Bavaria, by placing him under guardianship. The public display of sympathy for Chamberlain in 1938 was indicative of these proclivities.⁴³⁴

In the eyes of the world public at large, Hitler appeared to have scored an overwhelming success. Without firing a shot, he had gained huge territories and an additional 3.5 million people. The prostrate Czechoslovakia was placed at his mercy. The Western Powers had lost prestige, particularly in the smaller states of southeastern Europe.

There was yet another victor to emerge from the Munich Conference whose importance would become evident within a few months: Chamberlain! He had succeeded in securing Hitler's signature on an international document that forced Hitler's hand. Either the dictator was to abide by what he had signed, meaning that he would have to abandon his gluttonous appetite for annexation, or if he did break with the terms of the treaty, he would be discredited as the aggressor in front of the entire world. Ironically, Hitler himself was among the few who realized at the time that Chamberlain was indeed the true victor of Munich.

After he bade Mussolini farewell at the train station at 1:50 a.m. and had returned home himself, it must have struck him to what extent he had let himself be trapped. He had invested a great deal of time and energy in evading the restraints of international agreements and conjuring up endless excuses so that his freedom of action would not be restricted by any means. Now he had allowed himself to be manipulated into signing an international agreement whose exigencies he could not possibly keep—lest he abandon all his dreams of conquest to the East to build the new Germanic-German Reich.

The Sudeten German territories, which he had so graciously been granted, were of little value to his grand plans if he were not in possession of the remainder of Czechoslovakia as well. Chamberlain, “that bastard”⁴³⁵ had not only spoiled his march into Prague, he also had created a great obstacle to Hitler by making it difficult to find a pretext that would somehow justify a new assault upon the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain had dared to bind him in international chains. Indeed, Hitler had cause to be furious. He had been caught in his own web. How many times had he assured the absolutely binding obligation of his signature:

Whatever we believe we cannot adhere to, on principles of honor or ability, we will never sign. Whatever we have once signed we will blindly and faithfully fulfill!⁴³⁶

Or, an even more boasting example:

Nowhere on the face of this earth is there a better guarantee of the upholding of a contract than a signature by this hand at this time.⁴³⁷

He had been taken by his word, and now he was trapped. Should he misstep, he would find himself accused of breach of contract.

Hitler’s mood steadily worsened in the hours following the signing of the document. Chamberlain found him in dejected spirits when, as agreed, he came to see him at 1:00 p.m. on September 30 at his private apartment (16 Prinzregentenplatz). Schmidt, the interpreter, described the ensuing scene in these words:⁴³⁸ Hitler had changed. In a bad mood and pale, he sat across from me. Absent-mindedly, he sat and listened to Chamberlain expounding upon questions regarding Anglo-German relations, disarmament and economic matters. Uncharacteristically, he added very little to the discussion.”

Although Chamberlain dominated the discussion at this particular private meeting, he had not come merely to chat: toward the end of the talk, he presented to Hitler a prepared statement which contained

an Anglo-German mutual declaration of peace, drafted precisely to meet Hitler's exigencies. These exigencies corresponded to those he had imprudently revealed in his speech at the Sportpalast on September 26.⁴³⁹ Moreover, Chamberlain had added a pledge which called for mutual consultations, a pledge Hitler, as a matter of principle, would be loathe to take. He never consulted anyone prior to making a decision, not even his friend Mussolini. He hardly cared to consult the "senile" Englishmen on any such matters.

According to Schmidt,⁴⁴⁰ Hitler, being less than pleased with the declaration Chamberlain placed before him, hesitated to sign it at first. However, perhaps thinking that the placement of his signature on a document the night before had lessened the import of again binding himself in such a manner, he gave in. After all, he had no intention of upholding either agreement. He planned the revenge to be his, to make the British pay for the manner in which he had been treated at Munich. He would show the British whose will would reign supreme in the Europe of the future!

The document signed September 30 had the following verbatim content:⁴⁴¹

September 30, 1938

We, the German Führer and Chancellor, and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German Relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference, and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

Adolf Hitler
Neville Chamberlain

Hitler's fury at the Munich Agreement could not be stemmed by the flood of congratulatory telegrams from abroad and from across the Reich, which conveyed appreciation of the settlements arrived at in the treaty. Among the telegrams was one by the former French Premier Flandin.⁴⁴² Hitler's reply to this particular wire read:⁴⁴³

I thank you with all my heart for the congratulations which your telegram has transmitted. Hereby I express my gratitude to you for your energetic endeavors striving for complete understanding and cooperation between

Germany and France. I have followed these efforts with genuine interest and desire that these might yet bear even more fruit.

With heartfelt best wishes,

Adolf Hitler, Reich Chancellor

In contrast to Hitler's mood of September 30 and October 1, the German people were most happy and relieved now that the threat of war had apparently receded. Overall the Munich Agreement was regarded, even within the Party, as an astonishing victory for Hitler. By securing the favorable terms of the agreement, the German media and propaganda campaign had played a crucial role, forcing the Western Powers to capitulate at the expense of Czechoslovakia. The Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, made the following revealing statement in Berlin as he congratulated Goebbels: "Our weapons were not allowed to speak. Your weapons [press and propaganda] have won!"⁴⁴⁴

At the time, no one in Germany realized that propaganda was appropriate as a means of fighting an inferior enemy or one on the verge of collapse, but would be ineffective against a superior opponent.

On September 29, the Austrian General Alfred Krauss had died at the age of seventy-six. The Chancellor ordered a state funeral for the general and sent his widow a telegram:⁴⁴⁵

May I extend to you my sincere and profound sympathies on the most painful loss which you and the Greater German Army have suffered as a result of the passing away of your husband.

Adolf Hitler

A laconic September 30 official announcement canceled the *Erntedankfest* for that year:⁴⁴⁶

Because of the comprehensible need for all transportation vehicles, it has become necessary to cancel the celebration of the *Erntedankfest* on the Bückeberg and the related receptions in Hanover and Goslar.

How things had changed! The era of excessive celebration of national holidays of the years 1933 to 1937 was nearing its end. The *Erntedankfest*, an important national holiday, which was even embodied in a law, was simply canceled "because of the comprehensible need for all transportation vehicles." Soon questions of transportation, armament, and other domestic economic adversities brought by war would supplant the celebration of such supposedly 'eternal' national holidays as May Day, Reich Party Congresses, *Erntedankfest*. Indeed, these celebrations would cease to exist before Hitler met his end.

October 1, 1938

On October 1, Hitler returned to Berlin, from where he sent a handwritten note to Admiral General Raeder congratulating him on his tenth service anniversary as Chief of Navy Command.⁴⁴⁷

That same day in Berlin, Hitler issued the following decree concerning the administration of the Sudeten German territories:⁴⁴⁸

§1

Upon the occupation of the Sudeten German territories by German troops, the German Reich assumes responsibility for the administration of the area.

§2

The administration in the Sudeten German territories will be headed by the "Reichskommissar for the Sudeten German territories." This shall take effect as soon and insofar as I shall withdraw the powers of attorney to administer the said territories from the Commander in Chief of the Army, in whom these are vested for the interim time period. The Reichskommissar will be responsible for all branches of the administration. The Reich Minister of the Interior, in agreement with the appropriate Reich Minister, will decide upon the transfer of all respective branches of the administration to the existing Reich Special Administration (*Reichssonderverwaltungen*).

§3

The Reichskommissar is directly subordinate to me. He shall see to the implementation of my general instructions with regard to the political organization, as well as carry out the specific instructions received from the Reich Ministers concerning the administrative, economic, and cultural organization of the Sudeten German territories.

§4

Within the Sudeten German territories, the Reichskommissar is empowered to issue instructions to the administrative departments of the state, the municipal authorities, and other public corporations. This also applies to general instructions by the Deputy of the Führer pertaining to the offices of the Sudeten German Party, its subdivisions, and connected associations. The Reichskommissar supervises all public corporations in the Sudeten German territories.

§5

The present laws in the occupied territories shall remain in force, excepting those laws which conflict with the interests acquired by the German Reich as a result of its occupation of the Sudeten German territories. With the approval of the responsible Reich Ministers and the Reich Minister of the Interior, the Reichskommissar shall have the right to revise the law via ordinance. Ordinances shall be published in the official gazette for the Sudeten German territories. Unless otherwise noted, they shall take effect as of the day subsequent to their publication.

§6

As Reichskommissar for the Sudeten German territories, I appoint the leader of the Sudeten German Party, Konrad Henlein.

October 1, 1938

§7

The Reich law shall be introduced to the Sudeten German territories either by myself or by the responsible Reich Minister in accordance with the Reich Minister of the Interior.

§8

The Reich Minister of the interior shall be responsible for the transfer of the Sudeten German territories.

§9

The Reich Minister of the Interior shall issue the legal and administrative regulations necessary to the implementation and supplementation of this decree.

Berlin, October 1, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Dr. Frick

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Dr. Lammers

The decree made no reference to the Munich Agreement, the only legal foundation upon which the Reich could base its possession of the said territories. This fact in itself is revealing enough!

Moreover, contrary to his unwavering principle of preferring Reich Germans to native politicians in newly acquired territories,⁴⁴⁹ Hitler named Konrad Henlein as Reichskommissar for the Sudetenland. By no means did this reflect a change of heart on the part of Hitler, rather it demonstrated that Hitler regarded the present situation to be of an interim nature.

Had matters proceeded on schedule, and had he taken all of Czechoslovakia by force, it is highly unlikely that he would have appointed Henlein to the position of Reichskommissar (no more than he had assigned Seyss-Inquart to such a post in Austria). In this hypothetical case, it is probable that Hitler would have entrusted Neurath with all executive powers in Bohemia and Moravia, as he did when establishing a Reich Protectorate on March 15, 1939, in these regions. Hitler thought the Sudeten German territories to be of little consequence, leading him to believe that the assignment of Henlein as Reichskommissar there would not engender any risks. In addition, he appeared to be in no rush to travel to the area in order to have himself hailed as the great liberator. Neither on October 1 nor on October 2 was Hitler present when the German troops marched into Zone I (southern Bohemia) and then into Zone II (Bodenbach-Zwickau).

It was not until October 3 that Hitler stepped across what had been the German border at the Wildenau crossing near Asch. That same day, German troops occupied the largest zone (Zone III, encompassing

Eger-Karlsbad). On this occasion, Hitler used his three-axle, cross-country gray Mercedes for only the second time since the March 12 Anschluss of Austria. Again he wore his leather coat that was cut in a military fashion. For the time at hand, he had to leave his field-gray tunic hanging in the closet, which he had planned to wear for his campaign.

Contrary to his demeanor during the days of the Anschluss, Hitler's face was serious and grim. Intermittently, he would force a smile if the crowd hailed him in a particularly enthusiastic fashion. For him, the mass rallies in Eger, Karlsbad, Friedland, Krumau, and in other cities, were of little consolation when set against his dreams of triumphant entry into Prague. Hitler remained irritable for several weeks. In no address in the newly acquired territories could he refrain from mentioning his original intent to conquer the area by force.

His very first speech in the new territories on October 3 in the Eger market place already was anything but friendly. He immediately announced to the Sudeten Germans that they, too, must fulfill new duties—naturally of a predominantly military nature—since, after all, he had with alacrity “drawn his sword” in their defense. The verbatim content of Hitler's speech at Eger is reproduced below:⁴⁵⁰

Egerlanders!

Today, for the first time, I may greet you as *my* Egerlanders! Through me, the entire German Volk greets you! At this moment, it not only greets you but the entire Sudeten German territories which will, in a few days' time, belong to the German Reich in its entirety.

This greeting is at the same time an avowal: never again shall this land be torn from the Reich! This Greater German Reich is protected by the German shield and by the German sword. You yourselves form part of this protecting umbrella. From now on, like all other Germans, you will have to do your part. It is a cause of great pride for all of us that each and every German son will participate not only in Germany's joy, but also in our duties and, if need be, in our sacrifices as well.

For you, this nation was willing to draw the sword! And you will all be willing to do likewise wherever German lands or the German Volk be threatened. In this community of will and fate, the German Volk will, from now on, mold its future. And no power on earth will ever be a threat to it again! And so all of Germany, from East to West, from North to South, stands prepared to stand up for each other.

There is great happiness in all of Germany these days. Not only you feel this, it is felt by the entire nation which rejoices with you. Your happiness is the happiness of the seventy-five million who have made up the Reich until now, just as your sorrow was their sorrow until a few days ago.

October 3, 1938

And thus you step forth onto the path leading to Germany's great future! In this hour, let us thank the Almighty who has blessed our paths in the past, and let us pray to Him: may He lead us forth onto the path of righteousness in the future as well.

On the same day, Hitler attended an outdoor dinner at the headquarters of General von Reichenau, at which he appeared to be absent-minded. That afternoon, he left the Sudeten German territories again by passing through Wildstein and Schönbach. At 2:00 p.m. on October 4, Hitler proceeded to Karlsbad via Falkenau, where he delivered an address upon the Theaterplatz:²⁵¹

Germans! Volksgenossen! People of Karlsbad!

Twenty years ago, you were so unfortunate as to set out on a path which led you on to what appeared to be a hopeless future. I set out on my path back then, too: I believed in the resurrection of Germany, in the restitution of my Volk and in the greatness of the coming German Reich. You remained faithful to your *Deutschtum* throughout the years as I remained faithful to my belief! And today we both find ourselves living in that German Reich I had envisioned then and in which I believed. This Reich has become reality, and it will remain so eternally.

Just as you must take care of that Greater German Reich which we share, and the citizens of which you have now become, this Germany will take care of you! Seventy-five million other Germans reciprocate your feelings of love and dedication, of loyalty and willingness to sacrifice.

It was a difficult decision that led me here. This decision was backed by the will to resort to force, if need be, in order to free you. We are all the more happy and grateful that this last and most difficult step needed not be taken in order for us to secure our rights. We are proud to take over this country with all its natural beauty. We are determined to immediately begin with improvements here as well, to improve what needs improvement, to build up what can be built up, and to let the wounds of the past heal.

I did not know which paths would lead me here. But that I would stand here one day, that I knew! As I stand before you now, you will not only thank me but I wish to thank you as well for your loyalty, faithfulness, and your willingness to sacrifice. Just as you are proud of this Greater German Reich whose leader I am, so this Germany takes great pride in you Sudeten Germans. At this hour, we can but think of our eternal German Volk and our Greater German Reich!

Deutschland—Sieg Heil!

9

Hitler returned to Berlin on October 5. At an evening rally in the Sportpalast he opened the new Winterhilfswerk. The short duration of his speech (only thirty minutes) revealed his ill temper. The majority of the speech was dedicated to describing the preparations for armed conflict which he had undertaken during the preceding weeks and months.⁴⁵²

It was a great goal I set for myself on May 28.⁴⁵³ At the time, it was a most difficult decision. I believed in its realization and I could only believe in it because I knew: behind me stands the entire German Volk, and it is ready to take on any [!] mission. [—]

Within these last few weeks and months, I have been able to count upon one great help in matters of foreign affairs, and in my last speech in Halle,⁴⁵⁴ I already thanked that man who always stood behind me as a great and loyal friend of Germany, Benito Mussolini. He placed not only his own strength and power of genius in the service of finding a just solution, but also placed in its service all the power at his disposal. I must also thank two other great statesmen who, at the last minute, realized the historic import of the hour and declared themselves willing to strive for the solution of one of the most burning problems in all of Europe. These men made it possible for me to extend my hand as well for reaching an understanding.

However, above all, my heartfelt gratitude flies toward the German Volk! It has always stood by me in these long months. In solemn determination it has shouldered all those measures necessary to see through the just demands of the Reich. It will be to the eternal glory of our Volk that in a time period in which hundreds of thousands were called to work and hundreds of thousands of our men were called to arms, that in this time period not *one* panic-buy took place, that not *one* man went to the bank, not *one* woman had doubts. Rather the entire nation stood together as one. I must say this openly: I am proud of my German Volk!

He was not quite as proud as he claimed to be. After all, he had not forgotten the embarrassing lack of war enthusiasm the German

Volk had displayed in the preceding month. Hitler then indirectly revealed his intention not to allow internationally supervised plebiscites to be held in the region, even though it had been agreed upon in Munich to conduct these in various zones.

I hope that within a few days, the Sudeten German problem will *finally* be resolved. By October 10, we will call all German territories our own which belong to us.

With that, one of the most difficult crises in Europe will be over. This year, all of us may truly look forward to Christmas, not only within Germany but outside of its borders as well. For all of us, it shall be a true celebration of peace.

Such emphasis on peace by Hitler was always suspect. Indeed, this usually signaled that he was preoccupied with exactly the opposite. In this instance, he was contemplating the options for military conquest of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Only a few days later, he issued concrete instructions to the military.⁴⁵⁵

In his October 5 speech in Berlin, he had already alluded to the issue. While minutes earlier he had spoken of the assistance that Mussolini, Daladier, and Chamberlain had rendered him, he now declared:

A law reigns above all of us: no one in this world will help us, if we do not help ourselves. This program of self-help is both a proud one and a manly one. It is quite different from those of my predecessors who ran around all over the place, one minute begging at the gates of Versailles, then in Geneva, Lausanne, or at some other conferences [!]. It is with greater pride that we Germans solve our own problems and help ourselves today!

Yet we must realize to how many nameless, countless of our Volksgenossen we owe a great debt. How many hundreds of thousands of German workers were suddenly pulled from their jobs these past months. One fine day they were told: "You must pack your bags now, you are going West!" There a mighty army set to work and built a wall of concrete and steel to protect all of us and all of Germany. They had to leave their wives and children behind. They had to leave their work places and had to choose different, often more taxing tasks. In mass dormitories, they had to put up with many an inconvenience. Certainly, we tried to make things bearable for them. All the same, we owe them thanks, we owe it to them and to the hundreds of thousands of other men who were called up and moved into the barracks and to maneuver sites. And we owe thanks to all those women who had to let their sons and husbands go.

To the "returned" Sudeten Germans, Hitler dedicated only a few words. With effusive sentimentality, he described how, "for the first time," he had seen actual "tears of joy."

October 5, 1938

I myself have taken the first step into these [Sudeten German] territories. I was greatly moved by two pictures. For one, I had often witnessed joyous jubilation and enthusiasm. It was the first time that I saw tears of joy in the eyes of hundreds of thousands there.

Secondly, I witnessed gruesome destitution! When Englishmen like Duff Cooper⁴⁵⁶ and Mister Eden go around claiming there had been injustice done to the Czechs—well, they should just see what had happened there in reality. How can they twist the truth like that?! I saw entire villages malnourished, entire cities run down.

My Volksgenossen, it is up to you now to fulfill an obligation of honor! We must take these people into the midst of our Volksgemeinschaft and help them. They need our help! This is merely a token of appreciation on the part of those Germans who were so fortunate as to always have lived in the safe haven of our Reich. We demand but a small sacrifice from everyone. I expect everyone, however, to determine the nature of this sacrifice in accordance to his expertise and ability. I expect of the wealthy to set an example. It must be a question of pride for us to eradicate this destitution in the quickest way possible. I wish to see not one more rachitic child in Germany within a few years' time.

Once again Hitler called the Winterhilfswerk "the greatest social organization on earth." He concluded his address by stating:

I expect that the 1938 Winterhilfswerk campaign reflects the historic greatness of the year. It shall be the ambition of all of us to contribute to such a monumental success. This success shall then prove beyond all doubt that the word "Volksgemeinschaft" is not just an empty delusion (*leerer Wahn*).⁴⁵⁷ We realize that, in the final instance, all human enterprise requires the blessings of Providence if it is to succeed. Yet we realize as well that Providence accords its blessings only to him who proves himself worthy of them. I believe that all of us have experienced such great fortune this year that we are obligated to make sacrifices voluntarily.

On October 6, Hitler returned to the Sudeten German territories. By way of Fugau, he proceeded to Schleckenau, where he reviewed the Sudeten German Freikorps and signed the guest book of the city. Shortly after 11:00 a.m., he arrived in Rumburg and gave an oration on the market square.⁴⁵⁸ He began his "party narrative" by reminding his audience that the road to freedom had been long:

Let this miraculous development serve as a demonstration of what an unbending will is capable of achieving. Today three and a half million people are in the process of coming to the Reich.

Let all of us pledge ourselves at this hour: the will which shall sustain this Reich shall not fall short of that will which was necessary to build up this Reich. Every parcel of German earth, wherever the flag of the German Reich has been planted, shall remain German for all eternity!

Subsequent to his speech in Rumburg, Hitler toured the Czech fortifications (bunker line) along the border. As was well known, he considered himself to be an expert on questions of fortification. Around 3:00 p.m., he reached Kratzau and reviewed the troops. Ninety minutes later, he arrived in Friedland, where he delivered another speech.⁴⁵⁹ He recalled the battles of the past decades and declared himself ready for present and future combat:

That flag which flies over all of Germany today shall be the flag of the German Volk for all eternity and the nation shall bear it forth for all eternity! That Reich of the Germans which we have finally erected in the form of the National Socialist state, that Reich is the highest good there is for us in this world. We stand ready to make the most noble and final sacrifice for it at all times! [—]

I am certain that the Reich which has been born out of the struggle of the National Socialist Movement shall, as long as there are Germans breathing, never perish! *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

Hitler left the Sudeten German territory by way of Neustadt. The next day, October 7, he visited the area around Schönwiese and Kohlbach. Göring and Colonel General von Rundstedt greeted him upon his noon arrival in Jägerndorf. On the town square, the Führer spoke of his determination to fight to the end and emphasized the strength of the German Wehrmacht:⁴⁶⁰

While one might rob three or six million Germans of their rights and oppress them, no one can, in this world, bend eighty million Germans to his will. [—]

On October 10, the swastika will fly over even the last morsel of the Sudetenland. Then this region will finally be freed, and it will be a Reichsgau and part of the German nation for all time to come!

That afternoon, Hitler again inspected Czechoslovakian bunkers within the Schoeber Line outside of Neuerbersdorf. Together with Göring, Hitler then passed in front of a contingent of Luftwaffe troops in Freudental. Thereupon, he left the Sudeten German territories to proceed to Saarbrücken in the western part of the Reich.

The statements Hitler had made in his dedication of the Winterhilfswerk on October 5 did not make a favorable impression abroad, particularly with regard to Great Britain. Many British were sobered by Hitler's declaration of his intent to prevent international supervision of plebiscites in the Sudeten German territories. On October 3, the British Government accepted the British Legion's proposal, which envisioned assigning 1,000 volunteers to police the

plebiscite territories. The delegation of volunteers was to be headed by two generals, a colonel, and Sir Francis Fetherstone-Godley. The October 4 British newspapers contained photographs of an inspection of the Second Battalion of the Scottish Guards, which, together with four other battalions, was to be stationed in the Sudeten German territories for the duration of the plebiscite.

However, Hitler had no intention of accepting Britain's generous offer of assistance. He believed it was high time for the British to receive their just reward for daring an attempt to subvert his actions. He took advantage of the completion of the new Saarbrücken Gau Theater to attack the British in a rather crude manner and declared that he interdicted any attempt to "patronize him as a schoolmarm would." He continued to announce new military measures to be implemented toward the West. In addition, he asserted that the ten million Germans (i.e. Austrians and Sudeten Germans) had returned to the Reich only through the application of "their own German strength."

"The rest of the world has never understood, nor has it even tried to understand, that these people knew only one yearning, to return to the Reich!" Hitler made this claim despite the fact that only through exactly this understanding had the rest of the world allowed him to absorb 3.5 million Germans into the Reich. Hitler was convinced that the leniency of the Western Powers had been a direct result of the military threat he posed to them. He could not fathom the possibility that the right of all peoples to self-determination had played a part in their calculations. It had been those "little worms,"⁴⁶¹ the French and the British, who had not been capable of making a virile decision.

On October 9, Hitler spoke at a mass rally on the Befreiungsplatz in Saarbrücken. Among those attending this address were West Wall workers, who had constructed the Saarbrücken fortifications. The verbatim content of Hitler's speech follows:⁴⁶²

Germans! Volksgenossen!

When I come to speak before you in your Gau in the midst of these great historic events and moving days, then I do so in the conviction that no one has a better understanding of what has occurred within these last weeks than you. You, my men and women of the Saarpfalz, have experienced for yourselves what it means to be separated from the Reich and you have yourselves experienced the great joy of reunion. You have also borne the privations of nearly two decades of separation. You rejoiced at the hour of liberation, you were overjoyed by it, as it allowed you to return home to our common Greater German Reich. Millions of Sudeten Germans suffered through similar trials

and tribulations, and that very same joy which once moved you took hold of them these days. At the beginning of this twentieth year following our collapse, I resolved to lead those ten million Germans, who still lived outside of our borders, home to the Reich. I was completely aware that we could force such a return only if we applied all our own strength to this end. The world neither saw nor desired to see that ten million Germans were separated from the German Reich, in violation of the right to self-determination of all peoples, and that they were being oppressed simply because of their *Deutschtum*. The world neither understood nor desired to understand that these men and women knew but a single yearning—back to the Reich!

While these citizens of the world feel great compassion with any criminal who is held responsible for his deeds in Germany, they turned a deaf ear to the complaints of ten million Germans. The world is contaminated by the spirit of Versailles even today. No one should try to tell us that the world has divorced itself from this spirit! No, it has been Germany that has divorced itself from it! A tough decision had to be made. There were the weak amongst us who perhaps did not grasp this. Yet it is a self-evident truth that, at all times, it has been the honor of all true statesmen to shoulder such responsibility. There were a number of conditions which had to be fulfilled to bring about a solution such as this one:

First, the inner unity of the nation. As I made my decision, I was certain to be the Führer of a truly manly Volk. I realize that there are yet many in the world today, and perhaps even certain individuals in Germany, who have failed to grasp that the German Volk of 1938 is not the same Volk it was in 1918! No one can deny the great educational feats accomplished by our Weltanschauung. Today there is a Volksgemeinschaft of strength and vigor the likes of which Germany has never known before. This was the first condition upon which rested the success of the struggle.

The second condition was the rearmament of the nation, for which I have labored zealously for almost six years. It is my opinion that it is cheaper to arm prior to certain events than to meet these unprepared and have to pay tribute afterwards.

The third condition was the security of the Reich. You yourselves have witnessed the gigantic work being accomplished around you. I do not need to go into any details here. However, let me voice one conviction: no power on earth shall ever be able to break through this wall!

And fourth, in the realm of foreign affairs, we have won new friends. In the last two and a half years, that Axis which has sometimes been the butt of ridicule abroad has proven itself to be of lasting quality. And it has also proven itself to be a steadfast one, even in hours of great distress.

We are happy that the work of 1938, the reintegration of ten million Germans and of approximately 110,000 square kilometers into the Reich, was accomplished without the shedding of blood. And it did so despite the hopes and aspirations of so many warmongers and profiteers throughout the world. Speaking of the cooperation of the world in this peace effort, I must first and for all speak of that one true friend we possess today, Benito Mussolini. All of us know how much we owe to this man. With gratitude, I also think of the

other two great statesmen who labored to open a passage toward preserving the peace. They concluded that agreement with us which has rendered justice to millions of Germans and that has secured peace for the world.

Yet the experiences of the past eight months can and must harden our resolve to be cautious and never to fail to take whatever steps necessary to protect the Reich. That those statesmen standing in front of us desire peace, we must believe. Yet these men govern countries, the inner construction of which makes it entirely possible that they could, any day, be replaced by men who might not share their resolve for peace. And these other men do exist. The minute another man rises to power in England and replaces Chamberlain—someone like Mr. Duff Cooper, Mr. Eden or Mr. Churchill—that minute we know that it would be the ambition of these men to break loose yet another world war, and that immediately. They are quite open about this, they do not make a secret of it.

Further, we know that the international Jewish fiend looms threateningly behind the scenes on stage and it does so today just as it did yesterday. It has found its most succinct expression in those foundations upon which rests the Bolshevik state. And we are not ignorant either of the machinations of a certain international press that lives off lies and defamations. This obliges us all the more to protect the Reich! Preparedness for peace at all times means preparedness for defense at all hours! Therefore I have decided that the fortification of our Western border be carried out at even greater speed, as I already announced in my speech at Nuremberg. I will now integrate into this line of defense those two large areas which up to present stretched out in front of our fortifications, namely, the area around Aachen and Saarbrücken.

For the rest, however, I am happy to be able to recall within the next few days those measures which we had to institute because they were necessary in these critical weeks and months. I am glad that then all those hundreds of thousands of our men can return home and that our reservists can be released once more. I thank all of them for the way in which they undertook the fulfillment of their duties in the service. In particular, I thank those hundreds of thousands of German workers and engineers, of whom tens of thousands stand amongst us today, and who worked on the fortifications here.

My Comrades, you have helped secure peace for Germany! My particular thanks go to the entire German Volk which has borne itself in so manly a manner. As a strong state, we are prepared, at all times, to negotiate with our neighbors. We do not place any demands on them. We desire nothing but peace. There is only one thing we truly desire, and this applies especially to our relations with England: it is high time that the British finally abandon their grand airs of the time of Versailles.

We will no longer tolerate any schoolmarm patronizing us (*gouvernantenhafte Bevormundung*) Inquiries of British politicians on the status of Germans or other citizens of the Reich within its boundaries are not appropriate. We do not interfere in similar matters in England. There have been many instances in which the rest of the world would do far better to take care of its own national problems than to interfere in ours. Just think of the events in Palestine. In any event, we leave this to those men who think themselves

called upon by God to resolve these problems. Yet we can but stand in awe of how quickly they come up with ready-made solutions. We wish to counsel all these gentlemen to take good care of their own problems and to leave us alone. That, too, forms part of securing world peace.

Great tasks lie before us. Enormous cultural and economic problems await their solution. No Volk could use peace better than we could right now, yet no Volk knows better what it means to be weak and at the mercy of others.

My Volksgenossen! This year the great work of national unity has been brought to its final conclusion, the resurrection of a proud, mighty, and free German Reich! You yourselves have suffered through so much here that you know why I am uneasy for the future of the Reich and why I demand of the German Volk to continue to stand prepared and to give its best effort. It is a miracle that we were allowed to witness Germany's resurrection in the span of so few years. Things could have developed differently! This we should always keep in mind. We wish to persevere in our determination to serve this Germany, man by man and woman by woman. And at the moment that the greater interest of our Volk and Reich may require it, we shall disregard all personal interests.

Today I stand in your midst for the second time. Back then, your jubilations were an expression of joy at your own return home. Today, you witness the jubilations of millions of other Germans who have also come home to the Reich. With them, let us unite as we pledge ourselves to our one, magnificent German Reich we faithfully believe in. *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

The mutual declaration of peace between Germany and Great Britain had been signed in Munich only ten days prior to this verbal attack. Because the Sudeten German Freikorps reminded him of the much despised militia units, he decided to do away with it. On October 10, while still in Saarbrücken, he issued the following decree effecting its dissolution:⁴⁶³

The Sudeten German Freikorps is dissolved. I thank the men for their self-sacrificing and brave sortie in the struggle for the German *Volkstum* and the freedom of their homeland. I expect of them that they shall now continue to fulfill their duties in such a dedicated manner as they join the fighting formations of Party and State.

Adolf Hitler

The new Government in Prague had been formed on October 4 under General Jan Sirovy, with the moderate František Chvalkovsky as Foreign Minister. The Czechs hurried to accommodate Hitler's demand of redrawing the border without a plebiscite. The situation on October 13 coerced an international commission, consisting of the ambassadors of the Great Powers, to agree not to conduct a plebiscite.⁴⁶⁴

That same day, Hitler toured the Krupp industrial plants in Essen, as if to emphasize an inclination to employ force.⁴⁶⁵

On October 14, Hitler received Chvalkovsky in Munich and accepted the latter's assurances that the Czechoslovakian Government would remain loyal to the German Reich.⁴⁶⁶ In addition to Chvalkovsky, the ex-Prime Minister of Hungary, Darányi, was in Munich. He had come to discuss the issue of the Czechoslovakian regions which had been promised to Hungary. But the Hungarians did not enjoy the same preferred position which the Poles, at that time, enjoyed. With Hitler's connivance, Poland's military had invaded and simply taken the region of Teschen-Olsa on October 1.

The Hungarians, on the other hand, had negotiated the cession of territories with a Czechoslovakian delegation in Komorn (Komárno). The negotiations had not yielded satisfactory results. In the meantime, Hitler had found new friends, the Slovaks. Monsignor Josef Tiso, a Roman Catholic priest, had formed an autonomous Government in Pressburg on October 6.⁴⁶⁷ Because of this development, Hitler was no longer willing to accord Hungary either substantial parts of Slovakia or the Carpatho-Ukraine (Ruthenia).

In his talks with Darányi in Munich⁴⁶⁸ on the afternoon of October 14, Hitler aimed to prevent the Hungarians from calling for the convention of the International Commission, as had been provided for by the Munich Agreement. Hitler instead wanted the Hungarians to first place their demands before the German and Italian Governments and then to accept their decision as final. In this case, Hitler would be the final arbitrator. Because he was convinced that he would receive more concessions from Hitler than from the international Committee, Darányi accepted Hitler's proposal. However, the settlement reached in Vienna on November 2 sorely disappointed him.

In Munich on October 15, Hitler called upon the Reichsstatthalter General von Epp to personally congratulate him on his seventieth birthday. In addition, he gave Epp the command of the Sixty-First Infantry Regiment.⁴⁶⁹

On October 18, Hitler received the parting Japanese Ambassador Togo at the Obersalzberg. Togo presented the Chancellor with an elaborate Japanese table as a personal gift from the Japanese Emperor. In turn, Hitler extended his best wishes to the Tenno and to the Japanese people and handed the Ambassador an autographed photograph of himself.⁴⁷⁰ Later that day, the French Ambassador François-Poncet met with Hitler to bid farewell. He had been transferred to the Embassy in Rome, to work there in the same capacity as he had in Berlin.

Hitler received François-Poncet in the Alps at the *Teehaus* pavilion, a structure which Bormann had recently constructed at approximately 1800 meters altitude on the Kehlstein.⁴⁷¹

The pavilion could be reached only by ascending through a 120 meter elevator shaft. Even though Hitler did not particularly cherish the teahouse himself, he used it on this visit to impress his guest by the pure savage nature of the environment. Upon François-Poncet's arrival, Hitler first raged against the British, then lavished abuse upon the Munich Agreement, which he found not in the least satisfactory. Then he addressed the topic of Franco-German relations. He proposed a mutual declaration to acknowledge the existing borders between the two countries. He also suggested that mutual consultations take place on all concerns pertaining to both states.⁴⁷²

It is obvious that Hitler did not have serious consultations in mind. Instead, he was attempting to drive a wedge between Great Britain and France. The Anglo-German declaration of September 30 had created a slight jealousy in the French. Thus they were most receptive to Hitler's proposal to enter into a similar FrancoGerman agreement. Thus the October 18 conference between Hitler and François-Poncet led to the Paris December 6 declaration on borders and consultations.⁴⁷³ Toward the end of François-Poncet's visit, Hitler bestowed upon him the distinguished award of the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle. Later, this award would become "devalued" through liberal distribution among politicians in the German Reich's satellite states. In Germany, a communiqué on the visit was issued.⁴⁷⁴

Berchtesgaden, October 18

Today, at the Berghof on the Obersalzberg, the Führer and Reich Chancellor received the former French Ambassador in Berlin, François-Poncet, on the occasion of the latter's departure, in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. The Führer expressed his gratitude and true appreciation of the parting Ambassador's endeavors to bring about an improvement of Franco-German relations and his resulting contributions to the securing of peace.

Simultaneously, Hitler signed the following decree:⁴⁷⁵

Berchtesgaden, October 18, 1938

As visible proof of my appreciation and gratitude for the accomplishments achieved in the course of the reunion of the Sudeten German territories with the German Reich, I announce the creation of a medal in commemoration of October 1, 1938. The statute contains the details.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor,

Adolf Hitler

At 9:00 a.m. on October 20, Hitler traveled from Linz to the Southern Bohemian area that had been ceded to Germany and reached Krumau by 11:00 a.m. Perched on a rostrum in front of the City Hall, the Führer emphasized that Germany was willing to liberate the area "till the end":⁴⁷⁶

Germans! Volksgenossen! Meine Böhmerwäldler!

As I greet you here today as the new citizens and members of our great German Reich, I wish to, first of all, thank you for your loyalty to your *Volkstum* and for never losing faith in the great German Volk and Reich.

You must also, however, thank those millions of Germans in the Reich who were willing, if need be, to make the greatest of all sacrifices for you, the German people of this land. For Germany was willing and determined to fight for your liberation till the end had this been the only solution!

You will now experience the great joy of being citizens of so great a Reich, a Reich that spans from Königsberg to Aachen, from Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein to the Karawanken, and in the midst of which you lay embedded today. To reach this Reich, you had to tread along a most difficult path. Throughout the centuries we had to fight for this Reich, and it was our generation that had to make the greatest sacrifices within the last decades. This makes the Reich twice as dear to us!

Just as this Reich will take up the cause of each one of you, so must each German in turn be willing to dedicate his entire existence to this Reich and to serve this community. Germany cannot give more to each of us than we ourselves are willing to give to Germany!

There are many Germans who would gladly sacrifice it all to Germany and who are not as fortunate as we are to be members of this community. Alas, they are prevented from doing so. All the more grateful should those of us be who partake in this great happiness!

For all of us this entails one great responsibility, to do everything that might be of benefit to the Reich. At that point at which it becomes necessary to do so, all of us must set aside our personal interests and serve the greater interest of Germany. For we ourselves mean nothing; our Volk means all.

If the German Volk perishes, then every single German will perish along with it! If our great German Reich, however, is once more mighty and strong, then a ray of this fortune will shine upon every single German! All of us live in Germany and through Germany! To this we faithfully pledge ourselves in these memorable and moving hours.

Fortune has blessed us. Providence allowed us to make good what the weak generation before us failed to do. Providence has allowed us to restore internal order to our Volk, to eliminate discord, to overcome fratricide and hatred, and to lead back to our great shared Reich those millions of Germans to whom it had already appeared to be lost forever.

The year 1938 will go down in history as a most memorable one! This year, we have added about ten million Volksgenossen and far more than 100,000 square kilometers of territory to the German Reich and hence to the German

Volkstum. We have secured them for the Reich for eternity. And we achieved this without having to resort to an all-out effort. However, this was only possible because we stood armed and prepared for that all-out effort and because we were determined to see it through, if need be!

We thank the Lord that we and so many other German Volksgenossen were spared this suffering. All the more fervently, we pledge ourselves to fulfilling our duties and to doing all that is to the benefit of our Volk and to refrain from doing all that might be to its detriment.

This we promise as Volksgenossen in this mighty and great German Reich to which we have pledged ourselves for a life time, body and soul.

Our German Volk and Reich—*Sieg Heil!*

After returning to Berchtesgaden, Hitler ordered the transfer of the executive powers in the Sudeten German territories to the civil administration. He addressed the following letter to the Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch:⁴⁷⁷

Units of the Army, the Luftwaffe, the Police, the SS Verfügungstruppe, and SS and SA contingents were involved in the occupation of the Sudeten German territory. Placed under the protection of the Wehrmacht, 3.5 million of our German Volksgenossen have finally come home to the Reich. From October 21, 1938, onward, the civil administration will take over the protection of these citizens.

At the same time, I shall relieve you of the authority to exercise executive powers while expressively acknowledging the merit of all offices involved. Together with our Sudeten German Volksgenossen, the entire German Volk thanks all those involved in the liberation of the Sudetenland.

Adolf Hitler

In this correspondence, Hitler voiced his wish to terminate the plan to militarily administer the Sudetenland from October 21.⁴⁷⁸ He believed the time to have come to order the Wehrmacht to prepare to annex the remainder of Czechoslovakia—only three weeks after the signing of the Munich Agreement! On October 21, Hitler sent out the below instructions on the elimination of the remainder of Czechoslovakia:⁴⁷⁹

Directive by the Führer for the Wehrmacht
Berlin, October 21, 1938
Top Secret
OKW L Ia. No. 236/38

The future tasks of the Wehrmacht and the preparations for the conduct of war resulting from these tasks will be laid down by me in a later directive. Until this directive comes into force, the Wehrmacht must at all times be prepared for the following eventualities:

1. Securing the frontiers of the German Reich and protection against surprise air attacks.
2. Liquidation of the remainder of the Czech State (*Rest-Tschechei*).
3. The occupation of Memelland.

Of the technical details of the military enterprise, which were enumerated in the directive, the following paragraph is worthy of notice:

2. Liquidation of the remainder of the Czech State.

It must be possible to smash at any time the remainder of the Czech State, should it pursue an anti-German policy.

The preparations to be made by the Wehrmacht for this eventuality will be considerably less in extent than those for "Operation Green"; on the other hand, as planned mobilization measures will have to be dispensed with, they must guarantee a continuous and considerably higher state of preparedness. The organization, order of battle, and degree of preparedness of the units earmarked for that purpose are to be prearranged in peace time for a surprise assault so that Czechoslovakia herself will be deprived of all possibility of organized resistance. The aim is the speedy occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and the cutting off of Slovakia. The preparations must be so made that the defense of the western frontier (*Grenzsicherung West*) can be carried out simultaneously.

The following are the individual of the Army and Luftwaffe:

A. Army

The units stationed near the Czech frontier and certain motorized formations are to be detailed for surprise attack. Their number will be determined by the forces left to Czechoslovakia; quick and decisive success must be assured. The deployment and preparations for the attack must be worked out. Forces not required are to be kept in the readiness in such a manner that they either can be used for securing the frontier or can follow up the attacking army.

B. Luftwaffe

The rapid advance of our Army is to be assured by nearly elimination of the Czech Air Force. For this purpose the rapid move of the formations near the frontier from their peace stations is to be prepared. Whether even stronger forces will be required for this purpose can only be seen from the development of the military and political situation in Czechoslovakia.

In addition, the simultaneous deployment of the remainder of the offensive forces against the West must be prepared.

On the Obersalzberg on October 24, the Goebbels family visited with Hitler.⁴⁸⁰ Goebbels' amorous escapades had, for some time, troubled the domestic life of his family. The next day, near Pressburg, Hitler inspected the Fngerau bridgehead, whose cession he had insisted upon in the negotiations with the Prague Government because

of its strategic importance. Afterwards, he toured the former Czech barracks and other facilities. On his return trip in the afternoon, he stopped in Vienna to see the Art History Museum and the Hofburg.⁴⁸¹

The following day, October 26, Hitler again traveled to the Sudeten German territories. First he stopped at the Czech fortifications at Trutnov and Zlín in southern Moravia. At 3:00 p.m., Hitler spoke on the market place of Zlín.⁴⁸² In the introductory part of his speech, Hitler claimed that he stood in front of the people as the voice of the German nation and that his presence demonstrated the resolve of the German Reich never to retreat from these territories.

To underline Germany's power, he exclaimed: "Today all Germans can take great pride in belonging to a community that constitutes the greatest and mightiest Reich in Europe." Again Hitler spoke of the "most difficult decision" of his lifetime, which he was forced to make a few weeks earlier. He declared quite openly:

We would have marched in here on October 2 at 8:00 a.m., one way or another. The Reich stood ready to fight to the last. And the German Volk stood determined to see this fight through!

Hitler spent the night in the compartment of his special train in Lázně u Teplic. On the morning of October 27, he stepped out of the train to face the crowd that had quickly gathered at the train station. He continued his voyage early in the day and arrived in Nikolsburg at 9:00 a.m. There he got off the special train and continued his trip by automobile. He drove through the Czech fortified area and, in addition to stopping at a few little villages, briefly visited Pohlitz and Wolframitz.

He returned to Nikolsburg around 11:30 a.m. and attended a reception in his honor at the City Hall. From the balcony, he addressed the inhabitants of this city, where the Peace of Nikolsburg had been signed in 1866, ending the Seven Weeks' War between Austria and Prussia.⁴⁸³

Hitler made use of the history of this city to emphasize the importance of his achievements and his person. He had set his mind to not only tear to shreds the Treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain, but also to declare null and void all agreements that had put Germany at a disadvantage. He started with the Armistice of Compiègne,⁴⁸⁴ and concluded with the Peace Treaty of Westphalia.⁴⁸⁵ He felt himself called upon to erase these from the book of history. His presence in Nikolsburg alone would, no doubt, suffice to have the pre-peace agreement there sink into oblivion.

Hitler began his oration by expounding upon the 1866 Civil War. Then he spoke of the suffering the German people had endured since those days and described the trials and tribulations since 1918 in great detail. He declared that he himself was guiding the Reich to the pinnacle of its decade-long struggle and that the Wehrmacht stood ready to fulfill its final mission.

Once every German has learned to always and foremost regard himself as a German, then the Reich will stand secure and mighty for all time. [—]

I have chosen this location to conclude my first journey through the Sudeten German territories because it was here that a certain tragic development once began and it shall be in this very location that this development is officially brought to an end: one Volk and one Reich, one will and hence one shared future! *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

On October 29, Hitler mailed a telegram to the Turkish President Atatürk, congratulating him on the fifteenth anniversary of the existence of the Republic of Turkey.⁴⁸⁶ A day later, he signed an ordinance pertaining to the establishment of a Gau of Sudetenland.⁴⁸⁷

On October 31, a decree was issued regarding the supplemental elections to the Reichstag. Its verbatim content was:⁴⁸⁸

Article 1

I order the supplemental elections to the Reichstag in order to accord our Sudeten German Volksgenossen representation in the Greater German Reichstag.

Article 2

The supplemental elections shall be held on Sunday, December 4, 1938.

Berchtesgaden, October 31, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor,

Adolf Hitler

In this instance, Hitler evidently proceeded in a different manner than he had in the case of the reunion of the Saar with the German Reich. In the earlier case, he had simply taken the results of the plebiscite of January 13, 1935, as a basis for nominating the deputies to the Reichstag himself. In this instance, however, he sought to use the special election as a replacement for a plebiscite conducted under international supervision, which had not been held. The election was to be conducted in a truly National Socialist manner, with only one list to choose from; the NSDAP.

On November 2, the “Viennese sentence” was served on the subject of the cession of previously Slovakian territories to Hungary. Hitler was not personally present at this state occasion.⁴⁸⁹ Instead he left it to Ribbentrop and Ciano to reconcile the two German satellite states,

Slovakia and Hungary, in the Belvedere Palace. A day later, Hitler inspected the progress on the Party Congress Grounds in Nuremberg (Märzfeld, Congress Hall). Construction work had been disrupted by the Sudeten crisis and had resumed again after the crisis' resolution.⁴⁹⁰

On November 6, Hitler spoke at the Gautag of the Thuringian National Socialists in Weimar.⁴⁹¹ This occasion afforded him the opportunity to again verbally attack British statesmen. He began the attack early in his "party narrative." Once again Hitler took up the issue of Wilson's Fourteen Points, in reference to which he proclaimed:

There is only one answer to those politicians and members of parliament abroad, who, from time to time, dare to maintain that Germany has committed breach of contract. All we can say to these men is: the greatest breach of contract of all time has been committed not by, but to the detriment of the German Volk! Not one promise has been kept which was made to Germany in those infamous Fourteen Points on the basis of which Germany laid down its arms!

In this speech, Hitler not only attacked men like Eden, Duff Cooper, and Churchill, but also turned against Chamberlain in a deriding manner. Chamberlain had been noted for carrying an umbrella on his visits to Germany. At the time in Germany, sporting an umbrella was considered to be an outdated Philistine relic. To Hitler, this umbrella proved beyond doubt that Chamberlain was the British version of the senile German Nationalist politician. In Weimar, Hitler expressed his disgust with Chamberlain when he spoke of certain "umbrella-carrying prototypes" (*Regenschirmtypen*):

Only a blind man can deny that the political leadership of the German nation is a different one today than that of say five, ten, or even twenty years ago, both internally and externally. Those umbrella-carrying prototypes from the heyday of our bourgeois party world have been eradicated and shall return no more!

The audience rocked with laughter and frantic applause upon hearing this ironic allusion to Chamberlain. Hitler then underscored that he was acting from a position of military strength:

From the very first day, I had set my maxim: a German man is either the foremost soldier in the world, or he is not a soldier. We will never be cowardly soldiers, and we do not wish ever to be so. Hence we must be the foremost soldiers worldwide.

As a man who loves peace, I have continuously striven to provide the German Volk with a certain kind of weaponry and defense particularly well suited to convince others of our determination for peace. Regrettably, there are people who hate the hedgehog merely because it has quills.

Well, all they have to do is not bother the animal. No hedgehog has ever attacked someone lest he was threatened himself. Let this be our code of conduct, too! Let others keep their distance. We wish to be left in peace, to be left to our work, and not to be bereft of our right to life which others claim for themselves as well.

For the democratic states, this ought to be a quite straightforward position easily understood. After all, it is they who constantly speak of equality of rights! How can they claim these rights for all sorts of tiny peoples and then become outraged when as great a Volk as ours demands the same?! Our National Socialist Wehrmacht will see to the securing of these rights for us and will serve as a guarantee for them.

It was in this spirit that I undertook a reorientation of our foreign policy and that I turned to those states who have been forced to fight for their rights just as we have been. Assessing the results of this, our action, I feel I can say: all of you can judge for yourselves whether or not we have achieved truly unbelievable feats on the basis of these principles!

Precisely because of this, we should never forget what has made this success possible. Even if some foreign newspapers scribble, "You could have achieved this by means of negotiation," we know very well that the Germany before us was capable of nothing other than forever negotiating! For fifteen years, it did nothing but negotiate and in the end it lost all. I am open to negotiations as well but let there be no doubt that I will not have Germany's rights slighted, not by negotiations, and not by any other means!⁴⁹²

German Volk—may you never forget to whom you owe your successes, to which Movement, to which ideology, and to which principles! And secondly, always be cautious, always keep your guard! It is quite well to speak of peace and disarmament internationally; however, I am highly suspicious of the disarmament of weaponry if evidently there is no mental disarmament as well!

In the world, a rather odd differentiation of peoples has developed according to which these either form so-called authoritarian states, that is states of discipline, or they form democratic states. In the authoritarian, in other words, disciplined states, it is self-evident that one should not defame foreign peoples, that one should not lie about them and that one should not plunge them into war! In democratic states, however, all this is allowed because after all one is "democratic."

In authoritarian countries, such warmongering is out of the question because, after all, it is the duty of their governments to prevent warmongering. In democratic countries, the governments know but one duty: to sustain democracy. In other words, they have the liberty to become warmongers if need be!

Just recently, I named three of these international warmongers. They were upset by this, but not because of any question of principle. No, they were upset because I had dared to cite names. Mr. Churchill has openly declared that, in his opinion, the present regime in Germany must be overthrown with the help of forces in its interior, forces that gladly would assist him in this venture. If Mr. Churchill spent less of his time talking with emigrants, people

paid abroad to commit treason, and spent more time with Germans, then he would realize the degree of stupidity and plain insanity contained in his words. I can assure this gentleman, who apparently lives way behind the times, of one thing only: there is no such force in Germany that could bring about the overthrow of the present regime! In Germany, there is only one force, and that is the force of the German nation, manifested in leadership and following, in defense and armament.

I have no intention of denying, before these most worthy gentlemen that we Germans have no right, for instance, to demand that other peoples change their constitution. However, as the leader of all Germans, it is my duty to take into consideration these constitutions and the possibilities resulting from them. A few days ago, the deputy of the British opposition leader in the House of Commons stated that he desired to make no secret of it that he would greatly welcome the destruction of Germany and Italy. If such a man, in one or two years' time, rises to power thanks to the democratic machinations of his party, I cannot prevent him from doing so.

But there is one thing of which I can assure him: I will prevent him from destroying Germany! And I am equally certain that the German Volk will take care that these gentlemen's designs on Germany come to naught! And in the very same manner, Fascist Italy will take care of itself, that I know!

I am convinced that for all of us there is a lesson to be drawn from these international hopes. And that lesson is to stand together and to move closer to one's friends. The more we form a cohesive community in Germany, the less can these warmongers anticipate; and the closer this will move us to Italy, the one state that shares our fate, the less will these others feel encouraged to conspire against us.

As we let the year 1938 pass by in front of our eyes, we can but be filled with great pride and overwhelming joy. Germany has increased in size and has done so in the most natural and moral manner there is! Millions of our Volksgenossen whose sole desire and ambition it was to return to Germany now form part of our community!

Now they will do their share in the support of the Reich and, undoubtedly, they will serve as its most loyal members, for they themselves know quite well what it means to have been amputated and separated from the Reich! This year also imparts great responsibility upon us: we must derive from it the realization and the determination never again to stray from the path of success! If the world is willing to disarm, then so are we, but under one condition only: first the warmongers are to disarm! However, as long as there is only talk of disarmament and the warmongers go about their business as usual, then we must assume that their goal is to steal our weapons and to once again subject us to a fate equal to that of 1918-19. All I can say to Mr. Churchill and comrades is: that was once and shall never be again!¹⁴⁹³

I strode forth on my path with a tremendous faith in the German Volk. What else could have kept us from despairing back then? I had faith in the German Volk, in its inner values and hence in its future. Today my faith has miraculously proven itself justified. This year, it has been reinforced once more. How deserving our Volk proved itself in these last five, say six, years!

Has not everything come true which I foretold year upon year and which all of us desired so desperately?

How wonderfully has our Volk conducted itself in the course of these past weeks and months! My Volksgenossen, you may believe me when I say that, yes indeed, I am proud and happy to be allowed to be your leader!

The German Volk has formed a magnificent picture of such consistent unyielding cohesion precisely within these last weeks, like the cohesion I witnessed in the times of its greatest trials in the War. No nervousness, no rush, no insecurity, no signs of desperation, instead only confidence and loyal following. Every single man and every single woman knew that Fate might have asked the final sacrifice of us. It is to this cohesion and to this calm that we owe the fact that we were spared this sacrifice!

Fate did not call upon us because it knew we were strong! This we shall carry in our hearts as a lesson for the future! Then no ill can come to our beloved Germany, neither now nor in all eternity! *Deutschland, Sieg Heil!*

The constant references to the supposedly “wonderful” stance of the German Volk in the Sudeten crisis revealed how little he had managed to come to terms with the lack of popular enthusiasm for war that September. He was tense, waiting for an opportunity to seek revenge upon those who in his eyes bore the responsibility for this development—the Jews.

The main part of Hitler’s annual speech in the Munich Bürgerbräukeller on November 8⁴⁹⁴ consisted of yet another outburst against British politicians. Prior to this outpouring of wrath, he delivered a verbose and bombastic “party narrative.” He ranted that there would have been no collapse in 1918 had he been in charge of the nation at that time:

Nevertheless, had not the German Volk in its blindness allowed the civic unrest back then to foment a civil war, then there would never have been a collapse such as that of 1918. I believe I have a right to say that, had Fate put me at the helm back then, this collapse would never have come about.

He then proclaimed that of course he had been right in 1923 as well, even though his attempt at a putsch had ended in failure. By recounting this example, Hitler wished to establish, once and for all, that he could never be wrong. Indeed, in the future he would not stand for anyone to express doubt over his decisions:

I have been told that not too long ago, a man was heard saying: “Well, you know, the Führer, too, can err. After all, he was wrong in 1923 and went under back then!” All I can say to these Philistines is: I was not wrong in 1923! I did not go under back then! I did receive a severe blow at that time, but the Party and hence Germany recovered from this blow and they are all the stronger for it.

What was the situation like in 1923? I was the leader of a rather small party, however, of a party in determination and courage. I was perhaps the only leader of a party who could claim that he was backed by a community of men and women, a community that stood ready to march upon a moment's notice if necessary. Others had a following which was willing to make deals only.

Back then I resolved to eliminate this incompetent regime. The deed was not carried out then. However, this failure proved and will prove itself to be of greater benefit than we may realize to this day. I know not what the fate of Germany would have been had the course of events taken a different turn and had Herr Kahr and his comrades succeeded in their attempts to tear this country apart.

Subsequently, Hitler read a lengthy monotonous excerpt from Clausewitz on the decadent nature of court and government officials. Then he asserted complete agreement with the founder of the modern doctrine of war and his statement: "I declare and assert before all the world and posterity that, in my opinion, the faulty wisdom that seeks to back away from danger is the most immoral result of what fear and anxiety can instill in man." Hitler added:

I declare and assert before all the world and posterity that in 1923 I, too, acted in accordance with this conviction!

Once Hitler believed he had sufficiently demonstrated to his intellectual critics that he could never be wrong, he again turned against the British parliamentarians and described his military might in the most graphic terms:

Every day, as I read in foreign journals that we are deeply shaken by the armament efforts of our neighbors, I can assert only one thing, namely, that I would be shaken only if the German nation failed to arm itself! The fact that others are arming does not shake me up!

Let there be no doubt: the German Volk will not be caught carrying the olive branch while the rest of the world arms itself to the teeth.

In this event, we will do precisely what is necessary to secure peace for ourselves!

As a Gennan statesman I am obligated, in the interest of my Volk, to concern myself with measures taken by the rest of the world, to assess their consequences, and to take into consideration possible dangers arising from them. And here I will not tolerate a certain British member of parliament telling me what to do! Some people of late have come up to me and claimed: "Oh, we meant to destroy the dictatorships but not the German and Italian peoples." My only answer to this is: something of this sort you could perhaps claim prior to November 1918, but no longer after November 1918! Back then, these very same circles had claimed that all they sought was the destruction of "Prussian militarism," the destruction of only one dynasty, the House of Hohenzollern, not the destruction of the German Volk! The German Volk

would then be led toward regaining its freedom in the framework of international democracy. We got to know this particular type of "freedom" quite well! And the German Volk has learned its lesson.

A collapse, such as the one experienced by the German Volk due to its naivety, will not repeat itself in the next millennium!

And I can assure you this will also be the case for all those who still believe they can instigate hate campaigns against the German Volk once more! Germany will never again be duped by such rhetoric! As a Führer of responsibility, I will point out these dangers to the nation. And one of these dangers I see arising from the constant hate campaigns abroad directed against Germany. Whoever does not want to believe this, should simply call to mind a few of the recent incidents.

It has not been all that long ago that there was a debate concerning questions of civil aviation before the House of Commons in England. Back then, a certain type of new civil airplane was declared to be of great practical value and particularly useful. Then one man of the opposition party stood up and shouted: "I hope this plane can also carry bombs to Berlin!" We know what this means! People might tell me: "That was only one man of the opposition party." To that I can only reply: In these democracies, the Constitution allows the opposition of today to become the government of tomorrow. In general, this usually happens sooner or later. We are most grateful that France and England have removed men of such persuasion from office and that these two countries desire good relations with Germany. More than once, we have made it clear that all we want from these countries is the return of the colonies unjustly taken from us. I have always asserted that, of course, we shall not go to war simply because of this. Rather, it is a question of justice, we say, a question of whether there is an honest intent to render the peaceful coexistence of various peoples possible. We desire no more of these other peoples, we demand nothing of them. We simply wish to make deals with these peoples, that is we wish to conduct trade with them. So if there is talk of reaching an understanding, we really do not know what there is to reach an understanding about.

However, there is one thing I must never let out of sight. Today there might well be men in power in France and England who desire peace. Yet there are other men who do little to conceal that they wish for war with Germany. I am forced to state this in all objectivity before the nation and to draw the consequences. Mr. Churchill can be Prime Minister by tomorrow. And when one leader of the British opposition declares that it is not the German Volk they wish to destroy but the regime, then that is one and the same thing since this regime will not be destroyed lest one destroys the entire German Volk! And if someone claims that he wishes to free the German Volk from this regime, then I will tell him: The German Volk is none of your business! If there is one man whose business is the German Volk, my dear gentlemen of the British parliament, then that is me!

The regime in Germany is an internal affair of the German Volk, and we will not stand for being supervised as if by a schoolmaster. Moreover, I believe that we have achieved far more than these gentlemen. Above all we have

restored order to our state which is something you cannot say for a good number of countries on the face of this earth.

Hence I am forced to take into consideration the persuasions of men who might not govern today but could do so tomorrow and who have left little doubt as to their convictions. The German Volk will understand why I am warning it and why I myself am determined to take all precautions necessary to make certain that there is no foreign interference!

On a side note, let me assure you that the German Volk shall not succumb to a fear of bombs, falling—let us say—from either Mars or the moon.⁴⁹⁵ We will keep good measure as is the custom of all Germans. But I am determined to ensure the security of the Reich by fortifying it to the last. And I know that the entire German Volk agrees with me on this! No doubt this means sacrifice. However, it is better for us to make sacrifices now than having to pay up one day in the form of contributions or should we rather say “reparations” as they were called back then.

For us there is only one maxim that truly counts and that I spoke of in Saarbrücken: “We are always ready for peace!” It was not us who broke the peace. However, we are always ready to stand up in defense of ourselves as well, in a manner both manly and determined.

When someone says to me, “So it is not by legal means that you intend to enter into world history, but rather it is violence which serves as your means,” then all I can say in reply is that today’s Germany did not refuse to obtain its rights by means of negotiation! Year after year we attempted to secure our rights by negotiating. And most certainly English parliamentarians have no right to doubt this. After all, it was by means of negotiation that we concluded a treaty with England. It is not our fault that others did not become parties to the treaty.

Always keep in mind the following: National Socialist Germany will never go to Canossa!⁴⁹⁶ We have no need to! If the rest of the world persists in denying us our rights by means of negotiation, then it should not be surprised if we resort to other means in order to secure our rights, rights we cannot obtain in the customary fashion. Now that these British advocates of world democracy maintain that this year alone we destroyed two democracies, I can only ask them: What precisely is democracy? Who has the right to speak in the name of democracy?

Has the good Lord handed over the keys to democracy to Mr. Churchill or to Mr. Duff Cooper? Has the lock combination been engraved upon some ancient tabulae perhaps at present in the hands of the British opposition?

In our opinion, democracy implies a regime supported by the will of a people. I became Chancellor of Germany once in compliance with the rules of parliamentary democracy; and that as the leader of the strongest party by far. And it was in compliance with the rules of parliamentary democracy that I possessed the absolute majority then, and today I received the complete approval of the German Volk—let Mr. Churchill doubt this if he pleases. I did not eliminate two democracies this year, rather, I destroyed, as the epitome of a true democrat, two dictatorships! Namely, the dictatorship of Herr Schuschnigg and the dictatorship of Herr Beneš. It was by peaceful means that

I attempted to persuade these two dictators to open up a path toward democracy for their peoples by permitting them to exercise their right to self-determination. I did not succeed in this attempt. It was only then that I applied the force of our great German Volk to restore democracy to these countries, in other words to liberate these oppressed people.

These gentlemen of the British parliament might know their way around the British world empire, but of Central Europe they know nothing! Here they completely lack any idea of the situation, the events, and their circumstances. They should not, and will not, regard this as an insult, for, after all, we do not know our way around India, Egypt, or Palestine either.

Nonetheless, I believe it would be for the better if these gentlemen applied their enormous expertise and their infallible wisdom for which they are so well known, if they applied these, let us say, for instance or rather especially to the case of Palestine. They might do great good there. Because, after all, damn it, what is happening there reeks of brute force rather than democracy! But I am just citing this as an example, I do not mean to criticize, for I am but the advocate of the German Volk rather than that of others. In this I differ from Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden who see themselves as the advocates of the whole world.

I am merely the advocate of my Volk! And here I do everything in my power that I deem necessary. And if Mr. Churchill turns to me and says, "How can a head of state be at odds with a British parliamentarian?" then all I can say to him is: "Mr. Churchill, you should be honored by this!" By the fact that a German head of state does not hesitate to be at odds with a British parliamentarian, you can see in what great esteem English parliamentarians are held here. Besides that, I am not a head of state in the sense that a dictator or monarch is, I am a leader of the German Volk!

Rest assured, there are plenty of titles I could have appropriated myself. I kept my old title and I will keep it as long as I live because I have no desire to be anything other and I have no intention of ever becoming anything other! I am content this way. Mr. Churchill and these gentlemen are delegates of the English people, and I am a delegate of the German Volk. The only difference here is that Mr. Churchill received only a fraction of his people's votes while, I may confidently say, I represent the entire German Volk!

Therefore, my Old Comrades in Arms, when I call upon you and the entire German Volk to proceed with caution, I have the holy right to do so! In these few years, I have scored great successes for the nation. The nation must understand that I always take great care to preserve it. I do not want to live to see that on my dying bed I would have to close my eyes to equally sinister prophecies, as was the case with Bismarck⁴⁹⁷

Listening to Hitler's words, it would be easy to entertain the thought that perhaps he indeed believed that the menace of a declaration of war by Great Britain truly existed. However, it is well known that this was far from his mind. He saw the British to be "little worms" and "senile" Philistines, that had come to rest so comfortably on the laurels

of days gone by that they had fallen asleep on top of them. No longer were they capable of formulating a “manly” decision—i.e. to decide upon war. His verbal campaign against the British was an outgrowth of his fury at them both for failing to allow him the freedom to proceed to the East as he had envisioned, and for surveying every step he took with great suspicion. His tirades were to function like deserved slaps in the face, wakening them to “reason” and teaching them whom they ought to respect as the actual master of Europe!

In this sense, too, Hitler was convinced that it had become necessary to now apply thumbscrews to the German Jews in order to exert pressure on the British Government.

Already Hitler had plans at hand for an appropriate measure. On November 7, Herschel Grynszpan, a German Jewish emigré, had fired upon the legation counsellor Ernst Eduard vom Rath at the German Embassy in Paris. Vom Rath was seriously wounded in the attack. Through his act, Grynszpan had wanted to protest and draw attention to the denial of rights to Jewish people in Germany. In any event, this was how his deed was assessed worldwide.

Even though one might have expected differently, Hitler had not mentioned the incident at all in his speech at the Bürgerbräukeller. He had come up with a far better idea. Since Rath had been so critically wounded in Paris, Hitler was sure that he would eventually die. As soon as news of his death reached Germany, Hitler would stage an anonymous pogrom in all of Germany.

The customary march to the Feldherrnhalle, and from there to the Königsplatz, took place on November 9. For the first time, the Führer’s new military sycophants, Keitel and Brauchitsch, occupied the places of the fired generals Blomberg and Fritsch. Raeder and Milch also participated in the march.

In a French hospital, the legation counsellor vom Rath died at 4:30 p.m. on November 9 of the various injuries he had sustained in the attack. What had happened in Paris was a nearly perfect replay of the events of February 1936, surrounding the death of Wilhelm Gustloff in Davos. In both cases, a fanaticized Jew had assassinated a representative of National Socialist Germany to protest against the treatment of his fellow men there. Regrettable as the deaths of innocent people in these events were, it is extremely unlikely that they could have provoked a “spontaneous” outburst of a thirst for revenge among the German people. The latter had no reason to hold the innocent German Jews responsible for the murders. Under normal circumstances, as in the

time of the Wilhelm Gustloff case, an assassination such as that of vom Rath would not have led the German population to seek vengeance in a pogrom.

However, and this was the crucial point, *Hitler* reacted completely differently to the more recent incident. Gustloff had been killed immediately prior to the occupation of the Rhineland. Hitler did not wish to attract international attention; thus, he had to content himself with a relatively moderate speech at Gustloff's funeral.

But the assassination of vom Rath came at a most opportune moment for Hitler to use it as a pretext for staging a Jewish pogrom throughout the Reich. Hitler sought revenge for the smugness of the German Jews during the Sudeten crisis and believed that this measure would be most effective in pressuring the secret Jewish world government. If this organization, and its members among the English inner circle in the City of London, did not react swiftly to induce a more subservient demeanor of the Western Powers facing him, he wanted to make it clear that the Jews in Germany would suffer severely in consequence. Their cries of anguish would cause Jews worldwide to shudder. For the rescue of those "hostages" of the same creed and race in Germany, "world Jewry" would influence the British Government to espouse a more lenient stance toward Germany. It was the same attempt at blackmail that Hitler would use again and again during the war.

Of course, this was a completely utopian undertaking, given the fact that the secret Jewish world government only existed in Hitler's mind. Nonetheless, even harsh realities could not succeed in convincing Hitler to abandon his preconceived notions of 1919. From early 1942 onward, when it became obvious that the conquest of Russia did not go on as planned, he found himself forced to face the consequences of his previous policy and to demonstrate to the West that even his cruelest threats were deadly serious. Hundreds of thousands, finally millions of Jewish people were slaughtered. However, this did not in the least force the Western Powers to consider Hitler's terms of peace.

Nevertheless, in 1938, Hitler still believed that a "simple pogrom" would suffice to serve his interests. He himself did not wish to be implicated in the upcoming incidents. Contrary to the Gustloff case in 1936, he remained silent on the Paris murder and avoided making any specific comments in connection with vom Rath's death. He only sent condolences to the parents of the assassinated legation counsellor in the following telegram, dated November 9:⁴⁹⁸

November 9, 1938

To Herr and Frau vom Rath, Paris

Please accept my sincere sympathies on the grievous loss with which you have been afflicted as a result of the cowardly assassination of your son.

Adolf Hitler

This was the only public stance Hitler took with regard to the vom Rath case. Goebbels was to execute the pogrom according to his instructions. Hitler not only desired to keep himself aloof from the affair, but he also wanted to keep his favorite branches of the Party organization, such as the Political Leaders and the SS, from being compromised before the German public.

Speaking to SS recruits taking their loyalty oath in front of the Feldherrnhalle at midnight on November 9, Hitler made no mention of the Parisian affair either. He only presented them with the customary admonishment to devote their lives to his defense.⁴⁹⁹

Above all, I expect of you to uphold the motto which you have the honor to bear.⁵⁰⁰ Your honor must always and under all circumstances be loyalty.

Hitler passed the infamy generated by the persecution of the Jews on November 9 and November 10 on to the branch of the Party he had disliked for a long time already: the SA. Up to January 30, 1933, he had taken advantage of their services in his rise to power. But since that date, Hitler had built his political base upon the military. He loathed the SA's ideas on the establishment of an independent militia. The sight of their hats alone sufficed to pique his anger.⁵⁰¹

In addition, the majority of these hundreds of thousands of SA men were financially independent of the Führer. They neither entertained ambitious designs nor were their professional careers linked to the success of the Movement. Hence, their situation was completely different from that of Political Leaders and the SS. The SA men wished only to patriotically serve the cause of the Fatherland. Because the SA was a thorn in Hitler's side, he saw it as the ideal scapegoat for the excesses of the upcoming pogrom.

The pogrom aimed to destroy Jewish synagogues,⁵⁰² demolish Jewish apartments, and seal the fate of the remaining Jewish businesses. The resulting outcry that was certain to be voiced by the German population against such atrocities could then be blamed on the SA—after all, the SA had long proven to be unreliable.

After the war, an inquiry into the participation of the SA men in the so-called "Crystal Night"⁵⁰³ was undertaken by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. The fact that only a small percentage of

the SA membership took to the streets that night (along with other Party members and Political Leaders) matters less than the revelation at the Nuremberg trials that the orders to act that night had not come from the leaders of the SA. Indeed, the majority of the SA leadership had not yet returned from the festivities in Munich. Instead, the Ministry of Propaganda and the commissioned Political Leaders had issued the directions on how to proceed that night. Those among the SA men who heeded the call to action on that evening of November 9, 1938, had been deceived by Hitler.⁵⁰⁴

The riots and campaigns directed against the Jews that month included dozens of murders, which were later investigated at the Nuremberg trials as well. Nonetheless, the pogrom of 1938 can be considered comparatively “mild” in relation to the brutality of many pogroms of earlier centuries in Germany and in other countries. That night nearly all synagogues stood in flames. Jewish families awoke in terror as their furniture was hacked to pieces. There were incidents of theft of Jewish private property, though these were not very frequent. The goal was destruction, a show of force.

Those roaming the streets of the Jewish quarters of German cities that night heard the crashes of breaking furniture and china, a sound they heard again during the Second World War bombings of German cities, when the air shocks from the exploding bombs shook houses and destroyed their furnishings.

The Party and State feigned complete surprise on the morning of November 10, when the smoldering ruins of the synagogues were brought to daylight. With glass of broken windows from Jewish homes scattered about the streets, the government decided that only a “spontaneous outburst of popular fury” could explain such odd behavior, and immediately endeavored to direct this “public outrage” into more orderly channels by staging official marches to protest the assassination in Paris. Göring imposed a “penalty,” in the amount of one billion mark, upon the Jewish community in Germany, for its “sin.”

Hitler refrained from commenting on the pogrom. Even his ‘secret speech’ in Munich before the German press on the evening of November 10 contained no reference to the events that had taken place less than twenty-four hours earlier.

Ceremoniously printed invitations to attend the speech in the Führerbau at the Königsplatz were extended not only to the publishers and the leading editors of Party newspapers, but also to members of the bourgeois press (insofar as a bourgeois press still existed at this

time). There had been no comparable event since 1933–34, when Hitler had repeatedly spoken before German journalists and publishers in Berlin. The official reason given for this unconventional gathering was that the government wished to express its gratitude to the German press for its actions in the course of the Sudeten crisis.

In Germany, the belief was widespread that the astonishing accommodation of the Western Powers at the conference in Munich had largely been due to the German press campaign against Czechoslovakia. In all likelihood, Hitler shared this opinion. As mentioned before, Hitler continuously overestimated the influence of propaganda and the press, maintaining his firm conviction that both factors had played a decisive role in the First World War.

Though the gratitude to the German press was a valid reason to deliver the ‘secret speech’ of November 10, Hitler had another consideration in mind as well. He had not been satisfied in the least with the German people’s lack of display of popular enthusiasm for war in September. In the meantime, other developments had added to his displeasure: the Munich Agreement, the Anglo-German declaration of peace, the frustrated war. In his mind, all these developments appeared to threaten the future spiritual wholeness of the German population. He feared the ascendancy of a pacifist philosophy, all the more because he had just declared the Sudeten area would be his last territorial claim in Europe.⁵⁰⁵ Hitler intended to use the German press as a means for preventing such an undesirable development. The press was to prepare the German public for future wars. More importantly, the media was to instill into the Volk the “blind” conviction that whatever decision the Führer made was the only correct one.

Hitler’s ‘secret speech’ of November 10, 1938, has been preserved on a phonograph record. Its verbatim content, which has been published later,⁵⁰⁶ is reproduced below. Hitler began his talk by referring to the military preparations taken within the last months, and stated:

The year 1938 owes its great successes, as a matter of course, primarily to the enormous work of education which National Socialism has wrought for the German Volk. Slowly this work is beginning to bear fruit. The German Volk has brilliantly proven itself within these past months; yes, indeed, we may say that it has done so better than any other nationality in Europe. Naturally, we also owe these successes to the decisiveness of the leadership. Gentlemen, I can assure you that this was not always easy.

First, the decisions had to be made; then they had to be carried out. After all, the nation as a whole—and particularly the intellectuals—did not stand

behind these decisions. It was only natural that numerous of these “spirited men”—those at least who think of themselves as “spirited”—were less than in agreement with these decisions. They voiced doubts continuously. Hence, it was all the more important to persevere with an iron will and to see through the decisions which had been made in May despite heavy opposition.

Further, the actual motivation behind these decisions, which were the root of our successes, was revealed in our large-scale preparations and, most importantly, in our military rearmament. Certain measures which had to be and have been implemented sooner or later were undertaken this spring. Central to these measures was the construction of the fortifications in the West. Moreover, the political situation worldwide greatly advanced our interests. Taking advantage of this situation was instrumental to our success. We benefited greatly from the international situation which never before has appeared so favorable to our cause.

In this context, one must not forget one thing which was crucial, namely, propaganda. Not only propaganda in the interior but also in the exterior. As I pointed out earlier, the fact that the German Volk took a different stance in this case⁵⁰⁷ quite different from that of other peoples and of that which the German Volk would have taken not so very long ago, is the result of the persistent enlightenment campaign with which we have inundated the German Volk. And here the press played a big role.

With this we have taken upon ourselves the resolution of several tasks this year which we wish to achieve by employing propaganda. And it is here that the present press will be amongst our foremost instruments. First, the slow preparation of our Volk itself. For decades, circumstances caused me to speak almost exclusively of peace. Only by constantly emphasizing the German Volk’s desire for peace and peaceful intentions was I able to gain the German Volk’s freedom step by step and thus to give it the armament necessary as a prerequisite for accomplishing the next step. It is self-evident that this peace propaganda throughout the decades may well have had quite questionable effects. It might well leave the mistaken impression in the minds of many that the present regime stands for the resolution and the willingness to preserve peace under all circumstances.

This would not only lead to a wrong assessment of the ambitions of this system. It would also, and above all, lead the German nation, instead of being prepared for what is to come, to fall prey to a spirit of defeatism. In the long run, this could and most certainly would obliterate the successes scored by the present regime.

For years, I spoke only of peace because of this forced situation. Now it has become necessary to slowly prepare the German Volk psychologically for the fact that there are things that cannot be achieved by peaceful means. Some goals can only be achieved through the use of force. Not that it was necessary to propagandize the use of force as such, but it was necessary to shed light on certain events abroad in such a manner that the inner voice of the German Volk naturally cried out for the application of force. That meant that certain of these events needed to be portrayed in a manner in which they would automatically trigger a certain reaction in the brains of the mass of the German

Volk: if you cannot stop these things in a peaceful manner, then you will just have to stop them by force—in any event, things cannot go on like this. Fulfilling this task took many months' time: it was begun on schedule, continued, and reinforced. Many did not understand this, gentlemen, many thought it a bit extreme. These men were those hypersophisticated intellectuals who have no idea of how to get a Volk to stand straight when thunder rolls and lightning is in the sky. Secondly, it was necessary to make propaganda abroad as well and to do so for a variety of reasons. For one, it was necessary to portray those problems, problems that moved us ourselves, to the world as issues of importance and great urgency. Second, it was necessary that it became increasingly clear to the whole world that the German nation had reached a stage at which it could no longer be discounted. This would have to become increasingly evident based on the manner in which we treated these problems. And finally, one had to convincingly portray the cohesiveness of the German nation. It was also to this end that the press was essentially employed. Further, it was necessary to impress the enemy by this propaganda and press campaign, impress the enemy we faced at this time, namely, Czechoslovakia. There might have been some who did not understand the measures we took in the course of these years. Gentlemen, from May 21 on, it was crystal clear that this problem had to be resolved in one way or another! Any further delay would only have complicated the situation and might well have rendered its resolution all the more bloody. Today we know that this was perhaps the last possible moment in which to resolve this problem in the manner in which we were able to resolve it now.

One thing is certain, gentlemen: even a delay of no more than one or two years would have placed us in a most difficult situation militarily. Our enemies worldwide would not have changed. The "aircraft carrier" in the heart of Germany would have continued to build up and to seal itself off behind its fortifications. The imperative of first meeting this challenge would have implied that all our additional weaponry be applied to this task. This in turn would have slowly but surely devoured all investment into the military.

Hence, this problem had to be resolved this year—no matter what the circumstances. It was simply no longer possible to defer this issue to a later date. For the first time, preparatory steps were pursued to completion, and they were carried out on such an enormous scale that they could not well be disguised. Above all, however, the surrounding countries must have been aware of the activity—given the circumstances. Back then, I somehow had the impression that all these pacifist slogans no longer moved anyone. They had become tiresome and, anyway, no one believed them any longer or took them seriously. By then, I had arrived at the conclusion that only one alternative remained; to speak the truth relentlessly and brutally, and to do so without any false pretenses. No more and no less was required. In the long run, this simply had to have a paralyzing effect upon the state which was the most afflicted.

Many times, the question was put to me: "Do you truly believe this is right? For months now, each shooting-range in the vicinity of Czechoslovakia is being fired upon constantly. Czechoslovakian bunkers are being fired upon

constantly. Live ammunition is being used constantly. Indeed, you practically force everyone to notice the on-goings." I was convinced that these tactics would ultimately, over the months, ruin the nerves of these gentlemen in Prague. And to this end, the press had to make its contribution. It had its share in slowly ruining the nerves of these people. Indeed, their nerves did not stand up to the pressure.

After a few additional references to how he had gone about destroying "the nerves of these gentlemen in Prague," Hitler maintained that "others," i.e. the Western Powers, had suffered a nervous breakdown as well.⁵⁰⁸

At this last and crucial breaking point, the others lost their nerve so that in the end it was not necessary for us to actually take up arms. Indeed this was the main task of our press campaign, a task many did not understand. They said: "You are exaggerating, this is not fair play, after all it is just a tiny state." Only intellectuals could say something of this nature, naturally the Volk never would. In this instance, the Volk preferred a diet of greater clarity, boldness, and acridity. But certain intellectuals did speak in this manner, feeling themselves guardians of a different type of morality in Germany. They felt themselves responsible for what they called justice and for keeping measure in all things. Many of them did not understand this. Believe me, it was necessary! And in the end, all that counts is the success! I would now like to establish the fact that propaganda did excellent work this year, extremely excellent work. The press, too, blossomed in this work, and I personally felt great pleasure looking through numerous German newspapers every day.

Almost every day I could ascertain the great effectiveness of this propaganda and, in particular, of this propaganda in the press. What matters in the end is the success, as I said earlier, and, gentlemen, what a fabulous success it is indeed! This success is like a dream, a success so great that, in the present, we are not yet capable of assessing its true extent.

I realized the greatness of this success for the first time as I found myself standing on the Czech bunker lines. It was then I realized what it means to gain a line of fortification, nearly 2,000 kilometers in length, without having had to fire a shot. Gentlemen—this time propaganda in the service of a great idea conquered ten million people and 100,000 square kilometers of land for us. That is enormous!

For us, this opens the door to an understanding of Napoleon's victories. He was victorious not only because he was a brilliant strategist and great warlord. The Marseillaise and the ideas of the French Revolution came before him, and brought them to fruition. Out of this, we must arrive at one fundamental realization: the press, gentlemen, can achieve the impossible and it can have an enormous effect if it is used as a means to an end. We live in a time when the opposite is proving itself to be true. For example, assuming there are 2,400 newspapers in one country and each of them makes its own politics based upon its journalists' reflections, then there are 2,400 newspapers aiming to discredit each other. The net result would be chaos like the one we

are witnessing at present in the French press. One newspaper repudiates the conclusion of the other and, within a short time, the result is that every newspaper is discredited. When we look to the past six years, we cannot deny that the French press played a pivotal role in the collapse of the country. And this was so because of the complete muddleheadedness and lack of discipline of the French press. Every paper published whatever it thought appropriate at one particular point in time.

One of the papers claimed that any negotiations with Germany on the basis of a 200,000-man army were tantamount to a criminal deed. Another paper claimed that any negotiations on the basis of a 300,000-man army were tantamount to crime as well. Three years later, these same papers demand: "Now why did you not accept the 300,000-man army proposal back then?" They keep contradicting themselves. This whole matter is proof that in modern times, in times in which the greatest battles ever are being fought, in such times you cannot win the battle if the—let me call them—"critical swords" act to self-glorification. They must instead listen to one command and strike out in one direction. As a means to an end, the press becomes an instrument of incredible force. Its value is not diminished by the fact that there is no need for paper A to disprove the claims of paper B, nor by the fact that paper C could contradict both the claims of A and B. In an age where questions of such paramount importance are on the agenda, the press will lose its importance completely once it strays from this path, something we witness in many other countries today. I experienced this early on, gentlemen—in my youth. As a young man when I first witnessed the practical formation of a national identity in Vienna, the city's newspapers were exclusively of a Marxist or liberal democratic persuasion. This included all the big papers such as the *Neue Freie Presse*, *Wiener Journal*—at the time still named the *Die Zeit*—, *Wiener Tagblatt*, and *Extrablatt*, and so on. Those were the big papers and the papers of the worker. For the remainder, there was only one with an anti-Semitic agenda, namely the *Deutsches Volksblatt* with a circulation of about 20,000 to 25,000. And on the board of the city council of Vienna, 136 of the 148 delegates were anti-Semitic, namely the Christian Socialists. That goes to show how little influence the press had in reality. No one took note of its scribbling. The press published, the people read, but the papers themselves had no influence.

Today the situation is similar in many other countries where public opinion is beginning to make itself felt. Public opinion there is of a completely different nature from that portrayed by the press. The press simply does not want to face the facts. It was once the same here. When I took power, we controlled less than five percent of the German press. Not even five percent: 95 percent opposed us. But the power became mine; the Volk backs me!

That simply goes to show just how incredible the power of the press can be when it serves as an instrument of power wielded by one government. And, I would like to point out, this proves just how devoid of importance the press becomes when it is left to its own devices, when it tries to make history and politics by itself. In Germany, we have attempted to transform the press into a most powerful instrument. And at the close of this year, I would like

to proclaim before you that I am more than satisfied with the results. The press has gloriously passed the test and has proven its value. We face great new tasks. And above all we have one mission, gentlemen, one mission we must fulfill by all means: to strengthen the self-confidence of this German Volk—step by step! I realize that this is a goal that cannot be achieved within a year or two.

What we need is a forceful and confident public opinion, if at all possible, to penetrate the ranks of our intellectuals as well. It is in this manner only that we successfully can make politics in the long run. When I say in the long run, I do not mean spring 1939 nor am I speaking of the summer. What I am speaking of are the coming decades, the years that lie ahead of us. We must instill in our Volk that same profound self-confidence that once permeated the German soldier at the end of the Franco-German War of 1871 and that he felt up to the middle of the World War. This type of self-assurance gives the German Volk a sense of its intrinsic value and the sense that its leadership is the right one. Here it is of paramount importance that in our education of the Volk we must consciously combat all those forces that I myself have encountered as the greatest enemy of the resurrection of our people: mass hysteria—and more specifically—the hysteria of our intellectual strata. To this end, one must rely completely on the broad general public in order to counter the weight of this inbred, intellectual and hysterical strata.

Let me give you an example. In February of this year, our intellectuals claimed: "Things are not going well in foreign affairs; truly they are not going well at all!" Toward the end of February: "We are headed for catastrophe! Our foreign policy is a catastrophe, a pure catastrophe!" Mid-March: "Incredible victory! The battle is won—thanks to our braveness and steadfastness. Everything is in order now! Germany is invincible, it is a world power, etc. The colonies are next on the list—they will be returned to us as gifts, undoubtedly. Too bad the leadership did not carry the matter further, evidently it was not quite its day. It should have made a double-take, it should have pushed further, everything was still open."

Two months later, upon the beginning of Czechoslovakian predicament they claimed: "Haven't we had enough for one year?! We should not be embarking upon yet another enterprise." A month later: "This will end in catastrophe! Germany will face economic ruin; this will ruin German financially! We can pay for this neither in terms of money nor in terms of human endurance!" Another week later: "The entire world is against us; we are facing another world war!" Yet another week later: "Triumph! Why did the leadership not take things a step further and take all of Czechoslovakia?!"⁵⁰⁹ Why negotiate?" You would not believe the response I have had.

I knew one man a while back who sat in this office in Berlin. Regarding negotiations on the topic of the Navy, he maintained: "This demand for 35 percent is utterly outrageous! To think that the English would ever agree to anything of that nature is to totally underestimate them. They cannot agree to that, they will never agree to such a demand! This will lead to a breakdown of British-German relations, it will lead to the isolation of Germany! This will strain the so laboriously won rapprochement between Germany and England—

laboriously won by the Foreign Ministry that is.” Then the actual negotiations take place. The demand for 35 percent is granted, even 45 percent regarding the submarine fleet. If we wished we could get one hundred percent. About three or four months thereafter, I finally had to throw this gentleman out of the Foreign Ministry for good since this very gentleman had declared, all of a sudden: “I have no idea what got into Ribbentrop to make such a big deal out of this. Had he gotten 50 percent then we could talk, but 35 percent—what is a mere 35 percent in the end?” I then fired this gentleman after his statement was brought to my attention, perchance. He was a legation counsellor.

I have experienced similar things in the meantime. I received memoranda that proved to me in black and white that all this was completely impossible and, in the end, it would lead to catastrophe, and so on. And then I saw other memoranda that insisted that the distance between our southernmost position in ... ⁵¹⁰ and our northernmost position in lower Austria was a mere 60 kilometers—why on earth had I not taken these few kilometers as well. And then it was pointed out to me that there happened to be German-speaking enclaves in this strip of land in case I should not be aware of this fact! Yes, gentlemen, such is the hysteria of our high society! We must strive in particular not to let this hysteria infect the broad masses. And we must do so in order to instill in the Volk, and if at all possible in certain intellectual circles as well, a real self-confidence. It is the mission of the press to further the self-confidence of all Germans and to refrain from doing anything that might thwart this process, endanger this self-confidence, or to weaken its impact.

I know only too well that certain parties will point out that in fact there are several issues which deserve criticism. Gentlemen, there are two approaches. Approach number 1: I search all of Germany to find something to criticize. Once I start on that, gentlemen, I will turn into a veritable *Rüsselschwein*⁵¹¹ in no time. There will be plenty of subjects, and I will dig myself in ever the more. That is one way to stay busy, but to me it is not a satisfying one.

However, there is another approach which lies in the recognition of the great tasks facing us. I will not resolve even the most trifling of matter if I get bogged down by details. Rather I must direct the force of the entire nation toward the truly great tasks facing us. I must solve these great tasks. To the extent that I succeed in resolving these enormous tasks, small matters will reveal themselves as ludicrous and trivial. No one will speak of them ever again. And hereby I will overcome them as well. No one will take note of them any longer and no one will think of them.

And finally: human imperfection. In the past, this issue was not removed from the face of the earth either. The press in the liberal states did not succeed in this and neither shall we. There will always be people of insufficient strength and talents, lacking in character, etc., and we cannot remove them from the face of the earth.

What is important instead is not to promote public awareness of these faults, but to emphasize instead the great surge of strength in our nation, a strength evident throughout the centuries and millenniums.

After Hitler had reflected at great length upon this immense success and, likening himself to Napoleon, he began to flaunt anecdotes and war stories. Considering the later course of events, one of these tales was particularly amusing, although perhaps not in the context its author had intended:

One day, a man came up to me and said: "Listen, if you do this, then Germany will be ruined within six weeks' time." So I said: The German Volk once survived wars with the Romans. The German Volk survived the *Völkerwanderung*. The German Volk later survived the great battles of the early and late Middle Ages. The German Volk survived the religious wars of more recent times. The German Volk then survived the Napoleonic Wars, the Wars of Liberation, even a World War, even the Revolution [of 1918]—it will survive me, too!

For once, a statement by Hitler was most authoritative! The Führer continued:

It is imperative for us to instill in the German Volk a confidence based upon its history and our beliefs in order to be able to carry out the great political tasks facing us. Gentlemen, a nation's Führer can do no more than his nation will allow him to do. This is a law of unquestionable appropriateness and significance. I ask you: how shall I approach the tasks facing us in the future if I have behind me a people lacking in faith?! It does not suffice that I myself have faith: I must know that behind me stands a German Volk strong in its convictions, united, secure, and confident. It is the goal of our mutual, gigantic efforts to achieve this. This is a wonderful task.

You know it is something completely different to be making history instead of ... [sentence incomplete]. And indeed today we live in a most wonderful period, a time in which we can truly say that history is being made. And indeed we can say that we have not wasted our time in the pursuit of trivial matters, that we did not record historic events simply for the sake of recording events. Nor did we talk about them only for the sake of idle chatter. All this has led to for one outcome, an historic outcome, which allows us to stand proudly amidst the ranks of our revered ancestors, gentlemen! And I did not accomplish this feat by myself. Rather, it is the accomplishment of hundreds of thousands who stand behind me, who march alongside me, and who represent the Volk in the end. Therefore, it is necessary for us to strive to awaken the true force of the German Volk by reinforcing confidence in this power. Hereby we will bring stability to the assessment of political problems.

Now it appeared to be necessary to once again rage against the intellectuals:

I should perhaps add that there is yet one concern that continues to haunt me. It is the following: when I take a look at the intellectual classes we have—unfortunately, I suppose, they are necessary; otherwise one could one day, I don't know, exterminate (*ausrotten*) them or something—but unfortunately

they're necessary. So when I take a look at these intellectual classes and imagine their behavior and take a closer look, in comparison to myself, and to our work, then I almost get scared. For since I have been politically active and particularly since I began to lead this Reich, I have experienced only successes. And all the same, this mass is floating around, often in such a positively repulsive, nauseating way. What would happen if we ever suffered a defeat? It is a possibility, gentlemen. Can you imagine how this race of chickens would act then, given the chance? They are not reliable, even now that we are scoring success upon success unrivaled in the history of mankind. Can you imagine how they would react if we truly suffered defeat?

Then Hitler addressed the crucial point in his speech. He wished to make it perfectly clear to the press, and through its offices to the German people, that the leadership, i.e. Adolf Hitler, would always make the right decisions, and therefore it was imperative to blindly obey.

Gentlemen, it used to be my greatest pride to have built up a party that stood by me, come what may. The party stood behind me, even in times of setback and dismay, and apparently it did so all the more fervently when times were tough. I took great pride in this, and it was a great consolation for me. This is precisely what we must bring the Volk to do. It must learn to fanatically believe in the *Endsieg* so that even if we meet with failure, the nation will assess this failure in a different light, in a more illuminated light if I may say so, thinking: this is only temporary, victory will be ours in the end!

There once was a Prussian warlord who epitomized this trait of character: Blücher—the man of innumerable defeats who zealously believed in victory in the end, and this was the crucial point!⁵¹² We must instill this belief in the entire Volk. It must be instilled with an absolute, stubborn, self-evident and confident faith: in the end we will accomplish all that is necessary. This can only succeed, we can only accomplish this by persistently appealing to the nation's strengths, underscoring the Volk's good points, and ignoring its so-called bad points.

To this end, it is imperative that the press blindly pledge itself to one principle: "The leadership acts correctly!"

Gentlemen, we all must admit that we do indeed make mistakes. Journalists are not exempt from this either. Nevertheless, we all can only endure if, instead of permanently criticizing each other in full view of the world public, we highlight each other's positive aspects.

In other words, it is imperative that—while not disclaiming the possibility of errors or even of discussion—the correctness of the leadership's actions must, in principle, be continuously emphasized. That is crucial. Above all, you know, this is necessary because of the Volk. Still today I hear some people demanding—they are throw backs to a more liberal age: "Should one not place this issue before the Volk for once?" Well, gentlemen, I do believe I have accomplished not little, at least a lot more than some old cobbler or some old dairymaid.

Nonetheless, it is entirely possible that I may not arrive at an agreement with other gentlemen on the assessment of certain problems, with other gentlemen who have also accomplished not little. However, a decision must be made. It is totally impossible that I leave this decision, an issue to which no one knows a solution at this point, in the hands of dairy maids and dairy farmers or cobblers. It is totally impossible.

It does not make any difference whether this decision proves correct in the last instance—that is of no interest. What is decisive is that the entire nation as a single unit stands behind this decision. It must form a unitarian front. Should the decision prove not entirely correct, this will be more than compensated for by the determination with which the whole nation backs it. This will be of importance in the coming years, gentlemen! In this manner only can we free the German Volk from the bondage of doubt, a doubt that only makes the Volk unhappy. The broad mass would rather not be troubled by doubt, it has only one desire: to be led by a leadership it can trust. The mass does not want this leadership to be a divided one, but rather that this leadership should step before it as one.

You may believe me that the Volk likes nothing better than the feeling that when I venture out into the streets with my colleagues on a day such as November 9, they can point at us and say: "That is he, and that is he, and that is he." The Volk feels secure in the knowledge that these men will stand together, follow one Führer, and this Führer will stand by these men. These men are their idols. It is possible that an intellectual might not be capable of comprehending this. But the man in the street, he somehow places his trust in those men who step before him. He depends on these men. Seeing the Führer step forth, accompanied by all his men, that picture reassures the man in the street.

It is this that makes the people happy! That is what they want! This has been the case throughout German history. The Volk always delights in seeing the men on top united. This makes it easier to maintain its own unity. We must bear in mind the big picture, we must do everything in our power to preserve and foster this impression with the Volk. We must instill in the Volk the conviction that the leadership is right and that everyone stands behind this leadership. Psychologically speaking, this makes it possible for the leadership to hold its own in times of crisis.

In summary, I would like to point out one fact, gentlemen. In the liberal states, the mission of the press can be summed up as follows: press plus Volk against leadership. For us, it must read: leadership plus propaganda plus press, etc., to stand united before the Volk! Leadership of the Volk entails all of this. Every man must feel himself to be a leading member of the Volk and must feel himself personally responsible. Every man must internalize the high principles of leadership. Regardless of what is discussed behind closed doors, the leadership must step before the Volk as one, a single united entity.

It does not matter whether one of its members is responsible for propaganda only, another is responsible for the press, and a third conducts rallies or a fourth manages the political organization. A fifth may lead the military. A sixth may either work in the administration or represent his country abroad.

All of these men are part of the German Volk's leadership, and as such they must appear to stand united before the Volk. Amongst us, we can exchange opinions. Before the Volk, there is only one opinion. Gentlemen, this is the clear-cut command of the hour! If we can carry out this command, then this leadership will make the German Volk great and mighty. And this means, that in 1935 we find ourselves not at the end of an epoch. Rather, we stand at the beginning of another great era in the history of our Volk.

Gentlemen! I believe in the future of the German Volk. In the past, a man perhaps thought: "The Führer must be a dreamer—how else could he believe in these possibilities?" Quite easily, gentlemen! People make history. People did so in the past, and they will do so in the future. What is decisive is the internal worth of the people. Their numbers are crucial. The value of the German Volk defies comparison. I will never believe that there could ever be a people of greater worth.

Here Hitler referred to the decision between war and peace. He could not put this decision before the German Volk, simply because the latter's choice would have been a most obvious one. At the end of his nearly one-hour speech, Hitler presented the gentlemen with a long list of figures. In it, the German Volk was not only listed as the most valuable of all peoples, but also as the one numerically dominant nation. His calculation was the following:

I am convinced that, particularly today, our Volk represents the pinnacle reached by an evolution toward gradual, racial improvement, unequaled on this planet at present. With regard to statistics you should always keep in mind that the American Union is made up of 126 million or 127 million people. However, if you subtract the Germans, Italians, Negroes, Jews, etc.,⁵¹³ then all you are left with are about 60 million Anglo-Saxons, people who count themselves as members of the Anglo-Saxon race. The Russian Empire contains not even 55 million or 56 million true Russians. The British Empire has less than 46 million Englishmen living in the mother country. The French Empire contains less than 37 million true Frenchmen. Italy has little more than 40 million Italians. Only 17 million Poles remain in Poland. However, from 1940 on, 80 million people of one race will live in Germany, surrounded by nearly eight million people additionally who are actually of the same race as well. Whoever has doubts about the future of so great a block of people, whoever does not believe in this future, is merely a weakling. I believe in this future without reservation!

We once called our own the greatest empire on earth. Since then, we have slackened in our efforts, and we have worn ourselves out. We exhausted our powers in a process of inner disintegration. We lost in standing abroad. Now, after a period of crisis which has lasted 400 or 300 years, our Volk has finally recuperated. And I am certain that what we are witnessing today we is the rebirth of Germany and hence of Germany's future. For all of us, the greatest happiness lies with having been allowed to partake in the process of preparing, forming, and realizing this future.

All of us feel profound satisfaction at this and, in view of this, all else loses in meaning. It was this firm conviction that once led me forth from my hospital bed as it has inspired me to this day on which I stand before you. And all of us must resound with this firm conviction as we stride forth on the path laid out for the German Volk. I am certain this path will lead the German Volk to greatness and it will lead the German nation onward toward a bright future. I wish to thank you once again for your cooperation.

Evidently, here Hitler did not include the British with the Germans in his tables, despite the fact that he had repeatedly declared the British to belong to the same race as the Germans.⁵¹⁴ It is also remarkable that Hitler did not mention the supposed “Bolshevist threat to the world” in his ‘secret speech’ of November 10. On other occasions, he often reminded of this imminent danger in order to justify his military measures to the Western Powers. Furthermore, he used the threat of allying himself with the Bolsheviks as a threat to terrorize the British into a more lenient stance. The strategy was starkly reminiscent of the tactics Hitler used to deal with the German Nationalists during the November 1932 transportation strikes, when he had encouraged National Socialist cooperation with the Communists.

On November 11, Hitler sent a telegram to the President of the Turkish National Assembly, expressing his condolences and his sorrow at the death of the Turkish President Kemal Atatürk:⁵¹⁵

Deeply moved, I and the German Volk extend our great sorrow and sympathy on the demise of the President of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk, to Your Excellency, the Great National Assembly, and the entire Turkish people. With him we have lost a great soldier, a brilliant statesman, and a historic person. In the erection of the new Turkish Empire, Atatürk has created for himself a memorial which will survive the ages.

Adolf Hitler, German Reich Chancellor

In Düsseldorf on November 17, Hitler attended the funeral services for the assassinated legation counsellor vom Rath. The Führer himself did not speak on the occasion⁵¹⁶ and his demeanor was quite the opposite of the behavior he had displayed two and a half years earlier at the funeral of Wilhelm Gustloff, where he had delivered a lengthy address.⁵¹⁷

This time he was concerned about appearances and wished in no way to be connected to the pogrom that had followed the death of vom Rath. He may have found credulous listeners in his German audience, but his tactic failed him with regard to the international public. Out of protest against the committed atrocities, the United States recalled its

Ambassador in Berlin, Hugh R. Wilson. An American Ambassador would never return to National Socialist Germany. Hitler was forced to react by recalling the German Ambassador, Dieckhoff, from Washington on November 18. Only a *Chargé d'Affaires* remained in the American capital.

On November 21, Hitler received the newly appointed Japanese Ambassador Lieutenant General Oshima at the Obersalzberg. He delivered the following address on the occasion:⁵¹⁸

Your Excellency!

I gratefully acknowledge your words of appreciation for the development of the German Reich and the German Wehrmacht. We owe this development to the unerring pursuit of a standardized path upon which the German Volk seeks to attain the fulfillment of its great national mission.

Under the wise guidance of its Imperial House within the last decades, Japan has witnessed a remarkable upswing which is reflected in the spirit of the Japanese Volk so like that in Germany.

A further proof of this kindred spirit is the fact that both our peoples have correctly identified the extent of the danger posed by the corrosive agitation of international communism and have allied themselves, together with the Italian people, to ward off this dangerous influence in the agreement against the Communist International.

Therefore, I am convinced that the German-Japanese friendship, based upon such a strong foundation, will be augmented and expanded upon in the future for the benefit of both our peoples in the service of peace and progress worldwide. In your previous capacity in Germany, Your Excellency, you have already greatly contributed to the further amplification of our friendly relations.

Hence I welcome it all the more that Your Excellency remains dedicated to the service of this idea in your new and highly responsible position. Let me assure Your Excellency, that your endeavors shall always be certain of my unflinching support.

Further, Hitler received the newly appointed Belgian Ambassador, Count Davignon. The count had previously served his country in the capacity of an envoy to Berlin. He presented his credentials to Hitler, who accepted them with the following words:⁵¹⁹

Your Excellency!

I am greatly honored to accept from your hand the correspondence which accredits you as the Royal Belgian Ambassador Plenipotentiary here.

I strongly applaud His Majesty the Belgian King's choice of Your Excellency as his first Ambassador to the German Reich. You have now represented your country as envoy here for over two and a half years and have come to know Germany well in the interim. It is with great satisfaction that

both the German Reich Government and the Royal Belgian Government reflect upon this period in which the relations between our countries developed most favorably. The basis for German-Belgian relations, as articulated in the German declaration of October 13, 1937,⁵²⁰ has stood the test of time—particularly within the last months. You may rest assured that your efforts to expand upon this foundation and to intensify German-Belgian relations will always meet with my full support.

I thank you for the friendly best wishes which Your Excellency has again extended for both the prosperity of Germany and myself. I return these with great sincerity, Your Excellency, and bid you welcome.

At the Obersalzberg on November 21, too, Hitler welcomed the recently appointed envoys from Albania, Manchukuo, and the Dominican Republic. He delivered the customary addresses on the occasion.⁵²¹

In the same location on the next day, a reception was held for the new French Ambassador, Robert Coulondre. He was to be the last accredited diplomat of the Third Republic serving in Berlin. In reply to the French Ambassador's introductory speech, Hitler delivered the address below:⁵²²

Your Excellency!

I am greatly honored to accept from your hand the correspondence which accredits you as France's Ambassador Plenipotentiary of His Excellency, the President of the French Republic.

I warmly welcome the fact that Your Excellency sees it as your mission to continue the work of your predecessor, Ambassador François-Poncet, and thus wish to contribute to the creation of consistent and trusting relations between Germany and France. I agree with you completely that both our peoples have every reason to cultivate good neighborly relations based upon mutual respect. Similarly, our countries complement one another in the realm of economics and thus should strive to work together in a spirit of honest cooperation. Now that the border disputes—which for such a long time in the past have weighed heavily upon our relations—are no longer of import, it is my firm conviction that peaceful competition will not only be mutually beneficial for our countries, but for Europe as a whole.

In this spirit, as you begin your work here, you may rest assured that I will do my utmost to facilitate the fulfillment of your mission. I bid you a heartfelt welcome, Your Excellency.

Later that day, the newly named Latvian Envoy Edgar Kreewinsch called upon Hitler. Having represented his country in Berlin in earlier years, Kreewinsch was well acquainted with Germany.⁵²³

On November 24, royal guests visited the Obersalzberg. Hitler's prestige had grown tremendously in the Balkans, and the Rumanian King Carol II believed the time to be ripe for him to pay his respects

to Hitler. The following communiqué was published on the meeting of the two statesmen:⁵²⁴

His Majesty King Carol II of Rumania, accompanied by his son Crown Prince Michael, called upon the Führer and Reich Chancellor for a private visit on the Obersalzberg today. They took breakfast together at the Berghof. Foreign Minister Ribbentrop attended both the breakfast and the ensuing discussions.

Afterwards, Hitler received the South African Minister of Defense, Commerce, and Industry, Oswald Pirow, on the Obersalzberg. The minister was at the time touring Germany.⁵²⁵

That same day, Hitler added to his previous instructions for military preparations for the annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia and the Memelland. He now included an ordinance to effect the occupation of the city of Danzig.⁵²⁶ These were the goals Hitler had set for his upcoming military moves. Hitler was confident that he could attain them without causing much of an uproar or provoking any serious interference by the Western Powers. This, however, was a dangerous mistake on his part.⁵²⁷

For the last time in his life, Hitler gave an election speech on December 2, 1938. He delivered it at Reichenberg, where he spoke on the topic of the upcoming December 2 supplemental elections to the Reichstag.⁵²⁸ Hitler arrived in the capital of the Sudetenland at around 2:00 in the afternoon. First he toured the House of Trade and the city theater, then continued on to the City Hall, where a reception was given in his honor. After a welcome by the Mayor, Hitler thanked him in a short address in which he emphasized his intention to transform Reichenberg, within a few years, into “a truly beautiful stronghold of the Movement.”

At a mass rally that evening, Hitler delivered his big election speech. He began with the obligatory “party narrative,” which even his regular listeners found comparatively long. However, he stood before thousands of Sudeten Germans, who heard him speak for the first time and adored him as though he were a godlike figure. They still possessed a faith in him which the people in the old part of the Reich had incrementally lost over the course of his six-year rule.

In front of the Sudeten Germans, Hitler could indulge once again in an orgy of verbosity. He listed his achievements of the past twenty years of his life, crowning his description with the following:

“National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!”

By the time Hitler's narrative had finally taken him to the year 1938, he could not refrain from expounding upon the preparations he had made for war against Czechoslovakia:

In this year, the German Volksgemeinschaft has proven itself to be a reality for the first time, a Volksgemeinschaft that does not shrink from threat or blackmail.

We have limited our foreign policy goals in a most reasonable fashion, yet there comes a point where international rights cease to exist and where the national rights of all peoples make their appearance! And it is for this national right to life that we stood up this year; we were determined to see it through even if this should demand the utmost of us.

Millions of Germans were not able to spend this summer, this fall, with their families. For many months, they were in the barracks or at military training sites. In this manner, they made a solemn vow that for them the German Volksgemeinschaft is more than simply a term or a phrase. To them it is a holy duty for which each man for himself is immediately willing to sacrifice his life, if need be, as so many millions have done before us.

From this determination, the Greater German Reich arose. It has cleared the path into this great Reich for you as well, my Volksgenossen, now that it has taken you in!

That with all your heart you have pledged yourselves to this greatest of communities, this most social of communities which exist on this earth todaythis I know! Now you must avow your heart's desire before all the world! This is what you are called upon to do on December 4 of this year!

Hitler maintained that the plebiscite would symbolize the completion of the birth certificate of Greater Germany, the Third Reich, which would be valid to the end of time.

Now you, too, shall step before the face of all the world at the completion of this year, profess your faith, reaffirm it, and hence solemnly avow your faith. I know what this avowal will be. Actually, it would not even be necessary to avow it. However, it is necessary to render complete the birth certificate of the Greater German Reich!

The birth certificate of the Second Reich was signed by the German Princes. The birth certificate of the Third Reich will be issued and verified by the German Volk.

Beneath this birth certificate of Greater Germany, all men and women of our German Gaus have set their hand already this year, be they from East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia, Brandenburg, Berlin, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Hanover, from Central Germany, from Franconia, Swabia, from the Rhine, from the South, from our Ostmark all the way to Vienna. And now you, too, will set your hand to it so that its validity shall remain for all eternity!

Greater Germany has arisen out of the will of the German nation! This is confirmed by all men and women of this Volk! And one day the German youth will pledge itself to this Reich forever. It is this that I demand of you now!

In the December 4 election in the Sudetenland, of the 2.94 million ballots cast, 2.64 million votes went to the NSDAP (98.8 percent). Hitler could not be content with such a “meager” showing. After all, the Saarlanders had reaffirmed his rule on March 31, 1936, by casting 99.9 percent of the votes in his favor. Earlier that year on April 10, the Austrians had demonstrated their support for his policies by dedicating to him 99.7 percent of the votes. Hitler felt that he had been done an injustice by the Sudeten Germans, whose gratitude for his willingness “to draw the sword” for them ought to have resulted in a far better showing. He punished them for the poor results of the plebiscite by simply ignoring them. There were no particular thanks to the Sudeten Germans as there had been for the people of the Saar and of Austria.⁵²⁹ Instead Hitler used his time that day to mail a congratulatory telegram to Franco, on the General’s forty-sixth birthday.⁵³⁰

The day after the plebiscite, December 5, Hitler proceeded to the Sudeten-Silesian region, accompanied by Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Milch. There he attended maneuvers conducted by the Army and the Luftwaffe.⁵³¹ What a telling foretaste of his plans for the future!

In the meantime, Ribbentrop journeyed to Paris. Upon arrival he went to meet his colleague, Bonnet, in the Foreign Ministry. There they signed the following Franco-German Declaration on December 6:⁵³²

The German Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, and the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Georges Bonnet, acting in the name of and by order of their Governments, have at their meeting in Paris on December 6, 1938, agreed as follows:

1. The German Government and the French Government fully share the conviction that peaceful and good neighborly relations between Germany and France constitute one of the most essential elements in the consolidation of the situation in Europe and in the preservation of general peace. Both Governments will consequently do all within their power to assure the development in this direction of the relations between their countries.

2. Both Governments state that between their countries no questions of a territorial nature are outstanding and solemnly recognize as final the frontier between their countries as it now exists.

3. Both Governments are resolved, without prejudice to their special relations with third powers, to remain in contact with each other on all questions concerning both their countries, and to confer together should the future evolution of these questions lead to international difficulties.

In witness thereof, the representatives of the two Governments have signed the present Declaration, which comes to force immediately. Executed in duplicate in the German and French language at Paris, on December 6, 1938.

Joachim von Ribbentrop

Georges Bonnet

This declaration met all the exigencies of the proposals that Hitler had presented to the former French Ambassador to Berlin, François-Poncet. Hitler would have been greatly deceived had he believed that the signing of a like document would prevent the French from declaring war on him in the event that he attacked Poland. For Hitler such declarations and mutual non-aggression pacts were not meant to keep him neutral, but rather to give the other signatories a pretext to refrain from intervention against his aggression. He envisioned that France could point to the December 6 declaration with Germany to justify neutrality in the event of a German-Polish conflict.

Naturally, Hitler failed to inform Mussolini of his intention to incorporate France into this alliance system. It is fairly certain that his friend was not pleased at all upon hearing the news. The Italian had just announced his claims on Tunis and Corsica and had found little love for his *mare nostrum* policy⁵³³ on the part of the French.

In Germany, meanwhile, the demonstrations of military might kept rolling. On December 8, the aircraft carrier *Graf Zeppelin* was launched at the Deutsche Werft in Kiel. It was the first ship of its kind in Germany. However, it would never be equipped nor would it ever see action.⁵³⁴ Hitler attended the ship's launching, at which Gbring spoke at its christening. Thereafter, Hitler reviewed the Navy from the harbor in Kiel and had breakfast with the commanders in chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht aboard the light battleship *Grille*.

In Munich on December 10, Hitler received the Italian Minister of Economics Lantini at the Führerbau.⁵³⁵ That same day, he delivered a big 'culture speech' to open the Second German Architecture and Industrial Art Exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst.⁵³⁶ First, he spoke at great length on the mission and goals of architecture. He then announced his latest project, the construction of a giant opera house in Munich. Then Hitler's fetish for numbers surpassed all reasonable bounds: he earnestly claimed that the number of churches, theaters, assembly halls, and other public buildings in a city had to rise in proportion to the growth of its inhabitants. For instance, this meant that the Berlin Cathedral would have to furnish seats for 100,000 faithful. In his Munich speech, Hitler explained himself in the following terms:

Let me take up the topic of just one single project: the blueprint for a new opera house in Munich. For many years, it was worked upon, and it is now that its outlines are taking shape and form. Yet it still will take a long time for this work to reach its final completion. And the same applies to the great buildings in Berlin and the enormous building projects all over the Reich.

Let us never forget: we are not building for our time, we are building for the future! That is why the structures must be grand, solid, and durable, and thereby they will become beautiful and worthy. May every man commissioning a work, every architect who finds himself enchanted with some latest fad that he thinks remarkable or interesting, may he think again and ask if his project will be able to stand up to the criticism of the centuries. Because this is what counts! That is easily said. But we have countless examples for works, works where evidently someone was not thinking, works which evidently were not built with a purpose in mind and hence do not do justice to this purpose, either in size or in the long run.

Let me just cite one of these examples. In Germany there are about forty million Protestants. The Confessional Church⁵³⁷ built for itself a cathedral in Berlin which serves as the central church for the three and a half million Protestants living in the capital of the German Reich. The cathedral holds 2,450 seats, each of which is numbered in order to accommodate the more prominent Protestant families in the Reich.

My Volksgenossen! Something like this is happening in an age of so-called democratic evolution. Here the churches ought to lead by example being the most democratic since after all they deal with souls and not with professions or even social classes. Now it is somewhat difficult to follow how this church of 2,450 seats can possibly do justice to the spiritual needs of three and a half million faithful. The dimensions of the building structure are not the result of technical necessities but rather they are the net result of a narrowminded and thoughtless building process. Actually this cathedral ought to accommodate 100,000 persons.

You might ask me: "Do you believe that 100,000 persons will actually go there?" It is not my business to answer this question, a question that would have to be answered by the Church! But you will now understand that we, as a true Volk movement, must keep the needs of our Volk in sight as we carry out our building projects. Hence we must build halls into which 150,000 or even 200,000 persons will actually fit. That means: we must build them as big as the technical possibilities of our day permit, and we must build for eternity!

Another example can be found in the realm of theater buildings. Around 1800, a small town of 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants built for itself a theater with 1,200 seats. Now in the course of the years, commissioners from building inspection authorities and fire protection agencies come along and begin to limit the number of theatergoers for security reasons. In this same time period, the small town grows; 100,000 or 150,000 people live there now. In other words, while the number of seats in the theater declines, the number of inhabitants of the city increases continuously. It becomes necessary to build a new theater. And now the city of 150,000 people begins to build yet another theater holding 1,000 or 1,200 seats, as many seats as the old theater already held a hundred years ago.

Well, it seems that one has forgotten the fact that the orchestra has swollen to sixty musicians today instead of the sixteen musicians of the past. This is largely due to our new composers—I need only name Richard Wagner. Both supernumeraries and choir also have an increasing membership, and overall

technical requirements today demand the participation of far more people. Today this same theater needs to accommodate 450 or 500 stage hands, members of the choir, soloists, dancers, that is 450 or 500 members and an audience of one thousand. That means every member of the audience must support two members of the crew. That is possible perhaps in a capitalist age. For us, this is impossible, for we must finance our theaters through contributions from the Volk.

Because this alone necessitates that the masses of our Volk go to our theaters, these theaters must have a certain size.

Now we are asked: "What? You want to build an opera with three thousand seats here?" Yes, indeed, we would like to increase that number even more because we want thousands of our Volk to partake of the fruits of German art. [—]

Another objection might be: do we have to build so much just now? Yes, we do! We must build more now than ever before, because before us, they built either nothing or pitiful miserable structures.

And secondly: we just happen to find ourselves today in an epoch of great rejuvenation for the German Volk! He who has not realized this yet, he must nonetheless believe it! That is a fact! Posterity will have greater appreciation of the years 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1938 than certain of our contemporaries who seem to live behind the times!

Posterity will see this epoch of the greatest resurrection of the German Volk ever in the context of the foundation of an enormous, great and mighty Reich. These years will one day be seen as corresponding to the ascent of a movement to which we owe that the German Volk emerged from the confusion of party politics, segregated classes, and various confessions and melted into one entity of great spiritual strength and willpower. Such an epoch has not only the right to leave its mark upon eternity in the form of great monuments, it has a duty to do so!

If someone says to me, "Why do you build more than earlier?" all I can reply is: "We build more because we are more than we were earlier." Today's Reich is different from that of yesterday. It is not just a passing fancy since it is supported not by merely a few individuals or certain interest groups. For the first time in its history, the German Reich has its foundation in the willpower and consciousness of the German Volk. Hence it well deserves that monuments now built will one day testify to its greatness even when its people have long been silent.

Furthermore, this art of building also spawns other arts, such as sculpture and painting. How true this is you can see by looking at the two wonderful sculptures exhibited here. They represent Party and Wehrmacht and no doubt they belong to the most beautiful art ever created in Germany. [—]

We are incapable of assessing what countless German artists have created with truly painstaking diligence and zealous dedication. As the speaker for the German Volk, I wish to express its gratitude to those involved since it cannot possibly thank each artist individually.

Naturally, the true recompense lies within the work itself! Through it, the artist makes his way into eternity. I have the honor of declaring this exhibition

open to the public, an exhibition that will prove to you that there are indeed many artists making their way here in our country, finding it, and continuing upon it.

On December 14, Hitler sent King George VI a congratulatory telegram on the British monarch's birthday.⁵³⁸

The next day, Hitler advantageously used the occasion of the completion of the 3,000th kilometer of the Autobahn to invite 3,000 workers from several Autobahn construction sites to Berlin. Here, the 'Theater des Volkes' was the site of an "evening of comradeship."⁵³⁹ In a good mood, the Führer bade his guests welcome with the following words: "I simply cannot be everywhere at once—so it is for the better that today you come to see me for a change!"

Subsequently, Hitler lectured the workers on the "philosophy of business." He spoke on the production and distribution of goods, citing various examples from the history of railroad and motoring. Naturally, he also made reference to the "construction of the West Wall."

This great feat had been made possible solely through the deployment of the work force of the Reich Autobahn project. To embellish this admission of the limited nature of the accessible German manpower, Hitler found flattering words for the workers assembled before him.

Perhaps it has been precisely this work which has made possible the bloodless revolution that united our German Volk in the Greater German Reich.⁵⁴⁰ This year, they [the Sudeten Germans and Austrians] can celebrate Christmas with us for the very first time.

Toward the end of his speech, Hitler maintained that the success of the year 1938 had been "a tremendous and historic joint effort," stating:

I have invited you to Berlin, as part of the German Volksgemeinschaft, to act as representatives of your hundreds of thousands of colleagues who are employed in one of the most important work projects in the Reich. I wish to thank you and all of those who cannot be here with us tonight for your work, accomplishments and above all for your loyal fusion into our great German Volksgemeinschaft.

On this day, 3,000 kilometers have been completed, thereby concluding a monumental and gigantic work. Hence you, as the representatives of this great accomplishment deserve, more than anyone else, to truly be happy for two hours tonight.

On December 16, Hitler received the newly appointed Chinese Ambassador Chen-chieh at the Chancellery in Berlin.⁵⁴¹

I welcome the fact that Your Excellency regards it as a mission of particular priority to expand upon the good and friendly relations between our countries. You may rest assured that in this enterprise you shall enjoy my full support as well as that of the Reich Government. Our mutual endeavors to strengthen cultural ties between us will, I hope, be continued successfully in the future. As you do, I believe that the differing structures of our economies provide a most favorable opportunity for us to expand our economic ties.

I thank you for the friendly note extending the best wishes of His Excellency, the President of the National Government of the Chinese Republic, for both the prosperity of Germany and myself personally. I return these best wishes in all sincerity and bid you welcome, Your Excellency.

Thereafter, the new Envoy of the Netherlands in Berlin, Jonkheer van Haersma de With, visited Hitler for the first time.⁵⁴² In his address, Hitler first lamented the tragic death of the former Dutch Envoy.⁵⁴³ He then spoke of the good neighborly relations between the two countries, stressing that the German Reich accorded great importance to maintaining these relations and to developing even closer ties in the future.

On December 17, Hitler issued a supplementary order to the directive "occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia."⁵⁴⁴ The favorable political developments in Prague left him with little fear of any possible complications. He was convinced that the Wehrmacht would not be met by any serious military opposition and thus felt no need to prepare for such an eventuality.

On December 23, Hitler again delivered a 'secret speech' before a group of 7,000 construction workers, employed in the reconstruction of the Chancellery.⁵⁴⁵ Among other issues, he spoke of the "profound significance of building in National Socialist Germany" in general, and in particular its applicability to the Reich Capital. That evening, Hitler attended the first showing of the monumental film *Pour le mérite* at the Berlin Ufa Palace. The film was generally applauded, and Hitler congratulated its director Karl Ritter, maintaining that it was the "best film ever made on contemporary history."⁵⁴⁶

On December 24, as every year, Hitler attended the Christmas celebrations of the *Alte Kämpfer* in the Löwenbräukeller in Munich. In an address, he recounted the events of the past year.⁵⁴⁷

While at the Obersalzberg on December 30, Hitler awarded the poet E.G. Kolbenheyer the *Adlerschild des Deutschen Reiches* medal, on which the dedication "Dem deutschen Dichter" was engraved.

Résumé

The last day of 1938 marked the end of the triumphant years the Führer had enjoyed since his rise in 1932. Looking at this period more closely, one realizes that the structure of Hitler's successes was domestic in its entirety. He had made himself the sole and undisputed ruler in all areas of political life within Germany. In the field of economics, he had played the central role in conquering the ills of unemployment and deflation. Through this, he had secured for himself the approval of the people. He had consolidated state, industry, and Wehrmacht directly under a single supreme commander: himself.

Even his most spectacular triumphs—the reintroduction of general conscription, the establishment of a strong German Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe, the occupation of the Rhineland, the Anschluss of Austria, and the acquisition of the Sudeten German territories—seem only at first glance to be of a foreign policy or military nature. In reality, they were founded upon interior conditions, too. Although other countries had an important stake in the matters, and despite Hitler's repeated breaches of international law and supranational treaties, each of these events touched essentially upon concerns of either domestic policy, the German state, or German people.

Hitler had considerably expanded the German Reich's territory without firing a single shot. Now he had achieved everything that could be attained by the art of rhetoric, the insistence upon the principles of self-determination of the peoples and international law, and finally by military pressure short of war. Even though his methods undoubtedly shocked the Western Powers, they were not yet willing to take any steps against him. After all, in 1938 Hitler did not venture beyond the boundaries of German concerns by force, and his demands pertained to territories that were largely inhabited by Germans. For this reason, international agreements could be achieved.

The dictator, however, with his insatiable lust for power and the gigantic war machinery he had built up, was not suited for peace. When would this most hazardous gambler on earth overstep the territorial marks of "Greater Germany" to pursue his expansionist

designs by force? It seemed to be only a question of time. Then the Western Powers, led by Great Britain, would react in exactly the same way they had calculated for this case and announced long before—by going to war with Germany and hereby bringing about the Third Reich's downfall.

Hitler had never understood these fundamental principles. As 1938 neared its end, he was convinced that he stood, as he himself had put it,⁵⁴⁹ "at the beginning." For him, the years 1933 through 1938 had merely served as a preparation for his actual purpose, which he pursued in the realm of foreign policy: the conquest of new Lebensraum in the East, all the way to the Ural Mountains. He really believed that in Europe and in the world he would score precisely the same victories he had gained at home, both before and after his rise to power, with regard to the German Nationalists, leaders of military, members of international high finance and nobility, etc. In the beginning, they had looked down at him, the self-taught person who had come in from nowhere, at best wanting to use him as a "drummer" for their purposes. Meanwhile, not only the rich and powerful of Germany had learned how to show their respect to the Führer!

Hitler's master plan was now to swamp the saturated bourgeois Western Powers with his spellbinding rhetoric, while using brute force to deal with the inferior and primitive peoples of the East. Then he would show the degenerated Englishmen who was the ruler in Europe. This would be his ticket to the *Endsieg*, to world dominion—the ultimate goal which his predecessors Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, and William II had striven for in vain.

Indeed the Führer surpassed them all in record time—considering the territorial dimensions concerned and the monstrous, uncompromising brutality he applied. Not only was he willing to consign the 'hostile world' to the flames, the demonic Pied Piper also led his most faithful adherents, his allegedly 'beloved Volk,' and 'his youth' into the abyss to sacrifice them without mercy on the altar of his megalomania. But the age-old plot of hubris that has been told since the case of Lucifer, developed inevitably and strictly according to the laws of a Greek tragedy. Now the whole of mankind was on stage, and the greatest battle ever given on this planet left about fifty-five million people dead.

As the years of Hitler's ascent drew to a close, he already lacked the sense of balance imperative to a "sleepwalker."⁵⁵⁰ First of all, the Munich Agreement meant a failure to him: the Western Powers had

accorded him the Sudeten German territories, but they had not granted him *carte blanche* to further proceed with his aggression to the East and on the contrary bound him in contractual chains. The dictator could hardly conceal his anger—under no circumstances was he willing to bear such restrictions! In this coherence, the sequence of the further incidents appears veritably predestinated, and, while people in Germany and in the world believed that Hitler had scored his greatest triumph to date in Munich, his descent was inexorably about to begin.

From early 1939 on, Hitler completely lost control of the fast train he had undertaken to steer. All attempts to transfer his domestic tactics to the international scene, failed him miserably and ended in catastrophe. The course of events took quite a different turn from the one he had imagined and predicted. Now the tyrant was trapped by his own utopian visions, completely caught up within the world of ideas he had formed in the year 1919. In view of reality and the measures taken by the Allied Forces, his oratorical efforts could no longer be of any real import, no more than a delaying factor in the progress of the dramatic action. In order to postpone the defeat, Hitler was forced into constant improvisations to atone for reactions abroad which he had failed to foresee.

The years 1939 through 1945 would destroy the fundamental assumptions underlying all his theses. The first hypothesis to be refuted was his assertion that domestic policy corresponded to foreign policy. Following this, other hypotheses fell into disproof as well, such as the “senility” of the British, the “primitive” nature of the Bolshevik Soviets, and the influence of a “secret Jewish world government.” These revelations precluded the possibility of coercing the acquiescence of the Western Powers by taking, keeping, and slaughtering Jewish hostages—and rendered futile the attempt to vanquish the world by new German *Wunderwaffen*.

In spite of all, Hitler hoped for a miracle, refusing until the end to accept the truth. He believed with tenacity and steadfastness that his visions could yet come true, either with the help of Providence or, if necessary, by forcing Fate through willpower. At the end of the year 1940, he would phrase his central idea for the World War:

“I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally!”⁵⁵¹

APPENDIX

Hitler's Rise to Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

It is no doubt impressive how Hitler improved his lot from that of an unskilled laborer, living in a hostel for the homeless in Vienna, to his later position as head of the German Reich. Far more astonishing is his military career. The former corporal assumed supreme command of all three branches of Germany's Wehrmacht. Admirals and generals promptly complied with his orders and, for the most part, did so without voicing any objections. And all this took place within a military that jealously guarded its strict rules of conduct and proudly looked back to a three-hundred-year history.

Hitler was never a career military man. He had not even "served." Indeed, prior to the First World War in Austria, he had done his utmost to avoid making "this most noble sacrifice a man can be asked to make,"¹ as he would later call it. His participation in the First World War was his sole qualification for his later position as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. As a common front-line soldier, he had been a member of an infantry regiment of the Bavarian Reserve troops. In recognition of his military service, Hitler had been awarded the Iron Cross, Second and First Class, in addition to the Bronze Badge for injuries sustained in battle.²

Once he became Reich Chancellor, Hitler managed to instill in the admirals and generals a conviction that Fate had preordained him to realize the military's domestic and foreign policy ambitions. Moreover, he persuaded them that he possessed expertise in military affairs, supplemented by great intuitive knowledge. Hitler achieved a remarkable feat of rhetorical prowess in claiming that he had "come from the ranks of the Reichswehr and would always remain one of them,"³ a version which was indeed accepted.

Any investigation of Hitler's phenomenal success with the military has to address the objectives pursued by the military and Hitler's method of subjugating its leaders to his will. Hitler's military ambitions were primarily directed toward the realm of foreign policy. He believed

that the realization of his goals hinged upon the establishment of an army based upon a two-year compulsory conscription program. This conscription was crucial to his envisioned conquest of the East, an area he termed the “new Lebensraum.” He abhorred militia units, *Wehrverbände* and such paramilitary organizations. These military groupings did not know the “blind” obedience ingrained in regular military units, an obedience he deemed crucial to the implementation of his ambitious designs. Hence he placed little faith even in his own SA and, in 1934, he did not desist from the cold-blooded murder of its most prominent leaders, among them his closest friends.

On the other hand, Hitler regarded the generals, and in particular the members of the General Staff, as his natural allies in the pursuit of his future conquests. To him, these men were mere “blood-hounds,” straining at the leash, eagerly waiting for him to unleash them upon an opponent.⁴

In Hitler's opinion, domestic policy served only one end: to create the prerequisites for a “policy of strength toward the outside world.” As he would freely admit at a later date,⁵ the Party and its various subdivisions were but “a means to an end” to him. At times, he would strive to please the generals far more ardently than he ever sought to accommodate his fellow Party members. There is little doubt that, had he succeeded in the conquest of the coveted new Lebensraum, he would eventually have rid himself of the Wehrmacht's generals in order to build up an army with officers more to his liking.

In direct opposition to Hitler's ambitions, the Reichswehr's leaders concerned themselves largely with issues of a more domestic nature. In compliance with the Constitution of the Weimar Republic, the Reichswehr was an institution devoid of any political function. However, this neutral role applied primarily to enlisted men and officers of lesser standing. The leading figures within the Reichswehr sought to transform it into a potent instrument of political power.⁶

The entire body of the Reichswehr generals regarded the existence of the Weimar Republic as a national disgrace, a most embarrassing institution they would have to eliminate at the first opportunity which arose. The leading members of the Reichswehr openly supported the “stab-in-the-back” legend, a myth purporting that the German Army had been on the brink of victory in the autumn of 1918. As victory appeared to be within reach, traitors without conscience—aided by mysterious dark forces—robbed the army of the fruits of its victory, thus “stabbing” Germany “in the back.”

These “November Criminals,” as Hitler called them, supposedly were none other than the founding fathers of the “confounded” Republic of Weimar. The Reichswehr generals blamed them for the outcome of the Versailles Treaty, in particular with regard to its provisions concerning Germany’s military. And moreover, in the eyes of the generals, these men supposedly guilty of high treason were responsible as well for the replacement of the cherished black-white-red banner and cockade with the despised black-red-gold flag. While being allowed to retain the black-white-red “Reich Naval Ensign,” the military men were coerced into accepting a black-red-gold canton which had to be placed on the flag. This antagonism typified the bitter enmity between the leaders of the Reichswehr and the Weimar Republic.

Nevertheless, the Reichswehr generals had no intention of directly involving themselves in any coup attempt. Neither were they willing to resort to revolution or other illegal measures in pursuit of such an end. Needless to say, the generals were not opposed to taking action themselves in the event of “chaos” or the erosion of the legal authority of the government.

It is not entirely clear precisely what type of state the generals envisioned to replace the “interim government” of the Weimar Republic. There is no doubt that most of the generals would have welcomed the restitution of the monarchy and feudal privileges which had been lost to them in the aftermath of the military defeat of 1918.

A small, radical group among the generals toyed with the idea of establishing a military dictatorship. This group was composed of men and associations as disparate as General von Schleicher and the Soldatenbund. Members of the Soldatenbund had been particularly active in the early years of Hitler’s rule. Even as late as 1938, they openly advocated the transformation of the Third Reich into a military state.⁷

Another less radical formation within the army sought to achieve its goals through limited cooperation with the men in power in the Weimar Republic. The majority of this group’s members had belonged to the last Army High Command (Oberste Heeresleitung), and they had worked side by side with the Social Democrats in 1918. It was a relatively small grouping within the German army composed of men such as Groener, Heye, von Stülpnagel, and von dem Busche. In his function as Reich Minister of Defense in 1932, Groener bore the brunt of the fervent and passionate opposition of the remainder of the Reichswehr—and of Hindenburg as well.

As is evident from the above, the goals pursued by the military were of a predominantly domestic nature and aimed at destroying the Republic of Weimar so despised by the generals. A milestone in their struggle was the reintroduction of general conscription to Germany, for it entailed sweeping sociopolitical consequences and strongly affected the caste system.

In matters of foreign policy, the Reichswehr endeavored to render null and void the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. To the generals, this meant at the very least the restitution of the 1914 eastern boundaries. For this, the generals saw the maintenance of good relations with the Soviet Union and the Red Army as crucial to their effort to circumvent the provisions regarding Germany's military as established in the Versailles Treaty. For instance, German officers could be trained in the Soviet Union and instructed by members of the Red Army in the handling of weaponry prohibited in Germany.

In 1920, Poland had appropriated for itself territories along its western frontier by the use of brute force and in defiance of the recommendations put forth by the Western Powers. The land at stake was located east of the so-called Curzon Line⁸ in White Russia and the Ukraine, and hence a concerted action by Germany and the Soviet Union directed against the Polish state was within the realm of the possible. Within the Reichswehr, an assault upon Poland was at the center of debate and strategic planning. Naturally, the fact that East Prussia had been severed from the Reich played an important role in these considerations as well.

The manner in which the German-Polish border had been redrawn in accordance with the Versailles Treaty entailed further complications. Its course was a most unfortunate one that contained all the necessary ingredients to torch Europe once more. In the days of the Weimar Republic, East Prussia had consistently been administered by special military law apart from the main body of the Republic. The Versailles Treaty reinforced its special status. East Prussian fortifications were the only military installations within Germany that were permitted to maintain heavy artillery units for their defense. It came as no surprise that Hitler took advantage of the extraordinary status of the territory in an effort to gain the favor of the Reichswehr.

Contrary to Hitler, the generals of the Reichswehr had no intention of realizing their foreign policy aims through a general war. Rather, they hoped for the development of a more favorable situation abroad such as a possible armed conflict between either the Soviet Union and

the Western Powers or between the Soviet Union and Poland. The generals considered the latter scenario a distinct possibility. Like Hitler, they were taken in by the deceptive belief that the Anglo-Saxon Powers would stand aside in the event of an outbreak of open hostilities between Germany and Poland—particularly if Germany had obtained the implicit consent of the Soviet Union prior to such action.

The aims pursued by the Reichswehr and Hitler had various aspects in common. Both strove to put an end to the Weimar Republic, to reintroduce general conscription to Germany, to reunite East Prussia with the Reich, and to rid Germany of the black-red-gold flag. The ambitions of Hitler and the generals in the question of power politics were closely related as well. Both parties sought to secure for themselves a central position within the power structure of a future German state. However, these shared ambitions bore within themselves the seeds of future conflict.

Prior to 1932, the Reichswehr generals had been willing to accept Hitler as the national “drummer.” They had consented to integrate Hitler’s SA men into the Reichswehr under the pretext of establishing new militia units. Nevertheless, the generals’ disdain for the former Austrian corporal—who by no means fit into their social circles—was such that it never occurred to them to accord him any position of power, either in the military or in the political realm. They had no room for him in the new German state they coveted. In their minds, Hitler was to set the stage for a “national revival” within Germany. He was to clear the streets of Communists, rid the parliament of democratic majorities and popularize the idea of defense. After he had accomplished this, he was expected to step down and leave center stage to the generals themselves or to the royal family, so that either of these could assume power as guarantors of the “new national” law and order within Germany.

Needless to say, the generals had failed to account for the man Adolf Hitler in their calculations. They had underestimated his tactical abilities. Hitler, on the other hand, knew only too well the strength and weaknesses of the generals opposing him, and he was determined to take full and relentless advantage of their faults. Nevertheless, he had pledged himself to pursuing the legal path to attaining this goal. To this end, he relied completely upon his “national” oratory prowess instead of revolutionary overthrow: for the one time that he had employed revolutionary tactics, the venture had failed miserably. The debacle of 1923 had taught Hitler a valuable lesson he took to heart. He realized

that, as a rule, Germany's generals would always bow to the authority of a legitimate government, even if they despised it. As long as the state maintained its power in a legal fashion, the generals could never be moved to support a revolutionary movement, no matter how sympathetic they might be to its cause.⁹

Hence, in this instance, Hitler trod the legal path to power, thereby assuring himself of the generals' approval. He knew well that the use of force was simply not an option for the realization of his goals. He also realized that any armed units that might march on the Capital would succumb to the bullets of police and Reichswehr long before they ever reached Berlin. While he had drawn together armed militia units in Mecklenburg in 1932, he had merely been bluffing at that point. In fact, Hitler had never seriously contemplated instigating an armed rebellion on a national scale.¹⁰

In the course of the year 1932, Hitler had repeatedly tried to take hold of power by means of various plebiscites. None of these attempts bore any fruit, and thus Hitler resorted to the last device left at his disposal in order to gain power in a legal fashion: he would attempt to convince Reich President von Hindenburg to personally appoint him Reich Chancellor.

The main obstacle to be overcome in this undertaking was the heavy reliance of Hindenburg upon his old advisers, the majority of whom came from the ranks of the Reichswehr generals and the East Prussian Junkers. Hence, Hitler deduced that it would be most advantageous to secure for himself the support of the East Prussian officers prior to any further action. Hitler began his campaign by rallying numerous generals to his cause. For the most part, these military men had retired from active duty during the times of the German Kaiser, and their discontent with the present regime made them easy prey for Hitler's national slogans. The connections his principal negotiators, Röhm and Göring, had formed with the Reichswehr were of crucial importance to this undertaking.

Unrelated to these circumstances, Hitler enjoyed strong support in the Reich Navy in 1932. The enthusiasm of the "Christian officers at sea" was such that the "landlubber" Hitler was hailed whenever he came aboard to inspect a battleship, even if he did so merely as a civilian. On May 26, 1932, prior to a tour of the cruiser Köln, Hitler entered the following memorable dedication into its visitors' book: "With the hope of being able to help in rebuilding a fleet worthy of the Reich. Adolf Hitler."¹¹

Nonetheless, in the months prior to the take-over, the Navy did not rally to Hitler with such enthusiasm and unity simply because of his national persuasion and his solemn pledges to blow the dust off the “violated black-white-red cockade of the Old Army and Navy.” The motives behind the Navy’s enthusiasm for Hitler were of a psychological nature as well. The sailors had suffered greatly from a sense of national “shame” that had been attached to them ever since the events in November 1918. In the eyes of nationalists both within the Reichswehr and outside of it, the Navy had been the pivotal cause of collapse since it was the first branch of the Armed Forces to succumb to signs of demoralization that fateful month. Pointing accusingly to the mutiny on ships of the Navy at the time, the conviction spread that the German Navy as a whole had failed its country at the end of the War. The Navy officers had supposedly confined their high-seas fleet to harbor when they should have been leading their men to battle. The ensuing inactivity—the most disgraceful condition for any soldier—had led the “blue boys” astray and caused them to commit such deplorable acts as the 1918 revolts in Kiel and Wilhelmshaven.

Although unsubstantiated,¹² this story’s popularity rivaled that of the “stab-in-the-back” myth in nationalist circles. As a result, the Navy’s men felt a vague feeling of guilt. Army officers and other dignitaries of national renown, who felt they had no share in this disgrace, looked upon the Navy with condescending pity.

Given this background, the Navy’s men felt Hitler to be the awaited Messiah who would deliver them of their guilt and restore the honor of the Navy. While Hitler was fond of speaking out against the “November Criminals,” not once did he reproach the seamen for their actions. To the contrary, whenever appearing before an audience composed of naval officers, Hitler made certain to pay the Navy his respects. Indeed, Hitler appears to have been completely earnest on this subject for he greatly admired the Navy’s moral code of conduct. Hitler was enormously impressed by the Navy’s pledge to “fight unto one’s last breath,” even in a hopeless situation. He also doted on the seamen’s maxim rather to go down with their ship than ever to surrender to the enemy. This fascination with the Navy’s unwritten code of conduct stayed with Hitler to the last. In his political testament of April 29, 1945, he expressed great disappointment with the officers of the Army, but lauded the Navy, sparing it from his wrath.¹³

Prior to his rise to power, Hitler feared the majority of the Reichswehr generals less than he did those officers who wished to pursue

paths different from his own. The majority of generals were traditionalist in outlook and monarchist at heart. A small number of officers, however, were not categorically opposed to cooperation with the parties of the Weimar Republic. Others continued to dream of the establishment of a military dictatorship.

In 1932, Hitler found himself faced by two proponents of these divergent points of view: General Groener, Reich Minister of Defense and of the Interior and member of the Brüning cabinet; and General von Schleicher, Chief of the Ministerial Office. Hitler was determined to oust Groener and, if at all possible, to remove Schleicher from office in the wake of Groener's dismissal. In the case of Groener, a pretext for action presented itself rather quickly.

As mentioned earlier, Hitler greatly valued the maintenance of good relations with the East Prussian Reichswehr. As early as 1931, he had placed local SA units at the disposal of the Army there. After the April 13, 1932, election reinstating Hindenburg in office one last time, Brüning and Groener forced a measure through the cabinet that banned both the SA and SS. However, neither of these two officials were prepared for the strong reaction of the Reichswehr to this move.

General Groener proved remarkably short-sighted in his assessment of the situation. His own State Secretary, General von Schleicher, conspired to remove him from office. Within a few days after the measure had passed cabinet, Hindenburg had been persuaded that a decree banning the SA was detrimental to the Reichswehr and would considerably weaken it. Groener was forced to resign as Minister of Defense on May 13, 1932. His fall signaled the impending fate of Brüning who resigned on May 30. Schleicher took over Groener's post as Reich Minister of Defense in the von Papen cabinet, and the decree banning the SA was rescinded. Nevertheless, despite frequent consultations with each other, Schleicher remained Hitler's declared enemy.

Once the returns of the July 31 election revealed that Hitler could not secure more than 37 percent of the popular vote, Schleicher determined to summarily deal with Hitler by assigning him the post of Vice Chancellor, a position of hardly any significance. When Hitler rebuffed this offer, Reich President Hindenburg summoned him on August 13 and accused him of being incapable of forming a government on his own.

Hitler pledged to himself to seek bloody revenge on Schleicher for having trapped him in so embarrassing a situation. Prior to any further action, however, Hitler knew he had to come to terms with the "Cabinet

of Barons.” For this purpose, he required a strong and effective “nationalist” slogan. He came upon one quickly in the form of five death warrants. Dated August 22, 1932, these warrants were the outcome of an extraordinary trial at Beuthen conducted by the von Papen government. The verdict was a death sentence for five SA men guilty of having murdered a Polish guerilla in Potempa. Swiftly Hitler seized the opportunity and branded the von Papen cabinet as the “hangman of national freedom fighters for the German Volk.” Unrelated to this, Hitler shocked Germany once more by announcing National Socialist cooperation with the Communists in the Berlin transportation workers’ strike. This move sought to terrify right-wing circles bringing to mind the possibility of a Red-Brown alliance.

Although Hitler had lost two million votes in the Reichstag election of November 6, the NSDAP still remained the strongest party. von Papen’s cabinet stood no chance of being tolerated by such a parliament, and thus it was forced to step down. Now Hindenburg had to intervene in person. He summoned Hitler to his office several times. As early as November 1932, Hindenburg indicated willingness to entrust a cabinet to Hitler as long as the latter respected the parliamentary principles it was based upon.

At this point, however, Hitler had little desire of assuming such a responsibility. Rather, he intended to deal with his most dangerous opponent, General von Schleicher, prior to any further move. Hitler assumed that Schleicher would lose greatly in popularity as the “Winter Chancellor” and that he would isolate himself within the Reichswehr in the process. Although undoubtedly without intention, Schleicher indeed presented Hitler with the first opportunity to strike. He had commissioned the head of his department, Lieutenant Colonel Eugen Ott, to call on Hitler. For three hours, Hitler prevailed upon the officer, persuasively arguing that the appointment of Schleicher to the post of Chancellor brought with it far more dangers than the Reichswehr had realized.

On December 4, Hitler planted the next land-mine in Schleicher’s path. This time the conspiracy against Schleicher was to take place within the inner circles of the East Prussian Reichswehr. This body was headed by General Werner von Blomberg in his capacity as Commander of the Wehrkreis and by Colonel Walter von Reichenau who served as Chief of Staff. The latter received a voluminous carefully composed letter¹⁴ in which Hitler pointed out that he held “General von Schleicher’s present cabinet to be particularly unfortunate because it cannot solve

this problem of the inner, spiritual rearmament of the nation.” Hitler desired to “overcome Marxism, to establish a new unity of spirit and will in the Volk and a universal spiritual, moral and ethical armament of the nation.” He expressed the aim of bringing about “technical rearmament, the organizational mobilization of the power of the Volk (*Volkskraft*) for the purpose of national defense, and the attainment of a legal recognition by the rest of the world of the new situation which has already been brought about.” As Hitler put it: “East Prussia can only be saved if Germany is saved. It is clear that Schleicher’s cabinet will once more delay and impede this one and only possible deliverance” [Hitler’s accession to power].

On December 6, the newly elected Reichstag met for its first session. Hitler had seen to having one of his party members appointed Chairman by seniority, the eighty-two-year-old General Karl von Litzmann, popularly known as the “Lion of Brzeziny,” an ardent admirer of the Führer. Litzmann’s opening address contained a long list of accusations aimed at Hindenburg, whom he alleged of having vested his trust in a certain Hermann Müller, a Brüning, or a von Papen as Reich Chancellors, but had to this date declined to call upon Hitler.

Subsequently, Göring, who had distinguished himself as a Pour-le-mérite-award recipient and as Hitler’s “best man,” was elected President of the Reichstag with the help of the votes cast by the Center Party and the Bavarian People’s Party. In his address, Göring declared that the National Socialists profoundly regretted that “the appointment of the Reich Minister of Defense as Chancellor had made the Reichswehr into a bone of political contention.”

The stage was set. Hitler had only to stand by and observe the further development of the situation up to the certain downfall of Schleicher. Moreover, he could prepare the setting for his Presidential Cabinet by either directly influencing the advisers of Hindenburg himself or by indirectly proceeding through the offices of his military experts Göring and Röhm. Two conferences with von Papen, held on January 4 and 18, were crucial to this drive, as were the later meetings with Colonel Oskar von Hindenburg, the Reich President’s nephew, and State Secretary Otto Meissner on January 22. By January 28, Schleicher was forced to resign, since Hindenburg had not accorded him the right to dissolve the Reichstag. The next day, Göring assured Meissner in a most innocent manner that the National Socialists would not oppose the reinstitution of the monarchy, provided that two thirds of the Volk expressed this desire.

Rumors that Schleicher intended to stage a putsch and that the Potsdam garrison would march on Wilhelmstrasse hastened the constitution of a new government. Because of the tense and unstable situation, the new Reich Minister of Defense was sworn into office as a precautionary measure. It is revealing to note that the position was to be occupied by the former Commander of the Wehrkreis of East Prussia, General Werner von Blomberg. The aforementioned Colonel von Reichenau, previously Chief of Staff of the division deployed in East Prussia, was assigned the post of Chief of the Ministerial Office.

The East Prussian landowner and Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, gave his blessings to the new Presidential Chancellor Adolf Hitler on January 30, 1933. In doing so, he accorded Hitler his complete trust from that day onward. The Reich President yielded to all the Chancellor's demands and even granted the dissolution of the Reichstag, a measure he had earlier denied Schleicher. Having become Chancellor, Hitler immediately seized the opportunity to gain the favor of the military. He strove to win over to his cause those generals who had not yet joined the ranks and files of his more ardent admirers. Already on February 3, Hitler spoke before the men in command of the army and navy and expounded his principles to them.¹⁵ As he would do repeatedly throughout the years to come, Hitler expressed his desire that the army remain the sole armed force within Germany. He insisted that there would not be any absorption of party formations into the military, as in the prototype of Fascist militia units. He promoted the idea of instilling a will to defense in the general populace by all possible means while the twin evils of Marxism and pacifism were eradicated.

Hitler explained the motivation behind his struggle to be that of reversing the Treaty of Versailles and the restrictions it had imposed upon Germany's military. He claimed that he would invest in the military all and everything he could manage to save. Since 1918, no head of government had proposed such an enticing program to the generals. Not surprisingly, the generals rejoiced at the prospect of additional funding and suppressed any and all doubts they might still have entertained. In the course of the following years, Hitler liberally distributed promotions, awards, and remuneration among the generals. They became some of his most faithful and loyal followers. Ignoring vulgar insults, unjustified accusations and headmaster-like admonitions, the generals bore the reign of the former corporal with patience and without much resistance.

On March 12, 1933, the customary commemoration of the dead of the First World War took place, at the time still termed *Volkstrauertag* (Day of National Mourning). Hitler had decided not only to rename the holiday, calling it the *Heldengedenktage* (Heroes' Memorial Day) from 1934 on, but also customarily took advantage of the occasion to announce additional measures to strengthen the armed forces.¹⁶ He did this nearly every year prior to the Second World War, staging impressive military parades to give his announcements the proper setting.

March 12, 1933, was the first in a series of similar annual celebrations. Hitler marked the day by proclaiming that both the black-white-red banner and the swastika flag would serve as the official standards of the Reich. in spite of the fact that this measure was in blatant defiance of the Weimar Constitution, both Hitler and Hindenburg signed their names to it, and the Wehrmacht rejoiced at the return of its beloved black-white-red ensign.

March 21, 1933, "Potsdam Day," was to signify the union of old imperial Germany and its young "nationalist" counterpart, personified by Hindenburg and Hitler respectively. The multitude of generals of the Old Army and members of the German high nobility assembled on this occasion created a grandiose backdrop for the Reichswehr units, SS and SA men, members of the Stahlhelm, and various other national military associations as they marched past the rostrum. Judging by outward appearances alone, an unwitting member of the audience that day might have thought that the restoration of monarchy and the feudal state was imminent.

Regardless of all princes, barons, and generals present at Potsdam, the future of Germany would be determined by one man alone—Adolf Hitler. To him, these remnants of the feudal system were no more than pawns in a game, pawns he knew how to handle and how to make into willful instruments for his designs,

As a first step toward this end, it was imperative for Hitler to sever all of Germany's international ties and, above all, to prepare for Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. He knew that he would have to bring about such a measure prior to the implementation of equality of rights in military affairs which the League of Nations had determined to grant Germany in its December 11, 1932, session.

With these considerations in mind, Hitler delivered his first "peace speech" on May 17, 1933—one of the many such addresses that were to follow. It was the primary purpose of this speech to preclude any

contractual settlement of these matters by placing exorbitant demands upon the League, demands it could not possibly meet.

In the meantime, the number of Reichswehr generals who admired Hitler without reservation had grown steadily, but there still were several important members of the military who were ill at ease with the Führer. General Freiherr von Fritsch, the new Chief of Army Command, figured most prominently among these. For Hitler, it had become increasingly clear that he needed to plant a more reliable man, a Party member, amongst the top-ranking army men—and he chose Göring for the task.

In order to transform this former Air Force captain into a general of the Reichswehr, Hitler required Hindenburg's connivance. He arranged for Göring to present Hindenburg with a tax-exempt country estate, renamed "Hindenburg Neudeck," at a celebration in Tannenberg on August 27, 1933. In addition, Hindenburg received the Prussian domain Langenau and the Preussenwald woods. He demonstrated his appreciation for these gifts by promoting Göring, the former captain, to the rank of infantry general—a process without doubt unparalleled in the history of the Prussian-German army. Later, at the September "Reich Party Congress of Victory," Hitler accompanied the new Reichswehr general at the maneuvers of the Fifth Reichswehr division stationed in Ulm instead of his usual routine of conducting "Wehrmacht Day."

Hitler announced Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations on October 14, 1933. To his great astonishment, neither Great Britain nor France undertook any steps militarily to counter his move. In his eyes, this lack of resolution on their part provided ample proof of their internal weakness and inferiority.

At the same time, he secured Hindenburg's approval for new elections to the Reichstag. This meant that the legislature would be composed exclusively of National Socialists in the future. Hindenburg had expressed concern with regard to this topic, fearing for the preservation of his rights as Reich President within the framework of such a newly constituted Reichstag.

In order to dispel Hindenburg's reservations, Hitler assured him that he did not intend to infringe upon the Reich President's privileges. In an October 14 press release, Hitler instructed the Reichswehr not to assign guards of honor to him on official occasions, "for he desires that this high military honor be reserved for the Reich President and the high military officers."¹⁷

On November 8 and November 9, 1933, the festivities in commemoration of the 1923 Putsch afforded Hitler the opportunity to regain the favor of the armed forces. Hitler proclaimed his commitment to both Reichswehr and Land Police. He also took it upon himself to swear in recruits for both his personal *Leibstandarte*, members of which were allowed to carry arms from March 17 onward, and the recruits for Göring's and Röhm's equally armed *Stabswachen* (staff guards).

Clearly, Hitler's insistence that the Wehrmacht constituted "the sole bearer of arms" in Germany was not entirely true. What he neglected to mention, furthermore, was the fact that the number of recruits for Göring's police units had constantly been on the rise.¹⁸

In his January 30, 1934, address before the Reichstag, Hitler made clear his opposition to the reinstitution of monarchy in Germany. Shortly thereafter, on February 3, he dissolved all monarchist clubs and associations. On the occasion of the Heldengedenktage, following a proposal by Blomberg, Hindenburg bestowed the sovereign symbol of the Party, eagle with swastika, upon all members of the Reichswehr, despite the fact that it was not yet accepted as the national emblem. Members of the armed forces would henceforth bear Hitler's sign on tunic, cap, and steel helmet. Battleships suffered a similar fate. Apparently, Hindenburg, Blomberg and the entire Reichswehr had entered into a competition with Party organizations to see which of them could implement the National Socialist Revolution the speediest.

Nonetheless, Hitler was far from satisfied. It was the question of Hindenburg's succession which was foremost on his mind during those days. Undoubtedly, Hitler himself intended to ultimately assume the post of Reich President. Unlike the late Reich President Ebert, Hitler had little desire to function as the commander of the military in name only. He coveted both titular and actual control over the Reichswehr generals, much like the control Hindenburg had enjoyed.

Still Hitler doubted whether the generals would truly accept him as their superior: he decided to improve his image by proving his "manly" courage in a rather peculiar manner. He attempted to gain the generals' favor by having a number of top-ranking SA men, some of whom had been personal friends for years, murdered in cold blood. In the course of time, irreconcilable differences between Reichswehr and the SA had become apparent. These differences in opinion threatened to overshadow the earlier successful cooperation between both groups, as in East Prussia.

It is highly probable that the true issue at stake was the *Gleichschaltung* of party and state, which strongly affected all realms of public life at the time and particularly the SA. The SA Standarten had, with Hitler's full approval, appropriated for themselves the numbers of old imperial garrison regiments. The Reichswehr generals most feared the application of the *Gleichschaltung* process to the top echelons of Reichswehr and SA. Röhm, the SA Chief of Staff, sought to promote this development in the hope of personal advancement. After all, if Göring, a former Captain, could rise to the post of Reichswehr General of the infantry, then Röhm, a retired Captain and Lieutenant Colonel in Bolivia, could justifiably be promoted equally.

Although Hitler actively pursued the process of *Gleichschaltung* of party and state, he stood firmly opposed to it insofar as the SA was concerned. He strongly believed that the establishment of an army based upon two years of compulsory military service was crucial to his plans for conquest to the East. Hence, he was willing to defer to the generals. While neither Röhm nor any of the other SA leaders so much as contemplated mutiny Hitler nonetheless had the most prominent among them arrested for "attempted treason" on June 30, 1934. For this, he chose those SA men whose past had been tainted by their involvement in the Freikorps movement. These men were then summarily shot without the benefit of a public trial.

The Reichswehr aided and abetted Hitler in the preparation for these assassinations both in a material and in a spiritual sense. As early as June 28, the Reich Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, put the armed forces on alert. At the same time, Blomberg published an article in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, applauding the Führer and claiming that "the Wehrmacht stands by the leadership of the State in discipline and loyalty" and by "the Führer of the Reich, Adolf Hitler, who once came from our ranks and will always remain one of us."¹⁹

On June 28 as well, the Chief of the Ministerial Office, General von Reichenau, whose recent promotion had advanced him to the rank of Major General, had Röhm expelled from the German Officers' League. This action was tantamount to declaring Röhm an outlaw to be hunted down at will. By July 1, Berlin guards goosestepped by the Chancellery, hailing Hitler for the ominous murder of the SA leaders.²⁰ The Reichswehr stood by silently, tolerating the events in return for the convenient elimination of two of its most unpopular generals—former Minister of Defense, General von Schleicher, and his State Secretary, Major General von Bredow.

In the aftermath of these events, Hitler no longer needed to fear that control of the military might slip from his hands following the imminent death of Hindenburg. Indeed, he eagerly assumed control and charged on with his plans for the military even prior to Hindenburg's demise. In clear defiance of the Constitution, Hitler arranged for the cabinet to appoint him successor to the Reich President the day before Hindenburg finally passed away. On August 2, the very day Hindenburg died, Hitler hurriedly altered the loyalty oath to be taken by all incumbent soldiers to read, "to render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler."

On August 6, the Reichstag met to mourn the demise of Hindenburg. Immediately after its session, the Reichswehr paraded by its new Commander in Chief (Oberbefehlshaber) for the first time. The parade provided a curious illustration of what precisely Hitler had neglected to mention when he had earlier promised the generals that the army would remain "the sole bearer of arms in the nation." Armed contingents of the Land Police, the SS Leibstandarte, and the Feldjägerkorps strode in step behind the Reichswehr units.

Naturally, such displays were not in the least to the taste of the generals. At times, it appeared as though a sharp controversy would arise between Reichswehr and SS. However, an emotional appeal by Hitler at the "Rally of German Leadership" in Berlin on January 3, 1935, dispelled such notions. Moreover, as mediator between the front lines, Göring read a declaration of loyalty to the Führer, emphasizing that he spoke in his capacity as "a high-ranking National Socialist leader and at the same time as a Reichswehr General and a Member of the Reich Cabinet."

Hitler announced the reintroduction of general conscription to Germany on the 1935 Heldengedenktag. While the generals were exceedingly well pleased by this measure, the general public in Germany was shocked and deeply disturbed by the possible consequences of this action. Perhaps sensing this disquiet, Hitler made ample use of the services of old Field Marshal von Mackensen who made several token appearances at military ceremonies. Hitler used Mackensen's presence to keep his backside free so that he could proceed with his plans in spite of Hindenburg's demise. While Hitler displayed great skill in dealing with military men in general, the extent to which Mackensen came under his spell was truly astonishing. On July 31, 1935, Mackensen even terminated his honorary membership in the Stahlhelm, thereby facilitating Hitler's dissolution of the front-line soldiers' association. As a sign of appreciation for the services rendered by

Mackensen, Hitler presented the Marshal with the ancestral estate Prussow on October 22.²¹ Shortly thereafter, on November 7, 1935, the Stahlhelm ceased to exist.

At the September 16 "Reich Party Congress of Honor," the elite of Germany's generals, men such as Blomberg, Fritsch, Raeder, and Göring, marched up in front of Hitler as though they were mere recruits. At the same Party Congress, Hitler declared the swastika flag the exclusive official Reich banner. On November 7, 1935, he introduced the flag with the swastika emblem as the Reich Naval Ensign to the Wehrmacht and abolished the old black-white-red flag.

Parallel to these developments, General von Reichenau was assigned to head the Seventh Army Corps in Munich. In his capacity as Chief of the Ministerial Office in the renamed Ministry of War, Reichenau was replaced by Major General Keitel, who assumed his post on October 1, 1935.

On March 7, the 1936 Heldengedenktag, Hitler sent troops to occupy the demilitarized zone in the Rhineland, thereby extending the military sovereignty of the Reich to encompass this area as well. On March 16, he introduced *Truppenfahnen* to the Wehrmacht. On April 20, Hitler appointed the first Field Marshal of his career, his Reich Minister of War, General von Blomberg. In the course of the following years, Hitler accorded this title to twenty-eight members of his staff.

In July of 1936, Hitler secretly instigated the Third Reich's entanglement in the Spanish Civil War. On August 24, he decreed the extension of the compulsory conscription from one year to two years of military service. At the Reich Party Congress that year, Hitler had the audacity to claim that this two-year compulsory service would prove so beneficial to the young recruits that it would add ten years to their life expectancy.²²

The year 1937 passed much like the quiet before the storm. Not even the customary celebration of the Heldengedenktag was accompanied by any spectacular event connected to the military—as was usually the case. The bombing of the Spanish harbor Almería on May 31 was the only event worthy of note that year. Hitler had ordered the expeditionary force's venture as a reprisal for the shelling of the pocket battleship *Deutschland* while in Spanish coastal waters.

Behind the scenes, Hitler was busily preparing for his conquest of the East. On November 5, 1937, Hitler astonished his generals by revealing to them his intention of launching attacks upon Czechoslovakia and Austria in the near future. To Hitler's great displeasure, Blomberg

and Fritsch did not in the least rejoice at such prospects. Instead, they ventured to voice misgivings over the Führer's military analysis of the situation and, in particular, they disputed his a priori assumption that the Western Powers would remain neutral and indifferent to a German move of such importance.

Hitler realized that, given their views on this topic, both Blomberg and Fritsch might become costly liabilities in the event of a war. Hence, he decided to rid himself of the two generals as soon as possible. This did not prove particularly difficult. Hitler succeeded in luring Blomberg into a marriage that provoked the Minister's downfall, and Fritsch was discredited on account of alleged homosexuality. On February 4, 1938, Hitler made official the removal of both military men from office. He himself took over the Reich Ministry of War and thereby secured for himself an unchallenged position as Supreme Commander (Oberster Befehlshaber) of the Wehrmacht.²³

Artillery General Keitel assumed Hitler's earlier responsibilities in presiding over the High Command. Hitler appointed Artillery General von Brauchitsch the new Commander in Chief of the Army.²⁴ By promoting Göring to the rank of Field Marshal, Hitler made him the highest ranking officer on active duty with the Wehrmacht. Furthermore, Hitler reassigned forty-six leading military men to various new command posts, while retiring fourteen others.

On March 10, Hitler issued the first mobilization order of his career. He called up several Bavarian Military Districts, judging their manpower sufficient for the invasion of Austria. On the same day, Hitler effected the dissolution of the Soldatenbund, the last vestige of reactionary generals. Two days later, Hitler slipped into his new role as Warlord. As an outward sign of this change, Hitler wore the Wehrmacht's cockade in the center of a wreath of the oakleaf cluster on his cap. After the Austrian venture had proven a complete success, Hitler had himself celebrated as a "victorious warlord" on the front pages of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. On March 13, the day of the Heldengedenktage festivities, Austria was officially incorporated into the German Reich.

On May 28, Hitler gave orders pertaining to "Case Green" in preparation for the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The date was set for October 2, 1938. At the same time, Hitler issued instructions for the construction of a new line of fortification along the Reich's western border, the West Wall. By August, it had become increasingly clear that Hitler intended to proceed as planned with the assault upon Czechoslovakia, in spite of strong opposition by the generals.

Hitler was greatly annoyed, however, by the fact that the Munich Conference had ruined his plans for a forced entry into Czechoslovakia. An agreement was signed at the September 29 conference provided for the ceding of the Sudeten German territories to the Reich and thus robbed him of his pretext for invasion.

General von Brauchitsch expressed his disappointment in the following terms: "Our weapons were not allowed to speak."²⁵ Hitler vowed to make up shortly for the defeat he deemed himself to have suffered at Munich. On October 9, he made public his plans for the construction of further fortified structures in the vicinity of Aachen and Saarbrücken. And on October 21, despite solemn pledges to the contrary, Hitler instructed his generals to proceed with preparations for "the elimination of the remainder of Czechoslovakia."

In light of the remarkably short time period in which Hitler rose to his position as the unchallenged Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, one has to grant him considerable political cunning. Hitler followed the path of legality to power, an approach greatly cherished by the Wehrmacht generals. As he fought them with their own weapons, he secured victory for himself in the end. The military's leaders bowed to his command even if his orders blatantly violated the Constitution or obviously defied international law. No general ever refused to obey the Führer in public.

Among the three thousand generals—of whom a good number were opposed to Hitler's handling of military matters—only one, Colonel General Beck, had the courage to face up to the consequences of his conviction. Because his conscience did not allow him to further support Hitler's policies, Beck voluntarily handed in his resignation as Chief of the General Staff, and he was allowed to do so without suffering any retribution on the part of Hitler.

The Year 1935

Notes

1. See above, p. 170, speech of October 16, 1932.
2. See above, p. 512.
3. See below, June 26, 1935 and note 153.
4. Published in VB, No. 2, January 2, 1935.
5. It was Hitler's habit to spend New Year's Eve and New Year's Day on the Obersalzberg, and he was disgruntled over this January 1 meeting. In 1935 he abided by the scheduled itinerary, but from 1936 on he postponed the reception until around January 10. It was the dictator's wish that the year should be punctuated by a series of holidays, not unlike the practice of the Catholic Church, and the party calendar foresaw the following special holidays: January 1 (New Year's Day), January 15 (in commemoration of the Landtag election in Lippe-Detmold in 1933), January 30 (day of the *Machtergreifung* in 1933), February 24 (announcement of the party program in 1920), Misericordia Domini in March (Heroes' Memorial Day), April 20 (Hitler's birthday), and May 1 (National Holiday of the German Volk). No special holidays were scheduled for June, July and August because these were harvest/vacation months, but the string resumed in the fall: within the first half of September (Reich Party Congress in Nuremberg), the Sunday following Michaelmas in September or October (*Erntedankfest*), and November 8/9 (in memory of the Putsch of 1923 and those who had died for the Movement).
6. Published in VB, No. 2, January 2, 1935.
7. At that, time, the Wehrmacht was frequently referred to as the "school of the nation."
8. The rally was convened on January 2, 1935, with only twenty-four hours' notice. Göring had even ordered an aerial barrage for Berlin and special anti-aircraft protection during the rally (NSK report, January 4, 1935).
9. DNB text, January 3, 1935; VB, No. 4, January 4, 1935.
10. Göring, taking on the responsibilities of "host," greeted the participants when the rally commenced. The State Opera House (Berlin, Unter den Linden) belonged to the Land of Prussia, and Göring was acting in his capacity as Prussian Minister-President.
11. For more details on the Soldatenbund, see below, 1937, note 1.
12. On February 4, 1938, Hitler dismissed Generals Blomberg and Fritsch and appointed Göring Field Marshal, personally taking over supreme command of the Wehrmacht and becoming head of the Reich Ministry of War. From this point onwards, the conflict between the Party and the Wehrmacht played only a secondary role.
13. Report in VB, No. 5, January 5, 1935.
14. Report in VB, No. 12, January 12, 1935.
15. DNB text, January 15, 1935.

16. Published in VB, No. 16, January 16, 1935.
17. Published in VB, No. 17, January 17, 1935.
18. Published in VB, No. 19, January 19, 1935. In No. 21 of January 21, 1935, the VB published Ward Price's comments on this interview: "I am convinced of Adolf Hitler's love of peace.—Never before had I seen Adolf Hitler as youthful and invigorated as last Friday [the interview was held on Thursday, January 17, 1935]. I was constantly amazed by the keen concentration of his reasoning when he spoke on events in world politics."
19. The reference here is made to Hitler's "Peace Speech" before the Reichstag on May 17, 1933. See above, *ibid.*
20. Report in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1935.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Published in VB, No. 26, January 26, 1935.
23. A structuring in Reich Gaus, parallel to the Gau divisions of the NSDAP, was effected only in Austria, the Sudetenland, Danzig, West Prussia, and Posen (or Wartheland), i.e. in newly acquired territories.
24. DNB report, January 26, 1935. A Foreign Office record of the talk with Lord Allen of Hurtwood on January 25, 1935 can be found in Friedrich Berger, *Deutschland-England 1933-1939, Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Instituts für aussenpolitische Forschung*, Vol. VII (Essen, 1943), pp. 47 ff.
25. Report in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1935.
26. Published in VB, *ibid.*
27. RGBl. 1935, 1, pp. 494–68.
28. Report in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1935. Friedrich Grimm, born 1888, defense attorney in numerous *Ruhrkampf* cases (resistance against the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923) and trials before the Feme.
29. Published in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1935.
30. *Ibid.*—Here Hitler is alluding to the dictatorial government of Minister-President António de Oliveira Salazar.
31. Published in VB, No. 38, February 7, 1935.
32. Reports in VB, Nos. 35 to 37, February 4 to 6, 1935.
33. VB, No. 38, February 7, 1935. Official bulletin.
34. Published in VB, No. 39, February 8, 1935.
35. Published in VB, No. 46, February 15, 1935. This speech is quite typical for Hitler's attitude. Streicher could take personal and moral liberties under Hitler, because he "did not waver for a second" and "stood behind him unerringly in every situation." Of those sentenced to death in Nuremberg in 1946, Streicher alone maintained his "undying" devotion to Hitler to the bitter end, raving like a lunatic all the way to the gallows.
36. Report in VB, No. 46, February 15, 1935. The designer to whom Hitler refers was Dr. Ferdinand Porsche. See also Paul Kluge, "Hitler und das Volkswagenprojekt," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), pp. 341 ff.

37. See above, January 17, 1935.
38. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, February 16, 1935.
39. Published in VB, No. 50, February 19, 1935.
40. Report in VB, No. 53, February 22, 1935.
41. DNB report, February 22, 1935.
42. Published in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1935.
43. It was Hitler's perpetual concern that "one of the nameless" might dethrone him: the reason underlying the great precautions he took to ensure that no political power—however marginal—might be wielded without his approval and constant supervision.
44. That these solemn declarations were completely without merit is best illustrated by Hitler's actions on March 15, 1939 when, in one fell swoop, he unilaterally breached both the Munich Agreement and the Anglo-German declaration of mutual consultations of September 30, 1938, he himself had signed.
45. Report in VB, No. 59, February 28, 1935.
46. Report in VB, No. 63, March 4, 1935.
47. Report in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1935.
48. Hitler's rallies were frequently favored with sunshine and gave rise to the popular epithet *Hitlerwetter*, in a certain sense a sequel to the sunny weather referred to under the regime of William II as *Kaiserwetter*. If rain, gales, or thunderstorms happened to blight the sky, either some evil power was alleged to be at work (as, for instance, in the harsh winters of 1939–1942) or Providence was providing the German people with an opportunity to prove their resilience.
49. Published in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1935.
50. See above, speech of August 27, 1933.
51. See above, speech of August 26, 1934.
52. The type of "work" Hitler had in mind was to be revealed two weeks later: on March 16, 1935, general conscription was reintroduced in Germany.
53. Here several minutes of resounding applause interrupted the speech.
54. Hitler spoke only once more at a rally in Saarbrücken. On October 9, 1938, shortly after the Munich Agreement, he delivered the notorious speech in which he inveighed against Great Britain and announced new military action on Germany's western border; see below, *ibid*.
55. 1 Cor. 13, 2 ("Faith moves mountains")—yet another instance of Hitler's penchant for equating the Christian faith in God with faith in himself and his politics.
56. This phrase was a harbinger of the soon-to-be-accomplished fact of the swastika banner being made the sole *Reichsflagge* (national flag).
57. Here Hitler gave vent to his resentment that "others," i.e. international bodies, had settled the question of the Saar and prevented him from taking independent action.
58. DNB report, March 2, 1935. An eighth deputy was later appointed.
59. DNB report, March 4, 1935.
60. Published in VB, No. 65, March 6, 1935.

61. Hans Schemm, a teacher by profession; Gauleiter in Upper Franconia in 1925, founder of the National Socialist Teachers' League; from April 13, 1933, Bavarian State Minister for Education and Culture.
62. Published in the magazine of the National Socialist Teachers' League in 1935. Taken from the author's notes.
63. Published in VB, No. 66, March 7, 1935.
64. Report in VB, No. 69, March 10, 1935.
65. Article 198 of the Treaty of Versailles read: "Germany may not maintain a military air force on land or at sea as a part of its armed forces." (RGBL. 1919, I, p. 957).
66. See above, p. 364.
67. According to Bullock, p. 332; cf. also Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 283.
68. The Luftwaffe, which had been masquerading under the guise of the German Air Sports Association (DLV), wore blue "civilian" uniforms without military insignias; a few days' time was needed to attach the epaulettes and to issue helmets, rifles, etc. in preparation for March 16 and 17, 1935.
69. Joachim von Ribbentrop, born 1893 in Wesel, hanged 1946 in Nuremberg, acquired his mark of nobility—the "von" in his name—by means of adoption.
70. DNB report, March 10, 1935.
71. This White Paper contained Great Britain's plans for increased armaments. The grounds cited were Germany's rearmament (despite the provisions of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles). See Bullock, p. 332; cf. also Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 283.
72. Published in VB, No. 74, March 15, 1935.
73. The SA sports badge (also called the SA military badge) was a bronzed-tinted badge which was pinned to the left side of the chest as were the Reich sports badge and the Iron Cross 1st Class. It depicted a sword and swastika with oak wreath. The badge was first awarded as early as November 28, 1933, but was confined to members of the SA. On March 18, 1937, a further decree was issued requiring repeated achievement tests for the SA "into old age."—The "former sections" denoted not only the SS but also the NSKK, which had become independent in the meantime, and several other organizations.
74. Bullock, p. 333. Apparently Bullock took the official DNB bulletin of March 16, 1935 at face value. It read: "The same enthusiasm [as in the Reich Cabinet] reigns in the German Volk," but was issued simultaneously with Hitler's proclamation, i.e. at a point in time at which no public reaction could possibly have been available.
75. Report in VB, No. 77, March 18, 1935.
76. According to Bullock, p. 333, the French had extended military service to two years because of a shortage of youth born in the war years 1914–1918.
77. Published in VB, special issue, March 16, 1935.
78. Ramsay MacDonald (1866–1937), British Prime Minister in 1924 and from 1931 to 1935.

79. *The Times*, March 12, 1935; quoted from Baynes, p. 1208.—Stanley Baldwin, Earl Baldwin of Bewdley (1867–1947), British Prime Minister in 1923, from 1924 to 1929, and from 1935 to 1937.
80. Hitler is referring here to the police troops; he chose the odd and linguistically incorrect expression *Truppen-Polizeien* in order to disguise, even at this point, the military character of these divisions which had been previously denied.
81. Report in VB, No. 77, March 18, 1935.
82. DNB text, March 18, 1935. Published in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1935.
83. For Hitler's attitude toward England, see above, pp. 53 ff.
84. Reports on Hitler's stops in Augsburg, Stuttgart, and Wiesbaden in VB, Nos. 79 to 82, March 20 to 23, 1935.
85. DNB text, March 26, 1935.
86. By the will which was to "pervade into the bottommost organs" Hitler naturally meant his own.
87. DNB report, March 24, 1935. In August 1914, Fürst had taken part in the Bavarian King's Own Regiment's attack on the French border town of Badonviller (Badenweiler) and afterwards composed a march which was first performed at the market place in Peronne. It was later called the Badenweiler March (Army Music March No. 256) and was allowed to be played in the Third Reich only when Hitler was present.
88. See below, June 18, 1935.
89. For the contents of these talks, see Schmidt, pp. 294 ff. and *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945* (London/Washington 1949 ff.), Series C (1933–1937), Volume III, no. 555, pp. 1043 ff. (hereafter referred to as DGFP).
90. Report in VB, No. 88, March 29, 1935. The fighter group of the German aviation hero Manfred von Richthofen (shot down in action) was the most famous group in the First World War. Its last commander was Hermann Göring.
91. Report in VB, *ibid.* Francisco Agramonte y Cortijo was the last Republican Ambassador before the Spanish Civil War.
92. Report in VB, No. 89, March 30, 1935. See Ulrich Gregor/Enno Patalas, *Geschichte des Films*, Vol. I (Reinbek, 1976), p. 144: ... "The camera sweeps upward along the flagstaffs, underlining the enormous expanse of the Congress grounds. Then the Führer appears in focus as the overawing ruler of this New Order. He strides forth, alone, along the wide empty path between the innumerable rows of lined up formations. Towering above them, he stands at the rostrum."
93. See above, p. 528.
94. Report in VB, No. 92, April 2, 1935.
95. Report in VB, No. 93, April 3, 1935.
96. Report in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1935.
97. Report in VB, No. 95, April 5, 1935.
98. Expression used in the *Kulturkampf* (struggle between Church and State) of the nineteenth century, meaning being in favor of absolute supremacy of papal over national authority. See also Ludendorff's

invective against Hitler in his magazine *Am Heiligen Quell Deutscher Kraft*, 1926–1932.

99. See above, p. 518, speech of August 7, 1934.
100. See below, November 8, 1937.
101. Published in VB, No. 99, April 9, 1935.
102. Report in VB, No. 101, April 11, 1935.
103. See below, March 11, 1936.
104. Reports in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1935.
105. The square standard showed a black swastika bordered in gold on a red background encircled by a gold-worked oak wreath. In the corners were two golden national eagles and two golden eagles with swastika, as depicted on the steel helmets worn by the Army. The design was created by Professor Klein, Munich.
106. Report in VB, No. 119, April 29, 1935.
107. Published in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1935.
108. DNB report, May 1, 1935. The text of the speech was printed in VB, *ibid.*
109. Oswald Spengler, a philosopher and social theorist (1880–1936), enjoyed great popularity among the National Socialists as long as his works *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* and *Preussentum und Sozialismus* were useful stepping stones for Hitler's climb to power. Prior to the NS takeover, Spengler met with Hitler several times and had himself photographed with the dictator. However, in 1933, when he dared to articulate his skepticism about the future of National Socialism in his new work called *Jahre der Entscheidung* (Part 1), he fell out of Hitler's favor and Part 2 of this work was not allowed to be published. In spite of this, Alfred Rosenberg wrote a lengthy obituary in the *Völkischer Beobachter* at Spengler's death in 1936.
110. Reports in VB, Nos. 122 and 123, May 2 and 3, 1935.
111. Report in VB, No. 123, May 3, 1935.
112. Report in VB, No. 124, May 4, 1935.
113. Report in VB, No. 126, May 6, 1935.
114. Published in VB, *ibid.*
115. Report in VB, No. 127, May 7, 1935.
116. Report in VB, No. 133, May 13, 1935.
117. Published in VB, No. 134, May 14, 1935.
118. DNB report, May 18, 1935.
119. Report in VB, No. 140, May 20, 1935.
120. RGB1. 1935, 1, p. 609.
121. See above, p. 558, note 130.
122. Until 1918, there were Ministries of War in both Prussia and Bavaria.
123. Hitler introduced two-year conscription by decree on August 24, 1936 (RGBL. 1936, I, p. 706) shortly before the close of the one-year term served by those born in 1914. The reasons for this step were cited as the alleged Bolshevik threat, the Spanish Civil War, and health motivations; see below, September 9 to 14, 1936.
124. Published in VB, No. 142, May 22, 1935. This wording contained a few minor transcription errors which were corrected by the author.

125. See above, pp. 324 ff., speech of May 17, 1933.
126. See Schmidt, pp. 294 ff.
127. These figures are greatly exaggerated. Even the official "Roll of Honor of Those Murdered for the Movement" published in VB (No. 312, November 8, 1937) cited a total of only 258 persons up to May 1935; see above, p. 572, note 211.
128. See Schmidt, pp. 297 f.
129. In March 1935, the signatory powers repeatedly demanded the institution of a directorate in the Memel territory according to the provisions of the Statute.
130. Hitler broke off his attack on Lithuania as abruptly as he had launched it. For years there was no discussion on this question at all; then Lithuania surrendered the Memel territory to the German Reich in response to a German ultimatum on March 23, 1939; see below, March 22 and 23, 1939.
131. In his speech of September 1, 1939 (see below), Hitler boasted having spent ninety billion marks on arms within a six-year period.
132. This remark was a warning to the British to finally come to reason and give him *carte blanche* in Eastern Europe.
133. Cf. report in VB, No. 145, May 25, 1935.
134. Report in VB, No. 149/150, May 29/30, 1935.
135. DNB report, June 1, 1935; VB, No. 153, June 2, 1935.
136. Armand Augustin Louis de Caulaincourt (1773–1827), French diplomat and Foreign Minister under Napoleon; Ambassador to the Tsar in Saint Petersburg from 1807 to 1811; later Division General.
137. Cf. Ribbentrop's testimony in IMT, Blue Series B, X, pp. 274 f.; pp. 468–471. See also below, February 4, 1938.
138. Cf. Schmidt, p. 312.
139. For a report on the negotiations, see *ibid.*, pp. 311 ff.
140. A proportion of one to one had been fixed for submarines, but in terms of total tonnage, they counted one to three. In respect to the larger warships, Germany did not achieve the permitted strength prior to 1939 due to the lengthy construction period required. The Germans did, however, unwisely exceed the contractually allowed tonnage and armament in respect to both battleships and battle cruisers completed. In his speech of April 28, 1939 (see below), Hitler withdrew from the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935 in retaliation for the British reaction to his occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, believing that in so doing he would move the stubborn British to recognize his supremacy in Europe.
141. Published in VB, No. 238, August 26, 1935.
142. Report in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1935.
143. DNB report, June 3, 1935.
144. Report in VB, No. 159, June 8, 1935.
145. DNB report, June 9, 1935.
146. Report in VB, No. 168, June 17, 1935.
147. DNB text, June 18, 1935; published in VB, No. 170, June 19, 1935.

148. Report in VB, *ibid.*
149. Report in VB, No. 174, June 23, 1935.
150. Reports in VB, Nos. 175 to 177, June 24 to 26, 1935.—The reference here is to the 1864 war between Denmark on the one side and Prussia and Austria on the other.
151. Report in VB, No. 177, June 26, 1935.—Hess was recovering from an injury he had received doing sports.
152. Reports in VB, No. 179, June 28, 1935.
153. RGBl. 1935, I, p. 769. Paragraph 8, section 3 of the Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 had incidentally provided: "Performing compulsory labor service constitutes a prerequisite for active military service." RGBl. 1935, I, p. 610.—In spite of all the rhetoric lost on the subject in Paragraph 1 of the Reich Labor Service Law of June 26, 1935 ("The Reich Labor Service is an honorable service to the German Volk, its purpose to provide education in the Volksgemeinschaft and the true concept of labor, and particularly in the recognition due to manual labor," etc.), compulsory labor service came to be nothing more than a preparatory course for military service.—For the establishment of the "women's labor service" with its "work maidens" (*Arbeitsmaidens*), ideological considerations initially played a more significant role; during the war, this institution, too, became another branch of the *Kriegshilfsdienst* (auxiliary military service).
154. Report in VB, No. 179, August 28, 1935.
155. Published in VB, No. 181, June 30, 1935.
156. Photo report, *ibid.*
157. Reports in VB, No. 182, July 1, 1935.—The segment in question joined Munich and Holzkirchen.
158. Reports in VB, Nos. 185 and 186, July 4 and 5, 1935.
159. Report in VB, No. 193, July 12, 1935. Among the women who helped Hitler regain his self-confidence following the failed Putsch in 1923 were Carola Hoffmann, Helene Bechstein, and Winifred Wagner. See also Bullock, pp. 391 f.
160. Report in VB, No. 194, July 13, 1935.
161. Cf. Schmidt, p. 316.
162. Wolf Heinrich Graf von Helldorff, born 1896 in Merseburg. Arrested and hanged in connection with the attempted assassination of July 20, 1944.
163. Report in VB, No. 203, July 22, 1935.
164. These speeches did not really be kept "secret" to the public as a rule. Most of them have been published exclusively in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (not in the DNB reports), although in many cases not in their entirety. See also below, October 31, 1937.
165. Published in VB, No. 215, August 3, 1935.
166. Report in VB, No. 220, August 8, 1935.—An American society dedicated to the memory of the former Prussian Officer Friedrich von Steuben, General Chief of Staff under George Washington.
167. Report in VB, *ibid.*

168. DNB text, August 11, 1935.
169. Here Hitler chose an extremely modest term.
170. This passage recalls to mind the thinking of William II, who also personally laid claim to God's favor and went so far as to describe the Almighty as an "ally" of Prussia and Germany. He declared on February 24, 1892 before the Brandenburg Provincial Parliament: "Furthermore, I am of the absolutely firm conviction that our ally at Rossbach and Dannewitz will not let me down. He has taken such infinite trouble with our Old March [Brandenburg] and our House [Hohenzollern] that we need not think He has done it all for naught."—Cf. Penzler, Vol. I, p. 209.
171. Report in VB, No. 225, August 13, 1935.
172. See below, November 7, 1935.
173. On May 26, 1932, Hitler had written, "With the hope of being able to help in rebuilding a fleet worthy of the Reich.—Adolf Hitler." Taken from the author's notes..
174. Published in VB, No. 246, September 3, 1935.
175. Published in VB, No. 242, August 30, 1935. Queen Astrid, a Princess of Sweden, was the wife of King Leopold III of Belgium.
176. Published in VB, *ibid*.
177. Report in VB, No. 243, August 31, 1935.
178. Report in VB, No. 249, September 6, 1935.
179. Reports in VB, Nos. 250 to 252, September 7 to 9, 1935.
180. A satirical National Socialist weekly.
181. Published in VB, No. 252, September 9, 1935.
182. RGBl. 1935, 1, pp. 1145–1147.
183. See below, November 5, 1935.
184. Dr. Franz Schlegelberger, State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Justice, of which he was temporarily in charge from 1941 to 1942.
185. RGBl. 1942, 1, p. 247.
186. The issuance of citizenship patents foreseen in this law never became reality, for the subject was eclipsed by arms production and preparations for war. To judge from Hitler's remarks to the Reichstag in this context, only tried and true National Socialists were to be declared "citizens of the Reich" (*Reichsbürger*). The remaining Germans were to be "subjects of the state" (*Staatsangehörige*) without any special rights of citizenship, as well as the Jews or other people lacking "German or cognate blood." See below, speech of September 15, 1935, and note 211.
187. The insignias of the Holy Roman Empire (the Imperial Orb, Crown, Scepter, and Sword; including several relics, in particular the Holy Lance) were kept in Nuremberg until 1796 and then removed to the National Treasury in Vienna. After the Anschluss, Hitler immediately had them restored to Nuremberg. In 1946, they were reinstalled at the Vienna Hofburg. The replica of the imperial Sword presented to Hitler in 1935 was the work of the Aachen master goldsmith Witte.—See also below, September 5, 1938, and 1938, note 339.
188. Published in VB, No. 254, September 11, 1935.

189. Champ de Mars; in Merovingian and Carolingian times, the place where the Reich's elite gathered for military parades.
190. Published in VB, No. 255, September 12, 1935.
191. Ibid. The construction work on the Congress Hall, modeled after the Roman Colosseum, was halted because of World War II, leaving behind a gigantic torso of the debacle of the Third Reich; taken over by the City of Nuremberg in 1960 to be used in part as a sports arena.
192. Ibid.
193. DNB text, September 12, 1935; VB, No. 256, September 13, 1935, partly in indirect speech.
194. Published in VB, No. 257, September 14, 1935.
195. Here Hitler was alluding to the generals' attempts to gradually dissolve the Party and to erect a military dictatorship with the aid of the Soldatenbund; see below, 1937, note 1. Certain circles within the Stahlhelm shared these thoughts—reason enough for Hitler to dissolve the Stahlhelm organization.
196. DNB report, September 13, 1935.
197. Report in VB, No. 257, September 14, 1935.
198. DNB report, September 14, 1935; VB, No. 258, September 15, 1935, partly in indirect speech.
199. When men fit for service at the front became increasingly rare in the course of World War II, Hitler did not hesitate to send large numbers of German women in their places as assistants to the Army, the Luftwaffe, and the SS.
Although armed at best with pistols and not deployed in infantry fighting, the women wore uniforms, lived in barracks like their male colleagues, and assumed some soldierly duties. Many were taken prisoner by enemy forces.
200. DNB text, September 14, 1935; VB, No. 258, September 15, 1935.
201. *Mein Kampf*, p. 392.
202. "*Flink wie Windhunde, zäh wie Leder and hart wie Kruppstahl.*"
203. DNB report, September 14, 1935.
204. This body never achieved any real significance, but was soon subsumed into the organization of the Four-Year Plan which governed economic life in Germany from 1937 onwards under Göring.
205. Published in VB, No. 259, September 16, 1935.—The name *Verfügungstruppe* meant that it should stand at Hitler's personal disposal (*Verfügung*); see also below, August 17, 1938.
206. Former conscripts did not long have an opportunity to join the ranks of the SA. Those who were discharged in 1937 and 1938 were enlisted shortly thereafter for military purposes (e.g. Austria and the Sudetenland) and deployed in the war from 1939.
207. The demonstration against the *Bremen* had taken place on July 26, 1935. The following night, demonstrators gained access to the ship and tore down the swastika flag. Police arrested several people who were subsequently given lenient sentences on August 12 and 14.
208. See above, pp. 297–302.

209. DNB text, September 15, 1935; also published in VB, No. 259, September 16, 1935.
210. See above, speech of May 21, 1935.
211. Just as the Reich Flag Act raised the status of the swastika to sole national flag, the Reich Law of Citizenship likewise should raise the status of well-deserved National Socialists to sole “Reich Citizens” with respective civil rights, in distinction from the remaining Germans to whom no “debt of gratitude” was owed. See above, note 186.
212. See above, p. 502.
213. DNB text, September 15, 1935.
214. DNB report, *ibid.*
215. Published in VB, No. 260, September 17, 1935.
216. The Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 had conferred upon the Reich Minister of War the title of “Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht.” Hitler, in his capacity as Head of State, was now the “Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.” This distinction—merely of formal nature—was dropped on February 4, 1938. See below, *ibid.*
217. Published in VB, No. 260, September 17, 1935.
218. Report in VB, No. 261, September 18, 1935.
219. Hitler did not deliver the proclamation at the Party Congress himself; it was read aloud.
220. Report in VB, No. 268, September 25, 1935.
221. Report in VB, No. 273, September 30, 1935.
222. Hindenburg’s coffin was removed from the Tannenberg monument before the end of World War II and transferred to the Elisabeth Church in Marburg an der Lahn.
223. Reports in VB, No. 276, October 3, 1935.
224. Published in VB, *ibid.* By virtue of this decree, Hitler put an end to years of controversy on the erection of a Reich memorial for the World War dead. Sites competing for the honor had included Lorch am Rhein, Bad Berka, and others.
225. Reports in VB, Nos. 277 and 278, October 4 and 5, 1935.
226. Published in VB, No. 280, October 7, 1935.
227. At this time already, Hitler no longer went forth among his Volk quite as fearlessly as he claims here. Later, during the war, his appearances in public grew exceedingly rare.
228. People in Germany gave Hitler’s attempts to increase the military and political potential by stepping up the birth rate the ironic epithet of “demographic policy.”
229. The wording of this passage reveals that Hitler would not, in the long term, confine naval tonnage to a third of that of the British.
230. Published in VB, No. 280, October 7, 1935; also reproduced by the Eher Verlag in a pamphlet entitled *Führer-Reden zum Winterhilfswerk 1933–1936* (Munich, 1937).
231. On the first Sunday of each winter month, all Germans were to eat only *Eintopf* (stew) such as those served by the military in field kitchens. The money saved was to be handed in to the Winterhilfswerk. Even

at this point—i.e. in peacetime (!)—restaurants were also required to serve only stew dishes on these Sundays and to collect respective contributions for the organisation.

232. This refers to the time prior to 1914.
233. This type of generous impulse on Hitler's part was a rarity, reserved at best for family members of German Communists who themselves were allotted but meager rations in the concentration camps. Russian Communists on the other hand were to be exterminated, even if they were hungry.
234. Report in VB, No. 294, October 21, 1935.
235. *Gedenkhalle für die Gefallenen des Dritten Reiches*, edited by Hans Weberstedt and Kurt Langner, Munich, 1935. The Party's stamp of approval was given on October 20, 1935.
236. The first *Wartburgfest* took place in 1817.
237. Open letter from Mackensen to Seldte dated July 31, 1935. DNB text, August 5, 1935.
238. Report in VB, No. 296, October 23, 1935. Official ancestral estates of the Third Reich were not to be parceled out; they enjoyed a special status and respective privileges.
239. Hitler's endowments to faithful ministers and generals went into hundreds of thousands of marks. Funk, for instance, received RM 520,000 while Lammers and Ribbentrop were given RM 500,000 each; Keitel received RM 250,000 and Milch RM 500,000. See IMT, Blue Series B, XIII, pp. 158–161.
240. Report in VB, No. 297, October 24, 1935. Wilhelm Friedrich Loeper, former Captain; Reichswehr officer from 1920 to 1924 (last at the Pionierschule in Munich); Gauleiter in Magdeburg-Anhalt from 1924; appointed Reichsstatthalter in 1933.
241. Report in VB, *ibid.* See also below, Hitler's letter to Seldte dated November 7, 1935.
242. Report in VB, No. 301, October 28, 1935.
243. At the end of his life, Hitler claimed the opposite, i.e. that he had been treacherously betrayed by all his friends including Göring and Himmler; see below, Vol. IV, Appendix.
244. Report in VB, No. 308, November 4, 1935.
245. It is not clear to which "sad events" are referred here except those on November 8/9, 1923. The bridge had been erected in 1828, expanded in width in 1892, and decorated with allegoric figures. It was damaged by bombs in World War II.
246. Report in VB, No. 308, November 4, 1935.
247. RGBL. 1935, I, pp. 1285–1287.
248. RGBL. 1935, I, pp. 1287 f.
249. The basic design of the imperial naval ensign which had flown mainly on the ships of the imperial fleet was modeled after the British naval ensign.
250. Report in VB, No. 310, November 6, 1935.
251. Recruits born in 1914 and, in East Prussia, born in 1910 as well.

252. Published in VB, No. 312, November 8, 1935.
253. Reference here is to the black-white-red flag with a large black iron cross in its center. In the Weimar Republic, this banner—just as the former black-white-red flag of the merchant marine—showed a black-red-gold jack in the inner upper corner.
254. Hitler never did put this into practice; here his words were merely designed to comfort those who might mourn the loss of the old black-white-red flag.
255. Published in VB, No. 313, November 9, 1935.
256. Published in VB, No. 315, November 11, 1935.
257. One is still waiting in vain for revelations on this point!
258. The Blood order (decoration of November 9, 1923) was a silver medal with a matt finish measuring 4 cm in diameter. The front showed an eagle in side view perched on a wreath of oak leaves which encircled the date “9. Nov.” To the right was the inscription, “München 1923–1933.” The back of the medal featured an embossed image of the Feldherrnhalle; above it stood the swastika in rays of sunshine with the inscription in an arch, “Und ihr habt dock gesiegt!” (But you still have triumphed).

The order was worn on a blood-red band which was intertwined and attached to the right breast pocket. Hitler had created the Blood Order in March of 1934; it was originally intended only for those who had taken part in the coup attempt of 1923. After the Anschluss of Austria, it was also awarded on a general basis to “Blood Witnesses of the Movement.”
259. His successor as Chief of the Wehrmacht Office (called Ministerial Office prior to May 21, 1935) was Major General Wilhelm Keitel.
260. Hitler had ordered that the entire square, which had contained a number of green areas, be covered with concrete slabs in the Italian style.
261. Initially, the war in Abyssinia did not progress well for Italy. The Ethiopians had unexpectedly offered strong resistance, and the League of Nations had passed economic sanctions against Italy for its aggression there.
262. Report in VB, No. 315, November 11, 1935.
263. After the end of the Third Reich, the sixteen dead were dismissed from their “Eternal Guard” and removed to normal cemeteries. Whereas the pantheons themselves were detonated, the party structures, which also survived World War II intact, were used as state administrative buildings.
264. NSK text, November 9, 1935.
265. Report in VB, No. 316, November 12, 1935.
266. Reports in VB, No. 320, November 16, 1935.
267. Reports in VB, Nos. 326 and 327, November 22 and 23, 1935.
268. DNB text, November 27, 1935. Published in VB, No. 332, November 28, 1935.
269. Report in VB, No. 334, November 30, 1935.
270. Report in VB, No. 341, December 7, 1935.

- 271. Report in VB, No. 343, December 9, 1935.
- 272. *Ibid.*
- 273. Report in VB, No. 350, December 16, 1935. See also DGFP, C, IV, nos. 460 and 462, pp. 913 f. and 917 ff.
- 274. Report in VB, No. 352, December 18, 1935.
- 275. Report in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1935.
- 276. Published in VB, No. 1/2, January 1/2, 1936.

The Year 1936

Notes

1. Dr. h.c. Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, born 1882 in Braunau am Inn. Austrian Minister without Portfolio from July 11, 1936; Minister of the Interior from November 3, 1936; Vice Chancellor March 12, 1938, to May 24, 1938; died in 1946.
2. DNB report, January 1, 1936. The specification "in Berlin" refers only to the place where the announcement was read. Hitler himself was in Berchtesgaden at the time.
3. Report in VB, No. 6, January 6, 1936.
4. Report in VB, No. 7, January 7, 1936.
5. Report in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1936.
6. Report in VB, No. 11, January 11, 1936.
7. Published in VB, *ibid*.
8. Published in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1936.
9. Published in VB, No. 14, January 14, 1936.
10. Published in VB, No. 16, January 16, 1936.
11. See below, speech of November 8, 1941. "The last battalion on the battlefield will be a German one."
12. Printed in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* January 16, 1933.
13. Published in VB, No. 20, January 20, 1936.
14. Published in VB, No. 22, January 22, 1936.
15. Published in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1936.
16. Printed in VB, No. 27, January 27, 1936. The reproduction in the *Frankfurter Volksblatt* of January 26, 1936, contains greater detail on Madame Titayna's remarks, and therefore is cited here.
17. See below, February 21, 1936.
18. At the time Funk was State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Propaganda; See above, p. 580, note 52.
19. This right Hitler accorded only to the German people. Other people, such as the Polish, Russians, Serbians, etc.—not to mention the Jews—should "vegetate" or best be eliminated.
20. Here Hitler is referring to a war with France or the Western Powers. He believed he was justified in waging a war in the East, since such a crusade would be dedicated to the conquest of new "Lebensraum."
21. This interpretation of the rules governing the acquisition of new territory was made in reference to German interests only. Hitler applied vastly different criteria when other peoples' territory was at stake.
22. Reference is made here to the Anschluss of Austria with the German Reich.
23. This remark refers to Leni Riefenstahl.
24. Pierre Laval, born 1883 in Chateldun, French Premier repeatedly, executed for collaboration in 1945.
25. Ferdinand de Brinon, State Secretary, later General Delegate, executed for collaboration in 1947.

26. This is reflected in his memoirs *Souvenirs d'une Ambassade à Berlin* (Paris, 1949). Because of his repeated favorable statements, François-Poncet mockingly was called the "Reich Speaker of the NSDAP" in Germany prior to 1938. Even Hitler once offered him this title as a joke; according to Schmidt, pp. 363 f.
27. DNB report, June 25, 1936; VB, Berlin Edition, February 26, 1936.
28. This remark, which Hitler frequently uttered, formed part of the so-called *Wandsprüche* (mural sayings) and ran as follows: *Deutsch sein heisst wahr sein, deutsch sein heisst klar sein* ("To be German means to be honest, to be German means to be clear"). Hitler himself never took this maxim too seriously, as he greatly preferred a convoluted and vague wording, not to mention its content of honesty (!).
29. Evidently Hitler's idea of logic entailed clinging on to the concepts he formulated in 1919, irrespective of whether or not these corresponded to reality or whether reality had discredited them. Despite long-winded proclamations to the contrary, nothing ever came of the proposed draft for a new constitution; nor did a *Führungsauslese*—supposedly ascertaining the proper succession to the Führer—ever take place.
30. Report in VB, No. 29, January 29, 1936.
31. Report in VB, No. 30, January 30, 1936. Late in 1935, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile had agreed to upgrade their representative offices in Germany to Embassies.
32. According to DNB, he spoke before 25,000 SA men only.
33. DNB report, January 30, 1936.
34. These and similar phrases are based on passages from the Gospel according to St. John: "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14, 21); "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14, 3); "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15, 5); "I know my own and my own know me" (John 10, 14).
35. Published in VB, No. 36, February 5, 1936. Born 1895 in Schwerin, Wilhelm Gustloff was head of the meteorological station in Davos. He was also the senior Landesgruppenleiter of the NSDAP Foreign Organization. David Frankfurter, born in Yugoslavia in 1909 as the son of a rabbi, did not know his victim personally. Frankfurter's motive for the assassination was Gustloff's position as a leading National Socialist.
36. Report in Schmidt, p. 335 f.
37. The "Olympic Honor Badge" consisted of a gold-edged star, bearing five horizontal bars, coated in white enamel, and crossed over by five golden rays. In its center were the five gold-edged Olympic rings of white enamel. The symbol of sovereignty was placed over the top ray. The medal was awarded in two classes and was worn on a brick-red, black-trimmed band that contained five interwoven white stripes (RGBL. 1936, I, pp. 53 ff.). The honorary badge was awarded to deserving members of the organizational committee at the Games. On July 31, 1936, Hitler also issued an "Olympic Commemorative Medal" that was worn on a similar band, a distinction awarded to nearly all

- persons involved in the conduct of the Games, whether they were policemen or ushers.
38. DNB report, February 5, 1936.
 39. DNB report, February 6, 1936.
 40. See below, November 9, 1938.
 41. Published in VB, No. 44, February 13, 1936.
 42. Eleven members of the Thule Society (see above, p. 556, note 101), were taken hostage and executed by the Munich Räteregierung (soviet government) in 1919.
 43. Published in VB, No. 48, February 17, 1936.
 44. Ferdinand Porsche.
 45. Hitler was alluding to the economic sanctions of the League of Nations chastising Italy, which oddly enough did not include restrictions on the import of fuel.
 46. DNB text, February 16, 1936.
 47. In *Mein Kampf* (pp. 699 f.), Hitler had called France “Germany’s most deadly enemy.”
 48. See below, March 7, 1936.
 49. DNB text, February 28, 1936; cf. also *Paris Midi*, February 28, 1936.
 50. Up to the year 1932, Hitler described himself as an “artist and writer” on all official documents as well as on police registration forms (completion of which was required in the event of a change of address). As recent as February 5, 1933, he had declared he would not accept payment for his work as Chancellor, since he earned sufficient money through his activities as an author (see above, February 5, 1933, as well as p. 581, note 80.)—The fact that he actually had no intention of “correcting” his stance in foreign policy vis-à-vis France became quite obvious in the years 1940 through 1944 during which he controlled the country.
 51. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, February 26, 1936.
 52. He had already given a detailed description of this assembly in *Mein Kampf*, pp. 400 ff.
 53. Reference is made here to the then party chairman Karl Harrer. Hitler was not elected to preside over the NSDAP until July 1921.
 54. China also followed suit and promoted its previous envoy in Berlin to the rank of Ambassador.
 55. Reports in VB, No. 59, February 28, 1936.
 56. Report in VB, No. 60, February 29, 1936.
 57. Report in VB, *ibid*.
 58. The signatory powers of the Locarno Pact (Great Britain, France, Italy, and Belgium) had challenged the German Government on March 19, 1936, “to submit the question to the Permanent International Court of Justice in The Hague as to whether the mutual assistance pact entered into by France and the Soviet Union is compatible with the existence of the Locarno Pact, and to pledge to respect its decision as final in the case.” Hitler remained silent on this demand. Cf. Schmidt, p. 328.
 59. Cf. Bullock, pp. 342 f.

60. Printed in VB, No. 67, March 7, 1936.
61. Quoted from the wording published in 1936 by the Eher Verlag in a pamphlet entitled *Des Führers Kampf um den Weltfrieden* ("The Führer's Struggle for World Peace"), that contains the speech in the Reichstag and excerpts of the following campaign speeches. A special edition appeared that same year, entitled *Die Rededes Führers in der historischen Reichstagssitzung vom 7. März 1936*. It was printed in Mainz for the SA Brigade 150 Rheinhesen.
An English edition (*Speech delivered in the Reichstag, March 7th, 1936, by Adolf Hitler, Führer and Chancellor*) was also published in 1936 by Müller & Sohn KG, in Berlin.
62. Somehow Hitler had managed to lose one million people in his citation. In the months of January and February he had spoken of 68 million.
63. "So oder so"(one way or another) was one of Hitler's favorite phrases, when he was referring to the implementation of force to resolve a problem.
64. In this instance, Hitler was referring to the renunciation of the Alsace-Lorraine area. However, when he occupied the territory in the course of the Second World War, he did not hesitate one minute to annex it to the German Reich.
65. The treaty referred to is the Locarno Pact of 1925.
66. For his attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, Hitler had to take steps first to prepare the "territorial prerequisites" for such a venture.
67. Édouard Herriot, born 1872 in Troyes, died 1957 in Saint-Genis-Laval (Département Rhone), radical socialist politician; Mayor of Lyon; served repeatedly as minister.—Hitler was by no means convinced of the correctness of the figures he employed, he simply used them because they suited his purpose at the time.
68. Reference is made to Bertrand do Jouvenel; see above, February 21, 1936.
69. Quoted from the Mainz special edition (see above, note 61), in which the complete Memorandum was published. The subsequent suggestions were not included in the Eher pamphlet.
70. Such assertions on the part of Hitler that, if only his present demands were fulfilled, he would have had "no more territorial claims to make" in Europe would be frequently heard in the following years. His cynicism was such that he did not seem to be bothered by the obvious discrepancy between his recurrent assurances and his new demands for annexation—first of Austria, then the Sudetenland; Bohemia and Moravia; the Memelland; Danzig; the Polish Corridor, and etc.
71. RGBL. 1936, p. 133.
72. Reports in VB, No. 69, March 9, 1936.
73. Song *Die Wacht am Rhein*, poem by Max Schneckenburger, music by Karl Wilhelm; opening line: *Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall*; chorus: *Lieb Vaterland magst ruhig sein*; popular after the Franco-German War of 1870–71. As a national Prussian song, it was never sung by the National Socialists, with this one singular exception.

74. DNB text, March 8, 1936. Also printed in VB, No. 69, March 9, 1936.
75. Published in VB, No. 72, March 12, 1936. DNB wording, November 11, 1936. The DNB text contains a few discrepancies by comparison. Cf. also Ward Price, pp. 128 f.
76. Albert Sarraut, then French Premier.
77. Published in VB, No. 72, March 12, 1936.
78. Schmidt, p. 320.
79. In accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, the Rhineland was divided into three zones of occupation, which were to be administered by the Allied Powers: zone I (Cologne) until 1925; zone II (Koblenz) until 1930; and zone III (Mainz-Wiesbaden) until 1935. In 1929, the Allied troops were withdrawn early from zone II, to be followed by zone III in 1930.
80. Cf. Recouly, p. 194.
81. Maxim Maximovich Litvinov (Wallach), born 1876, died 1951, People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union from 1930 to 1939.—Report on the meeting in Schmidt, p. 318 ff. The session took place in London on March 19, 1936.
82. Excerpts published by the Eher Verlag in 1936. Verbatim account here as quoted in the Eher pamphlet, with the exception of the speech in Cologne.
83. Reference is made to Marshal Józef Piłsudski.
84. This was an exaggeration. Only about one-third of the people had supported him at the time.
85. The flags were square, fashioned after the Prussian and imperial ensigns, but adorned with the swastika. The basic color of the flag indicated the branch of the service the unit belonged to (white for the Infantry, red for the Artillery, and so on). The cloth of the flag was divided into four squares by an iron cross. The Reichswehr had never had *Truppenfahnen*. Aside from the importance symbols such as this flag had for Hitler in general, he hoped to wipe out the Reichswehr's legacy of the years 1919 through 1934. Whenever Hitler now referred to the armed forces in his speeches, he was careful in particular either to qualify it as the "Old Army" (up to 1918), or as the new *Wehrmacht* in existence since 1935. He acted as though neither a German army nor a German navy had existed in the interim.
86. Published in VB, No. 77, March 17, 1936.
87. The audiences responded as one with: "Ja! "Obviously it had been Hitler, who had first used the puppet show approach, prior to Goebbels' well-known rally after the Stalingrad catastrophe. Goebbels asked on February 18, 1943: "Do you want total war?" and the audience responded unanimously: "Ja!"
88. Reference is made here to Eden's admonition that Germany ought to at least make a symbolic gesture and to refrain from fortifying the occupied area along the Rhine river.
89. This elegant wording might have misled the innocent bystander to assume that Hitler one day would renounce power and return to private

life. Among friends Hitler sometimes alluded to an utopian future in which he might leave command post to a successor and retire to enjoy his last days in a city, for example in Linz. However, nothing was further from his mind than actually renouncing even one shred of the power that he had fought so hard to obtain. The words cited here are perhaps best understood as a tool for rhetorical purposes, or perhaps as a parody of the Catholic Ash Wednesday liturgy: "Memento, homo, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris!" ("For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.")

90. The claim that Germany had been governed by 47 parties prior to 1933 was one of the stories Hitler used for propaganda purposes. In 1935, he had claimed that it had been 37 parties (see above, September 11, 1935). In reality, there had been only one instance in which over 30 parties had applied for participation in a Reichstag election, namely, the July 31, 1932 election. However, the majority of the parties did not fulfill the prerequisites to partake in the election and were thus removed from the list of eligible parties. For example, in the electoral district of Franconia only 18 parties had presented candidates for the election, even though the last of them was listed as number "32." In spite of the fact that a multitude of small parties existed during the Weimar Republic, they exerted little influence on national politics and thus did not hamper the parliamentary process. Only ten parties actually influenced governmental activities. Through representation in the Reichstag, the only political parties that actually took part in the formation of a government were: the SPD, the Center Party (with the Bavarian People's Party), the German State Party (former German Democratic Party). The German People's Party, the German National People's Party, the Economic Party of the Middle Class (Wirtschaftspartei), and the Thuringian Agrarian League also infrequently participateded in a government coalition.
91. Reference to Eden's "unreasonable demand," see above, note 88.
92. That Tuesday would have been March 31, i.e. after the plebiscite. In London on April 1, Ribbentrop presented his colleagues with the announced "new peace initiative."
93. Published in VB, No. 85, March 25, 1936. The fighter group referred to was financed by SA donations on Hitler's birthday one year earlier on April 20, 1935.
94. The term "liberator" is erroneous since the Rhineland was not oppressed by any alien power. There simply was nothing it could be "liberated" from. If anyone had a claim to such a title, it would have been the former Reich Chancellor and Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929). By pursuing the matter in diplomatic channels and avoiding the use of military pressure, he had been a key figure in promoting the early withdrawal of the French and British troops from zone II and zone III of the Rhineland. An impressive monument had been erected in Mainz honoring Stresemann; however, once they gained power, the National Socialists had it removed.

95. Report in VB, No. 89, March 29, 1936.
96. Hitler's speech in Cologne is reproduced here as it was reported in the *Frankfurter Volksblatt* of March 12, 1936. Both the transcription in the VB and in the Eher pamphlet of 1936 contain errors.
97. Borrowed from an expression of the character Prometheus in Aeschylus' tragedy *Prometheus Bound*. Also used by the German humanist Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1533).
98. According to Hitler, the German National reactionaries entertained "senile concepts," as did the British statesmen he frequently ridiculed.
99. According to the Reich Electoral Law, one deputy's seat in the Reichstag was accorded to every 60,000 votes cast.
100. See above, March 7, 1936.
101. The Saar had been united with the Gau Rheinpfalz for administrative purposes. Its new name therefore was "Saarpfalz."
102. Published in VB, No. 91, March 31, 1936.
103. Report in VB, No. 92, April 1, 1936.
104. Cf. Schmidt, p. 327.
105. Reports in VB, Nos. 102 to 104, April 11 to 13, 1936.
106. Reports in VB, No. 112, April 21, 1936.
107. There had been no more Field Marshal named in Germany after 1918. During the First World War, numerous professional military men had borne this title, in addition to the German Kings, Crown Princes, Dukes, etc. The following men were named Field Marshal on the dates indicated: von Billow (1915), von Eichhorn (1917), von der Goltz (1911), von Haeseler (1905), von Hindenburg (1914), Liman von Sanders (1915 as Turkish Field Marshal), von Mackensen (1915), von Tirpitz (1911), von Woyrsch (1918).—After Ludendorff had declined to be promoted to this rank by Hitler in 1935, the latter accorded Minister of War von Blomberg the title of Field Marshal. Blomberg gladly accepted the additional glitter. On February 4, 1938, Göring joined him in the illustrious ranks. During the Second World War, Hitler named no less than 27 additional Field Marshals and Grand Admirals. This number even exceeded that of Napoleon, who had been most generous in the distribution of honorary titles as well. In 1940, Hitler promoted Göring another step up, to the position of a Reichsmarschall, a title Hitler had just invented and that even towered above the rank of a Field Marshal. The last man to be appointed Field Marshal was Ritter von Greim, whom Hitler promoted on the eve of April 26, 1945.
108. Published in VB, No. 112, April 21, 1936.
109. Erwin von Witzleben, born 1881 in Breslau; named Field Marshal in 1940; hanged in 1944 in Berlin-Plötzensee in connection with the assassination attempt of July 20.
110. Reports in VB, No. 112, April 21, 1936.
111. Reports in VB, No. 116, April 25, 1936.—The *Ordensburg*en were massive stone structures that were intended to bear resemblance to ancient Germanic cult sites. What precisely was to be taught there was a matter never resolved while Hitler was in power. The National

Socialist “Weltanschauung” was nothing other than fervent belief in Hitler. Everything he said, thought, did, and ordered was to be the epitome of National Socialism. Apart from the unrelenting subservience to Hitler, it was never quite clear what the National Socialist “Weltanschauung” entailed. Additional insecurity was created by Hitler’s constant alteration of explanations, which frequently led to the appearance of contradictions with earlier arguments. Moreover, Hitler’s repeated shifts in tactics—and the fact that he did not disclose his secret ambitions and motivations even to the most intimate of his staff—further confused matters.

112. Reports in VB, Nos. 116/118/120, April 25/27/29, 1936.
113. Published in VB, Nos. 123/124, May 2/3, 1936.
114. Reports in VB, *ibid*.
115. Published in VB, *ibid*.
116. Reference is made here to Hitler’s “peace proposal.” See above, April 1, 1936.
117. Subsequent to remarking “I know,” Hitler made a dramatic pause indicating his agreement with the audience’s implied opinion that the Jews were to blame for this. However, in order not to carry the theatrics too far, Hitler repeated once more “I know” and continued the sentence with another interrelation.
118. This turn of the phrase is merely a repetition of opinions expressed earlier (see above, May 1, 1935.) In reality, Hitler would never have settled for being “the last” amongst the Volksgenossen since he desired always to be “the first.” Had the opportunity presented itself to him during his lifetime, there is no doubt that he gladly would have become King of Great Britain.
119. Report in VB, *ibid*.
120. VB, No. 127, May 6, 1936. No one knows what subsequently happened to the parchment paper edition. It has historic value insofar as Hitler considered it worthy to be preserved. He was in no manner involved with the production of the book.
121. Cf. Schmidt, p. 330.
122. Published in VB, No. 139, May 18, 1936.
123. Report in VB, No. 141/142, May 20/21, 1936. In Munich on May 16, Schreck had died of meningitis at the age of thirty-eight.
124. Reports in VB, No. 143, May 22, 1936.
125. Printed in VB, No. 144, May 23, 1936.
126. Report in VB, No. 149, May 28, 1936.
127. Report in VB, No. 150, May 29, 1936.
128. Reports in VB, Nos. 151 and 152/153, May 30 and May 31/June 1, 1936. Hitler did not like the U-boat monument in Laboe at all; in one conversation he called it “an unrivaled essay in kitsch and bad taste, as it stands there with its inverted bow” (cf. Picker, p. 212).
129. Published in VB, No. 156, June 4, 1936.
130. Reports in VB, No. 162, June 10, 1936, and DNB reports, June 9, 1936.
131. Report in VB, *ibid*.

132. Printed in VB, No. 165, June 13, 1936.
133. Reports in VB, No. 164, June 12, 1936.
134. Report in VB, No. 169, June 17, 1936.
135. Report in VB, No. 170, June 18, 1936.
136. Published in VB, *ibid.*
137. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, June 19, 1936.
138. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, June 18, 1936.
139. The uniforms referred to here were of a light green color. The central part of the shako was light green uniform cloth. In the place of the police star, there was the sovereign symbol (eagle) surrounded by a garland of oak leaves. This new police insignia pin was also worn on the police cap and on the left sleeve.
140. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 454 f. Hitler never had practised boxing or any other type of sport. He valued boxing because of intellectual considerations, in particular since it was a form of sport the English cultivated and the German Philistines found disgusting. He believed that if German youngsters learned how to box, it would prepare them spiritually for striking out at other occasions as well and this, in turn, would prepare Germany's next generation for what Hitler held to be its mission in life, namely, to conquer new Lebensraum in the East.
141. Published in VB, No. 173, June 21, 1936.—Max Schmeling, a studied economist, had been world heavyweight champion from 1930 to 1932 and the first European to win this title in the twentieth century. Joe Louis suffered the first of the only three defeats in his career by Schmeling. After winning the heavyweight title in 1937, Louis knocked out Schmeling within the first round, again in New York City on June 22, 1938.
These two sporting events of 1936 and 1938 appear to be more than coincidental. The climate had changed since the year of the Olympic Games, when the whole world had seemed to court Nazi Germany. In 1938, Joe Louis stood for the free world and the equality of rights of the races against the "Nazi representative and model Aryan" Schmeling. Cf. Max Schmeling, *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt, 1977) pp. 384 ff.
142. Report in VB, No. 175, June 23, 1936.
143. Report in VB, No. 179, June 27, 1936.
144. Report in VB, No. 181, June 29, 1936.
145. Published in VB, *ibid.* The University of Heidelberg was founded in 1386. There were only two other German universities that dated back even further. In 1347, Germans established a university in Prague, and in 1365, a university was founded in Vienna.
146. Willy Marschler, Thuringian Minister of Finance since 1932; Minister-President of Thuringia since 1933.
147. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, July 4, 1936.—Fritz Sauckel, born 1894; sailor by profession; Minister-President of Thuringia in 1932; Reich Governor of Thuringia from 1933 to 1945; Plenipotentiary-General for Labor (*Arbeitseinsatz*) during the Second World War and hence responsible for the management of the Arbeitseinsatz, forced labor

camps and especially for the treatment of foreign workers there; sentenced to death by the International Military Tribunal and hanged in 1946.

148. Report in VB, No. 187, July 5, 1936.
149. Reference is made here to the National Constituent Assembly that convened on August 11, 1919 in Weimar and drafted the new Constitution for the Weimar Republic.
150. Report in VB, No. 188, July 6, 1936.
151. Ibid.
152. See *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, edited by Malcolm Muggeridge (London, 1948), p. 146.
153. Published in VB, No. 195, July 13, 1936.
154. Reference is made here to the agreement reached by Italy, Hungary, and Austria that had been signed in Rome.
155. Hitler took his time about signing the ordinance into law. As a matter of fact, he did not sign it until August 24, 1936 (RGL. 1936, I, p. 647) when the traveling season had already ended.
156. Published in VB, No. 195, July 13, 1936.
157. Published in VB, No. 199, July 17, 1936.
158. Report in VB, No. 202, July 20, 1936.
159. The battleships sent were the armored ships *Admiral Scheer* and *Deutschland*, as well as the battle cruiser *Köln* and the Second Torpedoboat Flotilla.
160. See below, January 30, 1937 and August 6, 1937.
161. Published in VB, No. 204, July 22, 1936.
162. RGL. 1936, I, p. 577.
163. Report in VB, No. 216, August 3, 1936.
164. Ernst Curtius had been the first German to excavate the sites at Olympia in the years 1875 to 1881. Since 1877, Friedrich Dörpfeld participated in the enterprise, who served as director of the German Archeological Institute in Athens until 1912. Upon Hitler's insistence, renewed excavations began in 1937. The meanwhile 83 years old Dörpfeld initially participated in this undertaking. For details see E. Kunze, *Berichte über die neuen deutschen Ausgrabungen in Olympia 1937-1944*, as well as E. Kunze and H. Schleif, *Olympische Forschungen*, Vol. I, 1944.
165. Published in VB, No. 216, August 3, 1936.
166. Published in VB, *ibid.*
167. Published in VB, No. 217, August 4, 1936.
168. Reports in VB, No. 226, August 13, 1936.
169. Cf. Bullock, pp. 363 f.—On July 4, 1936, the President of the Senate in Danzig, Arthur Greiser, had demanded of the Council of the League of Nations in Geneva to remove either its Commissioner from Danzig or to curtail his powers at least. It is obvious that Greiser would not have voiced such a far-reaching demand without prior instruction by Hitler.
170. Report in VB, No. 227, August 14, 1936.
171. Konrad Henlein, born 1898 in Maffersdorf (near Reichenberg); leader

- of the Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia from 1935; Reichskommissar for the Sudetenland in 1938; later Reich Governor and Gauleiter; committed suicide in 1945.
172. Published in VB, No. 230, August 17, 1936.
173. Ibid.
174. Riefenstahl patterned the two parts of her documentary *Olympiade*, shown in 1938, along the same lines. In both *Fest der Völker* and *Fest der Schönheit*, “the prologue establishes a type of mystical atmosphere for the portrayal of the events. The presence of the charismatic Führer seems to beatify the athletes’ achievements and, indeed, their efforts appear to be ritual sacrifices, offerings brought in *His* honor.” Gregor/Patalas, p. 144.
175. Report in VB, No. 237, August 24, 1936.
176. RGBl. 1936, I, p. 706.
177. See above, speech of March 28, 1936.
178. Reports in VB, No. 244, August 31, 1936.
179. Reports in VB, Nos. 249 and 266, September 5 and 22, 1936, respectively; see also Schmidt, pp. 336 ff.—David Lloyd George (1863–1945), leader of the Liberal Party, British Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922.
180. *Mein Kampf*, p. 533.
181. This and the following Party Congress speeches of 1936, with few corrections, are taken directly from the Eher pamphlet entitled *Reden des Führers am Parteitag der Ebre 1936* (6th ed., Munich, 1936). The texts published there correspond to the respective publications printed by the VB.
182. Instructions for the implementation of the Four-Year Plan were not issued until October 18, 1936; see below, *ibid.*
183. With the “colonial claims” Hitler did not refer to the restitution of Germany’s former colonies in Africa and overseas, but rather he had in mind the conquest of new Lebensraum in the territory east of Germany. This intention is expressed clearly in *Mein Kampf*, p. 742. His demands for the restitution of former German colonies was nothing more than a rhetorical and tactical device.
184. References here are made to Heinz Neumann, a German Communist who had emigrated to the Soviet Union, and to Béla Kun (1885–1937) who, in 1919, proclaimed the establishment of a soviet republic in Hungary. A year later, Kun also emigrated to the Soviet Union.
185. *Mein Kampf* pp. 604 f.
186. Prior to the First World War, Hitler himself labored to avoid having to make this “most noble sacrifice.” See above, p. 16.
187. The Eher pamphlet incorrectly reproduced this word as *geändert* (changed) instead of *beendet* (ended).
188. Reference is made here to Spain. However, it was General Franco who was attempting to rise to power—not the Marxists.
189. See above, January 30, 1936, for an overview of passages lend from St. John. Hitler frequently employed these as a rhetorical device. Additional citations from the Evangelists’ writings: “Blessed are those who have

- not seen and yet believe" (John 20, 29). "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them" (Luke 7, 22).
190. Play on words taken from Eusebius of Caesarea's report on Emperor Constantine the Great's battle against Maxentius in the year 312: "In hoc signo vinces" (In this sign, conquer). According to the legend, Constantine spotted a luminous cross in the sky as symbol of the Christian belief, together with these words. Profoundly moved by the mystic vision, the Emperor converted to Christianity.
 191. "Just in passing," one might mention the fact that not one kilometer of the Munich subway system, along Lindwurmstrasse as envisioned, was ever completed during the Third Reich. See also below, May 22, 1938.
 192. Since he would be otherwise engaged, Hitler never realized any of the grandiose plans he announced on this day.
 193. These *obere Zehntausend*, the high society, had been instrumental to Hitler's rise to power in 1933, a fact the Führer naturally never mentioned in his speeches.
 194. In the course of the Second World War, Hitler managed to present the world with "hideous monstrosities" far worse than these.
 195. This remark was aimed at the English in particular.
 196. The middle-class Russian Government under Minister-President Aleksandr Kerensky (1881–1970) was toppled by the Bolsheviks in 1917.
 197. Leon Blum (1872–1950), Socialist politician, repeatedly French Premier, had formed a government with the Communist party among others in 1936, called the popular front government. France was particularly interested in suppressing the Franco rebellion in Spain in order not to neighbor three Fascist regimes.
 198. This remark was directed against the German generals, who had doubted the success of the March occupation of the Rhineland.
 199. Published in VB, No. 262, September 18, 1936.
 200. Published in VB, No. 263, September 19, 1936.
 201. On September 12, 1936 in Nuremberg, Hitler had declared that the transportation network would be completed within four years time. See above, *ibid.*—Report on the Breslau speech in VB, No. 272, September 28, 1936.
 202. The armored ships were classed according to their constructional blueprint and listed alphabetically. The 26,000 (or rather 31,800) ton heavy warship D was the first battleship to be built after the First World War. The Treaty of Versailles stipulated that the construction of warships in excess of 10,000 tons was prohibited. In fact, none of the cruisers built prior to 1933 even approximated this maximum tonnage quota.
 203. Devaluations took place in the following countries: the Netherlands, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia.
 204. Published in VB, Berlin edition, October 5, 1936.
 205. Wording as published by the Eher Verlag in a pamphlet entitled *Führer Reden zum Winterhilfswerk 1933–1936* (Munich and Berlin, 1937).

206. The casualty and injury counts Hitler referred to in his speeches had a tendency to constantly be on the rise from one speech to the next, and by far exceeded the counts published in official reports of the NSDAP. See above, May 21, 1935.
207. Contrary to Hitler's assertions, there had never been any "forced labor camps" in the Weimar Republic, and his account was certainly not descriptive of the situation in Germany. Even had he intended instead to deplore and expose the existence of forced labor camps in the Soviet Union, his claim that their existence was endemic to Marxist or socialist systems was simply not true. Already under the Tsars, forced labor camps had served as a form of punishment in Russia.
208. Published in VB, No. 281, October 7, 1936.
209. Report in VB, No. 282, October 8, 1936.
210. RGBl. 1936, I, p. 887.
211. See below, December 17, 1936.
212. Report in VB, No. 299, October 25, 1936. Cf. Ciano's statements at a press conference in Munich on October 25, 1936 (DNB text, October 25, 1936); see *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, pp. 43 ff. and Bullock, p. 351.
213. DNB text, October 31, 1936. Published in VB, No. 307, November 2, 1936.
214. See above, November 13, 1932.
215. For details of this discussion cf. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, No. 303, December 12, 1964.
216. Published in VB, No. 315, November 10, 1936.
217. Hitler is alluding to the indecisiveness of Reichswehr General von Lussow who, according to Hitler's account before the People's Court of Justice in Munich, had agreed to cooperate in the 1923 Putsch only if "certain prerequisites" were fulfilled.
218. As is well known, Hitler was convinced that the German Army in 1918 had succumbed not to a numerically superior opponent, but rather that it had been penetrated and destroyed from within.
219. During the time period in which no German troops had been stationed in the Rhineland, Hitler had constantly worried about the possibility of an Allied military intervention. No doubt, such a move would have caused the National Socialists great difficulties domestically. Hitler now felt relieved of this concern.
220. DNB report, November 10, 1936.
221. Reports in VB, No. 318, November 13, 1936.
222. Report in VB, No. 319, November 14, 1936.
223. DNB report, November 19, 1936.
224. Ibid.
225. NSK report, November 20, 1936.
226. Report in VB, No. 330, November 25, 1936.
227. Ibid. The *Adlerschild des Deutschen Reiches* (Eagle's Shield of the German Reich) medal was of bronze, 10.8 cm in diameter and rested on a bronze base. The sovereign symbol of the Reich was engraved on its face while its back side bore the recipient's name, along with a short

- dedication. The medal was intended for display, not wear. Up to 1941, Hitler distributed the award to thirty-seven men and women of the arts and humanities whom he thought deserving of such a distinction.
228. Italy acceded to the Anti-Comintern Pact on November 6, 1937. See below, *ibid*.
229. As future events would prove, the Japanese feared the Russians far less than the Anglo-Saxon Powers. In all likelihood, however, Hitler would have been only too happy to sacrifice the agreement with Japan to a similar agreement with Great Britain.
230. DNB text, November 25, 1936.
231. Report in VB, No. 333, November 28, 1936. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, born 1887 in Aplerbeck (Westphalia), head of German military intelligence (Abwehr) from 1935; suspected of involvement in the July 20, 1944 assassination attempt; subsequently imprisoned; executed in 1945 at the Flossenbürg concentration camp.
232. Report in VB, No. 332, November 27, 1936.
233. Report in VB, No. 334, November 29, 1936.
234. Report in VB, No. 336, December 1, 1936.
235. RGBL. 1936, I, p. 993.
236. Philipp Bouhler, born 1899, Chief of the Führer's Chancellery (Kanzlei des Führers), Hitler's Berlin Office; Bouhler published a book on Napoleon in 1942. His great-grandfather had taken part in the War of 1812.
237. Reports in VB, No. 338, December 3, 1936.
238. DNB report, December 8, 1936. Behind closed doors, the tonnage limit was raised to 31,800.
239. Reports in VB, Nos. 349 and 355, December 14 and 20, 1936.
240. Report in VB, No. 350, December 15, 1936. George VI had been crowned, following the abdication of his brother Edward VIII on December 10, 1936.
241. Report in VB, No. 352, December 17, 1936.
242. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, December 17, 1936.
243. Report in VB, No. 363, December 28, 1936.
244. Printed in VB, *ibid*.
245. Report in VB, No. 366, December 31,

The Year 1937

Notes

1. The Soldatenbund (or rather: NS Marinebund) existed from December 1935 until March 1938. The union had been created "with the approval of the Führer and Reich Chancellor." However, it soon became obvious that the Soldatenbund represented an attempt, on the part of the military, at converting the Third Reich into a pure military dictatorship. The military men were convinced that the institutionalization of general conscription would extend their influence into the realm of private lives of Germany's civilian population, thus significantly broadening their potential power base. They envisioned creating an association in which all active duty military personnel would automatically be enrolled. This would then permit the Commanders in Chief of Army and Navy to keep the enlisted men under constant surveillance. In concert with the existing Wehrkreise, the Soldatenbund classed its members in various groups. An officer headed each of these subdivisions. Retired Infantry General Freiherr Seutter von Lötzen served as the League's Bundesführer in his capacity as the highest ranking officer among the group's members. Cf. *DasArchiv*, edited by Alfred Ingemar Berndt (Berlin, December 21, 1935), p. 1204.
General Walter von Unruh (1877-1956) headed the Soldatenbund's propaganda division. In the years 1942 through 1944, the Führer assigned Unruh the post of special commissioner responsible for overseeing the proper and most efficient allocation of soldiers in the war effort. This earned Unruh the nickname *Heldenklau* (thief of heroes) in a popular allusion to propaganda's fuel-conservation campaign and its fictitious anti-hero *Kohlenklau* (thief of coals). From 1936 through 1937, Unruh traveled throughout Germany, speaking before groups of officers and expounding the goals and significance of his organization. In one address in Würzburg, Unruh reiterated the following:
"All unit leaders, station commanders and recruitment officers are responsible for ascertaining that every soldier and every reserve officer becomes a member of the Soldatenbund, after his term of duty has expired. There is no such thing as joining the association 'voluntarily' [as for instance its statutes required!] Whoever refuses to join the Soldatenbund will be kept on active duty until he has changed his mind. Only then will he know 'true military spirit.' In the future, the Soldatenbund will play a role of great importance in civilian life. It is planned to give each member of the Soldatenbund a rifle, a steel helmet and a uniform to take home with him. The 'status of being on leave,' [the official and highly appropriate terminology defining reserve duty needs to be transformed into a status of constant alertness. There will be drills every Sunday, even if they only take place in connection with soccer matches. Should the SA, SS and other party divisions be in need

of recruits, they should address the Soldatenbund and it will assign a number of its members to them, depending on the concrete situation.” (Quotation taken from the author’s notes at Unruh’s presentation on October 25, 1937.)

In early 1938, the Soldatentbund had a total membership of 350,000. This figure included the retired non-commissioned officers who were organized in the Reichstreubund, and hence were affiliated with the Soldatenbund. Cf. *Jahrbuch des Soldatenbundes* (Berlin, 1937/1938). Incidentally, this was the only yearbook ever published by the Soldatenbund. Under the influence of Göring, the Luftwaffe long refused to set up an organization corresponding to the reactionary Soldatenbund. It was not until October 1, 1937, that a Luftwaffenbund was founded. At this late a date, however, the issue had ceased to be of any importance. Cf. *Keesings Archiv der Gegenwart* (Vienna, 1937), p. 3237.

2. See below, speech of November 5, 1937, in the Reich Chancellery.
3. See below, October 29, 1937.
4. Hitler used this expression in his speech of October 16, 1932, see above, p. 170.
5. See below, May 31, 1937.
6. Hitler himself actually was in Berchtesgaden at the time.
7. Published in VB, No. 2/3, January 2/3, 1937.
8. Ibid.
9. DNB text, January 2, 1937. Archduke Friedrich Maria Albrecht of Austria-Hungary, Duke of Teschen, born 1856, had served as Field Marshal both in the Prussian and the Austro-Hungarian Army.
10. Printed in VB, No. 4, January 4, 1937. References here are made to the chief editor, retired Captain Wilhelm Weiss, and his deputy, SA Gruppenführer and retired Lieutenant Josef Berchtold who had led Hitler’s combat patrol (*Stosstrupp Hitler*) in the 1923 Putsch.
11. DNB text, January 5, 1937.
12. Report in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1937.
13. DNB illustrated report, January 8, 1937.
14. Published in VB, No. 12, January 12, 1937.
15. DNB text, January 12, 1937. Printed in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1937. On January 8, the French press had falsely reported that strong German contingents had landed in Ceuta and Melilla (Spanish Morocco). German troops, however, had landed in Spain.
16. Published in VB, No. 19, January 19, 1937. The Adolf Hitler Schools were a type of Gymnasium (secondary school), usually established in connection with a boarding school, where the pupils wore uniforms. These schools were reserved for elite pupils, mostly sons of leading men in the Party etc., and are not to be confused with the *National-politische Erziehungsanstalten* (Napolas). The latter served as a type of cadet training institutions inundated with National Socialist doctrine; its pupils, however, did not enjoy any special privileges and, in part, former citadels were used to accommodate the cadets. This was the case in Oranienburg near Limburg, Hesse, for example.

The graduates of the Adolf Hitler Schools were housed in the Ordensburgen, reserved for the education of the new National Socialist leadership. Contrary to frequent and incorrect claims in the literature, the Ordensburgen were subordinate to Reichsleiters and not administered by the SS. In the Ordensburgen, the next generation was trained to follow in the footsteps of the Political Leaders. The students' school dress was an exact replica of the uniforms worn by the Political Leaders. On January 16, 1938, cornerstones for the first Adolf Hitler Schools were laid at Waldbröl near Cologne, Hesselberg, Mittenwald, and at various other locations.

17. Published in VB, No. 18, January 18, 1937.
18. The term Ordnungspolizei refers to members of the regular police force and gendarmerie who wore uniform. Investigators with the criminal police and Gestapo wore civilian dress.
19. Dr. Hans Heinrich Lammers, born 1879 in Lublinitz (Upper Silesia); State Secretary and Chief of the Reich Chancellery in 1933; Reich Minister in 1937.
20. Report on the roofing ceremony at Berchtesgaden in VB, No. 19, January 19, 1937.
21. Hitler is referring to a vacation trip he took on the steam ship *Robert Ley* from April 2 to 4, 1939. See below, April 1, 1939.
22. Two days earlier, Eden had taken a stand on the involvement of foreign powers in Spain and quite openly referred to Germany and Italy as principal agents. He had called upon Germany to abandon the idea of 'national exclusiveness,' and to no longer isolate itself in order to avoid aggravating tensions internationally.
23. Official announcement, published in VB, No. 22, January 22, 1937.
24. On such occasions, Hitler would not raise his arm as completely as Mussolini did. He would extend his right arm at an almost right angle, in order to lend a more military character to the previously informal Fascist salute. As army regulations would later stipulate, the greeting required the arm to be raised no higher than to eye level (*'Hand in Augenhöhe'*).
25. DNB reports, January 31, 1937.
26. Text printed in VB, special edition, January 31, 1937.
27. Reference is made here to Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles pertaining to the question of Germany's war guilt, as well as to regulations set down in the London Agreement of August 16, 1924. These rules concerned the August 30, 1924 Reich Laws (conversion of the Reichsbank into an enterprise independent of the Reich Government and the transformation of the Reichsbahn into a company). In 1929, a meeting of experts in Paris had already provided for exclusive German ownership of the Reichsbahn. Two conferences in The Hague in the years 1929 and 1930 re-established this status. In his policy statement of March 23, 1933, Hitler had nevertheless declared the "reintegration of the Reichsbahn under Reich authority" a "binding task." See above, p. 282.

28. Hitler is alluding to a statement made by the British Prime Minister Baldwin.
29. Hitler is alluding to the 1936 sanctions imposed upon Italy because of its aggression against Ethiopia. There is no substance to Hitler's claim that the League of Nations produced words only. It was effective in several instances, resolving international conflicts through its agency, and thus preventing the outbreak of open hostilities in a number of cases. Even Hitler had to grudgingly acknowledge the key role played by the League of Nations in the reintegration of the Saar in 1935.
30. Reference is made to a French press report speculating that Germany entertained territorial ambitions regarding Spanish Morocco. See above, January 12, 1937 and note 15.
31. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 736–742.
32. Allusion to the foreign press, in particular to publications in the Anglo-Saxon states.
33. Despite placing his signature beneath both agreements, Hitler respected neither the obligations incurred through the Munich Agreement of September 9, 1938, nor did he observe the stipulations of the German-British declaration of September 30, 1938.
34. The Golden Party Badge bore the regular symbol of the Party, surrounded by a golden laurel wreath. The medal Hitler introduced in 1933 was a pin of 3.1 cm in diameter, and was worn above the Iron Cross on the left chest. Initially, the award was restricted to recipients whose Party membership number was beneath 100,000 [thus effectively limiting its distribution to Party members of the first hour]. After January 30, 1937, other Party members received this distinction as well. In a number of cases, as in the one detailed above, non-Party members also received the Golden Party Badge which entailed instant membership for them.
35. Reference is made here to the trial against Bukharin, and several of Trotsky's relatives.
36. Carl von Ossietzky, born 1889 in Hamburg, died 1938 in Berlin; editor of the weekly *Weltbühne*, secretary of the German Peace Society; arrested and detained in a concentration camp. Following worldwide pleas for his release, Ossietzky was allowed to leave the camp in 1937, only to die shortly thereafter as a result of the unbearable conditions he had been subjected to in the camp. Swiss professor Carl Jakob Burckhardt, then League of Nations' Commissioner in Danzig, labored for Ossietzky's release in particular.
37. RGBl. 1937, I, p. 305.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 95 f.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
42. Published in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1937.—Albert Speer, born 1905 in Mannheim, died 1981 in London; architect of the Reich Party Congress buildings in Nuremberg and other National Socialist facilities;

as successor to Fritz Todt, Reich Minister for Armament and Munitions in 1942 (for Armament and War Production from 1943 to 1945); sentenced to 20 years of prison at the 1946 Nuremberg trials; released in 1966.

43. Published in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1937.
44. The ban on membership was recalled on May 1, 1937. Since precisely four years earlier, only members of the Hitler Youth and the Stahlhelm had been allowed to join the Party. In part the recall of the membership ban appears to have been justified by the expanding movement and, on the other hand, the increasing financial needs of the Party. By no means did the rejection of an application for membership in the Party represent a threat to the life and limb of the applicant. Harm could come only to public servants in the sense that membership in the Party was crucial to professional advancement.
Subsequent to 1945, American occupation authorities identified Party members in accordance with the following criteria: membership obtained after May 1, 1937, indicated Party members of lesser conviction. Persons who had joined the Party in 1933, were considered to have been more deeply involved in the Movement ideologically. Individuals who had pledged their allegiance to the Party in its early years, prior to 1933, were regarded as die-hard National Socialists. Parenthetically, it is important to note that the date of a person's entry into the Party is not indicative of this individual's ideological commitment to National Socialism. As a matter of fact, many of those who joined the Party in 1933, or at an even earlier date, would not have done so in 1937 after having witnessed four years of Hitler's rule.
45. Reference is made here to ministers von Neurath, Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, Gürtner, Schacht, and Eltz von Rübenach.
46. Dr. Johannes Popitz, born 1884 in Leipzig; Prussian Minister of Finance; imprisoned in connection with the events of July 20, 1944; hanged on February 2, 1945, in Berlin.
47. State Secretary in the Prussian State Ministry.
48. State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Aviation; appointed Field Marshal in 1940. Blomberg issued the following order of the day to the Wehrmacht on February 1 (VB, No. 34, February 2, 1937):
"On January 30, 1937, the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht awarded the Golden Party Badge to Field Marshal von Blomberg, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, Admiral General Raeder, as well as to General der Flieger Milch. In doing so, the Führer has greatly honored these officers by presenting them with the greatest order in all of National Socialist Germany. Beyond its significance to the individual recipient, this order honors the entire Wehrmacht. The Führer has made plain that he sees both Party and Wehrmacht as the eternal guarantors of our Volk's survival and that, in this manner, he wishes to express his deep gratitude to the countless enlisted men and officers who have remained faithful to him and the National Socialist cause. This we have done and this we will continue to do for all time

to come. Our strength and our deeds, our earthly possessions and our blood belong to the Führer and the German Volk! *Heil dem Führer!*
von Blomberg, Field Marshal.”

Strictly speaking, the mentioned generals should have rejected this distinction, since the award implied simultaneous acquisition of membership in the Party. At the time, soldiers were not allowed to belong to a political organization.

49. See below, August 27, 1938.
50. Julius Dorpmüller, born 1896 in Elherfeld, died 1945 in MalentGremsmühlen.
51. DNB report, February 2, 1937. Published in VB, No. 34, February 3, 1937.
52. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, February 5, 1937.
53. Report in VB, No. 37, February 6, 1937.
54. Report in VB, No. 39, February 8, 1937.
55. Report in VB, No. 43, February 12, 1937.
56. RGBL 1937, I, p. 203. Printed in VB, No. 47, February 16, 1937.
57. Report in VB, No. 49, Berlin Edition, February 18, 1937.
58. RGBL 1937, I, p. 241.
59. On April 14, 1939 Hitler provided for the establishment of the *Spanienkreuz* (Cross of Spain) for the “services rendered by German volunteers in Spain’s struggle for freedom.” See below, April 14, 1939.
60. Published in VB, No. 53, February 22, 1937.
61. When war finally broke out, Hitler made an appeal to the NSDAP, employing similar terminology: “We have nothing to lose, but everything to win.” See below, September 3, 1939.
62. The following events marked the commemoration of the *Volkstrauertag* and *Heldengedenktage* in the years listed in parentheses: Hindenburg issues a decree permitting the swastika flag to be flown next to the black-white-red Reich flag (1933); Hindenburg provides for the introduction of the sovereign symbol of the Party to the Reichswehr (1934); reintroduction of general conscription (1935); occupation of the Rhineland (1936); Anschluss of Austria (1938); tension with the remainder of Czechoslovakia, imminent invasion by German troops (1939).
63. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, February 25, 1937. Records of the speech are on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 2).
64. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1937. A verbatim account of the interview was not published until 1938. Cf. VB, No. 176, June 25, 1938.
65. Reports in VB, Nos. 64 to 70, March 5 to 11, 1937.
66. Report in VB, No. 70, March 11, 1937.
67. Published in VB, No. 71, March 12, 1937.
68. Report in VB, *ibid.*
69. Reports in VB, No. 72, March 13, 1937.
70. Report in VB, *ibid.*
71. VB, No. 74, March 15, 1937.
72. See below, February 4, 1938.

73. Report in VB, No. 75, March 16, 1937.
74. Report in VB, No. 77, March 18, 1937.
75. Published in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1937.
76. It is evident here, too, that what Hitler understood by weltanschaulich attitude was actually bravery, that had to be proven through displays of courage. In addition, the National Socialist Weltanschauung entailed the duty of blind obedience to Adolf Hitler and the unrelenting belief that everything he said was correct and just.
77. Ohnesorge announced this in a speech before postal clerks in Würzburg on May 23, 1937 (taken from the author's notes). Professor Richard Klein of Munich designed the stamp, drawn from a photograph by Heinrich Hoffmann. The stamp was 23 x 27.32 mm in size.
78. Cf. "Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen" in *Münchner Illustrierte*, 48 (1954), p. 18 ff.
79. Published in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1937.
80. *Art Heiligen Quell Deutscher Kraft*, 1, 1937.
81. Reference is made to the Christian churches. Point 24 of the program of the NSDAP read as follows: "We demand freedom for all religious groupings within the nation, as long as these do not pose a threat to its existence or go against the moral standards of the Germanic race. The Party itself adheres to a 'positive' Christianity, however, without binding itself with regard to a particular denomination." Cf. Hofer, p. 30.
82. Reference is made here to the religious movement "Deutsche Gotterkenntnis" and, in particular, to Ludendorff's wife Mathilde.
83. See below, November 9, 1937, exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Ludendorff.
84. Printed in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1937.
85. All other states dispatched at least their Foreign Ministers to attend the coronation ceremony.
86. Law of January 26, 1937. RGBl. 1937, I, pp. 91 ff.
87. Published in VB, No. 92, April 2, 1937.
88. Published in VB, No. 98, April 8, 1937.
89. Report in VB, No. 99, April 9, 1937.
90. Report in VB, No. 107, April 17, 1937.
91. Report in VB, No. 113, April 23, 1937.
92. Speaking before the press on April 22, 1937, Krauss declared that his discussion with Hitler and Göring supposedly had "not touched upon the situation in Austria and within the Austrian Army." Cf. report in VB, No. 113, April 23, 1937.
93. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 343 f.
94. Published in VB, No. 110, April 20, 1937.
95. DNB report, April 20, 1937.
96. Friedrich Christian Christiansen, born 1879 in Wyk on the island of Föhr; awarded the "Pour le mérite" medal in 1917; commander of the flying boat 'Do X' in 1932; department head in the Reich Ministry of Aviation from 1933 to 1935; Corps Leader of the NSFK from 1937 to

1943; General der Flieger in 1938; Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht in the Netherlands from 1940 to 1945. In 1943, Colonel General Alfred Keller succeeded Christiansen as Corps Leader of the NSFK.

97. See above, April 20, 1936.
98. Report in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1937.
99. The “completely unexpected,” i.e. surprising nature of Hitler’s arrival, as cited in this utterly ridiculous report of his visit, represents a device his assistants used repeatedly in an effort to calm Hitler’s fear of an assassination attempt. Hitler constantly worried that if his whereabouts or arrival times were too well known beforehand, this might endanger his life. Cf. Baur, p. 104.
100. Report in VB, No. 115, April 25, 1937.
101. Report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1937. A record of the speech is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 2a/EW 67 207–67 245).
102. Called Ordensjunkers, not to be confused with the SS Junkers who constituted the next generation of leaders for the SS.
103. See above, April 24, 1936.
104. Report in VB, No. 121/122, May 1/2, 1937.
105. Once designated a “NS Musterbetrieb”, the business would receive a specially manufactured business flag as a reward for its efforts. In addition, a metal plate was affixed above the entrance. Both the DAF symbol (swastika and machine wheel) and classification as “NS Musterbetrieb” would be engraved on a plaque above the business’ entrance. Post Offices frequently were designated this way.
106. Report in VB, No. 121/122, May 1/2, 1937. The speeches given on the occasion of May Day and reports on the festivities were published in VB, No. 123, May 3, 1937.
107. Parody on the closing lines of Catholic liturgy: “Et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum” (From now until the end of time).
108. Here Hitler is alluding to charges of sexual misconduct brought against a number of Catholic clergymen at the time.
109. One cannot help the feeling that Hitler was attempting to proclaim May Day a “National Socialist Easter.”
110. Report in VB, No. 127, May 7, 1937. The KdF ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* served as battleship in the Second World War and later was also used to evacuate refugees from East Germany. The ship was named for the head of the NSDAP in Switzerland, Landesgruppenführer Wilhelm Gustloff, who had been assassinated in 1936 (see above, February 4, 1936). In 1945, the ship was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine in the Baltic Sea, and sank with numerous refugees on board.
111. Published in VB, No. 128, May 8, 1937.—Hitler himself disliked zeppelins, and therefore he had resisted Goebbels’ suggestion to name the ‘LZ 129’ after him. For Hitler, a zeppelin was an unnatural creation since it did not have a corresponding image among natural flying creatures. Cf. Picker, P. 159.
112. The speech and Hitler’s reply to it were printed in VB, No. 132, May 12,

1937. Henderson had been named Ambassador earlier, on February 5, 1937, as successor to Sir Eric Phipps, but had not arrived in Berlin until this date.
113. Published in VB, No. 132, May 12, 1937.
114. Report in VB, *ibid.*
115. *Ibid.*
116. Report in VB, No. 141, May 21, 1937. The speech contained many details on well-known Hitler's ideas on the subjects of productivity, buying power, stability of prices and wages, and the relationship of manpower to currency regulations. A record of the speech is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 3/EW 67 39767 427).
117. Report in VB, No. 142, May 22, 1937.
118. Published in VB, No. 144, May 24, 1937.
119. Report in VB, No. 146/147, May 26/27, 1937. The Reich Military Research and Development Council had been established on March 16, 1937, as provided for in the Four-Year Plan. Reich Minister of Education Rust appointed General Karl Becker as president of the Council. Becker had previously served as dean and lecturer at the Faculty of Defense Technology of the Technical University in Berlin.
120. Reports in VB, No. 148, May 28, 1937.
121. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, June 1, 1937.
122. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, May 30, 1937.
123. DGFP, D, III, no. 267, pp. 296 f. Originally published as DNB text, May 30, 1937.
124. The legal Government of Spain at the time had its headquarters in Valencia.
125. The amount of casualties would rise to 23 men, whose names were published. However, in his speech in Wtirzburg, Hitler reported 31 sailors dead. See below, June 27, 1937.
126. DNB text, May 31, 1937.
127. The port of Almería, located in southern Spain, had 60,000 inhabitants. One German armored ship and four destroyers began firing at 5:45 a.m. (local time) from a distance of 12.5 nautical miles. According to governmental sources in Spain, the ships fired 200 rounds, leveling 39 homes. Several other houses sustained severe damage. Initial reports placed the death toll at 21 and injuries to 53 persons. Spanish shore batteries returned fire for approximately 70 rounds. DNB reports, May 31, 1937.
128. DNB text, *ibid.*
129. Report in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1937.
130. *Ibid.*
131. Published in VB, No. 156, June 5, 1937. General Mola had been the officer in command of Franco's army in the North. Mola's plane had crashed in the fog close to Bilbao.
132. The Gau Bayerische Ostmark encompassed the districts Upper Franconia, Upper Palatinate, and Lower Bavaria.
133. Reports in VB, No. 158, June 7, 1937.

134. Published in VB, *ibid.*
135. Hitler was alluding to the increasingly skeptical Reich Minister of Economics, Schacht.
136. The term *Gottgläubigkeit* (belief in God) indicated that while certain National Socialists believed in the existence of one god (a German-Germanic one), these men rejected the traditional Christian schools of thought. Thus they stood in direct opposition to Point 24 of their own NSDAP Party Program which stipulated "positive Christianity." On official documents, National Socialists accepted "gottgläubig" as a separate denomination as valid as "Protestant" or "Catholic." Apart from the SS men, there were actually very few among the NSDAP members who left their respective churches to officially join the ranks of the "believers in God." Hitler himself continued to pay his taxes to the Catholic church until he died. Cf. Zoller, p. 193.
137. These figures are incorrect. On an average only half the German population died as a result of the Thirty Years' War.
138. Report in VB, No. 165, June 14, 1937.
139. Published in VB, No. 168, June 17, 1937.
140. Reports in VB, No. 169, June 18, 1937.
141. Report in VB, No. 171, June 20, 1937.
142. DNB report, June 20, 1937.
143. Dr. Bernhard Wilhelm von Bülow, born 1885 in Potsdam, died 1936 in Berlin; a nephew of the former Reich Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow; State Secretary in the Foreign Office since 1930.
144. DNB text, June 21, 1937.
145. Reports in VB, No. 172, June 21, 1937.
146. *Ibid.*
147. Published in VB, No. 177, June 26, 1937.
148. Report in VB, No. 170, June 24, 1937.
149. DNB text, June 26, 1937.
150. The NSDAP Gau Mainfranken encompassed what is today the district of Lower Franconia.
151. The last words of this sentence were inaudible because of the loud applause.
152. Report in VB, No. 195, July 14, 1937.
153. Report in VB, No. 196, July 15, 1937.
154. Report in VB, No. 198, July 17, 1937.
155. Published in VB, No. 200, July 19, 1937.
156. Hitler had bestowed the title of professor on Frau Troost.
157. Published in VB, No. 202, July 21, 1937. There is also mention of a telegram to the widow of Marconi.
158. DNB text, July 21, 1937. Published in VB, No. 203, July 22, 1937.
159. Report in VB, No. 205, July 24, 1937.
160. Report in VB, No. 212, July 31, 1937.
161. Report in VB, No. 213, August 1, 1937.
162. Published in VB, No. 214, August 2, 1937.
163. In this context as well it is evident that Hitler understood the term

- “Almighty” to refer to a god that existed exclusively for the German people. It is interesting to note how Hitler’s will becomes mingled with that of his god (“our will”).
164. Published in VB, No. 214, August 2, 1937.
 165. Report in VB, No. 215, August 3, 1937.
 166. Published in VB, No. 216, August 4, 1937.
 167. Published in VB, No. 219, August 7, 1937.
 168. Report in VB, No. 230, August 18, 1937.
 169. Published in VB, *ibid.* The upcoming birthday of Hindenburg was going to be on October 2, 1937.
 170. Reports in VB, No. 229, August 17, 1937.
 171. DNB text, August 16, 1937.
 172. Published in VB, No. 245, September 2, 1937.
 173. Unless otherwise specified, Hitler’s speeches at the 1937 Party Congress are cited from the Eher pamphlet, *Reden des Führers am Parteitag der Ehre 1937* (Munich, 1938). These speeches are also reprinted in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.
 174. Schacht was removed from his office as Minister of Economics, but remained in the Cabinet as Reich Minister without Portfolio up to 1944.
 175. In his address on the Day of German Art, Hitler had declared that it was not the “intent” of a work that mattered but rather the “ability” of the artist. See above, speech of July 19, 1937.
 176. The weapons referred to are pistol, carbine and bayonet. In addition to the bayonet, Prussian policemen also bore a truncheon in the years prior to 1933, a fact that irked National Socialists in particular.
 177. DNB report, September 10, 1937.
 178. Allusion to the foreign press.
 179. Expression coined by Karl Brögers. See above, p. 132.
 180. The mysterious painting was made by the famous portraitist Franz von Lenbach (1836–1904). According to Hitler’s statements, he himself had bought it for 34,000 marks in 1934. Cf. Baur, p. 276.
 181. DNB report, September 12, 1937.
 182. DNB report, September 13, 1937.
 183. Incorrectly cited in the Eher text as “proclamatory.”
 184. These proofs consisted of the “statistical” figures Rosenberg had presented at the Party Congress in 1936.
 185. Hitler’s conclusion is obviously a faulty one, since the “Star of David” has six points whereas the Soviet Star has only five.
 186. Coined by Hitler, the term “Germanic Reich of the German Nation” is his personal alteration of the term “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” that had existed from the 15th century until 1806. Hitler’s formulation of the term underscored his desire to unite all nations of the “Germanic race” beneath the German flag. He did not limit his scope to German speaking people, but also sought to include the British—the *Brudervolk*—and all Nordic peoples as well as the Dutch in his grand scheme. Further, he saw the territories to be conquered in Eastern Europe as future colonies for this new form of state. The Führer

had already resolved the question of the future for the population groups that had settled within these regions, i.e. in Poland, the Baltic States, and Russia: either they chose to live in servitude under German leadership or they faced extermination. Cf. Hans-Dietrich Loock, "Zur 'grossgermanischen Politik' des Dritten Reiches," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), pp. 37 ff.

187. Prior to returning the Italian visit in 1938, Hitler ordered uniforms tailored especially for the German Diplomatic Corps. The suit's cut was a strictly military one, the cloth of a gray-blue shade, replete with dagger. Schmidt, p. 383, dubbed the combination the "admiral's uniform."
188. RGrBl. 1937, I, p. 1013.
189. This reserve on the part of Munich's citizens was particularly evident in 1938 on the occasion of the Four-Power Agreement. Crowds welcomed Chamberlain and Daladier far more enthusiastically and cordially than they greeted Hitler. See below, September 30, 1938; cf. Schmidt, pp. 417 f.
190. The document read verbatim:

"Adolf Hitler, Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich and Volk, herewith is named honorary corporal of the MVSN [Militia Voluntaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale; Voluntary Militia for the National Security]. As Führer of the German Volk, he has restored to Germany the belief in its own, new greatness. With a determined hand, he leads the German nation onward toward its great destiny. He has proven to Italy his unrestrained friendship and communion with its people in their hour of need. He has thwarted all assaults upon European culture as its representative and foremost guardian.

Rome, September 24, 1937—XVth year of the Fascist era.
The Supreme Commander, Mussolini"
191. See above, p. 408.
192. The insignia consisted of a triangular sleeve badge with fasces.
193. On May 1, 1937, Hitler established this award in order to honor meritorious foreigners. It was awarded in various categories: Grand Cross, Distinguished Service Cross with Star, etc. The order was in the form of a gold-edged, eight-point cross made of white enamel. In each of its four angles, the cross bore an eagle with swastika. The Grand Cross consisted of a star to be worn on the recipient's chest and fastened by means of a red shoulder strap with white-black-white edgings. Upon appointment to the office, every foreign minister had the order automatically bestowed upon him.
194. DNB report, September 25, 1937.
195. DNB report, September 26, 1937.
196. Buna, short for *Butadien-Natrium* (butadiene sodium), trademark for synthetic rubber.
197. Published in VB, No. 271, September 28, 1937.
198. According to official figures (DNB), 650,000 persons had marched up and another 120,000 had assembled in the adjacent stadium. In his

- speech, however, Hitler spoke of “over one million people”.
199. Published in VB, No. 272, September 29, 1937.
200. Allusion to Germany’s stance during the Abyssinian War and the sanctions imposed on Italy by the League of Nations.
201. In near identical wording, on March 13, 1938, Hitler thanked Mussolini for his attitude to the Anschluss of Austria.
202. See above, April 20, 1936.
203. Cf. Benito Mussolini, *La dottrina del Fascismo* (Milan, 1932).
204. Report in VB, No. 274, October 1, 1937.
205. The 1938 Erntedankfest had to be canceled because of the invasion of the Sudetenland. During the Second World War, no more harvest festivals took place. Hitler gave his last Erntedankfest address on October 3, 1937. Published in VB, No. 277, October 4, 1937.
206. Published in VB, No. 280. October 7, 1937.
207. Published in VB, No. 279, October 6, 1937.
208. See above, p. 539.
209. Parody of the “copper coins of the widow.” Luke 21, 4; Mark 12, 44.
210. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, October 16, 1937.
211. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 745 ff.
212. Cf. Schmidt, p. 375.
213. Report in VB, No. 296, October 23, 1937.
214. Cf. Schmidt, p. 376.
215. Report in VB, No. 302, October 29, 1937.
216. Published in VB, *ibid.*
217. Report in VB, No. 304, October 31, 1937.
218. John 16,12.
219. Kurt Lüdecke, *I knew Hitler* (London, 1938), cited in Bullock, p. 381.
220. See below, order of January 11, 1940.
221. It seems as though the time from mid-October to mid-November constituted a particular constellation for Hitler. On several occasions, he then appeared to be predisposed to a violent resolution of problems at hand which, however, had a tendency to turn against him in the end: 1923, the aborted Putsch attempt in Munich; 1937, the decision to take an aggressive stance in the cases of Czechoslovakia and Austria; 1938, the decision to annex the remainder of Czechoslovakia by force; 1939, the decision to immediately go ahead with the offensive to the West. One wonders why the—in his eyes—negative results of November 9, 1918 for Germany (“legend of the stab in the back”) and of November 8/9, 1923 for him personally had not served as a warning to a man as suspicious and superstitious as Hitler, but, on the contrary, seemed to have incited him. The “coincidence” that Hitler would attack Russia on exactly the same day (June 22) as Napoleon, can be considered as similarly conspicuous.
222. Conference in the Reich Chancellery. See below, November 5, 1937.
223. Notes taken by the author on October 31, 1937, according to information related by the Gau Propagandaleiter Waldemar Vogt (Würzburg, later Berlin).

224. The term Anschluss at the time referred to the unification of Austria and the Third Reich, and has become part of the vocabulary in various foreign languages.
225. Cf. Schmidt, p. 347.
226. Telegram thanking Mussolini. See below, March 13, 1938.
227. *Fall Otto* was the code name for military action directed against Austria. The name stood for Otto of Habsburg, the pretender to the Austrian throne.
228. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 739 f.
229. Hitler referred to the Anti-Comintern Pact in these terms. See below, speech of November 8, 1937.
230. Report in VB, No. 309, November 5, 1937. On November 4, 1937, the Italian Minister of Justice, Solmi, visited Hitler in Berlin. He also received calls from the newly appointed Venezuelan Envoy Dr. Herrera and the Iranian Envoy Nader Arasteh.
231. VB, No. 310, November 6, 1937.

The text of the joint declaration of the German and Polish Governments, published on November 5, 1937, concerning treatment of their respective minorities, read verbatim:

The German Government and the Polish Government have taken occasion to make the position of the German minority in Poland and of the Polish minority in Germany the subject of a friendly discussion. They agree in the conviction that the treatment of these minorities is of great importance for the further development of friendly and neighborly relations between Germany and Poland, and that in each of the two countries the well-being of the minority can be the more surely guaranteed if it is certain that the same principles will be observed in the other country. The two Governments are therefore pleased to be able to declare that each of the two States, within the framework of its sovereignty, regards the following principles as determining for the treatment of the said minorities:

 - 1) Mutual respect for German and Polish nationality in itself precludes any attempt to assimilate the minority by force, to question membership in the minority, or to hinder profession of membership in the minority. In particular, no pressure of any kind will be exerted on youthful members of the minority in order to alienate them from their adherence to such minority.
 - 2) Members of the minority shall have the right to the free use of their language in speech and in writing, in their personal and economic relations, in the press, and in public meetings.
 - 3) The right of members of the minority to unite in associations, including those of a cultural and economic nature, shall be guaranteed.
 - 4) The minority may maintain and establish schools in its mother tongue.

With respect to church life, the members of the minority shall have the right to practice their religion in their mother tongue and to organize their own churches. There shall be no interference with existing

conditions in the matters of faith and of charitable activities.

5) Members of the minority may not, because of their membership in such minority, be hindered or prejudiced in their choice or exercise of an occupation or economic activity. In the economic field they shall enjoy the same rights as the members of the majority nationality in the State, particularly with respect to ownership or acquisition of real property.

The above principles shall in no way affect the duty of members of the minority to give their undivided loyalty to the State to which they belong. These principles are laid down in an effort to assure the minority equitable living conditions and a harmonious coexistence with the majority nationality; this will contribute to progressive strengthening of friendly and neighborly relations between Germany and Poland.

DGFP, D, V, no. 18, pp. 24 ff.

232. VB, No. 310, November 6, 1937.

233. "Danzig ist mit Polen verbunden." Cf. *Official Documents concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1933-1939* (London, 1939), pp. 3638. (Hereafter referred to as the *Polish White Book*.)

234. Friedrich Hossbach, born 1894, died 1980; Chief in the Central Department of the General Staff and Wehrmacht adjutant to Hitler from August 3, 1934, to January 1, 1938; Infantry General and Commander of the Fourth Army in 1944-45.

235. DGFP, D, I, no. 19, pp. 29 ff. Original text published in IMT, 386 PS. Also printed in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *1939-1945—Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten* (Darmstadt, 1959), pp. 83 ff.

236. Evidently Hitler thought he could duplicate a strategy Bismarck had employed in 1866. Bismarck had invaded Bohemia while Italy was preoccupied with the war to its south.

237. Statement made in Borrisow, Headquarters of the Heeresgruppe Mitte, autumn of 1941. See below, September 24, 1941. Also printed in Schlabrendorff, p. 60.

238. Blomberg, Fritsch, and Neurath would be dismissed from office in February 1938. See below; February 4, 1938.

239. Taken from the author's notes. The public rally was an assembly of mayors of towns in Lower Franconia on the morning of March 3, 1938.

240. Both telegrams were published in VB, No. 312, November 8, 1937.

241. *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, p. 143.

242. Report in VB, No. 312, November 8, 1937.

243. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1937. Records of this speech have been preserved and its text is being kept in the archives of the Munich magazine *Quick*.

244. Reference is made to world Jewry, or rather to the supposedly existing, secret Jewish world government.

245. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1937.

246. DNB report, November 10, 1937. The recruits referred to were those of the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, the *SS Standarten Deutschland* and

- Germania*, the *SS Totenkopfverbände* (Death's Heads units), special police formations, the *SS Führerschulen* (leader schools) Braunschweig and Bad Tölz, as well as of a few pioneer and communication units.
247. Report in VB, No. 324, November 20, 1937. See also Schmidt, pp. 377 ff.; Bullock, pp. 366 f.; DGFP, D, I, nos. 20–22, pp. 39–71.
 248. DGFP, *ibid.*, pp. 55 ff.
 249. Report in VB, No. 326, November 22, 1937.
 250. Published in VB, *ibid.*
 251. See below, speech of November 8, 1940.
 252. Report in VB, No. 327, November 23, 1937.
 253. Report in VB, No. 328, November 24, 1937.
 254. The 'secret speech' was published as an appendix to Picker, pp. 443 ff. The report of the speech there does not correspond to its verbatim content in some instances. Therefore the author has amended several misquotes. Records of the speech are on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 5/EW 68 368–68 400).
 255. "Germanic Emperors" had never existed.
 256. The figure is an arbitrary one. There were not even ten million organized National Socialists in the strict sense of the term (i.e. Party members or members of one of the formations). However, if Hitler was also counting the entire youth movement, the members of the DAF, NSV, etc., as part of the organized membership, he might as well have said forty million.
 257. Report in VB, No. 330, November 26, 1937.
 258. *Ibid.*
 259. Published in VB, No. 331, November 27, 1937.
 260. DNB text, November 26, 1937.
 261. Karl Hanke, born 1903 in Lauban; a vocational school teacher by profession; Gauleiter in Breslau in 1941, designated for Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police in 1945 by the provisions of Hitler's last will; supposedly slain by Czechs as an unknown SS man in May of 1945.
 262. DNB text, November 27, 1937.
 263. Report in VB, No. 338, December 4, 1937.
 264. Report in VB, No. 341, December 7, 1937.
 265. DNB report, December 7, 1937.
 266. DNB text, December 12, 1937.
 267. Hitler's generalization on the topic of the League of Nations lacked justification. Even Hitler himself had to concede the effectiveness of the League after the Saar plebiscite. See above, March 1, 1935.
 268. This was an indirect appeal to all smaller nations to henceforth better listen to the Führer and not to the League of Nations.
 269. While Hitler did not expand upon the topic in this context, the reasons were indeed the very same ones in all three countries. Japan, Germany, and Italy pursued an aggressive policy of expansion at the expense of other states. The League of Nations' objection to such an approach greatly inconvenienced them.

- 270. Report in VB, No. 353, December 19, 1937. Hitler never considered road construction projects in other countries, such as in the United States, to be of any consequence to the comparisons he drew. It must also have slipped his memory that he had already accorded the title of “greatest constructional undertaking on earth” to the Stadium in Nuremberg. See above, September 6 and 7, 1937.
- 271. Report in VB, No. 352, December 18, 1937.
- 272. Ibid.
- 273. Report in VB, No. 354, December 20, 1937.
- 274. Published in VB, No. 355, December 21, 1937.
- 275. Ibid.
- 276. As Ludendorff’s resting place, Hitler had considered the Neue Soldatenhalle (Soldiers’ Memorial Hall) in Berlin. Cf. Picker, pp. 233 and 398.
- 277. Report in VB, No. 357, December 23, 1937.
- 278. Reports in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1937.
- 279. Report in VB, *ibid.*
- 280. Report in VB, No. 364, December 30, 1937.
- 281. Published in VB, No. 3, January 3,

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Notes

1. Hitler had referred to Göring in this manner in an address before the leaders of Germany's economy. See above, December 17, 1936.
2. See above, 1937, note 1.
3. See below, September 14, 1938.
4. Speaking before the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht, Hitler had employed this term in reference to the British and French statesmen who had partaken in the Munich Conference. See below, August 22, 1939.
5. See below, September 30, 1938.
6. Cf. Schmidt, p. 417.
7. According to Schacht's testimony before the Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, Hitler lost his temper after the Munich Conference and exclaimed: "Chamberlain, that bastard (*dieser Kerl*), has ruined my entry into Prague." IMT, Vol. XIII, p. 4.
8. See below, October 9, 1938.
9. See below, November 8, 1938.
10. See above, February 12, 1936.
11. See above, p. 170.
12. Published in VB, No. 3, January 3, 1938.
13. DNB text, January 2, 1938.
14. DNB report, *ibid*.
15. Announcement in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1938.
16. Report in Vß, Nos. 9 and 10, January 9 and 10, 1938.
17. DNB text, January 11, 1938.
18. Reports in VB, No. 12. 1938.
19. Reports in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1938.
20. Title of a film produced in 1933, *Hitlerjunge Quex*, based on a novel initially published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.
21. As Bullock states, p. 416.
22. Cf. Zoller, pp. 128 ff.
23. Cf. Theodor Eschenburg, "Die Rolle der Persönlichkeit," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 9 (1961), p. 14.
24. Report in V13, No. 13, January 13, 1938.
25. Report in VB, No. 16, January 16, 1938.
26. According to the newspaper *Novosti*. DNB report, January 16, 1938.
27. Report in VB, No. 18, January 18, 1938.
28. Printed in VB, No. 24, January 24, 1938.
29. For details on the Fritsch Affair see Graf Kielmannsegg, *Der Fritsch-Prozess* (Hamburg, 1949), Hermann Foertsch, *Schuld und Verhängnis. Die Fritschkrise im Früblabr 1938* (Stuttgart, 1951), and Harold C. Deutsch, *Hitler and his Generals. The Hidden Crisis January-June 1938* (St. Paul, 1974).
30. On September 22, 1939, Fritsch died under mysterious circumstances.

He allegedly sustained injuries while leading his company in an attack upon Warsaw. Shot in the thigh, he collapsed in the street and died as a consequence of the severe loss of blood from the wound. When informed of Fritsch's death, Hitler barely looked up and took little note of the news. Unmoved, he went on with that day's business. Cf. Baur, p. 180. A photograph of an empty Warsaw street was presented to the public as evidence of Fritsch's supposedly heroic death. According to Foertsch, p. 134, Fritsch actually committed suicide.

31. Court-martial investigation of the Fritsch case began on March 17, 1935. Göring presided over the trial after his timely promotion to the rank of Field Marshal. The inquiry revealed that the accusations brought against Fritsch in truth pertained to another man. In fact, Schmidt, the sole witness in the trial had actually observed a retired captain of the cavalry by the name of Frisch engaging in homosexual activities. Taking advantage of the similarity of surnames, the Gestapo had coached Schmidt in his testimony against Fritsch. However, Schmidt failed to be convincing and paid with his life for it—he was murdered. It took time before Freiherr von Fritsch's name was officially "cleared." As a gesture of rehabilitation to please the General staff, Hitler appointed him Chief of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment on August 11, 1938. See below, *ibid.*
32. Lieutenant Colonel Rudolf Schmundt succeeded Colonel Hossbach. Later, Schmundt was promoted to the rank of general. He sustained severe injuries as a result of the 1944 attempt on Hitler's life. See below, July 20, 1944.
33. Published in VB, No. 30, January 30, 1938.
34. See below, speech of February 20, 1938.
35. Reports in VB, No. 31, January 31, 1938.
36. On the medal a star-shaped order was surrounded by numerous small diamonds. On the front of the medal, the head of Athena was engraved in a gold casing. The medal was worn on the left chest and attached by means of a wide ribbon.
37. The objects in question were cross-shaped orders and medals which were awarded in different categories (bronze, silver, and gold), according to the recipient's years of service with the military. The badges were worn with the uniform on a blue ribbon, strongly reminiscent of medals Hitler had presented to the Wehrmacht on March 16, 1936, on the first anniversary of the reintroduction of general conscription.
38. See above, p. 146. For details on the reception by Hitler, cf. also Bullock, p. 418.
39. Beck resigned as Chief of the General Staff on August 27, 1938 because he could not reconcile himself to Hitler's plans for war. Beck later became active in the resistance movement. Subsequent to the precipitous July 20, 1944 report of Hitler's assassination, Beck unwittingly placed himself at the disposal of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. At the request of General Fromm, Commander of the Replacement Army, Beck shot himself on the spot.

40. Report in VB, No. 34, February 3, 1938.
41. Reports in VB, Nos. 34 and 35, February 3 and 4, 1938.
42. RGBl, 1938, I, p. 111.
43. DNB text, February 4, 1938.
44. Ibid.
45. DNB reports, *ibid.*
46. Brauchitsch was forced to retire on December 19, 1941; Hitler not only blamed him for the failure of the offensive in Russia, in particular did he want to exercise the Supreme Command of the Army himself.
47. See above, 1935, note 259.
48. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1938.
49. DNB report, February 4, 1938.
50. The men in question were Reich Ministers Rudolf Hess, Hans Frank, Hjalmar Schacht, Hans Heinrich Lammers, and Otto Meissner. On February 1, 1937, Meissner had been promoted to the rank of minister thus bearing the title of "State Minister."
51. See above, p. 340.
52. See above, November 26, 1937.
53. By 1936, Hitler had reduced the number of times the cabinet was in session to an absolute minimum and governed in a most high-handed manner. After 1936, he no longer took any pretense and did not sign decrees into law exclusively in Berlin, the city which remained the official seat of government. Instead, he would issue decrees from wherever he happened to be at the moment, be it in Berchtesgaden, Munich, or Nuremberg. The Cabinet Privy Council existed on paper only. It was quite transparent that Hitler had created the council simply to remove Neurath from the Foreign Ministry in a manner less conspicuous than an outright dismissal. A so-called Reich Defense Council was created subsequent to the outbreak of the Second World War, strongly reminiscent of the Cabinet Privy Council, nearly all the former members of which sat on the Reich Defense Council as well. This notwithstanding, neither body ever convened.
54. RGBl. 1938, I, p. 112.
55. DNB text, February 2, 1938.
56. Ibid.
57. In his 1946 testimony before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, Ribbentrop maintained the following (see IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X, pp. 274 f. and 468 ff.):
 "When I took over the Reich Foreign Ministry, I was aware from the beginning that I would be working, let me say, in the shadow of a titan. I would have to exercise great constraint, that is to say, that I would not be in a position to conduct foreign policy ... in the fashion a foreign minister normally would. [—]
 "Naturally, the overpowering personality of the Führer dominated the conduct of foreign policy as well. He always attended to it in great detail. I was always loyal to Hitler. I carried out his orders in spite of the fact that I frequently disagreed with him and we had serious

differences. I offered to resign on various occasions. However, whenever Hitler ordered me to do something, I always carried out the order in accordance with the principles of our *Führerstaat*”

When Undersecretary Adolf Freiherr von Steengracht took the witness stand in 1946, he declared the following (ibid., pp. 124 f.): “Hitler did not merely issue guidelines for the conduct of foreign affairs, but also often involved himself in the most minute details. Frequently, Ribbentrop would say that the Führer had actually no need for a foreign minister, all he really wanted was a secretary for foreign affairs.”

Von Steengracht further stated that Ribbentrop’s importance was even less than that of a possible secretary: “Perhaps [as secretary], Ribbentrop at least might have been in a position to influence the writing of speeches on foreign matters. However, Hitler always wrote these speeches himself without any prior consultation with Ribbentrop.”

58. DNB text, February 4, 1938.
59. DNB text, February 5, 1938.
60. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Mussolini according to DNB text, February 5, 1938.
61. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and France according to DNB text, February 7, 1938. Also printed in VB, No. 39, February 8, 1938.
62. Statement of Josef Berchtold to the author on February 7, 1938.
63. See above, pp. 504 ff.
64. Wilhelm Keppler, born 1882 in Heidelberg, died 1960 in Kressbronn; Hitler’s economic adviser; president of the Reich office of Soil Research; State Secretary for special duties in the Reich Foreign Ministry; Reich Commissioner (Reichsbeauftragter) for Austria from March 18, 1938, within the Four-Year Plan. Keppler was instrumental in bringing about the meeting of Hitler and von Papen. He did so in his capacity as President of the Reich Office of Soil Research.
65. Statement made by Field Marshal Erhard Milch (born 1892 in Wilhelmshaven, died 1972 in Wuppertal). Testifying before the International Military Tribunal, he recalled the following later comment by Hitler on the subject: “When Schuschnigg came to visit, I had my two crudest looking generals parade in the anteroom” (the men in question were Generals Sperrle and Reichenau). Cf. *Neue Zeitung*, June 19, 1948.
66. On the conversation between Hitler and Schuschnigg cf. Kurt von Schuschnigg’s autobiographies, *Ein Requiem in Rot-WeissRot* (Zurich, 1947) and “Aufzeichnungen des Häftlings Dr. Auster,” in *Neue Rundschau* (Stockholm, April 1946) and *Neue Zeitung*, June 28, and July 1, 1946; cf. also Franz von Papen, *Der Wahrheitsfaden* (Munich, 1952) pp. 467 ff., and Hitler’s speeches of February 20, March 8, March 25, and April 3, 1938. See below, ibid.
67. See below, March 18, 1938.
68. See below, March 25, 1938.
69. In a similar fashion, Hitler would later instigate a confrontation with the Czechoslovakian President Beneš (see below, September 26, 1938). He did not aim to secure a peaceful electoral process, however. It was a

question of power politics for him.—Dr. Edvard Beneš (1884–1948), Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister 1918–35, also Prime Minister 1921–22; President of the Czechoslovakian Republic from December 1935 to October 1938; lived in exile in France and England 1938–45.

70. With the words “at the German borders,” Hitler referred to the states bordering Germany, alluding to the suppression of the National Socialist coup attempt in Austria. See above, July 24, 1934.
71. Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart, born 1892 in Stannern; lawyer by profession; appointed Minister of the Interior on February 16, 1938; named Federal Chancellor on March 12, 1938; Reich Minister in 1939; Reichskommissar for the Netherlands from 1940 to 1945; hanged 1946 in Nuremberg.
72. DNB text, February 16, 1938.
73. See IMT, 1780 PS.
74. DNB text, February 16, 1938.
75. Ibid.
76. Report in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1938.
77. Published in VB, No. 50, February 19, 1938.
78. Text according to the Eher pamphlet, *Führerbotschaft an Volk und Welt. Reichstagsrede vom 20. Februar 1938* (Munich, 1938).
79. Hitler was referring to the then residence of Reich President Hindenburg who lived in the old Chancellery building in Wilhelmstrasse.
80. Reference is made to Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929) who served as Premier of France repeatedly. However, Clemenceau never employed the phrase Hitler attributed to him. See below, September 3, 1939.
81. On September 1, 1939, Hitler reported that he had spent RM 90 billion on armament. Back in 1932, however, he had claimed that the RM 3 billion (in reparation costs demanded of Germany) would spell certain ruin for the country. See below, September 1, 1939.
82. He meant to say that the emblem was attached to the cap.
83. Hitler made this statement in an attempt to rouse the British. Such sentiments notwithstanding, he made overtures to the British in 1939, offering the assistance of German troops in the defense of the Empire. See below, August 27, 1939.
84. Allusion to letters written by members of the House of Commons on the subject of sentences passed by the People’s Court of justice.
85. This was intended as a warning to the Western Powers. Hitler felt that these had best desist from any opposition to Germany’s policy of expansion in the East.
86. Reference is made to Dr. Carl Jakob Burckhardt, born 1891 in Basel, died 1974 in Geneva; Swiss professor; League of Nations’ Commissioner in Danzig from January 18, 1937 to September 1, 1939.
87. Reference is made to Japan and Italy.
88. Hitler’s form of address was incorrect since various other parties (DNVP, Center Party, and several smaller bourgeois parties) also had voted in favor of the Enabling Act. None of their members remained in the Reichstag after July 1933.
89. The “Austrian Legion” was an association composed of Austrian

National Socialists, the majority of whom were also members of the SA. They had fled their homeland in the years after 1933 in order to avoid prison sentences and confinement to *Anhaltelagers*. The SA accommodated them in camps in Upper Bavaria, where they received pocket-money, SA uniforms, and kept busy with scouting games. At no time did Hitler seriously contemplate involving these troops in the invasion of Austria. They reminded him too much of militia units which he abhorred. He desired to flaunt Germany's military might before the world and, in the event of an invasion, it would have to be carried out by regular German troops exclusively. Moreover, he did not think the Austrian SA men reliable enough since they lacked the blind obedience instilled in the German soldier. He feared that native National Socialists might deviate from the Party line and succumb to the temptation of local politics. He worried greatly about this possibility whenever he conquered new territories. Furthermore, he felt that it was of little concern whether or not his policy pleased the more idealistic among his Party comrades in Austria. Meanwhile, Austria's National Socialists had brought the greatest sacrifice in terms of blood for Hitler, remaining loyal to the Party throughout years of persecution and maltreatment. Austrian National Socialists were made to feel the brunt of Hitler's opportunistic strategy immediately after the Anschluss, when they were barred from participating in the Army's entry into Austria on March 13. It was not until Wehrmacht and Reich German Party divisions had claimed for themselves all the glory in the "liberated homeland," that members of the Austrian Legion were allowed to return to their native land.

90. Published in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1938. A record of the speech is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 7/EW 67 246-67 265).
91. RGBl. 1938, I, p. 215.
92. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1938.
93. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1938.
94. Published in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1938.
95. DNB report, March 2, 1938.
96. DNB report, March 3, 1938.
97. Report in VB, No. 66, March 7, 1938.
98. Report in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1938.
99. Report in Schmidt, pp. 390 ff.
100. Reference in VB, No. 70, March 11, 1938. The ship in question was the *Robert Ley*.
101. For Hitler's account see below, speech of March 18, 1938. In an interview with Ward Price (see below, March 12, 1938), Hitler further stated that he had even commissioned an envoy to Vienna to investigate the matter since the rumor appeared all too fantastic to him.
102. Schuschnigg closed his appeal with the words *'Front-Heil! Österreich!'* The original text of the appeal for the conduct of a plebiscite is reproduced in *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), March 10, 1938.
103. In his speeches on March 25 and April 1, 1938, Hitler announced that

a letter by Schuschnigg had been recovered subsequent to the Anschluss. Allegedly, this letter had been addressed to an Austrian Landeshauptmann (in all likelihood to the Landeshauptmann of Upper Austria, Gleissner, in Linz). In it, Schuschnigg referred to the Berchtesgaden meeting as a "mere tactical maneuver," designed to gain time in the hope that international public opinion would shortly change in favor of Austria.

104. Numerous protest demonstrations against Schuschnigg took place in Austria. See also the description in Alfred-Ingemar Berndt, *Meilensteine des Dritten Reiches* (Munich, 1938), pp. 191 ff.
105. Cf. Max Domarus, *Mussolini und Hitler. Zwei Wege, gleiches Ende* (Würzburg, 1977), p. 222. The Envoy in question was the Austrian Military Attaché, Colonel Liebitzky.—Ciano let the Reich Foreign Ministry know: "The Italian Government had been informed by Schuschnigg on March 7 of the plan for a plebiscite. Mussolini had strongly advised him against it." DGFP, D, I, no. 350, p. 572.
106. See below, March 25, 1938.
107. A few days earlier, Hitler had informed Henderson that all issues concerning Austria and Czechoslovakia were simply 'none of Great Britain's business.' Cf. Schmidt, pp. 391 f.
108. At the time, General von Reichenau was attending a meeting of the International Olympic Committee in Cairo.
109. Freiherr Maximilian von Weichs, born 1881 in Dessau, died 1954 in Rösberg near Cologne; appointed Field Marshal in 1943.
110. Fedor von Bock, born 1880 in Kustrin, killed in action on May 3, 1945 in Schleswig-Holstein; Colonel General in 1938; Field Marshal in 1940.
111. The garrison in Würzburg, for example, was put on alert at 11:00 p.m. on March 10, 1938. Immediately thereafter, reserve units and replacement reserve members were called up.
112. Reference to the reorganization in HVBI. 1938, Part C, No. 205, p. 58, dated March 3, 1938. Published officially in a note by the OKW, see below, March 18, 1938.
113. DNB report, March 10, 1938.
114. IMT, 102C, and Hofer, pp. 197 f.
115. Cf. *Neues Wiener-Journal* and *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), editions of March 12 and 13, 1938.
116. Reinhard Heydrich, born 1904 in Halle; Chief of the Security Police (Sipo) and the SD from 1936; Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia from September 1941; died in June 1942 in Prague as a result of injuries sustained in an attempt upon his life by Czech nationalists.
117. Verbatim content in IMT, 2949PS
118. Text published in *Neue Basler Zeitung*, March 12, 1938.
119. Dr. Wilhelm Miklas, born 1872 in Krems, died 1956 in Vienna; Federal President from December 10, 1928 to March 13, 1938. Subsequent to the Anschluss, Hitler did not seek retribution regarding Miklas since the Austrian's steadfastness had greatly impressed him.
120. DGFP, D, I, no. 358, p. 580.

121. Hubert Klausner (1892–1939), retired Major; after the Anschluss minister in the Seyss-Inquart cabinet and later Gauleiter of Kärnten (Carinthia).
122. See below, speech of March 25, 1938.
123. See below, April 6, 1938.
124. See above, September 28, 1937.
125. The supporters of a Habsburg monarchy in Austria, the so-called “Legitimists,” formed part of Schuschnigg’s Vaterländische Front. However, there were no serious attempts made to bring about the restoration of the monarchy to power.
126. Text published in *Neue Basler Zeitung*, March 14, 1938.
127. Reference is made here to the war in Abyssinia and the sanctions imposed by the League of Nations.
128. Prince Philip of Hesse, born 1896 in Rumpenheim, married Mafalda Royal Princess of Savoy (born 1902 in Rome, died 1944 in the KZ Buchenwald). At the time, the Prince was Oberpräsident of the Province of Hesse-Nassau in Kassel and SS Obergruppenführer. Subsequent to the armistice in Italy in 1943, the Prince and his wife were interned in a concentration camp. American troops liberated the Prince in 1945.
129. Report of the Agenzia Steffani, March 12, 1938.
130. In Rome on March 16, 1938, Mussolini spoke before the Chamber of Deputies on the subject of the events in Austria. He declared that not one Austrian had ever shown any gratitude for his sending of four Italian divisions to the Brenner in July of 1934: “At noon on March 7, one of Schuschnigg’s confidants asked me for my opinion on the plebiscite which was planned. In a manner not to be mistaken, I told him I thought it a wrong step. It would prove itself to be a counterproductive measure ... In these days, we have witnessed the great desire of the Austrian people for an Anschluss. It was nothing more and nothing less than a revolution and we in Italy are the first to acknowledge this.” Original text published in Franco Martinelli, *Mussolini ai raggi X* (Milan 1964), pp. 558 ff.; German translation of the complete speech in Domaris, *Mussolini*, pp. 226 ff.
131. Cf. IMT, 2949-PS.
132. Cf. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, March 12, 1938.
133. DNB report, March 12, 1938.
134. DNB text, *ibid.*
135. *Ibid.*
136. Martin Bormann was Hess’ staff manager at the time.
137. Philip Bouhler, chief of the Führer’s Chancellery, rarely appeared in public.
138. DNB text, March 12, 1938.
139. Evidently, Hitler had not yet determined to annex Austria and to integrate it into the German Reich. Nonetheless, he would do so within a few hours’ time.
140. Peace treaty between the Allied Forces and Austria signed at Saint-Germain on September 10, 1919.
141. Translation according to the original German wording of both parties,

- published in VB, No. 74, March 15, 1938. Cf. also *Daily Mail*, March 13, 1938.
142. RGBL 1938, I, pp. 237 f.
143. At this point, the “Reich Government” consisted of no one else than Adolf Hitler. At the time, none of the Reich ministers, who supposedly signed the law into effect, were present in Linz.
144. The DNB published the following:
“Vienna, March 13. Official announcement: Upon a written request, dated March 13, by the Federal Chancellor, the Federal President has resigned from office. In accordance to Article 77, Paragraph 1, of the 1934 Constitution, Dr. Seyss-Inquart, the Federal Chancellor, assumes the President’s responsibilities.”
145. DNB text, March 13, 1938. General conscription was in force in Austria as well, although prohibited by the 1919 Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain. In one of his frequent imitations of Hitler’s moves, Schuschnigg had transformed the numerically restricted regular army into an army based upon conscription (cf. Austrian Bundesgesetzblatt 1936, No. 102). The Western Powers did not respond to this move on the part of Austria. They had neither opposed Germany’s 1935 institution of the draft nor a similar measure by Hungary in 1938.
146. NSK text, March 13, 1938.
147. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Mussolini, published in VB, Nos. 73 and 74, March 14 and 15, 1938.
148. Cf. Papen, pp. 492 ff.
149. Kurt von Schuschnigg remained in confinement until American troops came to his rescue in 1945. He was incarcerated first in Vienna and then in the KZ Flossenbürg. From there, he was transferred to other concentration camps toward the end of the War. Nonetheless, he gained permission to marry Gräfin Vera von Czernin while detained. Previously, she had been married to Leopold Graf von Fugger. She shared her new husband’s confinement and even gave birth to a daughter while in the camps. The Schuschnigg family was granted various unusual privileges, such as the possession of a radio.
150. See above, 1934, note 186.
151. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, March 16, 1938.
152. DNB text, March 15, 1938.
153. Published in VB, No. 75, March 16, 1938. The author has corrected a few insignificant discrepancies in the text.
154. Parody of a statement made by William I at Sedan on September 2, 1870: “What a great change under God’s guidance!”
155. Printed in VB, No. 76, March 17, 1938.
156. Neurath had been appointed SS Gruppenführer earlier. See above, September 19, 1937.
157. In July 1935, the SS Leibstandarte had already conducted maneuvers wearing this new field-gray uniform. Cf. illustrations in *Schwarzes Korps*, No. 23, July 31, 1935.
158. DNB report, March 15, 1938.

159. Facsimile reproduction in the *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna), March 29, 1938. A day earlier, Innitzer had made various proclamations on this great “turning point in the religious and cultural life of Germany.” Cf. VB, No. 93, April 3, 1938.
160. VB, No. 76, March 17, 1938.
161. Report in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1938.
162. Published in VB, *ibid*.
163. Published in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1938. See also above, March 10, 1938.
164. Published in VB, No. 82, March 23, 1938.
165. Text according to the Eher pamphlet, *Rede des Führers and Reichskanzlers Adolf Hitler vor dem Reichstag am. 18. März 1938* (Munich, 1938).
166. See above, March 1, 1938.
167. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 26, 1938.
168. Hitler is alluding to the colonization of the Teutonic Order and the settlement of Austrian Protestants in Prussia, with particular reference to the groups driven from Salzburg in 1731.
169. Published in VB, No. 86, March 27, 1938.
170. These accounts are grossly exaggerated. In the period 1933 through 1937, the number of National Socialist casualties totaled 136 in Austria, a figure that includes those Austrian Socialists who were hung. These victims are listed individually in the *Neues Wiener Journal*, November 9, 1938.
171. The activities of Himmler and Heydrich in Vienna are ample proof that Hitler was not truly as “forgetful” as he pretended to be in this instance. The assassination of Wilhelm von Ketteler is one more example of this. Ketteler’s sole “crime” had been that he had worked as von Papen’s secretary. See above, March 14, 1938.
172. “*Das Volk steht auf, der Sturm bricht los.*” Opening line of the poem *Männer und Buben* by Theodor Körner (1771–1813). See Theodor Körner, *Leyer und Schwert* (Berlin, 1814). The phrase was later used by Goebbels in his notorious call for total war in the Berlin Sportpalast on November 18, 1943: “Now Volk stand up, and storm break loose!”
173. In the years that followed, Hitler would repeatedly make similar pompous statements. On December 10, 1940, he grandiosely proclaimed: “A place taken by a German soldier, will never be taken by any other soldier!” See below, *ibid*.
174. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 27, 1938.
175. DGFP, D, II, no. 109, enclosure, p. 204. For the original text see IMT, 2788-PS and Hofer, p. 200.
176. Dr. Milan Hodža, born 1878 in Sucany; Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia from November 1935 to September 1938; emigrated to England at the outbreak of the Second World War; died 1944 in Florida.
177. DNB text, March 29, 1938.
178. See above, note 171.
179. The first KdF ship had been christened *Wilhelm Gustloff*.
180. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 29, 1938.

181. Ibid.
182. DNB text, March 29, 1938. Also printed in VB, Berlin Edition, March 30, 1938.
183. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 29, 1938.
184. DNB text, March 30, 1938. Also printed in VB, Berlin Edition, March 31, 1938.
185. Hitler appears to have come up with this flattery on the spur of the moment. The official reproduction of his March 15, 1938 speeches in Vienna contain no such statement.
186. Published in VB, No. 91, April 1, 1938.
187. Report in VB, No. 92, April 2, 1938.
188. Given the large number of Swabians living abroad, Stuttgart had been declared the "city of Germans living abroad" in 1933.
189. Published in VB, No. 92, April 2, 1938.
190. See above, note 103.
191. Published in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1938.
192. DNB, April 3, 1938. Quotation according to the *Aschaffenhurger Zeitung*, April 4, 1938. The reproduction in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1938, contains errors.
193. See above, note 172.
194. Parody of the Bible passage: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19, 6.
195. See above, note 90.
196. DNB text, April 3, 1938.
197. DNB text, April 4, 1938.
198. Ibid.
199. See above, p. 505.
200. Published in VB, No. 98, April 8, 1938.
201. Parody of the opening lines of the Gospel according to John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1, 1.
202. Parody of Goethe, Faust, Part I, 3: "*Ein Ted von jenerKraft, die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.*" (Part of that Power, not understood, which always wills the Bad, and always works the Good.—English quotation taken from the London 1866 edition.)
203. Hitler himself would prove a year later that this was indeed possible in spite of everything. On August 25, 1939, he repealed the order to march on Poland the next day and he did so primarily because of foreign policy considerations. See below, August 25, 1939.
204. Report in VB, No. 98, April 8, 1938.
205. Published in VB, No. 99, April 9, 1938.
206. Published in VB, No. 101, April 11, 1938.
207. Ibid.
208. See above, pp. 259 ff.
209. See above, March 28, 1936.
210. Notes taken by the author on April 9, 1938. (For the translation, the officially deleted sentence was reinserted; editor's note.)

211. The Second World War would prove that even “all German tribes united” could indeed be conquered. Events would prove wrong Hitler’s theory of “one Volk” that obeyed “one will” and hence was invincible.
212. Opening line of the so-called *Fluchtlied 1812* on Napoleon’s defeat in Russia, written by an unknown contemporary: “*Mit Mann und Ross und Wagen, so hat sie Gott geschlagen*. “Hitler enjoyed quoting this particular song and did so especially after the victories in Poland and France. See below, September 19, 1939.
213. DNB text, April 9, 1938.
214. DNB text, April 11, 1938.
215. Published in VB, No. 102, April 12, 1938.
216. Report in VB, No. 104/105, April 14/15, 1938.
217. Published in VB, No. 106/107/108, April 16/17/18, 1938.
218. At the time, the SA Standarte *Feldherrnhalle* was an armed unit that consisted of four *Sturmabteilungen* (battalions). There were 400 men in each battalion and these men lived in six camps. Initially, they would not carry arms on public occasions. However, the Standarte *Feldherrnhalle* openly participated in the October 1, 1938 move into Czechoslovakia as a fully armed regiment of the Luftwaffe.—As recently as 1934, Hitler had accused armed SA units of high treason in an effort to appease the generals. Once in command of the Wehrmacht, Hitler no longer resisted the transformation of the armed SA units into special regiments, provided that these did not serve as disguise for militia formations.
219. Reports in VB, Nos. 111 and 113, April 21 and 23, 1938.
220. “Green” was the code name for Czechoslovakia. “Operation Green” or “Case Green” (*Fall Grün*) stood for military action against this state.
221. DGFP, D, II, no. 133, pp. 139 f. Original German text in IMT, 338-PS. Also printed in Hofer, pp. 202 f. For the additional conferences at the Berghof on September 3, see DGFP, D, II, no. 424, pp. 686 f., and in Nuremberg on September 9 and 10, see *ibid.*, no. 448, pp. 727 ff.
222. Rudolf Schmundt, Wehrmacht Adjutant assigned to Hitler personally in February 1938, succeeded Colonel Hossbach who had been dismissed from his post on January 28, 1938.
223. Obviously, the life of the German Envoy in Prague, Dr. Eisenlohr, did not mean all too much to Hitler. As the document on “Case Green” reveals, Hitler had no qualms about arranging for the assassination of Eisenlohr if no other pretext for the invasion of Czechoslovakia could be conjured up in time.
224. Case Red (*Fall Rot*) was the code name for operations against France.
225. For details see Alfred-Ingemar Berndt, *Der Marsch ins Grossdeutsche Reich* (Munich, 1939), p. 30.
226. Reports in VB, No. 113, April 23, 1938.
227. By virtue of the April 14, 1939 law on the establishment of an administrative apparatus for the Ostmark (*Ostmarkgesetz*), Austria was subdivided into seven autonomous Reich Gaus. The administrative

reform in Austria was far more radical than any earlier reorganization process within the Old Reich's borders. There, at least, the existence of historic regions was accounted for in the creation of new administrative units. For example, Länder such as Prussia and Bavaria continued to exist within their historic boundaries.—In Austria, however, any lingering memory of Austria in its former state was to be relentlessly eradicated. The previous Austrian Länder of Upper and Lower Austria, for instance, were changed to the districts of Upper and Lower Danube.

228. RGBL. 1938, I, pp. 407 f.
229. Hitler's Austria expert Wilhelm Keppler, placed in charge of the implementation of the Four-Year Plan.
230. Published in VB, No. 116, April 26, 1938.
231. Hitler employed similar methods later when he occupied other countries. This applied to instances as well in which a pro-German provisional government had constituted itself, as was the case in Croatia and the Ukraine. Its members would be either arrested or harassed by Hitler's cronies to such an extent that they soon regretted ever having entertained sympathies toward Germany.
232. Report in VB, No. 118, April 28, 1938.
233. NSK text, April 28, 1938. Printed in VB, No. 121, May 1, 1938.
234. Published in VB, No. 134, May 14, 1938.
235. RGBL. 1938, I, pp. 431 f. This bronze medal was worn on a dark red band with black and white stripes. Hitler's face was engraved on the front of the medal in the center of the slogan: *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*
236. Published in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1938.
237. Ibid.
238. Reports on Hitler's travels in Italy in VB, Nos. 123 to 131, May 3 to 11, 1938.
239. The Palazzo Venezia served as Mussolini's seat of government.
240. Published in VB, No. 125, May 5, 1938.
241. DNB text, May 4, 1938.
242. Published in VB, No. 126, May 6, 1938.
243. Cf. description of the incident rendered by Fritz Dreesen jr. in "Kronzeuge Linge," *Revue* (Munich 1954/1955), series X-XI.
244. Published in VB, No. 129, May 9, 1938.
245. Cf. Picker, p. 409.
246. See below, September 10, 1943.
247. Published in VII, No. 131, May 11, 1938.
248. Ibid.
249. Printed in DNB, May 11, 1938.
250. Published in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1938.
251. Up to this point, officers and soldiers had only extended the "German salute" to Hitler when they did not wear hats. Thereafter, the military salute to Hitler was completely abandoned. Within the Wehrmacht itself, however, it was still customarily extended up to July 20, 1944 and afterwards replaced by the "German salute" as a general regulation.
252. DNB report, May 11, 1938.

253. See above, January 18, 1937.
254. Cf. *Bullock*, p. 446, and IMT, 388-PS.
255. Published in VB, No. 215, August 3, 1938.
256. See above, September 12, 1936.
257. To the great annoyance of Munich's citizens, the Matthäus Church near the Stachus was torn down as a first step to the planned construction of a subway system in the city. King Louis I of Bavaria had built the edifice in 1833. Up to its destruction, the Church had served as the main meeting place for Munich's Protestant congregation.
258. Published in V13, No. 143, May 23, 1938.
259. Hitler is referring to the period prior to 1914.
260. See below, speech of September 12, 1938.
261. The Volkswagen factory had built its production halls, administrative buildings and living quarters for its workers on a huge terrain. Twenty-eight separate communities were founded, the aggregate of which later formed the city of Wolfsburg. The construction of the Volkswagen factory was accompanied by the establishment of a savings association. For a weekly contribution of five marks, members acquired the right to buy a Volkswagen, the commercial value of which was 990 marks. The whole scheme was doomed, however. While the worker continued to make his weekly payments, he never obtained the car he coveted. The Second World War soon prohibited civilian driving anyway. The Volkswagenwerk was refitted to accommodate the production needs of the Wehrmacht. The military started producing its famous crosscountry *Kübelwagen* there. This vehicle was to be of enormous value to the troops in Africa and Russia since its motor did not require watercooling.
262. Published in VB, No. 147, June 27, 1938.
263. Lafferentz was the Reichsamtsleiter of the DAF and head of the society for the advancement of the Volkswagen.
264. Cf. IMT, 388-PS.
265. See below, September 12, 1938.
266. See below, January 30, 1939.
267. Hitler paid no heed to such obvious considerations. In 1939, for instance, he intended to launch his attack upon the Netherlands, Belgium, and France in mid-November. See below, October 10, 1939.
268. DGFP, D, 11, no. 221, pp. 357 ff. German text printed in IMT, 388-PS.
269. Kurt Zeitzler, later promoted General; succeeded Halder as Chief of the Army General Staff in September 1942; retired after the July 1944 events.
270. Reports on the parade and the performance of Weber's *Der Freischütz* in VB, No. 150, May 30, 1938.
271. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 45.
272. Published in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1938.
273. RGBl. 1938, 1, pp. 611 f.
274. Report in VB, Nos. 155, 156 and 157, June 4, 5 and 6, 1938.
275. *Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnisrock*. In the days when Fritsch's reactionary current pervaded the Army, a new uniform had been introduced in an

effort to emphasize continuity of military tradition. Its cut was strongly reminiscent of the Imperial Army's dress uniform. National Socialists were adamant in their opposition to its introduction. On a more practical note, the tunic had neither breast pockets nor side pockets but instead was furnished with a multitude of buttons and laced tails and cuffs. Even older officers were not pleased with this old-fashioned uniform, that soon earned the nickname "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Tunic," a play on words in reference to the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin. In actual combat situations, the uniform was more of a hindrance than help; finally it was forced upon home front garrisons.

276. Reports on these addresses in VB, No. 161, June 10, 1938.
277. DNB report, May 10, 1938.
278. Published in VB, No. 164, June 13, 1938.
279. Franz Schwede-Coburg, a non-commissioned career officer, had been elected Coburg's first National Socialist mayor even prior to Hitler's seizure of power. In 1934, he became Gauleiter and Oberpräsident of Pomerania.
280. DNB report, June 13, 1938.
281. Published in VB, No. 166/167, June 15/16, 1938.
282. See above, November 27, 1937.
283. NSK report, June 14, 1938.
284. See above, March 12, 1938.
285. Captain Leopold had led the illegal National Socialist Party in Austria in the times of Schuschnigg's rule.
286. Report in VB, No. 178, June 27, 1938.
287. Report in VB, No. 180, June 29, 1938.
288. Ibid.
289. Hitler's "Denkschrift zur Frage unserer Festungsanlagen" (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Militärarchiv, H-10-38) has been published in Otto-Wilhelm Förster, *Das Befestigungswesen*, Vol. XXV of *Die Wehrmacht im Kampf* (Neckargemünd, 1960), appendix 13, pp. 123 ff.
290. Upon this point, Förster, p. 138, remarks the following: "Hitler had forgotten the most effective enemy of a fortification line in a war, the pioneer."
291. RGBL 1938, I, p. 65.
292. In the summer months of 1938, the entire road network in North and East Bavaria was hastily rebuilt and repaired. The strategic significance of this area had greatly increased in light of the imminent assault upon Czechoslovakia.
293. Report in VB, No. 192, July 11, 1938.
294. Ibid.
295. Published in VB, *ibid.*
296. DNB report, July 13, 1938. Menemencioglu served as Foreign Minister of Turkey in the years 1942 to 1944. As he fell ill in 1942, Hitler sent the renowned German surgeon Professor Sauerbruch to Turkey to attend him.
297. Report in VB, No. 197, July 16, 1938.

298. Report in VB, No. 195, July 14, 1938.
299. See above, April 7, 1937.
300. DNB text, July 13, 1938.
301. Report in VB, No. 199, July 18, 1938.
302. Report in VB, No. 206, July 25, 1938.
303. Published in VB, No. 210, July 29, 1938.
304. See above, Hitler's speech of July 31, 1937.
305. Reports on the festivities in Breslau in VB, No. 213, August 1, 1938.
306. Immediately subsequent to the March 1938 annexation of Austria, a Viennese edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* was set up. Initial production was limited to a small-size format because of a lack of the appropriate rotary presses needed for publication of larger formats.
307. Report in VB, No. 219, August 7, 1938.
308. IMT, Vol. XXI, testimonies by Field Marshals von Brauchitsch (p. 24) and von Manstein (p. 48). Cf. Bullock, pp. 450 f.
309. Verbatim account of the Beck memorandum in Wolfgang Foerster, *Ein General kämpft gegen den Krieg* (Munich, 1949).
310. Entry into the diary of Colonel General Alfred Jodl, dated August 10, 1938, as cited in Bullock, p. 451. In 1946, Jodl was sentenced to death at the Nuremberg Trials and subsequently hanged.
311. Published in VB, No. 224, August 12, 1938.
312. Report in VB, No. 227, August 15, 1938.
313. Report in VB, No. 230, August 18, 1938.
314. Cf. IMT, 647-PS. Excerpt printed in Hofer, pp. 110 f.
315. Report in VB, No. 231, August 19, 1938.
316. Ibid.
317. Report in VB, No. 233, August 21, 1938.
318. See above, April 21, 1938.
319. Wilhelm Freiherr von Tegetthoff, Austrian Admiral (1827–1871). In 1866, he secured victory against the Italian Navy at Lissa.
320. Report on Horthy's official visit in VB, Nos. 235 to 240, August 23 to 28, 1938.
321. Published in VB, No. 238, August 26, 1938. Inadvertently, Hitler's reference to the Hungarian-German border must have offended his guests. Hungary had lost the area to Austria as a result of the First World War. Hungary coveted the Burgenland itself.
322. Term employed in the DNB text, August 25, 1938.
323. June 4, 1920 Peace Treaty entered into by the Allied Powers and Hungary following the First World War.
324. Cf. VB, Nos. 235 and 242, August 23 and 30, 1938 respectively.
325. See Wolfgang Foerster, *Ein General kämpft gegen den Krieg*; Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Offiziere gegen Hitler*, Josef Foltmann, *Opfergang der Generale*; and others. See also Bullock, pp. 449 ff.
326. Hans David Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg (1759–1830), Prussian general. He concluded the December 30, 1812 Neutrality Convention of Tauroggen with the Russians on his own.
327. The Ottomar Krug collection (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz) lists 2,530

- generals in the Army of the Third Reich. The April 20, 1945 listing of Luftwaffe generals cites 418 generals served with the Luftwaffe alone. Cf. typed records edited and published by the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia (Kornelimünster, 1954). The Navy list contains the names of 235 admirals. Cf. Walter Lohmann and Hans H. Hildebrand, *Die deutsche Kriegsmarine 1939–1945* (Bad Nauheim, 1956).
328. General Franz Halder, born 1884 in Würzburg, died 1972 in Aschau am Chiemsee, rose to the rank of Colonel General and became Chief of the General Staff for the period from 1939 to 1942. He was interred in a concentration camp in the years 1944 and 1945. In his publication *Hitler als Feldherr* (Munich, 1949), p. 14, Halder remarks on Hitler: "He was completely inept at military leadership. He replaced it with the brute force of military orders."
 329. The aggregate of generals at Hitler's disposal during the Second World War was termed the *Führerreserve*.
 330. See above, speech of March 7, 1936.
 331. The *Paris Journal* printed the interview on September 2, 1938. Its German version appeared in the *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 3, 1938. Neither the *Völkischer Beobachter* nor the *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* published the interview's verbatim account.
 332. Cf. *The Times*, June 3, 1938, etc. For Lord Runciman's mission see DGFP, D, II, nos. 313–333, pp. 512 ff.
 333. See below, speech of September 12, 1938. In reference to Beneš' offers, Hitler argued: "It's all tactics. Herr Beneš talks, wants to organize negotiations. He wishes to resolve the question of procedure in accordance with the Geneva Convention and hands out little favors to placate the people.—Herr Beneš is not supposed to grant the Sudeten Germans any favors. They have a right to their own way of life, just as any other people do.—I am not in the least willing to allow foreign statesmen to create a second Palestine right here in the heart of Germany."
 334. DNB text, September 2, 1938.
 335. Assaults upon Czechoslovakia in the German press had begun as early as May 21. On August 6, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published an article entitled "Genug!" and thereby launched an anti-Czechoslovakian campaign in all German papers.
 336. DNB text, September 6, 1938.
 337. Reference is made to a line of fortification along the Franco-German border which had been strongly reinforced. The French Minister of War André Maginot (1877–1932) had both planned and commissioned its construction. Work on the structure was begun in 1930. In 1940, German troops charged through the fortified stronghold, precisely as, in 1944 and 1945, the Allied Forces would later penetrate Germany's Atlantic Wall and West Wall.
 338. Claiming that "a few reserve battalions had merely been practicing the defense of the new German line of fortifications," Alfred-Ingemar Berndt plays down the importance of the German mobilization in his

- book on Greater Germany. This mobilization along Germany's eastern border was clearly and offensively directed against Czechoslovakia. Only the remaining mobilization to the western border had a defensive character. Cf. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 81.
339. The insignias of the Holy Roman Empire contained crown, scepter, sword, and several relics as the Holy Lance. The latter was of particular significance to Hitler. According to the legend, it was the spear of Longinus, a soldier who at the crucifixion stabbed Jesus Christ in the right side. Similar to the myth of the Grail, the Holy Lance was said to give its possessors—among them Constantine the Great and Charlemagne—magical powers.
 340. Hitler's speeches at this Party Congress are quoted from the Eher pamphlet, *Reden des Führers am Parteitag Grossdeutschland 1938* (Munich, 1938).
 341. This appeal obviously was directed at Great Britain to finally accept Germany's outstretched hand. In exchange for freedom of action in the East, Germany was willing to contribute to the "defense of the British Empire." Hitler was quite willing to sacrifice the alliance with both Italy and Japan to a rapprochement with Britain.
 342. In spite of Streicher's earlier visit (see above, October 28, 1937), measures against Jews in Italy were implemented hesitantly and only after considerable pressure by Germany.
 343. Here Hitler was ridiculing Rosenberg's philosophical opus *Der Mytbos des 20. Jahrhunderts*. On one occasion, Hitler remarked that he was glad that only the enemies of National Socialism seemed capable of understanding the abstruse book. Cf. Picker, p. 275.
 344. DNB report, September 8, 1938.
 345. See above, April 3, 1938.
 346. As mentioned earlier, Hitler valued little those of his successes which he had obtained through the intervention of an international body, as was the case in the Saar plebiscite and the Munich Conference.
 347. Plebiscites of this nature were held in the Third Reich in the years 1933, 1934, 1936, and 1938. In the period from 1939 to 1945, there were neither plebiscites nor elections.
 348. Reference is made to the April 10, 1938 Reichstag election. Supposedly, 99 percent of the electorate had expressed their support for Hitler.
 349. Hitler knew well that neither the German Nationalists, nor the Center, nor the Social Democrats had ever allied themselves with the Communists in the days of the Weimar Republic. Had such an alliance come about, the National Socialist Party would clearly have been defeated in 1932, since it could claim no more than 37 percent support among voters. These accusations were merely a means of propaganda, designed to frighten the Western Powers into a sort of neutrality for fear of Communism. This approach had worked extremely well with the German Nationalists and the Center Party in 1933. Hitler could not imagine an alliance between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union coming about as indeed it would in the course of the Second World War. A like

- coalition was simply not possible in his eyes because it defied his theory on the fundamental equality of domestic and foreign policy.
350. Reference is made to the Soviet People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Litvinov.
 351. See below, note 408.
 352. Pierre Cot, born 1895 in Grenoble, died 1977 in Chamberry. From 1933 to 1938, he repeatedly served as France's Minister of Aviation. At this point in time, however, Cot was Minister of Commerce.
 353. Denmark had 3.8 million inhabitants at the time.
 354. Hitler is referring to Great Britain, i.e. to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935.
 355. Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856–1921) had been German Reich Chancellor from 1909 to 1917. Georg Graf Hertling (1843–1919) succeeded him in the years 1917 to 1918.
 356. See above, 1937, note 15.
 357. It is highly unlikely that there had been any manipulation of the election results. According to official figures, 95.5 percent of the Sudeten German electorate had voted in favor of Henlein's party on May 21, 1938. In the May 28 election, 92.2 percent of the Sudeten Germans had expressed their support for this party.
 358. Hitler had construed the term "Germanic-German Reich." The "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" had ceased to exist in 1806.
 359. DNB text, September 14, 1938.
 360. Cf. Lewis B. Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude, 1938–1939* (London, 1948), p. 35.
 361. See above, February 12, 1938.
 362. The German press did not specifically mention Keitel's presence. However, pictures taken at the occasion reveal that he indeed attended the meeting.
 363. Larry William Fuchser, *Neville Chamberlain and Appeasement. A Study in the Politics of History* (New York, London, 1982), p. 143; cf. also Chamberlain's notes in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939* (hereafter referred to as DBrFP), Third Series, pp. 338 ff.; for descriptions of the meeting see further the German memorandum in DGFP, D, II no. 487, pp. 786 ff.; Schmidt, pp. 394 ff.; Friedrich Berber, *Deutschland-England 1933–1939* (Essen, 1943) pp. 145 f.; Fuchser, pp. 141 ff., Shirer, pp. 384 ff.; cf. also Nevile Henderson, *The Failure of a Mission* (New York, 1940), pp. 152 ff.
The interpreter Schmidt quoted Chamberlain's words as he had transmitted them to Hitler in direct form: "If you have already resolved to employ force without waiting for a discussion, why did you let me come? Given the circumstances, it will be best if I depart immediately. I am wasting my time here." (Retranslated from Schmidt, p. 397).
 364. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 758.
 365. Printed in Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 116.
 366. According to Reuters.
 367. DGFP, D, II, no. 487, p. 798; DNB text, September 15, 1938.

368. Translation according to the original German wording of both parties, published in VB, Berlin Edition, September 20, 1938. Cf. also *Daily Mail*, September 19, 1938.
369. This statement reveals Hitler's determination not to allow for the creation of an autonomous Czechoslovakian state and that, instead, he sought annexation.
370. The Sudeten German Freikorps wore a badge with red and black stripes on its flat caps for identification in addition to the uniform. The Freikorps consisted of five groups with a supposed membership of 80,000 men. In reality, the membership ran between 10,000 and 15,000 volunteers. Cf. Martin Broszat, "Das Sudetendeutsche Freikorps," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 9 (1961), pp. 30 ff. Hitler had no desire to rely upon the Sudeten German Freikorps for military purposes any more than he had relied upon the Austrian Legion earlier that year. The Wehrmacht carried through the occupation of the Sudetenland by itself. On October 10, Hitler dissolved the Freikorps. See below, *ibid.*
371. DNB text, September 18, 1938.
372. IMT, 388-PS (26).
373. DNB report, September 20, 1938.
374. *Ibid.* The Czechoslovakian Teschen or Olsa region was located at the Polish-Silesian border.
375. DNB text, September 21, 1938.
376. Édouard Daladier, born 1884 in Carpentras, died 1970 in Paris; from 1938 to 1940 served his third term as Premier of France. For Chamberlain's talk with Daladier see Fuchser, pp. 144 ff.
377. Georges Bonnet, born 1889 in Bassillac, died 1973 in Paris; French Minister for Foreign Affairs from April 1938 to September 1939.
378. Printed in Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 127. See *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 21, 1938.—For the joint communication handed to Beneš by the British and French Governments see DGFP, D, II, no. 523, pp. 831 ff.
379. DNB text, September 21, 1938.
380. Cf. Bullock, p. 456.
381. Reports on the conference in Schmidt, pp. 400 ff.; DGFP, D, II, no. 562, pp. 870 ff.; Fuchser, pp. 147 ff.
382. Reference is made to the fact that, while Poland claimed the Olsa area, Hungary coveted the Carpatho-Ukraine and parts of Slovakia.
383. DGFP, D, II, no. 572, pp. 887 f. German text published in Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 142 ff.
384. DGFP, D, II, no. 573, pp. 889 ff. German text published in Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 145 ff.
385. Hitler erroneously recalled the date of this particular speech and he did so repeatedly. The speech had actually taken place two days prior, on February 20, 1938. See below, April 28, 1939.
386. DGFP, D, II, no. 574, p. 892. German text published in Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 149 f.
387. Chamberlain was mistaken on this date. The conference had taken place on September 15, 1938.

388. German memorandum of August 30, 1938. It contained a proposal for the resolution of outstanding problems related to the Danzig question and the existence of the Polish Corridor. Moreover, it addressed German-Polish differences in the minorities question. See below, August 30, 1939.
389. DGFP, D, II, no. 584, pp. 908 f. German text in DNB report, September 24, 1938.
390. Initially, the date for the withdrawal had been set for September 28 in the memorandum. As described, Hitler then changed the deadline to October 1, 1938.
391. Statements quoted according to Schmidt, pp. 404 ff.
392. Cf. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 6, 1938. See also Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 157 ff.
393. Hitler had made similar concessions to Schuschnigg. See above, February 12, 1938.
394. DNB text issued at 2:00 a.m. on September 24, 1938.
395. Reuters report, September 24, 1938.
396. A month later, in a speech at Znaim, Hitler declared the following: "We would have marched in here on October 2 at 8:00 a.m., one way or another!" See below, October 26, 1938.
397. DNB report, September 25, 1938.
398. Report in *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 28, 1938. Cf. also DGFP, D, II, no. 631, pp. 957 f.
399. The letter read verbatim:

10 Downing Street, Whitehall, September 26, 1938

My Dear Reichskanzler!

In my capacity as intermediary I have transmitted to the Czechoslovakian Government the memorandum which your Excellency gave me on the occasion of our last conversation.

The Czechoslovakian Government now inform me that, while they adhere to their acceptance of the proposals for the transfer of the Sudeten German areas on the lines discussed by my Government and the French Government and explained by me to you on Thursday last, they regard as wholly unacceptable the proposal in your memorandum for the immediate evacuation of the areas and their immediate occupation by German troops, these processes to take place before the terms of cession have been negotiated or even discussed.

Your Excellency will remember that in my letter to you of Friday last I said that an attempt to occupy forthwith by German troops areas which will become part of the Reich at once in principle and very shortly afterward by formal delimitation would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force, and that, in my opinion, if German troops moved into the areas that you had proposed, I felt sure that the Czechoslovakian Government would resist and that this would mean the destruction of the basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together, namely, an orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by the use of force. I referred also to the effect likely

to be produced upon public opinion in my country, in France, and, indeed, in the world generally. The development of opinion since my return confirms me in the views I expressed to you in my letter and in our subsequent conversation.

In communicating with me about your proposals, the Government of Czechoslovakia point out that they go far beyond what was agreed in the so-called Anglo-French plan. Czechoslovakia would be deprived of every safeguard for her national existence. She would have to yield up large proportions of her carefully prepared defenses and admit the German armies deep into her country before it had been organized on the new basis or any preparations had been made for its defense. Her national and economic independence would automatically disappear with the acceptance of the German plan. The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic flight.

I learn that the German Ambassador in Paris has issued a communiqué which begins by stating that as a result of our conversations at Godesberg your Excellency and I are in complete agreement as to the imperative necessity to maintain the peace of Europe. In this spirit I address my present communication to you.

In the first place, I would remind your Excellency that as the Czechoslovakian Government adhere to their acceptance of the proposals for the transfer of the Sudeten German areas there can be no question of Germany "finding it impossible to have the clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation." I am quoting the words at the end of your Excellency's letter to me of Friday last.

On the contrary, a settlement by negotiation remains possible and, with a clear recollection of the conversations which you and I have had and with an equally clear appreciation of the consequences which must follow the abandonment of negotiation and the substitution of force, I ask your Excellency to agree that representatives of Germany shall meet representatives of the Czechoslovakian Government to discuss immediately the situation by which we are confronted with a view to settling by agreement the way in which the territory is to be handed over. I am convinced that these discussions can be completed in a very short time and, if you and the Czechoslovakian Government desire it, I am willing to arrange for the representation of the British Government at the discussions.

In our conversation, as in the official communiqué issued in Germany, you said that the only difference between us lay in the method of carrying out an agreed principle. If this is so, then surely the tragic consequences of a conflict ought not to be incurred over a difference in method. A conference such as I suggest would give confidence that the cession of territory would be carried into effect, but that it would be done in an orderly manner with suitable safeguards.

Convinced that your passionate wish to see the Sudeten German question promptly and satisfactorily settled can be fulfilled without

incurring the human misery and suffering that would inevitably follow on a conflict, I most earnestly urge you to accept my proposal.

I am, Yours faithfully,

Neville Chamberlain

DGFP, D, II, no. 619, pp. 944 f.; cf. also Schmidt, pp. 407 ff., with a report on the Hitler-Wilson meeting of September 26, 1938.

400. Sir Ivon Kirkpatrick was a member of the British Embassy in Berlin then. After the Second World War, he became British High Commissioner in Germany and later served as British Ambassador to West Germany.
401. Cf. Kirkpatrick's notes, DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. II, No. 1, 118; cf. Bullock, p. 461.
402. Once war had broken out, Hitler declared: "I now wish to be nothing other than the first soldier of the German Reich. Therefore I have put on that tunic which has always been the most holy and dear to me. I shall not take it off again until after victory is ours, or—I shall not live to see the day." See below, September 1, 1939.
403. The national emblem was affixed to the right side of all uniforms worn by members of the various branches of the Wehrmacht (Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe).
404. DNB report, September 27, 1938.
405. Later Hitler would claim to have spent 90 billions marks on armament. See below, September 1, 1939.
406. This type of rhetoric would ultimately backfire on Hitler. Chamberlain took note of Hitler's comment and, on September 30, 1938, he presented Hitler with a joint Anglo-German declaration of peaceful intent. Hitler had no recourse other than to sign the declaration.
407. Allusion to John 8, 44: "...for he [Satan] is a liar and the father of lies."
408. To emphasize this point of view, Hitler had ordered that Czechoslovakia from now on be officially written in two words, separated by a hyphen: *Tschecho-Slowakei*. (Editor's note: Hitler's spelling was not adopted in the English translation, either in the DGFP texts or subsequently in this work.)
409. Applause drowned out the remainder of this sentence.
410. It is revealing that Hitler only incidentally mentioned the Soviet Union and Bolshevism, the foe of mankind, in the context of this particular speech. He could neither fathom the Western Powers nor the Soviet Union partaking in the imminent conflict. He believed that the Soviet Union would not become involved in the hostilities because its armies would have to cross either Polish or Hungarian territory if the Soviets intended to comply with the terms of a mutual assistance pact concluded with Czechoslovakia in 1935.
411. See above, September 26, 1938.
412. Reference is made to Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States at the time.
413. William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary* (New York, 1942) p. 114. Shirer broadcast the scene from a seat in the balcony just above Hitler.
414. Written in 1813 by the German poet Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860). See above, p. 29 and Introduction, note 57.

415. DGFP, D, II, no. 635, pp. 966 ff. German text published in Berndt, *Marsch*, pp. 197 ff.
416. The statement of the British Prime Minister had the following verbatim content:
"I have read the speech of the German Chancellor and I appreciate his reference to the efforts I have made to save the peace. I cannot abandon those efforts since it seems to me incredible that the peoples of Europe, who do not want war with one another, should be plunged into a bloody struggle over a question on which agreement has already been largely obtained. It is evident that the Chancellor has no faith that the promises made will be carried out. These promises were made, not to the German Government direct, but to the British and French Government in the first instance.
"Speaking for the British Government, we regard ourselves as morally responsible for seeing that the promises are carried out fairly and fully, and we are prepared to undertake that they shall be so carried out with all reasonable promptitude, provided that the German Government will agree to the settlement of terms and conditions of transfer by discussion and not by force.
"I trust that the Chancellor will not reject this proposal, which is made in the same spirit of friendliness as that in which I was received in Germany and which, if it is accepted, will satisfy the German desire for the union of the Sudeten Germans with the Reich without shedding of blood in any part of Europe."
DGFP, D, II, no. 618, p. 943. The original text was in English, accompanied by a German translation. See also Schmidt, pp. 408 f., on the meeting Hitler-Wilson.
417. Roosevelt's first telegram of September 27, 1938, was in English in the original, DGFP, D, II, no. 632, pp. 958 ff., the German text was published in the *Aschaffenburg Zeitung*, September 28, 1938. For Hitler's reply see DGFP, D, II, no. 633, pp. 960 ff. and DNB text, September 27, 1938. Roosevelt's second telegram was accompanied by a German translation. Its English original text, DGFP, D, II, no. 653, pp. 984 f., had the following content:
Very Urgent Washington, September 27, 1938
To His Excellency Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of the German Reich, Berlin
I desire to acknowledge your Excellency's reply to my telegram of September 26. I was confident that you would coincide in the opinion I expressed regarding the unforeseeable consequences and the incalculable disaster which would result in the entire world from the outbreak of a European war.
The question before the world today, Mr. Chancellor, is not the question of errors of judgment or of injustices committed in the past; it is the question of the fate of the world today and tomorrow. The world asks of us, who at this moment are heads of nations, the supreme capacity to achieve the destinies of nations without forcing upon them as a price the mutilation and death of millions of citizens. Resort to force

in the Great War failed to bring tranquillity. Victory and defeat were alike sterile. That lesson the world should have learned. For that reason, above all others, I addressed on September 29 my appeal to your Excellency and to the President of Czechoslovakia and to the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and of France.

The two points I sought to emphasize were, first, that all matters of difference between the German Government and the Czechoslovak Government could and should be settled by pacific methods; and, second, that the threatened alternative of the use of force on a scale likely to result in a general war is as unnecessary as it is unjustifiable. It is, therefore, supremely important that negotiations should continue without interruption until a fair and constructive solution is reached. My conviction on these two points is deepened because responsible statesmen have officially stated that an agreement in principle has already been reached between the Government of the German Reich and the Government of Czechoslovakia, although the precise time, method, and detail of carrying out that agreement remain at issue. Whatever existing differences may be, and whatever their merits may be—and upon them I do not and need not undertake to pass judgment—my appeal was solely that negotiations be continued until a peaceful settlement is found, and that thereby a resort to force be avoided.

Present negotiations still stand open. They can be continued if you will give the word. Should the need for supplementing them become evident, nothing stand in the way of widening their scope into a conference of all the nations directly interested in the present controversy. Such a meeting to be held immediately—in some neutral spot in Europe—would offer the opportunity for this and correlated questions to be solved in a spirit of justice, of fair dealing, and, in all human probability, with greater permanence.

In my considered judgment, and in the light of the experience of this century, continued negotiations remain the only way by which the immediate problem can be disposed of upon any lasting basis. Should you agree to a solution in this peaceful manner, I am convinced that hundreds of millions throughout the world would recognize your action as an outstanding historic service to all humanity.

Allow me to state my unqualified conviction that history, and the souls of every man, woman, and child whose lives will be lost in the threatened war, will hold us and all of us accountable should we omit any appeal for its prevention.

The Government of the United States has no political involvement in Europe and will assume no obligations in the conduct of the present negotiations. Yet in your own right we recognize our responsibilities as a part of a world of neighbors.

The conscience and the impelling desire of the people of my country demand that the voice of their Government be raised again, and yet again, to avert and to avoid war.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

418. Cf. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 222. See also Schmidt, pp. 410 f.
419. The British fleet had been activated. France had called certain of its reserve units to the colors. Belgium drafted six age groups. Cf. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, September 28 and 29, 1938.
420. In 1939, Great Britain entered into a most timely mutual assistance pact with Poland.
421. 'Address to the British nation,' transmitted on BBC; see Fuchser, p. 156.
422. Report on Hitler's respective talks with François-Poncet and Attolico in Schmidt, pp. 410 f.
423. In the time period between September 18 and September 26, 1938, Mussolini had several speaking engagements in the cities of Trieste, Gorizia, Treviso, Padua, Belluno, Vicenza, and Verona.
424. On November 30, 1938, Ciano announced Mussolini's Eight-Point Program of September 27 before the Italian House. Ciano referred to the steps detailed in the program as "security measures." Cf. Agenzia Steffani, November 1, 1938.
425. International public opinion interpreted the fact that Hitler had set the ultimatum for 2:00 a.m. on September 28 as an indication that he would mobilize German troops only then. However, German soldiers had already previously called up for maneuvers serving as disguise for mobilization. Germany's reservists were at their battle stations long before September 28.
426. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 236.
427. DNB report, September 28, 1938.
428. Ibid. English translation in DGFP, D, II, no. 663, p. 995.
429. Prior to the National Socialist rise to power, members of all Party formations had worn either the simple brown cap of the SA or its black variant sported by the SS men. Right from the start, Hitler had only disdain for this type of cap, although it was both economical and suitable. Obviously, it reminded him too much of the attire worn by the Austrian military and post office officials, and the French flics. He himself never wore such a cap.
Once the financial situation of the Party had greatly improved in 1932-33, Hitler introduced the peaked cap he greatly preferred to his favorite organizations within the Party, such as the Political Leaders and the SS. Hitler was greatly enamoured of the more military appearing peaked cap and wore one himself. He chose one of a black color and with white edgings for the SS, a cap the famous officers of the Prussian Death's-Head Hussars had worn prior to 1914.
Those Party divisions that had incurred Hitler's displeasure did not receive a like distinction. The SA, upon which Hitler looked with great contempt, and the Labor Service were appropriated a far more modest cap made of simple cloth, strongly reminiscent of that worn by members of the Italian Bersaglieri troops. In Germany's satellite states, countries such as Italy, Slovakia, and Croatia, one of the first visible signs of the local government's subservience to the Third Reich were Hitler's peaked caps bestowed upon members of the armed services.

430. Cf. speech given by Ciano before the Italian House on November 30, 1938, printed in Agenzia Steffani, December 1, 1938.
431. The Agreement and the communiqué were published in German in DNB report, September 30, 1938 and in the Reichsgesetzblatt (RGBl. 1938, II, pp. 835 ff.). The latter rendition is incomplete, because the additional declaration on the Polish and Hungarian minorities is missing.—The above made quotation of the Agreement is according to the English original text (DGFP, D, II, no. 675, pp. 1014 ff.). Both it and the German version were signed by the four statesmen. The annex, the two additional declarations, and the supplementary declaration were also signed in the same order as the Agreement.
432. See above, March 1, 1935.
433. Munich's citizenry was not afraid to beat up a National Socialist Minister in public, as it did in the case of Hermann Esser—albeit not for political reasons. In no other German city was the man in the street as reluctant to extend the Hitler salute as in Munich. Anyone who stepped into a shop in Munich during the Second World War and bellowed his "*Heil Hitler!*" risked either not being served well or not being served at all.
434. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 417 f.
435. See above, note 7.
436. See above, speech of February 24, 1935.
437. See above, speech of March 28, 1936.
438. Cf. Schmidt, p. 417.
439. See above, September 26, 1938.
440. Cf. Schmidt, p. 417: "I did not share the impression Chamberlain relates in his private correspondence recently published. Chamberlain maintains that Hitler enthusiastically greeted the declaration. To the contrary, it appeared to me as though Hitler was quite hesitant at first. Only after a careful review of the terminology, Hitler finally acquiesced and signed the declaration. I had the impression then that he did so merely as a favor to Chamberlain and he himself had little faith in the effectiveness of such a measure."
441. DGFP, D, II, no. 676, pp. 1017 f. The original signed text was in English; German text in DNB report, September 30, 1938.
442. Pierre-Étienne Flandin, born 1889 in Paris, died 1958 in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat; French Premier from 1934 to 1935. He had called for a complete reorientation of French policy in September of 1938 by having huge posters placed all over France.
443. Published in the *Neue Basler Zeitung*, No. 238, October 12, 1938.
444. Note sent to the author by Waldemar Vogt, Gau Propagandaleiter in Berlin, on October 10, 1938.
445. DNB text, September 30, 1938.
446. Ibid. The *Erntedankfest* had been scheduled for October 2 (Sunday after Michaelmas).
447. Verbatim account in VB, No. 275, October 2, 1938.
448. RGBl. 1938, 1, pp. 1331 f.
449. Matter resolved in the cases of the Saar and Austria by appointing

- Bürckel, a citizen of the Old Reich, to Reichskommissar. See above, March 1, 1935, and April 23, 1938.
450. DNB text, October 3, 1938.
 451. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, October 5, 1938.
 452. DNB text, October 6, 1938.
 453. See above, September 12, 1938.
 454. See above, May 28, 1938, and speech of September 12, 1938.
 455. See below, October 21, 1938.
 456. Alfred Duff Cooper, born 1890, died 1954; repeatedly served as British Minister of War and Information; Lord Norwich subsequent to 1952.
 457. Parody of a line in Schiller: "*Und die Treue, sie ist doch kein leerer Wahn*" (Truth is no dream!—Its power is strong) in the ballad *Die Bürgschaft*. (*The Hostage*. English quotation taken from the Leipzig 1844 edition, trans. Edward Bulwer-Lytton.)
 458. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, October 7, 1938.
 459. Ibid.
 460. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, October 8, 1938.
 461. Hitler used this term in reference to British and French statesmen. See below, August 22, 1939.
 462. Published in VB, No. 283, October 10, 1938.
 463. DNB text, October 10, 1938.
 464. On the meeting of the International Commission cf. DGFP, D, IV, no. 56, pp. 63 ff.
 465. Report in VB, No. 287, October 14, 1938.
 466. DNB text, October 14, 1938.
 467. Monsignor Dr. Josef Tiso, born 1887 in Velká Bytča; Slovakian Premier from October 6, 1938; State President from 1939; hanged in 1947.
 468. DNB text, October 14, 1938.
 469. Report in VB, No. 290, October 17, 1938.
 470. Report in VB, No. 292, October 19, 1938.
 471. Further details on Hitler's *Teehaus* pavilion in Geiss, pp. 100 ff.
 472. For François-Poncet's report on the meeting see *Documents Diplomatiques, 1938–39* (Paris, 1939), No. 18. (Hereafter referred to as the *French Yellow Book*.)
 473. See below, December 6, 1938.
 474. DNB text, October 18, 1938.
 475. RGBl. 1938, I, p. 1524. The medal in question was worn on a black-red-black band and resembled the "medal in commemoration of March 13, 1938." See above, April 30, 1938.
 476. Published in VB, Berlin Edition, October 21, 1938.
 477. DNB text, October 20, 1938.
 478. A law on the reunion of the Sudeten German territories with the German Reich was issued from Berchtesgaden on October 21, 1938. Cf. RGBl. 1938, I, p. 1641.
 479. DGFP, D, IV, no. 81, pp. 99 f. German text printed in IMT, 136-C. Excerpts printed in Hofer, p. 219.
 480. Report in VB, No. 299, October 26, 1938.

481. Reports in VB, *ibid*.
482. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, October 28, 1938.
483. Prussia and Austria signed the armistice at the castle of Nikolsburg on July 21, 1866, where the preliminary peace treaty was signed on July 26, 1866, as well. The final Peace Treaty of Prague, dated August 23, 1866, adopted the provisions set forth in the Peace of Nikolsburg.
484. Armistice between Germany and the Allies of November 11, 1918. Subsequent to the fall of France, Hitler insisted that the French Government under Pétain surrender and sign an armistice with the German Reich at precisely the same location.
485. These peace treaties heralded the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. During the winter months of late 1939 and early 1940, rumors circulated to the effect that Hitler was confident that, in the end, he would dictate the terms of peace to the Western Powers at Münster and Osnabrück.
486. Report in VB, No. 303, October 30, 1938.
487. Published in VB, No. 306, November 2, 1938. The Gau of Sudetenland, created by the NSDAP, and the Reichsgau of the same name consisted of all territories in eastern and northern Bohemia. Reichenberg served as its capital. The southern part of Bohemia was placed under Bavarian administration, while the southern section of Moravia fell to Austria.
488. RGBL 1938, I, p. 1567.
489. Hitler's absence was conspicuous also at the reading of the second "Viennese sentence" on August 30, 1940. The verdict accorded Hungary the title to certain lands located in Transylvania, territory which had been part of Romania previously. On the other hand, however, Hitler made a point of personally attending the festivities at the Belvedere Palace on the occasion of the signing of the Three-Power Pact of 1940–41, in which Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania joined forces. See below, November 20, 1940, March 1 and 25, 1941.
490. DNB report, November 3, 1938.
491. Content of the speech in VB, No. 311, November 7, 1938.
492. Because the Czech territory in its entirety had been denied Germany, Hitler considered German law to have suffered abuse at the hands of the Munich Conference. The claims accorded Germany were restricted to the Sudetenland.
493. Parody of Werner Richard Heymann's (1896–1961) popular song *Das gibt's nur einmal, das kommt nichtwieder*, performed by Lilian Harvey for *Der Kongress tanzt Ufa*, (1931), one of the first sound movies.
494. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1938. Several recordings of this speech have been preserved and the verbatim account is on file at the archives of the *Quick* magazine in Munich.
495. Allusion to the mass panic that just had swept the United States after Orson Welles' radio broadcast on Halloween: according to the highly realistic airing, adapted from the novel *War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells, a Martian spaceship had landed in New Jersey.
496. Allusion to Bismarck's famous exclamation during a speech delivered on May 14, 1872: "We are not going to Canossa!" in the year 1077, King

- Henry IV (German Emperor from 1084) had done penance by going on a pilgrimage to Canossa where he threw himself at the feet of Pope Gregory VII.
497. Allusion to doubts Bismarck voiced regarding the future of the German Reich in his memoirs *Gedanken und Erinnerungen* (new ed., Stuttgart and Berlin, 1913), Vol. II.
 498. Published in VB, No. 314, November 10, 1938.
 499. Report in VB, *ibid.*
 500. The SS Verfügungstruppe wore belt buckles with the following engraving: *Unsere Ehre heisst Treue* ("Our honor means loyalty").
 501. See above, note 429.
 502. Hitler placed particular emphasis on the destruction of synagogues. As early as the September 1938 Party Congress, he had reproached Gauleiter Julius Streicher for allowing several synagogues in Nuremberg to remain unharmed. Remarks by Gauleiter Hellmuth in Würzburg on September 10, 1938. Taken from the author's notes.
 503. The public coined this term in view of the multitudes of broken glass strewn about Germany's streets. Then Reich Minister of Economics, Funk supposedly used the term *Glaswoche* (week of glass) in reference to these events as early as November 1938. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XIII, p. 165.
 504. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg referred to the SA as a criminal organization which formed part of the National Socialist Party. Nevertheless, its members were cleared of the accusations brought against them. Among those on trial, the former SA Obergruppenführer Max Juetter, chief of administration and deputy to the SA Chief of Staff, cut the best figure. He asserted the following at the end of his speech in defense of his actions: "We neither desired nor prepared for war. We men of the SA did not commit any crimes against humanity. In the event that one of us has done wrong, he shall be duly punished—this is our will as well. Hence we plea neither for mercy nor for pity in view of our present personal misfortune. We plea for justice and for nothing other; our consciences are clear. We conducted ourselves as patriots. If you wish to brand patriots as criminals—then, indeed, we are criminals!" IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XXI, p. 260.
 505. See above, September 26, 1938.
 506. Together with a preface by Wilhelm Treue, the text is printed in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 6 (1958), pp. 175 ff.
 507. Hitler is alluding to two speeches he delivered; one on November 6, 1938 in Weimar and the other on November 8, 1938 in Munich. Actually, Hitler had been greatly disappointed by the lack of public enthusiasm in response to the Sudeten crises.
 508. The extent to which Hitler was mistaken on this subject was proven in 1939 when the Western Powers did not break down in face of German propaganda but, in fact, declared war on Germany.
 509. The audience's laughter drowned out the beginning of the next sentence.

510. Word indistinct.
511. A German word *Rüsselschwein* does not exist. Hitler's idiom meant a wild boar rooting for truffles in the earth with his snout (*Rüssel*).
512. However, envisioning himself in his future role as warlord, Hitler was not willing to suffer even one defeat. He desired victory and victory alone. Based on the presumption of ever more victories, it was clear that the only new experience Hitler could possibly gain in wartime was defeat. After all, even the most fervent belief in the *Endsieg* cannot "move mountains."
513. In the German original, this sentence was grammatically incorrect.
514. See above, February 4, 1936.
515. DNB text, November 11, 1938.
516. Report in VB, No. 322, November 18, 1938.
517. See above, speech of February 12, 1936.
518. Published in VB, No. 327, November 23, 1938.
519. Ibid.
520. Reference is made to a declaration on the inviolability of Belgian neutrality. As with so many other similar declarations, Hitler would not later abide by its terms. See below, May 10, 1940.
521. DNB report, November 21, 1938.
522. Published in VB, No. 327, November 23, 1938.
523. Report in VB, *ibid*.
524. DNB text, November 24, 1938. It was rather conspicuous that on November 29, 1938—only five days after King Carol's call on Hitler—Codreanu, the imprisoned head of the Iron Guard (a Romanian organization) was killed in an alleged "escape attempt" outside of Bucharest. Twelve other members of the Iron Guard were shot as well.
525. DNB report, November 24, 1938.
526. IMT C-137.
527. See 1939, "Major Events in Summary."
528. Published in VB, No. 338, December 4, 1938. This publication also contains a report on the address delivered at the reception in City Hall.
529. See below, telegram of March 30, 1936, and radio broadcast of the April 10, 1938 address.
530. DNB report, December 5, 1938.
531. Ibid. "Sudeten Silesia" is a region located in eastern Sudetenland, bordering upon Silesia.
532. German text in DNB report, December 6, 1938; French text in the *French Yellow Book*, No. 28; English quotation according to DGFP, D, IV, no. 369, p. 470.
533. The Fascists had strong convictions that the Mediterranean Sea (*mare nostro*) belonged to Italy. In their opinion, the entire coastline should be incorporated in the Italian Empire in one form or another.
534. The ship had a tonnage of 19,000. The Germania Shipyards in Kiel had recently been commissioned to construct a second aircraft carrier.
535. DNB report, December 10, 1938.
536. Published in VB, No. 345, December 11, 1938.

- 537. This was a thinly disguised attack on opposition Protestant circles which called themselves “Bekenntniskirche” (Confessional Church).
- 538. DNB report, December 14, 1938.
- 539. Report in VB, No. 352, December 17, 1938.
- 540. Speaking before an assembly of publishers and journalists, Hitler attributed this victory, secured without bloodshed, to the German press. See above, November 10, 1938.
- 541. Published in VB, No. 352, December 18, 1938.
- 542. Report in VB, *ibid.*
- 543. Ridder von Rappard, the previous envoy, had been killed in a car accident.
- 544. IMT, C-138. See also Bullock, p. 478.
- 545. Report in VB, Nos. 358 to 360, December 24 to 26, 1938.
- 546. *Ibid.*
- 547. Report in VB, No. 365, December 31, 1938.
- 548. Dr. Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, born 1878 in Budapest, died 1962 in Munich; well known at the time for his metaphysical book *Die Bauhütte*.
- 549. See above, speech of December 2, 1938: “National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!”
- 550. See above, speech of March 14, 1936: “I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker.”
- 551. See below, speech of November 8, 1940.

Appendix

Notes

1. With these words, Hitler praised the introduction of the two-year compulsory conscription service in late 1936. See above, September 9, 1936.
2. See above, p. 552, note 16.
3. In a letter to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Reich Minister of Defense, General von Blomberg, proclaimed the following on June 29, 1934: "In a close alliance with the entire Volk, the Wehrmacht stands by ... the Führer of the Reich, Adolf Hitler, who once came from our ranks and will always remain one of us." See above, p. 467.
4. See below, September 24, 1941.
5. See above, February 20, 1938.
6. General Groener made the following statement during the 1930 autumn maneuvers: "A Wehrmacht, standing aloof from party politics, will always play a central role in the affairs of the state." Cf. Otto-Ernst Schüttekopf, *Heer und Republik. Quellen zur Politik der Reichswehrführung 1918–1933* (Hanover and Frankfurt am Main, 1955), p. 306. See also Friedrich von Rabenau, *Seeckt. Aus seinem Leben 1918–1936* (Leipzig, 1940); Werner Conze, "Die Weimarer Republik," in *Deutsche Geschichte im Überblick* (Stuttgart, 1962); and Francis Ludwig Carsten, *Reichswehr und Politik in der Weimarer Republik 1918–1933* (Cologne, 1964).
7. See above, 1937, note 1.
8. See below, September 17, 1939.
9. Hitler's assessment of the situation was correct. Once he held the reigns of government and claimed leadership legally, no general dared defy him. Even the generals of the July 20, 1944 resistance movement proceeded against him solely on the notion that he was dead and hence their actions took place within the boundaries of legality.
10. In August of 1932, Hitler made the following reply to an American journalist's inquiry whether he intended to march upon Berlin: "Why should I march on Berlin? I'm already there! The question is not who will march on Berlin, but rather who will march out of Berlin. The SA will not take part in an illegal march." See above, p. 158.
11. See above, p. 135.
12. See below, January 27, 1940.
13. See below, April 29, 1945.
14. See above, p. 195.
15. See above, p. 239.
16. See above, 1937, note 62.
17. See above, p. 376.
18. In the process of integrating the Land Police forces into the Wehrmacht in 1935, the steadily multiplying divisions of the SS Verfügungstruppe became a sort of a private army at Hitler's disposal.

19. See above, p. 467.
20. See above, p. 478.
21. See above, October 22, 1935.
22. See above, September 14, 1936.
23. While the Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 empowered Hitler to act as Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, the Reich Minister of War in his capacity as Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht also exercised considerable power. Henceforth, this differentiation no longer applied—Hitler securely established himself as sole Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.
24. On December 19, 1941—on the occasion of von Brauchitsch's forced resignation—Hitler personally took over the Supreme Command of the Army, too.
25. See above, September 30, 1938.

**The Complete Hitler
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Max Domarus

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THE CHRONICLE OF A DICTATORSHIP

VOLUME THREE
The Years 1939 to 1940



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Abbreviations

BA	= Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
AFR	= American Foreign Relations (Documents 1939-1945)
DAF	= Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front)
DBrFP	= Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1918-1939
DGFP	= Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945
DLV	= Deutscher Luftsportverband (German Air Sports Association)
DNB	= Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (German News Bureau)
G.Kdos.	= Geheime Kommandosache (Top Secret, Military)
Gestapo	= Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
HJ	= Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
HKL	= Hauptkampflinie (Main Front Line)
HVBL	= Heeresverordnungsblatt (Army Decree Gazette)
IMT	= International Military Tribunal, 1945-1949
KdF	= Kraft durch Freude ("Strength through joy")
NS	= Nationalsozialistisch (National Socialist)
NSBO	= Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation (National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation)
NSDFB	= Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpferbund, Stahlhelm (National Socialist German Front-Line Soldiers' Association)
NSFK	= Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Air Corps)
NSK	= Nationalsozialistische Parteikorrespondenz (National Socialist Party News Agency)
NSKK	= Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (National Socialist Motorized Corps)
NSV	= Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare Organization)
OKH	= Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKL	= Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (High Command of the Luftwaffe)
OKM	= Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine (High Command of the War Navy)
OKW	= Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
Pg	= Parteigenosse (Party comrade)
RGBI	= Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette)
RM	= Reichsmark
RSHA	= Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Central Security Office)
SA	= Sturmabteilung (Nazi storm troops; brown shirts)
SD	= Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, the SS intelligence agency)
SS	= Schutzstaffel (Nazi elite guard; black shirts)
TN	= Technische Nothilfe (Technical Emergency Relief Organisation)
VB	= <i>Völkischer Beobachter</i> (Nationalist Observer)
WHW	= Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Organisation)
WTB	= Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro (Wolff's Telegraph Bureau)

PROLOGUE

While Hitler had scored victory upon victory in his years of triumph from 1932 to 1938, he met with defeat upon defeat in the years 1939 to 1945. These later years delineated his slow though steady decline. In Hitler's mind, the earlier years had merely cast a mold for what lay at the heart of his ambitions: the conquest of new Lebensraum. Central to this was the idea of expanding the Reich's frontiers to the Ural Mountains, thus encompassing all of Eastern Europe. A new empire was to be born, stretching across the vast expanses of the European continent; an empire of immense "geopolitical dimensions." It was to determine not only the destiny of Europe, but that of the entire world.

At the beginning of 1939, Hitler was convinced that:¹ "National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!" In the midst of the war raging around him, he most acutely expressed one year later the deterministic view of foreign affairs he had embraced:² "I am firmly convinced that this [external] battle will not end a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally." Whether faced with elderly German Nationalists then or senile Englishmen now, with uncouth German Communists then or primitive Russians now—it was his destiny to rule. He had used bluffs against conservatives and brute force against ideologists at home. These methods which once helped him prevail were to secure victory abroad as well.

He could not take seriously the reluctance of the British to permit him a free hand in Eastern Europe. To him this seemed a stance inherent in their increasing national decrepitude, idiosyncratic to the English cast of mind. Assuredly, they would not stand in his way once he embarked on a policy of open confrontation and conquest in 1939. No doubt this would be met by rhetoric and not by decisive action.

The fallacy of this notion was to become apparent all too soon. In reality, the Western Powers had long resolved to respond to any further German aggression against a third state with a declaration of war. This resolution they had expressed clearly enough during the 1938 Sudeten

German crisis. The English were to swallow the willful annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, solely because no bloodshed was involved. Reluctantly, London refrained from any recrimination despite the blatant breach of contract this move represented in relation to the Munich Agreement signed by Hitler the year before.

Nevertheless, earnest voices of discontent made themselves heard abroad throughout the months leading up to August 1939. Chamberlain outspokenly criticized his adversary in a speech at Birmingham on March 17, 1939:³

I pointed out that any demand to dominate the world by force was one which the democracies must resist . . .

And indeed, with the lessons of history for all to read, it seems incredible that we should see such a challenge. I feel bound to repeat that, while I am not prepared to engage this country by new unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot be foreseen, yet no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that, because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power resisting such a challenge if it ever were made.

In a correspondence addressed to Hitler, the British Prime Minister commented on August 22, 1939:⁴

It has been alleged that, if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914, the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding.

If the case should arise, they are resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at their command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.

His view clouded by the conceptions formulated in 1919, Hitler paid little heed to such statements. The only reaction these elicited from him was indignation at the British reluctance to let him pursue his expansionist designs in Eastern Europe. To teach the British a lesson well-deserved for their patronizing behavior, Hitler resolved to "brew them one devilish potion,"⁵ to enter into a pact with the devil himself, i.e. with Bolshevism. This would give the British a healthy fright and assuredly, he reasoned, they would be far more willing to bow to his arbitrary reign in the East as a consequence, their knees trembling at the prospect of a National Socialist and Communist alliance. Once again, Hitler fell prey to his misconceptions since, in

striking contrast to the German Nationalists, the English proved more than a match for him.

History ran its course and on September 1, 1939, open hostilities broke out as the German cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein* fired on the bastion at the fore of the Danzig harbor. On September 3, the British Ambassador presented the declaration of war to Hitler's Third Reich. Germany's conduct of foreign affairs had failed it. Based on the notion that a policy of accommodation toward England and Italy in the West was compatible with a policy of aggression to the East, Hitler's foreign policy had borne within it the seeds of its own destruction. His speculation that England would remain neutral in any ensuing conflict did not come true any more than similarly confident pronouncements that Bethmann-Hollweg had made in his capacity as Reich Chancellor in August 1914.⁶ Confronted by a reality that in no way corresponded to the conceptions cherished for so many years, Hitler succumbed momentarily to utter dejection when presented with the shattering news of the British declaration of war. For minutes he stared at the floor, then said: "What now?"⁷

There was ample reason for his dejection. Up to the very last minute, he had repeated to his closest collaborators—generals, ministers, and leaders of the Party—that England would assuredly never resort to arms. Now the unthinkable had come true. For the Reich and its people, Hitler's mistake proved a fatal one. Had he indeed been a man of integrity, he would have faced either of two alternatives: to shoot himself on the spot or, at the very least, to leave the political stage. In principle, he himself had demanded no less of any leading politician guilty of a like grave error:⁸

A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung as such because he has recognized it to be false only then acts decently if, on realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final consequence. In such a case, he must, at the very least, forego the public exercise of any further political activities. Because he was once mistaken in his basic beliefs, it is possible that this could happen a second time.

The Führer of the Third Reich chose the easy way out, so to speak, by ignoring the import of the British declaration of war and proceeding with his plans as though nothing had happened. He still clung to the highly unrealistic notion that he could come to terms with England eventually, and that a miracle brought about by Providence would turn his foes into friends. To whoever cared to lend an ear, he insisted

throughout the war that he could still master the formidable task of bringing about an alliance with the “Germanic” Anglo-Saxons. The concern for not needlessly angering this potential future ally hindered him in the pursuit of a more determined military stance against that country. This lack of stamina was particularly apparent in the 1940 case of Dunkirk. In spite of having the means necessary at his disposal to prevent the escape of an entire British expeditionary corps, he allowed the Englishmen to get away. He displayed similar reluctance and hesitancy in the planning of assaults on Malta, Gibraltar, and Egypt, and especially in Operation “Sea Lion,” the planned landing of German troops along the coast of England. Every time the Reich successfully overran yet another small state, he graciously extended his hand in friendship to England and was incredulous each time he suffered another rebuff.

When all else had failed, Hitler turned against the Soviet Union in one last, desperate attempt to curry England’s favor. The English had contributed their part to reinforce him in this mistaken belief—it was exactly the same strategy that had already proved to be effective for the Crown in the case of Napoleon. Hitler invaded Russia in blatant disregard of the terms of the Non-Aggression Pact entered into by both countries. Persuaded that England would thus accept Germany as the savior of Europe from the Bolshevik plight, Hitler counted on Great Britain terminating its involvement in the struggle against the Third Reich. Naturally, this was not the only consideration that swayed Hitler to move against Russia. This step was in keeping with the idea of securing new Lebensraum in the East. A campaign against the primitive Bolsheviks could successfully be carried out, he was convinced, in a matter of weeks or a few months at the most.

There is an old German saying that likens Russia to a featherbed: easy to get into, but hard to get out of. Despite every kind of brutality, Hitler failed to overcome the Russians. In fact, as the English had correctly calculated, the bogging down of Germany’s forces along a perilous eastern front hastened the end of the war, in a manner quite different from the one Hitler had anticipated.

A few months later, contractual obligations to the Japanese cornered Hitler into declaring war on the United States, too. America’s entry into the war as Britain’s most important ally had been merely a question of time. Whoever gets drawn into a war with England ultimately also faces all English-speaking peoples in the world because of a traditional solidarity, their political connections, and the ties

between the Anglo-Saxon upper classes. Neither Imperial Germany nor National Socialist Germany had commanded the forces to face off such an alliance.

Whether Hitler was ever aware of the fatality of his undertaking or realized that his efforts were doomed from the outset—the harsh reality was that from September 3, 1939 on he was destined to suffer defeat upon defeat. The apparent victories the Third Reich secured in the subsequent years were Pyrrhic victories; they devoured its forces, consumed its military might, and curtailed its ability to act. While Berlin hailed the fall of France in 1940 as an astounding military accomplishment, it was in truth little more than a peripheral event. At the time, France was no more than half the Reich in size and had isolated itself politically. Conquests of smaller countries such as Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and the campaigns against Yugoslavia and Greece also failed to bring about any decisive changes as the Third Reich's chances for an ultimate victory faded.

As Hitler's prophecies about the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union and the certainty of reconciliation between Germany and Great Britain failed to materialize, he turned against the Jews as a last resort. The threat of massacring the Jewish people held hostage within the sphere of influence of the Third Reich would, so Hitler staunchly maintained, serve to coerce England to consider a settlement with Germany and to put forth a peace proposal. Should London still be reluctant to contemplate taking such steps, the agents of "world Jewry" would undoubtedly sway both London and Washington to submit to Germany's demands to save their brethren now at Hitler's mercy. Retaining his belief that this Jewish world government in fact existed, he held firm that this was the Third Reich's trump card. Unresolved in his eyes remained the mystery of why this strategy of intimidation and blackmail failed to produce the desired results. London did not at all respond as he had anticipated. Hitler had maneuvered himself into such a position that he could only make his threats true and carry out the barbarous massacre of millions of innocent Jews.

Once the British had resolved to wage war against him, they were not willing to halt their efforts before having accomplished what they considered their mission: namely, to end Hitler's reign of terror. Peace was yet possible between September 1, 1939 and 11:00 p.m. on the night of September 3, 1939. As the clock struck eleven, it heralded the twelfth hour of the Third Reich. From this point on, only Germany's

unconditional surrender and the capitulation of the National Socialist regime were acceptable to Great Britain. Neither Hitler's bloodthirsty threats, the Reich's initial successes abroad, his grotesque peace proposals, nor the insane genocide he bore ultimate responsibility for, sufficed to deter the British any longer. England's determined stance to see the matter through to its logical conclusion was made unmistakably clear in a radio broadcast on October 1, 1939, in which Winston S. Churchill, then serving as First Lord of the Admiralty and a member of Chamberlain's Cabinet, reiterated his assessment of the situation. To him and to the British Government, the unconditional surrender of the Third Reich and the removal of its notorious Führer formed the exclusive basis for conciliatory talks with Germany. Churchill's statement was short and devoid of any ambiguity:⁹

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough.

Hitler's fate was sealed and the war was lost for Germany on one and the same day: September 3, 1939. Events would run their natural course, and while the Third Reich retained the necessary capabilities to draw out the conflict, its government proved unable to win it. Neither the military occupation of fragile and relatively small states, nor the invasion of Russia and the mass murder of real or alleged enemies, conspirators, and Jewish "hostages" could change the facts of war.

Despite ample opportunities to compound the existing problems and thereby to prolong the conflict, Hitler mysteriously failed to take full advantage of these. Whether or not he subconsciously realized that this war was lost, he instructed the Wehrmacht not to prey upon Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, and Turkey, although it could easily have carried through a military occupation of these territories. Moreover, his irresolution on the topic of England apparently prevented him from ordering a landing on the British Isles, although, in the early stages of the war at least, this was entirely feasible.

On the other hand, even had he embarked on such ventures, this would have prolonged the conflict but not influenced its predetermined outcome. Had he indeed succeeded in conquering England, as the only consequence the Allied forces' mission to liberate France and Italy would have had to be extended to include the British Isles.

There is some truth to the argument that Hitler was at complete liberty to act as he chose until September 1, 1939. From the time that

he gave the signal for the invasion of Poland, he was no longer the master of his own destiny. The “sleepwalker” who was guided by Providence, as he once referred to himself,¹⁰ had lost his balance and, on recovering his senses, was confronted by harsh realities. His “actions” in the subsequent months and years are more properly described as “reactions” to the forces in place and the various constellations of power. He had conceived of foreign peoples and lands in a manner that did not correspond to reality. All of a sudden, he was faced with developments and events he had not foreseen and hence was incapable of dealing with properly. To keep his ship from sinking, he was forced to improvise to retain some semblance of coherence in his undertakings. The room left for action on his part was getting smaller all the time. Abroad, the foes of Germany whom he had summoned up with his arrogance and his ignorance of the true political power structures soon caused his ship to go under as a flood of events swallowed the man and his Third Reich.

Not surprisingly, from March 1939 on, Hitler’s speeches reflected an inner unrest. The forced nature of his arguments revealed an increasing desperation that arose from his flawed attempts to improvise in order to save himself and the situation. His bombastic announcements, unreasoned threats, and uncontrolled fits of rage mirrored the insecurity beneath the overly confident surface. He had ample cause to fear a future that looked more sinister by the day.

As early as 1939, rallies and electoral campaigns strikingly lacked the bombastic and colorful, though megalomaniac settings of similar occasions during Hitler’s years of triumph from 1932 to 1938. The next year, there were no more Party congresses and thanksgiving celebrations. Only one subdued Mayday celebration briefly added color to drab daily life in National Socialist Germany.

At this time, too, Hitler began increasingly to divorce himself from his old comrades who had shown such great unyielding loyalty in the course of so many years. Early in the war, he still mustered forces to speak before them on such dates as the November 8 commemoration of the 1923 Putsch, and the anniversary of the foundation of the Party celebrated on February 24. As the situation deteriorated further, even such relatively uncompromising speaking engagements fell victim to unexplained cancellations. Apparently there were no more appropriate occasions either for Hitler’s cherished “secret speeches” before gullible construction workers and factory hands employed by the armament industry. Instead of addressing the ordinary Reich citizen, Hitler spoke

exclusively before generals assembled at the various Führer Headquarters. This captive audience soon became tired of his lengthy tirades, and several officers actually fell asleep while listening to his narratives lasting hours.¹¹

Later Hitler occasionally contributed to discussions at military briefings, but otherwise he fell uncharacteristically silent. He regained his composure only when speaking before officer candidates annually assembled at the Berlin Sportpalast. There the Führer and Supreme Commander unfailingly crowned the initiation rites for the military's next generation with speeches during which he appeared to become his old, verbose self once more. This occasion was the only one reminiscent of the earlier great rallies he so cherished. Hitler increasingly shied away from direct contacts with his "beloved Volk." Those addresses which were held took place before a carefully selected audience on occasions such as the annual drive for the Winterhilfswerk and the commemoration of the National Socialists' rise to power.

On those rare occasions when Hitler spoke before the Reichstag, the subject was invariably linked to foreign policy. Frequently, Reichstag addresses were aimed more at London than at the deputies in the auditorium. Since Chamberlain and Churchill concerned themselves with Hitler in many of their public statements as well, these events tended to result in a fierce exchange of verbal abuse.

Judged solely by appearances, Hitler's and Churchill's speeches bore a striking resemblance. Both statesmen commanded an impressive, grandiose, and voluminous vocabulary, both loved prophesies and allegories. Neither spared his adversary or his respective audience vulgar expressions or demeaning commentary. The crucial difference between the two speakers lay in the fact that Churchill had the resources at his command to realize his announcements at a later time, whereas Hitler's threats against the Allies and his megalomaniac delusions tended to be without any substance or material backing in reality. To the contrary, he was confronted by a harsh reality which deprived him of the means to carry through on threats borne from frustration and desperation.

A German saying holds that he who shouts is the one in the wrong in the debate. Thus, before domestic audiences, Hitler's tirades against Churchill unwittingly backfired on him and left behind a most unfavorable impression. The German public was right in interpreting his railings as a bad omen. As the daily life of the Reich's citizenry deteriorated, the shortages which arose were accompanied by a

proportional increase in the curses and insults Hitler hurled at Churchill. Among the more graphic titles Hitler accorded his English counterpart were the following: “general criminal” (*Generalverbrecher*) and “general liar of world history” (*Generallügner der Weltgeschichte*),¹² “insane idiot” (*wahnsinniger Narr*),¹³ “insane drunkard” (*wahnsinniger Säufer*), and “whiskey-happy gentleman” (*whiskyseliger Herr*).¹⁴ No more respectfully, the Führer alleged the future Prime Minister to be a “garrulous drunkard” (*Schwätzer und Trunkenbold*), a “damned liar” (*verlogenes Subjekt*), and a “first-rank lazy fellow” (*Faulpelz ersten Ranges*).¹⁵ On another occasion, Hitler referred to Churchill as “one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals in world history” (*eine der erbärmlichsten Herostratennaturen der Weltgeschichte*).¹⁶ Once the United States entered the war, Hitler titled Roosevelt “Churchill’s accomplice in the White House,” and called him a “poor fool” (*armseliger Irrer*)¹⁷ and an “old gangster” (*alter Gangster*).¹⁸

Hitler lamented his lot to be faced with one too many “military silly asses” (*militärische Kindsköpfe*)¹⁹ and not by any more “formidable adversary.”²⁰ It was his plight to be confronted by “democratic nobodies . . . who cannot look back on even one single great achievement in their lives,”²¹ by “ludicrous zeroes” (*lächerliche Nullen*) and “nature’s political run of the mill” (*politische Fabrikware der Natur*).²²

This terminology was in fact not of any recent vintage; the insults and accusations correspond to those Hitler employed in 1932 in campaigning against his domestic adversaries.²³ Times had changed and so had the adversaries he faced. He had met his master abroad. There he was confronted by an enemy vastly superior to him who was not willing to offer him the other cheek.

As victories became increasingly rare, so did Hitler’s public appearances and official statements. Already in earlier years, he had carefully avoided making such appearances at times of internal difficulties or when a situation had arisen which he cared not to expand upon. He was weary of meeting his Volk eye to eye and of accounting for his deeds. This approach was evident in his behavior throughout the war. If there were actual or alleged victories to report on, he spoke eloquently at great length and dedicated much time and effort to promote awareness of the historic import of these events and of the greatness of his own person. When developments were less favorable to his cause, he sent Göring and Goebbels to the fore and gave them the thankless task of rationalizing defeats and shortages in

the face of the undeniable facts a disgruntled audience was only too well aware of. One textbook example of this strategy of denial was the Stalingrad disaster.

The numerous interviews Hitler had granted foreign journalists in previous years, the heaps of correspondence and telegrams exchanged with other politicians, the summit-style meetings with foreign heads of state—events that had enthralled him in the years of his success and had become an addiction—all these became increasingly rare. It was only during the first two years of the war that foreign statesmen and journalists would still come to call on Hitler.

For instance, Sumner Wells toured Germany in 1940 to gather information independently and to assess the import of the situation in the Third Reich for the United States. Conferences with other foreign statesmen like Franco, Pétain, and Molotov later that year already bore the stamp of futile attempts at achieving some form of consensus among the various governments concerned. A meeting of a similar nature with Matsuoka the following year also failed to produce the effects intended. All that was left to Hitler in public support was his old foot-soldier Mussolini. As the war dragged on, Hitler eagerly welcomed statesmen from countries of lesser importance, many of which had been allied with Germany in the First World War. In *Mein Kampf*, he had derisively referred to these states as “junk destined for destruction.”²⁴ It was in desperation that he clung to the delusion of still commanding a position of respect internationally, and proudly he would display numerous insignificant telegrams received from abroad as though these bore a greater significance than the customary diplomatic etiquette to which they owed their existence. Indeed, he pretended that they represented a veritable approval of his politics. Until his dying day, Hitler sent wired greetings to “friends,” usually either to diplomatic missions or to states that maintained strict neutrality in the conflict. He firmly believed, and sought to convince the German public of as much, that routine responses to these reflected a favorable assessment of his person abroad.

In fact, those foreign statesmen who continued to curry Hitler’s favor tended to be of dubious character and origin. This was true in particular of Subhas Chandra Bose of India,²⁵ and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem,²⁶ to name only two. Now that he could no longer maintain the pretense of standing aloof from the exigencies of low politics, he was indeed grateful for the visits of those whom he had assessed as “garrulous, pompous asses with nothing to them” (*schwatzhafte*

Wichtigtuert, bar jeden Hintergrundes) in *Mein Kampf*.²⁷ Not so many years later, he found himself overjoyed at the prospects of visits by such odd figures. It was his hope these calls would leave a good impression at home and abroad, that these encounters would underline his own role of prominence in world affairs, and the multitude of such conferences would signal acceptance of his politics by the “outside world.” In retrospect, Hitler’s insistence on personally receiving such ludicrous figures in his capacity as Chancellor of the Third Reich and the rhetoric he employed in this context appear both tragic and comic at the same time.

He truly was persuaded that as long as he persisted in his undertakings and clung to the conceptions formulated in 1919, Providence would smile on him once again. Indeed, he conceived of the misfortunes and defeats encountered as a reflection of the existence of a God somewhere above the clouds, putting him and the German Volk to the test.²⁸ This almighty spiritual force sent “trials” upon him so that he might prove his valor. In Hitler’s strange appraisal, even catastrophes on the scale of Stalingrad were mere “lashes of the whip” and “hammer blows of Providence.”²⁹ If he remained steadfast, did not err from the path assigned to him, the Lord would one day grant him the victory he so well deserved. England would turn to him in friendship while the Almighty’s wrath would spell ruin for Bolshevism.

It was not until the rain of bombs approached his hideout beneath the Reich Chancellery in April 1945, that he could admit to himself that the end had indeed come. This resignation and the realization of a reality that failed to correspond to his perceptions is nowhere more evident than in his decision to finally marry Eva Braun and thus retroactively avow his relation to the mistress so long and so carefully concealed from the public’s eye. This last-minute attempt to legalize a relationship which was generally frowned upon at the time, transcended its immediate significance to become an admission of guilt also in respect to the political fiasco Hitler left behind. He had built himself up to be a “God-Man” incapable of doing wrong, of committing errors, and succumbing to such human shortcomings as sexual desire. For many years, out of fear that Eva Braun’s existence might become known and put into question his implicit claims to “supernatural” powers, he had isolated the girl, permitting her few if any contacts with other persons, and had greatly degraded her by this quasi-custody.

Many years before these developments, a sigh escaped from Eva Braun’s lips in a private conversation with the BBC’s then correspondent

in Berlin: "It is too bad that Hitler became Reich Chancellor—or else he might have married me."³⁰ This comment revealed much about Hitler's character, and it is in this context that the wedding before the double suicide gains a historic dimension. By finally granting the woman who had shared his life and was to die alongside him the legitimization of their relations she had so long dreamed of, Hitler conceded that indeed he was an ordinary man like so many others. This concession also reflected some kind of resignation, like an admission of his utter failure as battlelord, head of state, and politician.

There is great irony in the fact that while he was perhaps subconsciously aware of his faults, he nevertheless could not depart this life without one of those gestures of grandeur he so excelled at. In his last will and testament, he attempted to burden Reichsmarschall Göring and Reichsführer SS Himmler with the responsibility for the Third Reich's ignominious defeat. Penning the document on April 29, 1945, a day before his death, he made one last all-out effort to transfer guilt to these two pitiful creatures and gave a grandiose pronouncement on the inevitable resurrection of the National Socialist Movement at some point in Germany's future.

On April 30, 1945, the newly-weds Eva Braun and Adolf Hitler retired to their bedroom in the bunker beneath the Chancellery building. While his bride took poison, Hitler shot himself with a pistol. The gruesome reign of terror of this one man had come to an end, having cost the lives of millions of Jews, Russians, Poles, millions from nearly every European nation—and the lives of millions of Germans as well. The demagogue who had demonstrated a rhetorical magic, hitherto unknown, at the greatest mass rallies of all time; the spellbinding seducer who had developed visions unheard-of, who had promised his listeners everlasting power and glory in a new utopian Reich spanning the world—this man had finally fallen silent.

The Year 1939

Major Events in Summary

Hitler focused on additional territorial annexations in the East in the first months of 1939. In his eyes the city of Danzig, the Memel territory, and the remainder of Czechoslovakia were rightful possessions of the Reich.¹ In complete disregard of the actual situation, he speculated that the Western Powers would remain silent or, at most, would launch formal protests when confronted with persistent aggression on Germany's part. Blinded by the successes scored in 1938 with the Anschluss and the effective insistence on the return of Sudeten German areas to the Reich, he adhered to his earlier perceptions that these achievements were due to nothing other than the display of the Third Reich's military potential. He failed to realize the import of international legal regulations, which invalidated Germany's territorial claims in the case of the Sudetenland.

To the contrary, he felt humiliated at the thought that he had placed his signature beneath so odious a paper as the Munich Agreement. He perceived this as the gravest error in his political career to date. In his mind, it greatly detracted from the other achievements of 1938. The eager acquiescence of the British at Munich he interpreted as proof of Britain's declining power and status. Instead of paying heed to Chamberlain's and Mussolini's offers to mediate, he should have followed his instincts and—this thought enormously troubled him—he ought to have taken hold of the entire Czechoslovakian state in late 1938. This would have spared him the disgraceful signature of the Munich papers, and he would not have been humbled by accepting that an international body had secured territorial concessions for him. Had he proceeded by the use of force, he would also have avoided placing himself at the mercy of the same despicable forum. He worried little about his actions eliciting a negative response from abroad, as he was certain that neither France nor Great Britain would have declared war on him in either event.

Given this set of mind, it was not surprising that at the onset of this most fateful year in Germany's history, Hitler's thoughts rested

foremost with atoning in some manner for his “lapse of presence of mind” at Munich. No matter under what pretext, the Third Reich simply had to swallow up the remainder of Czechoslovakia and lay hold of Slovakia militarily. He attached little importance to the fact that such moves would present a grave affront not only to the other parties to the Munich Agreement and to Poland, but to the entire international community. The thought that this would clearly expose him as a man not to be trusted before the eyes of the world apparently never entered his mind. That this blatant breach of contract might backfire and discredit his regime was a consideration alien to him. The decrepit English, the decadent French, and the depraved democracies worldwide meant nothing to him. He would show them once and for all that it was he, Adolf Hitler, who ruled Europe. All other heads of state would have to bow to the Reich’s might and submit to his arbitrary reign. That these statesmen would ultimately come under his spell, as the German Nationalists once had, was a fact he never questioned.

Among the many peoples and states in Europe, Slovakia was the most to Hitler’s liking. Having grasped the exigencies of the hour, Tiso and other Slovak statesmen like Tuka, Mach, and Durcansky² nearly fell over each other in their quest to please and flatter the German dictator. They were only too eager to comply with his implicit request and to deal a fatal blow to the fragile Czechoslovakian federation by becoming vocal in their demands for more autonomy for their ethnic group. Their requests were deliberately such that Prague could not possibly satisfy them without the federation self-destructing. The upheaval and turmoil thus created in Czechoslovakia prepared the ground for a German military intervention. Officially this represented an effort to re-establish the rule of law and order in the area. Once the Slovak politicians had accomplished their mission, Hitler was more than willing to grant them an autonomous state for their people. In fact, however, this state’s freedom of action was severely limited by Hitler’s reservation that it remain subject to the military sovereignty of the Reich.

The easternmost outreaches of the Czechoslovakian state were situated in the Carpatho-Ukraine, an area for which Hitler had special plans as well. Magnanimously, he intended to cede the area to Hungary in an effort to divert attention from his other territorial ambitions. Much as he had handled the appropriation of the Olsa region to Poland the previous year,³ Hitler was set on currying the favor of the Hungarians this time and luring them into an alliance with

Germany. Unaware of the German head of state's ultimate designs, an autonomous, pro-German government had already formed in the Carpatho-Ukraine. They promoted the cause of incorporating in their envisioned new state those parts of their homeland that had fallen prey to the Soviet Union and Poland in earlier years. They unwittingly counted on Hitler's active support for their dream of a reunited "Greater Ukrainian Empire." While Augustin Volo-in⁴ served officially as the autonomous region's Minister-President, behind the scenes the hand of Hetman Skoropadskyi⁵ was at work. This peculiar man had already functioned as "head of state" of a similar structure in the days of William II. Skoropadskyi's vision of a Ukrainian state also encompassed those lands the Central Powers had annexed in 1918. The Carpatho-Ukrainians were the first foreign people, though by no means the last, to experience how quickly and mercilessly Hitler could turn against former supporters and allies, once these had served their purpose. The Poles, Yugoslavs, and Russians were the next in line for this realization.

In March 1939, Hitler embarked on the realization of his ambitious ventures in connection with the remainder of Czechoslovakia and the Slovak peoples. Encouraged by Hitler's alluring promises and backed by him,⁶ the Slovaks stirred up civil unrest and involved themselves in intrigues against the central government in Prague to such an extent that the newly appointed Minister-President Háchá felt compelled to ask for the resignation of the Tiso cabinet and replaced it with a governmental team headed by Sivak.⁷ This represented the cue for a massive German intervention in Pressburg (Bratislava). All of a sudden, dubious men such as Hitler's expert for annexations, Gauleiter Bürckel, haunted the halls of administrative buildings in the capital. This veteran of the Austrian Anschluss and of the repatriation of the Saarland strode down hallways accompanied by other suspicious characters such as, for example, Seyss-Inquart, along with numerous highly decorated German generals. Deployed on numerous similar missions in the course of his career, Hitler's special plenipotentiary Wilhelm Keppler reinforced their ranks. Together these so-called envoys set out to convince the Slovak regime that the time had come for them to sever ties to the central government in Prague. History demanded of them that they create an "independent" Slovak state under the guidance of National Socialist Germany. Should they be unwilling, the consequences for their people would be grave ones. Already groups belonging to the German Party in Slovakia paraded through the city's streets attired in combat clothing and, all of a sudden,

carrying weapons. This drove home the point Hitler intended to make with the Slovak officials.

On March 13, Hitler consented to seeing Tiso and Durcansky at the Chancellery in Berlin. He lectured them on the importance of immediately pronouncing Slovakia an independent state. Upon his return to Pressburg the following day, Tiso did indeed read to the Slovak Parliament a "declaration of independence of the Slovak State" which Hitler had drawn up for him. This pulled the "Slovak" pillar out from beneath the increasingly unsteady Czechoslovakian federation. It also signaled the renewal of a German propaganda campaign directed against Prague. Once again, newspapers piled up carrying story after story of alleged Czech atrocities, of violations of the civil rights of ethnic Germans, and of renewed unrest in Bohemia and Moravia. Despite the turmoil created, reserve troops in Germany received no orders to march. This fact corresponded to a projected assessment of the situation as discussed in a directive of December 17, 1938,⁸ in which Hitler insisted that the German military need not fear encountering resistance of any significance as it moved to occupy the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

In the evening hours of March 14, German troops and armed SS contingents⁹ penetrated the area surrounding Moravian Ostrau in order to take this strategically important city in a first strike against Prague. The proximity of this population center to the Polish border was also to deter Poland from resorting to any foolish measures, such as resisting the German occupation of neighboring Czechoslovakia.

On the night of March 14 to March 15, Hitler ordered Hácha and the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky to come see him and to sign an agreement, practically at gunpoint, which effected the Reich's annexation of Bohemia and Moravia. To his credit, Hitler once more scored a major success without bloodshed. The Czech army received instructions not to oppose the German soldiers closing in on it from all sides. As a safety measure, the Czech soldiers had to hand over their weapons.

After the successful occupation of the territory, Hitler hastily issued two proclamations to the German Volk. He then rushed on to Prague to enter the Hradcany Castle and to finally reap the fruits of his labor which, he felt, the Munich Agreement had unfairly deprived him of. Nevertheless, the victory was a deceptive one. No glorious warlord was to be honored for his exploits; rather an exploited people was to be raped once more. And to achieve this dubious victory, Hitler had

sacrificed what remained of his credibility in the eyes of the world. In spite of repeated, solemn pledges denouncing intentions of further aggressive actions, like the ones enumerated below, he revealed himself to be a man of no scruples:

I shall never, as a statesman, put my signature on a treaty which I would never sign as a man of honor in private life either, even if it were to mean my ruin! For I would also never want to put my signature on a document knowing in the back of my mind that I would never abide by it! I abide by what I sign. What I cannot abide by, I will never sign.¹⁰

For my part, I declare that I would rather die at any time than sign something which, in my most sacred conviction, I hold to be unbearable for the German Volk.¹¹

I will never sign anything knowing that it can never be upheld, because I am determined to abide by what I sign.¹²

Whatever we believe we cannot adhere to, on principles of honor or ability, we will never sign. Whatever we have once signed we will blindly and faithfully fulfill!¹³

The German Reich Government does not intend to sign any treaty which it does not feel able to fulfill. It will, however, scrupulously comply with every treaty signed voluntarily, even if same was drawn up prior to its having taken office and coming to power.¹⁴

Nowhere in the world today is there a greater guarantee for the security of such a treaty than if it is signed by this [Hitler's] hand.¹⁵

Hitler had not only pledged to respect contracts he placed his signature on, he had also denied that he had any further territorial claims to make on behalf of Germany. Moreover, the establishment of a Greater German Reich would not entail subjugation of foreign peoples since, after all, as Hitler enjoyed pointing out, the last thing he wanted in this new Germany were Czechs. He pledged himself and his Movement to respect the right to self-determination of other ethnic groups:

We will never attempt to subjugate foreign peoples . . .¹⁶

We have no territorial claims to make in Europe.¹⁷

The German Reich Government shall thus unconditionally abide by the other articles governing the coexistence of the nations, including territorial provisions, and put into effect solely by means of peaceful understanding those amendments which become inevitable by virtue of the changing times.¹⁸

It is the last territorial demand I shall make in Europe. [—] I repeat here before you, once this issue [the cession of the Sudeten German territories] has been resolved, there will no longer be any further territorial problems for Germany in Europe!¹⁹

We do not want any Czechs at all.²⁰

He proved all these statements to have been despicable lies by invading what remained of the former Czechoslovakian state within five months after taking part in the Four Power Summit at Munich. His signature was worth less than the paper he scribbled it on. He had succumbed to the temptation of what he perceived to be the decrepitude of the English, the indecision of the French, the servile comportment of Mussolini, and the inferiority of Poland's military. For, in fact, the move of March 15 affected the Poles no less than the peoples of Czechoslovakia, as they strongly suspected Poland to be the next item on Hitler's list for future conquests.

In light of Hitler's deluded view of reality, the move of March 15 was not inconsistent with his previous statements. Given a fundamentally different assessment of the situation, the reaction abroad to the renewed provocation by Germany was entirely different from what Hitler had anticipated. The English were no German Nationalists, and they were not about to let the megalomaniac proceed as he wished. It would take just one additional slight provocation, one more attempt to subdue by force of arms yet another foreign people, and—British sources left no doubt of this—His Majesty's Government would be compelled to declare war on Germany as a consequence. Only the fact that no bloodshed had been involved in the March 15 foray spared the German people the horrors of war for another six months. Czechoslovakian troops had received timely orders not to fire on the advancing German units, and this saved Hitler one last time from the wrath of the Western Powers.

Meanwhile, this latest breach of contract by National Socialist Germany had reinforced Great Britain's determination to intervene militarily on the continent at the slightest provocation by Hitler's government. In a radio address aired from Birmingham on March 17, 1939, Chamberlain made the British position clear. The Prime Minister pointed out that earlier territorial claims by Germany had always been well-founded and justifiable in terms of international law. However, this latest undertaking was by no means compatible with the established conduct of affairs between states and represented a violation of all rights known to man:²¹

Germany, under her present regime, has sprung a series of unpleasant surprises upon the world. The Rhineland, the Austrian Anschluss, the severance of Sudetenland—all these things shocked and affronted public opinion throughout the world. Yet, however much we might take exception to the methods which were adopted in each of those cases, there was

something to be said, whether on account of racial affinity or of just claims too long resisted—there was something to be said for the necessity of a change in the existing situation.

But the events which have taken place this week in complete disregard of the principles laid down by the German Government itself seem to fall into a different category, and they must cause us all to be asking ourselves: “Is this the end of an old adventure, or is it the beginning of a new?”

“Is this the last attack upon a small State, or is it to be followed by others? Is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?”

To these remarks, Chamberlain added the warning already cited in the prologue to this volume, that no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that Britain would not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge.

Hitler failed to take seriously the well-meant admonishment, and instead of paying heed to it, he proceeded to the next items on his agenda for the spring of 1939: the Memel territory and Danzig. The former point was easily dealt with: fortune apparently chose to smile upon him one last time. Lithuania yielded to diplomatic pressure and, on March 22, declared its willingness to return the terrain illegally seized from the German Reich in 1923.

Poland, however, was not willing to make concessions on a similar scale. It refused to cede the Free City of Danzig to the German Reich. It also declined cooperation in the construction of an extraterritorial motorway piercing the Polish Corridor. Its reluctance was not a matter of spite, but one of well-founded concerns for its own safety. After the most recent forceful annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia and the military occupation of Slovakia, Poland found itself surrounded on three sides by Germany. The Third Reich’s troops had positioned themselves to its west, its north and its south, thus effectively encircling Poland, given that equally antagonistic Russians stood in the East. The Polish Government was haunted by the suspicion that any concessions on its part would, at best, keep Hitler at bay for another half a year. A military confrontation had apparently become unavoidable. And the Poles were not about to lend a hand in their own destruction, especially as they knew that Great Britain stood behind them.

Chamberlain unambiguously restated England’s commitment to Poland in a speech before the House of Commons on March 31, 1939:²²

As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments. In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty’s Government in the meantime before those consultations are

concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect.

I may add that the French Government have authorized me to make it plain that they stand in the same position in this matter as do His Majesty's Government.

This declaration left no doubt that the Western Powers were determined to meet any further armed aggression by Germany with a declaration of war. This was to apply also if German forces attempted to take Danzig, irrespective of the fact that Germans populated the area, and that it had once formed part of the Reich. The British stance was as clear then as it had been in 1914 when Austria set out to annex Serbia by force. Both causes, that of Serbia in 1914 and of Danzig in 1939, ultimately led to a world war, a confrontation pitting England and the Western Powers against Germany and Austria. The Reich's invasion first of Belgium in 1914 and later of Poland in 1939 precipitated mortal conflict and open warfare.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, many Germans,²³ and in his lifetime Hitler also, argued that England was to blame for these regrettable developments leading up to the great calamity of September 1939. Germany would not have resorted to arms had England not unduly reinforced the Poles by its lamentable declaration of March 31, 1939. It was only because of the British reassurances that Poland so vehemently denied Germany the construction of an extraterritorial motorway through the Polish Corridor and, by the same token, that the Poles refused to return the city of Danzig to its rightful owner, Germany.

On the other hand, it is perfectly possible that Poland would have reacted in the same manner regardless of Great Britain's behavior. The issues at stake transcended the immediate dispute concerning the linkage of East Prussia to the Reich and the status of the Free City of Danzig. The existence of the Polish state was no more the subject of the dispute in 1939 than either Serbia or Belgium had been the bone of contention in 1914. The crux of the matter was Germany's forcible annexation of neighboring territories and the support lent by Austria. Great Britain and the Western Powers were no more willing to tolerate such militant expansionism in 1939 than they had been in 1914. Persistent denial of the serious nature of the warnings by the West

clearly places the responsibility for the ensuing tragedy on the shoulders of the German and Austrian statesmen of both periods. Had the politicians involved acknowledged that Great Britain and the world community had severe misgivings about the route chosen by the Reich, they could easily have prevented the outbreak of hostilities if they had ceased the pursuit of territorial expansion by brute force. By refusing to consider this option, in a sense the politicians in Berlin and Vienna might as well have signed the British declaration of war themselves.

Refraining from the pursuit of his goals was not a subject to be discussed with Hitler. He was determined to set out on "the road of the Teutonic Knights of old, to gain by the German sword sod for the German plough . . ." ²⁴ And in this quest, he argued there was "but one ally in Europe: England." That it was possible Great Britain did not share his enthusiasm for such a policy apparently never entered his mind.

Thus it was not surprising that the Führer was shocked by Chamberlain's address before the House of Commons on March 31, 1939. England's willingness to support Poland was inexplicable to him. He was at a loss trying to understand the rapid developments and the reactions they had elicited abroad in the course of the preceding two weeks. The annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia had provoked Chamberlain's sharp criticism. Then Poland had indignantly rebuked Germany's demand for a return of Danzig. And to top this off, Great Britain announced the existence of a mutual assistance pact it had evidently concluded with Poland earlier. This series of developments shook the very foundation of Hitler's beliefs and the great stock he had placed in the decrepitude of the British mind. Obviously, English perceptions had not been dulled to the degree Hitler had counted on. Not surprisingly, Hitler was outraged at the impertinence of the British move when the news of Chamberlain's statement of March 31, 1939, reached him. He shouted: "I shall brew them one Devil's brew!" ²⁵

The main ingredient for this potion was not difficult to divine: entry into an alliance with Bolshevik Russia. This was to disquiet the Western Powers and to entice them to greater leniency toward Germany. That this strategy would achieve its ends, Hitler was certain: had not the National Socialist and Communist cooperation in the 1932 transportation workers' strike in Berlin forced von Papen and his reactionary German Nationalists to embrace his politics? Apparently oblivious of his previous proclamations that he would never collaborate with tainted men such as the Bolsheviks and risk exposure to this mind-poisoning

ideology,²⁶ he pursued these tactics to the end, albeit one quite different from what he had anticipated.

From April through August 1939, Hitler was busily adding other ingredients to the “potion” he was developing especially for the English. In his mind, they richly deserved his vengeance. It was the British Government’s recalcitrant behavior which had brought this misfortune upon them and forced him into an alliance with its archenemy. As of this time, however, he was still willing to grant England—magnanimously—one last chance to redeem itself. He would hold his anger in check and, at first, would deal it a few obvious slaps in the face. Should it fail to react to this in the desired manner, then his “Hugenbergers”²⁷ would have in fact dealt their last card and he would carry through on the envisioned alliance with the Soviet Union.

The Reichstag speech of April 28, 1939 appeared to Hitler a splendid occasion to affront the British Government once more and to test its reaction. First, he unilaterally abrogated the naval agreement on the size of the respective fleets arrived at in 1935. In one bold stroke of a pen, he then proceeded to declare null and void the 1934 Mutual Non-Aggression and Friendship Pact with Poland which, albeit many years ago, the Party press had once celebrated as a masterpiece of National Socialist statesmanship. Behind these two moves was Hitler’s megalomaniac desire to prove to Poland that Germany was free to move politically as he saw fit despite the British avowal of support for the Polish state.

All in all, Hitler did himself more damage than good as he terminated agreements he himself had labored so long to realize. And the twenty-one insolent responses to Roosevelt with which he laced his speech made him appear far more ludicrous than serious. Throughout the summer of 1939, he staged military parade after military parade in an effort to display the prowess and might of Germany’s Wehrmacht in a transparent effort to intimidate the English.

Already at a speech in Wilhelmshaven on April Fool’s Day 1939, the Führer had dedicated all his efforts to raise the specter of an overpowering German fleet before the eyes of the spectators, not to mention the British, at the christening of the battleship *Tirpitz*. The name was to remind London of the none-too-successful early stages of its struggle against the German Navy in the First World War.²⁸ When he appointed Admiral General Raeder Commander in Chief of the Navy, Hitler hoped the English would begin to wonder whether

a new Tirpitz was to head Germany's naval forces. If all went according to plan, he would cause the British to marvel at the apparent might of a navy that once more felt confident enough to face off Great Britain's own legendary naval power.

For his 1939 birthday celebration in Berlin, Hitler had rows of soldiers file by in front of him for hours, one of the most extensive military parades to date. In May, Hitler reserved several days for a thorough official inspection of the fortifications in the West in an attempt to underline the military's importance and might. Amidst much ado on May 22, he placed his signature beneath the so-called "Pact of Steel," a military alliance conclusively binding Italy to Germany. In the weeks to follow, a multitude of minor statesmen, mostly from the Balkans, came to call on the German dictator in Berlin, who rejoiced at these repeated opportunities to stage yet another impressive military parade. Between visits, Hitler busily attended maneuvers, issued directives to the military, and spoke frequently before Germany's generals. A special SS force took up quarters in Danzig, while Hitler called up reserve units and arranged for a concentration of German troops along the eastern frontier of the Reich, primarily in East Prussia and Slovakia.

Still the English failed to react as Hitler desired; they showed little inclination to be bluffed by military displays and paid little heed to Germany's obvious preparations for war against Poland. On the other hand, they repeatedly insisted on earlier statements that, should Berlin launch an armed aggression against Warsaw, even on as peripheral a topic as Danzig, an immediate declaration of war by London would be the consequence. Despite England's outward indifference, London noted the developments in Germany. Britain realized that the time for an open confrontation had come. What was at stake was not the fate of one small country but "larger issues," a topic Chamberlain had already expounded in a radio broadcast on September 27, 1938. Speaking on the eve of the Sudetenland crisis, he had alluded to the likelihood of such a confrontation, while maintaining that the time for this was not yet ripe.²⁹

However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbor, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in a war on her account. If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that.

The atmosphere that summer recalled one not so long ago when the Kaiser had still made pretenses about the glory to be gained for the

Germany of 1914 in the then pending conflict. National Socialist rhetoric and Hitler's outrageous pronouncements in 1939 sounded remarkably similar. The German public had been systematically divorced from reality, had no access to unbiased information, and hence had become easy prey for an exuberant propaganda apparatus. Few Germans had the resources necessary to recognize the true political and military power structure in Europe. This was as true in 1939 as it had been in 1914 on the eve of the First World War.

In England that summer, to the contrary, the air was heavy with forebodings. In a radio broadcast addressed to the American people and aired on August 8, 1939, Churchill described the situation in Europe in the following manner:³⁰

Let me look back—let me see. How did we spend our summer holidays twenty-five years ago? Why, those were the very days when the German advance guards were breaking into Belgium and trampling down its people on their march towards Paris! Those were the days when Prussian militarism was—to quote its own phrase—“hacking its way through the small, weak, neighbor country” whose neutrality and independence they had sworn not merely to respect but to defend.

But perhaps we are wrong. Perhaps our memory deceives us. Dr. Goebbels and his Propaganda Machine have their own version of what happened twenty-five years ago. To hear them talk, you would suppose that it was Belgium that invaded Germany! There they were, these peaceful Prussians, gathering in their harvests, when this wicked Belgium—set on by England and the Jews—fell upon them; and would no doubt have taken Berlin, if Corporal Adolf Hitler had not come to the rescue and turned the tables. Indeed, the tale goes further. After four years of war by land and sea, when Germany was about to win an overwhelming victory, the Jews got at them again, this time from the rear. Armed with President Wilson's Fourteen Points they stabbed, we are told, the German armies in the back, and induced them to ask for an armistice, and even persuaded them, in an unguarded moment, to sign a paper saying that it was they and not the Belgians who had been the ones to begin the War. Such is history as it is taught in topsy-turvydom.

Churchill's insistence that the fate of Belgium was of paramount importance to the developments in 1914 has to be taken with a grain of salt. “Larger issues” were at stake, to use Chamberlain's terminology of September 27, 1938. And, as Chamberlain expressed it, England would not go to war for the sake of one small nation alone, no matter how great its sympathy for the country.³¹

Nevertheless, Churchill hit the nail on the head when he spoke of “topsy-turvydom” and its false prophets. The legend of the stab in the

back, the myth of an invincible German army losing the First World War in 1918—all this bore evil fruit two decades later. Advocated by outspoken men such as Ludendorff and Hitler in conservative circles and warmed up occasionally, these theories led to a dangerous overestimation of Germany's military might and a no less perilous underestimation of the fighting power of the British and their staying power in battle. Hitler was among those who seriously believed that the Englishmen of this century were past their prime, and hence, he did not anticipate encountering such a determined stance on their part.

Despairing of the ineffectiveness of repeatedly slapping the British in the face, Hitler had maneuvered himself into a position where he could only resort to serving up his fabled "devilish potion." A non-aggression and mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union came about quickly and was ready for signature in Moscow by August 23, 1939.³² By entering into a pact with the devil, so to speak, Hitler was certain to achieve his ends, since a similar strategy had proved most effective against domestic opponents in the early years of his political career.

It took the English two full days to react to this obvious provocation. On August 25, Great Britain and Poland signed a formal mutual assistance agreement. Contrary to Hitler's expectations, Great Britain did not stumble after this renewed slap in the face, and the "potion" administered failed in its purpose.

This left Hitler ill at ease. He halted preparations already underway for a strike against Poland on August 26 to gain time to win England's favor. If London was not willing to enter into friendly relations with National Socialist Germany, perhaps assurances of its neutrality could at least be secured before a military move against Poland. Once more he pinned all his hopes on his oratorical prowess, his ability to persuade his opponents under almost any circumstances. He truly believed he could bring about a decisive change in the British stance this late in the game.

The approach he took was an old one: he was going to transmit a renewed "offer of friendship" to the British Government through the good offices of Göring's friend, the Swede Dahlerus. This was to signal his willingness to tie Germany to Great Britain—anything to secure England's good will. To this end, he stood prepared to antagonize his friend Mussolini whom he had just gravely affronted by entering into the Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviets without informing Italy or asking for its consent. These new allies he also willingly would have

sacrificed on the altar of England's friendship, albeit only after a conquest or, at the very least, a renewed partition of Poland.

The absurdity of Hitler's thoughts became all the more obvious when he seriously offered to deploy German military forces in order to protect the British Empire. At first, in the Far East, this would have entailed facing off with Japanese troops, although an earlier alliance bound Germany to Japan and its interests in the region. Moreover, Hitler was completely unaware that, by making this clumsy attempt, he was affronting the English in nearly the worst manner conceivable. All English-speaking countries regarded it as a great privilege and honor to be allowed to contribute to the defenses of the English motherland and the outreaches of the Commonwealth in times of danger. According to the public opinion in Germany, at least ever since the times of the Kaiser, the British Empire was always on the verge of collapse. And even if this were the case—to think the British would accept the help of Hitler's Army divisions was veritably ridiculous.

By the asphyxiation of the truncated Czechoslovakian state, Hitler had clearly demonstrated that any compromise reached with him was ultimately doomed to fall victim to his megalomania. Granted that Downing Street would perhaps have been able to make the Poles step down and yield to the German demands for Danzig and the Polish Corridor, it had far less incentive to do so after the willful annexation of the remaining territory legally ruled by Prague as an outcome of the Munich Agreement a year earlier.

Rescinding his order to attack Poland on August 25, Hitler had been certain that he could secure Great Britain's benevolent neutrality within a few days. Roused by the British failure to react in the manner anticipated, Hitler proceeded to ignore Britain's very existence and its opposition to his envisioned undertakings. The conceptions formed in 1919 clouded his view. As in so many earlier instances, the English would assuredly come around. If London chose not to support Germany's campaign against Russia, it would at least not hinder Berlin's pursuit of territorial expansion in the East. Irrespective of the time frame involved, so he believed, London would desist from any rash actions, issue protests for the record, and maintain a benevolent neutrality when faced with the accomplished fact of the German incursion into Poland.

His chest swelling with confidence, he ordered the military move against Poland to begin at 4:45 a.m. on September 1, 1939. That morning, he dressed carefully in his field-gray tunic for the first time,

proudly bearing the Third Reich's emblem on the left sleeve. He then formally announced to the Reichstag that the German Army was to "return fire" on Polish troops.

Initial reactions by Great Britain and the Western Powers appeared to vindicate Hitler's tactics. Ambassadors of both Great Britain and France called on the German Foreign Minister in the late evening hours of September 1, 1939. They protested the German move on behalf of their respective governments and stated that this represented "an act of aggression" against Poland. The Ambassadors brought to the Foreign Minister's attention the import of certain obligations binding their states to the fate of Poland. Their governments would feel compelled to act on these, should German military forces not withdraw from the sovereign territory of the Polish state immediately. Such statements were precisely the type of reaction Hitler had anticipated: diplomatic gestures void of any real significance in light of the impotence of the Western Powers' military forces, of which he was so firmly convinced.

While Great Britain's response was subdued that first day,³³ a British declaration of war on Germany lay on the Chancellor's desk by the third day of the conflict. Stunned by this unexpected turn of events, he was—for once—at a loss for words. For several minutes, he could only stare at the floor. The man who prided himself on having provided for every contingency imaginable had been taken by surprise. "What now?" was all he could say. When presented with a similarly unexpected declaration of war by the English on August 4, 1914, Bethmann-Hollweg had become no less despondent. In spite of Hitler's haughty disdain for his predecessors in office, the Führer cut a no less miserable figure in the Chancellery a mere quarter of a century later.

Thanks to Hitler's remarkable resilience, he regained his composure and confidence within a matter of hours. Undaunted by the recent breakdown of his conception of a foreign policy based on a tacit alliance with Great Britain and incompatible with the present British position, he carried out neither of the measures he himself had once required of any other politician who failed on a comparable scale. He neither stepped down nor committed suicide. Instead, he issued a multitude of proclamations to the German Volk, the Wehrmacht, and the National Socialist Party. Through these he hoped to deflect blame from his own person to the British, who were solely responsible for the calamitous situation at hand, at least in his opinion.

Defiantly, he told his supporters, "We have nothing to lose, but everything to win!"³⁴

Speedily he set out to inspect the state of preparations along the eastern front, in part undoubtedly to escape the disquieting situation in Berlin. He consoled himself by not taking the British declaration of war too seriously. He attributed it to a desire by the British to publicly satisfy the letter, not the spirit, of the English guarantee extended to Poland. Once the German military had conquered Poland with lightning speed, the English would undoubtedly resign themselves to the fact, whether they liked it or not. In time, they would realize that reconciliation with Germany and acceptance of its hand extended in friendship represented the only realistic approach for British foreign policy on the Continent.

Hence, it was imperative that the Polish campaign be brought to a successful conclusion as soon as possible under the circumstances. This in turn meant that Hitler had to concede parcels of territory in eastern Poland to Russia. One month after he set out to eliminate the Polish state, it had indeed disappeared from the political map. While this first "Blitzkrieg"³⁵ had lasted a mere twenty-eight days,³⁶ official sources in Germany shortened it considerably to eighteen days to emphasize the supposedly unequaled swiftness of the strike. A more decisive factor in the conflict had, however, been the numerical superiority of the German forces. Population figures were unmistakable here: 76 million Germans against 25 million Poles.

Goebbels' propaganda apparatus heralded this great military achievement as indicative of the intrinsic worth of National Socialism and its policies. The "Führer principle" and "blind obedience to the Führer" had won out over what was judged to be an inferior people. While such measures might have hastened compliance with orders from Berlin and resulted in swifter action by the military, the later years of the war were to prove that these ideas were impotent in a confrontation with a superior power. All victories scored in the initial stages of the war pitted an overwhelming German military force against countries with no like resources at their command: Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, and, of course, Poland. France for instance was only half the size of Germany at the time. When confronted with an adversary of equal or superior capabilities such as England, Russia, or the United States, Hitler's dictatorial measures failed to bring about decisive victories for Germany.

This baffled Hitler, as these measures had proved most useful in domestic politics. For example, when he ordered the construction of a large segment of the Autobahn, he could be assured of its immediate implementation. To construct a relatively small section of this Autobahn to cross the Polish Corridor, for some inexplicable reason, proved to be more of a task than he had imagined. That this was the case because of the determined opposition by the Western Powers to this particular project was a fact he was either unaware of or simply refused to accept.

Thrilled by the rapid conquest of Poland, Hitler determined the time had come to end the senseless confrontation with Great Britain. After all, the war between the two countries had not yet really begun. Nowhere had German troops actually faced off with their British counterparts, and already Hitler expected the British to back down without putting up a fight. In a speech before the Reichstag on October 26, 1939, he challenged the English to regain their senses, to accept the *fait accompli* of the Reich's annexation of Poland and to enter into negotiations for a settlement with Germany. Apparently, he sincerely believed that London would gratefully grasp the hand he extended in friendship as a splendid opportunity to end the war with Germany. This was a grotesque assumption.

In light of the peace proposal to Great Britain by the German resistance movement in 1941,³⁷ it is tempting to consider Hitler's 1939 offers with greater leniency. While Hitler's conception was undeniably divorced from reality, Goerdeler's bid for peace was even more absurd because of its late date. It seemed as though Goerdeler felt compelled to outdo Hitler in requesting the impossible. If this was indeed the case, he certainly realized his ambition by asking for a restoration of the German Reich within its borders of 1914, retention of the lands overrun by Hitler's troops, and a return of the colonies lost to Great Britain in the First World War. These outrageous demands lent further credence to Churchill's caricature of the Third Reich as "topsy-turvydom." Apparently, many of the Reich's citizens were convinced that the defeated party was entitled to dictate its terms for peace to its more successful adversary at ceasefire talks, in particular if the former was Germany.

In the last phase of the First World War, the Western Powers had already encountered similarly odd convictions in the Germans. These unpleasant experiences made the Allies adhere to a more prudent stance this time. As the war was winding down, they insisted on an "unconditional surrender" by Germany, Italy, and Japan. Popular

belief held this demand to have exacerbated the situation for Germany by forestalling an earlier end to the fighting and a possible removal of Hitler. This type of argument was based on the same fallacy as the one asserted about the Munich Agreement, and discussed in Volume II of this series. Many officers with the German Armed Forces maintained that the 1938 Munich Conference had effectively prevented them from launching a successful coup d'état to oust Hitler.

There has been much debate on the topic of “unconditional surrender.” In fact, any surrender is unconditional as far as the defeated party is concerned. The party to the conflict that lays down its weapons first will always be at the mercy of the conqueror. The vanquished party does not have the prerogative as to whether or not to accept certain proposals, unless it wishes renewed hostilities leading to its ultimate defeat. The term “unconditional” thus refers primarily to the defeated party, although it does not entail a complete liberty of action for the victor either. And as the textbook case of the Second World War shows, the demand for an “unconditional surrender” does not of necessity provoke rights-abuses. At the end of this particular conflict, the Allies desired merely to ensure that no doubts arose regarding the defeat of Germany; to avoid questioning that might lead to a repeat of the German military’s claim after 1918 that it had been lured into laying down its weapons, despite the preservation of sufficient fighting power to decide the conflict in Germany’s favor. Churchill pointedly sketched Great Britain’s stance in the matter in a radio broadcast of October 1, 1939, after the onset of open hostilities:³⁸

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough.

Given this state of events, it is hardly surprising that even the most gracious offers for peace by Hitler met with silence in England. Three days passed after the Reichstag speech of October 6, 1939 without any reaction from Great Britain. Enraged that the British were ignoring his peace proposals, Hitler decided to turn to the last resort at his command: the alliance with the Soviet Union. He would show the British who was the master of the continent. He would break their outpost, France. German tanks would roll over Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, countries officially neutral though sympathetic to the English cause and dependent on its protection. He was still reluctant to assault the British mainland, as he still held hopes for a later

reconciliation with this people bound to the German Volk by ties of blood. Nonetheless, he would chase the English from the European continent, which ultimately would be his. He would make them “scurry back to the Thames,” as he proclaimed in public.³⁹

Immediately, he set out to prepare for an offensive in the West. By October 9, 1939, he issued a directive “for the conduct of the war,” the opening statement of which was still cautiously phrased in the slowly diminishing hope that he could win the British over at this late date.⁴⁰

If it should become apparent in the near future that England, and, under England’s leadership, also France, are not willing to make an end of the war, I am determined to act vigorously and aggressively without great delay.

It was October 10 already, and still there were no signs that Great Britain was contemplating entering into peace negotiations with Germany. Again Hitler felt compelled to expand on the advantages a peace settlement would afford London. On the occasion of the annual drive for the *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* (Wartime Winter Relief Organization), Hitler spelled out in great detail once more how much London stood to gain by arriving at a settlement with Germany:⁴¹

We know not what the future shall bring. But one thing we know for certain: No power in this world shall ever wrestle Germany to the ground again! No one shall vanquish us militarily, destroy us economically, or trample upon our souls! And no one shall see us capitulate—under any circumstances.

I have expressed our willingness for peace. Germany has no reason to do battle against the Western Powers. It was they who began this war on a threadbare pretext. In the event they decline our offer for peace, Germany stands determined to take up the fight again and to follow through on it—in one way or another!

Not even this threat had any perceptible effect on the English. Chamberlain naturally rejected the peace proposal in his address before the House of Commons on October 12, 1939. Once more he emphasized that Great Britain and he himself judged Germany and Hitler by deeds and not words. Hitler found himself in a situation where he had to put aside his plans for reconciliation with the British and to embark on an offensive along the front in the West.

On October 13, Hitler issued an official declaration by the government admitting that the British had rejected the German peace initiative. Once more he pronounced himself able and willing to fight. And if it was to come to war with Germany’s neighboring states, then a conquest of these countries would be carried out quickly. Any

additional waste of time would merely allow Great Britain to prepare for war and increase the likelihood that it would embrace a more aggressive policy soon. Secondly, France might finally awaken from the lethargy it had displayed at the time of the campaign against Poland. Above all, swift action was to preclude a change of heart on the part of the Russians, whose alliance with Germany was of a relatively recent vintage and of whose continued support Hitler was not at all certain.

Oblivious of objections to launching a military campaign just before the onset of winter, Hitler resolved to commence the campaign on November 12, 1939. Naturally, he had yet to come up with a plausible immediate motive for propaganda purposes and to justify the venture in the eyes of the public. For one, the move entailed a violation of the neutrality of states such as Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, which National Socialist Germany had vowed to respect just as Imperial Germany once had. On the other hand, this was no more a reason to desist for Hitler than it had been for William II.

In the case of Poland, Hitler had already displayed his ingenuity for coming up with a "propagandistic reason" for unleashing the war, for divining an incident which could be portrayed as an affront sufficiently serious to warrant arousing the public, and to keep it from questioning the true motivation behind this particular military move.⁴² However, an incident of border violation like the staged assault on the Gleiwitz radio station was not feasible along the frontier to Holland. Nevertheless, the apprehension of two British Secret Service agents in the vicinity could be blown up into a sufficiently compromising affair.

When considering such carefully prepared undertakings orchestrated by Hitler and his assistants, it is imperative to keep in mind that any such incident was intended only secondarily as a justification of Germany's aggression abroad, and was intended primarily to rouse the public inside the Reich. Most of its citizens had vivid recollections of the First World War and were understandably reluctant to have those governing them embark on such risky forays as an attack in the West. There was great fear of yet another Verdun and renewed trench-warfare.

In Hitler's mind, to overcome this defeatist attitude by the German public, the propaganda experts of the Reich had to provide for an occurrence to outrage it and to set free the Teutonic fury essential to any successful and swift action against any of the countries bordering it. The fact that Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg served as bases for

Secret Service surveillance of Germany came to the aid of the propaganda department's staff.

The attack was scheduled for Sunday, November 12, 1939. Once more Hitler displayed his preference for a weekend to launch a military strike, a habit discernible in many other instances as well.⁴³ A provocative act to justify the invasion of Holland had to have taken place by this date. On November 7, because of bad weather, the date had to be postponed for three days.

On November 8, 1939, a mysterious attempt on Hitler's life ended with the explosion of a bomb in the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich, immediately after his delivery of the annual commemorative speech there. In fact, Hitler escaped injury only by departing for the train station earlier than scheduled. To this day, the particulars of this event are not fully understood.

The next day witnessed the staging of a more carefully prepared incident, involving English spies, at the Dutch border. It had initially been intended to rouse public opinion in Germany, a goal it failed to achieve. An SS *Kommando* abducted two British Secret Service agents in Holland and brought them across the border in the vicinity of Venlo.⁴⁴ The press in Germany tried to establish a connection between the explosion in Munich and the apprehension of the secret agents, which had allegedly occurred on German territory. The general public in Germany, however, did not judge this a plausible link and largely ignored the latter incident.

Far more likely seemed the explanation current in the foreign press: that the kidnapping was a coup staged by Hitler to procure an excuse for aggressive action against the Netherlands. Conspicuous troop movements had been under way on the three days before November 8, and these on such a scale that even uninterested passers-by had to notice that something out of the ordinary was going on. As a precautionary measure, the Dutch flooded the channels and streets on their side of the border.

Under these circumstances, Hitler considered wise a delay in the attack. Orders were rescinded, at first temporarily and then for a lengthier period as the season changed. A winter set in the like of which had not been seen in these latitudes for over a decade. Already in December, thermometer readings recorded minus twenty degrees Celsius and below. In the military compounds, vehicles refused to start. Against this background, even Hitler had to admit it would be rash to engage in any type of new military confrontation at this point.

Another factor which contributed to the considerable delay of the offensive in the West was the outbreak of the Russo-Finnish War on November 28, 1939. Hitler refused to render the Finns any type of assistance and even denied them moral support. Too many times in the past Finland had gravely affronted his regime and had even rebuffed an offer to enter into a mutual non-aggression pact with Germany. On December 7, 1939, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published an article, "Germany and the Finnish Question," in which Hitler reprimanded Finland for its pro-British stance and the anti-German sentiments it frequently expressed. In connection with this, he quoted an old German saying: "As one shouts into the forest, so it echoes back."⁴⁵

This first year of the war closed on a relatively quiet note. The front in the East remained calm and the so-called "Sitzkrieg" (Phony War)⁴⁶ in the West continued uneventfully throughout the winter months. Neither party to the conflict managed to score a decisive victory in the air or at sea in the course of 1939.

Report and Commentary

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The Berchtesgaden Christmas troupe jubilantly hailed the new year with a grand, traditional fireworks display in Hitler's honor. They could not possibly have foreseen that the year 1939 which they were ushering in so noisily was destined to be a fateful, tragic one. This year marked a turning-point in Hitler's career. The period 1932 through 1938 delineated the years of his greatest triumphs. The year 1939 heralded the beginning of his persistent decline, which culminated in the Third Reich's ignominious defeat in 1945. In 1939, events took a turn he had neither foretold nor anticipated. He lost the "instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker," with which he had followed the path supposedly assigned to him by Providence.⁴⁷

The New Year's Proclamation Hitler had composed for 1939 was destined to be the last one he wrote in peacetime. He maintained his firm conviction that "National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!"⁴⁸ This firm conviction resounded from every line of his 1939 address. It was now, when he had created Greater Germany, and the "inner consolidation" he sought had been attained, that he felt himself in a position to "speak out for the right to life of our Volk even at the risk of the last and most formidable consequences." The Wehrmacht, State, and Party had passed "the test," as Hitler put it. He was reassured, moreover, by the transformation of "the Western front of the Reich into a wall of steel and cement of which we know that no power on earth shall ever be able to penetrate it."

The last peacetime New Year's Proclamation read:⁴⁹

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

National Socialist Germany emerges from the year 1938 with deeply moved gratitude for the merciful workings of Providence. The sixth year after the National Socialist Revolution—and the newly erected leadership of the people and state wrought thereby—has come to a close as the most eventful

year in the history of our Volk in many a century. In the five years from 1933, the prevailing ambition of the National Socialist Movement and our Party was to overcome our domestic difficulties: the Volk's political, social, and economic misery. We have mastered the greatest foreign policy obstacle facing us within these twelve months which lie behind us now.

Who can help being deeply moved, seeing today's Greater German Reich which we erected, as he reflects on the situation we faced a mere six years ago? In face of the incredible changes wrought in the life of our Volk, who can any longer deny the righteousness of the forces and methods employed? In Germany, no one can—unless he consciously wishes our Volk ill. Abroad, of course, all those will deny this who have an interest in opposing the resurrection of the Reich—for whatever reason.

When I reflect on this year of the most bountiful harvest ever in our history, I feel tremendous gratitude first to Providence and second to my Party! The National Socialist Movement has wrought this miracle. The Good Lord provided for this, and the Party served as His instrument.

The Party stood by me in unyielding loyalty for nearly two decades. It became instrumental in creating the prerequisite conditions to herald, and indeed to force, Germany's resurrection. Throughout the years, its untiring exertions forged the inner consolidation of the *Volkskörper*. Knowing this concentrated force stood firm behind me, I was in a position, at a decisive moment, to stand up for the right to life of our Volk even at the risk of the last and most formidable consequences. All of us can reflect on 1938 with great pride and satisfaction: the men and women constituting the leadership of the Party, its fighting organizations, and the associations connected with it; the millions of active, albeit anonymous Party comrades; and all those active in the National Socialist Movement. Through their labor, they contributed to and rendered feasible the creation of this Greater German Reich.

National Socialism wrought a new sense of community within the Volk and provided it with a steadfast political regime which allowed me to carry out the build-up of a new German Wehrmacht. It has passed the test this year. Officers and enlisted men zealously competed with one another in their dedication to the National Socialist Greater German Reich. Once more the German Volk stands proud of its soldiers!

The state itself and its administration have resolved in masterly fashion a foremost task in the course of this year.

Above all, I reach out in gratitude to the entire German Volk. Its marvelous behavior has greatly contributed to robbing an inquisitive surrounding world of the last flicker of hope that the ancient affliction (*altes Erbübel*) of the Germans would once again be aroused. In the past year, not one of these so-called democratic statesmen could claim to truly speak for his people more so than I. This allowed for the resolution, without recourse to war, of this one European question which had to be resolved in one way or another.

The enterprising spirit of the German peasant assured production of foodstuffs for the German Volk. The German worker contributed to an exceptional increase in the productivity of our economy. I am grateful above all to those hundreds of thousands who transformed the Western Front of the

Reich into a wall of steel and cement of which we know that no power on earth will ever be able to penetrate it.

In this same period, the organizational power of our Volk has celebrated triumph upon triumph. The glorious feats accomplished by our Wehrmacht were paralleled by no less glorious achievements in the sphere of economics and public administration. And, one day, the history books will remark on the intriguing fact that, despite great political tensions and gigantic exertions and accomplishments, cultural life was not brought to a standstill but that, to the contrary, it witnessed astounding advances.

Within the past year, in all spheres of our communal life, the rich and multifaceted life of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft has compensated for the crimes committed against our Volk in certain decades and certain centuries. May this be of consolation to those who suffered throughout the years, throughout the decades, never yielding in their belief in our Volksgemeinschaft; and to those who were not fortunate enough to live to see the day of the restoration of the Greater German Reich. May they rejoice, from beyond their graves, in the happiness of uncounted millions which springs forth from their earthly remains. They did not suffer in vain; their deaths were not in vain.

The year 1938 constituted a solemn pledge on the part of the Volk. Twice within this year, Germans were called on to cast their votes. The first time, the Germans from the Old Reich stepped up to the ballot-box, alongside our Volksgenossen from the new German Ostmark. On the second occasion, Sudeten Germans having just returned to the Reich lined up beside them. And thus, for the first time in the history of our German Volk, all of Germany was allowed to freely and solemnly express its political will: to stand with the Greater German Reich and to never, ever again be severed from it—come what may!

In order that “come what may” could indeed come about, “the education of our Volk in the spirit of the National Socialist community” was imperative. In Hitler’s eyes, the realization of this end entailed promotion of an even more fervent personality cult in Germany, reinforcing the belief in his person among the Reich’s citizens. Another prerequisite for his ambitious designs was an augmentation of Germany’s military strength. It was essential to promote “the build-up and reinforcement of our Wehrmacht” while “implementing the Four-Year Plan” geared toward the establishment of a wartime economy. Hitler expanded on these concepts in the second part of the New Year’s Proclamation:

The future exacts fulfillment of the following tasks:

Our first and foremost task will remain what it has always been in the past and as it poses itself to us today: the education of our Volk in the spirit of the National Socialist community. The second task lies in the build-up and reinforcement of our Wehrmacht. And third, we face the task of implementing

the Four-Year Plan, resolving the manpower shortage, and integrating the new Reich provinces economically.

Germany occupies a well-defined position in international politics. We stand firm and unyielding by the obligations resulting from our friendship with Fascist Italy. The realization of the historic role played by Mussolini in the preservation of peace in the past year compels us to profound gratitude. We are grateful also to those other statesmen who in this year have undertaken to search for and to find a peaceful resolution to these questions which, at the time, allowed for no further postponement.

As regards world politics today, the Anti-Comintern Pact determines our political stance. Beyond this we have only one desire: May the coming year allow us to contribute to a general pacification of the world. May the Lord's mercy accompany our German Volk on its fateful path. Long live the National Socialist Movement! Long live our German Volk and Reich!

Berchtesgaden, December 31, 1939

Adolf Hitler

The Order of the Day that Hitler traditionally issued to the Wehrmacht on January 1 of each new year was quite concise in 1939. It read:⁵⁰

Soldiers!

A dream of many centuries came true in the year 1938: Greater Germany was born. You have decisively contributed to this. I thank you for your dutiful loyalty. It is my firm belief that, in the future also, you will stand ready to protect the nation's right to life in the face of any type of aggression.

Adolf Hitler

In reference to the exchange of telegrams between "the Führer and the Duce," the following official note was released:⁵¹

Berlin, January 2, 1939

The arrival of the New Year afforded the Führer and Reich Chancellor the opportunity to send the Italian Head of Government, Benito Mussolini, a telegram relaying his heartfelt best wishes to him. The Führer paid his respects to Benito Mussolini's great work, to the close cooperation of the years past, and to the friendship of both peoples. The Duce congratulated the Führer and the German Volk in a corresponding manner. He referred to the ties of both governments in the following words: "The close cooperation in the year 1938 between our governments and our peoples is proof to the world that our revolutions have successfully withstood the test of time; that today our revolutionaries march side by side and that they shall continue to do so in the future, too."

It is noteworthy that Hitler's telegram is reproduced in summary only, whereas an entire paragraph of Mussolini's correspondence is cited verbatim. At this point in time, Hitler obviously greatly valued

Mussolini's renewed pledge to march side by side with Germany, come what may.

On January 5, a special guest called on Hitler at the Obersalzberg: the Polish Foreign Minister, Major Beck. With regard to the consultations conducted by the two statesmen, the following communiqué was published:⁵²

Berchtesgaden, January 5, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor received the Polish Foreign Minister Beck at the Obersalzberg at 3:00 p.m. Thursday, in the presence of Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. Minister Beck was stopping over in Munich for two days on his return trip from Monte Carlo to Warsaw.

The uncharacteristically short and sedate nature of the note released revealed Hitler's irritation with the Polish Foreign Minister and his general dissatisfaction with the outcome of the conference. Relations between the two "friendly" nations had apparently cooled considerably even before this meeting. The bone of contention was the Polish Government's stance on a potential Anschluss of Danzig to the Third Reich. At the beginning of 1939, many in the National Socialist Party were unabashedly stating that now, after the Sudeten German areas had been joined to the Reich, it was high time for Danzig to return to Germany, too. Neither Hitler himself nor other members of the Party's leadership appeared troubled that such a request stood in blatant contradiction to a pledge Hitler had made on September 28 of the previous year in connection with the Sudetenland crisis: that this constituted his "last territorial demand" in Europe.⁵³

On the contrary, the Führer regarded the "return home" of Danzig as the most natural thing on earth, no different from the case of truncated Czechoslovakia or the Memel territory. After all, for many centuries, he reasoned, Bohemia, Danzig, and the Memel countryside had all formed part of the ancient Holy Roman Empire and later of the Prussian Kingdom. In his understanding, only the degrading military weakness of Germany and Austria and the despicable "betrayal" of 1918 had forced the surrender of these essentially German provinces in the first place. Now that Germany had regained its military strength, these territories would be restored to Germany. No power on earth nor any political intrigues could prevent the Reich from reclaiming them. Hitler was convinced that the British would not oppose him in the matter. And the Poles would ultimately bow before the might of the German Empire, so Hitler speculated, even if they did so only grudgingly.

Against this background was set the meeting with the Polish Foreign Minister on January 5.⁵⁴ The talks began on a friendly note. Beck voiced his country's reservations on the topic of autonomy for the Carpatho-Ukraine, for German support had allowed a so-called Ukrainian "National Government" to establish itself in the region. This body openly advocated unification with other Ukrainian provinces, located in Poland and Russia, with the goal of establishing a nationalist Ukrainian state. Poland would much have preferred the annexation of the Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary to escape the danger of a nationalist Ukrainian movement.

In principle, Hitler was not opposed to discussing the issue. Whenever there was a chance of gaining a political advantage by sacrificing a former "friend," such as the Carpatho-Ukraine, an area also known as Ruthenia, Hitler was willing to give serious consideration to such a scenario. Schmidt's notes on the meeting with Beck revealed Hitler's approach to such a situation:

The Führer's reply indicated that a resolution of existing differences lay in having recourse to the basic undercurrent of Polish-German relations. He was insistent that, on behalf of Germany, he could only emphasize that nothing had changed in these relations which the 1934 Non-Aggression Pact had determined. In the context of the Carpatho-Ukrainian question, he firmly maintained that Poland had nothing to fear, as the Reich entertained none of the designs the world press alleged that Germany pursued.

He stated that the Reich's interests did not extend beyond the Carpathian Mountains, and that he was indifferent to the activities of other interested parties in the area. He argued that the stance Germany espoused on the Viennese Sentence regarding the Ukraine, which regrettably had led to certain misconceptions in Poland, could be understood solely in the context of the issue's historical evolution. The verdict was carried out in favor of the Hungarian demands after both parties had been heard in the case. The Führer's stance on the Ukrainian question had been largely determined by his desire to avoid an international conflict at all costs.

Indeed, Hitler was to cede willingly the Carpathian section of the Ukraine to Hungary after the forcible resolution of the issue of truncated Czechoslovakia in mid-March. In all likelihood, Hitler speculated that his apparent generosity toward Poland warranted its acquiescence in the question of the Polish Corridor and Danzig. According to Schmidt, Hitler attempted to curry the Polish Foreign Minister's favor for such a barter agreement:

Aside from the Memel question, which apparently would be resolved in the interest of Germany (it appeared as though the Lithuanians were

interested in working for a rational resolution⁵⁵ of the matter), there remained one issue weighing heavily on immediate Polish-German relations: the highly sensitive and emotional issue of the Polish Corridor and Danzig. One had to move away from old, set ways to search for a completely new approach to a solution. In the case of Danzig, for instance, he could envision a return of the city in a political sense to Germany in accordance with the desire of the majority of its population. Polish interests would, however, be accounted for, especially in the economic sphere. To do justice to these was in the interest of the city, for, after all, Danzig was not an economically viable entity without a hinterland to back its economy. The Führer could visualize a settlement by which Danzig politically joined the German community, while economically remaining tied to Poland.

Danzig was German and was to remain German, and sooner or later it would return to Germany.

Hitler then declared that if Poland agreed to a return of Danzig to the Reich, and allowed for the construction of an extraterritorial Autobahn and railroad through the Polish Corridor linking East Prussia to the Reich, then he would be willing to guarantee Poland's existing frontiers. He might even contemplate a twenty-year extension of the 1934 German-Polish Non-Aggression and Friendship Pact, the terms of which were scheduled to expire in 1944. He pointed out to the Polish Foreign Minister that further economic concessions by the Reich were also a distinct possibility.

Despite what Hitler held to be the "generosity" of his proposal, Beck failed to display the enthusiasm the Führer had anticipated. Instead, Beck felt himself called on to point out to the German Head of Government that such concessions would by no means balance the loss of the Free City of Danzig to Poland. Beck stressed: "I cannot do this to public opinion in Poland under any circumstances."

This latter statement elicited a flood of contrary arguments from Hitler by which he sought to persuade his Polish visitor of the most beneficial nature of such a proposed settlement. Still reluctant to agree with Hitler, Beck did not yet dare to openly affront him by a blunt rejection of his proposals. After all, for a number of years, Beck had been accustomed to finding a friend of the Polish people in the person of Hitler or an honest broker at the very least. As he left Hitler's office, he made a rather non-committal statement by saying that he "would like to sleep on the matter first."

Nevertheless, the meeting had greatly sobered Beck, who presently awoke to the reality that Hitler was determined to bring about a change in the status quo in Danzig soon. Another Polish statesman whom

Hitler referred to as a “friend” and whom he credited with sponsorship of the 1934 Treaty, Marshal Pilsudski, had once aptly observed that the German treatment of the Danzig issue represented “a certain criterion in the assessment of Germany’s true intentions toward Poland.”⁵⁶ Hitler had repeatedly acknowledged the territorial autonomy of Danzig in the past.⁵⁷ Now he had apparently changed his mind. He was convinced that Poland had no choice but to ultimately reconcile itself to this reality. He was quite mistaken on this point, however, as future developments revealed.

On January 6, Hitler welcomed to the Berghof Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, and “expressed his heartfelt best wishes on the tenth anniversary of Himmler’s service as head of the SS.”⁵⁸

On January 9, Hitler returned to the capital city earlier than was his custom to attend the dedication ceremony of the newly constructed Chancellery. (Usually, he preferred to spend as much time as possible at the Berghof, where, as he put it, he could “think most clearly.”) The new Chancellery had been erected on Voss Strasse in the course of the preceding months, where it stood adjacent to the old Chancellery at the Wilhelmsplatz.⁵⁹ The opening ceremony had initially been planned to take place in the Ehrenhof courtyard of the new building. Because of the bad weather, the 8,000 construction workers who had been instructed to take part in the ceremony were asked inside the Sportpalast instead. There on the morning of January 9, the construction worker Max Hoffmann presented Hitler the keys to the new Chancellery, in a red leather case.

Next, Hitler stepped up to the rostrum to hold one of his ‘secret speeches’ for construction workers. Throughout recent years, he had frequently addressed a variety of audiences in a similarly “secretive” manner. He took great pains to detail the state of Germany’s domestic, economic, and foreign policy. He spoke of “the strengthening of German self-confidence in all areas and on all levels of our Volk.” Hence, he explained, it was his ambition to present Greater Germany with a capital worthy of the Third Reich, “the magnificence of which was to be mirrored in the magnificence of this city.” He himself did not wish to appear as though he was more than he had always been, namely, a “German Volksgenosse;” but—alas—as “the Führer of the German nation,” he did have to pay mind to the exigencies of representation. He explained this in the following terms:⁶⁰

As a German Volksgenosse, I am today precisely what I have always been, and I do not desire to be more than this. My private quarters⁶¹ are exactly as they were before I rose to power. This will remain unchanged. Today, however, I am the representative of the German Volk! When I receive a guest at the Chancellery, I receive him not as the private person Adolf Hitler, but as the Führer of the German nation! He is not my guest; through me he is the guest of Germany!

Then Hitler went on to praise the “young genius of an architect, Speer” who had, within the shortest time conceivable, erected “this edifice for work and representation” for the Greater German Reich. Construction had finished on January 9, 1939, the day scheduled for completion. Hitler claimed this represented a rare attainment in the construction business. As a former construction worker himself, he possessed the expertise to appreciate this feat properly. He declared:

This feat is unprecedented: I myself have worked in construction and I know what this means! It is truly a unique achievement, and every single man who partook in it is entitled to feel great pride today. And this is one more symbol of the German Volk’s capacity for great achievements!

Hitler then turned to thank all those involved in the construction of the building. He had even ordered the workers at the quarry, from which had come the stone to build the Chancellery, to participate in the festivities in Berlin. He concluded his lengthy speech on the following note:

Today all of you may feel great pride and joy. I rejoice in sharing with my German workers this celebration of accomplishment. Today I take possession of the new Reich Chancellery. I have observed you often in the task of building it, and I realize that what now stands before us so majestically, has cost you much sweat, labor, sacrifice, and exertion while undergoing construction.

It is the building of this new Reich Chancellery that now truly brings the year 1938 to a fitting close. It was in this year that you built the Chancellery as a monument to the events of this year and to crown our Greater German Reich. [—]

To our German Volk and to our Movement—*Sieg Heil!*

In the context of the dedication ceremony at the new Reich Chancellery building, it is appropriate to reproduce an article at this point, which Hitler would publish in July 1939 in a magazine called *Die Kunst im Dritten Reich*.⁶² The essay was entitled “Die Reichskanzlei—von Adolf Hitler,” and it dealt with the construction and significance of the old Reich Chancellery, but most of all, with the history of the

new one. In the article, Hitler's scorn for the old structure was shown in sarcastic comments on his predecessors' obviously mediocre frame of reference and their stilted lack of taste in general. In contrast, he showered praise on his own initiative and generosity, on the intricate and expert planning, and on the "truly magnificent effect" of the building. At this point, Hitler interjected: "this edifice that, by the way, will serve a different purpose from the year 1950 on." Hitler obviously entertained plans for the construction of a yet more magnificent and representative building to reflect the ever-increasing importance the Reich would undoubtedly have achieved by that year.

Hitler's essay, which was to be his last effort as an author, read:

THE REICH CHANCELLERY
by Adolf Hitler

When, after the re-establishment of the Reich, Bismarck determined to purchase the Palace Radziwill, later to become the Reich Chancellery, he himself retained his office in the Foreign Office building. The proximity of this building to the Foreign Ministry was, in all likelihood, the reason for the purchase of this particular object. The structure afforded virtually no actual space. Dating from the first half of the 18th century, it had initially served as an ancient seat for nobility. Its façade was well preserved. Inside, repeated attempts at modernization had disfigured the building. The end of the 19th century witnessed further such embellishments and degraded the palace by bestowing on it a heavy-handed elegance. Bombastic plaster was to hide the deficit of real material and thereby, unfortunately, glossed over its well-balanced proportions. Even the hall in which once the Congress of Berlin⁶³ convened was not spared like "improvements." Apparently, weak lighting along the walls and gigantic chandeliers of tin were then regarded as especially attractive. As concerns paintings in the house, these were mainly amateur copies of originals on loan from Prussian collectors. With the single exception of a portrait of Bismarck by Lenbach, the portraits of former chancellors were devoid of any artistic merit.

The Chancellery gardens were ill-tended and began to be overgrown by weeds. A superstitious fear of replacing old and dying trees led first to covering increasing numbers of their moldy trunks with shingles and then to filling them with cement. Had this process been allowed to continue, the park would undoubtedly have begun to resemble the Houthulster Wald⁶⁴ after three years of bombardment by the English.

While Chancellors before 1918 strove to make more or less tasteful improvements, the condition of the house began to deteriorate steadily after the Revolution of 1918. When I determined to move into the Chancellery nonetheless in 1934, the roof was practically rotting away above us while the floors beneath us were engaged in similar activities. The police restricted access to the hall in which congresses and diplomatic receptions were held to a total of sixty persons at one time, for fear the floor might give way. A few

months before this, on the occasion of a reception held by Reich President von Hindenburg, approximately 100 guests and servants had crowded one hall. As we began to tear out the floors, we came across beams which remained little more than brittle sticks disintegrating as we rubbed them between our palms.

During rain storms, water penetrated the building, not only from above, but from below as well. From the Wilhelmstrasse, a veritable flood spilt over into the first-floor compartments. Its flow was augmented by a back-up in the drainage throughout the house, including the toilets. As my predecessors could rarely count on remaining in office for more than three, four, or five months, they had neither motivation to clear away the dirt of those before them nor to improve conditions for those to succeed them. As the world took little notice of them in the first place, they were not generally troubled with appearances before foreign representatives.

By 1934, the entire structure exuded decay: ceilings and floors were giving way while wall and floor paneling was rotted out. An unbearable stench pervaded the house. Meanwhile, the new office space created for the Chancellery along the Wilhelmsplatz took on the appearance of a storage house or station for the municipal firefighters. Its interior suggested a sanatorium for those with lung disease, although this was not primarily the disease that those laboring inside were in fact suffering from. In an effort to restore the structure as far as possible, I decided to undertake a general renovation project in 1934. The expenses incurred were not to be assumed by the state, as I myself provided the financial means necessary.

Professor Troost himself was still able to draw up the blueprints for this project. His goals were:

1. to reassign living space as well as space for receptions to the lower floors of the building, and
2. to furnish the second floor for the practical exigencies of running a Reich Chancellery.

My office as Reich Chancellor up to this point had been located in a room facing the Wilhelmsplatz. Its size and interior decorating made it more appropriate to house a general salesman for cigarettes and tobacco in the office of a medium-sized enterprise. It was virtually impossible to work in this office: with the windows closed, the heat suffocated anyone inside; with the windows open, there was the noise rising up from the streets.

The upper floors had customarily been reserved for official receptions by the respective chancellors. In the days of the renovation of the Reich President's Palace, the old Reich President had held various receptions there, too. This, however, meant that these rooms were not in use throughout most of the year and stood empty. This was the reason behind my relocating the reception rooms to the lower floors and remodeling the upper floors vacated thereby, to accommodate offices. The hall for Congresses, vacant throughout most of the year also and without any practical application, became the meeting room for Cabinet sessions.

Since there was no room of sufficient size to accommodate the large-scale receptions I had to give for diplomatic reasons as head of state, I instructed

the architect Professor Gall to build a large hall to hold approximately 200 persons. At this point, it appeared as though the remodeling of the lower floor would suffice for this purpose. In the course of 1934, however, the merging of the offices of Reich Chancellor and Reich President necessitated rooms to house the presidential office and staff and provide space for the Wehrmacht secretariat within the building. Also, official receptions required an appropriate setting. The realization of these necessities led to the purchase of the Borsig Palace. Admittedly built in a style not looked on favorably in our age, its interior surpassed that of the miserable Chancellery building by far. Professor Speer was entrusted with the first remodeling of the Chancellery. Within a markedly short time and without altering the façade, the structure built by the architect Lucae was connected to the factory-building on the Wilhelmstrasse, and its interior design splendidly developed. At least for the time being, it provided the presidential office, the Wehrmacht staff, and the SA leaders with office space. Under the guidance of Party Comrade Bouhler, the Council of the Party was accorded a few rooms, too. The former office building of the Reich Chancellery was adorned with a balcony facing the Wilhelmstrasse. This was the first decent architectural element within the structure. Further building onto the existing structures, while providing temporary relief, did not represent a solution of the housing problem. Two further considerations were instrumental in bringing about my decision of January 1938 to seek an immediate solution.

1. In an effort to facilitate traffic flowing through the city from East to West, a lengthening of the Jägerstrasse had been determined on, to lead it through the Ministerial Gardens and the Zoo and thereby connect it to the Tiergartenstrasse. The Municipal Berlin Building Inspectorate of that time had drawn up these plans, which in my eyes did not represent a solution of the problem. Therefore I asked Professor Speer to come up with a more reasoned plan to relieve traffic flow along the Leipziger Strasse and the avenue Unter den Linden by securing a direct passage to the West of the Wilhelmsplatz. To this end it was necessary to transform the narrow passage along the Voss Strasse into a wide transit route. Since obviously this could not be realized at the expense of the Wertheim Department Store and would have been attended by construction difficulties in the first place, an attempt had to be undertaken on the opposite side of the street. Hence the necessity arose independently to tear down the entire housing front and to rebuild later.

2. Moreover, in the days of late December 1937 and early January 1938, I had determined to resolve the Austrian question and to erect a Greater German Reich. Hence the old Chancellery building could not possibly accommodate the additional administrative, as well as representative duties necessitated thereby. On January 11, 1938, I therefore instructed the General Building Inspector Professor Speer to undertake the construction of a new Chancellery building located in the Voss Strasse. The structure was to be completed by a January 10, 1939 deadline. On this day, I was to receive the keys for the building. While in fact we concerned ourselves with this topic mentally in a series of consultations, the physical nature of the task was an immense one. For on January 11, 1938, the construction of the new building

could not even begin as the old houses along the Voss Strasse had to be torn down first. Therefore, actual construction work could not be started before late March at the earliest. This left a term of nine months at our disposal to carry out the project. That this was indeed feasible we owe to this genius of an architect, his artistic inspiration, and his enormous organizational talents, as well as to the enterprise of those assisting him. The Berlin worker has outdone himself in his performance at this site. I do not think that a similar task, purely in regard to the labor involved, could have been carried out anywhere else in the world. I need not expand on the fact that naturally everything possible was undertaken to insure the social welfare of those involved in this construction project. In light of the winter temperatures, the severe frosts, the completion of this building is conceivable only—as emphasized earlier—if one considers the enormous ability to perform demonstrated by the Berlin worker.

The blueprint for this project is of a clear and generous nature and easily understood if one considers the structure's purpose and the space at the architect's disposal. The solution found in the gigantic, long structure along the Voss Strasse was dictated by the circumstances, as well as artistically ingenious. The sequence of rooms inside not only satisfies practical exigencies, it has also a truly magnificent effect on the onlooker. The interior decoration is truly excellent, thanks to the combined talents of interior decorators, sculptors, painters, etc., involved in the project. This applies also to the achievements of German craftsmanship here. The landscaping in the park is complete with the exception of one section which still serves as a construction site. The short period of construction has not yet allowed the banquet room at the end of the great hall to become apparent in its full size and stature. This room, therefore, is a makeshift, so that the structure can be used. The banquet room will only be complete in two years.

This Reich Chancellery building—this edifice that, by the way, will serve a different purpose from the year 1950 on—represents a practical and no-less artistic achievement of the highest order. It speaks for its ingenious designer and architect: Albert Speer.

Hitler's charge that the old Chancellery building left much to be desired was not unfounded. To a far greater extent this was true also of the Reich Foreign Ministry building, located at Wilhelmstrasse Nos. 74–76. However, one wonders whether splendor, or its absence, in a state's seat of government is truly a criterion of its might, as Hitler apparently assumed. London's Downing Street No. 10 and the White House in Washington suggest differently. While there was assuredly no causal relationship between the two, it was in fact rather curious how, once Hitler had set up house in the fabled new Chancellery building, things started to go decidedly downhill for him.

A peculiar trait of the Third Reich, its excessive preoccupation with questions of etiquette, taste, and representation, became particularly

prominent in 1939. While Hitler purposely fostered these outward displays of power, such efforts found little resonance among the German populace. The man on the street stood by on the sidelines and observed the goings-on with apprehension, distrustful of all the superficial glory. It was almost as if the ordinary citizen had a presentiment that in proportion to the increased demonstrations of might and self-confidence, the power needed to justify such pretense was getting less and less. Even the political leaders within the Party appeared ill-at-ease in the gilded uniforms replete with colorful new insignia, which Hitler so liberally distributed amongst them in April 1939.⁶⁵

The length to which Hitler went to show off the newly built Chancellery appeared excessive and unnatural. The first months after its opening, torrents of guests were ushered through its ostentatious hallways. Every imaginable sort of guest from Party, State, and Wehrmacht was instructed duly to admire the product of Hitler's vanity.

On January 12, the first official New Year's reception opened a series of festivities scheduled to take place in the new Chancellery building. At 11:00 in the morning, the Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht, all in full dress uniform, came to convey their best wishes for the New Year to the German Head of State, as was the custom. They were accompanied by numerous adjutants; the Reichsführer SS; the Chief of the German Police with his assistants; the Mayor and City President of Berlin, Lippert; and finally the Halloren (saltworkers at Halle).

At noon sharp, the main festivities began in the new Mosaic Hall, in which the numerous diplomatic envoys had assembled. It was to be quite an event, since Hitler and his entourage appeared clad in full dress uniform. The Reich Foreign Minister and the German Diplomatic Corps wore their new uniforms, adorned with epaulettes, aiguillettes,⁶⁶ and lavishly embroidered cuffs. In comparison to the uniforms of some other diplomats, the German ones were not excessively gorgeous. However, the uniforms of the foreign diplomats were the outcome of tradition and had historical significance. Not surprisingly, Germany's career diplomats were less than pleased to be attired in such ludicrous outfits.

The SS men in Hitler's entourage appeared at the reception clad in full dress uniform, too, with aiguillettes and silver-and-white sashes. The officers of the Wehrmacht were instructed to wear similarly ornate outfits. And a man who previously had insisted on wearing only a

simple brown shirt and a jacket without any distinctions for many years, this self-proclaimed example of modesty—Adolf Hitler—appeared on this memorable occasion wearing a sash with gold lining! The scenario no doubt was an impressive one, even if only in the eyes of the diplomats from the Balkans.

In his address, the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, the Apostolic Nuncio Monsignor Cesare Orsenigo, recalled the Munich Agreement:⁶⁷

May God Almighty grant us the evolution of such a peaceful procedure into a customary means for the settlement of international disputes, for it proved itself so immensely valuable at the Munich Conference, and it corresponds so well to the desire of all peoples.

Although this pious wish was far less to Hitler's taste, he took care not to reveal his true preferences in public and he replied to the Papal Envoy's speech in the following manner:

Your Excellency!

It is with sincere gratitude that I accept the congratulations which Your Excellency has proffered to me and to the German Volk at the New Year, on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps accredited in Berlin and assembled here.

Your Excellency has called to our minds the day the representatives of four great powers gathered in Munich. This unique occurrence has impressed itself strongly on my recollections of the past year. It is with profound gratitude that the German nation remembers 1938 as the year which brought about the realization of its inalienable right to self-determination. That this could indeed come about without rupturing the peace in Europe for even a single day was due largely to the policy of wisdom and understanding embraced by the powers, which found its expression in the Munich Agreement.

It was in another context that I already had the opportunity in this New Year to express the gratitude the German Volk felt to those statesmen who, in the year 1938, ventured to seek and secure a way toward a peaceful resolution of those questions which allowed for no further deferment and who pursued this path in concert with Germany. To have succeeded in this, to have arrived at the peaceful resolution desired by all parties, this we owe not exclusively to the will to peace and sense of responsibility of all governments concerned.

Foremost we owe this to the realization that the historical evolution and natural desires of a people have to be acknowledged sooner or later. These cannot be brushed aside to the detriment of one particular people or of one particular state, nor can force repress these. The powers concerned have capitalized on this insight, have drawn the proper conclusions, and have applied them to their political decision-making. Thereby they have not only made a genuine contribution to the preservation of peace in Europe, but also to the creation of a happier and healthier Europe.

These developments lead me to join with Your Excellency in the hope that in the future this insight will also enable all leading European statesmen to secure a peace for Europe which does justice to the natural and thereby rightful interests of all peoples, to the greatest extent possible.

May I cordially respond in kind to the congratulations Your Excellency extended to the German Reich and to my own person. My warmest wishes concern the personal welfare of all Heads of State represented here and the happiness and prosperity of their lands.

On the afternoon of January 12, Hitler called on Göring to congratulate him on his forty-sixth birthday. Alfred Rosenberg, who also turned forty-six that day, received only a congratulatory telegram. For his part, Rosenberg had chosen to celebrate his birthday outside the city of Berlin, as an equivocal press note indicated.⁶⁸ Hitler spent the evening at the German Opera House in Berlin-Charlottenburg, attending a new production of *Die lustige Witwe*, directed by the composer Franz Lehár himself.⁶⁹

The next grand reception at the Chancellery was scheduled for January 14. All Gauleiters and Reichsleiters, together with their respective deputies, were summoned to Berlin to attend a "Führer conference." The primary purpose of this meeting most obviously was to exhibit to those present the new, magnificent rooms at the Chancellery. After a communal lunch, Hitler took it upon himself to escort his Unterführers through the newly constructed facilities. After the tour, he gave—what else—a lengthy address before them. The official communiqué read:⁷⁰

In his office after the viewing, the Führer imparted to the political leaders' corps a recapitulation of the events of the past year and an assessment of the present political situation. The address lasted more than one hour. The Führer took advantage of the occasion to express profound gratitude to the Gauleiters and Reichsleiters for the outstanding behavior of the Party in the fateful months of the last year, with particular mention of his Deputy.

The Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Csáky,⁷¹ was the first foreign dignitary whom Hitler distinguished by a special invitation to the new Chancellery building. Ever since the Hungarian Foreign Minister Gömbös had been the first foreign statesman to call on the newly appointed Chancellor in 1933, numerous Hungarian politicians had gained his favor by frequent official visits. Hence, it was not by accident that a Hungarian was the first foreigner to admire in person the Third Reich's novel facilities for representative government.

The subservience the Hungarians displayed towards Hitler was all the more astounding because Hungary traditionally had not been

friendly to Germany. Such age-old resentment naturally did not vanish overnight. This applied even to a career diplomat such as Count Csáky. Only three months after this visit, in the course of a conference on April 20, 1939 with Mussolini and Ciano in Rome, he referred to Hitler in a derisive manner. He related that the first impression Hitler had made on him had led him to consider the German Head of State as "plain crazy," and he insisted that Hitler's shifty eye had revealed this.⁷² At a later encounter with Ciano on August 18, 1939, he openly declared that 95 percent of all Hungarians hated the Germans.⁷³

The communiqué below was published in Germany on the meeting between Csáky and Hitler:⁷⁴

On Monday afternoon [January 16, 1939], in the presence of Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer received the Hungarian Foreign Minister for a consultation in the rooms of the new Chancellery.

Csáky related the following on his meeting with the German Head of State in an interview with the official German News Bureau:

I am both pleased and satisfied with my first trip abroad in the capacity of Foreign Minister. I rejoice at being back on German soil, and to once again bear witness to the pulsating life within the mighty German Empire and to the spectacular improvement of its most beautiful capital. I am satisfied, as my consultations in Berlin have taken place in an extraordinarily cordial, completely unclouded atmosphere.

In the course of the talks with Count Csáky, Hitler had evidently hinted that in the matter of the Carpatho-Ukraine the last word had not yet been spoken. Poland also desired that this area be annexed to Hungary. Hence Hitler conceived of the terrain as an instrument of barter to be used in exchange for Danzig.

The next display of the splendid new Chancellery had been scheduled for January 18. Recently appointed lieutenants to Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe had to line up for inspection by Hitler on this date and admire the newly constructed facilities. As a matter of course, Hitler held a lengthy address before the men assembled. The official note below was published in reference to the occasion:⁷⁵

Berlin, January 18

On Wednesday afternoon, the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht received the lieutenants of the officer graduating class of 1938 who are entering service with Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe, in the presence of the three respective Commanders in Chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht and of the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. In the Mosaic Hall at the new Chancellery, the Führer extensively detailed to his lieutenants their

duties and obligations as German officers in the Greater German Wehrmacht. After the address, the Führer entertained the lieutenants as his guests in the rooms of the new Reich Chancellery.

This address, held on the anniversary of the foundation of the Reich in 1871, developed into a prototype for similar orations in the years to come.

As a result of the outbreak of a war on a scale far larger than anticipated, nearly all Party events, marches, mass rallies, and the like had to be canceled from 1940 on. With the exception of insignificant appearances at rallies for the Winterhilfswerk and the meetings of the Old Guard on November 8 and February 24, Hitler spoke almost exclusively at occasions attended only by young officers. These listeners were still captivated by Hitler, albeit more because of military discipline than true enthusiasm. Regrettably, military etiquette allowed for “*Heil*” cries only at the beginning and at the end of Hitler’s appeal. During the delivery of the speech, the officer candidates kept silent. Up to 1942, Hitler spoke no less than seven times before a like audience, whose presence he himself had ordered.⁷⁶ Through the years, Hitler spoke to about 7,000 to 10,000 professional and reserve unit officers, ordered to line up in front of him so that through his speeches their confidence in victory would be reinforced. Actually, it was Hitler himself who sought to reinforce his confidence by the sight of—and assurance displayed by—these young, inexperienced junior officers, some of whom no doubt brought him true enthusiasm. For the longer the war lasted and the more “lashes of the whip” and “hammer blows of Providence”⁷⁷ were dealt to Hitler, the less confident he became.

On January 19, 1939, Hitler turned his attention once again to the SA. As mentioned before, Hitler had steadily degraded this organization until at last, after several years, it had been transformed into a mere sports club. These men were to serve the Wehrmacht as errand boys, to concern themselves exclusively with the defense exercises (*Wehrsport*). The SA hence assumed responsibility for the paramilitary training of young Germans before conscription, to drill the youngsters so that, once drafted, they could be immediately assigned to specialized units and elite formations. Now the SA Sports Badge was given the title of *SA Wehrabzeichen*. The SA no longer simply served the “aggressive training of the body by means of simple, useful, and natural physical exercises,” as Hitler had paraphrased the SA’s mission as recently as 1935, but as an institution for paramilitary training.⁷⁸

Hitler's decree of January 19 had the following content:⁷⁹

To supplement my decrees of February 15, 1935 and March 18, 1937 on the acquisition of the SA Sports Badge and the annual training exercises, I elevate the SA Sports Badge to SA Defense Badge (*SA Wehrabzeichen*) and place it at the foundation of pre- and post-military training. As agency to provide this training, I appoint the SA.

On reaching seventeen years of age and satisfying the requirements for entry into the military, every German man will have the moral duty to fulfill the requirements for the acquisition of the SA Defense Badge in preparation for subsequent service with the Wehrmacht. Graduates of the Hitler Youth will begin preparations to acquire the SA Defense Badge on completing sixteen years of age.

Provided no prior engagement in special training through the facilities of another Party formation (such as SS, NSKK, NSFK) is already imparting training to him in the spirit of the SA Defense Badge, every soldier honorably discharged from the armed services and in good health shall maintain his physical and spiritual forces by joining the ranks of these defense contingents (*Wehrmannschaften*) and integrating himself into the SA. The character and nature of the training will take into account the requirements of service in the Wehrmacht.

Specific instructions on the character of the training will be issued by the SA Chief of Staff, pending agreement with the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht. Responsibility for implementation will lie with the SA Chief of Staff exclusively. Offices of Party and State are to lend support to the SA in this educational undertaking and to honor appropriately documented proof of the possession of the SA Defense Badge.

Adolf Hitler

This decree was complemented on January 27 by an ordinance pertaining to the pre- and post-military education for defense in the field of motoring:⁸⁰

I order the NSKK to cooperate with the Army in the realm of pre- and post-military education for defense and to assume the following tasks:

In the year before the individual conscript's tour of duty with the military, the NSKK is to instruct those individuals selected as drivers to relieve the motorized units of the Army in training courses of several weeks' duration at the "driving schools of the NSKK" at the wheels of Army vehicles.

All soldiers on leave from active duty⁸¹ who have been instructed in a modern fashion and have been selected as drivers in the event of a "Mob"⁸² are to complete training exercises with the NSKK to improve their technical driving skills. This training will be counted toward fulfillment of service with the SA Wehrmannschaften. The assignment to the SA Wehrmannschaften of these soldiers on leave from active duty will not be affected by the technical training.

The leaders and men of the NSKK as well as all soldiers on leave from active duty who have completed their tour of service are to join the ranks of

the NSKK and will undergo training with the NSKK on the basis of the provisions for the SA Defense Badge.

The NSKK is to take account of the requirements of the Wehrmacht with regard to organization and training. The NSKK Corps Leader is to issue specific instructions on the nature of the training, subject to the approval of the Commander in Chief of the Army.

Offices of Party and State are to lend support to the NSKK in this educational exercise.

Adolf Hitler

Both the above ordinances are instructive in the context of Hitler's true plans for Germany and his assessment of the German Volk. Their contents reveal that the various subdivisions within the Party served the pursuit of military objectives (divisions such as the SS, SA, NSKK, NSFK, and HJ). The so-called National Socialist Weltanschauung had apparently faded into oblivion and found no mention in either of the texts. On the other hand, this "philosophical" stance had never entailed anything other than "blind" obedience to Hitler.

One wonders whatever had happened to those supreme virtues that Hitler had fed to the Volk as the goals of his Movement, throughout all those years. Millions of Germans had enthusiastically rallied around such concepts as "love for Germany," "service to Volk and Fatherland," "physical exercise," "health right into old age," "strength through joy," "bread and work," and "culture and art." From early 1939 on, all one heard was: the "honorary service at the gun," "pre- and post-military education," the "moral obligation to acquire the SA Defense Badge," and the constitution of "defense units for the maintenance of physical and spiritual forces." Divisions and training within the Party hierarchy were to be set up in compliance with the "requirements of the Wehrmacht," and rules were subject to "the approval of the Commanders in Chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht."

Hitler's vision of a new Germany was one in which the German people had become soldiers knowing only blind obedience, and this to an extent not even the members of the Soldatenbund⁸³ had ever dreamt of. Nonetheless, the seeds Hitler had planted did not germinate. All Germans who were physically fit and could be spared at home would have to become soldiers soon, with or without the benefit of the SA Defense Badge! This would be the outcome of the harsh necessities of the war that was to begin, and that became a reality in a manner quite different from the one Hitler had envisioned. *Wehr-mannschaften*, "schooling" by SA and NSKK, etc., would be immaterial. Within the next six years, life in Germany would be tainted by the great

war, which Hitler's lack of restraint and caution had brought about. The entire structure of his fanciful and high-flown visions of the future would quickly crumble.

Undaunted as yet, Hitler believed himself in a position to build up a war machine, in the face of which every state would surrender. The Western Powers assuredly would not intervene. Nevertheless, speed was imperative. Therefore, the German economy would simply have to follow his lead "blindly" and concentrate on the armament process.

One of the consequences of this realization was Hitler's decision to dismiss Schacht, who occupied the position of Reichsbank President and who was particularly opposed to a further increase in the creation of money. Simultaneously, Hitler resolved to deal also with the other bourgeois economists who had approached him with their misgivings regarding the stability of the currency and other petty concerns.

On January 7, Schacht had placed before Hitler a memorandum on the intricate nature of Germany's finances. He had pointed out the strain of the armament process on the economy. Other directors with the Reichsbank had countersigned the policy paper, too. Of course, Hitler paid no heed to the memorandum. Instead, he made it clear to Schacht that he regarded him as an obstacle to the implementation of the National Socialist economic policy. Hence he effected Schacht's dismissal on January 19.⁸⁴

Berlin, January 19, 1939

Dear Herr Minister!

I wish to take advantage of the occasion of your leaving the office of President of the Reichsbank Board of Directors to express to you the sincere and cordial appreciation of your services in this position throughout long and difficult years on behalf of Germany and my own person. Your name will remain tied to the initial period of the epoch of our national restoration. I am glad to know you are at my disposal and to assign you new responsibilities in your capacity as Reich Minister.

With the German salute,

Adolf Hitler

Precisely what type of "new responsibilities" Hitler had in mind for Schacht remained a secret for the time being. Perhaps Hitler was speculating on making use of Schacht's services at a later date, as he was to do with the deposed Neurath just a few weeks later. For appearances' sake, both men stayed on as members of the Cabinet, whose reputation and presence were to create the illusion of national unity.⁸⁵ The new Reichsbank President, Funk, received the letter reproduced below:

January 19, 1939

Dear Herr Minister!

I take advantage of the occasion of your appointment as President of the Reichsbank to congratulate you on assuming this new position. It shall be your task:

1. to secure the absolute stability of wages and prices in your position, which is to combine the two important realms, and thereby secure the value of the Mark,⁸⁶

2. to develop and augment the private lender's access to funds in the money market,

3. to bring to a conclusion the process initiated by the law of February 10, 1937; in defiance of the Dawes Plan,⁸⁷ to reclaim the German Reich's uncontested sovereignty over the former Reichsbank and to place it unconditionally under the sovereignty of the State as a German bank of issue, in accordance with National Socialist principles.

With the German salute,

Adolf Hitler

Judging from these lines, it was not difficult to divine that Schacht, the previous Reichsbank President, simply no longer fit into the mold of the "National Socialist principles." At an earlier date, Schacht had been deemed a good man and a "well-trying" National Socialist.

Needless to say, Hitler also vigorously removed those directors of the Reichsbank who had placed their signatures beneath Schacht's memorandum. The official announcement read as follows:⁸⁸

Berlin, January 21

The Führer has relieved the following members of the Reichsbank Board of Directors of their duties: Vice President Dreyse and Reichsbank Director Hülle. Simultaneously, the Führer has appointed the State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Economics, Rudolf Brinkmann, as member of the Reichsbank Board of Directors. He shall retain his title as State Secretary. The Reich Minister of Economics and Reichsbank President, Funk, has named State Secretary Brinkmann Vice President of the Reichsbank Board of Directors.

Having removed the dissentious from the Reichsbank, Hitler took immediate control of the bank. He decreed that the Reichsbank was to extend to the State whatever credit he deemed necessary.⁸⁹ Hitler openly acknowledged his intentions in his speech before the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, stating:⁹⁰

I stand determined to bring to its conclusion the transformation of the German Reichsbank—a path pursued ever since January 30, 1937—from an internationally controlled bankers' enterprise to the institute of issue of the German Reich.⁹¹

If the rest of the world laments the loss of the international character of yet another German institution, may we point out that it is our inexorable

decision (*unerbittlicher Entschluss*) to impart to all institutions affecting our lives predominantly German, i.e. National Socialist characteristics. [—]

I now hold it to be the duty, my Reichstag Deputies, of every German man and every German woman to comprehend the conduct of the Reich's economic policy. In the cities and in the countryside you have to consider in particular that Germany's economic policy is not based on some sort of financial theory, but rather on a very primitive understanding of production, i.e. on the realization that the sole determining factor is the quantity of goods produced.

That we are faced with numerous other tasks, such as the necessary deployment of a high percentage of manpower to the armament—by itself unproductive—of our Volk, is regrettable, yet unalterable. After all, the economy of the present Reich hinges on its external security. It is best to arrive at this realization early rather than too late. I hence see it as imperative for the National Socialist leadership of this State to do everything humanly possible to strengthen our defenses.

This explanation signaled that Hitler had abandoned the formerly highly praised National Socialist economic policy. He thought such a development “regrettable, yet unalterable.” Finally, the bank of issue could strive to fulfill its supreme purpose: to fuel the armament production to the point of no return. Carelessly, Hitler tossed aside the very economic policy that had carried him to power in the first place by successfully fighting unemployment. No longer did he pay any heed to the relationship between production and the circulation of money, nor to the “backing of the currency by means of national productivity.” What was crucial to the war effort was to keep prices and wages stable, even though this stability was clearly an artificial one. Small matter if this meant that in the end the money earned by the workers did them little good, since they could not buy anything with it.

It was Hitler's firm belief that once the new Lebensraum in the East had been conquered, the economy would take care of itself. Should the conquest fail—well, that would be the end in any event! Therefore, Hitler began to improvise, both in foreign affairs and military policy. “The economy of the present Reich hinges on its external security”—this motto best sums up his new-found economic faith. After all was said and done, Hitler's assessment of this relationship proved to be correct in the end. The Third Reich would indeed ruin both the economy and the people. Once Hitler's reign was finally over for good, Germany awoke not only to an unparalleled military and political fiasco, but also to an economy in shambles. This collapse was far worse than the catastrophe of 1918.

On January 21, Hitler welcomed the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky⁹² to the new Chancellery for talks. The following official note was published on the meeting:⁹³

Saturday afternoon, in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer received the Czechoslovakian Minister for Foreign Affairs Chvalkovsky for consultations in the new rooms at the Chancellery. In the morning, both Foreign Ministers had already conferred on all the questions pertaining to the relationship of the German Reich to Czechoslovakia.

Subsequently, the Reich Foreign Minister gave a breakfast banquet at the Kaiserhof Hotel in honor of Chvalkovsky.

The issues Hitler and Ribbentrop discussed with Chvalkovsky largely concerned additional German claims on the "*Rest-Tschechei*" as well as a renewed curtailing of the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia. As early as November 19, 1938, Germany and the Czechoslovakian Government had signed a "contract on the construction and maintenance of an extraterritorial transit Autobahn, connecting Breslau (Wroclaw) to Brünn (Brno) and Vienna."⁹⁴

Another agreement of January 1939 was designed to facilitate traffic by car and bicycle. The treaty specified that Czechoslovakia was to allow for the passage of both types of vehicles along no less than 30 transit routes crossing its territory. Further, Reich Germans were exempted from paying customs duties, taxes, or tolls of any kind.⁹⁵

It is a very revealing fact that, despite Czechoslovakian cooperation with regard to the extraterritorial Autobahn through their territory, the complete annexation of the "remainder of Czechoslovakia" could neither be avoided nor delayed for any significant time. Hence, acquiescence to Hitler's demand for the construction of a similar Autobahn through the Polish Corridor,⁹⁶ was by no means a guarantee that Poland would not suffer a similar fate. There was no telling whether, if at all, Hitler would not cast an eye on other Polish terrain also.

Ever since the establishment of what remained as the Czechoslovakian Republic in 1938, Germany had exerted enormous pressure on this newly founded state. It was merely a question of time before it succumbed to the far more powerful German Reich and was turned into a protectorate of sorts. The above example of the transit Autobahn provides ample evidence to that effect, as does the free passage of German vehicles through territory of the nominally sovereign Czechoslovakian state.

There was simply no need for the forced entry of Hitler's troops into Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939. In due time, the country would have been *de facto* completely dependent on the Reich, though perhaps not *de jure*. Granted that his freedom of action in the region did not extend to military and foreign policy concerns, still he could regulate any matter to suit his interests. Nevertheless, Hitler insisted on subjugating the remainder of Czechoslovakia to Germany's military sovereignty, as he planned to do in the case of Danzig and the Memel territory.

On the afternoon of January 25, the Italian State Secretary Farinacci⁹⁷ called on Hitler at the new Chancellery.⁹⁸ It is worthy of notice that Gauleiter Julius Streicher accompanied him to the conference, the content of which evidently was of an anti-Semitic nature. Frinacci was a proponent of the new anti-Semitic agitation in Italy, perpetration of which Hitler had unequivocally demanded of Mussolini. Obviously, Farinacci had come to Berlin to pick up instructions on how to proceed.

The evening of that same day, another showing of the new Chancellery took place. This time, it was high ranking commanders of Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe who dutifully had to admire Hitler's new seat of government.⁹⁹ The stage could not have been more properly set if it had been a true theatrical performance. The officers wore full dress uniform as they lined up along the wall in the "Long Hall." Hitler stepped in front of them and slowly greeted each man personally. Torches burning in the huge hall did little to shed light, and thus the entire scene was of a most somber character. Nevertheless, Hitler was exalted and held a lengthy lecture on the political and military situation for the benefit of his guests. No official act of state was properly conducted, unless he gave at least one speech and dinner on the occasion.

Celebrations on the fifth anniversary of the conclusion of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact were set for January 26. Hitler had sent Ribbentrop to Warsaw to take part in the festivities. At the time, Hitler was still convinced that he could succeed in talking the Poles into returning Danzig and permitting the construction of an extraterritorial Autobahn through the Polish Corridor. While in Warsaw Beck and Ribbentrop spoke of the "well-tried cooperation" between Poland and Germany, the question of Danzig weighed heavily on their minds. Increasingly, the opinion spread in Poland that the Pact with Germany was nearly suicidal in nature.

After the conquest of the city of Barcelona, Hitler sent the telegram below to Franco, congratulating him on the feat on January 27:¹⁰⁰

I wish to convey to you my most cordial congratulations on the liberation of Barcelona, on this glorious success scored by the National Spanish Army under your leadership. I am confidently hoping that a swift and victorious end to this war shall restore peace to the Spanish people and thereby herald a new epoch of blissful evolution of the Spanish nation.

On the morning of January 30, the sixth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, the Wehrmacht serenaded its Supreme Commander.¹⁰¹ At 11:00 a.m., Hitler greeted the recipients of the 1938 German National Award in the big hall of the new Chancellery.¹⁰² Without exception, these men played a role of importance in Germany's armament industry:¹⁰³ for example, Heinkel and Messerschmitt, who represented the aviation industry; Todt, who was later to become Reich Minister of Armaments and Munition; and Porsche, the designer of the Volkswagen, which would become known not as the *Kdf Wagen*,¹⁰⁴ but rather as the *Kübelwagen* (bucket car)¹⁰⁵ when it was used in the upcoming war.

What a change in comparison to the award winners of the previous year! Then there had been Professor Troost's widow; Alfred Rosenberg; the Asia expert Wilhelm Filcher; and the two surgeons Ferdinand Sauerbruch and August Bier.¹⁰⁶

Hitler also announced a series of promotions in the Wehrmacht and in the administration on January 30, 1939. For the most part, these were men of little importance. The only noteworthy appointment perhaps was the one of Hermann Esser¹⁰⁷ as State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Propaganda. Previously, Esser had primarily handled issues connected with tourism. Also on that day, the Führer liberally distributed titles such as Professor, Baurat (Chief Architect), or Justizrat (Councilor of Justice) and awarded the Golden Party Badge to no fewer than 233 Party comrades.

On the evening of January 30, a Reichstag session took place in the Kroll Opera House. Elected on April 10, 1939, the "Greater German Reichstag" convened here for the first time.¹⁰⁸ As a result of the increase in population, the Reichstag comprised a total of 885 deputies.¹⁰⁹ Not much time was wasted on the process of electing a Reichstag President. Hitler named Göring in due course. Hanns Kerrl, Hermann Esser, and Emil von Stauss¹¹⁰ obtained the nominations for and unanimous acclaim as Vice Presidents. Behind the President's chair and the seats of the Reichstag deputies, at the head of the room, now hung the newly

conceived national emblem: a huge, three-dimensional eagle. It had replaced the swastika banner.

At a quarter past eight that night, Hitler ascended the rostrum to deliver a declaration of the Reich Government.¹¹¹ Once again, it ended up being a mammoth speech, lasting more than two-and-a-half hours. First came the customary “party narrative,” consisting of a detailed description of the state of affairs in the Weimar Republic. According to Hitler, thirty-five parties, in their shared hatred for the young movement, had come together to conspire against National Socialism. “Priests of the Center Party and communist atheists; socialist opponents of private property and proponents of capitalist interests in stock markets; monarchist regents and republican destroyers of the Reich” had nearly succeeded in subjecting Germany to “Bolshevist chaos.” This had only been averted because of “a last-minute miracle,” namely, the National Socialist rise to power.

Hitler concluded this particular “party narrative” with the following words:

Greatly disconcerted about the future of my Volk, I moved into Wilhelmstrasse on January 30, 1933. Today—six years later—I am able to speak before this first Greater German Reichstag! Truly, we are today better equipped than any generation before us to appreciate the pious import of the saying: “What a turn of events brought about by divine dispensation!”¹¹²

Six years sufficed to fulfill the dreams of many a century; one year to afford our Volk enjoyment of the unity which many a generation yearned for in vain. When I look at you today, the representatives of our German Volk from all Gaus of the Reich gathered around me, and I know the elected men of the Ostmark and the Sudetenland to be among you, then I am once more overwhelmed by those tremendous impressions recollected from that one year which realized the longings of centuries. How much blood was shed for this object—for naught! How many millions of German men strode forth on this bitter path throughout the years, conscious or unconscious of the higher ambitions they served—a path which led them to a swift or painfully prolonged death. How many others were condemned to end their lives behind fortress or dungeon walls, lives they sought only to dedicate to Greater Germany! How many hundreds of thousands, bending under the yoke of misery and worry, were forced to join that never-ending stream of German emigrants surging forth into the world, for decades cherishing the memory of the unfortunate homeland, after generations forgetting her. And now, in the span of this one year, a dream has come true.

It was not realized without a fight, as many an forgetful bourgeois might believe. For before this year of German unity, a political idea had to struggle fanatically for nearly two decades. Hundreds of thousands, millions risked their lives, their physical existence and economic livelihood. They put up with

mockery and scorn as willingly as they faced abusive treatment, base defamation, and near-unbearable terror. Throughout the German Gaus, countless corpses and the injured splattered with blood bore witness to this struggle. And, moreover, this success was secured by an immeasurable rallying of willpower and perseverance in valiant and zealous determination. I must say this today because there is a danger that certain elements who contributed the least to the practical implementation of German unity now seek, as brash orators, to appropriate to themselves the creation of this Reich. They portray the events of 1938 as a most natural, long-overdue, foregone conclusion, only belatedly realized by National Socialism.

To counter these elements, I must first state that perseverance through this year required a strength of nerves of which these dwarfs have not an inkling. They are well-known to us, these old incorrigible pessimists, skeptical and apathetic, who throughout the twenty years of our struggle made a positive contribution by making none. Now, after the victory, these self-proclaimed experts of the national uprising feel called on to contribute their comments and criticism to it.

I will now in a few sentences offer you an objective recapitulation of the historic events in this memorable year 1938.

His “objective recapitulation” of events “in a few sentences” began with the obligatory reference to Wilson’s Fourteen Points and to the right to self-determination which had been denied the German people. A description of the developments in Austria in the spring of 1938 followed. This particular version of the recent events was nearly identical to the one rendered in the speech before the Reichstag on March 18, 1938.¹¹³ Remarkable, however, was Hitler’s unabashed admission that he had already ordered German troops to cross the border into Austria at 10:00 p.m. on March 11. Previously, Hitler had consistently maintained that the German military had not transgressed the border until the next day.

Friday evening [March 11, 1938] a plea reached me, in the interest of preenting anarchy and chaos in this country, to order German troops to march. Already by 10:00 p.m., units were crossing the border at several locations. The general invasion began at 6:00 in the morning [March 12, 1938], to the great and unforgettable jubilation of the people now finally liberated.

In the second part of his description, Hitler turned to the topic of the Sudetenland crisis, frankly admitting that, as early as May 28, 1938, he had already scheduled the attack on Czechoslovakia for October 2, 1938. On this May 28, 1938, he had also decided on the immediate mobilization of no less than ninety-six divisions, to be followed by the mobilization of additional armed contingents at a later date. Hitler declared:

The man responsible for these developments was the then State President Dr. Beneš, who transformed Czechoslovakia into the exponent of the outside world's hostile intentions against the Reich. It was he who, on the prodding and with the active participation of certain foreign circles,¹¹⁴ carried out the mobilization in May a year ago which sought first to provoke the German Reich and, second, to do injury to the German Reich's prestige abroad.

The fictitious report of a German mobilization allegedly forcing Czechoslovakia to mobilize its armed forces was maintained and propagated, despite an official declaration twice conveyed at my bidding to the Czech State President Beneš, stating that Germany had not mobilized even a single soldier, and in spite of identical assertions to representatives of foreign powers. Insistent demands called for Germany to countermand the fictitious mobilization order and to renounce its pretenses. Beneš labored to spread the rumor that the determined nature of the steps he had taken had forced the German Reich back within its appropriate borders. Since the Reich had neither mobilized its forces nor entertained any intentions of attacking Czechoslovakia, this situation would have entailed without a doubt a serious loss of prestige for the Reich.

Because of this unbearable provocation, which was exacerbated by the truly infamous persecution and terrorization of our Germans there, I have decided to resolve the Sudeten German question in a radical manner and to resolve it once and for all.

On May 28, I issued orders:

a) for the preparation of a military intervention against this state on October 2,

b) for the intensification and expansion of our fortified line of defense to the West.

For the remainder of the confrontation with Herr Beneš and for the defense of the Reich against any attempts to influence or threaten it, there was a plan for the immediate mobilization of ninety-six divisions, to be reinforced if necessary by a great number of additional units within a short time period. The developments during the summer months and the situation of the Germans in Czechoslovakia proved these precautions to have been appropriate.

On the subject of his plans for the future, Hitler categorically denied the interests of other powers "in this area in which neither the English nor other Western nations have any business meddling." He immediately added that, "in the future also, we will not stand for the Western states meddling in certain affairs which concern us exclusively, in order to prevent by their intervention the arrival at natural and reasonable solutions."¹¹⁵ Hitler made this statement in the following context:

When certain newspapers and politicians in the outside world insist that Germany is threatening other peoples by military extortion, it is on the grounds

of a grossly distorted rendition of the facts. Germany has merely realized the right to self-determination of ten million German Volksgenossen in this area in which neither the English nor other Western nations have any business meddling. The Reich does not pose a threat to anyone, it has merely defended itself against the attempts at intervention by third parties.

There is no need for me to assure you, my Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag, that, in the future also, we will not stand for the Western states meddling in certain affairs, which concern us exclusively, in order to preclude by their intervention the arrival at natural and reasonable solutions.

Therefore, all of us were happy about the initiative of our friend Benito Mussolini and at the also highly appreciated readiness of Chamberlain and Daladier which allowed us to find elements for a peaceful settlement of a situation which demanded immediate attention. Moreover, this can justly be regarded as evidence of the possibility of a reasoned treatment of certain problems of vital interest and their resolution. However, without the determination to resolve this problem in one way or another, such an agreement between the great European powers could not have become a reality.

Hitler's words revealed his firm conviction that it had not been compliance with the requirements of international law which had ultimately led the Western Powers to consent to the return of the Sudeten German areas to the Reich. Instead, it had been Germany's persistent display of combat readiness and his "determination to resolve this problem in one way or another" which had been crucial to the success of his demands. All he needed to do in the future, so he reasoned, was to threaten the West with the unequivocal use of force to attain the ends he pursued. If he was insistent right from the start, then assuredly the Western Powers—decrepit as they were—would back off and submit to his demands for territorial revisions. It was precisely this erroneous belief which resulted in Hitler's downfall.

Hitler concluded his "objective recapitulation" with a reference to the election of the first Greater German Reichstag, and maintained:

Hence, we have before us today a form of representation of the German Volk which can claim to be a truly constituent body.

It would have been more truthful had Hitler admitted that this representative body was to carry out obligingly any constitutional changes he desired. After all, as he strove to establish an arbitrary reign, he wished not to be encumbered by legal or constitutional restrictions. In spite of his vague assurances to the contrary, he neither desired nor would have accepted the writing of a new constitution. Having expressed his gratitude for Göring's and Ribbentrop's outstanding

service in 1938, Hitler evidently thought it appropriate to recall once again the blind obedience the Volk owed him:

The German Volk of earlier decades, politically and socially disorganized, squandered large part of its inherent strength in an inner struggle as fruitless as it was senseless. The so-called democratic freedom to live to the full according to one's persuasions and instincts leads not to an evolutionary advancement nor to a freeing of exceptional forces or values. Instead, it leads to a squandering of the existing wealth of the creative potential of the individual and to his ultimate paralysis. By putting an end to this fruitless struggle, National Socialism released the inner strength otherwise suppressed and set it free to realize the vital interests of the nation in the sense of managing the great community tasks in the interior of the Reich and securing the vital necessities for the community with regard to the surrounding world.

It is complete nonsense to presume that obedience and discipline are useful only to soldiers and that they have no further application in the life of peoples beyond this. To the contrary: a Volksgemeinschaft instilled with discipline and obedience can far more easily mobilize the forces necessary to secure the survival of its own people, thereby benefiting other peoples and serving the interests of all more effectively.

Such a Volksgemeinschaft cannot be created by force primarily, however, but by the compelling force of the idea itself, hence, through the toil of a continuing education.

Now Hitler took a minute to relax, i.e. to begin with a second "party narrative." He claimed that National Socialism strove to establish a true Volksgemeinschaft. Naturally, jabs at his intellectual critics could not be omitted in this description of the aims of National Socialism.

There are indeed men whom neither the greatest of calamities nor earth-shattering upheaval can incite to inner reflection or induce to spiritual action. Their hearts beat no more. They are of no value to the community. They cannot make history and history cannot be made with them. Their blasé decadence and narrow-mindedness expose them as a useless waste product of nature (*Ausschussware der Natur*). They find some consolation, even satisfaction, in considering what they hold to be their cleverness or wisdom elevating them to a lofty height above the events of the day; in other words, in the contemplation of their own ignorance.

Now it is easy to imagine that, without such ignorant men, a Volk may well be capable of the greatest actions and deeds. However, it is impossible to imagine a nation, much less to lead it, which has at its core a multitude of such ignorant men instead of a mass of full-blooded, idealistic, believing, and positive men. They constitute the only valuable elements in a Volksgemeinschaft. You will allow them a thousand weaknesses, if only they possess the strength to give all they have, if necessary, for an ideal or for an idea.

My Deputies, we still face enormous, gigantic tasks! We must build up a new class of leaders for our Volk. Its composition is subject to racial criteria. Through the educational system and the methods we employ, it is equally

necessary to demand and secure valor and readiness to take on responsibility as natural prerequisites to the assumption of public office.

In assigning men to posts of leadership in State and Party, attitude and character are to be valued more highly than so-called purely scientific or supposed mental qualifications. For, wherever leadership has to be exercised, it is not abstract knowledge which is decisive, but instead the inborn ability to lead and therefore a high degree of readiness to take on responsibility, of determination, courage, and persistence.

In principle, we must realize that documented proof of a presumed first-class scientific education can never compensate for a lack of readiness to take on responsibility. Knowledge and leadership abilities, and hence vigor, are not mutually exclusive. In case of doubt, however, knowledge cannot serve as a substitute for attitude, courage, valor, and initiative, under any circumstances. These attributes are the more important ones in terms of the leadership of a Volksgemeinschaft in Party and State.

When I express this to you, my Deputies, I do so under the impression of that year of German history which has taught me, more than my entire previous life, how important and irreplaceable these virtues are and how, in a critical hour, one man of action weighs more than one thousand sophisticated weaklings. As a social phenomenon this new selection of leadership has to be divorced from the numerous prejudices, which I can only term phoney and profoundly nonsensical social morals.

There is no attitude which does not have its ultimate justification in the resulting advantages for the community. What is unimportant or detrimental to the existence of the community can never be seen as moral in the service of a social order. Above all: a Volksgemeinschaft is conceivable only in recognition of laws which apply to all. You cannot expect or demand of one that he abide by principles which seem absurd, detrimental, or merely unimportant in the eyes of another.

I fail to comprehend the endeavors of dying social classes, seeking to hide behind a hedge of withering class laws which have become unreal and divorcing themselves from reality to sustain life artificially. Nothing can be said against it, if it is being done in an effort to secure a calm cemetery where to rest after passing away. However, if it is being done in order to erect a barrier against the progress of life, then the storm of a forward charging youth will brush away the old scrub.

Today's German Volksstaat knows no social prejudices. Hence, it knows no special social morals. It knows only the laws and necessities of life, as they reveal themselves to man through reason and knowledge.

Having once more vented his anger on Germany's intellectuals, Hitler asserted that the National Socialist State would master any task it encountered.

The unity of the entire German Volkskörper, whose foremost guarantors you are and will continue to be, my Deputies, affords me the certainty that whatever tasks pose themselves to our Volk, the National Socialist State will resolve them sooner or later! Whatever the nature of the difficulties we

encounter may be, the valor and the courage of its leadership will master them!

The difficulties the leadership was fated to run into presently were primarily connected to the armament industry. Obviously, the unrestricted production of weaponry was a crucial preparatory step toward realizing the envisioned conquest of new Lebensraum in the East, as mentioned earlier in connection with Schacht's dismissal. Before turning to this sensitive topic, Hitler attempted further to dull the perception of his increasingly tired audience with a long-winded lecture on "economic philosophy." This rhetorical aside took up the better part of a hour, and numerous platitudes pervaded this section of the speech, excerpts of which are reproduced below:

1. We fight a truly gigantic struggle to which we have dedicated the entire force and energy of our Volk, and

2. we will win this struggle without reservations; yes, indeed, we have already won it!

For what is the reason for all our economic troubles? Simply the overpopulation of our Lebensraum! And in this context, I can only hold out to these critical gentlemen in the West and in the democracies beyond Europe one simple fact and one simple question: The German Volk survives with 135 inhabitants per square kilometer without any exterior assistance and without access to its earlier savings. The rest of the world has looted Germany throughout the past one-and-a-half decades, has burdened it with enormous debt payments. Without any colonies, its people are nonetheless fed and clothed and, moreover, Germany boasts no unemployment. And now to my question: Who among our so-called great democratic powers is in a position to say as much of itself?! [—]

To him on whom nature has bestowed bananas for free,¹¹⁶ the struggle for survival necessarily will appear far easier than to the weary German peasant who, all year round, toils to sow and reap on his plot of soil. And, therefore, we insist that this carefree, internationalist banana picker refrain from finding fault with the labor of our German peasant.

After endless accounts of the economically unsound policy forced on Germany by the victorious Allies in the aftermath of the year 1918, Hitler intimated that the economic sphere in Germany was soon to undergo radical changes. He insisted that an "expansion of Lebensraum" was both necessary and inevitable.

The dilemma we shall then face can only be resolved in two ways:

1. through an increase in the import of foodstuffs which necessitates an increase in the export of German manufactured goods in due consideration of the fact that raw materials used in the production process have to be imported initially and hence only a fraction of profit remains for the purchase of foodstuffs, or

2. through an expansion of Lebensraum for our Volk, thereby establishing

an economic circle to secure the production of sufficient foodstuffs for Germany domestically. Since the second approach is as yet [!] impossible to pursue due to the persistent delusions of the one-time victorious powers, we are forced to follow along the path of the first proposition. This means we must export in order to be able to purchase food from abroad. Since these exported goods use up raw materials which we ourselves do not possess, this means we must export yet more goods to secure these raw materials for our economy. We are compelled not by capitalist considerations, as this may be the case in other countries, but by dire necessity, the most excruciating which can befall a people, namely, concern for its daily bread.

And when foreign statesmen threaten us with economic sanctions, for what reason I do not know, then all I can do is to assure them that this would lead to a desperate struggle for economic survival. We could far more easily hold our own in such a struggle than those other satiated nations, for our motive for entering into this struggle would be a very simple one: German Volk, either live, i.e. export, or perish! And I can assure all these doubters abroad that the German Volk will not perish; it will live! And, if necessary, this German Volk will place at its leadership's disposal its entire capacity for work realized in the new National Socialist community. It will take up this struggle and it will persevere in this struggle. And as far as its leadership is concerned, I can only assure you that it stands determined to do whatever is necessary.

A final resolution of this problem in a reasonable manner will only come about when the greed of certain peoples has been conquered by the insights of human common sense and reason if one accepts that insistence on injustice is not only detrimental politically, but also useless economically, indeed that it spells insanity.

Thereupon, Hitler made a few further sarcastic remarks on the subject of the "obstinate intolerance" of the Western Powers, their "supposed superiority in arms," and the allegedly enormous financial strain on them after the appropriation of the former German colonies. At long last, he came to speak on the topic of his new economic policy. He uttered not a word in reference to Schacht's removal from office. Nevertheless, he emphasized the role of the Reichsbank, of the capital market, and of the careful reallocation of manpower, and announced "new additional production." At first Hitler tried to foster the impression that the issue at stake was simply to "obtain the highest yields possible from the Lebensraum available to us." He conceded, however, that he regarded it "as imperative for the National Socialist leadership of this State to do everything humanly possible to strengthen our defenses."

Given the present circumstances, we have no recourse other than to persist in the continuation of our previous economic policy which must undertake to obtain the highest yields possible from the Lebensraum available to us. This requires an ever greater increase in our efforts and in production.

This forces us to strengthen the implementation of the Four-Year Plan. Ever more manpower must be mobilized. And it is at this point that we enter into a new phase of Germany's economic policy.

In the first six years after our rise to power, it was the task of our economic leadership to channel idle manpower into some form of productive occupation. In the coming years, it will be their task to draw up a detailed inventory of our labor force, to reallocate productive powers according to plan. They will need to strive for rationalization and an improvement of operating conditions, in order to secure, while the work input remains constant, an increase in productivity, which, in turn, frees manpower for new additional production.

This, however, forces us to make the money market more accessible in the interest of technical advancement of our enterprises and to relieve it from its obligations to the state. This in turn necessitates close cooperation of economic and financial institutions. I stand determined to bring to its conclusion the transformation of the German Reichsbank—a path pursued ever since January 30, 1937—from an internationally controlled bankers' enterprise to the bank of issue of the German Reich.

If the rest of the world (*übrige Welt*) laments the loss of the international character of yet another German institution, may we point out that it is our inexorable decision to impart to all institutions affecting our lives predominantly German, that is National Socialist, characteristics. And perhaps this will make clear to the world the distorted nature of the claim that we sought to force German attitudes on the rest of the world. It would be far more justified if we in National Socialist Germany lamented that the outside world (*andere Welt*) is persistently trying to force its attitudes on us.

I now hold it to be the duty, my Reichstag Deputies, of every German man and every German woman to comprehend the conduct of the Reich's economic policy. In the cities and in the countryside you have to consider in particular that Germany's economic policy is not based on some sort of financial theory, but rather on a very primitive understanding of production, on the realization that the sole determining factor is the quantity of goods produced.

That we are faced with numerous other tasks, such as the necessary deployment of a high percentage of manpower to the armament—by itself unproductive—of our Volk, is regrettable, yet unalterable. After all, the economy of the present Reich hinges on its external security. It is best to arrive at this realization early rather than too late. I hence see it as imperative for the National Socialist leadership of this State to do everything humanly possible to strengthen our defenses. I place great stock in the German Volk's insight and, above all, in its recollections.

Hitler then turned his attention to the press campaign in Great Britain which had infuriated him especially. He threatened retaliation through a similar campaign in the German media.

We have no right to presume that, should Germany suffer yet another attack of weakness, its destiny would take on a different appearance. To the

contrary: they are in part the very same men who once kindled the fire to scorch the entire world who today strive to prepare the grounds for another, renewed struggle as the paid henchmen at the service of those promoting hatred among peoples, to augment existing animosities.

Deputies, Men of the Reichstag! I implore you in particular not to forget one thing: It is apparently one of the exquisite privileges of democratic, political livelihood, enjoyed in certain democracies, to indulge in artificially feeding the flame of hatred against so-called totalitarian states. By a flood of partially distorted, partially fictitious reports, these rouse public opinion against certain peoples who have done nothing to harm others nor wish to undertake anything of this nature, but have only suffered from the great injustice done to them throughout the decades.

And when we venture to defend ourselves in view of the injurious attacks of such apostles of war as the gentlemen Duff Cooper,¹¹⁷ Eden,¹¹⁸ Churchill,¹¹⁹ or Ickes,¹²⁰ then this is portrayed as though we were infringing on the most sacred of rights in these democracies. According to the understanding of these gentlemen, they apparently have the unchallenged right to attack other peoples and their leadership, but no one in turn has the right to defend himself against these attacks. I need not assure you that, as long as the German Reich shall exist as a sovereign state, its leadership will not allow one or another English or American politician to forbid it to reply in kind to such attacks. In the future, the weapons we forged shall insure that we remain such a sovereign state, as shall a great number of our friends.

Actually we could simply laugh off the libelous claim that Germany intended to attack America. And, indeed, we would much prefer to remain silent on the topic of the campaign of hatred pursued by certain British apostles of war and to simply ignore them. Yet we may not forget the following:

1. The democracies in question are states in which the political structures make it possible that, within a few months' time, the most notorious of these warmongers may actually have emerged as the leaders of their governments.

2. We hence owe it to the security of the Reich to enlighten the German Volk about the true nature of these men in a timely manner. The German Volk harbors no hatred for England, America, or France, and desires nothing other than to live calmly and peacefully, while the Jewish and non-Jewish agitators persist in rousing the animosity of these peoples against Germany and the German Volk. In the event that these warmongers should succeed in their undertakings, our own Volk would be confronted with a situation incomprehensible to it, as it was not psychologically prepared for anything of this nature.

Therefore, I believe it necessary that from now on our propaganda and press shall answer immediately to any such attacks and inform the German Volk of them. It must know who these men are who so desperately seek to provoke a war, no matter what the circumstances. I am convinced that the calculations of these elements will prove faulty as soon as National Socialist propaganda begins to reply in kind to these provocations. We shall deal with them as successfully as we did in Germany's interior when we wrestled the

Jewish world enemy to the ground through the forceful use of our propaganda.

It is evident that Hitler's firm belief in the identical nature of domestic and foreign policy extended to the Jewish issue as well. National Socialism would "wrestle the Jewish world enemy to the ground" on the international stage, just as it had been vanquished in "Germany's interior." Hence, Hitler believed it appropriate once again to rage on furiously against international Jewry and the supposed secret Jewish world government. He proclaimed:

The peoples of the world will realize within a short time that National Socialist Germany does not desire to elicit the enmity of other peoples. Allegations of the aggressive designs entertained by our Volk on other peoples are the products of a deranged, hysterical mind or blatant lies by certain politicians struggling for survival. In certain states, businessmen void of any conscience try to save their financial interests by propagating these lies. Above all, it is international Jewry which seeks thereby to gratify its thirst for vengeance and its insatiable hunger for profit.¹²¹ And this constitutes the greatest libelous claim ever levied against a great and peace-loving Volk.

After all, German soldiers have never fought on American soil other than for the cause of America's independence and freedom. Yet American soldiers were shipped to Europe and contributed to the suppression of a great nation struggling to preserve its liberty. It was not Germany that attacked America; it was America that attacked Germany. And it did so, according to the findings of an investigative committee in the American House of Representatives, without any compelling reason, other than perhaps capitalist considerations.

Nevertheless, let there be no doubt as to one point: all these attempts will not in the least sway Germany from its reckoning with Jewry. I would like to say the following on the Jewish question: it is truly a shaming display when we see today the entire democratic world filled with tears of pity at the plight of the poor, tortured Jewish people, while remaining hardhearted and obstinate in view of what is therefore its obvious duty: to help. All the arguments with which they seek to justify their non-intervention lend only further support to the stance of Germans and Italians in this matter.

For this is what they say: "We"—that is the democracies—"cannot possibly admit the Jews!" And this those world powers claim who can boast no more than ten persons per square kilometer while we must accommodate and feed 135 persons per square kilometer.

Then follow assurances: "We cannot take them unless they receive a certain monetary contribution from Germany to facilitate immigration." Small matter that Germany has already been good enough to provide for these elements for centuries, who possessed little more than infectious political and sanitary diseases. What this people possesses today, it obtained at the cost of the not-so-cunning German Volk by means of the most base manipulations. What we do today is no more than to set right the wrongs these people committed. In the days when the German Volk lost its savings, accumulated throughout decades of hard work, thanks to the inflation¹²² incited and

nurtured by the Jews; when the rest of the world took the German Volk's assets abroad; when it expropriated our colonial possessions; at that time such philanthropic contemplations did not yet play such an influential role in these democratic statesmen's considerations. I wish to assure these gentle-men that, owing to a fifteen-year-long crash course in democracy, we are today steeled against any sentimentality.

We had to live to see how, at the end of the war, after hunger and destitution had killed more than 800,000 children of our Volk, because of the gruesome articles of a Diktat which the democratic, humane world apostles had forced on us in the guise of a peace treaty, nearly a million dairy cows¹²³ were driven from our barns. We had to live to see, one year after the end of the war, over one million German prisoners of war still held captive without any perceptible cause. We had to suffer the sight of how, along our frontiers, far more than one-and-a-half-million Germans bereft of their possessions were driven from their homes with no more than their shirts on their backs. We had to bear the sight of millions of our Volksgenossen torn from us, without anyone according them a hearing, and were left without any means of sustaining themselves in the future.

Once he had securely placed the blame on the Jews for the bad fortune Germans had suffered throughout the twentieth century, Hitler set out to steel the audience before him "against any sentimentality" and humanitarian concerns. And—in the context of his previously mentioned strategy of blackmail,¹²⁴—he threatened the "annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of the Jewish race in Europe" in the event foreign powers should again declare war on Germany.

I could supplement these examples by dozens of yet more gruesome ones. Do not reproach me on the grounds of your humanitarian concerns. The German Volk does not wish to be governed by another people; it does not wish others to determine its affairs in its place. France to the French; England to the English; America to the Americans, and Germany to the Germans!¹²⁵

We are determined to undercut the efforts of a certain foreign people to nest here; a people whose members knew how to capture all leading positions. We will banish this people. We are willing to educate our own Volk to assume these leadership functions. We have hundreds of thousands of the most intelligent children of peasants and workers. We will have them educated, and we are already educating them. We are hoping that one day we can place them in all leading positions within the state along with others from our educated classes. No longer shall these be occupied by members of a people alien to us.

Above all, as the literal meaning of the term already indicates, German culture is exclusively German; it is not Jewish. Hence we shall place the administration and the care for our culture in the hands of our Volk. Should the rest of the world be outraged and protest hypocritically against Germany's barbarous expulsion of such an extraordinary, culturally valuable, irreplaceable element, then we can only be astonished at the consequences such a stance

would imply.

Should not the outside world be most grateful to us for setting free these glorious bearers of culture and placing them at its disposal? In accordance with its own statements, how is the outside world to justify its refusal to grant refuge in its various countries to these most valuable members of the human race? For how will it rationalize imposing the members of this race on the Germans of all people? How will the states so infatuated with these "great guys" explain why they are suddenly taking refuge with all sorts of pretenses just in order to deny asylum to these people?

I believe the earlier this problem is resolved, the better. For Europe cannot find peace before it has dealt properly with the Jewish question.

It is possible that the necessity of resolving this problem sooner or later should bring about agreement in Europe, even between nations which otherwise might not have reconciled themselves as readily with one another. There is more than enough room for settlement on this earth. All we need to do is put an end to the prevailing assumption that the Dear Lord chose the Jewish people to be the beneficiaries of a certain percentage of the productive capacities of other peoples' bodies and their labors. Either the Jews will have to adjust to constructive, respectable activities, such as other people are already engaged in, or, sooner or later, they will succumb to a crisis of yet inconceivable proportions.

And there is yet one more topic on which I would like to speak on this day, perhaps not only memorable for us Germans: I have been a prophet very often in my lifetime, and this earned me mostly ridicule. In the time of my struggle for power, it was primarily the Jewish people who mocked my prophecy that, one day, I would assume leadership of this Germany, of this State, and of the entire Volk, and that I would press for a resolution of the Jewish question, among many other problems. The resounding laughter of the Jews in Germany then may well be stuck in their throats today, I suspect.

Once again I will be a prophet: should the international Jewry of finance (*Finanzjudentum*) succeed, both within and beyond Europe, in plunging mankind into yet another world war, then the result will not be a Bolshevization of the earth and the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of the Jewish race in Europe.¹²⁶

Thus, the days of propagandist impotence of the non-Jewish peoples are over. National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy possess institutions which, if necessary, permit opening the eyes of the world to the true nature of this problem. Many a people is instinctively aware of this, albeit not scientifically versed in it. At this moment, the Jews are still propagating their campaign of hatred in certain states under the cover of press, film, radio, theater, and literature, which are all in their hands. Should indeed this one Volk attain its goal of prodding masses of millions from other peoples to enter into a war devoid of all sense for them, and serving the interests of the Jews exclusively, then the effectiveness of an enlightenment will once more display its might. Within Germany, this enlightenment conquered Jewry utterly in the span of a few years.

Peoples desire not to perish on the battlefield just so that this rootless,

internationalist race can profit financially from this war and thereby gratify its lust for vengeance derived from the Old Testament. The Jewish watchword "Proletarians of the world, unite!" will be conquered by a far more lofty realization, namely: "Creative men of all nations, recognize your common foe!"

Since Hitler was already in the process of threatening international Jewry, he determined to go on the offensive against members of the clergy opposed to his rule. Should they persist in their defiance of the state, he would see to implementing the appropriate measures for severely restricting church activities. In vivid colors, he depicted an effective separation of church and state, i.e. the end of state subsidies and tax revenues for the Church.

Among the reproaches which the so-called democracies have heaped on Germany has been the claim that National Socialist Germany is a state hostile to religion. On this topic, I wish to make the following solemn declaration before the entire German Volk:

1. To date, no one has been persecuted because of his religious affinity in Germany, nor will anyone be persecuted for this reason in the future either.¹²⁷

2. Since January 30, 1933, the official institutions within the National Socialist State have transferred the following tax earnings to the two Churches:¹²⁸

130 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1933; 170 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1934; 250 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1935; 320 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1936; 400 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1937; 500 million Reichsmarks for the fiscal year 1938. In addition to this, the Church receives approximately 85 million Reichsmarks annually in the form of Länder subsidies, and approximately another seven million Reichsmarks in the form of subsidies by the local communities and associations. Next to the State, the Church constitutes the greatest proprietor of land. It possesses holdings in real estate and forestry in excess of ten billion Reichsmarks. From these, it derives annual earnings of about 300 million.

Moreover, the Church benefits from countless gifts, bequests, and, above all, from donations collected. Further, the National Socialist State accords the Church concessions in a variety of realms: donations and inheritance are tax-exempt for instance. To make an understatement, therefore, it is with insolent impertinence that foreign politicians accuse the Third Reich of hostility to religion. Should the churches within Germany regard the situation as unbearable, then please bear in mind that the National Socialist State is willing, and prepared at any time, to undertake a clear separation of church and state, as is the case in France, America, and other countries.¹²⁹ In this context, I permit myself to pose the following question: Within this period, how much did official state appropriations to the church amount to in France, England, and the USA?

3. The National Socialist State has not closed even one single church,

neither prevented church services nor infringed on the conduct of Mass. It has not imposed its views on any confession's church doctrine and faith. In the National Socialist State, man is free to seek absolution in the fashion desired.

However, the National Socialist State will relentlessly deal with those priests who, instead of serving the Lord, see their mission in propagating derisive comments on our present Reich, its institutions, or its leading men. It will bring to their attention the fact that the destruction of this State will not be tolerated. The law will prosecute a priest who implicates himself in illegal activities and he will be held accountable for these in the same manner as any other, ordinary German citizen. It must, however, be stated at this point that there are thousands upon thousands of priests of all Christian beliefs who attend to their clerical duties in a manner infinitely superior to these clerical warmongers and without entering into conflict with the established law and order. To protect these is the mission of the State. To destroy the enemies of the State is the duty of the State.

4. The National Socialist State is neither prudish nor hypocritical. Still there are certain fundamental mores which must be upheld in the interest of preserving the biological health of the Volk. And we shall not allow these to be altered. This State prosecutes pederasty and child abuse as crimes to be punished by the law, irrespective of who perpetrates them. Five years ago, when leading members of the National Socialist Party were guilty of these crimes, they were shot.¹³⁰ Should other men perpetrate similar transgressions, whether in public, privately, or as members of the clergy, the law will duly prosecute them and sentence them to serve time. Should men of the cloth perpetrate other transgressions, in violation of their avowal of chastity etc., then it is of no interest to us. There has been no mention of this in our press ever. And besides this, this State has interfered only once in the inner organization of the churches, namely on the occasion when, in 1933, I myself attempted to reunite the impotent, fragmented Protestant Land Churches of Germany in the form of a great and mighty Protestant Reich Church. This attempt ran aground on the opposition of individual Länder bishops.¹³¹ And therefore I abandoned my efforts since, in the final instance, it is not our task to strengthen or to defend by force the Protestant Church against its own leaders.

The motivation behind certain statesmen in the democracies abroad taking such a vigorous interest in a few German priests is obviously political. For these very same democratic statesmen remained silent when in Russia hundreds of thousands of priests were hacked to pieces and their bodies burnt. These democratic statesmen remained equally silent at the brutal slaughter of priests and nuns in Spain, numbering in the tens of thousands, some of whom were even burnt alive. These democratic statesmen could not deny these facts, but they remained silent and nothing broke this silence. In the meantime, upon news of these massacres—and of this I must indeed remind these democratic statesmen—countless National Socialists and Fascist volunteers placed themselves at General Franco's disposal. They did so with the aim of precluding an escalation of the conflict, to prevent this Bolshevik bloodbath from enveloping all of Europe and hence the greater part of the civilized world.

Now it was clear why National Socialists and Fascists had volunteered for the fighting in Spain: they had simply not been able to stand the sight of slaughtered priests and nuns any longer! In 1936, however, as the conflict had raged to the South, Hitler had oddly enough published an ordinance in the Reich Law Gazette detailing that any German participating in the Spanish Civil War would be jailed, even if he had only instigated others to take part.¹³²

Now, three years later, Hitler thought the moment had come to admit publicly to the role Germany had played in the conflict. The fall of Barcelona had brought an end to the war within reach. Naturally, Hitler did not want to miss out on sharing the laurels, although he qualified his statement by insisting that the Reich had done so only in defense of European culture.

It was concern for European culture and the essence of civilization which led Germany to take sides in this struggle between Nationalist Spain and the Bolsheviks who attempted to destroy it. It is indeed a pitiful sign of the mentality abroad that people there cannot conceive of so selfless an intervention. Alas, National Socialists shared in General Franco's uprising because of their burning desire to promote his cause: to avert the danger threatening to engulf his country, a danger Germany itself had almost succumbed to.

Therefore, it cannot be sympathy or pity for persecuted servants of God that has mobilized the interest of the democratic citizens in some priests in Germany who have come into conflict with the law. Rather these interest them as German enemies of the state. May they note the following on this topic: we shall protect the German priest as a servant of the Lord, but we shall destroy the priest who is a political foe of the German Reich. We believe this will preclude the development of a situation which, as the experience in Spain has demonstrated, could all too easily escalate into a confrontation of as yet unforeseeable proportions.

As a matter of principle, I should like to state the following on this subject: apparently, certain circles abroad are pervaded by the conviction that the outspoken avowal of sympathy for certain elements who have come into conflict with the law in Germany would bring about an improvement of their situation. In this context, there is perhaps the hope of terrorizing the leadership of the German State by employing certain methods of exerting influence through the media.

This assessment rests on a profound fallacy. For the credence lent to these individuals abroad, and hence implicitly to their anti-governmental activities, merely reassures us in our earlier conviction that the characters in question are in fact traitors. After all, simple opposition to a regime has never elicited equal sympathy from these democracies abroad; and neither has the prosecution nor the sentencing of an individual in political opposition. For when was there ever a stronger opposition movement in Germany than the National Socialist

one? Never were political adversaries suppressed by like base means, persecuted, and hunted as those of the National Socialist Party. To us it is an honor never to have partaken in the sympathy and support extended by a foreign government. Evidently, such support is lent exclusively to those who aim to destroy the German Reich. Hence, in our eyes, the display of such support would indicate the necessity to step up measures previously taken in any such case.

After this tirade, Hitler turned to foreign affairs, relishing his role as the cultured statesman and historian. He enumerated many countries and peoples with which Germany allegedly maintained "excellent relations." Then he concluded with the exclamation: "Men make history!"

In view of the dangers enveloping us today, I regard it as most fortunate to have found states within Europe and beyond Europe which, like the German Volk, have had to struggle hard to preserve their existence: Italy and Japan. In the Occident, Italy and Germany today constitute the most ancient peoples, Italians as the descendants of Ancient Rome and Germans as the descendants of the Germanic tribes, and hence we have been in touch with one another the longest. Already on the occasion of my speech in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome during my visit to Italy, I underlined the tragic nature of the centuries-long and fruitless confrontation between this most mighty of cultured peoples of the Ancient world and the young German Volk, which belonged to a new world coming into being. These clashes were due largely to the lack of any natural frontier separating the two peoples and to a multitude of other circumstances.

But from these contacts throughout the millenniums sprang a community, one tied not only by linkage of blood, but by a shared historical and cultural past, a heritage of supreme significance. What precisely the Germanic peoples owe to Antiquity in terms of the evolution of statehood, realization of ethnic affinity, and in the sphere of general cultural development, defies measurement and description in its totality. Two thousand years have passed since. And the time came when we ourselves were called on to make a contribution, and we did so generously. Throughout, we remained closely linked to the Italian people, spiritually, culturally, and historically.

The 19th century heralded a process of political unification, strikingly alike in both instances. The Germanic tribes united in the German Reich, the Italian people came together in the Italian Kingdom. And the year 1866 even witnessed both peoples entering side by side into the struggle to form new states.¹³³

Now, for a second time, these peoples are experiencing a similar development. A man of secular standing was the first to oppose successfully to the democratic world of ideas, which had become barren, a forceful new idea which reigned victorious within a few years' time. What Fascism means to Italy is difficult to imagine. What it has contributed to the preservation of the culture of man is of astronomic proportions.

Striding through Rome or Florence, who can help being overcome by the contemplation of what fate these unique monuments of human creativity might have met with had it not been for Mussolini and Fascism, which pulled Italy back from the brink of Bolshevik oblivion? Germany, too, faced this danger. Here National Socialism wrought the miracle of rescue. And the belief in a new Renaissance in our day and age clings to these two states in the imagination of countless men of all races. The solidarity between these two regimes represents far more than simple, egotistical self-interest. This solidarity holds the promise of Europe's rescue from its threatened destruction by Bolshevism.

As Italy strode forth in its heroic struggle for its right to existence in Abyssinia, Germany sided with it as its friend. This friendship was more than repaid in the year 1938. May no one in the world doubt National Socialist Germany's loyalty, in which it shall not waver. In the interest of peace, let there remain no doubts that, should any power initiate hostilities against Italy, for whatever reason, this will automatically call Germany to its friend's side.¹³⁴

Above all, one should not heed false council by those who vegetate in the various countries as isolated, bourgeois weaklings who fail to comprehend that in the life of nations, wisdom implies not cowardice, but courage and honor.

As regards National Socialist Germany, it is painfully aware of the destiny awaiting it should Fascist Italy be wrestled to the ground by an international agglomeration of forces, irrespective of pretenses. We know these consequences and we shall cold-bloodedly (*eiskalt*) look them straight in the eye.

There will not be a repetition of the fate of Prussia from 1805 to 1806 in German history. Those weaklings who then counseled the King of Prussia counsel no one in today's Germany. The National Socialist State knows of the inherent dangers and undertakes the necessary steps to prepare for its defense.

Just as I know our own Wehrmacht is quite capable of standing up even under the greatest of strains of a military nature, I know this to be true of the military might of Italy. For as no one can judge the present German Army by the standards of the old Federal Army around 1848, no one can assess the present Fascist Italy by the standards of the old, warring Italian states.¹³⁵

Only a hysterical, mean-spirited press, as obstinate as it is tactless, can so quickly repress memories of the embarrassment it suffered through its false prophecies of Italy's Abyssinian campaign. And its present assessment of the Nationalist forces under General Franco affords it a similar embarrassment once over.

Men make history!

They forge the tools to mold history and, above all, they lend them their spirit. Great men are no more than the strongest, most concentrated representation of a Volk. National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy are sufficiently strong to secure peace in the face of any infringement and stand determined to bring to a successful close this conflict which irresponsible forces have far too thoughtlessly embarked on.

After Hitler had let the Western Powers know about the supposed invincibility of the German and Italian military, he continued his speech on a more subdued note.

He insisted that the Anti-Comintern Pact served one purpose exclusively, namely, "to arrest the menace of a progressive Bolshevization of a world blind to this danger;" and he expressed the hope that "one day, the Anti-Comintern Pact may be appreciated as a focal point around which gathered a group of powers whose most salient ambition lay in the thwarting of this satanic phenomenon imperiling peace and culture world-wide."

A mere seven months later, Hitler sealed a historic pact allying National Socialist Germany to this "satanic phenomenon." On January 30, 1939, however, Hitler entertained no misgivings about his righteous campaign against Bolshevism. He proclaimed:

This does not mean we Germans desire war, as an irresponsible press would like to have it, but that we

1. appreciate other peoples' wish to secure for themselves a share in the goods of this world, in accordance with their numbers, their courage, and their intrinsic value, and that therefore we

2. recognize these rights which oblige us to take a common stance in the pursuit of our common interests.

Above all, we shall not yield to threats or attempts at blackmail under any circumstances!

Our relations to Japan are determined by this realization and the firm determination to arrest the menace of a progressive Bolshevization of a world blind to this danger. One day, the Anti-Comintern Pact may be appreciated as a focal point around which gathered a group of powers whose most salient ambition lay in the thwarting of this satanic phenomenon imperiling peace and culture worldwide. Within the past two years, the Japanese people has repeatedly and tangibly demonstrated its splendid heroism and, undoubtedly, it is a swordsman in the service of mankind on the other side of the globe. Its potential collapse would be to the detriment of the cultured peoples within Europe and beyond and would irrevocably herald the Bolshevization of the Far East. And no people can wish for such a development, other than perhaps international Jewry, which has an interest in this, too.

And if indeed in this past year mighty exertions were permitted to come to a peaceful conclusion, then we are grateful for this not only to Mussolini. As mentioned in the first part of this speech, we extend our thanks also to those other two statesmen who, in the hour of critical decision, valued peace more highly than persistence in a wrong. Germany places no territorial demands on either England or France, other than perhaps a restitution of its former colonies. Yet, although a resolution of this question is highly desirable, this issue most assuredly does not warrant the outbreak of open hostilities.

If Europe today is plagued by strenuous tensions, then this is due primarily

to agitation in an unaccountable and irresponsible press. It allows not a single day to pass by without spreading disquiet among mankind by propagating false alarms, as ludicrous as they are libelous. The liberties taken in this context by the various organs of this worldwide poisoning of wells (*Weltbrunnenvergiftung*) can be regarded only as criminal wrong-doing. In recent days, there has been an attempt to place radio journalism at the service of this internationally instigated campaign. I wish to pronounce this warning here: if certain countries do not immediately desist from airing broadcasts targeted at Germany, then we shall respond accordingly.¹³⁶ And then I hope statesmen from these countries will not venture to approach me with the sincere desire to restore normal relations between our states.

For I remain convinced that our educational campaign will be far more effective than the campaign of lies instigated by these international Jewish agitators. And the announcement of American film companies of their intention to produce anti-Nazi—i.e. anti-German—films, will only lead to our German producers creating anti-Semitic films in the future.¹³⁷ And in this instance, too, certain elements would do well not to deceive themselves as to the effect: a multitude of states and peoples exist today who would be most receptive to such an educational campaign expanding their comprehension of this important issue.

I believe that, should we succeed in arresting the activities of the Jewish-international press agitators and their propaganda, then a reconciliation between peoples would be speedily attained. These elements alone persistently place their hopes on war. I, however, believe in a long-lasting peace.

It was only natural for Hitler to wish for peace in the West, i.e. with Great Britain in particular. All he wanted was a *carte blanche* for his undertakings in the East, an area which he understood to be “none of [the Englishmen’s] business” in the first place. It was equally beyond him why the Western Powers could not be “reasonable” and accept his hand extended in a genuine offer of friendship and peace. Hitler was not a man to give up easily and therefore he renewed his efforts in the vain hope of interesting London, at long last, in the Anglo-German alliance he had always dreamt of.

For is there truly a conflict of interest between England and Germany, for instance? I have often enough stated that there is no German man and especially no National Socialist who even as much as dreams of interfering with the vested interest of the British Empire. And repeatedly the voice of reason was heard to reign in England as well, and we have indeed heard of Englishmen whose calm reflection has led them to espouse a similar stance toward Germany.

It would be a cause for great happiness throughout the world, should these two peoples enter into confiding cooperation with each other. And the same holds true for our relations with France.

While Hitler had generously allocated time to speak on the previous subjects, he treated the remainder of the world's states in a cursory manner. His account carried him swiftly from Poland all the way to South America:

These days bear witness to the fifth anniversary of the conclusion of our Non-Aggression Pact with Poland. There is little dissent today among those who truly love peace as to the value of this agreement. Just imagine where developments might have taken Europe in the interim, had it not been for the conclusion of this pact which truly signaled a great relief for all involved. Poland's most outstanding marshal and patriot¹³⁸ rendered his people as great a service as the National Socialist State's leadership rendered the German Volk. And, in the course of the tense months last year, German-Polish friendship became a reassuring factor in the otherwise troubled political life in Europe.

Our relations with Hungary are based on a long-standing, well-trying friendship and shared interests. Each people has traditionally avowed its high regard for the other.¹³⁹ Germany rejoiced in participating in the restitution for a misfortune inflicted on Hungary.

One state that has commanded our Volk's attention ever since the Great War has been Yugoslavia. The high regard which German soldiers once felt for this valiant people has become ever the more profound and has fostered the development of a sincere friendship. A sharp increase in trade has marked our economic relations with Yugoslavia, as with states friendly to us such as Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, and Turkey. The primary cause has lain in the complementary nature of these economies to the German one.

Germany today considers itself fortunate to possess pacified frontiers to the West, South, and North.¹⁴⁰ Our close relations to states in the West and in the North, i.e. to Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Baltic States, are the cause of further rejoicing, all the more so as recent times have witnessed an increasing tendency to renounce certain war-laden paragraphs of the League of Nations.¹⁴¹

To a greater extent than any other state, Germany appreciates knowing that truly friendly neutral states reside along its borders. May Czechoslovakia succeed in its search for inner peace and the restoration of law and order so as to preclude a relapse into the times of former State President Beneš.¹⁴² The adherence of Bulgaria and Manchukuo to the Anti-Comintern Pact¹⁴³ is an agreeable symptom of resistance worldwide to the threat posed by Jewish-internationalist, Bolshevik agitation.

The amicable relations between the German Reich and the South American states are at present being invigorated in the economic sphere.

Our relations with the North American Union have suffered unduly because of a smear campaign. With the pretext that Germany threatens America's independence and even its liberty, it has placed an entire continent at the service of all too transparent political and financial interests. These are attempting to agitate against those European states governed by the people for the people. All of us are aware that these elements are not representative

of the will of millions of American citizens who do not doubt for one minute, despite bombardment by a 'gigantic Jewish-capitalist instigated propaganda campaign—via press, radio, and film—that there is not a word of truth in all these claims. Germany desires to live in peace and friendship with all countries, America included. It declines any involvement in America's internal affairs and hence, equally vigorously, it rejects American involvement in Germany's internal affairs.

Whether or not Germany seeks maintenance of economic ties or promotes business with the states of Latin America is really not the business of anyone but these states themselves. Germany is a sovereign state and a great Reich. Its policies are not subject to revision by American politicians. In any event, I believe that all the world's states face so many urgent problems at home these days that their peoples would undoubtedly be glad if the statesmen responsible accorded greater attention to domestic issues in their own countries.¹⁴⁴

As concerns Germany, my own experiences have taught me that the tasks to be mastered are so great that they are almost¹⁴⁵ beyond a single man's capacity for insight and concerted action. I can therefore state, both on behalf of my staff and myself, that we are dedicating our lives exclusively to the maintenance and sustenance of our Volk and Reich, both of which can proudly look back on a glorious history spanning the millenniums.

Hitler was now nearing the end of his exposition of several hours. However, he did not easily separate himself from the rostrum. Once again, he felt compelled to reflect on the past and the future. Sentimentally, he pleaded the greatness of the times to which one must sacrifice even "institutions grown dear, cherished recollections, manly pledges of loyalty, and so on." Even the first German dukes would have made these demands, when they formed "wild tribes into higher unions." All collectively had served "as instruments of Providence in the formative process of a nation." And hence, one had to be grateful to the Lord Almighty "to be alive at this time and this hour." Hitler concluded his speech with the following words:

My Deputies, Men of the First Greater German Reichstag!

As I conclude my explanations today, the years of struggle and fulfillment lying behind us now pass once more before my mind's eye. To many these meant the sense and purpose of their entire existence. We know that greater things cannot be granted to our Volk and our own lives.

Without shedding a drop of blood, we succeeded in raising up this great Reich of the German Volk. Let us not forget, however, that this process meant painful sacrifices for some of us: the erasing of many Länder structures; the lowering of their banners; the oblivion of their local traditions. Yet may it be of consolation to these men that no generation involved in the constructive process of our history has been spared similarly painful experiences. Ever

since the first German dukes labored to form wild tribes into higher unions, their endeavors had to obliterate institutions grown dear, cherished recollections, manly pledges of loyalty, and so on.

It was nearly two thousand years before the scattered Germanic tribes emerged as one people; before the countless lands and states forged one Reich. We may now consider this process of the formation of the German nation as having reached its conclusion. The creation of the Greater German Reich represents the culmination of our Volk's thousand-year struggle for existence. As streams of German blood flow together therein, so do traditions of times past, their standards and symbols, and, above all else, all the great men of whom their contemporaries were rightly proud. Small matter whose side they stood on in their day, all those daring dukes, great kings, formidable warlords, mighty emperors, and around them the inspired geniuses and heroes of the past served as instruments of Providence in the formative process of a nation. Insofar as we embrace this great Reich in grateful reverence, the wealth of German history reveals itself to us in all its splendor. Let us thank the Lord Almighty for bestowing on our generation the great blessing to be alive at this time and this hour.

Now Göring—who more than any other man knew how to curry Hitler's favor—rose to add a few words:

Mein Führer!

Your comrades of the first hour are seated before you willing to follow your lead loyally as one united whole; to stride forth at your side in the future also, suffused by the single desire to follow you blindly toward the attainment of the greatest of victories: the victory of our great German Volk. You have led us onward to victories unfathomable. You have restored to us a life worth living, a life splendid and magnificent. It was you who created Greater Germany. How feeble are our expressions of gratitude; words to express our gratitude to you simply defy us! The cries with which we jubilantly hail you presently, mein Führer, these shouts of *Heil* sum up everything we feel within ourselves in respect to inspiration, dedication, love, and loyalty.

Comrades! To our dearly beloved Führer, the creator of Greater Germany: *Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*

2

At this particular session, the Reichstag unanimously extended the Enabling Act of March 24, 1933,¹⁴⁶ due to expire in two years' time, to remain effective until May 10, 1943.¹⁴⁷ Technically speaking, there was no pressing reason for such a step at this time. The same legislative body had already passed a decree on January 30, 1937¹⁴⁸ which had rescheduled the expiration date for April 1, 1941. Hitler was extremely cautious in all questions regarding power politics, as mentioned earlier. The first historic session of the Greater German Reichstag appeared to him an excellent forum for extending the Enabling Act until 1943. After all, so he speculated, there was no telling whether he would still be in a position to see through a like heavy-handed move in 1941. As a precautionary measure, he himself issued the following "Law on the Tenure of the Reichstag":¹⁴⁹

§ 1

- (1) The Reichstag shall serve for a period of four years.
- (2) Tenure shall commence on election day, and shall terminate four years after the first session of the Reichstag.

§ 2

Within sixty days after the expiry of tenure, a new election shall be held.

§ 3

The Reich Minister of the Interior shall issue specific regulations.

Berlin, January 30, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The emphasis of this particular decree was obviously on Paragraph 1, Section 2. The preceding Reichstag had been elected on April 10, 1938. In violation of the Constitution, this Reichstag was not called into session until this January 30, 1939.¹⁵⁰ Hence, its period of service would not expire on April 10, 1942; instead it would remain in office until

January 30, 1943, legally. According to the new regulation, an election to the Reichstag was to be held within sixty days of this date, i.e. before Sunday, March 30, 1943. The law was obviously intended to circumvent the requirements of Article 23 of the Weimar Constitution.¹⁵¹ The most salient feature of this new regulation was that it contained no stipulation indicating when the new Reichstag was to convene for the first time. Hence, if Hitler so desired, he could easily delay calling on the Reichstag for years and thus avoid a new election. In theory, he could postpone the dissolution of this Reichstag indefinitely as long as he never convened it in the first place.

In view of the extension of the Enabling Act by the Reichstag that day, it would have been only logical had Hitler made use of this same forum to pass the law on the Reichstag. That he refrained from doing so was revealing, because Article II of the Enabling Act provided that governmental laws could deviate from the letter of the Constitution only "to the extent that they do not concern the institutions of the Reichstag or Reichsrat as such."¹⁵² Hitler obviously violated the spirit of this provision by issuing the law on Reichstag tenure, as this undeniably jeopardized the institution of the Reichstag as such. But he alone shouldered, as he once put it,¹⁵³ the responsibility for this action. In any case, he did not venture to place this law before the Reichstag for a vote, although in all likelihood, it would have passed the law as unanimously as it had assented to the prolongation of the Enabling Act. Probably, no one would have noticed the hidden traps that had been set therein.

Hitler's paranoid concern for his position in power politics had proved completely unfounded in the past, but still he lived in constant fear that a stranger might come along and depose him, or capture power in some other manner.¹⁵⁴ Hitler's own rise to power appeared so miraculous to him that he was haunted by the vision, throughout his years in power, of another launching a similarly astounding career.

After the Röhm Purge, Hitler had grown apprehensive about meeting his Volk face to face. He feared the Reichstag no less, as had already been evident in his address on July 13, 1934.¹⁵⁵ At the time, he had sought to explain the murders of June 30, 1934. Before entering the hall, he had armed SS guards wearing steel helmets positioned around the rostrum and dispersed throughout the hall.¹⁵⁶

This precautionary measure was to discourage any assassination attempts by any deputies outraged at the bloodbath. In particular, Hitler feared the Reichstag's disposition in the event he should suffer

some political setback. Speaking before the leading editors of Germany's press in a conference on the passive opposition by German intellectuals on November 10, 1938, he expressed this anxiety in the following manner: "What would happen if we ever suffered a defeat? It is a possibility, gentlemen."¹⁵⁷

Hitler's fear of the Reichstag was not completely unfounded, since this parliamentary body represented what might well be termed the Achilles' heel in his system of governance, as, in theory at least, it made steps in opposition to the government legally permissible. An illegal uprising to oust Hitler was highly improbable. Given the cultural heritage of obedience to authority in Germany, no revolutionary movement could hope for more than initial successes in any such undertaking. Exerting pressure from below, through a mass uprising for instance, was inconceivable. Even in the unlikely event that a protest movement gathered momentum in its early phases, it was doomed to collapse beneath a shower of bullets fired by the members of the Armed Forces, traditionally loyal to whatever regime was in power. Hitler's 1923 Putsch debacle was a textbook example of this historic reality. Moreover, desertions from the governing elite did not imperil Hitler's reign. Any attempt to overthrow Hitler as the legal head of state and government would have required illegal activities. German bureaucrats and officers were not suitable as candidates for such a venture.

The Reichstag presented an entirely different case, however. As the sole parliamentary body empowered to render null and void Hitler's decrees, it possessed the vested authority to remove Hitler from office. While the Reichstag deputies were members of the National Socialist Party, and their appointments to this legal body reflected their ideological reliability, this was no guarantee of their loyalty to Hitler in times of crisis. In the past, this had repeatedly proved to be of concern to him. One has only to think of the case of Gregor Strasser.¹⁵⁸

Every member of the Reichstag had the right to take the floor, to give a speech, or to propose a motion. Hitler was well aware that there was no telling how such a step by one renegade deputy might affect the Reichstag as an entity. All depended on the overall political and military situation and the arguments employed. Hitler was decidedly more aware of this potential vulnerability than of the entire resistance movement within Germany, as he was decidedly more competent in questions of constitutionality and power politics. His greatest nightmare was that, in the wake of some policy disaster, one of the deputies might

unexpectedly rise to speak. With an extensive pool of the Führer's wrongdoings, false prophecies, and fallacies to draw on, the renegade deputy could conceivably conclude his speech with a demand for the impeachment of Hitler.

There was ample reason for Hitler's misgivings, as Mussolini's overthrow on July 25, 1943 proved in retrospect. At a session of the Great Fascist Council, a deputy by the name of Grandi courageously rose to offer this parliamentary body undeniable proof that Mussolini's ill-conceived policies were responsible for the unprecedented debacle Italy now faced. Thereupon, the Italian equivalent of the Reichstag proceeded successfully to pass a vote of no confidence against the Duce. Its enigmatic leader gone, the entire Fascist Party vanished from the political stage as though it had never existed. Yet no man with the stamina of Grandi was to be found among the 884 deputies constituting the Reichstag in Germany.

The situation in 1939 and in particular during the years of war to follow was entirely different from the one faced by Reichstag deputy Wels on March 23, 1933 when the Social Democrat sought unsuccessfully to counter Hitler.¹⁵⁹

To effect the removal of Hitler by entirely legal means, it would have sufficed had one of the Reichstag deputies vigorously challenged Hitler, acting as a sort of counsel for the prosecution on behalf of the German Reich. Any man attempting to parry Hitler would, admittedly, have had to command considerable courage and intelligence, as well as extraordinary oratorical prowess. Moreover, he would have had to boast a familiarity with the Constitution and an understanding of its pitfalls, a subject in which Hitler excelled. Had there been such a man among the deputies, he might possibly have risen to request innocently Göring's permission to take the floor. Most likely, the President of the Reichstag would have accorded the deputy this opportunity to voice his laudation of the Führer—what else could possibly be his design? Now the fictitious deputy might have reiterated Hitler's assertions of his alleged desire for peace and his loyalty to treaties, of the alleged neutrality of England, of the alleged crack-up of Russia, of the alleged invincibility of the German Wehrmacht, etc. A rigorous comparison of these claims to the undeniable realities of the day might well have prepared the ground for a motion toward a vote of no confidence against the Führer. A two-thirds majority in favor of such a resolution would have sufficed to remove Hitler and to call for the constitution of a new government.

Of course, it is entirely possible that such a motion would have failed. The renegade deputy in this speculative example might have been booed by the audience, arrested, or shot at once. Nevertheless, given careful maneuvering on his part as well as favorable circumstances, he might well have succeeded in the end. After a vote of no confidence, Hitler might have reacted by retreating into some form of exile, followed by a large number of his adherents, to launch his struggle for power at a later date.¹⁶⁰ Or, possibly, he might have committed suicide.

Many of Hitler's early followers had premonitions of his ultimate failure since they had more intimate knowledge of his person than others, such as conservatives and officers for instance. Better acquainted with his ambitious designs, these NSDAP members had looked with open eyes at Hitler's ruthless determination ever since the events of June 30, 1934. Once the Second World War broke out, they grasped how tragically mistaken Hitler's assumption of British neutrality had been and that from this point onward, Hitler was merely improvising and had lost the assurance flaunted previously. Several members of the Reichstag would flee Germany in the course of the Second World War, such as Fritz Thyssen and Rudolf Hess. Others committed suicide, like Gauleiter Josef Bürckel.¹⁶¹ Even the relatively dense Himmler realized that Hitler's policies heralded disaster and, at the very latest from 1943 on, desperately searched for a way out.

Despite an abundance of good intentions, there were very few outstanding personalities among the deputies who could have mustered the courage necessary to openly oppose so extraordinary a man as Hitler. Not even Graf Helldorff,¹⁶² a high-ranking SA leader and President of the Berlin Police, could make any pretenses to such a distinction. This intelligent and courageous sympathizer of the resistance movement was not used to speaking publicly nor did he command the legal knowledge required for such a sophisticated attack.

While opposition within the Reichstag was precluded from the start, as no deputy dared to openly challenge Hitler, he was cautious enough not to take this for granted. He took every step imaginable to curtail the Reichstag's ability to take action. The public by and large paid no attention. The press was not allowed to publish anything pertaining to the law of January 30, 1939 concerning the Reichstag.¹⁶³ All was well, as long as no deputy bothered to draw the pertinent conclusions on the law's ramifications.

During the war, Hitler approached the Reichstag with utmost caution. He preferred not to call on the parliamentary body to

convene, even on as innocuous an occasion as the anniversary of his rise to power.¹⁶⁴

On those extremely rare occasions when Hitler did in fact summon the deputies, he invariably used the Reichstag as a forum for the announcement of some great achievement or astounding military success. This was the case on September 1, 1939, when "retribution" for Poland's alleged aggression was to be celebrated, closely followed by a report of victory over Poland on October 6, 1939. A number of further dates and events merited a session of the Reichstag: July 19, 1940 marking the fall of France; May 4, 1941 witnessing the conquest of the Balkans; December 11, 1941 heralding a declaration of war on the United States. The Reichstag deputies were called together one last time on April 26, 1942 in order to issue Hitler a virtual *carte blanche* to dismiss any member of the judiciary or of the administration as he saw fit.

This effectively heralded the end of the Greater German Reichstag. Even when, on May 10, 1943, the Enabling Act expired, Hitler did not deem it advisable to summon the deputies. He himself attended to the matter as the chief executive. Two months later, the Great Fascist Council effected Mussolini's ignominious dismissal, which affirmed Hitler's conviction that he had dealt wisely with this dangerous forum. He now ensured his complete control over the members of this parliamentary body by ordering police surveillance of the deputies.

On January 30, 1939, Hitler issued a further decree which was equally indicative of his preoccupations at this time. The issue at stake was the preservation of power in Austria. On the surface, everything appeared to be going well there as Gauleiter Josef Bürckel, an expert in questions of territorial annexations, remained securely installed in Vienna as Reichskommissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich.¹⁶⁵ This administrative post had been established by a decree dated April 23, 1938. Bürckel would have had to relinquish his position on May 1, 1939, according to the provisions of the decree. However, Hitler's goals in Austria were too ambitious to be attained within one year: he desired the complete erasure of Austria as a separate entity from the political map of Europe. The problem arose of what to do about the dreams of many Austrian National Socialists who envisioned their country as carrying out a special mission in the future life of the Reich.

To deal with the matter swiftly, Hitler issued the following decree on January 30:¹⁶⁶

January 30, 1939

I have heeded the request of Party Comrade Odilo Globocnik¹⁶⁷ to relieve him of his post as Gauleiter of the Gau of Vienna. I appoint Party comrade Josef Bürckel as NSDAP Gauleiter of the Gau of Vienna, while he retains his other positions.

Adolf Hitler

Thus all Austrians, in particular the citizens of Vienna, could rejoice that Hitler's Reichskommissar would stay on a bit longer—whether they liked it or not.

On the sixth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, he received fewer congratulatory telegrams than customarily. The German print media published only four notes from foreign statesmen: Mussolini, Franco, the Hungarian Regent Horthy, and the Hungarian Minister-President Imrédy.¹⁶⁸

The telegram of the Italian Head of State read:

Unanimously rallying to you, the German Volk, in its great political, military, and social institutions, celebrates the sixth anniversary of your rise to power. I feel compelled to express to you my heartfelt and comradely best wishes, the roots of which are based on the sincere and profound friendship linking our two peoples through the Axis of this steadfast alliance for the present and for the future.

Mussolini

Hitler wired the following telegram in response to this avowal:

I wish to relate my heartfelt thanks for the comradely congratulations extended to me today on the sixth anniversary of my rise to power. It is with particular satisfaction and rejoicing that I accept these as a renewed symbol of our solidarity and friendship.

With the very best of wishes to you, I remain, Your Adolf Hitler

In 1939, the anniversary celebrations culminated in a midnight, torch-lit parade along Wilhelmstrasse, where the columns filed by beneath the Chancellery's balcony. There Hitler stood perched to observe the festivities in the company of Göring and Hess.¹⁶⁹ The SS Standarte *Feldherrnhalle*¹⁷⁰ headed the festive military parade, its men proudly shouldering their rifles. Various Party formations and Labor Service delegations followed. Sporting steel helmets and rifles, the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler* made up the tail-end of the procession.

On January 31, Hitler once again entertained guests at the new Chancellery. A delegation of approximately eighty cavalry officers from Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary had accepted Hitler's invitation.¹⁷¹ The deputies were in Berlin to participate in the Nineteenth International Equestrian Com-

petitions. The military attachés of the respective embassies accompanied the participants to the reception at the Chancellery where all of them were afforded ample opportunity to admire the new seat of government in the Reich capital. Hitler was a most congenial host and generously donated an honorary award for the tournament entitled "Preis der Nationen."¹⁷²

On the following day, Hitler personally attended the qualification rounds in the Deutschlandhalle at Berlin.¹⁷³ Also on February 1, Hitler decreed a restructuring of the Luftwaffe. The Air Force was to be subdivided into three separate Fleet Commands, the commanders of which bore the titles listed below:

Chief of the First Air Fleet and Commander of the Eastern Section: General Kesselring.¹⁷⁴

Chief of the Second Air Fleet and Commander of the Northern Section: General Felmy.¹⁷⁵

Chief of the Third Air Fleet and Commander of the Western Section: General Sperrle.¹⁷⁶

In addition, Hitler effected the following promotions: State Secretary Colonel General Milch¹⁷⁷ was named Inspector General of the Luftwaffe; General Stumpff¹⁷⁸ became Chief of the Anti-Aircraft Forces; Lieutenant General Udet¹⁷⁹ was appointed Aircraft Master General. As Hitler emphasized in the decree, these steps served the "greatest possible concentration of all forces,"¹⁸⁰ and accomplished "another decisive step forward in the buildup of the Luftwaffe."

On February 1, Hitler brought together art treasures that were formerly part of the Schack Gallery in Munich¹⁸¹ with works of art from the same period that previously had been in the possession of the Bavarian State. These objects of art were to be integrated in a permanent collection renamed the "Schack Gallery of German masters of the 19th century," with its seat in Munich.¹⁸² The State of Bavaria would become the official proprietor of the gallery. The Bavarian Minister-President was to administer the collection "in accordance with the Führer's instructions."

February 4 witnessed the publication of additional information on the precise nature of the personnel changes on the Reichsbank board of directors. Hitler had apparently dismissed three of Schacht's former colleagues in order to assign more ideologically reliable men to their posts.

The official notice detailing the changes in personnel read as follows:¹⁸³

The Führer has relieved of their duties the following members of the Reichsbank Board of Directors: Privy Finance Counselor Dr. Wilhelm Vocke, Carl Ehrhardt, and Kurt Blessing. The following men received new appointments to the Reichsbank Board of Directors: the Director of the Reichsbank, Friedrich Wilhelm; the departmental head in the Reich Ministry of Economics, Ministerialrat Kurt Lange; the Ministerialrat in the Reich Ministry of Finance, Walter Bayrhofer. The previous official positions of the latter two individuals are not affected.

On February 7, Hitler conveyed his congratulations to the Emperor of Manchukuo,¹⁸⁴ Pungi (Pu Yi), on his birthday.¹⁸⁵ This conspicuous wire served two purposes. For one, it was to draw attention to Manchukuo's assent to the Anti-Comintern Pact. Second, this public recognition of Manchukuo as a sovereign state was to reward the Emperor for his decision to side with Germany.

On February 9, Hitler honored Rear Admiral von Reuter, who now lived in Potsdam, with a congratulatory telegram on his seventieth birthday.¹⁸⁶

On the next day, Hitler ordered a wreath placed at the tomb of Sir Henry Deterding,¹⁸⁷ in Döbbin in the district of Mecklenburg.¹⁸⁸ In addition, Hitler offered his condolences to the Vatican on the death of Pope Pius XI. The following official note was published:¹⁸⁹

On the occasion of the demise of Pope Pius XI, the Führer requested the State Minister and Chief of the Presidential Chancellery, Dr. Meißner, to offer his condolences to the Apostolic Nuncio Monsignor Orsenigo.

Flags flew at half-mast in front of the Presidential Chancellery, the Reich Chancellery, the Reichstag building, and the Foreign Office.

February 10 was indeed busy at the Reich Chancellery, as numerous receptions had been scheduled for that day.¹⁹⁰ The Yugoslav Envoy Cincar-Markovich¹⁹¹ called on Hitler to bid his official farewell as he returned home to assume the post of Yugoslavia's Foreign Minister. He was followed by the Spanish Ambassador, de Magaz, who presented Hitler with a handwritten letter from Franco. The main event of the day was a reception of all Group Commanders serving with the Army. These were afforded the opportunity of duly admiring the new Chancellery building.¹⁹² Before an extensive tour of the grounds, they assembled in the main conference hall to hear a lengthy lecture on one of Hitler's favorite topics, "the tasks and duties of the officer in the National Socialist State."

On Sunday, February 12, Hitler graced with his presence a "community stew dinner" in the new Reich Chancellery's courtyard.

More than 1,400 Party members, representatives of the National Socialist Party News Agency, and volunteers for the Winterhilfswerk had been asked to participate in the conspicuously grand display of simplicity. Eight army field kitchens dished out peas with bacon. The following effusive official communiqué reported on Hitler's participation in the event:¹⁹³

Ushered in by thunderous cries of *Sieg Heil*, the Führer himself appeared among his guests to the boundless joy of everyone present. Accompanied by SA Obergruppenführer Brückner, Reichsleiter Bormann, and State Secretary Hanke, the Führer stuffed bills into numerous collecting tins stretched out to him. The Führer further made sizeable contributions to collections by numerous other Party comrades who handed him "their" tins, to their great rejoicing. From the staircase, he bade the assembled party farewell as a frenzy of gratitude was showered upon him.

On February 12, Hitler conveyed his congratulations to the eldest member of the SA, Andreas Hofmann, a resident of Presseck, who celebrated his ninety-third birthday.¹⁹⁴ On the same day, Hitler also received the Slovak politician Dr. Tuka¹⁹⁵ to whom he indicated that he favored the Slovak quest for independence.¹⁹⁶ Hitler conceived of Slovakia as an ideal base for launching his attack on the newly established Czechoslovakian Republic. To this end, he strove to fuel the civil strife between the Czechs and Slovaks. Within a few weeks, so he reasoned, this existing controversy would no doubt sharpen, given a little encouragement. Unrest in these areas, a possible declaration of Slovak independence, and state attempts at its suppression, would furnish an excellent pretext for a German military intervention. In his understanding and in that of the more faithful adherents of National Socialism, such a development would suffice to rationalize, and hence to excuse, the breach of the Munich Agreement. This argument, however, was unacceptable to the international community. Hitler was to realize this later to his great astonishment and annoyance.

In mid-February, the Führer was still undaunted by any such misgivings. He felt confident that the time had come for a display of the Third Reich's military might. The British especially needed reminding that he was at least as "tough a fellow" as Bismarck.

On a side note, Hitler was by no means one of the more ardent admirers of Bismarck. In numerous speeches and in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler showed that he disapproved of several of Bismarck's policy objectives, like the idea of a Smaller Germany and Prussia's strategic alliance with Austria. Moreover, he judged Bismarck's dealings with

the Social Democrats and the Center Party to have been extremely unwise. In Hitler's eyes, Bismarck had been a man of limited resources who had merely smoothed the path for a man to succeed him: a man of greater mental capacities and faculties whose name was to be Adolf Hitler; a man whom Providence had chosen to fulfill the longings of Germany's most renowned sons in all spheres: culture, politics, and military affairs.

When Hitler now proceeded to name the first heavy battleship *Bismarck*, the intent was a rather transparent one: by conjuring up the specter of the old "Iron Chancellor," he hoped this would remind the British of the might of Imperial Germany and of its formidable fleet.¹⁹⁷ Haunted by the fear that Germany might one day resurrect its naval supremacy and thereby threaten their interests, the British would undoubtedly give in to Germany's implicit demands regarding Eastern Europe and be transformed into a more conciliatory partner in world politics. Should they still remain recalcitrant on this account, then indeed he would see to the creation of a German fleet even mightier than that of William II.

At this point, Hitler was no doubt contemplating such a build-up of the German fleet,¹⁹⁸ despite the alleged "honest intentions" to limit its tonnage to 35 percent of the total tonnage of English vessels.¹⁹⁹ While this percentage was still far off, once he had reached it, he would proceed as he pleased.

Hitler's choice of *Bismarck* as the name for the first great battleship exceeding 35,000 tons demonstrated once more his scant knowledge of history, even German history. For one thing, Bismarck would have been strongly opposed to provoking England in so obvious a manner. He had been one of the few German politicians and statesmen who had appreciated the might and significance of Great Britain in world politics and thus had been moderate in his demands. It had been because of this realization that Bismarck had thought little of the Kaiser's naval policy—undoubtedly, he would not have been pleased to see his name on the bow of this ship which symbolized a similar policy of confrontation.

On February 13, Hitler left Berlin for Friedrichsruh where he placed a wreath at Bismarck's grave.²⁰⁰ This deferential act evidently was to prepare him spiritually for the festivities at the ship's launching. The following communiqué was released regarding Hitler's visit:²⁰¹

While journeying to Hamburg, the Führer stopped on Monday at Friedrichsruh, where he placed a laurel wreath at the tomb of Prince Otto von

Bismarck, the Chancellor of the Old Reich. Thereafter, the Führer was the guest of Prince von Bismarck and his wife,²⁰² at the Friedrichsruh Castle. On both arrival and departure, the population of Friedrichsruh and the surrounding countryside enthusiastically acclaimed the Führer, whom they had observed in deeply moved silence in the solemn act of placing the wreath at the grave.

Late in the evening of February 13, Hitler reached Hamburg. A guard of honor greeted him at the Dammtor train station and from there, he proceeded to the Hotel Atlantic where he set up quarters. When he left the hotel on February 14, at 12:15 p.m., several Party formations lined up to form a cordon through which his automobile passed. At the St. Pauli gangway, he boarded the state yacht *Hamburg*, as nearby canons fired a round of 21 shots in his honor. From there, he proceeded to inspect the Blohm and Voss shipyard. Anchored there, the pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer*, the cruiser *Nürnberg*, and the torpedo boats forming the Fourth Flotilla greeted the passing state column. At the docks, State Counselor Blohm reported the completion of the new battleship type 'F'.²⁰³

Thereupon, Hitler mounted to the rostrum to present the following address on the occasion of the vessel's christening:²⁰⁴

Germans!

On the day of our assumption of power six years ago commenced the resurrection of the German Wehrmacht. It is to secure the existence of the Reich and to enable its Führer to pursue the justified interests of the nation successfully. As the sharpest instrument of war, it is to take under its protection a just peace and help shield it. Simultaneously with the establishment of the German Army and the creation of a new German Luftwaffe, we established a new Navy, one sufficient to meet our needs. We Germans still feel a terrific tug at our hearts when we think of the fate of the Fleet sunk twenty years ago, after its glorious struggle throughout four years.²⁰⁵ National Socialist Germany sought its resurrection with particular dedication and love.

The circumstances made necessary and acceptable the restrictions in the Anglo-German Naval Agreement on the number of large-sized ships. This has led to the necessity of achieving a compromise in the christening of these vessels between, on the one hand, the Navy's understandable desire to accommodate its heritage and, on the other hand, the new Wehrmacht's significance to the Volk and the National Socialist State. The pool of names from which to draw inspiration in the naming of large entities of our fleet is therefore restricted to those men who deserve an honorary mention in our history, to be immortalized in these gigantic works of nationalist feats and inspirations, or else to those men whose names have already been inscribed honorably on the pages of our history and whose greatness commands us to respect this tradition. And it was thus that the names of two great soldiers were given to the first two German battleships to serve with our new Navy.²⁰⁶ These

men undertook, in times of the greatest degradation of Prussia, to realize the principal idea of a *Volksheer* (people's army) and to fight for the restoration of their country's external liberty. The names *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* have already borne witness to a naval history and a glorious heroic struggle on their own.²⁰⁷

Before us today we see the first giant of a new squadron of 35,000-ton battleships. We shall witness its launch momentarily, the first in the days of the new Greater German Reich. After a period of complete collapse and decay, National Socialism has gripped the nation, elevated it, and led it toward gigantic domestic and foreign victories. And the signs of the time compel me all the more fervently to honor the memory of those whose undertakings in their day and age created the preconditions for this Greater Germany of today.

One giant rises above all of those who could lay claim as well to having prepared the path toward a Greater Germany: Bismarck.²⁰⁸ The life of this one heroic man reflects the history of an age. Amidst the waning relief felt at Prussia and Germany emerged from a disquieting age, when the best of Germans began to entertain doubts as to the rise of the desired liberty for the German nation and had but a faint, imperfect vision of a new German Reich, a child is born. Thirty-three years later, the deputy von Bismarck begins to emerge from a revolutionary, agitated epoch; highly ambitious in its ideals; highly ambivalent in the methods it employed. Those surrounding him grow increasingly attentive to the young man.

Two years later, he appears at the Bundestag in Frankfurt in his official capacity as the Envoy of Prussia. Eleven years thereafter, a King of great character entrusts him with the leadership of Prussia and the conduct of its foreign affairs. Within barely eight years, he assures hegemony in Germany for a Prussia previously in the shadow of the Habsburg monarchy. He leads Prussia onward, his efforts crowned by the creation of a new German Reich.

This culminating event was not predetermined. It was not one whose time had come in due course, as certain dunces (*Einfaltspinsel*) maintain. No, this result was wrought by a historically isolated phenomenon, a man truly blessed by the Lord.

And this struggle for a new German Reich is a struggle not only against all sorts of imaginable internal forces and their opposition. Liberals and democrats hate this Junker. As late as 1867, conservatives implore the King to distance himself from this treacherous reformer; from this revolutionary who seeks the destruction of Prussia. Clerical politicians fight him with teeth clenched for they clearly recognize him as the founder of an imperial might; one for whom they harbor only hatred. In the eyes of the Marxists, this man represents a stabilizing force in a social order which ultimately undertakes the solution of social problems without setting fire to the entire world in due course. The egoism of stubborn, decrepit dynasties unites with the hunger for power of Länder politicians. The ambitions and recklessness of parliamentarians mobilize the print press and agitate the Volk. Certain females (*Frauenzimmer*) plunge themselves into the nerve-racking pursuit of intrigues at the Royal Court. At each step, this great man of genius, alone in his age, encounters the opposition of nobodies. It is truly a struggle of giants, as only a man can

estimate who himself has been forced to lead a struggle in a similarly hostile environment [i.e. Hitler].

What we so greatly admire in this man, besides his daunting insight and wisdom, is the enormous willpower which insured him against any cowardly pretenses. In three instances,²⁰⁹ his sense of duty pressured him to take up his sword in order to resolve matters which, according to his most sacred conviction, he held not to be answerable by means of a negotiated majority decision. And for what this giant wrought within himself—for this, all Germans owe him never-ending gratitude. By mastering the challenging, inner transition from a Prussian statesman to a German *Reichsschmied* (smith of the Reich) he forged not only an empire, but also created the prerequisites for the erection of what is today called Greater Germany. Despite scruples, he also laid the foundation for the National Socialist State as one of unity and cohesion. His persistent efforts led, as a logical conclusion, to an overcoming of the psychologically divisive prejudices between various tribes and Länder, and the difference in interests.

In those instances in which he was denied success, his efforts had been doomed from the outset, as he lacked the means to pursue this struggle to its ultimate conclusion. The resistance encountered from a filibustering league of Center Party priests paralyzed him as much as did his own attempt to exorcize the spirit of Marxism from the German Volk by all means at his disposal. His attempt to resolve purely social problems by state intervention inspires admiration even today. Unfortunately, he had not an inkling of the potential of an effective propaganda campaign. Most crucially, he lacked a certain tool in his pursuit founded on a *weltanschaulich* legitimate idea which alone could assure the long-term success of his efforts. And thus, thanks to his genius, his outstanding character and valor, he resolved the state's problems in his day and age with the governmental means then available. Nevertheless, his attempt to lead a crusade with governmental means against powers that transcended the state was doomed to ultimate failure.

The Second Reich collapsed as he himself had sensed in torturous premonitions. He to whom the German nation owed all, who, after endless days of Germany's degradation and shame, restored respect to the name of our Volk, might and strength to the Imperial Reich, and colonial possessions which linked the Reich to the remotest parts of the world, he received bad recompense for his troubles. His removal from office and the later hostility of certain political circles, these both constitute a lamentable chapter of national ingratitude. Providence proved more just than man. There are no longer princes and dynasties, politicized Center Party priests and Social Democrats, liberalism, Länder parliaments, or Reichstag parties. All those who rendered difficult the historic struggle of this one man outlived him for but a few years. National Socialism, however, through the vehicle of its Movement, has imparted to the German Volksgemeinschaft the spiritual and organizing abilities of a world view capable of destroying the enemies of the Reich from now on for all eternity. In the sixth year of the National Socialist revolution, we bear witness today to the launch of this third, now mightiest of battleships in our new fleet.

As Führer of the German Volk and Chancellor of this Reich, I cannot conceive of a better name to give this ship than the name of this man who, as a fearless valiant knight created this German Reich, whose restoration from bitter despair and whose miraculous growth Providence has bestowed on us.

German construction workers, engineers, and dock workers have created the enormous hull of this proud giant which will ride the waves! May the German soldiers and officers, who will have the honor to command this ship one day, prove themselves worthy of the name! May the spirit of the Iron Chancellor suffuse them, may it accompany them in their actions during many sorties in times of peace! Should it be necessary, may his example inspiringly remind and precede them, may it illuminate the hours of hardest fulfilment of their duty!

It is with this fervent wish that the German Volk greets its new battleship, the *Bismarck*!

After Hitler's concluding remarks, Admiral General Raeder addressed the audience:

We thank the Führer for bestowing on this new battleship of the Third Reich's Navy so proud a name which obliges us to the Great Smith of the Second Reich. We acknowledge the high calling of his name. On this day, mein Führer, we pledge ourselves, the crew of this ship and the entire Navy, always to bear in mind the high calling and enormous responsibility—unto our last breath.

"Unto our last breath;" this was a maxim to Hitler's liking. He had always greatly admired the naval officers' strict code of conduct. And, indeed, the men of the *Bismarck* were to keep their promise in the end, as they did not receive permission to surrender to the enemy despite the hopelessness of the situation. On that day in February 1939, *Bismarck*'s granddaughter, Dorothee von Loewenfeld,²¹⁰ assuredly had no premonition of the future tragedy as she mounted the rostrum and proclaimed: "On the Führer's order, I christen you the *Bismarck*."

On February 17, Hitler established a new award in recognition of "loyal services rendered in the protection of customs frontiers."²¹¹

Later that day, he gave a lengthy speech at the festivities opening the annual International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in the Berlin Exhibition Halls on Kaiserdamm. This particular address was the last he could deliver on such an occasion, as it was the last exhibition of this kind to take place in the Third Reich.

Although the setting was as elaborate as the year before, if not more so, the affair lacked the ebullience of previous ones. Though Hitler expounded the significance and potential of motor vehicle production at great length and in great detail, his words failed to convey the enthusiasm he had earlier displayed on this particular topic. Hitler

barely mentioned his favorite project, the Volkswagen, and referred to the construction of the Autobahn as an aside only.

Indeed, the tone was a subdued one in 1939. The forced armament production was already overshadowing the automobile industry as well as other branches of the economy, which relied heavily on the infrastructure, traffic, and transportation. Raw materials and fuel supplies were becoming increasingly scarce, and Hitler admonished the public to exercise economy in the consumption of these goods: "Every kilogram of steel needlessly tacked onto an automobile not only raises its costs and its retail price, but also maintenance expenditures. This in turn leads to more gas being used up, tires wearing out more quickly, and street surfaces needing more frequent replacement."

These new insights imparted by Hitler to the audience in his appeal for economy were intended to challenge the automobile industry to construct new car models, weighing no more than 2,000 kilograms instead of the customary 3,000 kilograms. Hitler further argued that the Autobahn highways had not been built "for speeds from 120 to 140 kilometers per hour, but rather for average speeds, let us say, of eighty kilometers." This speed limit soon became law. Ironically, after the National Socialists' rise to power in 1933, one of the first pieces of legislation enacted had been a repeal of earlier speed restrictions which allegedly had inhibited the development of motorization. At the time the Nazis had claimed that high speeds even reduced the number of accidents on the road! A change of heart on this subject now turned speeding into "un-National-Socialist behavior."

Hitler began his speech at the International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition with the following remarks:²¹²

For the seventh time, I have the pleasure of opening an exhibition which affords us insight not only into the workings of one of the most important branches of industry in our country, but also of a large part of the world.

Hitler then indulged in sentimental reminiscences of the great "victory" celebrated by the automobile in the days of Gottfried Daimler and Carl Benz. He proceeded, in a five-point overview, to enumerate the measures taken by the National Socialist administration to promote the development of the motorcar. The first four points concerned the evolution in society's attitude toward the automobile: "The automobile is not a luxury article, it is an article of general use." Furthermore, National Socialists had succeeded in lowering costs and prices: "adaptation of price policy to the group of buyers in question." This

would lead to an increase in “the confidence of the German Volk in its own car.” In fact, the traffic infrastructure the National Socialist State had built up over the years was far superior to “the attainments of the past and present.” The most important aspect of Hitler’s speech was no doubt contained in the fifth item concerning the creation of “an independent raw material base.” A discussion of additional goals to be pursued in the future followed:

Within the framework of the Four-Year Plan, we sought to free motorization in Germany from dependence on factors abroad and to establish our own independent raw material base. After only a few years, the results of this effort may today already be called gigantic. In part, they have led to overwhelming new inventions whose superiority renders it unnecessary to use raw materials formerly [involved in the production process], even should they be abundantly available once more in the future.

In an overview of these facts, which in themselves reveal to us the greatness of the results attained, we note the striking evidence of the gigantic increase in production, the extraordinary rise in exports, the lowering of prices for certain models of automobiles and motorcycles, and above all, the excellent work in detail. I open an exhibition today which will splendidly demonstrate these achievements. In spite of this, along with a few smaller tasks and current problems, there remain great tasks yet to be accomplished:

1. It was understandable that, in times of grave concern for sales, each individual firm, more or less nervously, tried to scan the market and its requirements. Hence, as I already pointed out in my last speech, each firm seized that model which apparently held the greatest promise, without considering how many other factories were already involved with this particular model, or the potential size of the series already in production at any one factory. The resulting competition precluded a potential decrease in prices for certain models. Furthermore, it was understandable that, under the circumstances, a relentless competition for customers ensued which led to an exaggeration of the mechanical element. This meant the incorporation of any type of innovation in the car, no matter how insignificant its practical application, simply because of the belief that one had to oblige a highly selective customer.

The conditions which led to this technically and economically undesirable phenomenon no longer exist today. It is less the task of today’s German automobile industry to seek potential customers than to satisfy the demands of existing customers. The demand for automobiles is overwhelming. The following are necessary in order to satisfy this demand:

- a) Lower prices. This is possible in the long run only if one instills order in the types of models produced. This means that individual firms must achieve a consensus on the type of models to be produced and restrict the overall number of models. Indeed, there must be a simplification of the production program to very few models. It is crucial to augment the total production of automobiles instead of increasing the number of models

offered. The multitude of these would ultimately lead to a splintering off into an infinity of models, encumbering the production process and possibly lowering total output.

b) Justice can be done to this call for lower prices only if the weight of cars, particularly of those in mass production, is significantly lowered. Every kilogram of steel needlessly tacked onto an automobile not only raises its costs and its retail price, but also maintenance expenditures. This in turn leads to more gas being used up, tires wearing out more quickly, and street surfaces needing more frequent replacement. Moreover, a 3,000-kilogram automobile performs no better than one in a 2,000-kilogram category, but needlessly taxes the raw materials at our disposal. Two cars in such a heavy weight class simply rob us of the materials needed to produce a third one.

I do understand that, in the end, the industry was not capable of arriving at such an ordering of its production on its own. Therefore, I appointed Colonel von Schell²¹³ as plenipotentiary to see to these tasks being carried out. He is presently issuing binding directives to all appropriate offices within the framework of the Four-Year Plan. His activities have already resulted in exceptional results and hold great promise. He will be in a position to account for his activities for the first time at the 1940 exhibition.²¹⁴ The resulting further decline in prices for our automobile industry will undoubtedly have a positive effect on exports.

2. Let the new Volkswagen represent an enormous, real avowal of these principles. All those concerned are called on to devote the greatest energy to press forward the construction of its factory. I sincerely rejoice in being able to afford you a glance at the car for the first time in this exhibition. The Volkswagen's ingenious designer has bestowed an object of extraordinary value on the German Volk and the German economy. It is up to us now to persevere in our efforts to shortly begin mass production of this car.

3. The pending increase in the flow of motorized traffic, due to the Volkswagen and the introduction of a series of low-price trucks, now forces us to take steps necessary to ensure traffic safety. In a period of six years, the German Volk sacrifices nearly as many men to automobile-related accidents as it did in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. This cannot be tolerated. Though the beneficial cooperation of State and Party offices, and the deployment of traffic police and NSKK patrols has already brought some relief, these results can neither be regarded as satisfactory nor can the situation be regarded as tolerable.

Above all, there are certain principles and duties all those who participate in traffic on German roads must be aware of:

When someone causes an accident today, whether he be the engineer or the switchman, then the responsible party will be regarded as an unscrupulous criminal who is indifferent to the life of his contemporaries, and he will be punished accordingly. The driver of a private vehicle bears similar responsibility not only regarding his own life, to which he may be indifferent or which may be of little value, but for that of other participants in traffic. Whoever nonchalantly endangers these lives acts in a criminal manner and without any scruples.

Those who cause the nation to lose 7,000 men annually, in addition to imparting to it the care of 30,000 to 40,000 injured, are parasites on the Volk. They act irresponsibly. They shall be punished as a matter of course, provided they do not escape the Volksgemeinschaft's wrath by dying themselves.

It is truly not an art to drive fast and to endanger the lives of others. Rather it is a great art to drive safely, i.e. carefully. Lack of caution coupled with high speed is the most common cause of automobile crashes. And it is discouraging to realize that the majority of those driving could easily spare the extra ten, twenty, or even thirty minutes which, at best, they can hope to save by their insane reckless driving (*Wahnsinnsraserei*), even on long stretches.

This constitutes a call for all those involved in the training of our drivers. One should point out that the new roads in Germany, especially the Autobahn, distinguish themselves in allowing for a high average speed, although peak speeds may well be relatively low. The Reichsautobahnen were not built, as many mistakenly believe, for a speed of 120 to 140 kilometers per hour, but rather for an average, let us say, of eighty kilometers. This is easily obtained by driving at a near-constant speed. In the end, this speed over long distances far exceeds that of even our most rapid trains.

Speaking on a matter of principle, it is indeed un-National-Socialist behavior to be inconsiderate towards other Volksgenossen. At this point, I would like to say today that I expect, in particular of representatives of National Socialist institutions, that, in this realm as well, what otherwise would be mere lip service to the Volksgemeinschaft, will become a matter of course for them. Besides, in the context of our national supply of raw materials, it is absolutely senseless to drive at speeds which increase the rate at which tires need replacement twice or even three or four times. Naturally, these speeds also cause an uneconomical fuel consumption. In general, our race cars and their drivers set speeds and records for performance, as do others who promote motorization. They do not need the support of more or less talented amateur drivers. Consideration for one's fellow man should have priority for all those on our streets; otherwise they cannot expect the Volksgemeinschaft or the state to show consideration to them. All of us should unite to make our country not only the one with the greatest traffic density, but also the one where traffic is the safest. In the interest of maintaining this traffic safety, the state stands determined to mercilessly destroy and exterminate those criminal elements which set up road traps and rob taxi drivers, and commit murder.

I wish to take advantage of today's occasion to thank all those who have not only contributed to the domestic significance of the German automobile and motorcycle industry, but also to its renown worldwide: the businessmen for their enterprising spirit; inventors, engineers, and technicians for their ingenuity; and masters of their trade and laborers for their astounding achievements. The German Volk today can justly be proud of the marvels of an industry which once took its first, gingerly steps toward practical application in this country.

In this spirit, I hereby declare the 1939 International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition in Berlin open to the public.

Having thus concluded his opening statements, Hitler spent the following three hours touring the exhibition. Göring, Ley, and numerous Reichsleiters and ministers accompanied him. Before leaving, he inspected a bus in which the propaganda department exhibited its own display: "Vierjahresplan."

That afternoon, Hitler delivered yet another 'secret speech'²¹⁵ before 400 laborers, some of them construction workers involved in the Autobahn project and others representing the German automobile industry. Together with members of the NSKK and the Wehrmacht, these men had assembled at the Kaiserhof Hotel to hear Hitler speak. The German News Bureau published the following report on the gathering and on Hitler's 'secret speech,' which was destined to be the last of its kind in the Third Reich's history:²¹⁶

It was the appearance of the Führer himself which proved the crowning event at this comradesly gathering of staff members and of laborers toiling at the fore of motorization. The Führer dedicated an extended period to his guests and, to their great rejoicing, even addressed a few words to them.

On February 17, Hitler ordered that "special measures to promote urban development" be implemented in the capital cities of various Gaus, including Augsburg, Bayreuth, Breslau, Dresden, Graz, Hamburg, and Würzburg. He entrusted the carrying out of these projects, in the form of separate decrees,²¹⁷ to the respective Gauleiters, such as Karl Wahl,²¹⁸ Fritz Wächtler,²¹⁹ Josef Wagner,²²⁰ Martin Mutschmann,²²¹ Dr. Siegfried Uiberreither,²²² Karl Kaufmann,²²³ and Dr. Otto Hellmuth.²²⁴ This move complemented a law to remodel major cities in Germany in accordance with Hitler's taste, an ambition already expressed and provided for in a law dated October 4, 1937, which had decreed the nationalization, i.e. expropriation, of private property.

As mentioned previously, Hitler entertained great designs for Germany's cities, envisioning large-scale changes of the type he had already implemented in Munich, Nuremberg, and Berlin. Entire blocks of houses were to be torn down to provide for thoroughfares and new monumental buildings. During the Second World War, however, Allied bomber squadrons transformed the major German cities in a completely different way and buried Hitler's grandiose plans beneath the rubble.²²⁵

On February 18, Hitler attended the funeral services for the late Gauleiter of Kärnten, Hubert Klausner.²²⁶ These were conducted in the Knights' Chamber of the Landhaus in Klagenfurt.²²⁷ While he did

convey his sympathies to the family of the deceased, he refrained from speaking on this particular occasion. On February 20, Hitler presented the poet Hermann Burte²²⁸ and the author Josef Stolzinger-Cerny²²⁹ with the Goethe medal for performances in the arts and sciences,²³⁰ on their respective sixtieth and seventieth birthdays.

One day later, Franco displayed the might of his armed forces in the form of a military parade through the city of Barcelona. In connection with this event, the Generalissimo addressed telegrams to both Mussolini and Hitler. The telegram to the German head of state read as follows:²³¹

As our victorious troops made their entry into Barcelona at the culmination of the Catalan campaign, heroic German volunteers were among them. Through them the Spanish people jubilantly cheered Germany and its Führer. I cordially convey my greetings to you and wish to assure you of the great respect your army enjoys with ours.

Generalissimo Franco

On February 23, Hitler replied to Franco in the following manner:

With all my heart, I thank you for the telegram relayed to me on the occasion of the troop parade in Barcelona. Germany and its Wehrmacht rejoice that German volunteers were permitted to fight in the ranks of your glorious army, alongside their Italian comrades, and thereby were allowed to modestly contribute to the liberation of your country and to the restoration of a proud Nationalist Spain.

Adolf Hitler

In the evening hours of February 24, the annual festivities commemorating the foundation of the National Socialist Party took place in the banquet hall of the Munich Hofbräuhaus.²³² In his customary address, Hitler attempted once more to instill in his party comrades the conviction that any future problems could be countered by the exercise of "diligence, determination, ingenuity, willpower, and unyielding persistence in standing together." If this advice was heeded, then assuredly Germany's struggle abroad would end no differently from that at home:

Naturally, it is not possible to convert all men. Although busy becoming extinct, some of our adversaries are still active in Germany. They are our friends from the black-red-gold coalition²³³—well known to us from the days of old—the same people who today are forming a coalition against us worldwide.

Hitler was not in the least troubled by considerations of a possible failure. He continued:

You shall assuredly not judge me presumptuous, my old Party Comrades! How could a man think differently! Especially how could one man do so who set out as an unknown individual twenty years ago; who stood here for the first time nineteen years ago, forsaken by everyone, facing a raging and defiant crowd; who strode forth to take up the struggle to conquer this vast Reich, accompanied by only a dozen of his most loyal comrades, on this indescribably difficult path. Who could truly believe that such a man would, once in power, easily be frightened off by the threats of others? I knew no fear then. I know no fear now; otherwise I would have to feel ashamed of myself; otherwise I would not feel worthy to call myself the Führer of this German nation. Their threats will not shake us. And should indeed the peoples of the world once more commit the insanity of engaging us in another battle, then this would merely serve to fortify us in our resolution not to capitulate. [—]

There shall never be another year 1918 in German history!

At the end of his speech, Hitler once more portrayed his own “marvelous ascent” to power as conclusive proof that the goals National Socialism had set for itself were attainable. Since the social life at the new Chancellery building had developed so rapidly within the past few weeks, Hitler desired to impart this style to his undertakings in Munich, too. One day after the official celebration at the Hofbräuhaus, he entertained an evening festivity at the Führerbau on the Königlicher Platz. Party officials from the rank of Gauleiter on up and their ladies were invited guests on this occasion,²³⁴ and Hitler naturally could not refrain from once again offering his assessment of the political situation in a speech.

On February 25 in Munich, Hitler established November 9 as a national holiday “in commemoration of the dead of the Movement” so that the lower ranks of Party and Wehrmacht could fully appreciate the splendid life the Third Reich afforded them.²³⁵ The official schedule now provided for celebration of the Heldengedenktage on March 16, alternatively on the preceding Sunday, and its official purpose now was to mark the “anniversary of the reintroduction of general conscription” to Germany.²³⁶

In the interim, the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano had journeyed to Warsaw. State visits there by representatives of the Axis Powers had grown increasingly frequent in the past weeks. Tensions were simmering between them and the Warsaw Government because of Germany’s claims to Danzig.

A visit by Ribbentrop to Warsaw in late January had passed uneventfully. This bland guest failed to disconcert the general populace in Poland. Another visit by Himmler on February 19 also had passed

quietly. Himmler had called on the Polish government in his capacity as chief of the German police to confer with his Polish colleagues. Ciano's arrival in the Polish capital on February 25 was, however, accompanied by the first vocal anti-German demonstrations. It is highly likely that the Polish population perceived the Italian Foreign Minister, himself a Catholic, as a natural southern ally for their cause. Apparently, Poland speculated that the Axis alliance was much weaker than it actually was, and the Poles believed they could win Ciano for their defiant stand against German encroachment on Polish sovereignty. Before the gates to the German Embassy in Warsaw, protesters shouted:²³⁷ "Down with Hitler! An end to pro-German politics! Long live Polish Danzig!"

For Hitler, the turmoil came at an opportune moment, as it later furnished him with a credible motive for the armed aggression against Poland. Nevertheless, the problem of the remainder of Czechoslovakia still needed to be addressed before any further steps could be taken. Because of this, newspapers in Germany initially refrained from reporting on the incidents in Warsaw.

On February 28, another diplomatic reception took place at the new Chancellery. The Lithuanian Envoy Kazys Skirpa, the Bolivian Envoy Hugo Ernst-Rivera, and the Siamese Envoy Phra Prasasna appeared before Hitler to present him with their credentials. The Führer welcomed them in the customary addresses prescribed by diplomatic etiquette, the contents of which, however, were not published.²³⁸

Later on February 28, Hitler was present at the opening ceremony for an exhibition entitled "Ancient Japanese Art," to tour various state museums in Berlin.²³⁹ This represented the first tangible result of the German-Japanese Cultural Agreement. The galleries displayed Japanese sculptures from the 12th and 13th centuries.

On March 1, a new round of receptions at the Chancellery began. Within the first ten days of March 1939, no less than five gala banquets took place there. On these various occasions, Hitler himself, attired in a tailcoat, would lead his guests on a tour of the Chancellery's halls. Many diplomats, economic leaders, military men, ministers, and prominent Party members were thus afforded the opportunity to view the building's interior and listen to numerous addresses or anecdotes related by the German Head of State.

On March 1, Hitler asked all foreign diplomats accredited in Berlin, and their female companions, to the first in a series of official

receptions at the new Chancellery. The British Ambassador Henderson also attended, having returned to Germany only two weeks earlier, after an extended period of convalescence at home.²⁴⁰ He sought to take advantage of the opportunity to enter into a more serious discussion with Hitler on the persistent tensions between England and Germany.²⁴¹ However, Hitler was not inclined to display preference for the British in front of his other guests. Instead of making any commitment, he voiced the usual platitudes on the subject. He maintained that the issue of the colonies constituted the only point of difference between Britain and Germany. He had no desire to stand in the way of the British Empire, which he greatly admired. In return, however, Britain must acknowledge Germany's special position in Europe. It was not up to Britain to involve itself in what he held to be exclusively Central European affairs. This was the same old story Hitler had reiterated so many times before: Germany would acknowledge the interests of the British Empire worldwide, as long as Great Britain gave Germany a free hand in the East and did not interfere in Central Europe, which meant above all else in Czechoslovakia, Danzig, and Poland. Apparently, Hitler sought to discourage British intervention by openly affronting the government in London, with an eye to the pending operation against the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

On March 2, 1939, the former State Secretary Cardinal Pacelli²⁴² assumed leadership of the Holy See and took the name Pius XII.²⁴³ Hitler promptly conveyed his congratulations on its choice to the Vatican, as Pacelli was considered to be pro-German. Undoubtedly, so Hitler believed, Pacelli's appointment signaled increased support for German policies. From 1937 on, his predecessor Pope Pius XI had found these ever less acceptable. Given the uncivil comments Hitler and other leading National Socialists had repeatedly made about the Vatican over the years, this was hardly surprising.²⁴⁴

At noon on March 2, Hitler received the Prince of Liechtenstein, whom he treated with great respect, at the new Chancellery for mutual consultations.²⁴⁵ Later in the day, Hitler entertained the leaders of the German economy and their ladies at a festive evening reception and led his guests through the new facilities. Renowned singers participated in a charity concert to benefit the Winterhilfswerk. "Voluntary contributions" exceeded two million Reichsmarks that night.²⁴⁶

On March 4, a similar evening reception for the leading personalities in German arts took place²⁴⁷ and gave Hitler yet another occasion to display the new Chancellery building to the public.

One day later, on the occasion of the opening of the annual Trade Fair at Leipzig, Hitler forwarded the following telegram to its organizers:²⁴⁸

The Leipzig Spring Trade Fair 1939 is the first Reich Fair of Greater Germany. It shall prove before the world the quality of German products and the enormous improvements attained by German technology. I wish the Fair the greatest success possible in fulfilling this mission.

Adolf Hitler

On March 7, an important reception took place in the rooms of the new Chancellery. Hitler had invited the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht, the commanding generals and admirals serving with the three branches of the Armed Forces, and their female companions to attend a dinner, in order to display the magnificence of the new seat of government.²⁴⁹ On March 8, Hitler welcomed prominent members of Party and State there.²⁵⁰ It soon became quite evident at the gala dinner which of the various groupings had gained Hitler's favor recently. The Wehrmacht generals received preferential treatment, while the Party men had to take a back seat. Nevertheless, everybody present was afforded the opportunity of marveling at the splendor of the new Chancellery: the Reich Ministers, Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, and "their ladies." Many of the more glamorous women present had obtained legalization of their relationships under the title of "Frau" quite recently. A number of Hitler's colleagues from the "time of struggle" no longer deemed their first wives good enough for the new aspect life had assumed in the Third Reich. Many of the leading men in the Party especially had obtained divorces from their spouses to marry more attractive companions with whom to shine more brilliantly at social occasions.

On March 9, Hitler exchanged telegrams with the presidents of Germany's universities, who had assembled in Berlin for their annual convention. In their reply to Hitler's telegram, they expressed their gratitude that Hitler had restored science in Germany to the "springs of wisdom," its well-deserved place.²⁵¹

On March 10, naval attachés convening in Berlin called on Hitler. In the course of their short visit, they were also allowed, as the Führer's guests, to duly admire the new structure.²⁵²

The next day, staff members of the various military academies in Germany followed. One of their foremost tasks was naturally to tour the Chancellery building. This "special treat" was crowned by an appearance of the Führer addressing them in person in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.²⁵³

The celebration of the annual Heldengedenktage commemoration on March 12 was already overshadowed by the pending assault on the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Already on March 10, a propagandistic campaign in Germany's press spread reports of civil unrest in Ruthenia. On March 6, the Government in Prague had attempted to quell the separatist agitation by the self-declared autonomous government under Vološin.²⁵⁴ The ensuing repression had led to grave unrest in Chust, the so-called capital of the Carpatho-Ukraine.

German newspapers on the morning of March 11 described the situation in Slovakia as "hair-raising." Encouraged by Hitler's remarks of February 12,²⁵⁵ Tuka and Tiso had clamored so loudly for autonomy that the central government in Prague was left with no choice but to intervene. It removed the Slovak ministers Durcansky and Prucinsky²⁵⁶ from office and unequivocally dismissed Tiso, and entrusted Minister Karl Sidor²⁵⁷ with the formation of a new government. According to the reports in the media, martial law had been imposed in Pressburg (Bratislava) where the Czech military was harassing Slovak citizens, while government troops had arrested the leader of the Slovak independence movement and had jailed dissidents. The events across the border provided a most appropriate background for the display of military might in Berlin on the occasion of the Heldengedenktage festivities. Since its inception in 1933, events of either a military or a political nature had dominated these annual celebrations, with the sole exception of 1937.²⁵⁸

On March 12, Hitler attended the official ceremony at the State Opera, although he did not speak on the occasion. This was the traditional task of the senior officer in attendance. Previously, von Blomberg had delivered the annual address. In 1938, Göring had taken over this function. However, in 1939, since Göring had been assigned to San Remo where his presence was required as of March 5,²⁵⁹ it fell to Admiral General Raeder to address the audience in his capacity as senior officer in attendance. Doubtless at Hitler's insistence, Raeder spoke in forceful terms of the Wehrmacht's readiness for immediate deployment. The address poorly concealed Germany's aggressive intentions and the possibility of a German military foray:²⁶⁰

It is the will of the Führer that the German Wehrmacht should continuously be strengthened to enable it to take account of the increasingly responsible mission assigned to it, regardless of how well armed the enemy might be. Wherever we gain a foothold, we will maintain it! Wherever a gap appears, we will bridge it! Wherever additional armament is needed, we will rearm!

And let no one deceive himself: our weapons will not be blunt should German soil be ravaged or the blood of Germans be spilt. Germany will protect all Germans on this side of the border and on its other side! The shots fired at Almeria²⁶¹ are proof of this. Germany strikes swiftly and strongly!

After the official ceremony, Hitler reviewed the honor guards of the three branches of the Wehrmacht. He then proceeded to the monument on Unter den Linden to place an enormous wreath in honor of the Unknown Soldier. Afterwards, Hitler spent a few minutes in conversation with disabled veterans of the World War and then returned to the Chancellery. On this particular Heldengedenktag, he had arranged for the placement of wreaths at Hindenburg's tomb in Tannenberg, at Ludendorff's grave in Tutzing, and at the Viennese cemetery where Conrad von Hötzendorf lay buried.²⁶²

Hitler had not lost sight of the Slovak question in the interim. As early as March 11, he had dispatched to Pressburg his specialists well-versed in questions of territorial annexation: State Secretary Wilhelm Keppler and Gauleiter Josef Bürckel.²⁶³ Accompanied by German military experts, the two men appeared at the Slovak seat of government and instructed the ministers present to declare Slovakia's independence. The deposed Minister Durcansky addressed the population on the Viennese Reich Broadcasting Network, urging the declaration of an independent Slovak state. Keppler and Bürckel required the allegedly incarcerated Minister-President Tiso to visit Hitler. Tiso's plane touched down in Vienna in the early morning hours of March 13 only immediately to take off again for Berlin. The leader of the ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) in Slovakia, State Secretary Karmasin, also played a major role in staging the events in Pressburg.

By March 13 reports on the situation in Slovakia grew increasingly dramatic. The newspapers alleged the abuse of a German child by men hostile toward Germany. Another headline read: "Nineteen deaths to be lamented in Slovakia." Supposedly "terror perpetrated by the Czech military" targeted ethnic Germans; three Reich Germans had been arrested, etc. Papers throughout the Reich carried a multitude of similar reports of atrocities.²⁶⁴

Meanwhile, the communiqué below was released on the talks between Hitler and Tiso in the afternoon hours of March 13:²⁶⁵

Berlin, March 13

In the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister, the Führer today received the Slovak Minister-President, Dr. Tiso, who has flown to Berlin by special plane from Pressburg. Minister Durcansky accompanied Dr. Tiso to the

Chancellery where they met with the Führer for consultations on pending issues.

In addition to the men listed above, Colonel General Keitel and State Minister Meissner also attended these “consultations.”²⁶⁶ In a manner reminiscent of the meeting with Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden,²⁶⁷ Hitler prefaced his talk with an angry and agitated tirade as indicated by these unequivocal notes on the encounter:²⁶⁸

Czechoslovakia owed it only to Germany that she had not been mutilated further. With the greatest self-control Germany had renounced the language enclaves situated on her frontiers, only in order to insure normal living space for Czechoslovakia. No thanks had been received for this.

During recent weeks conditions had become intolerable. The old spirit of Beneš had come to life again.

A second disappointment had been the attitude of Slovakia. He had thought Slovakia wanted to lead an independent existence.

He had now summoned Minister Tiso in order to clear up this question in a very short time.

It was a question not of days but of hours. He had previously²⁶⁹ said that if Slovakia wished to become independent he would support and even guarantee her efforts in that direction . . .

If she hesitated or refused to be separated from Prague, he would leave the fate of Slovakia to events for which he was no longer responsible.

Hitler’s thinly veiled threat to leave Slovakia at the mercy of Hungary recalled his recent action in the case of Ruthenia. The pressure exerted resulted in the desired outcome, in particular after the timely arrival of a message reporting Hungarian troop movements along the Slovak border. The resistance of Hitler’s two unwitting Slovak guests collapsed. Eagerly they assured Hitler that Slovakia would prove itself worthy of his trust.

This easy victory over Tiso reinforced Hitler in his conviction that he could deal with the Czechoslovakian President Hácha in a similar manner. Apparently, Hitler had initially determined to annex the remainder of Czechoslovakia by force. In his planning, he had accounted for token Czech resistance to a military occupation, albeit on a negligible scale. Two directives of October 21 and December 17, 1938 on the issue of the “elimination of the remainder of Czechoslovakia” (*Erledigung der Rest-Tschechei*) point in this direction.²⁷⁰ Similar convictions appeared in the unequivocal “Proclamation to the German Volk” that Hitler published in the aftermath of the invasion on March 15, 1939. In rationalizing the military action, Hitler argued that the presence of German troops there served exclusively “to disarm terrorist

gangs and the Czech armed forces backing them.”²⁷¹ This publication nowhere mentioned that, the night before, Hácha had signed a paper in accordance with Hitler’s instructions. Caution and fear moved him to place “the fate of the Czech people and state trustingly in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich,” as he himself put it.

There is further evidence substantiating the hypothesis that Hitler had originally intended to take the remainder of Czechoslovakia by force of arms: contingents of the Eighth Army and the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler* had already crossed the border in the evening hours of March 14 and seized the strategically located junction of Moravian Ostrau (Mährisch-Ostrau). Hitler then resolved to subjugate Hácha—like Schuschnigg and Tiso—by rhetorical force alone. The successful meeting with the Slovak Minister-President might have had greater impact on this decision than Hácha’s request for a talk.²⁷² Hácha would have secured neither a like audience nor a peaceful solution, had the Führer definitely been determined to proceed as planned. Hitler’s tactical change of mind spared Germany an immediate joint declaration of war by Britain and France. Undoubtedly, one would have been forthcoming, had the Czechs mounted a more decisive resistance and had blood been shed.

On March 14, Hitler ordered Hácha and the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky to be brought to Berlin. In the interim, he recalled Göring from San Remo. Göring arrived in Berlin at 6:00 p.m. On Germany’s request, Tiso had meanwhile read the Slovak declaration of independence to the Slovak parliament and thereby dealt a deadly blow to the government in Prague. The Czechoslovakian confederation lay in shambles.

March 14 also witnessed a renewal of the press campaign. Headlines told of gruesome atrocities perpetrated in Czechoslovakia. Czech policemen were allegedly bayonetting ordinary citizens and shooting civilians deliberately; German schools were attacked; riots reportedly raged in Brünn (Brno); from Iglau, stories reached Germany of the wounding of fifty individuals; headlines in German papers accused Moscow of involvement in the civil unrest and of arming underground movements.

The articles published in the press were nearly verbatim reproductions of reports of atrocities across the border during the summer of the year before. In the assessment of Hitler and the German military,²⁷³ every one of these articles then had undercut Czech resistance and sabotaged morale in Czechoslovakia. Moreover, these

libelous reports had psychologically prepared the German public for an armed aggression against that state. While there was indeed a basis for this interpretation of the events in the months of August and September 1938, Hitler greatly overestimated the potential of a renewed press campaign in 1939. Launched three days before the invasion, the 1939 campaign had little impact on public opinion in Germany. Most Germans simply shook their heads in disbelief at the reports of barbarous slaughter in the East. They were left to wonder why the Prague government would resort to such inconsiderate measures in view of its earlier displays of eagerness to please Berlin. Ever since October 1938, the Czechoslovakian Government had anxiously fulfilled each and every demand made on it by the German head of state. It had voiced no objections to the extraterritorial rights presumptuously appropriated by Germany and had not stood in the way of the construction of an extraterritorial motorway. The general public in Germany was left to puzzle why the “spirit of Beneš” should have risen to haunt Berlin once more. And abroad, this ludicrous and implausible claim merely helped to create a highly unfavorable impression of the Third Reich and its leaders. Moreover, the campaign in the media by no means affected the lot of the Czech people, who would have to come to terms with Hitler’s Diktat in one way or another.

Late on March 14,²⁷⁴ the train bearing Hácha and Chvalkovsky to Berlin pulled into the Anhalt station in the midst of a snowstorm. State Minister Meissner and Colonel General Seifert were on hand to welcome Hitler’s guests. In spite of the cold weather, the two Czechoslovakian statesmen bravely reviewed an honor guard waiting to greet them. Having fulfilled this requirement of diplomatic etiquette, they proceeded to the Adlon Hotel where they awaited Hitler’s summons. Hitler once more exercised his favorite tactic of letting several hours pass before declaring himself ready to see his physically and psychologically exhausted visitors.

Shortly after 1:00 on the morning of March 15, Hitler finally aaked his guests to his office at the Chancellery, where he and several members of his staff awaited them. Göring, Ribbentrop, Keitel, and Meissner were in attendance, as was Schmidt in his capacity as interpreter. The gentlemen seated themselves on upholstered chairs at a round table. The setting recalled the scenario Tiso had encountered a mere thirty hours earlier.

Again Hitler began his monologue with an angry tirade. According to Schmidt’s recollections,²⁷⁵ Hitler’s harangue was tantamount to a

global indictment of the Czech people. He reiterated the same “list of sins” that he had already exhaustively employed during the Sudeten crisis in his conversations with the British and French. The spirit of Beneš pervaded the new Czechoslovakian state as it had its predecessor, Hitler complained. He quickly added to this statement that he did not wish to create the impression that he had lost confidence in Hácha. He did not doubt his unyielding loyalty. However, Hitler argued, it was imperative to assure the safety of the Reich. Hence, Germany had resolved to establish a protectorate in Czechoslovakia to ensure law and order in the region. After speaking for forty-five minutes, Hitler concluded:

An invasion by German troops is inevitable. If you wish to prevent bloodshed, then you had best telephone Prague immediately and instruct your Minister of War that the Czech troops are to offer no resistance.

Hitler summarily dismissed the two stunned Czechoslovakian statesmen. He then proceeded in the manner which had proven enormously effective during Schuschnigg’s visit on February 12, 1938.²⁷⁶ Following his verbal assault on the people of Czechoslovakia, he entrusted Hácha and Chvalkovsky to the care of Ribbentrop and Göring. In the case of Austria the year before, von Papen had assisted Ribbentrop in this task. The change in personnel constituted the sole difference between the meetings in Berchtesgaden and Berlin.

Having listened to Hitler’s accusations in silence, Hácha and Chvalkovsky sat as though “paralyzed.” According to Schmidt, Göring then took charge. He threatened them with military intervention. Among other things, Göring stated that he would be exceedingly sorry to have to bomb as beautiful a city as Prague. This was a bluff. Neither Hitler nor Göring would ever have issued such an order.²⁷⁷ Prague was different from such cities as Warsaw, Rotterdam, and Belgrade which were bombed later. For one thing, it held a German population of over 40,000. Moreover, Hitler’s forthcoming speeches included token references to the one-thousand-year-old “German” city of Prague. He could ill afford to speak of Prague’s exceptional beauty, which testified to centuries of German cultural influence in the East, after German fighter planes had leveled the city. In addition, the destruction of the city would have been completely unnecessary from a military point of view.

These considerations notwithstanding, the pressure exerted by Göring brought the desired results. Hácha even suffered an acute

attack of fatigue. Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Morell,²⁷⁸ however, lost no time in reviving him by administering an injection.

After this unpleasant incident, Hácha and Chvalkovsky called Prague to inform the deputies in the Czechoslovakian Parliament of the recent developments and the hopelessness of the situation. They cautioned their colleagues that any resistance was entirely useless. Afterwards, they conveyed to Hitler their readiness to sign the mutual declaration as requested. Only ninety minutes had elapsed from the time the Czechs had entered Hitler's office to the signature of this historic agreement. According to the impression made on Schmidt, Hitler had obviously prepared the content of this "agreement" well before the meeting and had "kept it on hand." At 3:55 on the morning of March 15, the chief protagonists placed their signatures beneath the declaration, which read:²⁷⁹

Berlin, March 15, 1939

At their request the Führer today received the Czechoslovak President, Dr. Hácha, and the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Dr. Chvalkovsky, in Berlin in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. At the meeting the serious situation created by the events of recent weeks in the present Czechoslovak territory was examined with complete frankness.

The conviction was unanimously expressed on both sides that the aim of all efforts must be the safeguarding of calm, order, and peace in this part of central Europe. The Czechoslovak President declared that, in order to serve this object and to achieve ultimate pacification, he confidently placed the fate of the Czech people and country in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich.

The Führer accepted this declaration and expressed his intention of taking the Czech people under the protection of the German Reich and of guaranteeing them an autonomous development of their ethnic life as suited to their character.

In witness whereof this document has been signed in duplicate.

Adolf Hitler
Dr. E. Hácha

von Ribbentrop
Chvalkovsky

After its signature, the parties to the agreement took leave of each other. A car returned Hácha and Chvalkovsky to their hotel. Hitler celebrate the moment in his own way. He rushed up to his two female secretaries, asked them to kiss him on the cheek, and exclaimed: "Children! This is the greatest day of my life! I will go down in history as the greatest of Germans!"²⁸⁰ This utterance lends further credence to the theory that Hitler had not counted on the Czechs' giving in so easily, and had been prepared to take military measures.

Abroad, public opinion conceded the profoundly tragic nature of the developments, although some critics blamed Hácha for his surrender. Further events in the end proved Hácha right. Resistance might have been an alternative before the autumn of 1938, when crucial territorial concessions had led to the dismantling of Czechoslovakia's border installations. Its defenses crippled, Czechoslovakia was at the mercy of Hitler. Given his insatiable thirst for ever new conquests, the Prague Government undeniably acted in its people's best interest in submitting to German rule and leaving the fighting to the great powers.

Despite Lidice²⁸¹ and other atrocities, the people of Czechoslovakia suffered a less tragic fate than most other countries during the Second World War, with the exception of Denmark which in 1940 also formally surrendered.

March 15 marked the publication of Hitler's "Proclamation to the German Volk." As mentioned earlier, this had obviously been prepared well in advance of Hácha's visit to Berlin, as its contents failed to account for this most recent development.²⁸²

To the German Volk!

Once already, a few months ago, Germany was forced to extend its protection to our German Volksgenossen living in closed settlements in Czechoslovakia, and to counter the intolerable aggression of its terrorist regime against them. These last weeks have borne witness to similar phenomena. An area that is home to so many nationalities, living next to one another, of necessity leads to the development of intolerable conditions. In response to the renewed aggression imperiling their life and liberty, the various ethnic groups have now divorced themselves from the Government in Prague. Czechoslovakia has ceased to exist.

Since last Sunday, wild outrages have frightened many cities and victimized numerous Germans. Renewed pleas for help reach us every hour from those concerned and persecuted. Another wave of refugees who have been robbed of their possessions flows toward the Reich from the populous German-speaking enclaves which only the magnanimity of the Reich allowed to remain in Czechoslovakia this past autumn. Persistence of this situation will eradicate the last aspects of public order in the area affected, one which is of vital interest to the Reich. Indeed, this land formed part of the German Reich for over one thousand years.

To eliminate this threat to the general peace and to create the preconditions for the necessary new order in this Lebensraum, I have determined to order German troops to march on Bohemia and Moravia as of this day. Their task is to disarm the terrorist gangs and the Czech armed forces backing them. They will extend their protection to all those whose lives are threatened; and thereby they will secure the basis of a fundamental settlement, which will do

justice to a thousand-year-old history and the practical requirements of the German and the Czech people.

Berlin, March 15, 1939

Adolf Hitler

At this time, Hitler also issued an order to the German Wehrmacht which read:²⁸³

Berlin, March 15, 1939

Order to the German Wehrmacht

Czechoslovakia is disintegrating. Intolerable terror is being inflicted on our German Volksgenossen in Bohemia and Moravia. As of this day, March 15, 1939, contingents of the German Army and Luftwaffe will advance into Czech territory to secure equal protection for life and property of all inhabitants of this country.

I expect each German soldier not to view the population of the occupied territory as the enemy. Instead, each should behave as the executor of the will of the German Reich Government which endeavors to restore an acceptable form of order to this territory. Should local resistance be encountered, all means available are to be employed to break it.

Bear in mind, furthermore, that you enter the Czech areas as representatives of Greater Germany.

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, Adolf Hitler

A short announcement was published to update the order which had evidently been prepared well before the meeting with Hácha. It read: "The Government in Prague has ordered that no resistance be offered the invading German troops and that their requests be complied with under all circumstances."

A further ordinance vested the executive power in the occupied territories in the Commander in Chief of the Army:²⁸⁴

Berlin, March 15, 1939

In connection with the entry of German troops into Bohemia and Moravia, and upon the Führer's orders, executive power in the areas afforded protection by the German Wehrmacht shall be vested in the Commander in Chief of the Army as of this day.

Under his supervision, the following shall exercise executive powers: the Commander in Chief of the Third Army Group, Infantry General Blaskowitz, in Bohemia; the Commander in Chief of the Fifth Army Group, Infantry General List, in Moravia. Reichskommissar and Gauleiter Konrad Henlein shall assist the Commander in Chief of the Third Army Group in civilian questions; Reichskommissar Gauleiter Bürckel shall assist the Commander in Chief of the Fifth Army Group in civilian questions.

Much as he had done in the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, Hitler allowed the military men to dominate the situation.

The Reichskommissars assigned to the military, like Bürckel in Austria and Henlein in the Sudetenland, functioned solely as advisors.

In the early hours of March 15, the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe units converged on Czechoslovakia from all sides. The military had been on alert and on the move ever since March 13.²⁸⁵ In accordance with the directive of December 17, 1938,²⁸⁶ no mobilization of reserve units took place, as additional fighting men were not required. This spared the general populace the unpleasantness of a full-scale mobilization. In only two prior cases had Hitler resorted to mobilizing reserve units: in Bavaria in March 1938; and another time throughout the Reich in August 1938.

The first German troops reached Prague at 9:00 on the morning of March 15. Afterwards, Hitler released “Wehrmachtsbericht” for publication that day. This was the first announcement of this nature and set a precedent for the nearly two thousand Wehrmacht bulletins to follow in the course of the Second World War:²⁸⁷

Berlin, March 15, 1939

Das Oberkommando der Wehrmacht gibt bekannt
(The High Command of the Wehrmacht makes public):

German Wehrmacht troops, under the joint command of Infantry General Blaskowitz and Infantry General List, crossed the German-Czech border early Wednesday morning and are presently advancing on targets in Bohemia and Moravia. Army contingents and the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler* already occupied Moravian Ostrau and Witkowitz in the evening hours on Tuesday. At the same time today, under the joint command of General der Flieger Kesselring, General der Flieger Sperrle, and Lieutenant General Löhr, Luftwaffe squadrons penetrated Czech airspace.

And what would the Führer do? Would he head the German troops’ triumphant entry into the city of Prague, if not as warlord after winning a battle, then at least in his capacity as Supreme Commander? Would he enter exhilarated at finally laying claim to the glory which Chamberlain, “*dieser Kerl*,” had denied him in the autumn of 1938? Nothing of the sort. Like a thief in the night, he awaited dusk to steal into the capital city, in a manner most fitting for someone who had just illegally appropriated a foreign country. He boarded the notoriously slow Special Train in Berlin and arrived in Bohemian Leipa, Sudetenland, around 3:00 p.m. Once there, he asked Henlein and Lammers to join him in the special train compartment for a conference. He also summoned Colonel General Hoepfner²⁸⁸ to inform him of the progress made in the course of the military occupation.

Hitler then climbed into his three-axle, cross-country Mercedes, precisely as he had done in Austria and the Sudetenland the year before. Naturally, every single SS man had put on his field-gray uniform, tailored to be worn in times of war. The Führer himself, however, had to leave his gray uniform hanging at home since, after all, no shot had been fired and the venture could not be termed a bona fide war.

The Führer's car passed through the towns of Daubva, Töschen, and Wallach. At 6:00 p.m., the Mercedes crossed the Czech border at Liboch. A snowstorm dampened Hitler's entry into "enemy country," and no *Hitlerwetter*²⁸⁹ as anywhere in sight to provide relief.

Having overtaken columns of soldiers moving up to the front, the Mercedes reached the outskirts of the capital shortly after 7:00 p.m. An hour later, it pulled into the Prague Fortress (Hradcany) courtyard, without attracting public notice. His entourage welcomed him: Keitel, Himmler, SS leaders Daluge and Wolff, von Ribbentrop, Bormann, and Dr. Dietrich. Several other generals and a number of local National Socialists were on hand to greet him as well. Discussions of the military situation claimed Hitler's undivided attention that night, and he eagerly listened as Keitel, List, and Blaskowitz²⁹⁰ reported on the state of affairs.

On March 16, Reich Minister of the Interior Frick heeded Hitler's summons to Prague. The Supreme Commander desired "clarification of questions concerning constitutional law in the Bohemian-Moravian territories." Arriving from Berlin at the Prague airport, in the company of State Secretary Stuckard,²⁹¹ Frick was immediately ushered to the Fortress. There he drafted a decree on the establishment of a "Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," which Hitler hastily signed. The legal experts determined to accord the former Czechoslovakian state a status similar to that of the French Protectorate of Tunis in North Africa.

The document read as follows:²⁹²

In the name of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, the decree of March 16, 1939, regarding the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is hereby proclaimed.

For a thousand years the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia formed part of the Lebensraum of the German people. They were arbitrarily torn from their ancient historic setting by force and folly and, by their ultimate fusion into the artificial structure of Czechoslovakia, became a center of constant unrest.

Year by year the danger increased that a new and tremendous threat to the peace of Europe would spread from this area, as it had done once in the past, for the Czechoslovakian State and its rulers did not succeed in organizing a reasonable coexistence for the ethnic groups arbitrarily united within it, nor

in awakening and keeping alive among all concerned the interest in the maintenance of their joint State.

In this it showed its inherent inability to survive and has therefore now fallen a victim to actual dissolution. The German Reich, however, cannot tolerate continuous disturbances in these areas, which are of such vital importance for its own peace and security as well as for the general well-being and general peace. Sooner or later, as the power most interested and most concerned due to historical and geographical circumstances, it would have had to bear the heaviest consequences.

It is therefore in keeping with the law of self-preservation that the German Reich is now resolved to intervene decisively to rebuild the foundations of a reasonable order in Central Europe and to take the necessary steps for this purpose. For in the thousand years of its history it has already proved that, thanks to the greatness and the qualities of the German people, it alone is called upon to undertake this task.

Inspired by the solemn desire to serve the real interests of the nationalities living in this area, to insure an individual national life to the German and Czech peoples, and to promote the peace and social welfare of all, I, therefore, in the name of the German Reich decree the following as a basis for the future coexistence of the inhabitants of these areas:

Article I

The areas of the former Czechoslovakian Republic occupied by the German troops in March 1939 form part of the Greater German Reich from now on and, as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, come under the protection of Germany. Insofar as is necessary for the defense of the Reich, the Führer and Reich Chancellor will issue separate ordinances for individual parts of these territories.

Article II

The *volksdeutsch* inhabitants of the Protectorate become German nationals and, in accordance with the provisions of the Reich-Citizenship Law of September 15, 1935, citizens of the Reich. The laws for the protection of German blood and German honor therefore apply to them. They are subject to German jurisdiction. The other inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia become subjects of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Article III

The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is autonomous and self-governing. It exercises sovereign rights conceded to it within the framework of the Protectorate, in conformity with the political, military, and economic requirements of the Reich. These sovereign rights will be exercised through their own organizations and their own authorities with their own officials.

Article IV

The Supreme Head of the autonomous administration of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia will enjoy the protection and the honorary rights of the head of state. The Supreme Head of the Protectorate must have the confidence of the Führer and Reich Chancellor for the execution of his office.

Article V

The Führer and Reich Chancellor will appoint a Reich Protector in Bohemia and Moravia as a guardian of the interests of the Reich. His headquarters will be in Prague. It will be the duty of the Reich Protector, as the representative of the Führer and Reich Chancellor and as the commissioner of the Reich Government, to insure respect for the political directives of the Führer and Reich Chancellor. The members of the Government of the Protectorate will be confirmed in office by the Reich Protector. The confirmation may be withdrawn. The Reich Protector is empowered to receive information on all measures passed by the Government of the Protectorate and to advise the Government. He can protest against measures calculated to harm the Reich, and if there is danger in delay he can order measures necessary in the common interest. Proclamations and laws, as well as the execution of administrative measures and valid court decisions, are to be rescinded if the Reich Protector objects to them.

Article VI

The Reich will take over the foreign affairs of the Protectorate, in particular the protection of its nationals abroad, and the Reich will conduct foreign affairs in a way suitable to the common interests. The Protectorate will have a representative with the Reich Government with the rank of Minister.

Article VII

The Reich will afford military protection to the Protectorate. For the exercise of this protection the Reich will maintain garrisons and military establishments in the Protectorate. The Protectorate may set up its own organizations for the maintenance of internal security and order. The Reich Government will decide on these organizations and their armament.

Article VIII

The Reich will exercise direct control over transportation, posts, and telegraphs.

Article IX

The Protectorate comes within the customs area of the Reich and is subject to its customs jurisdiction.

Article X

Until further notice the Krone, as well as the Reichsmark, will remain the legal currency. The Reich Government will decide the exchange rates of the two currencies.

Article XI

The Reich may promulgate legal measures valid for the Protectorate; insofar as common interests demand, and a common need exists, the Reich may incorporate administrative branches into its own administration and set up the Reich authorities required for this. The Reich Government may take measures necessary for the maintenance of security and order.

Article XII

The code of law at present valid in Bohemia and Moravia may remain in force insofar as it does not conflict with the terms of the assumption of protection by the German Reich.

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Article XIII

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in agreement with the Reich Ministers concerned, will take the legislative and administrative measures necessary for the execution and completion of this decree.

Prague, March 16, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers

The Commander in Chief of the Army called on Hitler at noon to report on the state of the troop movements. Precisely at 12:39 p.m., Hitler stepped out onto the balcony to greet several thousand Germans who had gathered at the main entrance. Later a delegation of German inhabitants of Prague and members of the City Council welcomed Hitler to their city.

At 2:30 p.m., Hitler conferred once more with State President Hácha, whom Ribbentrop had meanwhile instructed on the restrictions implied by the decree establishing the Protectorate. The Führer accorded the man who had served as the country's Minister-President in the autumn of 1938, the Czech Army General Sirovy,²⁹³ a hearing later that day.

Before leaving Prague in the afternoon hours of March 16, he had himself personally introduced to a few hundred students of the Prague University. They had marched into the courtyard of the Prague Fortress, properly attired in NSDAP "Brown Shirts." Himmler and Heydrich accompanied Hitler on this occasion. Afterwards, he also reviewed the honor guards of the Army with Keitel and Brauchitsch in attendance.

The Führer expressed his appreciation of the military's performance in two separate decrees issued to the respective Commanders in Chief of Army and Luftwaffe. These read:²⁹⁴

Prague, March 16, 1939

To the Commander in Chief of the Army!

Through its speedy occupation of the most important cities in Bohemia and Moravia on March 15, 1939, the Army has restored to the Greater German Reich sovereignty over ancient territory of the Reich. Despite the stormy winter weather and difficult road conditions, Army units, reinforced by Luftwaffe squadrons, crossed the borders and reached their destinations within hours of orders.

On my journey to Prague, I encountered troops who, in defiance of the physical exertions undoubtedly lying behind them, made a most favorable

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impression upon me. I wish to express my appreciation for behavior and performance to officers and enlisted men alike.

Adolf Hitler

Prague, March 16, 1939

To the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe!

In the course of the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia on March 15 and March 16, 1939, through daring sorties in spite of adverse weather, the Luftwaffe's valiant deployment has proven its readiness for combat and the personal courage of its members.

I wish to express my appreciation for behavior and performance to officers and enlisted men alike.

Adolf Hitler

The following communiqué was published on the special honors bestowed upon Keitel and Brauchitsch for their involvement in the venture:²⁹⁵

Upon the astoundingly successful conclusion of the military operations in Bohemia, the Führer awarded Colonel Generals von Brauchitsch and Keitel the Golden Party Badge. In this context, the Führer expressed his personal appreciation and gratitude for the most valuable services rendered by both generals.

The situation in Slovakia meanwhile had escalated. The Slovak Minister-President addressed this telegram to Hitler on March 5:²⁹⁶

Trusting in you as the Führer and Reich Chancellor of the Greater German Reich, the Slovak State places itself under your protection. The Slovak State asks you to assume its defense.

Tiso

On March 16, Hitler responded

I acknowledge receipt of your telegram yesterday, and hereby assume the protection of the Slovak State.

Adolf Hitler

Curious wording indeed! Just one telegram sufficed to have Adolf Hitler personally assume responsibility for the defense of the Slovak state. Actually, this proved none too difficult since German troops were already penetrating Slovak territory, for example taking over the cities of Pressburg and Treshov. The Slovak Propaganda Chief, Sano Mach, promptly gave them a heartfelt welcome.

On the evening of March 16, the High Command of the Wehrmacht announced the following:²⁹⁷

In the course of March 16, the troops of the Third and Fifth Army have reached their final destinations in the territories assigned to them, without any

incidents. Herewith law and order have been restored to the Bohemian and Moravian areas.

Hitler spent the first night on Sudeten German soil in his special train in the Silesian territory. In the morning, Hitler's train rolled on, passing through the Altvater region to Olmütz and from there on to Brünn, where he arrived at 11:10 a.m. General List, Gauleiter Bürckel, Reich Governor Seyss-Inquart, and other dignitaries awaited him at the railroad station. From the square in front of the station, Hitler reviewed the Second Panzer Division by car, as he drove down the main street where it had lined up in parade formation. The local Kreisleiter of the ethnic Germans, Folta, welcomed Hitler in the Knights' Chamber of the City Hall.²⁹⁸ In his reply, Hitler thanked those assembled for their loyalty and hailed them as "new citizens of the Greater German Reich." As a sign of "gratitude for the liberation," the German Mayor of Brünn presented Hitler with a highly valuable copy of the ancient legal code of the famed "Brünn Court of Lay Assessors." While Hitler initially accepted the gift, he later returned it to the Mayor with the remark that he desired the ancient body of laws to remain in the Moravian capital. Subsequently, Hitler stepped out onto the City Hall's balcony to address the crowd of Germans assembled in front of the entry below.

Shortly after 2:00 p.m., Hitler's special train left Brünn and arrived at the Nordbahnhof Station in Vienna at 5:00 p.m. Moving through a lane formed by Party contingents, Hitler's car took him to the Imperial Hotel, where he made an appearance on the balcony.²⁹⁹ In the meantime, Neurath had also arrived in Vienna, as Hitler had ordered.³⁰⁰ Ever since February 4, 1938, Neurath had served primarily decorative purposes, although he remained a Cabinet member and had been accorded the title "President of the Secret Cabinet Council" officially. While retaining him in this position, Hitler had appointed him as Reich Protector in Bohemia and Moravia, assigned to assume his new responsibilities in Prague.³⁰¹ In Vienna in the early morning hours of March 18, the treaty for the Protectorate of Slovakia was drawn up. Ribbentrop and Tuka were to ratify this in Berlin on March 23.³⁰²

Shortly after 11:00 a.m., Hitler left Vienna's Westbahnhof Station for Berlin. On his return trip, he had the train stop over in Linz for several hours. There were two reasons for this interruption of the journey. For one, Hitler wished to delay his arrival in the Reich capital until nightfall on March 19. The festivities of the "Day of the Wehrmacht" would be enhanced by the drama of his entry into the city. Second, exhilarated

by his success with Slovakia, Hitler took advantage of the opportunity to visit the place of his earlier triumph in Austria. He went to the Weinzier Hotel, where he had signed into law the edict effecting the Anschluss the year before. There he informed himself on the progress of the constructional improvement in the city³⁰³ and the development of the Hermann-Göring Works.³⁰⁴ Naturally, Hitler stepped onto the Hotel's balcony as well to show himself to his adherents. In addition, he undertook an excursion into the surrounding countryside to the Pöstlingberg, high above the city.

On that March 18, the leader of the NS Warriors' Association, Major General and SS Gruppenführer Reinhardt, celebrated his seventieth birthday. He had been instrumental in the dismemberment of the Soldatenbund.³⁰⁵ Hence Hitler promoted him to Infantry General and penned the following handwritten note to him:³⁰⁶

Dear General Reinhardt,

I am happy to be able to promote you to the honorary rank of Infantry General on the occasion of your seventieth birthday, in appreciation of your dedicated service in the fostering of German soldiery and of your efforts to unite all groups of former soldiers in the National Socialist Reichskriegerbund.

In addition to expressing my appreciation, I extend my personal best wishes for your future. In comradely friendship and with the German salute,

Adolf Hitler

At 7:30 p.m. on the night of March 19, Hitler's special train entered the Görlitz station in Berlin. As on numerous previous occasions, Göring greeted him in an ebullient fashion and then declared:

And yet once more Providence has called on you. Once more you have heard and heeded its call. Today, instead of mere thanks, please accept on behalf of the entire German Volk this, our most solemn pledge: never to let go of those things mighty and great, which, by virtue of your unequalled valor, you have bestowed on us—come what may. For it is not possible that behind such a heroic soldier, there should not stand an equally heroic Volk.

Afterwards, the Führer made yet another "triumphant" entry into the Reich capital. Anti-aircraft searchlights flooded the avenue Unter den Linden, forming a veritable "tunnel of light" through which the columns of soldiers passed, while fireworks illuminated the night skies. This magnificently staged welcome could not conceal, however, that the Volk was less than pleased with this latest coup by its leader. While Göring had presumed to speak "on behalf of the entire German Volk" in his considerably overdrawn declamation at the Görlitz station,

the majority of the German people was outraged by Hitler's treatment of the Czechoslovakian state born of the Munich Agreement. The prospect of war had already put the public ill at ease the previous autumn.³⁰⁷ It had been with a feeling of great relief that the Germans warmly welcomed Chamberlain's intervention. They had hoped that this intervention had effectively put a halt to Hitler's expansionist designs. In March 1939, the public in Germany was stunned by the unbelievably callous breach of contract Hitler had committed in dealing the Czechoslovakian Federation a deadly blow, having vowed to uphold its integrity and to respect the borders drawn at Munich just a few months before. This surpassed all of Hitler's indiscretions since the Röhm Purge.

Hitler's assertions that the cession of the Sudeten German territories constituted "the last territorial demand [he] shall make in Europe," and that Germany did "not want any Czechs at all"³⁰⁸ still rang in the ears of many a German. Schmidt's later comment that the rape of Czechoslovakia appeared to him as the beginning of the end³⁰⁹ was a sentiment shared by a large section of the German population. Hitler's most loyal Unterführers such as Ribbentrop, Göring, and Neurath, who were usually willing slaves to his designs and power, knew deep down that Hitler had left the safe grounds of Realpolitik. Casting caution aside, Hitler had wandered into a terrain of the political landscape where circumstances would force him to resort to potentially dangerous improvisation.

Many Germans were astounded that the Western Powers apparently were willing to put up with Hitler's affront. This led others to believe that perhaps indeed Hitler was the political wizard he had always claimed to be, as even the great powers of the West had apparently abandoned their resistance to his designs. Events would soon prove how gravely Hitler was mistaken in his calculations.

Judging by those to follow, March 15 still had been a fairly calm day. While Chamberlain commented, speaking before the House of Commons, that the Third Reich had indeed acted in defiance of the spirit of the accord reached in Munich, he was quick to point out that, in light of the dissolution of the Czechoslovakian Federation to which its members had apparently consented, the border guarantees that had been extended no longer applied.³¹⁰

The leading statesmen in Germany interpreted this remark to signify that Great Britain would accept the occupation of truncated Czechoslovakia as a *fait accompli*. Assessing the stance of Britain on

such questions usually necessitated waiting a few days to see how opinion there developed. And this was equally true of the events in March, 1939.

While Chamberlain's statements on the first day were subdued in nature, England made its discontent with Hitler vocal on the third day after the invasion. On March 17, the British Ambassador Henderson called on State Secretary von Weizsäcker at the German Foreign Ministry. Henderson expressed His Majesty's Government's reservations on the Czechoslovakian affair to von Weizsäcker, who headed the Ministry in Ribbentrop's absence.³¹¹ Henderson further stated that London perceived a new chapter in German politics to have opened, one which could by no stretch of the imagination be attributed to justifiable pursuit of the self-determination of the peoples. Germany had clearly embarked on a policy of territorial expansion. After the elimination of Czechoslovakia, everyone in England was wondering: "What next?"

3

Far more important in the context of British policy toward Germany was, however, a speech held by the British Prime Minister in Birmingham in the evening hours of March 17.³¹² There the true “victor of Munich” spoke, the man whose cautious conduct of negotiations had succeeded in luring Hitler into the “trap” in September 1938, according to the Führer’s interpretation of events. After all, it was indeed an outstanding achievement to get Hitler to place his signature beneath the international agreement voluntarily. This assured that, should Hitler break the Munich Agreement, he would stand revealed before the world as the perjured, brutal conqueror he truly was. It was a precaution well taken, as Hitler respected neither his legal obligations, the contracts binding him, nor ethical and moral imperatives. The Czechoslovakian venture had revealed his true character and the mask of a reliable statesman was now finally torn from his face for good. The Chamberlain who spoke at Birmingham was a different man from the one who had sought conciliation at Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich. In a frank manner, he declared that Hitler’s previous actions—such as the annexation of the Rhineland, of Austria, and of the Sudeten German areas—had been provocative enough, though they could be reconciled with the principles of international law. This was no longer the case in the brutal aggression against Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain reminded Hitler of the assurances he himself had given and admonished him to abide by these. The next time Hitler resorted to the use of force and this resulted in bloodshed, said Chamberlain, he would face an immediate declaration of war by Great Britain. The British Prime Minister stated:³¹³

I am convinced that after Munich the great majority of British people shared my hope and ardently desired that that policy should be carried further. But today I share their disappointment, their indignation that those

hopes have been so wantonly shattered. How can these events this week be reconciled with those assurances which I have read out to you? Surely as a joint signatory of the Munich Agreement I was entitled, if Herr Hitler thought it ought to be undone, to that consultation which is provided for in the Munich declaration. Instead of that he has taken the law into his own hands. Before even the Czech President was received, and confronted with demands which he had no power to resist, the German troops were on the move, and within a few hours they were in the Czech capital.

According to the proclamation which was read out in Prague yesterday, Bohemia and Moravia have been annexed to the German Reich. Non-German inhabitants, who of course include the Czechs, are placed under the German Protector in the German Protectorate. They are to be subject to the political, military, and economic needs of the Reich. They are called self-governing States, but the Reich is to take charge of their foreign policy, their Customs and their Excise, their bank reserves, and the equipment of the disarmed Czech forces. Perhaps most sinister of all, we hear again of the appearance of the Gestapo, the secret police, followed by the usual tale of wholesale arrests of prominent individuals, with consequences with which we are all familiar.

Every man and woman in this country who remembers the fate of the Jews and the political prisoners in Austria must be filled today with distress and foreboding. Who can fail to feel his heart go out in sympathy to the proud and brave people who have so suddenly been subjected to this invasion, whose liberties are curtailed, whose national independence has gone? What has become of this declaration of "No further territorial ambition"? What has become of the assurance "We don't want Czechs in the Reich"? What regard has been paid here to that principle of self-determination on which Herr Hitler argued so vehemently with me at Berchtesgaden when he was asking for the severance of Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia and its inclusion in the German Reich.

Now we are told that this seizure of territory has been necessitated by disturbances in Czechoslovakia. We are told that the proclamation of this new German Protectorate against the will of its inhabitants has been rendered inevitable by disorders which threatened the peace and security of her mighty neighbour. If there were disorders, were they not fomented from without? And can anybody outside Germany take seriously the idea that they could be a danger to that great country, that they could provide any justification for what has happened?

Does not the question inevitably arise in our minds, if it is so easy to discover good reasons for ignoring assurances so solemnly and so repeatedly given, what reliance can be placed upon any other assurances that come from the same source?

There is another set of questions which almost inevitably must occur in our minds and to the minds of others, perhaps even in Germany herself. Germany, under her present regime, has sprung a series of unpleasant surprises upon the world. The Rhineland, the Austrian *Anschluss*, the severance of Sudetenland—all these things shocked and affronted public

opinion throughout the world. Yet, however much we might take exception to the methods which were adopted in each of those cases, there was something to be said, whether on account of racial affinity or of just claims too long resisted—there was something to be said for the necessity of a change in the existing situation.

But the events which have taken place this week in complete disregard of the principles laid down by the German Government itself seem to fall into a different category, and they must cause us all to be asking ourselves: "Is this the end of an old adventure, or is it the beginning of a new?"

"Is this the last attack upon a small State, or is it to be followed by others? Is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?"

Those are grave and serious questions. I am not going to answer them tonight. But I am sure they will require the grave and serious consideration, not only of Germany's neighbours but of others, perhaps even beyond the confines of Europe. Already there are indications that the process has begun, and it is obvious that it is likely now to be speeded up.

We ourselves will naturally turn first to our partners in the British Commonwealth of Nations and to France, to whom we are so closely bound, and I have no doubt that others, too, knowing that we are not disinterested in what goes on in South-Eastern Europe, will wish to have our counsel and advice.

In our own country we must all review the position with that sense of responsibility which its gravity demands. Nothing must be excluded from that review which bears upon the national safety. Every aspect of our national life must be looked at again from that angle. The Government, as always, must bear the main responsibility, but I know that all individuals will wish to review their own position, too, and to consider again if they have done all they can to offer their service to the State.

I do not believe there is anyone who will question my sincerity when I say there is hardly anything I would not sacrifice for peace. But there is one thing that I must except, and that is the liberty that we have enjoyed for hundreds of years, and which we will never surrender. That I, of all men, should feel called upon to make such a declaration—that is the measure of the extent to which these events have shattered the confidence which was just beginning to show its head and which, if it had been allowed to grow, might have made this year memorable for the return of all Europe to sanity and stability.

It is only six weeks ago that I was speaking in this city, and that I alluded to rumours and suspicions which I said ought to be swept away. I pointed out that any demand to dominate the world by force was one which the democracies must resist, and I added that I could not believe that such a challenge was intended, because no Government with the interests of its own people at heart could expose them for such a claim to the horrors of world war.

And indeed, with the lessons of history for all to read, it seems incredible that we should see such a challenge. I feel bound to repeat that, while I am

not prepared to engage this country by new unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot now be foreseen, yet no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that, because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power resisting such a challenge if it ever were made. For that declaration I am convinced that I have not merely the support, the sympathy, the confidence of my fellow-countrymen and countrywomen, but I shall have also the approval of the whole British Empire and of all other nations who value peace indeed, but who value freedom even more.

In Berlin on March 18, 1939, the Ambassadors of Great Britain and France, Henderson and Coulondre, presented the German Government with official notes of protest. Von Weizsäcker's refusal to accept these was of no avail, however. To emphasize the gravity of the situation, the British and French Governments recalled their ambassadors on that same day.³¹⁴

On March 19, Hitler returned to Berlin to face the situation described above. There was little he could do other than to recall Germany's Ambassadors from Britain (von Dirksen) and France (Graf Welczek) in turn. The Führer, nevertheless, initially failed to perceive the seriousness of the Western protests, which he understood to constitute token gestures. He resolved to speedily announce the appointment of the well-known and respected former Reich Foreign Minister, Neurath, to the post of Reich Governor in the newly annexed territories in the expectation that this step would appease international public opinion.

On March 20, German newspapers carried the following communiqué on the Western Powers' reaction:³¹⁵

Berlin, March 20

In response to the measures Germany undertook to restore law and order in Bohemia and Moravia in order to pacify Central Europe, the British and French Ambassadors made a demarche to the Foreign Ministry to protest against the supposed unlawfulness of the German actions. As reported, the Foreign Office officially informed them that the Reich Government was not in a position to formally acknowledge receipt of this protest, which was completely unfounded politically, legally, and morally.

Hitler's breach of the Munich Agreement indeed was not only a grave affront to Britain and France, but also a slight to Italy. As usual, Hitler had failed to give notice of his designs to Mussolini.

In this instance, however, Hitler was plagued by a guilty conscience and hence was reluctant to provide Mussolini a written justification. The previous year, Hitler had entrusted Prince Philip of Hesse with a

personal letter addressed to Mussolini³¹⁶ to inform him of the planned Anschluss. In 1939, however, Hitler chose instead to send Prince Philip to Rome with an oral report. The excuses Hitler made were the customary ones: Czechoslovakia had kept its armed forces on the alert, it had established ties with the Soviet Union, and the Government in Prague had willfully mistreated the German minority in Czechoslovakia. The Prince of Hesse duly relayed Hitler's arguments to the Italian Head of State. Ciano was present at the encounter and recorded the frustration he felt in his diary:³¹⁷ "Such pretexts may be good for Goebbels' propaganda, but they should not use them when talking with us."

Hitler's approach in this matter was a bit much even for his friend Mussolini. The Duce fervently opposed making the Prince's visit public. Angrily he burst out: "The Italians would laugh at me; every time Hitler occupies a country he sends me a message."³¹⁸ This development was pivotal and apparently reinforced Mussolini's determination to launch his military campaign against Albania³¹⁹ in the hope of improving his tarnished image.

The rape of the remainder of Czechoslovakia greatly disconcerted Poland. Needless to say, Hitler had not thought it necessary to consult this "befriended" people before taking action. During the autumn crisis of 1938, relations between the two states had improved when Hitler had apportioned the Olsa region to Poland.³²⁰ Alas, times had changed. Nevertheless, Hitler remained undaunted, as he was confident that he had done the Poles so great a favor, by appropriating the Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary, that they would remain silent when confronted with the German annexation of the Czech territories. He was wrong. While Poland had long sought to obtain a common border with Hungary, the military occupation of Czechia and, above all, of Slovakia was obviously a measure directed against Poland. Its aim was to corner Poland, which now faced German troops to its west, north, and south.

In view of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Reich's demands for the return of the Free City and for the construction of an extraterritorial Autobahn across the Polish Corridor took on a very different connotation. These items on Hitler's agenda were undoubtedly intended to prepare the grounds for an assault on Poland. Acquiescence to these requests did not represent an acceptable solution for the Poles, especially considering that, despite far-reaching concessions, Czechoslovakia had not been spared annexation. Neither the cession of the Sudeten German areas, nor the construction of an extraterritorial

Autobahn linking Breslau to Vienna, nor thirty other extraterritorial thoroughfares had prevented Hitler from annexing the "remainder of Czechoslovakia."³²¹ Poland could not hope to sway him in his ambitious designs by granting Germany access to one port and extraterritoriality of a single motorway across the Polish Corridor. It was proof of Hitler's impertinence that he thought he could see his demands through all the more easily after the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

On March 21, Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to present the German demands to the Polish Ambassador Lipski anew. First of all, Ribbentrop said he regretted that Poland had not been informed of the measures taken against Prague. Then he began clumsily to repeat Hitler's arguments for the cession of Danzig and permission for the construction of either an extraterritorial motorway or railway link across the Polish Corridor. Ribbentrop recorded the following in his notes on the talk:³²²

I asked the Polish Ambassador Lipski to see me at noon today.

In describing the recent developments in Czechoslovakia, I pointed out to Herr Lipski that, because of the rapid succession of events, I had been unable to inform the representatives of foreign powers here in the manner I had desired. [—]

I stated that I assumed that the settlement of the Carpatho-Ukrainian question was satisfactory to Poland. The establishment of a Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia meant the pacification of the region and accorded with the historic conditions. In the end, it benefited everyone.

At this point, Ambassador Lipski interjected Polish misgivings on Germany's assumption of the protection of Slovakia. News of this event had had quite an impact in Poland. The man in the street regarded this move as one primarily directed against Poland. Slovaks shared a linguistic affinity to the Polish people. Poland had historically defined interests in this area. Speaking in terms of an unfettered *Realpolitik*, the extension of German protection to Slovakia could only be interpreted as a strike against Poland.

Ribbentrop then mused on the correct course of action to take:

It appeared imperative to me to make a renewed attempt to get German-Polish relations back on track. It appeared to me both correct and highly appropriate that German and Polish statesmen should personally meet in the near future to exchange views. I stated that I would be extremely pleased if Foreign Minister Beck would visit Berlin soon. The Führer had also indicated to me that he would warmly welcome such an exchange of views. [—]

The provisions of the Versailles Treaty as they applied to the Corridor were generally regarded as placing a great strain on Germany. Not one of the previous German Governments had been in a position to distance itself from the claim for revision without its governing coalition being swept away by the Reichstag within forty-eight hours.³²³

The Führer was of a different opinion with regard to the Corridor. He acknowledged the justified claim of Poland to free access to the sea. He was the only German statesman who could pronounce a renunciation of the Polish Corridor for good. Prerequisites for this were the return of the exclusively German city of Danzig to the Reich and provisions allowing for the construction of an extraterritorial highway and railroad link between East Prussia and the Reich. Only by this could the thorn represented by the existence of the Polish Corridor be extracted from the flesh of the German Volk.

Should Polish statesmen in all earnest sit back and ponder these facts for awhile, then assuredly a resolution of the situation could be obtained on the basis of the following: a return of the Free City of Danzig to the Reich, an extraterritorial highway and railroad link between East Prussia and the Reich, and, in exchange, a [German] guarantee of the Corridor. [—]

Ambassador Lipski promised to inform Foreign Minister Beck and thereupon to report back to me. I suggested that Ambassador Lipski himself return to Warsaw to relay his report orally. I repeated once again how advantageous a final settlement between Germany and Poland appeared to me at this particular stage. This was especially important since the Führer was astonished by the odd attitude Poland assumed in a variety of questions. It was imperative that the Führer not gain the impression that Poland was simply not willing [to address these difficulties].

Soon Hitler would judge Poland's behavior even more "odd," when, on March 26, its government refused categorically to give in to the German demands.³²⁴ Apparently, Hitler had truly believed Poland would be more likely to yield to Germany after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. After all, it had been his declared intention to first occupy the remainder of Czechoslovakia, and then the Memel territory and Danzig in 1939. He had been convinced that the virtual annexation of these territories could easily be attained without opposition by the Western Powers.³²⁵

The circumstances surrounding the cession of the Memel territory had been fortunate ones for Hitler. The Versailles Treaty³²⁶ had severed the region from the German Reich. Without awaiting a final settlement, Lithuania had deployed its soldiers in the area on January 8, 1923. This hasty move had resulted in the withdrawal of French occupational forces from the territory.

Attended by representatives from Lithuania, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan, the Convention of May 8, 1924 had granted the Memel territory a certain autonomy. In spite of good intentions, this settlement had been far from satisfactory to the area's population, which consisted largely of ethnic Germans. In the year 1935, Hitler had repeatedly taken up the cause of the Memel territory, pointing to Lithuania's conduct in

1923, in an effort to divert attention from the reintroduction of universal conscription.³²⁷

In early 1939, Lithuania granted the Memel territory a far-reaching autonomy.³²⁸ This, in turn, allowed Hitler great political freedom of action in the region, similar to the privileges he enjoyed in the Free City of Danzig. Hitler was not interested in political issues at this point; what he desired was to extend the Reich's military sovereignty to the Memel territory. He was determined to succeed in this "in one way or another." Returning to Berlin from Prague, Hitler alerted the Navy and issued instructions to the three branches of the Wehrmacht to take measures in preparation for a military occupation of the Memel territory. In the interim, Ribbentrop conveyed Hitler's demand for an immediate cession of the Memel territory to the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Juozas Urbys, who happened to be in Berlin at the time.

On March 21, Urbys returned to Kaunas (Kovno). That same night, the Lithuanian Government published the following declaration:³²⁹

Kaunas, March 22

After returning to Kaunas yesterday [March 21], Foreign Minister Urbys reported on the outcome of his talks with the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to the Ministerial Council. It was in session from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The report conveyed that, on the behalf of the Reich Government, the Reich Foreign Minister had proposed the restitution of the Memel territory to the Reich. This he termed the sole expedient approach to a settlement.

Von Ribbentrop further added that, provided a return of the territories was effected based on voluntary agreement, Germany was willing largely to consider Lithuania's vested economic interest in the Memel harbor. The Reich Foreign Minister emphasized that such a solution not merely rendered justice to the unequivocal desire of the German population within the Memel territory, but would clearly be in the best interest of future relations between the two countries. He then pointed to the Memel German population's well-known demand for a return to the Reich. The atmosphere in the Memel territory at present was such that a settlement of this question on the basis of the proposed solution by the Reich was urgent and imperative in order to prevent clashes.

After Foreign Minister Urbys' exposition, the Ministerial Council consulted at great length on the resulting situation. The Foreign Minister shall report on this to the body of the Sejm today. In view of the stance espoused by the German Reich, the Ministerial Council has consented to the return of the Memel territory. A Lithuanian delegation will depart for Berlin on Wednesday to discuss the ramifications of this decision.

At 3:20 p.m. on March 22, on receipt of the good news, Hitler again climbed aboard the special train awaiting him as Head of State at the

Stettin station. Though not aware of this himself, he was about to bring to its conclusion the last bloodless territorial acquisition of his career. Accompanied by the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral General Raeder, Hitler arrived in Swinemünde at 6:30 p.m., where he boarded the pocket battleship *Deutschland*. Also at this time, those navy contingents which were not engaged elsewhere set sail: the pocket battleships *Admiral Graf Spee* and *Admiral Scheer*,³³⁰ the light cruisers *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Köln*, two divisions of destroyers, three torpedo boat flotillas, and several convoy vessels.

Half an hour later, negotiations concerning the Memel territory began in the Reich capital. Urb-ys having returned to Berlin from Kaunas, the Reich Foreign Minister and the Lithuanian Foreign Minister sat down to draft a treaty, which was to settle all outstanding questions. By 11:00 p.m., the two diplomats had the document ready for signature.

Its contents, however, implicate Hitler as its original author:³³¹

The German Reich Chancellor and the President of the Republic of Lithuania have determined to settle the reunification of the Memel territory with the German Reich in an international treaty. It shall resolve all outstanding issues concerning Germany and Lithuania and, thereby, it shall open up venues for the development of friendly relations between the two countries.

To this end, the Chancellor of the German Reich and the President of the Republic of Lithuania have appointed as plenipotentiaries: the Reich Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Herr Juozas Urb-ys, and the Lithuanian Envoy to Berlin, Herr Kazys Skirpa.

After the due and proper exchange of powers of attorney, agreement on the following was reached:

Article I

Severed from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, the Memel territory shall be reunited with the German Reich as of today.

Article II

Lithuanian military and police forces shall withdraw immediately from the Memel territory. The Lithuanian Government shall attend to the orderly evacuation of the premises to be left behind in proper conditions. Wherever necessary, both parties shall appoint commissars who shall assume responsibility for handing over administrative units not presently in the control of the autonomous administration of the Memel territory. The remaining issues arising from the transfer of sovereignty shall be addressed in subsequent agreements. This applies in particular to questions of an economic and financial nature, and to questions concerning issues of an administrative character or matters of citizenship.

Article III

To account for Lithuania's economic requirements, a free trade zone shall be established in the Memel harbor. The particulars pertaining to this shall be regulated in guidelines contained in the enclosure to this treaty.

Article IV

To strengthen said resolution to promote the development of friendly relations between Germany and Lithuania, the two parties to this treaty pledge themselves to refrain from the use of force against each other and from the support of efforts by third parties to use force against either of them.

Article V

This treaty enters into force on the day of its signature. In acknowledgment thereof, the plenipotentiaries present place their signatures beneath this treaty.

Done in duplicate in the German and the Lithuanian languages.

Berlin, March 22, 1939

Joachim von Ribbentrop

J. Urbšys

K. Skirpa

At midnight, Ribbentrop triumphantly informed Hitler in a telegram: "Mein Führer! I report to you the signing of the treaty with Lithuania on the reunification of the Memel territory with the Reich."

On March 23, aboard the *Deutschland*, Hitler effected a "Law on the Reunification of the Memel Territory with the German Reich." The Reich Ministers who supposedly countersigned this decree were not present on the ship, with the exception of Lammers. This law was passed in violation of the Constitution in a manner similar to the ordinance effecting the Austrian Anschluss on March 13, 1938³³² and had the following content:³³³

Law on the Reunification of the Memel Territory
with the German Reich on March 23, 1939

§ 1

The Memel territory is part of the German Reich again.

§ 2

(1) The Memel country shall be integrated into the Land of Prussia and the Province of East Prussia. It shall be assigned to the administrative district of Gumbinnen.

(2) The Reich Minister of the Interior shall decree either the administrative subdivision of the Memel territory in urban and rural districts or shall integrate the Memel territory into the existing urban and rural districts.

§ 3

As of the promulgation of this law, those residents of the Memel territory who lost their German citizenship with the removal of the Memel territory on

July 30, 1924 shall regain their German citizenship, provided their place of residence as of March 22, 1939 was located either in the Memel territory or in the German Reich. This shall equally apply to persons whose citizenship is derived from individuals native to the Memel territory who fulfill the above criteria.

§ 4

(1) Reich Law shall enter into force in the Memel territory as of May 1, 1939.

(2) The Reich Minister concerned shall be entitled, in concord with the Reich Minister of the Interior, to provide either that Reich Law not enter into force in the Memel territory, or that it shall do so at a later date, or that its promulgation shall be subject to special measures. Any such regulation shall require publication in the Reich Law Gazette.

§ 5

(1) The Law of the Prussian Land shall enter into force in the Memel territory as of May 1, 1939.

(2) The administration of the Land of Prussia shall be entitled to provide that either Prussian Law not enter into force in the Memel territory, or that it shall do so at a later date, or that its promulgation shall be subject to special measures. Any such regulation shall require publication in the Statute Books of the Land of Prussia.

§ 6

(1) The Reich Ministry of the Interior shall constitute the center for the reunification of the Memel territory with the German Reich.

(2) The President of the Province of East Prussia shall serve as transitional commissar [for the Memel territory]. The Führer of the Memel Germans shall serve as his deputy.³³⁴

(3) The Reich Minister of the Interior shall be entitled to decree the legal and administrative regulations necessary for the implementation and supplementation of this Law.

§ 7

This Law shall enter into force on March 22, 1939.

Aboard the Panzerschiff *Deutschland*, March 23, 1939.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan,

Field Marshal and Prussian Minister-President, Göring

The Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers

The autonomous government in the Memel territory took control of all formerly Lithuanian agencies: the postal service, the broadcast station, the port authority, etc. The Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police, Himmler, was the first Reich German to arrive in the Memel territory on March 22. Police task forces and SS Kommandos accompanied him.

In the morning hours of March 23, German battalions and Panzer divisions crossed the Queen-Luise Bridge in Tilsit and entered the Memel territory, while Luftwaffe squadrons soared overhead. Torpedo boats and escort vessels pulled up alongside a naval landing party in the Memel harbor at approximately 10:00 a.m. Hitler himself did not disembark, although—given Himmler's stringent security measures—he could have safely come ashore. As usual, whenever his personal welfare was concerned, Hitler played it safe and waited until the German military had completely secured the city.

It was not until 1:30 p.m. that Hitler finally left the *Deutschland* anchored offshore. He transferred to the torpedo boat *Leopard*, which ferried him to the harbor where he finally stepped ashore at 2:00 p.m. There he reviewed naval officers, police contingents, and the Memel German Security Police.³³⁵ A car took him to the Theater Square where the leader of the Memel Germans, Dr. Ernst Neumann, greeted him and led him up to the balcony of the theater. There Hitler pinned the Golden Party Badge on Neumann's chest.

After Neumann's introductory statements, Hitler gave an uncharacteristically short speech. Indeed, he appeared to have other things on his mind. In all likelihood, the unexpectedly vocal British reprimand of his actions weighed heavily on him. Spitefully, he stated the Reich's determination "to master its own destiny, to fashion it, whether or not this suits an outside world." Hitler stated.³³⁶

Memel Germans! Volksgenossen!

I greet you today in the name of the entire German Volk. I am happy to receive you into our Greater German Reich. I lead you back to your homeland which you have not forgotten and which has never forgotten you. In the name of the German Volk, I thank you for your brave, manly, and unshakeable insistence on your rights and your affiliation to the German Reich.

I believe I could not have expressed this gratitude in any better way than I just did by bestowing on your leader the one badge which adorns the chest of the new German Reich's best fighters. That you are able to celebrate this day is not the result of chance, but of immense work, the most difficult of struggles and sacrifices. You were once forsaken by a Germany which had succumbed to disgrace and shame. Now you have come home to a mighty new Germany.

It upholds once more its unshakeable sense of honor. It shall not entrust its destiny to foreigners; it stands ready and willing to master its own destiny, to fashion it, whether or not this suits an outside world.

Eighty million Germans today stand up for this one new Germany. You shall now partake in the surge of our national life, our work, our faith, our hopes, and, should it become necessary, you shall partake in our sacrifices.

You appreciate this more than other Germans who enjoy the good fortune of living in our great Reich's heartland. You live on its borders and you will perceive what it means no longer to feel forsaken now that you know a mighty Reich, a great united nation, stands behind you. Just as you once suffered because of Germany's impotence and its fragmentation, other Germans did, too. From despair and suffering now springs forth a new community. It is our will and our determination that it shall never again be shattered and that no power on earth shall ever break or bend it. Let this be our most solemn vow.

Twenty years of misery and suffering shall serve us as a lesson and as a warning in the future. We know what we have to expect of the rest of the world. Yet we wish it no ill because of this. But the suffering it imparts to us must have an end.

Hence, I greet our German Volksgenossen of old as the newest of the Greater German Reich's citizens. Let us join the other Germans throughout the Reich who, at this moment, express our love, our dedication, our willingness to sacrifice, our faith, our loyalty, and our confidence in the battle cry: our Volk and our German Reich—*Sieg Heil!*

As early as 3:45 p.m., the Führer left aboard the *Leopard*, which returned him to the *Deutschland*. By 9:00 the following morning, he was back in Swinemünde. Before stepping ashore, he had the following message related by flag signal to the fleet:³³⁷ "I express to the fleet my appreciation for the accomplished mission. Adolf Hitler."

Amidst the thunders of the salute, Hitler again set foot on land at approximately 10:00 a.m. A special train took him back to Berlin, where he arrived around noon at the Stettin station. In this instance, he refrained from making another "triumphant" entry into the city.

On March 24, the ratification of a far-reaching economic agreement between Germany and Rumania became public. Ministerialdirektor Wohltat had served as Hitler's special emissary on this occasion and, along with Fabricius, the German Ambassador to Bucharest, had negotiated the treaty with the Rumanian Foreign Minister, Grigore Gafencu.³³⁸ It had been concluded the previous day.³³⁹

The treaty's purpose was obvious: Hitler sought to secure access to Rumania's oil reserves and other raw materials essential to the war effort. The true significance of paragraphs 3 and 5 of the treaty was thinly veiled. These points provided for the establishment of a German-Rumanian joint venture dedicated to the "exploration of petroleum, development and exploitation of copper pyrites, manganese ore, and bauxite." Hitler's ambition to convert Rumania into a German vassal state was manifested by Point 7 where he promised to "supply armament and weaponry to the Rumanian Armed Forces."

On March 25, Hitler signed into law two “Ordinances on the Implementation of the Law on the Hitler Youth.”³⁴⁰ The first of these provided for the creation of a *Stamm-Hitlerjugend* (regular Hitler Youth), privileged as a subdivision of the NSDAP. Hitler Youth members of good standing were to be granted admission to this “core” unit after a one-year membership in the Hitler Youth movement. The second ordinance decreed that all German boys between the ages of ten and eighteen years were to partake in the activities of the Hitler Youth and were obliged to accept compulsory membership in general Hitler Youth sections. This decree contained a slogan to inspire German youngsters to take part in the labor service and to participate in defense exercises: “Service with the Hitler Youth is an honorable service to the German Volk.”

In a special law³⁴¹ also dated March 25, Hitler granted the *Technische Nothilfe* (Technical Emergency Relief Organization) the standing of a corporate body under public law. It was dedicated to “the most worthy of services to the German Volksgemeinschaft.” The motivation revealed in this “generous” acknowledgment was of a purely military nature and by no means humanitarian in character. Should there be a war, Hitler thought it judicious to have at his command the resources of this agency and the expertise of its personnel, to fulfill “certain tasks in the defense of the nation on land and in the air.” The preamble to the law stated:

In order to provide technical assistance in combating public emergencies and in carrying out certain tasks in the defense of the nation on land and in the air, the State is in need of a permanent technical relief organization. The Technische Nothilfe constitutes this technical relief organization. Service with the Technische Nothilfe renders valuable service to the German Volksgemeinschaft. To assure the constant readiness and the effectiveness of the Technische Nothilfe, the Reich Government promulgates the following law, which is hereby made public:

Article 1

As a provider of technical help, the Technische Nothilfe (TN) shall be placed under the supervision of the Reich Minister of the Interior.

Hitler signed another ten decrees and ordinances on this day so rich in lawmaking. Chief among these was a “Decree on the Organization of the Sudeten German Territories.”³⁴² The heartland was to become a Reichsgau divided into three administrative districts (Aussig, Eger, and Troppau), while the Reich Government dealt out parcels of land on the southern and eastern fringes of the Sudetenland to Bavaria, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, and Silesia.

March 25, 1939

As though he had suddenly recalled his friend Mussolini, whom he had recently slighted so considerably, Hitler addressed the following telegram to the Duce that same day:³⁴³

On the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Fascist League of Fighters, my thoughts turn to you, in heartfelt and loyal friendship, as the victorious creator of the proud new Italy. Suffused by identical ideals, the German Volk stands shoulder to shoulder with the battle-tested Italian people in order to thwart attempts, fostered by hatred and incomprehension, to hamper the justified will to live of our two peoples and to undermine peace worldwide.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, Göring had returned to San Remo, where he granted an interview. As Hitler's spokesman, he obediently declared the friendship between Germany and Italy to be ineradicable. It would defy any and all attempts to drive a wedge between the two peoples. Any speculations on this possibility were ludicrous, as any such endeavors were doomed from the outset. The slight irritation perceptible in these declarations revealed that, apparently, there were powers which "speculated" on a rift between the two states. In a speech the next day (March 26), Mussolini hurriedly declared efforts to undermine the Berlin-Rome Axis simply "childish."³⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Hitler spent his time awaiting the arrival of the Polish Foreign Minister, Beck, from whom he expected to receive Danzig and the extraterritorial Autobahn on a silver platter. Despite the urgent nature of Ribbentrop's request of March 21, Beck failed to heed Berlin's summons. Instead, the Polish Ambassador Lipski announced his intention to relay to Berlin a memorandum drawn up by the Polish Government.

Hitler bluntly refused to see anyone other than the Polish Foreign Minister. He was irritated and baffled by the reaction of the Poles. In his eyes, the situation was clear cut: Poland would have to yield to Germany's demands. How could it be so bold as to present him with a "memorandum"?

Hitler took advantage of the demise of the Reichsärzteführer (Head of the Reich Physicians' Association) Dr. Wagner,³⁴⁵ in order to leave Berlin for a few days. He expressed his condolences to Wagner's widow in a short telegram:³⁴⁶

I offer you my deeply felt condolences on the painful loss you have suffered with the death of your husband.

Adolf Hitler

On March 26, the thankless task of accepting the Polish Government's memorandum from the hands of Ambassador Lipski fell to Ribbentrop.³⁴⁷ The note made no mention of a possible return of Danzig to the German Reich, and instead the Polish Government advocated a "joint German-Polish guarantee for the Free City." In addition, the memorandum called to mind "certain statements by the Herr Reichskanzler in February of 1938."³⁴⁸ At the time, Hitler had argued that, if the Polish Government respected the German character of Danzig, then the Free City and the German Reich would respect Poland's rights and interests. The memorandum included this unequivocal statement on the disputed topic of an Autobahn and railway link across the Polish Corridor: "Any concessions on the part of Poland are viable only within the framework of the sovereignty of the Polish state—hence granting extraterritoriality to motorways is out of the question."

One can easily imagine Ribbentrop's displeasure at such strong language. In his notes, he remarked:³⁴⁹

Having taken note of its contents, I responded to Ambassador Lipski by stating that, in my personal opinion, the Polish position afforded no basis for a solution of the German-Polish contention. The only possible resolution thereof lay in the reunion of Danzig with the Reich, and the creation of extraterritorial railroad and motorway links, connecting the Reich to East Prussia. Herr Lipski retorted that his was the unpleasant duty to point out that any further pursuit of this particular German policy, especially pertaining to the restitution of Danzig to the Reich, meant war with Poland.

One can equally easily imagine the impact of this memorandum on Hitler. He was incensed at the thought that the impudent "satellite" state³⁵⁰ Poland dared defy him and cite his own statements of February 1938 in arguing against his claims, thereby adding insult to injury. Poland had thus turned the Danzig question into a *casus belli*. This was decidedly ungrateful on Warsaw's part, for had not he, Adolf Hitler, just done it the extraordinary favor of appropriating the Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary? And had he not done so in order that Poland might realize its dream of obtaining a joint border with Hungary? Had it not been reasonably clear that a Polish cession of Danzig was to be expected in return? Never had he faced such refractoriness before. Hitler was outraged. Had he not just offered Poland a "generous" guarantee of its borders?

Undoubtedly, all this was the fault of the British. Their support of Poland had emboldened the Polish statesmen to employ so provocative a language in the memorandum addressed to him. Here Hitler was

right, since the Poles had reason to believe—based on Chamberlain's comments on March 17—that Britain would answer the use of force by the German dictator with an unequivocal declaration of war.

At noon on March 27, Hitler attended the funeral service for Reichsärztführer Wagner in the mortuary of the Ostfriedhof cemetery in Munich. He placed an enormous laurel wreath at the grave.³⁵¹

On March 28, events in Spain took a decisive turn as Franco's troops moved to occupy the capital of the country. Hitler wired the following congratulatory note to the Spanish Generalissimo on this occasion:³⁵²

I extend my most heartfelt congratulations on your troops' entry into Madrid and the final victory which Nationalist Spain thereby secured over the destructive forces of Bolshevism. In sincere appreciation, Germany's thoughts turn today to the outstanding accomplishments of your brave soldiers. Germany stands convinced this shall herald an era of Spanish ascent which will justify the great exertions and sacrifices of the years of struggle.

Adolf Hitler

On March 29 in Berchtesgaden, representatives of the judiciary (Rechtswahrer) in the Ostmark and the Sudetenland visited Hitler, who delivered a short address for their benefit.³⁵³

On March 30, Hitler inspected the progress of a project restoring Augsburg's city theater and surveyed work at the Apollo Theater.³⁵⁴ Among other officials Gauleiters Adolf Wagner and Karl Wahl, Reichsleiter Bormann, and Building Inspector Professor Giessler accompanied Hitler on this tour.

Returning to Berlin the same day, Hitler placed his signature beneath a decree introducing a standard service uniform for civil servants. Hitler had been indignant that high-ranking German civil servants and even ministers appeared in civilian clothes on official occasions. This could not be reconciled with the new style in the Third Reich. He dealt summarily with this lack of etiquette by instituting a dress code in the form of a decree, the preface to which detailed the following:³⁵⁵

§ 1

(1) Civil servants in the higher echelons of the administration of the Reich and the Länder, the civil service administration, and permanent representatives thereof are obliged to wear the uniform of the civil service whenever they represent the government or the administration at official events or whenever specially instructed to do so. Exempted from these provisions are civil servants who are entitled to wear the official Party uniform in their capacities as political leaders or members of organizations. The Deputy of the Führer

shall issue special guidelines in agreement with the Reich Minister of the Interior.

In addition, Hitler awarded the Goethe Medal to the President of the Reichsgericht, Dr. Bumke, on the occasion of his tenth service anniversary. Hitler was highly satisfied with Bumke's conduct of office.

Hitler also conveyed his condolences to the parents of Luftwaffe Captain von Moreau, who had perished in a plane crash.³⁵⁶

March 31 was a black day for Hitler. Chamberlain had chosen this date to follow up his announcements of March 17 with concrete action. Stepping before the House of Commons, he announced the conclusion of a military alliance between the United Kingdom and Poland. It would enter into force immediately if Poland was forced to oppose aggression by Germany. He declared:³⁵⁷

As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments.³⁵⁸ In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty's Government in the meantime before those consultations are concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect. I may add that the French Government have authorized me to make it plain that they stand in the same position in this matter as do His Majesty's Government.

The British Prime Minister hereby made clear that the agreement also applied to Danzig. Since the Polish Government held a military occupation of Danzig by German troops to represent a serious infringement on its independence and vital interests, any such action by Germany would elicit a declaration of war by Great Britain and France. Hitler was outraged when news of Chamberlain's address reached him. This was hardly surprising, as this was already the third blow to his conception of foreign policy which he had received from abroad within the last two weeks.

First, Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham on March 17 had contained an unexpected British reaction to the occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Second, Poland had boldly refused to cede Danzig and opposed the construction of an extraterritorial motorway across the Polish Corridor. Third, Chamberlain now threatened that, should Germany pursue its aggressive designs against Poland, Britain would declare war on the Reich. All this was hard to

reconcile with the Third Reich's policy of territorial expansion to the East. Hitler's entire foreign policy had been based on a "natural alliance" with Great Britain.³⁵⁹

In a fit of rage, he pounded the marble desk top with his fists. Time and time again, he cursed the British. Finally, he shouted: "*Denen werde ich einen Teufelstrank brauen!*" (I shall brew them one devilish potion!)³⁶⁰

He already had in mind a few potent ingredients for this drink: abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, renunciation of the German-Polish Friendship Pact, and military subjugation of Poland. And, if he failed to succeed at first, then there always remained what he considered an ace up his sleeve: an alliance with the Soviet Union. The English were certain to feel weak in the knees when confronted with the terrible prospect of a National Socialist alliance with the evil forces of Bolshevism. They would eagerly abide by any conditions the Reich Chancellor then chose to impose on them. After all, a similar strategy had quickly led to the capitulation of the German Nationalists in the Berlin transportation workers' strike in November 1932. Naturally, he would resort to such a drastic measure only as a last recourse. The British would assuredly regain their common sense before this and would realize that only submission to the will of Adolf Hitler represented a reasonable approach to foreign policy in the Europe of 1939.

For the moment, a few slaps in the face would undoubtedly restore reason to the obstinate British. The threat of an abrogation of the Naval Agreement of 1935 would suffice as a first step. Hitler welcomed the launching of a battlecruiser in Wilhelmshaven on April 1, as it afforded him the opportunity to speak at length on the topic of naval supremacy. The vessel to be christened was the second so-called 35,000-ton heavy battlecruiser, which had an actual tonnage of over 40,000 tons, in disregard of earlier agreements. The *Tirpitz* and the *Bismarck* were destined to be, when completed, the strongest vessels afloat in the world.

At the launching of the *Bismarck* on February 14, Hitler had already implied that persistent hostility by Britain might lead him to embrace a naval policy similar to that of William II. It was not by chance that the first large high-seas battlecruiser of the German Navy bore the name *Bismarck*. To drive home this point once again, Hitler resolved to christen the second battlecruiser *Tirpitz*. Although the German fleet, even if everything went well, would require years to approach the

might of the Kaiser's fleet, at least the English would learn again to fear a German Grand Admiral like Tirpitz. For this reason, Hitler speedily promoted Raeder to Grand Admiral on April 1.

Around 11:00 a.m., Hitler's special train pulled into the Wilhelmshaven station. From there he proceeded by car to the naval shipyards. He reviewed a contingent of the naval artillery and mounted the rostrum to open the festivities. Vice Admiral von Trotha³⁶¹ delivered a short address, which he concluded with shouts of "Sieg Heil!" Frau von Hassel, a daughter of Grand Admiral Tirpitz, had been asked to christen the battleship named in honor of her father: "On the orders of the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, I christen you the *Tirpitz*."

Once the ship had been successfully launched, Hitler boarded a light battlecruiser, the *Scharnhorst*, which had cast its anchor near the Seydlitz Bridge. Before a gathering of the admirals and commanders of the Fleet, Hitler personally presented Raeder with his new appointment in a handwritten letter:³⁶²

My dear Admiral General Raeder,

These days you celebrate your forty-fifth service anniversary. Throughout your long years of service, you bore active witness to all [!] of the most crucial epochs in German history. You experienced the building of our mighty fleet before the war under its great creator.³⁶³ You headed the missions of this instrument of German naval prestige, standing at the side of the most outstanding Commander of this Fleet³⁶⁴ in a great day and age. With all your might, you upheld the thought of Germany's naval prestige even in a time of decline.

For ten-and-a-half years you have been the leader of this German Wehrmacht at sea. Your personality has left its imprint upon it. On this day, the launching of the fourth battleship,³⁶⁵ which bears the name of the creator of Germany's first High Seas fleet, greatly reinforces its ranks. I take advantage of the launching of the *Tirpitz* to lend visible expression to my gratitude and appreciation for your dedicated and purposeful work.

I promote you to Grand Admiral as of this day!

In the context of this promotion, I wish to extend my heartfelt, best wishes on your forty-fifth service anniversary. I cherish the hope that you shall be preserved to us in the best of health so that you may continue to head the building of a fleet worthy of Greater Germany and remain at my disposal as my adviser and colleague for many years to come.

Adolf Hitler

In addition, Raeder received the baton of Grand Admiral, which bore the inscription: "To the first Grand Admiral of the Third Reich. Adolf Hitler."

Hitler remained aboard the *Scharnhorst* for several hours. In all likelihood, he was already drawing up the directives to the Wehrmacht in preparation for the aggression against Poland ("Case White").³⁶⁶ One piece of evidence in support of this theory is a letter Keitel wrote in Berlin on April 3, 1939:³⁶⁷

In connection with "Case White," the Führer has given the following additional orders:

1. Action on this case has to allow for implementation at any point after September 1, 1939.

2. The High Command of the Wehrmacht is charged with drawing up an exact chronological table for "Case White" and ascertaining congruence through talks with all three branches of the Wehrmacht.

3. The branches of the Wehrmacht are to submit their intentions and papers regarding the chronological table to the High Command of the Wehrmacht by May 1, 1939.

On April 1, Hitler left the *Scharnhorst* for Wilhelmshaven at approximately 5:00 p.m. The Mayor of Wilhelmshaven bestowed honorary citizenship on the Reich Chancellor at the City Hall. Following the official reception, Hitler staged a mass rally at the square in front of the building. Already his opening statements revealed his reasons for holding forth on this particular occasion: by taking up the city's imperial past, Hitler wished to attack the British verbally:³⁶⁸

Germans! Volksgenossen!

Whoever seeks to fully appreciate the rise and fall of Germany, has only to look to the history of a city such as Wilhelmshaven. Today resounding with creative activity and work, it was a dead spot not so very long ago—virtually without a right to exist and with no prospects for the future. One does well to reflect on this past every once in a while.

The city experienced its first boom along with the rise of the German Reich after its struggle for unification. This Germany was a Germany of peace. It was a time when many of the so-called peace-loving, virtuous nations were engaged in a multitude of wars while this Germany knew but one goal: to secure peace, to work in peace, to advance the welfare of its inhabitants, and to thereby contribute to human culture and civilization. Internally, this peaceful Germany labored to fashion its life with infinite diligence, ingenuity, and persistence. On the outside, it sought to secure for itself a well-deserved place in the sun by participating in peaceful competition with other peoples.

Although this Germany was the greatest guarantor of peace for many decades, wrapped up in its peaceful pursuits, it was unable to prevent other peoples, especially their statesmen, from looking at our rise with envy and hatred. In the end, they responded with war.

Today the historic record tells us how England systematically pursued this policy of encirclement at the time.

Propaganda in Germany peddled the slogan “policy of encirclement” during the months to follow, ruthlessly exploiting the watchword Hitler had introduced in his speech. While Britain had admittedly taken certain precautionary measures before 1914, they had been applied only after Germany and Austria attempted to expand by force.³⁶⁹ The First World War had broken out precisely because Austria had not heeded London’s warnings and had invaded Serbia, and Germany had invaded Belgium. Their cause had been doomed: neither Germany nor Austria had commanded the military resources to emerge victorious from a confrontation with the Western Powers.

No nation can claim the glory of having wrestled us to the ground, least of all those nations whose statesmen do all the talking today! Germany remained undefeated and unbeaten in the struggle on land, in the air, and at sea. And still we lost the war. We know the power which carried the victory over Germany back then. It was the power of lies, the poison of propaganda. It did not recoil before distortion and falsehood. And, unprepared for this onslaught, the German Reich was defenseless against it.

After these utterly fantastic claims, Hitler expounded the impact of Wilson’s Fourteen Points on the German military at great length. The German army had prematurely laid down its weapons in 1918, deceived by these false promises. Hitler attacked the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles. In this context, he spoke of Germany’s “right to life.”

When other statesmen insist that the rule of law should prevail in this world, then one ought to point out to them that their crimes do not constitute law. Their Diktat is neither right nor law. The eternal right to life of all peoples takes precedence over this Diktat. Providence did not create the German Volk so that it might obediently comply with a law, applauded by either the English or the French, but so that it might realize its right to life. And this is what we are here for!

Apparently, Hitler thought he had just realized this “eternal right to life” of Germany by invading Czechoslovakia. Before replying to British misgivings at his conduct in recent days, he interjected a *ritardando*, to whit a highly convoluted rendition of his struggle “within the nation” in the form of a “party narrative.” Finally, he returned to his earlier topic and went on the offensive:

If an English statesman today believes he can resolve all outstanding problems by means of open consultations and negotiations, then this will elicit from me only one comment: There was ample time for this before we came—fifteen years! Apparently, the world today is persuaded it can divide

the nations into two categories: those which are virtuous and those which are not. England and France belong to the first category, while Germany and Italy belong to the latter. All we can say in reply is: Is it not best left to the Lord Almighty to determine who is virtuous and who is not? Assuredly, it is not up to us mortals to pass judgment.

Perhaps this English statesman will then retort: "Evidently, the Lord has already passed his judgment, for did he not accord the virtuous nations a quarter of the surface of this earth while he took everything from those which are not virtuous?" Please permit me to ask a question here: Precisely by what means have these virtuous nations appropriated themselves a quarter of the earth? There is only one reply to this: surely these means were not virtuous! For 300 years now, England has acted in a fashion which cannot be described as virtuous. And now, in its old age, it speaks of virtue!

"In its old age," decrepit England and its senile statesmen³⁷⁰ thought they could order him, Adolf Hitler, around! These men were incapable of taking decisive action. Nothing they could do would dissuade him, the young conqueror, from the pursuit of his ambitious designs.

It took great impertinence on the part of the British, so Hitler reflected, to find fault with him for not consulting them prior to the move against Czechoslovakia. He was not a man to ask others what to do. Indeed, had he not always "gone it alone," not even conferring with his closest friend Mussolini, or his own staff, before taking action? Apparently Hitler had all but repressed the memory of having twice in the previous year signed his name to a contract which stipulated consultations with Great Britain.³⁷¹ On the contrary, Hitler had meanwhile come to believe steadfastly that his actions were simply none of England's business, as he had not interfered in the Palestinian question.

If a British statesman today demands of me that all problems related to Germany's vital interests first be discussed with England, then I could as well insist that all issues pending in Great Britain had first to be discussed with us. It is entirely possible that the English would retort to this: "The Germans have no business being in Palestine!" Indeed, we do not want to be in Palestine. And just as we Germans have no business being in Palestine, the English have no business being in our German Lebensraum!

And now they declare the issues at stake to be general questions of law and legitimacy. This opinion would hold good only if they were universally binding ones. They tell us that we have no right to do this or no right to do that. I would like to ask in turn: What right have the English—to cite only one example—to go about shooting Arabs in Palestine only because these stand up to defend their homeland? Who gives them this right?

We in Central Europe, on the other hand, have not slaughtered thousands. We go about regulating our affairs calmly and with order! I should not like

to fail to mention one thing here: the German Volk of today, the German Reich of the present are not willing to forsake their vital interests. Likewise they are not willing to stand by and watch the approaching danger without taking action themselves.

And woe to any “satellite state”³⁷² bold enough to heed Great Britain’s bidding and not his. Anyone attempting “to pull the chestnuts out of the fire” for the Western Powers would have to bear the consequences. He “should expect to burn his fingers.” Hitler undoubtedly had the “satellite state” Poland in mind when he pronounced this unequivocal warning:

When the Allies transformed the political landscape in Europe in utter disregard of practicality, laws, traditions, and reason, we did not have the power to prevent it. But when they expect today’s Germany to stand by patiently until the day their satellite states (*Trabantenstaaten*) leap on it, states whose *raison d’être* lies in their potential to be used against Germany, then they apparently mistake today’s Germany for that of the prewar years! Whoever declares himself willing to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the great powers should expect to burn his fingers.

Now Hitler began to search for a rationale to explain the destruction of the Czechoslovakian state created in Munich. Well, for one, it had been Germans who had built the Hradcany Castle and St. Vitus’ Cathedral in Prague. A German king had reigned there in the past. For a thousand years the territory had formed part of the “Lebensraum of the German Volk.” He had merely reinstated the “ancient German law” there and had brought back together “what history and geographical position, the rules of common sense, demanded be united.” He continued:

We harbor no hatred for the Czech people. For years, our peoples lived alongside each other.³⁷³ The English statesmen know nothing of this. They have no inkling that the Hradcany Castle was not built by Englishmen, but by Germans. Neither did the English built the St. Vitus’ Cathedral. No, Germans had their hands in this, too.

The French were not active in this area either. They do not know that, when England was still a small country, a German emperor was paid homage on this mountain. A thousand years before I stood there, the first German king received this people’s homage. The English do not know about this. They cannot and need not know about this. It suffices that we should know it and that this was the case. For a millennium, this area formed part of the Lebensraum of the German Volk.

Nevertheless, we would not have had anything against an independent Czech state if it had not oppressed Germans and had not been intended as a weapon in the pending attack on Germany.

April 1, 1939

These days, a former French Minister of Aviation wrote in a newspaper³⁷⁴ that it is the task of this Czech state to serve as a base, because of its excellent location, for launching aerial attacks on Germany's industrial heartland. It is easily understood that such a remark is of interest to us. It is equally natural that we draw the proper conclusions from this. It would have been up to England and France to defend this airfield. It was up to us, on the other hand, to prevent such an attack from taking place.

It had been my intention to achieve this in the most natural and simple manner possible. It was only after I had realized that any such attempt was destined to fail and that anti-German elements were gaining an upper hand once more; only after I had also seen that this state had long ceased to be a viable structure; that it had already broken apart internally; it was only then that I determined to reinstitute ancient German law here. Thereby I have reunited what history and geographical position, the rules of common sense, demanded be united. This was not to oppress the Czech people! They will enjoy greater privileges than many of the oppressed peoples in the virtuous nations. I believe I have rendered a great service to the cause of peace because I took timely steps to render useless this weapon which was to be effective against Germany in the event of war.

This rationale could not in the least justify Hitler's actions before the rest of the world. To the contrary, the reasons he cited were about the least convincing ones he could possibly have come up with. If these principles had been universally applied, then German supremacy would have had to be accepted throughout Europe. For where had Germans not been involved, in the course of the past millennium, in the construction of cathedrals and palaces, where had not a German sovereign once governed a state or a territory? At one point or another, every region in Europe had come into contact with the Holy Roman Empire, which since 1512 has been officially called the "Holy Roman Empire of the German nation." The Empire of Charlemagne and its successors, as well as the German Empire from 962 to 1806, were both regarded as the Christian ("holy") revival of the Roman Empire and comprised at their height much of western and central Europe.

To apply Hitler's logic to cases such as Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands would have meant that these states would have to become part of the Greater German Reich, too, since all of them had at one point belonged to the ancient German Reich. Taking the argument further, Hitler could have claimed Hungary for his Third Reich, as the Habsburg royal family had once reigned there also. The case would have been even clearer with Poland, as Saxon electors had reigned there for some time. Moreover, the grasp of East Prussia had extended far into the country's heartland in the course of

the repeated historic divisions of the land. Germany could also have had claims to all three Baltic states, for the Knights of the Teutonic Order had long owned land in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Numerous German kings had also reigned in the Balkans: Karl I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen had ruled Rumania; Ferdinand I of Coburg had been king in Bulgaria; and Otto I of Wittelsbach had once led Greece.

In the context of Hitler's pretenses to formerly German-held territories, the history of the House of Habsburg would have brought Yugoslavia under the rule of the Third Reich: Croatia, Slovenia, northern Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina had all formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Habsburg family had also reigned in Spain for over two centuries (1506–1700), creating a world empire which spanned large parts of Europe and America. And only seventy-five years ago, Maximilian, the brother of Emperor Franz Joseph, who precipitated World War I, had been Emperor of Mexico.

By the same token, Italy would have had to become German as well considering its long association with German emperors and kings who had served as regents in the country. The Kingdom of Naples, including South Italy and Sicily, had experienced its heyday under the German Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. Upper Italy, Venice, and Tuscany had belonged to Austria for ages.

With regard to France, at the very least, Alsace-Lorraine and Burgundy had long belonged to the "German Lebensraum." Tracing history to the days of Charlemagne, Hitler could have argued that the whole country rightly had to be German. The great King of the Franks and Holy Roman Emperor, who united most of Western Europe, died 814 in Aachen where he was buried; his language was German, or more precisely *theodisc* as it was called at the time.

In the case of Belgium, cities such as Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet could well have been considered German and hence fallen prey to Hitler's expansionist designs, not to mention Belgium's temporary integration into the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its various sovereigns being descendants of the House of Nassau-Orange and the House of Saxe-Coburg. The Netherlands had belonged to Spain (House of Habsburg) and afterwards were ruled by members of the House of Nassau-Orange. This same line of argument would have brought England under German control. In fact, Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, also called the Anglo-Saxons) had conquered much of the island between the 5th and 7th centuries; they ruled until

the Norman invasion of 1066. The Angles, coming from the North German district *Angul*, gave their name to England and the English. Hitler considered England's inhabitants to be members of the Germanic race, as he frequently pointed out.³⁷⁵ Also in modern times, the British Royal Family was tied by lines of blood to the German nobility, in particular to the Houses of Hanover, Nassau-Dillenburg, and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

For the annexation of Denmark, North Schleswig could be used as a pretext, or the "German Lebensraum" in the north. Such an affiliation to the Germanic race was applicable as well to the Norwegians and Swedes. Frequently, though incorrectly because of their Asiatic origin, the Finns were cited as one of the Germanic peoples that belonged to the natural "German Lebensraum." After all, Finland had gained its independence in 1918 with the help of German troops.

According to Hitler's line of argument, Germans would have been entitled to rule Russia, too—at least in part. Many German noblemen had sought fame and fortune in the Russian lands. The last Romanov Tsar was married to the German Princess Alix of Hesse. The 1918 peace accords of Brest-Litovsk had granted possession of the Ukraine jointly to Germany and Austria. And Germans had long history of settlement in the Volga region. These might also be eager to return to the German Reich.

In accordance with the criteria enumerated in his speech at Wilhelmshaven, the list of potential candidates for annexation by Germany would have been an impressive one. And so it was no coincidence that all the countries mentioned above would appear again—nearly identically—in a list of states forwarded to Hitler on April 15. Its author was the American President Roosevelt, who demanded that Hitler respect the territorial integrity of all of these states and refrain from aggression against them.³⁷⁶

By the time Hitler spoke at Wilhelmshaven, he had apparently realized that his move against Czechoslovakia had outraged much of the outside world. He tried to appease international public opinion by claiming that—already before his forced intervention [!]³⁷⁷—he had chosen the motto "Party Congress of Peace" as a proof of Germany's peaceful intentions. He was eager to state that power politics did not lie at the core of Germany's policy in Eastern Europe and maintained that its interests there were of a purely economic nature.

I do not believe that, when people abroad say that this [the aggression against Czechoslovakia] heralds the beginning of a German attack on the world, this is meant quite seriously. If it is, then this is a sign of a guilty

conscience. Perhaps it only reflects indignation felt at the failure of a larger plan? Perhaps it only serves to create the tactical prerequisites for a new policy of encirclement? Whatever the case may be, I remain convinced that I have rendered a great service to the cause of peace.

And it was in this conviction that three weeks ago,³⁷⁷ I chose the name "Party Congress of Peace" for the upcoming Party Congress. Germany has no intentions of attacking other nations. What we do not want to do without, however, is the expansion of our economic relations. This is our right. I refuse to accept orders from any European statesman on this account, or from any other statesman for that matter!

The German Reich is not only an important producer, it also consumes enormous amounts. Just as we represent an irreplaceable trading partner in our capacity as consumers, our role as producers affords us the means to pay for our consumption honestly and fairly. We entertain no designs on other nations, provided they also leave us in peace. In any event, the German Reich is not willing to subject itself to a policy of intimidation and encirclement in the long run.

Apparently, Hitler now felt the time had come to call the British to order and to threaten them with the unilateral abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935, should they persist in causing trouble or venture to conclude a military alliance with Poland. They would not succeed in wearying him, so he assured the British, as the German Volk always stood ready to fight, if this proved necessary. Moreover, he placed special emphasis on the strength of the Axis:

I once concluded a treaty with England: the Naval Agreement. It was based on the one desire we all share: never to have to go to war against England. This desire must be a mutual one, however. If England no longer wishes this, then the practical prerequisites for this agreement are no longer present. In that case, Germany would not be greatly perturbed. We are so sure of ourselves because we are strong, and we are strong because we are united and, moreover, because our eyes are open.

In this city especially, I can confidently appeal to you, my Volksgenossen: Look at the world and at what is happening around us with open eyes. Do not allow yourselves to be deceived regarding the most crucial condition for life, namely, your own strength. Whoever does not possess might, forsakes his right to live! We have seen this in the past fifteen years. Because of this, I have made Germany strong again and built up its Wehrmacht on land, at sea, and in the air. Now that other countries openly declare their intent to arm, and to constantly rearm, there is only one thing I can say to these statesmen: they will not wear me out!

I have resolved to continue striding forth on this path. And I firmly believe that we shall advance more quickly along it than all the others. No power on earth shall ever take these arms from us again by empty talk. Nevertheless, should some power seek to measure its might against ours by force, then it ought to realize that the German Volk is in a position to take up the fight at any time. It stands prepared and determined! And our friends think precisely

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as we do. In particular, this feeling is shared by one state closely allied to us. We march alongside it today and in the future, no matter what the circumstances! And when our adversaries' journalists run out of material to write about, they speak of divisions within the Axis, of signs of its disintegration. May they rest assured that this Axis represents the most natural of political instruments in this world. It is a political combination which owes its existence not only to considerations of reason and a desire for justice, but also to the power of idealism. And this construction will prove itself more durable than the temporary alliances of non-homogeneous bodies on the other side. And to anyone who tells me today that there are no longer any *weltanschaulich* or ideological differences between England and Soviet Russia, I can only say: Congratulations, gentlemen!

At this point, Hitler thought it appropriate to remind the British of the evils of Bolshevism to which they would undoubtedly succumb should they continue to oppose Germany. He claimed that the Bolsheviks had "slaughtered hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings—men, women, children, and old people" in Spain. This was irrefutable evidence of the horrors perpetrated by the Jewish-Bolshevist pestilence."

It was obvious that Hitler had not yet abandoned all hope that he could bring the British around by constantly referring to the Bolshevik threat to the world. After all, this strategy had been highly effective in Germany. He was still hesitant to administer the "devilish potion" he had prepared for his adversaries in the form of an alliance between National Socialists and Bolsheviks. He would use it only as a last resort.

Toward the end of the address, Hitler made a display of his unfettered confidence: he maintained that "no power on earth" could ever break Germany's might and shrugged off the recent British declarations as mere "papers."

He concluded the speech on the following note:

I believe the time is near when it shall become apparent that the *weltanschaulich* community of Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany is of a different mettle than that of democratic Great Britain and Bolshevik Russia under Stalin. Should there really be no ideological differences between them, then all I can say is: how correct indeed my views of Marxism, communism, and democracy were! Why should there be two phenomena when the substance is actually the same?

We witness a great triumph and we experience a profound, inner satisfaction these days. A land ravaged by Bolshevism has freed itself, where hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings—men, women, children, and old people—were slaughtered. It has freed itself despite Bolshevism's ideological sympathizers in Great Britain, France, and other countries. We understand this struggle in Spain only too well. We welcome its success and

we congratulate Spain. And, as Germans, it fills us with particular pride that many young German men fulfilled their duty there. As volunteers, they helped to break a tyrannical regime and restore to a nation its right to self-determination. We rejoice in observing just how quickly—extraordinarily quickly—the *weltanschaulich* change of heart of the suppliers of war material among the Reds came about. We are happy to see how well they suddenly understand Nationalist Spain, and how eagerly they engage in economic relations with it, now that their *weltanschaulich* endeavors have failed.

This, too, is a sign of where events are taking us. My Volksgenossen, I am convinced that all states will eventually face the same problems we once did. State upon state will either surrender to this Jewish-Bolshevist pestilence or will fight it. We fought it and we built up a national German *Volksstaat*. Its sole desire is to live in peace and friendship with all other states. It will never again allow itself to be wrestled to the ground by any state!

Will the world become Fascist? I do not know. Will the world become National Socialist? I do not believe so. Will the world ultimately rid itself of the grave dangers of Bolshevism? I am profoundly convinced of this.

And it is because of this that I believe in a final reconciliation among the peoples [of the world], which will come about sooner or later. Only if the Jewish spirit of discord among people is eliminated, can a lasting cooperation among nations come about, based on mutual understanding. Today, we must rely on our own forces! And we can be satisfied with the results of this self-reliance—both internally and externally.

My Volksgenossen, when I took power, Germany was torn by inner conflicts and impotent. It was a plaything at the mercy of foreign powers. Today, we are united at home, and our economy thrives. Abroad, we may not be popular, but people respect and esteem us. And this is decisive!

Above all, we have imparted the greatest happiness possible to millions of our Volksgenossen: we enabled them to return home to our Greater German Reich. Further, we have imparted a great happiness to all of Central Europe, namely, a peace protected by Germany's might. And no power on earth shall ever be able to break this might! This shall be our pledge!

And thus we realize that two million of our Volksgenossen did not perish in vain in the Great War. Their sacrifices have brought this mighty young German Reich into being. It has held its own in life. And, in view of these sacrifices, we shall never shrink from making sacrifices ourselves, should this become necessary. The world would do well to take note of this! Let them conclude pacts, issue declarations, all they like. I do not rely on papers. I rely on you, my Volksgenossen!

We Germans were the victims of the greatest breach of promise of all time. Let us now take care that our Volk shall never again become divided internally. Then no power on earth shall ever be able to threaten us again. And then peace shall be preserved for our Volk. Should it be necessary, we shall force its preservation. Then our Volk will thrive and prosper. It will dedicate itself to works of peace and culture with all its ingenuity, its abilities, its diligence, and its assiduity. This is our desire, this is what we hope for and what we believe in.

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Twenty years ago today, when our Party was founded, it was only a small structure. Think of how far we have come since then. Think of the miracle which has come to pass. And, because of this miraculous path along which the German Volk has traveled, believe that it is making its way toward a great future as well. Deutschland—*Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*

On the international stage, however, there was no such “miraculous path” to be found. Even the most elegant speech could not change the fact that domestic policy and international politics were simply not the same.

After the rally, Hitler returned to the harbor to put to sea again, though not on board a battleship this time. The new KdF ship *Robert Ley* set out on its maiden voyage at 8:00 p.m. with the Führer of the Greater German Reich aboard.

Hitler was confident that his speech in Wilhelmshaven had given the British something to think about. Now he could spend a few days relaxing. Allegedly, the journey aboard the *Robert Ley* was the first and only vacation of his entire life.³⁷⁸ He was well prepared for the trip, having had a blue flatcap especially tailored for the occasion. He wore it along with civilian attire on board. This peculiar flatcap was a cross between the blue cap that skippers sported and the pseudo-military hat that German veterans wore at the NS Reich Warriors’ Organization meetings. The only distinction of this cap was that Hitler had had the sovereign symbol pinned on it. Even during this trip, Hitler would wear his uniform on occasion, for example, when he and other tourists visited the island of Heligoland. For the remainder of the time, Hitler preferred to appear casual. He had his picture taken with pretty girls, was attentive to Robert Ley’s attractive new wife, and watched other travelers play medicine ball on deck.

Hitler could not resist the temptation of adding a little drama to the otherwise calm journey. “Accidentally,” the passenger liner encountered the *Scharnhorst* on the High Seas. The battleship raced toward the cruiser at breakneck speed, fired salutes, and then turned about close by. Its crew stood in parade formation on the deck. The newly promoted Grand Admiral Räder raised his baton to greet the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. On this occasion Raeder and Hitler exchanged telegrams at sea.³⁷⁹ Hitler enjoyed the voyage so much that he extended the journey an additional day. Thus his vacation ended on April 4, a day later than scheduled.

On April 3, while Hitler was still at sea, the Polish Foreign Minister Beck paid a visit to Great Britain. He did so in spite of having slighted Berlin by declining Hitler’s summons on March 21.³⁸⁰ The purpose of

his journey to London was to work out the details of the Anglo-Polish military alliance³⁸¹ with Chamberlain. Hitler still thought the British were merely bluffing at this point.

On April 4, the *Robert Ley* anchored in the Hamburg harbor at noon. Having walked past rows of tourists, shaking hands here and there, Hitler left the KdF ship. He then made his next publicity stop at the floating youth hostel "Hein Godewind" to chat briefly with a few of its guests. Then he drove through the lane formed by Party contingents to the Dammtor station, so as to depart at 12:43 p.m. on his special train for Berlin.

Before departing from Hamburg, Hitler addressed the following greeting to the so-called *Kraft durch Freude* Fleet:³⁸²

The voyage aboard the steamer *Robert Ley* will always remain among the most cherished of my recollections. Nowhere is the impact of the National Socialist educational work of social improvement more beautifully manifest, neither at public events nor on other occasions, than in the trips of the wonderful ships of the *Kraft durch Freude* Fleet. They not only afford us visible proof that the Greater German Reich encompasses all German Gaus, but, above all, they are a living demonstration of our Volksgemeinschaft.

Hamburg, April 4, 1939

Adolf Hitler

The same day, Hitler extended his and the German Volk's condolences to Prince Abdul Illah of Baghdad, who was mourning the demise of King Ghazi I.³⁸³ State Minister Meissner personally called at the Iraqi Embassy to convey Hitler's message. Attending the official funeral ceremony, the German Ambassador to Baghdad placed a wreath at the King's graveside on behalf of the Führer.³⁴

In subsequent days, Hitler had to face one disappointment after the other in his relations with the British. His former "friend" Lloyd George, whom he had so lavishly praised in *Mein Kampf*³⁸⁵ and whose remarkable visit to Berchtesgaden in 1936 had so exhilarated him,³⁸⁶ this same Lloyd George openly spoke out against him before the assembled House of Commons on April 4. Should Hitler force his way into Poland as he had into Czechoslovakia, then, as Lloyd George summarily stated, Great Britain and France would order their troops to march also. Lloyd George subsequently spoke of a potential Anglo-Russian military alliance against Germany. The German press, which had called the British statesman a "hotspur" (*Feuerkopf*) in 1936, now describe him as "senile." According to Hitler's perception, Lloyd George had become the victim of the same "decrepitude" which ultimately beset all British statesmen.

April 3, 1939

In a speech before the House of Commons on April 3, Chamberlain had announced that Great Britain and Poland had concluded a mutual assistance pact. Referring to Hitler's speech on April 1, Chamberlain declared:³⁸⁷

It is true we are told now that there are other reasons for recent events in Czechoslovakia—historical associations, the fear of attack. Well, there may be excellent reasons, but they do not accord with the assurances which were given before.

It is inevitable that they should raise doubts as to whether further reasons may not presently be found for further expansion. I am not asserting that today this challenge has been made. No official statement that I know of has ever formulated such ambitions, although there has been plenty of unofficial talk; but the effect of these recent events has penetrated far beyond the limits of the countries concerned, and perhaps even further than was anticipated by those who brought them about.

It is no exaggeration to say that public opinion throughout the world has been profoundly shocked and alarmed. This country has been united from end to end by the conviction that we must now make our position clear and unmistakable whatever may be the result.

On the situation in Poland, he stated:

If that policy were the policy of the German Government it is quite clear that Poland would not be the only country which would be endangered, and the policy which has led us to give this assurance to Poland, of course could not be satisfied or carried out if we were to confine ourselves to a single case which, after all, might not be the case in point.

These recent happenings have, rightly or wrongly, made every State which lies adjacent to Germany unhappy, anxious, uncertain about Germany's future intentions.

The Prime Minister concluded his speech with the following appeal:

Therefore, we welcome the co-operation of any country, whatever may be its internal system of government, not in aggression but in resistance to aggression. I believe that this nation is now united not only in approval of what we have said, but in approval of the aim and purpose that lie behind it. I believe that the whole Empire shares in that approval. The members of the British Empire beyond the seas have hitherto watched our efforts for peace with a fervent hope that they might be successful. All of them have had a growing consciousness that we cannot live for ever in that atmosphere of surprise and alarm from which Europe has suffered in recent months.

The treaty between Britain and Poland—drawn up on April 6—would enter into force upon signature³⁸⁸ for a term of five years. It was ratified on August 25, 1939, and read:³⁸⁹

April 6, 1939

Agreement of Mutual Assistance
between the United Kingdom and Poland

London, August 25, 1939

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Polish Government:

Desiring to place on a permanent basis the collaboration between their respective countries resulting from the assurances of mutual assistance of a defensive character which they have already exchanged;

Have resolved to conclude an Agreement for that purpose and have appointed as their Plenipotentiaries:

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax, K.G., G.C.S.I, G.C.I.E., Principle Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs;

The Polish Government:

His Excellency Count Edward Raczynski, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Polish Republic in London;

Who, having exchanged their Full Powers, found in good and due form, have agreed on the following provisions:

Article I

Should one of the Contracting Parties become engaged in hostilities with a European Power³⁹⁰ in consequence of aggression by the latter against that Contracting Party, the other Contracting Party will at once give the Contracting Party engaged in hostilities all the support and assistance in its power.

Article II

(1) The provisions of Article I will also apply in the event of any action by a European Power which clearly threatened, directly or indirectly, the independence of one of the Contracting Parties, and was of such a nature that the Party in question considered it vital to resist it with its armed forces.

(2) Should one of the Contracting Parties become engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of action by that Power which threatened the independence or neutrality of another European State³⁹¹ in such a way as to constitute a clear menace to the security of that Contracting Party, the provisions of Article I will apply, without prejudice, however, to the rights of the other European State concerned.

Article III

Should a European Power attempt to undermine the independence of one of the Contracting Parties by processes of economic penetration or in any other way, the Contracting Parties will support each other in resistance to such attempts. Should the European Power concerned thereupon embark on hostilities against one of the Contracting Parties, the provisions of Article I will apply.

Article IV

The methods of applying the undertakings of mutual assistance provided for by the present Agreement are established between the competent naval, military and air authorities of the Contracting Parties.

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Article V

Without prejudice to the foregoing undertakings of the Contracting Parties to give each other mutual support and assistance immediately on the outbreak of hostilities, they will exchange complete and speedy information concerning any development which might threaten their independence and, in particular, concerning any development which threatened to call the said undertakings into operation.

Article VI

(1) The Contracting Parties will communicate to each other the terms of any undertakings of assistance against aggression which they have already given or may in future give to other States.

(2) Should either of the Contracting Parties intend to give such an undertaking after the coming into force of the present Agreement, the other Contracting Power shall, in order to ensure the proper functioning of the Agreement, be informed thereof.

(3) Any new undertaking which the Contracting Parties may enter into in future shall neither limit their obligations under the present Agreement nor indirectly create new obligations between the Contracting Party not participating in these undertakings and the third State concerned.

Article VII

Should the Contracting Parties be engaged in hostilities in consequence of the application of the present Agreement, they will not conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement.

Article VIII

(1) The present Agreement shall remain in force for a period of five years.

(2) Unless denounced six months before expiry of this period it shall continue in force, each Contracting Party having thereafter the right to denounce it at any time giving six months' notice to that effect.

(3) The present Agreement shall come into force on signature.

In faith whereof the above-named Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Agreement and have affixed thereto their seals.

Done in English in duplicate, at London, the 25th August, 1939. A Polish text shall subsequently be agreed upon between the Contracting Parties and both texts will then be authentic.

Halifax Edward

Raczynski

When news of the Anglo-Polish accord reached Hitler, he found himself once more in a position which forced him to improvise. Although he had originally thought the ratification of such a treaty impossible, and although he held its practical applicability to be severely limited, he could not deny the obvious: Poland had gone over to the British camp. He had speculated that Poland would offer little more than token resistance to the German demands and would, slowly but surely, follow in the Slovaks' footsteps. Initially, Hitler had even toyed with the idea of stationing German troops in Poland. This would

have been a good base for operations in the East. If the Poles conducted themselves obligingly, then he might even have been willing to accord them a certain, albeit limited, role in the military conquest of new Lebensraum in Russia. Later, after the war had started, Hitler would proceed in this manner in the case of Slovakia, Rumania, and others.

A rude awakening was the only tangible result of Hitler's dreams of a faithful Polish vassal state in the East of the Greater German Reich. He was forced to take by the sword what refused to become his voluntarily. Poland denied the Third Reich access to Danzig and the Polish Corridor. To add insult to injury, the Polish Foreign Minister rushed to London instead of heeding Hitler's summons to Berlin. The Polish military concentrated troops on the outskirts of the Free City with the obvious intent of intervening should ethnic Germans in the city stage a coup there. Hitler considered this move even more insolent than what he had termed an "intolerable provocation of the German Reich" perpetrated by the Czechoslovakian State President Beneš when he mobilized his country's military on May 21/22, 1938.³⁹² Thus, Hitler was forced to issue more detailed instructions for "Case White" to the German military.

While immersed in preparations for the strike, news of Mussolini's attack on Albania caught Hitler completely by surprise. Mussolini had taken the country's capital Tirana on Good Friday, April 7, 1939. Albanian forces had mounted hardly any resistance to the Italian invasion. Even though Italy had contemplated annexation of its neighbor to the East for a long time,³⁹³ the Duce's strike at this point was a direct response to Hitler's clandestine action against Czechoslovakia.

This move had inspired Mussolini to pursue his *Mare Nostrum* policy³⁹⁴ with equal ardor. As far as the Mediterranean arena was concerned, Hitler had expected a better performance by his friend Mussolini. The ludicrous conquest of impotent Albania did not contribute much to the greater glory of Fascist Italy. Throughout the preceding months, Italian newspapers had bristled with news of grand proclamations in Mussolini's speeches, of his designs on Tunis, Corsica, Nice, Suez, and Djibouti.³⁹⁵

A year earlier, Hitler had dreamt up visions of a potential military confrontation in this region. One possible scenario had been an armed conflict pitting France and Great Britain against Italy.³⁹⁶ Had developments taken such a turn at the time, Hitler would surely have found better things to do than to rescue the Duce. Back then, such an

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engagement of England and France in the Mediterranean region would have immensely facilitated his dealings with the Eastern Europe states.

By 1939, the situation for Germany had changed dramatically. Faced with the distinct possibility of war with Britain and France, Hitler had absolutely no use for a Duce who might well rouse the anger of the Western Powers with his ill-considered steps. Mussolini was needlessly complicating matters.³⁹⁷

The further course of events proved that Hitler had little to fear in this context. At this point, Mussolini apparently still had complete command of his faculties and was not so foolish as to provoke an open confrontation with the Western Powers. He could easily have done so by attacking either Tunis or the Suez Canal. In fact, the Italian dictator adhered to the same principle his German colleague did and took the way of least resistance. He hurled the might of the Italian armed forces against tiny Albania to achieve a cheap political and military success. Despite their ideological affinity, Hitler was less than pleased by Mussolini's activities. He himself had just laboriously "pacified" Rumania and thus opened this area to exploitation by Germany. The Duce's move was stirring up "unrest" in the Balkans. Hitler could not bring himself to forward the customary congratulatory telegram required on similar occasions. The only official acknowledgment of Mussolini's indiscretion in Albania appeared in the form of an official German press release which stated that Germany "sympathized" with Italy's actions.³⁹⁸

On April 10, the Führer wired his congratulations to Cavalry General Knochenhauer in Hamburg on his fortieth service anniversary; likewise to Admiral Albrecht, whom Hitler now promoted to the rank of Admiral General.³⁹⁹

On April 11, having taken advantage of the extended weekend holiday to formulate his policy stance on "Case White," Hitler issued the following directive to the Wehrmacht, including instructions for "Case White" and the occupation of Danzig:⁴⁰⁰

TOP SECRET MILITARY

BY OFFICER ONLY

OKW No. 37/39 g. Kdos. Chfs. WFA/L I

Berlin, April 11, 1939

5 copies

Subject: Directive for the uniform preparation of war
by the Wehrmacht for 1939/40

I shall lay down in a later directive the future tasks of the Wehrmacht and the preparations to be made in accordance with these for the conduct of war.

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Until that directive comes into force the Wehrmacht must be prepared for the following eventualities:

I) Safeguarding the frontiers of the German Reich and protection against surprise air attacks. (See Enclosure I).

II) "Case White" (See Enclosure II).

III) Taking possession of Danzig (See Enclosure III). Enclosure IV lays down the regulations for the exercise of military authority in East Prussia in the event of hostilities.

Adolf Hitler

Enclosure II
"Case White" (*Fall Weiss*)

The present attitude of Poland requires, over and above the plan "Frontier Security East" the initiation of military preparations, to remove if necessary any threat from this direction forever.

1. Political Requirements and Aims

German relations with Poland continue to be based on principles of avoiding any disturbances. Should Poland, however, change her policy towards Germany, which so far has been based on the same principles as our own, and adopt a threatening attitude towards Germany, a final settlement might become necessary in spite of the treaty in force with Poland.

The aim then will be to destroy Polish military strength, and create in the East a situation which satisfies the requirements of national defense. The Free State of Danzig will be proclaimed a part of the Reich territory at the outbreak of hostilities, at the least. The political leaders consider it their task in this case to isolate Poland if possible, that is to say, to limit the war to Poland only.

The development of increasing internal crises in France and resulting British restraint might produce such a situation in the not too distant future.

Intervention by Russia, if she were in a position to intervene,⁴⁰¹ cannot be expected to be of any use to Poland, because this would mean Poland's destruction by Bolshevism. The attitude of the Baltic States will be determined wholly by German military superiority. In the course of further developments it may become necessary to occupy the Baltic States up to the border of the former Courland and to incorporate them in the Reich.

Germany cannot count on Hungary as a certain ally. Italy's attitude is determined by the Rome-Berlin Axis.

2. Military Conclusions

The great objectives in the reconstruction of the German Wehrmacht will continue to be determined by the antagonism of the Western Democracies. "Case White" constitutes only a precautionary complement to these preparations. It is not to be looked upon in any way, however, as the necessary prerequisite for a military conflict with the Western opponents.

The isolation of Poland will be all the more easily maintained, even after the outbreak of hostilities, if we succeed in starting the war with sudden, heavy blows and in gaining rapid successes. The overall situation will require, however, that in all cases precautions be taken to safeguard the western frontier and the German North Sea coast, as well as the air above them. Against

the Baltic States—Lithuania in particular—security measures are to be carried out in case of a Polish march through this country.

3. Tasks of the Wehrmacht

The task of the Wehrmacht is to destroy the Polish Armed Forces. To this end a surprise attack is to be aimed at and prepared. Camouflaged or open general mobilization will not be ordered earlier than the day before the attack and at the latest possible moment.

The forces provided for “Frontier Security West” (*Grenzsicherung West*), section I, “Frontier Security” must not be employed for the time being for any other purpose.

All other frontiers are to be kept under observation only; the Lithuanian frontier is to be covered.

4. Tasks for the Branches of the Wehrmacht

a) Army

The operational objective in the East is the annihilation of the Polish Army. For this purpose the German Wehrmacht, on the southern flank, may enter Slovak territory. On the northern flank, communication between Pomerania and East Prussia must be established quickly.

The preparations for the opening of operations are to be made in such a way that, even without waiting for the planned deployment of mobilized units, positions can be taken up by the troops immediately available. A camouflaged assembly of these units just before the day of attack may be provided. I reserve for myself the decision in this matter.

Whether the forces provided for “Frontier Security West” will be deployed there in their entirety, or whether part of them will be available for some other employment, will depend upon the political situation.

b) Navy

The tasks of the Navy in the Baltic Sea are as follows:

1) Destruction and/or elimination of the Polish Naval Forces.

2) Blockade of all sea-lanes to the Polish naval bases, especially Gdynia. The neutral shipping in Polish harbors and in Danzig is to be given a time limit for sailing at the beginning of the invasion of Poland. After its expiry, the Navy will be free to take blockade measures. The disadvantages for the conduct of naval warfare caused by this time limit must be accepted.

3) Suppression of Polish maritime trade.

4) Securing of the sea-route between the Reich and East Prussia.

5) Protection of German sea-communications to Sweden and the Baltic States.

6) Reconnaissance and protection, as far as possible in an inconspicuous manner, against intervention by the Soviet Navy from the Gulf of Finland. Suitable naval forces are to be provided for defense of the North Sea coast and its approaches. In the southern part of the North Sea and in the Skagerrak such measures are to be taken as are deemed advisable as precautions against surprise intervention in the conflict by the Western Powers.

These measures are to be restricted to the absolute minimum. Their inconspicuousness must be assured. It is of decisive importance to avoid here any sort of action which might aggravate the political attitude of the Western Powers.

c) Luftwaffe

The Luftwaffe, except for necessary forces left in the West, is to be used for a surprise attack on Poland. Besides destruction of the Polish Air Force in the shortest time possible, the tasks of the German Luftwaffe are principally as follows:

1) Interference with Polish mobilization and prevention of planned strategic concentrations by the Polish Army.

2) Direct support of the Army, especially support of the spearheads starting immediately after the crossing of the frontier. A possible transfer of air units to East Prussia, before the beginning of operations, must not endanger the element of surprise.

The first crossing of the frontier by air is to be synchronized with the operations of the Army. Attacks against the harbor of Gdynia may be undertaken only after the expiry of the sailing period for neutral ships (see number 4b). Strong points of air defense are to be set up above Stettin, Berlin and the Upper Silesian industrial district including Moravian Ostrava and Brno.

Enclosure III

Taking Possession of Danzig

Surprise occupation of the Free State of Danzig may become possible independently of "Case White" by exploiting a favorable political situation.

The preparations are to be made on the following basis:

The "Division of Power Command in East Prussia in case of hostilities" (see Enclosure IV) will be put into effect according to paragraph 3.

Occupation by the Army will be carried out from East Prussia.

The Navy will support the action of the Army by intervention from the sea, according to detailed orders by the Commander in Chief of the Navy. The naval forces involved are to be instructed to cooperate with the Army.

The extent to which the Luftwaffe units can participate in the occupation will be decided by the Reich Air Minister and Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe.

Details on cooperation are to be settled directly between the branches of the Wehrmacht.

The "Special Orders" attached to "Case White" added—under Section 1 ("Legal Bases")—that "it is to be assumed that a state of defense or state of war as defined in the Reich Defense Law of September 4, 1938⁴⁰², will not be declared. All actions and requirements connected with the implementation of mobilization are to be based on peacetime legislation. The provisions of the Hague Convention on Land Warfare will similarly apply." Therefore, one particularly remarkable feature of this directive was Hitler's intent of opening hostilities against Poland without issuing any declaration of war. He was soon to realize this ambition. A similar propensity had already been evident in the prelude to the assault on Czechoslovakia a year

earlier. Nevertheless, this departure from the accepted practices of war found its first unequivocal expression in the directive of April 11, 1939.

The fact that Germany and Japan resorted to this behavior on various occasions during the Second World War was tantamount to a return to barbarism. Though it was not until the 19th century that international conventions sought to regulate and humanize warfare,⁴⁰³ a formal declaration of war prior to the outbreak of hostilities was prescribed even in the so-called "Dark Ages." While war was regarded as an acceptable means of resolving conflict in general within the German Reich then, a formal announcement of the anticipated clash was an undisputed prerequisite to ensuring the legal acceptance of the steps taken.

On April 11, Hitler awarded retired Colonel General Haselmayr the title of SA Obergruppenführer on the occasion of the old NSDAP fighting comrade's sixtieth birthday.⁴⁰⁴ In addition, Hitler sent Haselmayr a painting depicting a battlefield scene.

On the same day, he expressed his condolences to the Deutsche Erdöl Company in Sachsen-Altenburg on the casualties sustained among its colliers in a tragic mining accident.⁴⁰⁵

Profoundly shaken by the news of the accident in the pit of the Deutsche Erdöl mine at Regis-Breitingen, I ask you to convey my sincere sympathies to the bereaved and my best wishes for the convalescence of the accident's survivors. I place a sum of RM 20,000 at the disposal of the concerned families as immediate assistance.

Adolf Hitler

Retreating to Berchtesgaden for the Easter holiday, Hitler tended to several of the Reich's internal affairs. There was the question of parliamentary representation in the Reichstag for the Germans living in the Memel territory and in other protectorates. Under no circumstances was Hitler willing to allow supplemental Reichstag elections in these areas, similar to those conducted on December 4, 1938 in the case of the Sudetenland. Nor did he desire a call for new elections in the entire Reich. On the one hand, he had always maintained that he would ask for the Volk's endorsement of his policies by means of annual plebiscites.⁴⁰⁶ On the other hand, he was well aware that public opinion was not partial to him at this point. Hence, he decided to proceed in a different manner, in utter disregard of the Constitution. In all likelihood, he regarded this measure as "a risk [he] had to take."⁴⁰⁷

He appointed several deputies to represent the German population in the newly acquired territories in the Reichstag, without obtaining the

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consent of the electorate. Oddly enough, the Reich Government had apparently relocated from Berlin to Berchtesgaden and consisted of only two persons (Hitler and Frick), when it promulgated the following laws:⁴⁰⁸

Law on the Representation in the Greater German Reichstag
of German Volksgenossen residing in the
Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

To grant German Volksgenossen who reside in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia proper representation in the Greater German Reichstag, the Reich Government has promulgated this law which is hereby made public:

§ 1

The number of deputies in the Greater German Reichstag elected on April 10 and December 4, 1938, shall be determined by dividing the total numbers of German Volksgenossen, who reside in the Protectorate as of March 16, 1939 and are at least twenty years of age, by a factor of 60,000.⁴⁰⁹

§ 2

In accordance with § 1 above, the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall appoint individuals to the Greater German Reichstag from among the German Volksgenossen who reside in these areas and are at least twenty-five years of age.

Berchtesgaden, April 13, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

Law on the Representation of the Memel Germans
in the Greater German Reichstag

To lend visible expression to the reunion of the Memel territory with the Greater German Reich, and grant the Memel Germans proper representation in the Greater German Reichstag, the Reich Government has promulgated the following law which is hereby made public:

§ 1

In accordance with the number of members of the German Volkstum, who reside in the Memel territory as of March 22, 1939 and are at least twenty years of age, two more deputies shall join the Greater German Reichstag elected on April 10 and December 4, 1938.

§ 2

In accordance with § 1 above, the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall appoint the deputies to the Greater German Reichstag.

Berchtesgaden, April 13, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

Three decrees issued in April, 1939 concerned the internal affairs of the National Socialist Party.⁴¹⁰ One established an NSDAP service award in three classes.⁴¹¹ A second ordinance introduced new insignia of rank and departmental badges for the Political Leaders. In accordance with this ordinance, it was possible to promote Ortsgruppenleiter and Kreisleiter up to five times. With each promotion, the official in question would receive new insignia of rank without actually moving on to a higher office. A third ordinance regarded the wearing of the new uniforms, overcharged with frills, which were intended to mirror the new style to which the Third Reich now aspired.

Hitler's ordinances once more revealed his fascination with the military and its ways. He greatly admired the discipline in the ranks, the blind obedience the superior could command. Hitler sought to instill these principles in the German people, who were supposed to look up to him. He was the Supreme Commander, whose authority was not to be questioned. He felt that only a strict hierarchical organization such as that of the armed forces would guarantee that the will of Adolf Hitler would indeed be implemented without lengthy debate. Despite his efforts, Hitler feared he had not yet obtained this blind submission to his ideals even within the confines of the Party. This greatly irritated him and prompted him to draw up numerous similar pieces of legislation.

On April 14, Hitler established a medal for German participants in the Spanish Civil War.⁴¹² From a legal point of view, such participation ought to have resulted in the distribution of arrest warrants instead of awards. After all, the law of February 18, 1937 stipulated that all German citizens interfering in this internal affair of the Spanish state were liable to criminal prosecution. Even those merely implicated in the matter, say by recruiting Germans to serve as mercenaries in the civil war, risked legal action and possible imprisonment.⁴¹³ The Cross of Spain, and the badges awarded to soldiers wounded in Spain, were remarkable in the sense that these were the first awards Hitler designed especially for veterans.

A preference for pins was already evident at this point. It would largely determine the design and manner of wearing medals during the Second World War. Given the sheer number of these pins—badges awarded to wounded soldiers, insignia, shields, clasps, etc. distributed for meritorious service on the battlefield—the front of most tunics no longer sufficed and hence some medals had to be worn on the sleeve. The immense pleasure Hitler derived from heaping countless medals

and awards on his subordinates strongly recalled Slavic, Oriental, or South American customs.

Also on April 14, Hitler signed the "Law on the Establishment of the Administration in the Ostmark."⁴¹⁴ It carved up Austria into several Reichsgaus, administrative districts within the Reich. Obviously, any lingering memory of Austria's existence as an independent political entity was to be swept into oblivion. Even the provinces of Upper and Lower Austria received new names and henceforth were to be referred to as the provinces of the "Upper and Lower Danube." Vienna became a Reichsgau in its own right, thus receiving the same legal status as the other former Austrian provinces. Hitler's administrative reform in Austria was of a far more radical nature than in the Old Reich. The former Länder largely retained their historic boundaries and were not affected by the administrative restructuring. The insistence on this in the case of Austria revealed Hitler's persistent fear that the country's inhabitants felt apprehensive about the Anschluss that they possibly did not feel the affinity for the Reich necessary to become an integral part of it, if left to their own devices. Thus, Hitler decided to give them constant reminders that they formed part of the Reich.

Hitler was busily restructuring Austria's administration in Berchtesgaden, when news of a new statement by Chamberlain reached him. Speaking before the House of Commons on April 13, Chamberlain announced that Great Britain had issued unilateral guarantees to Rumania and Greece in the event that the independence of these states was endangered. This was the British response both to the German-Rumanian economic agreement of March 24⁴¹⁵ and to Italy's move against Albania on April 7. Chamberlain added that those governments which were closely allied to Greece, in particular the Turkish Government, would be informed separately of the guarantee.⁴¹⁶

The structure of the alliance systems was emerging. Few states remained which were willing to side with Germany and the Axis. Although Hitler held Germany's allies in the First World War in great disdain, the failure of his coveted alliance with Britain forced him to reconsider. Now his only recourse was the Balkan states and Turkey, that "junk" (*Gerümpel*), as he had called them in *Mein Kampf*.⁴¹⁷

4

On April 15, Hitler sent a delegation to Teheran to represent Germany at the wedding of the Iranian Crown Prince, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi,⁴¹⁸ with the Egyptian Princess Fawzieh.⁴¹⁹ Later that day, Hitler received another blow from the Western Powers. The President of the United States addressed this message to Hitler on April 15:⁴²⁰

Washington, April 15, 1939

His Excellency Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of the German Reich, Berlin

You realize, I am sure, that throughout the world hundreds of millions of human beings are living today in constant fear of a new war or even a series of wars. The existence of this fear and the possibility of such a conflict is of definite concern to the people of the United States, for whom I speak, as it must also be to the peoples of the other nations of the entire western hemisphere. All of them know that any major war, even if it were to be confined to other continents, must bear heavily on them during its continuance and also for generations to come. Because of the fact that after the acute tension in which the world has been living during the past few weeks there would seem to be at least a momentary relaxation because no troops are at this moment on the march, this may be an opportune moment for me to send you this message.

On a previous occasion⁴²¹ I have addressed you on behalf of the settlement of political, economic and social problems by peaceful methods and without resort to war but the tide of events seems to have reverted to the threat of arms. If such threats continue, it seems inevitable that much of the world must become involved in common ruin. All the world, victor nations, vanquished nations, and neutral nations will suffer. I refuse to believe that the world is of necessity such a prisoner of destiny. On the contrary it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their peoples from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended. It is, however, unfortunately necessary to take cognizance of recent facts. Three nations in Europe and one in Africa have seen their independent existence terminated. A vast territory in another independent nation of the Far East has

been occupied by a neighboring state. Reports, which we trust are not true, insist that further acts of aggression are contemplated against still other independent nations. Plainly the world is moving towards the moment when this situation must end in catastrophe unless a more rational way of guiding events is found. You have repeatedly asserted that you and the German people have no desire for war. If this is true there need be no war. Nothing can persuade the peoples of the earth that any governing power has any right or need to inflict the consequences of war on its own or any other people save in the cause of self-evident home defense.

In making this statement we, as Americans, speak not through selfishness or fear or weakness. If we speak now it is with the voice of strength and with friendship for mankind. It is still clear to me that international problems can be solved at the Council table. It is therefore no answer to the plea for peaceful discussions for one side to plead that unless they receive assurances beforehand that the verdict will be theirs they will not lay aside their arms. In Conference rooms as in Courts it is necessary that both sides enter upon the discussion in good faith assuming that substantial justice will accrue to both and it is customary and necessary that they leave their arms outside the room where they confer.

I am convinced that the cause of world peace would be greatly advanced if the nations of the world were to obtain a frank statement relating to the present and future policy of Governments. Because the United States, as one of the nations of the western hemisphere, is not involved in the immediate controversies which have arisen in Europe, I trust that you may be willing to make such a statement of policy to me as the head of a nation far removed from Europe in order that I, acting only with the responsibility and obligation of a friendly intermediary, may communicate such declaration to other nations now apprehensive as to the course which the policy of your Government may take.

Are you willing to give assurance that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory or possessions of the following independent nations:⁴²² Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, the Arabias, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Iran? Such an assurance clearly must apply not only to the present day but also to a future sufficiently long to give every opportunity to work by peaceful methods for a more permanent peace.

I therefore suggest that you construe the word 'future' to apply to a minimum period of assured non-aggression, ten years at the least, a quarter of a century if we are to look that far ahead. If such assurance is given by your Government I will immediately transmit it to the Governments of the nations I have named and I will simultaneously enquire whether, as I am reasonably sure, each of the nations enumerated above will in turn give like assurance, for transmission to you.

Reciprocal assurances such as I have outlined will bring to the world an immediate measure of relief. I propose that, if it is given, two essential

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problems shall promptly be discussed in the resulting peaceful surroundings and in those discussions the Government of the United States will gladly take part. The discussions which I have in mind relate to the most effective and immediate manner through which the peoples of the world can obtain progressive relief from the crushing burden of armament which is each day bringing them more closely to the brink of economic disaster. Simultaneously the Government of the United States would be prepared to take part in discussions looking towards the most practical manner of opening up avenues of international trade to the end that every nation of the earth may be enabled to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market as well as to possess assurance of obtaining the materials and products of peaceful economic life.

At the same time those Governments other than the United States which are directly interested could undertake such political discussion as they may consider necessary or desirable. We recognize complex world problems which affect all humanity but we know that study and discussion of them must be held in an atmosphere of peace. Such an atmosphere of peace cannot exist if negotiations are overshadowed by the threat of force or by the fear of war.

I think you will not misunderstand the spirit of frankness in which I send you this message. Heads of great Governments in this hour are literally responsible for the fate of humanity in the coming years. They cannot fail to hear the prayers of their peoples to be protected from the foreseeable chaos of war. History will hold them accountable for the lives and the happiness of all even unto the last.

I hope that your answer will make it possible for humanity to lose fear and regain security for many years to come.

A similar message is being addressed to the Chief of the Italian Government.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

This letter represented Roosevelt's reaction to the preceding weeks' events in Czechoslovakia and the Balkans. Moreover, it was also a reply to Hitler's speech in Wilhelmshaven,⁴²³ where he had attempted to justify his advances to the East by reference to "ancient German right," the history of the thousand-year Reich, and the role played by German kings and architects in the building of Prague. This speech had provoked Roosevelt's adjuration, which encompassed nearly all European states, as well as those which had established themselves on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. These had a long history of relations with Germany, which they had maintained even during the First World War.

Roosevelt's telegram was tantamount to an admonition that should Great Britain be drawn into a war with Germany, the United States might well engage in the fighting also. While remonstrating with Hitler,

Roosevelt expressed the uncompromising solidarity of the English-speaking nations, and this was reinforced by a note published three days later in London. In concert with Roosevelt's telegram, Buckingham Palace announced on April 18⁴²⁴ that the King and Queen of the United Kingdom would officially pay a visit to the White House from June 7 to June 11.

Hitler failed to comprehend the true import of Roosevelt's telegram. He was convinced that it was merely a diplomatic bluff, designed to rouse public opinion in Germany against him. This was precisely how he had assessed Wilson's Fourteen Points many years earlier.

Most revealing, too, was the headline of the *Völkischer Beobachter* on the pending publication of the telegram: "The 'message' of the US President—an infamous attempt at deception of the public *à la* Wilson."

Hitler resolved to parry such an impudent maneuver by replying in a rhetorical masterpiece of even greater length than the original. Wilson had once preached Fourteen Points; Hitler would now catapult twenty-one points at Roosevelt.

At once, he had the following official note published on the matter:⁴²⁵

The American President has addressed a telegram to the Führer with the request that he might indicate his stance on certain issues. The Führer has deemed this matter of paramount importance and has therefore resolved to respond to the American President on behalf of the German Volk, before the forum of the Reichstag. He has thus called on the German Reichstag to convene on April 28 to bear witness to the delivery of this declaration.

Before the announced speech, Germany's diplomatic missions abroad received instructions to counter Roosevelt's "infamous" propaganda campaign. Immediately, Hitler extended diplomatic feelers to the smaller nations listed to investigate whether these states had granted Roosevelt license to speak in their name.⁴²⁶ Despite negative replies hastily issued in most of the capital cities enumerated, he remained insistent on the conclusion of several bilateral non-aggression pacts. He was less than satisfied with the results: only Denmark, Latvia, and Estonia were willing to enter into such agreements with Germany. Norway, Sweden, and Finland declined Hitler's offer to his great displeasure.⁴²⁷

On April 17, Hitler inspected troops in Austria, confident of his diplomatic initiatives.⁴²⁸ At 10:00 a.m., he appeared at the post command in St. Pölten, proceeded to the pioneer training camp at

Krems, and then to the garrisons stationed at Stockerau and Strebersdorf. Having reviewed “each and every man,” as he claimed, Hitler delivered a number of addresses before officers serving in Austria. In the course of these, he promoted the Commander in Chief of the Fifth Army Group, General List, to the rank of Colonel General. After the inspection, Hitler issued the following order of the day:⁴²⁹

Soldiers of the Ostmark!

It was with great pride and joy that I was able to personally convince myself earlier today, inspecting a series of garrisons, of the high quality of your training. I was able to ascertain the assiduity, insight, and earnestness on the part of the trainers, and the great dedication of the recruits in the fulfillment of their honorary service to Volk and Fatherland.

Adolf Hitler

On April 17, Hitler summoned his former “special envoy” to Austria, Franz von Papen, to Berlin. Von Papen had completely withdrawn to private life after his unanticipated dismissal from his post in Vienna. Nevertheless, he stood ready to return to the political stage when the Führer required his services. And this was the case, indeed. The combined activities of Chamberlain and Roosevelt in recent days had cornered Hitler and had placed great strain on Germany diplomatically. Though Hitler thought little of Turkey,⁴³⁰ he wished nevertheless to preclude its siding with the Anglo-Saxon Powers. Thus he resolved to send von Papen as special envoy to Ankara, as von Papen had served as Chief of the General Staff with Liman Sander’s Fourth Ottoman Army in the First World War. Hitler was confident that von Papen’s connections and diplomatic astuteness would lure Turkey back into Germany’s camp. However, the Führer’s hopes proved vain, as times had changed considerably since 1914.⁴³¹

The following communiqué was published on von Papen’s appointment and on his meeting with Hitler:⁴³²

Acting on a proposal advanced by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer appointed Franz von Papen Ambassador to Ankara. On Monday afternoon [April 17], the Führer bade the newly appointed Ambassador farewell and wished Herr von Papen success in his future work in Turkey.

In reference to von Papen’s performance in the First World War, the *Völkischer Beobachter* called him “the deliverer of Turkey in the most difficult of times,” and added that von Papen’s appointment to Ankara mirrored “the great importance the Führer assigns to a continuation of friendly relations between the young Reich and the

young Turkish State.” Given the troubles he was facing, Hitler naturally desired “friendly relations” with the Turkish Government. Whether this was a mutual wish remained questionable, however. Despite the diplomatic pressure exerted by Germany, Hitler was unable to secure any satisfactory commitment. All the Government in Ankara would concede was a tentative assurance of Turkey’s benign neutrality. This was applicable, of course, only as long as its relations with Germany did not present an accute threat to Turkey’s position itself. When Germany’s fortunes began to wane in the course of the Second World War, Turkey broke relations. And ultimately, when the Third Reich’s defeat was no longer in doubt, it declared war on Germany in the spring of 1945.⁴³³

On April 17, von Massow,⁴³⁴ a retired Major General and SS Brigadeführer, celebrated his seventieth birthday. Hitler sent him the following telegram:⁴³⁵

In grateful appreciation of your services to the German Volk in times of war and peace, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on your seventieth birthday today.

Adolf Hitler

On April 19, the Rumanian Foreign Minister Gafencu called on Hitler at the new Chancellery. The Rumanian Ambassador in Berlin, Radu Crutzescu, and Ribbentrop accompanied him to the reception.⁴³⁶ The official occasion was Hitler’s upcoming fiftieth birthday. The German-Rumanian economic agreement reinforced Rumania’s position as a German “satellite.” However, Rumania had accepted the British offer of a guarantee the week before. Would not Hitler see this as a plain desertion from the German ranks?

To dispel any such notions, the Rumanian Foreign Minister detailed his country’s position. Rumania had concluded the economic agreement with Germany in order to “strengthen peace” and in this same spirit his government had accepted the British guarantee. Certainly, the Führer would have liked a Rumanian rejection of the British declaration decidedly better. Notwithstanding his annoyance, he realized that Germany’s reliance on Rumanian crude oil and other raw materials essential to a wartime economy was too great to allow for discord in this precarious situation.

Such were apparently his considerations as he lectured Gafencu for over two hours on the general political situation, beginning with a series of compliments to the Rumanians, while persistently finding fault with the Hungarians. Despite his great generosity, the Hungarians

had repeatedly proven themselves to be a most ungrateful people. The German minority in Romania⁴³⁷ had absolutely no desire to return to Hungary; rather, Hitler argued, they felt most at home in the new confederation to which they now belonged. Indeed, had the Führer had any say in the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, he would have resolved the nationality problem by simply allocating to each people its own state: the Poles would have had a Poland, the Serbs a Serbia, the Romanians a Romania, and the Germans a Germany.

Romania had nothing to fear as far as he was concerned, so Hitler claimed, provided that the British guarantee remained a unilateral affair, i.e. that the treaty was not extended to a mutual assistance pact as had happened with Poland. At this point, Hitler apparently believed the time had come to speak on less genial topics. It appears as though he was rehearsing for his speech before the Reichstag and regarded the meeting with the Romanian Ambassador as a mere dress rehearsal.⁴³⁸ Moreover, Hitler knew that Gafencu planned to leave for London shortly. Without doubt, Hitler hoped that Gafencu's vivid report of the German dictator's outrage and threats would intimidate the British.

On the topic of Poland, Hitler declared: "Beck's mistake was to go to London [instead of to Berlin]. It is beyond me what could have provoked this change in the Poles' attitude. It could prove a fateful one for Poland." Gafencu next had to listen to the same tirades which the Reichstag would hear on April 28.⁴³⁹ Again Hitler expounded the unparalleled obliging tone of his earlier proposals and of his friendly advances to Warsaw. He added: "As regards the Danzig question, it has to be resolved shortly—and it will be resolved, no matter what political schemes a certain Herr Beck concocts!"

Precisely as in the later Reichstag address, this remark was followed by a long list of sacrifices which Hitler claimed to have made to France (the cession of Alsace-Lorraine), Italy (Southern Tirol), Yugoslavia, Romania, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland. Convinced that this lent credence to the conciliatory nature of his arguments and designs, Hitler put forth the rhetorical question: "Why should we once again make precisely the same mistakes we made in 1914?"⁴⁴⁰

Finally, Hitler addressed the topic of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia. He maintained that it simply had not been possible to ensure the independence of this state because, for one thing, Hungary had clamored for Ruthenia and, for another, the Slovaks had been determined to secede. Hitler then came to speak of the

impudence of the British, who stubbornly refused to issue him a *carte blanche* for his designs in Eastern Europe:

The English do not comprehend. Instead of seeking an understanding with us, they insist on getting in our way. They are looking for a quarrel. They cannot reconcile themselves to our political might. They oppose our economic development. They are searching for allies against us everywhere. They seek to undercut our influence. They have embarked on a campaign of hatred. They are preparing for a general war and are already trying to burden us with the responsibility for it.

What is it they accuse us of? We desire nothing that is not rightfully ours. We want our colonies back, we need them.⁴⁴¹ We need them for our economy and for our feeling of greatness and honor. We desire England, whose empire we respect, to respect our sphere of influence in turn, and the areas of vital interest to us.

Again his words revealed how firmly he clung to his old convictions of 1919: In Germany's struggle for new *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe, Great Britain would assuredly lend its support to the Reich. England would constitute Germany's only "potential ally" in this quest. And this the "senile" British statesmen regrettably failed to "comprehend." Hitler grew increasingly irate as he spoke, raising his voice, shouting, and raging against the British. After all, he hoped that the Rumanian Foreign Minister would inform London of how serious the situation was, how determined the Führer was, and what a terrible fate awaited Britain, if it failed to heed Hitler's timely warnings.

Well, if England really wants this war, then it shall have it. But it will not be an easy war, as the British apparently imagine it will be.⁴⁴² It will not be a war of the old kind. England will no longer have the entire world on its side. At least [!] half of the world will be with us. It will be a war of destruction (*Zerstörungskrieg*), as no imagination however vivid can yet envision. By the way, how can England believe it will be able to conduct a modern war if it cannot even muster two armored divisions at any one front?⁴⁴³

As far as we are concerned, our misfortunes have rendered us a great service in the end: we shall fight with different weapons than in 1914! We will act mercilessly and ruthlessly. Never before were we as powerful as we are today.

The ingenuity of our technicians, of our engineers, and of our chemists complements the invincibility of our armies. The world will stand in awe of our resources and our inventions.⁴⁴⁴ And on what are they counting to stand up to us? On their air forces? Perhaps they shall be able to bomb a few of our cities, but how can they dare compete with us?

Our *Luftwaffe* is the best in the world, and no enemy city will remain standing!

Having boasted enough about Germany's military might, Hitler once more conjured up the specter of international Bolshevism. This enemy of the civilized world had always served him well with the German Nationalists. It was inconceivable for Hitler that a similar tactic would fail to intimidate the British.

And for what this unthinkable massacre? In the end all of us, victor and vanquished alike, will lie buried beneath the same rubble, and there will be only one who will benefit from it—the one in Moscow.

And who should ever have imagined that it would be I, of all people, who would be forced to envision a like conflict? It was I who repeatedly was faulted in Germany for being too incorrigible an admirer of the British Empire; who so frequently sought to bring about a lasting understanding between the Reich and England, an understanding which I still consider vital to the defense of European culture even today! And to be blamed for all of this is solely the unreasonableness and obstinate blindness of the leaders of Great Britain!

In Hitler's eyes, the leading British statesmen truly suffered from "blindness," as they failed to see the obvious benefits of an alliance with Germany. Apparently, they were as reluctant to share the world with Hitler as they had been opposed to sharing it with William II.⁴⁴⁵ And this Hitler failed to see.

Once Gafencu had left, Hitler began to prepare for the countless activities and festivities which were to span the days of April 19 and April 20, marking Hitler's fiftieth birthday.⁴⁴⁶ In the afternoon, the first guests to congratulate him called: Ludwig Sieber, the Bavarian Minister President; Adolf Wagner, State Minister and Gauleiter; and the Mayor of Munich, Reichsleiter Fiehler.

The reception in the Mosaic Room at the new Chancellery for graduates of the SS Junkerschule Brunswick began at 5:00 p.m. On finishing their training courses, the recruits were automatically promoted to the rank of Untersturmführer (lieutenant) of the Waffen SS. Graciously, Hitler allowed them to admire the building which cadet officers had been asked to tour earlier. Hitler could naturally not resist delivering another speech on this occasion. Afterwards, Hitler had Himmler and SS Gruppenführer Schmidt, the inspector of the SS Junkerschulen, introduce him personally to every young man, whose pledge of loyalty he accepted at this time.

Since 1933,⁴⁴⁷ Hitler had proceeded in this manner at the swearing-in of recruits for the various armed SS contingents which took place at the Feldherrnhalle in Munich on November 9 of every year. Their numbers had swelled so considerably in the interim that Hitler could

personally attend only to the oath of loyalty of the more high-ranking officers.⁴⁴⁸

At 7:00 p.m., Hess led in a group of 1,600 Political Leaders who presented the Führer with a collection of fifty original letters by Frederick the Great. Hitler thanked them in a short address, culminating in the following proclamation: "May the iron determination of this Movement constitute our age's legacy to the nation for all time to come!"

At 8:00 p.m., survivors of the 1923 Putsch and bearers of the Blood Order filled the Chancellery's Marble Gallery to congratulate the Führer on his birthday. One hour later, Hitler's car passed along the recently finished seven-kilometer stretch of the Tiergartenstrasse which now complemented the so-called "East-West Axis" through the city. After Hitler arrived at the Hindenburgplatz at 9:15 p.m., General Building Inspector Speer duly reported the completion of the project. Hitler thanked him, the city's mayor, and all workers involved for its speedy realization and declared the street officially open for traffic.

At 10:00 p.m., the tattoo was sounded at the Wilhelmsplatz, and a parade of troops crossed the square in front of the Chancellery. A torchlight procession of the Old Guard moved through Berlin's streets only thirty-five minutes later. Subdivided into twenty-one parade formations, the men filed by in front of Hitler at the Wilhelmstrasse. Significantly, there were guards of honor from Danzig [!] among them, as well as from other Gaus. At 11:00 p.m., the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler* sang their namesake a birthday song in the courtyard of the new Chancellery. At midnight, Hitler's entourage extended their personal best wishes to the Führer. Afterwards, Hitler stepped out on the Chancellery's balcony to show himself to the crowd below.

On Hitler's actual birthday, celebrations began at 8:00 a.m. in the garden of the old Chancellery where the Leibstandarte's band played for Hitler. An hour later, the entire SS Leibstandarte paraded by, accompanied by a storm unit of the SS *Totenkopfverbände* (Death's Head Units) and a battalion of the Schutzpolizei.

Twenty minutes later, the Papal Nuncio Monsignor Orsenigo congratulated Hitler in the name of the Diplomatic Corps. Five minutes later, Reich Protector von Neurath appeared to present his best wishes along with State President Hácha. Another five minutes later, Tiso and the Slovak Foreign Minister Durcansky followed in their footsteps. At 9:45 a.m., Hitler received individual Cabinet members to accept their

congratulations. At 10:00 a.m., the heads of the Wehrmacht called on Hitler to congratulate him: Göring, Raeder, Brauchitsch, and Keitel. Hitler expressed his thanks to each of them in the form of a short address.

The Mayor and City President of Berlin, Lippert, came to extend his best wishes about ten minutes later. The next ten minutes in Hitler's schedule were reserved for Gauleiter Albert Forster, who presented Hitler with a letter conferring on him honorary citizenship of the Free City of Danzig. The document had been designed by the Munich Professor Richard Klein and bore the following inscription:⁴⁴⁹

With the consent of its citizens, the Senate of the Free City of Danzig has bestowed upon Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Volk, the freedom of the city, in ineradicable gratitude for his work at the service of the moral and *völkisch* renewal of the German Volk, and as a symbol of the close bonds of blood which tie Danzig to the German Volk.

In testimony thereof,

Danzig, April 20, 1939

The Senate of the Free City of Danzig

The letter strikingly resembled the contents of the document conferring on Hitler the honorary citizenship of Saarbrücken on May 1, 1934,⁴⁵⁰ only a few months before the Saarland was reunited with the Reich. The Saar returned to the Reich under international supervision. In the case of Danzig, Hitler had either to desist or to resort to war to secure the Free City.

The military parade across the Wilhelmsplatz began at 11:00 a.m. It moved along the newly constructed "East-West Axis." The rostrum for Hitler and the guests of honor had been erected in front of the Technical University of Berlin. Special seats of honor stood on top, reserved for the Czech State President Hácha and the Slovak Minister-President Tiso. Given the embarrassingly sparsely populated stage, there was an attempt, nearly by force, to seat the Rumanian Foreign Minister Gafencu there as well, in spite of his declared opposition to this plan.⁴⁵¹ Gafencu feigned illness, so that Hitler's assistants finally reconciled themselves to his being seated with the Diplomatic Corps, as inconspicuously as planned initially.

The absence of the British, French, and American Ambassadors, however, was not easily concealed, as it was public knowledge that the representatives of these countries had been withdrawn to protest against Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia. Only the British Chargé d'Affaires was present at the official ceremony. While the Polish Ambassador Lipski was in attendance, Poland had not dispatched a

special delegation to the birthday celebration as had Hitler's other "friends" (Italy, Japan, Spain, and several of the Balkan states). During a four-hour défilé of troops, the birthday parade displayed Germany's military might for the benefit of Hitler, naturally, and the representatives of smaller countries.

At 4:00 p.m., the Berlin Sängerbund assembled on the Wilhelmsplatz to sing several folk songs in honor of Hitler's birthday. About one hour later, delegations from Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria were allowed to convey their congratulations. Thereafter, Hitler invited all members of the various foreign delegations to the Chancellery for tea where they were joined by numerous generals, Reich Ministers, and NSDAP Reichsleiters.

At 6:30 p.m., a delegation representing various German ethnic groups living abroad congratulated Hitler in the name of their constituency: von Hassebeck, the organization's Secretary General; Fabricius, a retired Cavalry Captain; and SS Obergruppenführer Lorenz. Albert Speer headed the next delegation to call on Hitler, one comprising artists such as von Arendt, Breker, Giesler, Gradl, Kreis, Thorak, and Ziegler.

The following information was published regarding the congratulatory telegrams wired to Berlin on this April 20, 1939:⁴⁵²

On the occasion of his fiftieth birthday, a multitude of foreign heads of state and heads of government forwarded cordial congratulatory telegrams to the Führer. From Italy, telegrams were received from King Victor Emmanuel III; Mussolini; the Marshals Balbo and Graziani; Count Ciano; and many other prominent figures. Further congratulatory telegrams were wired by: the Emperor of Japan; the Kings of Great Britain, Bulgaria, Rumania, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Egypt, and Afghanistan; the Emperor of Manchukuo; the Queen of the Netherlands; the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg; the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia; the Regent of Iraq; the Regent's Counsel of Siam; further the Hungarian Regent von Horthy and the Hungarian Minister-President Teleki; General Franco; the Presidents of Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Turkey, China, and Bolivia; the Prince of Liechtenstein; the former King Ferdinand of Bulgaria and its former Minister-President Stojadinovic.

Of the customary responses to these congratulations, only two were published: one to the Italian King Victor Emmanuel and the other to Mussolini.⁴⁵³

I ask Your Majesty to accept this most cordial expression of my gratitude for the kind congratulations on my birthday, which sincerely delighted me.

Adolf Hitler

April 20, 1939

I thank you for your kindly remembrance of my birthday, Duce, and for your heartfelt words. With this expression of gratitude, I wish to associate a renewed assurance of my unshakeable attachment to you and to Fascist Italy, which you have created, as well as my best regards,

Adolf Hitler

In the following official statement, Hitler gave thanks for the wishes extended by both Germans living in the Reich and by members of “the German Volkstum abroad.”⁴⁵⁴

On my fiftieth birthday, I have received countless congratulatory messages and other signs of remembrance from all walks of life of the German Volk and members of the German Volkstum abroad. Since it is absolutely impossible to reply to these individually, I ask my Volksgenossen to accept this expression of my sincere gratitude to all those who remembered me on this day.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler established a “special edition of the merit badge of the German Eagle”⁴⁵⁵ to add to his enjoyment of the birthday celebration. The Great Cross of the German Eagle could now be awarded in gold as well. The number of recipients was to be restricted to sixteen. One sentence in the charter was rather peculiar: “For military services rendered, the ‘merit badge of the German Eagle with swords’ will be awarded.”

The net result of the birthday celebrations was a meager one. Aside from the customary appearances and congratulations by foreign dignitaries, only a few of the Balkan states, Italy, Japan, and Spain had proven willing to still stand by Hitler. The Great Powers and the neutral states had displayed marked restraint. Moreover, the four-hour military parade completely failed of its purpose. It had not created the impression desired with the Western Powers. Even had Hitler ordered the parade to last twice or thrice as long, this provocative display could only reinforce the Western Powers’ determination and add justification to their military countermeasures. Chamberlain announced the introduction of universal conscription to the United Kingdom on April 25, three days before Hitler’s Reichstag speech.

Reports in Germany’s print media revealed the embarrassing failure of the festivities. Given the conspicuous absence of any other laudations, bold-letter headlines were used to highlight an odd expert appraisal of the military displays. Its author was Lieutenant General With, the Commander in Chief of the Danish Armed Forces, a man unknown in Germany, who had distinguished himself merely as one of the few men favorably impressed by the parade.

In the meantime, Hitler continued his inspections of military installations, reviewing troops at the Infantry Training School and Döberitz Air Base on April 22.⁴⁵⁶

On April 26, Hitler received the Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Cincar-Markovich at the Chancellery. Reportedly, the “friendly discussions” had served to “deepen and underscore the sincere friendship which has bound both states for many years already.”⁴⁵⁷ In the evening, Hitler visited Hess at his private apartment to congratulate him on his forty-fifth birthday.⁴⁵⁸

On April 27, Hitler wired his congratulations to Professor Messerschmitt, who had set a new record with the ‘ME 109’ fighter plane. It had attained a speed of 755.11 km per hour.⁴⁵⁹

At noon on April 28, Hitler finally held the long awaited speech before the Reichstag. Given its undeniable importance for the foreign policy both states would have to conduct in the future, Great Britain and France returned their ambassadors to Berlin on this special occasion.⁴⁶⁰ Both governments had recalled their representatives on March 17/18 in protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. By contrast, the United States, which had already severed diplomatic ties to Berlin in the aftermath of the Crystal Night the year before, did not send any official emissaries to the German capital to attend the session of the Reichstag.

As mentioned earlier, Hitler had declared that his speech before the Reichstag would serve as a reply to Roosevelt’s message. In the beginning of his speech, it appeared as though he intended to come immediately to the point:⁴⁶¹

Deputies, Men of the Reichstag!

The President of the United States of America has addressed a telegram to me, whose peculiar contents you are aware of. Since, as the addressee of this document, I saw it only after the rest of the world had gained knowledge of it on the radio and in the press, and after countless commentators from international democratic institutions had kindly informed us that this telegram was a very adroit tactical paper which was to burden those states governed by the people with the responsibility for the aggression perpetrated by the plutocracies, I resolved to convene the German Reichstag to afford you, my Deputies, the opportunity—in your capacity as the elected representatives of the German nation—to be the first to hear my response which you may either confirm or reject.⁴⁶²

Beyond this, I thought it expedient to adopt the method employed by Herr President Roosevelt and, for my part, to proceed to inform the rest of the world of my answer by the means at our disposal. I should like equally to take

advantage of this occasion to express those sentiments which have deeply moved me in light of the stunning historic events of the month of March of this year.

These, my deepest sentiments, compel me to turn to Providence in humble gratitude, to thank it for calling on me, an unknown soldier in the World War, to rise to the heights of Führer of my dearly beloved Volk. Providence permitted me to find the appropriate path, one not smeared with blood, to free my Volk from misery and to lead it upward once again. Providence granted me the fulfillment of what I consider the mission of my life: to uplift the German Volk from its defeat; to free it from the shackles of this most shameful Diktat of all time!

Hitler's audience soon realized that, having summoned the aid of Providence, he had immediately digressed into a lengthy "party narrative." Wilson's Fourteen Points naturally occupied center stage: they had heralded "the darkest period of its national misfortunes" for the German Volk which bore guilt itself for this by allowing itself "a moment of weakness in placing faith in the promises of democratic statesmen."

Hitler then spoke of the "peaceful dictators of American and European origin." He portrayed his own policies as conciliatory ones, and pointed to Germany's good-neighborly relations with Yugoslavia, and to what he considered his eminently reasonable stance on the question of Alsace-Lorraine:

I have not, as France did in the years 1870–71, referred to the cession of Alsace-Lorraine as intolerable in the future. No, I carefully differentiated between the Saar territory and the two other former Reichsländer. And I have not revised my stance on the matter, nor will I revise it in the future. Not once have I allowed my views to be violated or questioned in the interior, either for the sake of publicity, or for any other reason. The return of the Saar has removed from the face of the earth all territorial disputes between France and Germany in Europe.

Nevertheless, I have always regretted that French statesmen take this, my stance, for granted. Things are not so simple. I have not preached this stance for fear of France. As a former soldier, I have no reason for such fear. Moreover, in the context of the Saar settlement, I have left no doubt that a refusal to return this territory to Germany was unacceptable to us. No, I have assumed this attitude towards France as an expression of my realization that it is necessary for Europe to find peace somehow, and that open, limitless demands for ever new [territorial] revisions would merely sow the seeds of lasting insecurity and tensions. If tensions have now arisen, Germany does not bear the responsibility for this. Instead, this is to be blamed on international elements intentionally promoting tensions to serve their capitalist interests.

I have extended binding assurances to a series of states. Not one of the states can lament so much as an insinuation by Germany of any demands in violation thereof. Not one Nordic statesman can claim, for instance, that either the German Reich Government or German public opinion forced on him an unreasonable request which was incompatible with the territorial integrity or the sovereignty of his state.

I was glad that a number of European states took advantage of the opportunity presented by the German Reich Government's declaration to express, in turn, their unequivocal willingness to espouse a stand of unconditional neutrality and hereby to strengthen this avowal. This is true of Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, and so on. I have already mentioned France. I need not mention Italy, as it is tied to us by bonds of a friendship both close and profound. Neither need I speak of Hungary or Yugoslavia, neighbors with whom we are fortunate to enjoy a heartfelt friendship.

By the same token, from the first moment I actively involved myself in politics, I have left no doubt that there do exist certain states of affairs which represent so base and crude an infringement on our Volk's right to self-determination, that we can never be expected to accept or tolerate these. I have not written a single line or a single speech in which I have ever expressed a stance contrary to the one indicated on the subject of the states mentioned before. Neither does there exist a single line or a single speech concerning other instances in which the stand I espoused was not retroactively confirmed by the actions I later took.

Soon it became apparent what "other instances" Hitler was referring to: Austria and Bohemia-Moravia. Hitler's claim that his actions by necessity always conformed to statements he had made earlier in this context ought to have been qualified to read "conformed to statements he chose to recall." In the case of truncated Czechoslovakia, Hitler completely ignored earlier assurances such as "we do not want any Czechs at all."

In this speech, Hitler once again repeated the accusations and precedents with which he had earlier justified Germany's legal claims to the Sudetenland, albeit with greater pertinence at that time than in the present case. Obviously he labored to create the impression that these legal claims applied equally to the elimination of the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

Hitler enumerated the following points:

First: Austria. This oldest Ostmark of the German Volk once shielded the Reich to its southeast, as the protective march of the German nation. The Germans who settled in these lands were recruited from among all German tribes, although it may well be true that the majority of them were Bavarians. Later this Ostmark became the seat of dynastic power of a German empire which lasted half a millennium, while Vienna became the capital city of the

German Reich. Already in gradual dissolution, this German Reich was finally shattered by the Corsican Napoleon. Still, it lived on in the framework of the German Union (*Deutscher Bund*). Although no longer sharing a common statehood, its people recently came together, in yearned-for *völkisch* unity, to fight and suffer side by side in the greatest war of all time, though not united in the form of a common statehood. I myself am the child of this Ostmark.

Not only did the criminals of Versailles hack this German Reich to pieces and dissolve Austria, what was worse they forbade the Germans to avow their allegiance to the one community to which Germans have belonged for more than one thousand years. To alter this state of affairs is a task I have always regarded as the most lofty and most hallowed of missions in my life. To proclaim this will is something I have never failed to do. I stand ready to realize this will at any time in my life; it is a thought that haunts me day and night.

I would have sinned against Providence's calling, if I had become a traitor to this endeavor to return my homeland and my German Volk of the Ostmark to the Reich, and thereby to the German Volksgemeinschaft. I have erased the most shameful page of the Versailles Treaty. I have restored the right of self-determination to seven-and-a-half million Germans. I have put an end to the persistent democratic rape of these seven-and-a-half million people. They were forbidden to take their destiny into their own hands—I have rescinded this prohibition. I have conducted this plebiscite before the eyes of history. Its results confirmed my expectations.

Those democratic rapists of the peoples (*Völkervergewaltiger*) conferring at Versailles had apparently shared them. Why else would they have forbidden a referendum on the Anschluss?

After this excursion into Germany's past, Hitler gave his listeners the following peculiar and highly questionable rendition of the history of Bohemia and Moravia.

When in the course of the migration of the peoples, German tribes for inexplicable reasons began to leave the area which today is Bohemia and Moravia, a foreign, Slavic people penetrated this area and drove a wedge between those Germans who had remained behind. Ever since, this people's Lebensraum was embraced by the German Volkstum in the form of a horseshoe. In economic terms, an independent existence of this area is conceivable only in connection with the German Volk and the German economy.

Besides this, nearly four million Germans live in the Bohemian and Moravian area. Pressure by the Czech majority has brought a policy of annihilation to bear, especially apparent since the Diktat of Versailles, but which has also been in part due to the economic situation and an increasing poverty, which, in turn, has led to an exodus of the German elements from the area. The numbers of the remaining Germans there dropped to approximately 3.7 million. While the fringes of this area are populated exclusively by Germans, there are several big islands of German speech in its interior.

The Czechs are a people alien to us, given their foreign heritage. Through a community formed over a thousand years, German influence has largely molded and fashioned their culture. Their economy is the result of affiliation with the greater German economy. At times, the capital of this area was a German Imperial city. It is home to the oldest German university. Numerous cathedrals, city halls, palaces of noblemen and burghers attest to Germany's cultural influences. Throughout the centuries, the Czech people have fashioned their relations to the German Volk now the more closely, now the more distantly. Closeness of relations leads to a bloom of both the German and the Czech peoples; separation to catastrophe.

The merit and value of the German Volk is known to us. The Czechs also deserve our respect for the sum of their skills and abilities, their enterprise and diligence, their love for their homeland and folklore.⁴⁶³ And, indeed, there were periods in which respect for each other's national conditions was considered most natural.

The credit for assigning to the Czech people the special role of a satellite state that can be set against Germany goes to the democratic architects of peace (*Friedensmacher*) at Versailles. To this end, they arbitrarily appropriated the possessions of other peoples to this state, not viable in its Czech ethnic core (*Volkssubstanz*). This meant that it was allowed to rape other nationalities in order to secure a state-financed latent threat to the German nation in Central Europe. For this state, whose so-called state people (*Staatsvolk*) was in the minority, could survive only due to the brutal oppression of its ethnic majorities. This oppression, in turn, was unthinkable unless the European democracies granted this state protection and assistance. This assistance would only be granted, however, if this state was willing to assume and play the role assigned to it at birth. To play this role meant preventing the consolidation of Central Europe constituting a bridge for Bolshevik aggression into Europe, and, above all, to serve as a mercenary for the European democracies' agitation against Germany. Everything else arose then of itself.

The more actively this state pursued its mission, the greater became the resistance of the ethnic minorities opposed to it. The greater the resistance, the greater the need for suppression. The resulting hardening of the inner antagonism led to an ever greater dependence on the democratic European founders of this state and its benefactors. For they alone were in a position to maintain economically the unnatural, artificial existence of this edifice.

Essentially, Germany primarily pursued only one interest, namely, to deliver the nearly four million Germans in this country from this unbearable situation, and to enable them to return to their homeland: the one-thousand year old Reich. Of course this problem brought up immediately the entire question of the remaining nationalities. That the removal of these nationalities would rob the remainder of this state of its viability was equally clear, as the founders of this state at Versailles had been only too aware. It was because of this that they decided on the suppression of the other minorities and their forced integration into this dilettantish state structure against their will.

Never have I left any doubt of this, my view and opinion. Certainly, as long as Germany itself was impotent and defenseless, this rape of nearly four

million Germans could take place without the Reich being able to mount any resistance to it. However, only a political tot could seriously believe that the German nation would forever remain in the state of the year 1919.

It was only as long as those international traitors, who were financed abroad, held the leadership of the German State that a patient acceptance of this shameful state of affairs could be expected. Ever since the victory of National Socialism forced these traitors to take up residence in those countries from where they received their subsidies, the resolution of this problem has become merely a question of time. And it was a question exclusively of the concerned nationalities, not of Western Europe. It was only natural that Western Europe should take an interest in the artificial state structure created in its interest. That the nationalities surrounding this state should consider this interest decisive for them was perhaps a regrettable fallacy for some. Insofar as this interest exclusively concerned the financial foundations of this state, no objections to this would have been voiced by Germany, had not this financial interest in the end been subservient to the power politics and ambitions of the democracies.

Even the financial sponsorship of this state served one central idea: to create a state, militarily armed to the teeth, with the task of forming a bastion reaching far into the Reich. There was no doubt of its value and the promise it held, either as a base for military operations in the context of Western incursions into the Reich or simply as an air base. A comment by the French Minister of Aviation, Pierre Cot, left no doubt of what was expected of this state. Calmly he spoke his mind, saying that it would be the task of this state, in the event of conflict, to serve as a port for arrival and departure for bombers. From there it would be possible to destroy the most important industrial centers in Germany within hours.⁴⁶⁴ Hence, it was only natural that the German state leadership, for its part, resolved to destroy this port of departure for bombers. It arrived at this decision not because of hatred for the Czech people. On the contrary, in the thousand years they have lived together, the German and the Czech peoples have enjoyed centuries of close cooperation, interrupted by only short periods of tension.

Admittedly, in such times of tension, the passions of the men fighting on the front lines of such ethnic conflicts may well dim their sense of justice and thus lead to a false assessment of the overall situation. This is a trait characteristic of any war. However, in the great epochs of understanding coexistence, both peoples have always agreed that each of them had an inalienable right—mutually—to the esteem and respect of its *Volkstum*.

Even in these years of struggle, I approached the Czech people not only in my capacity as the protector of the biased interests of his Volk and Reich, but also as one who never failed to respect the Czech people itself. One thing is certain, however: had the democratic midwives of this state been allowed to realize their ultimate goal, the German Reich would not have been eliminated, although, undoubtedly, we would also have had to take some losses. Rather the Czech people would in all likelihood have had to bear far more horrendous consequences, as regards its size and position. Indeed, I am convinced these consequences would have been catastrophic.

I am happy that we were able to prevent this catastrophe in Central Europe, albeit to the great irritation of democratic interests, thanks to the restraint we exercised and the insight of the Czech people. For the National Socialist German Reich grants its citizens from the start what the best and most insightful Czechs have fought for throughout the decades. It is the right to one's own Volkstum, the right to cultivate it and to enjoy it freely. National Socialist Germany has no intention whatever of renouncing the racial principles on which we pride ourselves. They will not only benefit the German, but also the Czech Volk. What we demand is respect for the historic necessity, for the economic predicament that confronts us all.

As I announced the solution of this problem on March 22, 1938⁴⁶⁵ before the Reichstag, I was convinced that I was attending to a Central European necessity. In March 1938, I still believed that we could resolve the minorities question in this state by a slow evolution and that, sooner or later, we would be able to assure a common platform by means of contractual cooperation, which would benefit the interests of all of us not only politically, but also economically.

It was only when Herr Beneš, by then completely in the hands of his international democratic financiers, added a military aspect to the problem and unleashed a wave of repressions on the Germans and simultaneously attempted the well-known mobilization to deal the German state a defeat internationally and to damage its prestige, that I finally realized that a solution in this manner was no longer possible. For the lie about a German mobilization at the time had obviously been inspired by foreign powers and proposed to the Czechs in order to deal a blow to the prestige of the German Reich.

I do not need to repeat once again that Germany had not mobilized a single man in May of last year. By contrast, all of us had been of the opinion that the fate of Herr Schuschnigg would induce others to seek an understanding, by means of a more just treatment of their national minorities. For my person, I had been prepared to undertake patiently such a peaceful evolution, if necessary, over a number of years.

However, it was precisely these peaceful intentions which represented a thorn in the side of the fomenters in the democracies. They hate us Germans and would much prefer to wipe us out completely. And, what are the Czechs to them? A means to an end! What interest do they have in the fate of such a brave little people? What do they care for the lives of a few hundred thousand brave soldiers who unwittingly became the victims of their politics?

These Western European fomenters of peace (*Friedenshetzer*) did not seek to promote peace, but to spill blood. And this bloodshed did enable them to rouse people yet again and thereby to let more blood flow. That is why the mobilization was made up and the public in Prague was told a pack of lies. These were intended to serve as arguments for a Czech mobilization. Above all, they were to furnish an excuse to exert highly welcome military pressure on the pending elections in the Sudetenland.

According to these men's convictions, there remained only two possibilities for Germany: either it accepted the Czech mobilization and hence suffered a

shameful defeat, or it openly confronted Czechoslovakia in a bloody war. This would have made it possible to mobilize the peoples of Western Europe, who had no real interest in this matter, to plunge them into the necessary frenzy of bloodlust and mankind into a new catastrophe. Some would have the honor to lose their lives in this war, while others would profit from it.

You are aware of the decision I made instantly at the time, my Deputies. First: resolution of this question before the year 1938 ended, by October 2 at the latest. Second: preparations for a solution by all those means which would leave no doubt that any attempts at interference would be thwarted by the united strength of the nation.

Apparently, Hitler thought this an opportune moment to point to the strength of the West Wall, claiming that "no power on earth" could ever pierce it. After all, ever since the autumn of 1938, Hitler had firmly believed that a similar bluff had been instrumental in eliciting the leniency displayed by the Western Powers at the time. In his opinion, it had prevented a declaration of war, in spite of the blatantly obvious nature of his designs on Czechoslovakia. Hence, a renewed reference to the "mightiest fortification of all time" might prove salutary and once again prevent a declaration of war as Germany turned against Poland.

At the time, I directed and gave orders for the expansion of our fortifications in the west. By September 25, 1938, they were already in such a condition as to surpass the power of resistance of the former Siegfried Line by thirty to forty times. Since then, they have essentially been completed. At present, the sections I later ordered to be added, running from Saarbrücken to Aix-la-Chapelle, are under construction. To a high degree, they are ready to assume their defensive role.

The state in which this mightiest fortification of all time finds itself today affords the German nation the reassuring knowledge that no power on earth shall ever be able to pierce this front.

When the first attempt at provocation by means of the Czech mobilization had not produced the desired results, a second phase set in. It revealed all the more the true nature of the interests involved in this affair which concerned Central Europe exclusively. And when today a cry rings out in the world, "Never again Munich," this is ample evidence that these warmongers regard the peaceful solution of this problem as the most ruinous outcome that ever happened.

They regret that no blood was shed. Not their blood, of course, since these fomenters never stand where the shots are being fired, but where the money is being made. What is at stake is the blood of many nameless soldiers.

By the way, it was not even necessary for this Conference at Munich to convene. After all, it came about only because those states which agitated for resistance at all costs later on began to search for a more or less decent escape route, once the problem called for a solution in one way or another. For without Munich, i.e. without the Western European states' intervention, the

solution of this entire problem—had there ever been a like escalation of events—would have been child's play.

The strong language Hitler employed in this context revealed once more his frustration with the Munich Agreement. A military annexation of Czechoslovakia “would have been child's play” had not Chamberlain, that “bastard,” ruined his entry into Prague.⁴⁶⁶ In the next section of the address, Hitler tried to blame the Western Powers for what actually was his breach of the Munich Agreement. According to his analysis, the Western Powers ought to have voiced any potential objections in November 1938 when Hungary and Slovakia had approached Germany and Italy for assistance in realizing their ambitions for territorial gains at the expense of Czechoslovakia. The two states had thereby demonstrated their lack of respect for the integrity of the Munich Agreement.⁴⁶⁷ Since Britain had remained silent then, it had forfeited its right to reproach Hitler for the invasion of truncated Czechoslovakia at a later point!

The decision at Munich resulted in the following:

1. Return of substantial parts of the German frontier areas in Bohemia and Moravia to the Reich.

2. Preservation of options for a resolution of the other problems with this state, i.e. the return or the migration of the remaining Hungarian and Slovak minorities.

3. Issue of a guarantee. From the start, as far as Germany and Italy were concerned, the guarantee of this state was made conditional on the consent of all interested parties bordering the state and, thus, depended on the actual resolution of those questions concerning the interested parties.

The following questions remained open:

1. Return of the Magyar parts to Hungary;
2. return of the Polish parts to Poland;
3. resolution of the Slovak question; and
4. resolution of the Ukrainian question.

As you are aware, barely had the negotiations between Hungary and Czechoslovakia begun, when the Czechoslovakian as well as the Hungarian negotiators approached Germany and Italy, standing at our side, with the request to undertake, as arbitrators, the drawing of the new borders between Slovakia, the Carpatho-Ukraine, and Hungary. In so doing, they themselves failed to exhaust the possibility of an appeal to the Four Powers, and, thus, waived this right, i.e. declined to take advantage of it.

And this was quite understandable. All those residing in this Lebensraum wished to preserve peace and quiet. Italy and Germany were ready to heed this call. Neither England nor France objected to this agreement, which in its nature had already bypassed the formalities of the Munich Agreement. After all, it would have been crazy if either London or Paris had protested against

an act by Germany or Italy which had taken place on the request of those concerned.

As always in such cases, the award arbitrated by Italy and Germany could not completely satisfy both sides. Its major shortcoming was that both parties had to agree to submit to the arbitration voluntarily. Shortly after this award was settled, two states immediately mounted strong protests. Hungary claimed the Carpatho-Ukraine based on its general interests and certain specific ones. Poland, on the other hand, demanded a direct link to Hungary. In view of these claims, the remainder of this state born at Versailles was destined to perish. In all likelihood, only one other state was interested in maintaining the status quo: Rumania. A competent authority⁴⁶⁸ personally informed me of how desirable he felt it was that Rumania should be granted a direct link to Germany through the Ukraine and Slovakia. I am citing this particular example to illustrate how threatened Rumania must have felt by Germany, as certain American clairvoyants would have had it. It was clear, however, that it was neither Germany's duty to oppose such a development in the long run, nor to fight for a state of affairs for which we could never have assumed responsibility.

Hence came the moment in which I resolved to declare, on behalf of the Reich Government, that we had no intention to continue to be bothered with the odium of opposing the Polish and Hungarian desire for a common border, just perhaps to secure a route of advance into Rumania. And since the Czech government resorted once more to its methods of old, and Slovakia revealed its desires for independence, there could be no talk of maintaining this state any longer. The Czechoslovakian state constructed at Versailles had outlived its purpose. It broke up not because Germany wished this. It broke up because it is not possible to construct and maintain at the conference table artificial states which are not viable in themselves.

Thus when, a few days before this state disintegrated, England and France inquired about a guarantee, Germany rejected this because the conditions stipulated at Munich no longer applied. To the contrary, when the German Reich Government finally resolved to intervene on its part—now that this whole structure was in the process of disintegration and, for all practical purposes, had already disintegrated—then this occurred in the fulfillment of a self-evident duty. In this context, the following ought to be noted:

On the occasion of the Czech Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky's first visit to Munich, the German Reich Government clearly expressed its views on the future of Czechoslovakia. At the time, I myself assured Herr Minister Chvalkovsky that, given a decent treatment of the large remaining German minorities in Czechia and a pacification of the whole state, Germany would assume a fair attitude. We did not wish to create difficulties for this state.

I left no doubt that, if Czechia undertook any steps reminiscent of the political tendencies of the retired Herr Dr. Beneš, Germany would not tolerate a development along this line. Such a development would be nipped in the bud. At the time, I also pointed out that the maintenance of huge military arsenal in Central Europe without aim and object had to be regarded as a source of danger.

Later developments proved how right this warning of mine had been. A continually worsening whispering campaign as well as a lapse of the Czech newspapers into the old style made it clear to even the most simple-minded that a return to the old state of affairs was imminent.

The danger of a military confrontation was ever present in view of the possibility that some lunatics could seize the enormous stockpile of war material. This involved a certain danger of explosions of incalculable consequences.

To prove this to you, my Deputies, I have no choice but to give you a general idea of the numerical proportions of the international arsenal of explosives in Central Europe, which strike me as downright gigantic.

Once again Hitler succumbed to his passion for numbers. They proved nothing and were intended merely to impress and mesmerize his audience.

Since this territory has been occupied, the following items were confiscated and secured:

1. Air Force: 1,582 planes; 501 anti-aircraft guns;
2. Army: 2,175 fieldguns (light and heavy); 785 mortars; 469 tanks; 43,876 machineguns; 114,000 pistols; 1,090,000 rifles;
3. Ammunition: 1,000,000,000 shells (infantry); 3,000,000 shells (artillery and gas);
4. Other weaponry of all types, such as devices for building bridges; listening devices; searchlights; measuring instruments; cars and special vehicles in great numbers.

I believe that it was fortunate for millions and millions of people that I was able to prevent this explosion, thanks to the insight which the responsible men on the other side had at the last minute. It is my conviction that we found a solution which has settled this dispute and has eliminated it as a source of danger for Central Europe.

The claim that this solution contradicts the Munich Agreement cannot be justified any more than it can be substantiated. Under no circumstances can the Munich settlement be regarded as a final one. After all, it makes concessions for the solution of additional questions and the need to resolve them. Truly, and this is decisive, it cannot be held against us that the concerned parties appealed to Italy and Germany, and not to the Four Powers. Nor can it be held against us that Czechoslovakia disintegrated on its own and, hence, ceased to exist. It is only natural that, once these ethnographic principles no longer applied, Germany again took charge of its one-thousand year old interests, which are not only of a political, but also of an economic nature. Time will tell whether the solution Germany found was the right one.⁴⁶⁹

One thing is sure, however: this solution should not be subject to English control or criticism. For the Länder of Bohemia and Moravia have nothing at all to do with the Munich Agreement since they constituted the final remnants of the former Czechoslovakian state.

With the brazen remark that the remainder of Czechoslovakia had “nothing at all to do with the Munich Agreement,” Hitler opened his verbal assault on the British. He maintained that his personal understanding with Chamberlain, which had been arrived at on September 30, 1938,⁴⁷⁰ and which had provided for mutual consultations, was not applicable to his move against the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Hitler argued that if it was applicable, this would oblige him to monitor British actions in Northern Ireland and Palestine. Should Great Britain be “incapable of understanding this, our attitude” and should the Prime Minister believe that Britain could not possibly “place any trust in assurances by Germany,” this meant that the “foundations” for the Anglo-German Naval Agreement had been destroyed. Thus he had resolved “to inform the British Government of this today.”

These arguments were textbook examples of the “slap in the face” tactics Hitler employed in his dealings with the British. Their forceful nature would frighten them and induce them to search for ways of obtaining his favor. In order not to prevent the British from showing themselves to be conciliatory, Hitler yielded and expressed his hope that “an arms race with England” could still be avoided. He detailed:

As little right as we have to subject English measures, whether just or unjust, to German control and criticism, for instance in Northern Ireland, as little right does England possess to do this in the case of the old German electorates. I completely fail to understand how the personal understanding reached by Mr. Chamberlain and myself at Munich can be applied to this case. After all, the case of Czechoslovakia was dealt with in the Munich Agreement insofar as it was possible to deal with it at that point. Beyond this, it was only planned that, should the concerned parties be unable to arrive at a agreement themselves, they could appeal to the Four Powers. After a period of three months, the Four Powers would meet again for further consultations.

Now the concerned parties have not appealed to the Four Powers, but to Germany and Italy. Evidence for the legitimacy of this step lies in the fact that neither England nor France voiced any objections. Moreover, they have accepted without any further ado the award arbitrated by Germany and Italy.

No, the agreement Mr. Chamberlain and I entered into has nothing to do with the problem at hand. It applies exclusively to questions concerning the coexistence of England and Germany. This is equally evident in the statement that such questions, in the future, ought to be dealt with in the spirit of the Munich Agreement and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which advocate friendly relations by means of mutual consultations. Should this agreement apply to any and all future German political activities, then England could not take any further steps, for instance, in Palestine or anywhere else for that matter, without consulting Germany before taking action. We certainly expect

nothing of the kind and, in turn, we protest that this is expected of us. When Mr. Chamberlain now concludes that the Munich Agreement is null and void, because we abrogated it, I shall take note of his disposition as of today and I shall draw the proper conclusions.

Throughout my years of political activities, I have always advocated the idea of establishing close Anglo-German friendship and cooperation. I found countless congenial people in my Movement. Perhaps they even joined my Movement because of this conviction of mine. The desire for Anglo-German friendship and cooperation not only reflects my own proper sentiments on the topic, derived from the common heritage of our two peoples, but also my opinion that the existence of the British Empire is of importance to mankind and in its best interest. Never have I left any doubt about my conviction that the maintaining of this empire is an object of inestimable value to mankind's culture and economy.

By whatever means Great Britain may have gained its colonial possessions—and I know this entailed the use of force, the use of the most brutal force in many instances—I nevertheless realize that no other empire has ever been created by different means. In the end, world history values not the method so much as the success; and this not in terms of the success of the method employed, but of the general utility derived from the method.

Undoubtedly the Anglo-Saxon people have accomplished a great colonizing work on this earth. I sincerely admire this achievement. From a higher humanitarian point of view, the thought of its destruction has always seemed to me, and seems to me today, the product of a wanton thirst for fame (*Herostratentum*). However, my sincere respect for this attainment does not mean I will refrain from assuring the life of my own Volk. I believe it is not possible to bring about a lasting friendship between the German and the Anglo-Saxon peoples if the other side fails to realize that next to British interests there are German ones also. As for the men of Britain the sustenance of the British Empire lends meaning and purpose to life, so the sustenance and liberty of the German Reich does for the men of Germany! A lasting friendship between these two nations is conceivable only in the framework of mutual respect.

The English rule a mighty empire. They built this empire in the days of the German Volk's slackening. In former times, the German Reich also was a mighty empire. It once ruled the West. In bloody battles and religious confrontations, as well as because this state split up internally, this Reich lost its might and greatness and finally fell into a deep sleep. Still, as the old Reich was nearing its end, the seed for its ultimate rebirth began to germinate. A new Germany grew out of Brandenburg and Prussia: the Second Reich. And, in the final instance, this became the German Volksreich of today.

Perhaps now the English will understand that we have no reason to feel in the least inferior to them. For this, truly, our historic past is too colossal! England has given the world many a great man; Germany has done no less. The difficult struggle for the survival of our Volk has demanded of us, in the course of three centuries, a blood sacrifice in the defense of the Reich far outstripping the sacrifices other peoples had to make to secure their

existence. That, perpetually the victim of aggression, Germany was not able to maintain its assets, that it had to sacrifice many provinces, has been the result of the state's undesirable development which caused its impotence.

We have now overcome this condition. We, as Germans, therefore do not feel inferior to the British. Our respect for our country is just as great as that of every Englishman for England. The history of our Volk throughout the past two thousand years affords us grounds enough and deeds to fill us with sincere pride.

Should England declare itself incapable of understanding this, our attitude, and should it instead perhaps regard Germany as a vassal state, then our offer of love and friendship for England will have been for naught. We shall neither despair nor lose heart because of this. Instead, we shall then set out on a path—conscious of our own strength and that of our friends—which shall secure our independence and not prejudice our dignity.

I am aware of the British Prime Minister's declaration in which he maintains he cannot place any trust in assurances by Germany. Under the circumstances, I felt that we should no longer burden him or the English people with conditions, unthinkable without mutual trust. When Germany became National Socialist and thus initiated its resurrection, I made a proposal, for my part, in pursuit of my stalwart policy of friendship for England, to impose voluntary limits on German armament at sea. This implied the will and conviction that war should never again be possible between England and Germany. And this remains my will and my conviction even today.

However, I am now forced to concede that England's official and unofficial policies leave no doubt that London no longer shares this conviction. Quite the contrary, it is my conviction that, irrespective of what type of conflict Germany might be drawn into, Britain will always oppose Germany. War with Germany is regarded as a matter of course.

I deeply regret this since my only demand of England today is, and will continue to be, the return of our colonies. However, I have always made it perfectly clear that this does not constitute grounds for a war. I remain true to my conviction that England, for whom the colonies have no value, would come to understand Germany's position one day. Then it would undoubtedly realize that Germany's friendship far outweighed these objects, which, while they are of no real use to England, are of vital importance to Germany.

Beyond this, I have never made any demands which affected British interests, posed a real danger to its world empire, or were detrimental to England in some other manner. I have restricted myself to demands in the framework of Germany's Lebensraum, questions closely tied to the German nation's eternal possessions. Now that journalists and officials in England publicly advocate opposition to Germany in any case, and this is confirmed by the well-known policy of encirclement, then the foundations on which the Anglo-German Naval Agreement rested have been destroyed.

Thus, I have resolved to inform the British Government of this today. This is not a question of a material affair—since I continue to cherish the hope that an arms race with England can be avoided—but a question of self-respect.

Should the British government reconsider and wish to negotiate this matter with Germany in order to reach a clear and definite understanding, then no one would be happier than I.

Beyond this, I know my Volk—I rely on it. We desire nothing that was not ours before. Never will we rob another state of its rightful possessions. Alas, he who believes he can attack Germany will encounter such a power and such a resistance that those of the year 1914 will have been negligible in comparison.

Before landing his second strike, namely, the unilateral abrogation of the German-Polish Treaty of 1934, Hitler took a few minutes to give an overview of the process of the reintegration of the Memel territory into the Reich's administrative structures. He then tried to illustrate the peaceful intentions of the policies of Germany, which exclusively engaged in the pursuit of economic prerogatives, by talking at length of the relations between the Third Reich and the Baltic States.

I would like to discuss in this context a matter which those circles that earlier occasioned the mobilization of Czechoslovakia have taken up as a point of departure for a new campaign against the Reich. In the introduction to my speech, my Deputies, I already assured you that never in my political life, neither in the case of Austria nor in the case of Czechoslovakia, have I assumed an attitude which was incompatible with the measures now executed. On the question of the Memel Germans, I have always pointed out that, should Lithuania not resolve this problem in a refined and generous manner, Germany would have to appear on the scene one day.

You know that the Diktat of Versailles arbitrarily tore the Memel territory from the German Reich, and that in 1923, in the midst of peace, Lithuania occupied these areas and confiscated them more or less. The fate suffered by the Germans living there has become tantamount to martyrdom since then. In the framework of the reintegration of Bohemia and Moravia into the German Reich, I was able to reach an agreement with the Lithuanian government, which allowed for the return of these areas to Germany without any violent act or bloodshed. And here, too, I did not demand even one square mile more than what we originally had possessed and had been robbed of.

This means that only those areas torn from us by the insane dictators of peace at Versailles returned to the German Reich. I am convinced that this solution will have a favorable effect on the relations between Germany and Lithuania. Our behavior has clearly shown that Germany now has no interest in anything other than to live in peace and friendship also with this state. We seek to establish and cultivate economic ties with it.

And, in principle, I wish to explain the following here: the significance of economic agreements with Germany lies not only in its ability to produce nearly all industrial goods in demand, but also in its role as a gigantic consumer. As the buyer of numerous products Germany makes it possible for

many other countries to participate in world trade in the first place. Hence, it is in our own best interest not only to preserve these markets, but to cultivate them as well.

For this is what the existence of our Volk is based on to a high degree. It is once more a sign of the greatness of the so-called democratic statesmen that they believe they have won an eminent political success when they manage to prevent a people from making sales, for example, by boycotting its markets, in order to starve them out, I presume. I need not tell you that, in accordance with my convictions, a people will not starve because of this, but it will be all the more willing to fight under such circumstances.

As far as Germany is concerned, it is determined not to allow certain markets which are of vital interest to the nation to be taken from it by terrorist interventions from abroad or by threats from there. This is not only in our interest, but also in the interest of our trading partners. In this case, as in any type of business, dependency is not unilateral but mutual.

We often have the pleasure to read dilettantish treatises in the democratic press which in all earnest maintain that, because Germany has close economic relations with a country, it is trying to make that country dependent on it. What truly hair-raising Jewish nonsense! For, if today the German Reich delivers machinery to an agricultural state and receives foodstuffs in return, then the Reich as a consumer of these foodstuffs is at least as dependent—if not more dependent—on this agricultural state as the agricultural state is on Germany from which it receives industrial products as payment.

Germany regards the Baltic States as its most important trading partners. It is hence in our own interest to see that these lead an independent, orderly national life of their own. In our eyes, this is a prerequisite for any economic development domestically, which in turn creates the prerequisites for our barter trade.

I therefore am happy that in the case of Lithuania, too, we have been able to remove the bone of contention between our two countries. Thus, we have cleared away the only obstacle in the way of a friendly policy. It does not consist of political compliments, but can and will hold its own, I am convinced, in practical work in the economic sphere.

The democratic world profoundly regrets that no blood was shed in this instance, too. It regrets that 175,000 Germans were able to return to their beloved German homeland without a few hundred thousand others being shot in the process! This truly pains the humane world apostles. It is not surprising in the least that they immediately set out to search for new means of once again upsetting the European atmosphere thoroughly. And this time, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, they again alleged that Germany had taken military measures, that is they claimed that a so-called German mobilization had taken place. And the object of this mobilization was Poland.

Now finally the time had come for Hitler to vent his anger at the impudent Poles' refusal to let him have Danzig and the extraterritorial motorway. He openly admitted to the demands he had made on

Poland, the territorial nature of which could not be denied. They stood in contrast to his earlier assurances that the return of the Sudetenland had been "his last territorial demand in Europe."⁴⁷¹ Notwithstanding this openness, Hitler remained silent on his explicit insistence to the Poles that any contract to be entered into by Poland and Germany would have to contain a decidedly anti-Soviet element.

Instead, Hitler claimed that Poland had rejected his proposals although they represented a "truly unique compromise." To add insult to injury, Poland had concluded a mutual assistance pact with Great Britain which forced him, so Hitler lamented, to "regard the agreement reached at the time with Marshal Pilsudski as unilaterally abrogated by Poland and therefore null and void." Hitler declared:

There is little to be said on the topic of Polish-German relations. In this instance as well, the Peace Treaty of Versailles has grievously and intentionally wounded the German Volk. Above all, the strange delimitation of the Corridor, granting Poland access to the sea, was to preclude a reconciliation between Poland and Germany for all time. And, as emphasized earlier, this problem is perhaps the most painful one for Germany to bear.

This notwithstanding, I remained steadfast in my conviction that the necessity of granting the Polish state free access to the sea cannot be ignored. Moreover, in principle, I have always maintained that it would be expedient that people whom Providence has destined—or damned, for all I care—to live next to one another, did not needlessly and artificially poison their relations. The late Marshal Pilsudski, who adhered to this view also, was willing to review the issue of a decontamination of Polish-German relations and finally to arrive at an agreement, in which Germany and Poland pledged themselves to renounce war as a means of settling conflicts between them.

Poland was granted one exception from this agreement: the provision that pacts of assistance previously entered into by Poland would not be affected by this regulation. Reference here was solely to the Mutual Assistance Pact with France. It was accepted as a matter of course that this provision applied only to the pact already concluded and was not to be extended to pacts to be concluded in the future. It is a fact that this German-Polish Pact considerably contributed to a relaxation of tensions in Europe.

Nevertheless one question remained open, one issue which would naturally have to be resolved sooner or later: the question of the German city of Danzig. Danzig is a German city and it wishes to return to Germany. On the other hand, this city does have contractual obligations to Poland, although they were forced on it by the dictators of peace at Versailles. Now that the League of Nations—previously a great contributor to the unrest—has commissioned a most tactful High Commissioner to represent its interest, the question of Danzig was destined to land on the conference table once more, at the very latest when this ominous institution itself began to fade. I regard the peaceful resolution of this question as a further contribution to a final

relaxation of tensions in Europe. This relaxation of tensions is assuredly not promoted by the smear campaign of warmongers gone crazy, but rather by the elimination of real sources of danger.

Since the problem of Danzig was discussed several times a few months ago, I forwarded to the Polish Government a concrete proposal. I will now inform you, my Deputies, of the contents of this proposal. You shall be able to judge for yourselves whether this proposal was not the most gigantic concession imaginable in the service of peace in Europe.

As emphasized previously, I have always recognized the necessity for this state to have access to the sea and I have taken account of this. I am not a democratic statesman; I am a realistic National Socialist. However, I held it equally necessary to point out to the government in Warsaw that, just as it desires access to the sea, Germany desires access to its province in the East. These are indeed difficult problems. Germany bears no responsibility for this. The ones to be blamed are the magicians of Versailles who either out of malice or thoughtlessness set up a hundred powder kegs all around Europe, each equipped with a fuse virtually impossible to extinguish.

You cannot solve these problems in the same old way. I hold it to be absolutely essential that new ways be found. After all, Poland's access to the sea and Germany's access to the Corridor are devoid of any military significance. Their significance is of a psychological and economic nature exclusively. To assign military significance to this traffic route would mean succumbing to military naivety to an exceptional degree.

I have therefore made the following proposal to the Polish Government:

1. Danzig is reintegrated into the framework of the German Reich as a Free State.

2. A highway and a railroad line through the Corridor are placed at Germany's disposal. They are accorded the same extraterritorial status which the Corridor now enjoys.

In return, Germany is willing:

1. to recognize all economic rights of Poland in Danzig;
2. to secure for Poland a free port of whatever size it desires in Danzig and to guarantee free access thereto;

3. to regard and accept the borders between Germany and Poland as final;
4. to enter into a twenty-five-year pact of non-aggression with Poland, a pact which would far outlive me, and

5. to secure the independence of the Slovak state through cooperation between Germany, Poland, and Hungary, which is tantamount to a virtual renunciation of a one-sided German hegemony in this area.

The Polish Government has refused this proposal of mine and has declared itself willing:

1. to discuss only the question of a potential replacement of the present League of Nations' High Commissioner and

2. to consider facilitating transit traffic through the Corridor.

I sincerely regret the attitude of the Polish government which I fail to understand. This alone is not decisive, however. What is far worse is that Poland, like Czechoslovakia a year ago, now apparently believes it has to call

up troops, under pressure from a mendacious worldwide campaign of rabble-rousing. And this though Germany has conscripted not one man nor in any way intended to take action against Poland.

As stated earlier, all this is regrettable in itself. It will be up to posterity to decide whether it was wise to refuse the unique proposal which I had made. As stated earlier, this was an attempt to resolve a question which moves the entire German nation emotionally through a truly unique compromise, and to solve it to the advantage of both countries.

It is my conviction that Poland was not interested in the give and take of this solution—it sought exclusively to take. That Danzig could never again become Polish was completely beyond doubt. And the plans for an attack, falsely attributed to Germany by the international press, now led to the so-called offers of guarantee. It also led to a commitment by the Polish government to a pact of mutual assistance which would force Poland to oppose Germany militarily, in the event of war between Germany and another power—in which England would appear on the scene again. This commitment violates the agreement which, at the time, I had entered into with Marshal Pilsudski. For this agreement bore solely on commitments then already in existence, i.e. on Poland's commitment to France, of which we knew. To expand on these commitments retroactively is inconsistent with the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact. Under the circumstances, I would never have concluded this Pact. For what is the meaning of a non-aggression pact, when one party leaves open countless exceptions to the rules!

Either collective security exists, that is collective insecurity and the perpetual threat of imminent war, or there are clear agreements, which, in principle, prevent the contracting parties from resorting to arms. Thus, I regard the agreement reached at the time with Marshal Pilsudski as unilaterally abrogated by Poland and therefore null and void. I have informed the Polish Government of this. I can only repeat once again that this does not signify a fundamental change in principle in my views of the stated problems.

Should the Polish Government consider it worth its while to arrive at a renewed contractual regulation of its relations to Germany, then I shall naturally welcome this with the one provision that such a regulation must contain clear commitments, which must be mutually binding for both parties. Germany is gladly willing to undertake such obligations and to fulfill them as well.

Hitler's words clearly indicated that, at this point, he had not given up hope that his abrogation of the treaty would frighten the Poles into submission to his demands. Hence, he did not hesitate to use Spain as an example of the gruesome fate international Bolshevism held in store for countries such as Great Britain and Poland, should they fail to comply with his requests and speedily place themselves under his protection.

There have been repeated claims that Hitler, in order not to alienate a potential ally, refrained from verbally assaulting the Soviet Union and

Bolshevism in his April 28 speech. This is incorrect. Given the focus of his talk on Great Britain, Poland, and the United States, it is true that Bolshevism and the Soviet Union did not play a major role, as they had in earlier speeches. Nonetheless, token references to the dangers of world Bolshevism, intended to frighten the bourgeois Western Powers, were contained in the Reichstag address also. For example, Hitler spoke of the threat of "Bolshevism's annihilation of European culture;" of the dangers posed by "Bolshevist murderers and incendiaries;" not to mention "the Bolshevist subhumans in Spain." He maintained that "Soviet Russia has been involved in ten wars and military actions since 1918 carried out by use of force and bloodshed." On the topic of Spain, Hitler argued the following:

When, for these reasons, new unrest took hold in Europe during the past weeks, the propaganda at the service of the international warmongers was responsible, a form of propaganda perpetrated by numerous organs in the democratic states. They seek to continuously exacerbate nervous tensions by fabricating persistent rumors; to make Europe ripe for a catastrophe; that catastrophe which they hope will achieve what has not been achieved by other means up to now: Bolshevism's annihilation of European culture! The rabble-rousers' hatred is easily understood if one considers that in the meantime one of the crisis spots in Europe has been pacified, thanks to the heroism of one man and his people, and—if I may say so—thanks to the Italian and German volunteers. During these last weeks, Germany has joined in the experience and celebration of Spain's victory with heartfelt sympathy.

When, at the time, I resolved to heed the request by General Franco for assistance by National Socialist Germany in his struggle against the international backing of the Bolshevist murderers and incendiaries (*Mordbrenner*), the same international warmongers misinterpreted and abused this step by Germany in the most shameful manner.

At the time, Germany was accused of seeking to gain a foothold in Spain; of coveting Spain's colonies; there was the base lie of 20,000 men landing in Morocco. In brief, everything possible was done to discredit the idealism of our men and the Italian reinforcements and to provide new fodder for yet another campaign of warmongering.

In a few weeks, the victorious hero of Nationalist Spain will make his solemn entry into the capital of his country. The Spanish people will jubilantly cheer him as their savior from unspeakable horrors, as their liberator from gangs of murderers and incendiaries, on whose conscience are the execution and the murder of an estimated 775,000 human beings. Entire populations of villages and cities were literally slaughtered under the silent, gracious patronage of humanitarian world apostles from the democracies of Western Europe and North America. In this victory parade, side by side with their Italian comrades, the volunteers of our German Legion will march in the rows of valiant Spanish soldiers.

Shortly afterwards we hope to welcome them here in the homeland. The German Volk will then find out how, in this instance also, its valiant sons fought in the defense of the freedom of a most noble people and how, in the end, they contributed to the rescue of European civilization. For the victory of Bolshevik subhumanity (*Untermenschentum*) in Spain could only too easily have swept over Europe. Hence, the hatred felt by those who regret that Europe did not go up in flames. Now, they are all the more determined to make use of every opportunity to sow the seeds of distrust between nations and to whip up the enthusiasm for war, desirable from their point of view, somewhere else.

What these international warmongers have come up with, in the last weeks, in terms of mendacious statements and falsified reports, which were circulated in numerous newspapers, was partially as childish as it was spiteful. And its first success—insofar as it did not serve the domestic politics of the democratic governments exclusively—has been the spread of a type of nervous hysteria which in the land of unlimited possibilities has presently already led to people thinking that a landing by Martians is possible.⁴⁷² However, the actual purpose is to prepare public opinion to accept the English policy of encirclement as necessary and, if worse comes to worse, to support this policy.

By contrast, the German Volk can calmly go about its daily work. The best army in Germany's history defends its frontiers; a gigantic Luftwaffe protects its air space; its coasts have been made unassailable by any enemy power. In the West the mightiest bulwark of all time has been erected.

What is decisive, however, is the unity of the Volkskörper, the trust all Germans place in their Wehrmacht, and—I believe I can say this—the trust that all place in their leadership.

Hitler now turned to discuss his remaining friends, the Italians and the Japanese.

No less is the trust our leadership and our Volk place in our friends. At their fore stands the one state, which in its fateful solidarity is closest to us in all respects. And in this year also, Fascist Italy has shown the greatest possible understanding for Germany's justified interests. No one should be surprised that, for our part, we reciprocate these sentiments for Italy's vital necessities.

The alliance which binds the two peoples can never come apart! Any attempt to rock it is ludicrous in our eyes. In any event, a few days ago, one great democratic newspaper published an article which illustrates and elucidates this well. It maintained that one could no longer count on playing Italy and Germany against each other in order to destroy them separately later.

Thus, the German Reich Government has profound understanding for the lawfulness of the action of our Italian friend against Albania and has welcomed it. Yes, Fascism has not only the right but the duty to attend to the preservation of order in this Lebensraum, which nature and history have assigned to Italy. Only such an order can lay the foundations for the bloom

of human civilization and its maintenance. And the rest of the world can no more doubt, in the end, the civilizing works of Fascism than it can doubt those of National Socialism. In both cases, undeniable facts speak against untenable fibs and unproven assertions by the other side.

It is the long-term goal of the German State leadership to bring about increasingly close relations between Germany, Italy, and Japan. We regard the continued existence and the preservation of the freedom and independence of these three world powers as a strong element in the maintenance of a truly human civilization, a practical civilization, as well as a more just world order for the future.

After this digression of one-and-a-half hours, he finally addressed the issue of the day: Roosevelt's telegram. Hitler again resorted to a sarcastic and presumptuous tone of discourse which, so he believed, had proven its value in the long years of domestic struggle. As mentioned before, Hitler greatly overestimated the importance of propaganda. The speech before the Reichstag on April 28, 1939 also proved that he failed to realize that even the most skilled arguments and oratorical masterpieces were ineffective against an external adversary of superior strength.

Hitler sought to discredit Wilson and Roosevelt as "magicians"⁴⁷³ whose sole ambition was to rhetorically deceive and seduce both German and international public opinion. He failed to realize that the military and political might of the United States or, as the case might be, the Anglo-Saxon world, gave powerful and decisive weight to the statements of American presidents. Hitler obviously had resolved to outdo Roosevelt by presenting him with an even longer and more detailed reply. Whereas Wilson had restricted himself to his famous "Fourteen Points," Hitler listed twenty-one points of contention with the Anglo-Saxon Powers.

Many of Hitler's remonstrances were well-founded. After all, the history of the United States is full of military interventions in Latin American states. In his attempt, however, to use these historic facts as precedents for his own actions in Eastern Europe, his arguments lost their persuasiveness. Neither Austria nor Germany had the military potential to successfully carry out such military ventures without suffering retribution; and neither of the Anglo-Saxon Powers was willing to allow the territorial expansion of Germany or Austria by force, irrespective of what particular direction this might lead them. The Anglo-Saxon Powers and their allies stood prepared to thwart any such aggression by force of arms. And in this context, Hitler's feeble attempts at belatedly rationalizing his actions were simply grotesque.

His reply to Roosevelt's telegram comprised twenty-one separate answers to each of the posed questions:

As I mentioned in my introduction earlier, the world was informed of the contents of a certain telegram on April 15, 1939. I did eventually see this telegram myself, though not until somewhat later. It is difficult to classify this document. It simply fits into no known category. Therefore, my Deputies of the German Reichstag, standing before you and hence before the German Volk, I will try to analyze the contents of this curious document. From there I will go on to give the necessary answers in your name and in the name of the German Volk.

1. Mr. Roosevelt is of the opinion that I also ought to be aware that "throughout the world hundreds of millions of human beings are living today in constant fear of a new war or even a series of wars." This was of definite concern to the United States, for whom he spoke, "as it must also be to the peoples of the other nations of the entire western hemisphere."

Answer:

To this I would like to say that the fear of war has undoubtedly haunted mankind throughout the ages, and rightly so. For example, from the conclusion of the Peace Treaty of Versailles in 1919 until 1938, fourteen wars alone have been waged,⁴⁷⁴ in none of which Germany has been involved. However, the same cannot be said of states of the "western hemisphere" in the name of which Mr. President Roosevelt claims to be speaking. To these wars one must add, within the same time period, twenty-six armed interventions and sanctions imposed by brute force, and resulting in bloodshed. And in this, too, Germany has not been involved in the least.

The United States has participated in six cases of armed intervention since the year 1918 alone⁴⁷⁵ Soviet Russia has been involved in ten wars and military actions since 1918 carried out by use of force and bloodshed.⁴⁷⁶ And in this, too, Germany has not been involved. Nor has it caused any of these incidents. Hence, in my eyes, it would be a mistake to attribute the fear of war of the peoples of Europe and beyond right now to precisely those wars for which Germany could be held responsible.

Instead, the cause for this fear lies in an unbridled smear campaign in the press, as mendacious as it is vile, in the dissemination of nasty pamphlets to foreign heads of state, in the artificial scaremongering which has even made interventions from other planets⁴⁷⁷ seem possible, which, in turn, has led to dreadful scenes of utter confusion.

I believe that the minute the responsible governments exercise the necessary restraint themselves and demonstrate greater love of truth, and impose this criterion on their journalistic organs, with regard to international relations and the internal affairs of other people, then assuredly this constant fear of war will vanish immediately. And then, the peace we all desire will be forthcoming.

2. Mr. Roosevelt professes the belief in his telegram that "any major war even if it were to be confined to other continents must bear heavily on everyone during its continuance and also for generations to come."

Answer:

No one knows this better than the German Volk. The Peace Treaty of Versailles placed so heavy a burden of debt on its shoulders that even a hundred years would not have sufficed to pay it off. And all this despite the fact that it was American specialists in constitutional law, historians, and professors of history who proved conclusively that Germany could not be blamed for the outbreak of the World War any more than any other nation.

Still, I do not believe that every struggle has catastrophic consequences for the environment, i.e. the entire earth, especially if it is not artificially drawn into this conflict by a system of impenetrable alliances. Since the world has experienced wars not only in the past centuries, but also frequently in more recent decades, as I have demonstrated in my earlier comments, then this would mean that, if Mr. Roosevelt's views are correct, the sum of the consequences of these wars would bear heavily on mankind for millions of years to come.

3. Mr. Roosevelt declared that already "on a previous occasion"⁴⁷⁸ he had addressed me "on behalf of the settlement of political, economic and social problems by peaceful methods and without resort to war."

Answer:

This is precisely the same opinion I have always advocated myself. Also as history proves, I have settled the necessary political, economic and social problems without resort to arms, without resort to war. Regrettably, a peaceful settlement has been rendered more difficult through the agitation by politicians, statesmen, and news reporters, who were neither concerned nor in the least affected by the issues in question.

4. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "the tide of events seems to have reverted to the threat of arms. If such threats continue, it seems inevitable that much of the world must become involved in common ruin."

Answer:

As far as Germany is concerned, I am not aware of such threats to other nations. Nevertheless, each day in democratic newspapers I read lies concerning such threats. Daily I read about the mobilization of German troops, troop-landings, and blackmail. And all this is supposedly directed against states with whom we live in peace and enjoy the most friendly of relations.

5. Mr. Roosevelt further believes that, in the event of war, "all the world, victor nations, vanquished nations, and neutral nations will suffer."

Answer:

This is a conviction I have expressed as a politician during twenty years in which, regrettably, the responsible statesmen in America could not bring themselves to see their involvement in the World War and the nature of its outcome in this light.

6. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their peoples from the disaster that impends."

Answer:

If this is indeed clear, then it must be truly criminal negligence—not to employ a less refined expression—by the leaders of these peoples if they

prove incapable of curtailing, in view of the powers at their command, the excesses of their warmongering press⁴⁷⁹ and thereby of sparing the world the disaster which threatens in the case of armed confrontation.

Moreover, I fail to comprehend how the responsible leaders, instead of cultivating diplomatic relations internationally, can recall their ambassadors⁴⁸⁰ or take like actions to disrupt and render these relations more difficult without a good reason.

7. Mr. Roosevelt declares that "three nations in Europe and one in Africa have seen their independent existence terminated."⁴⁸¹

My answer:

I do not understand which three nations in Europe are being referred to. Should reference be made to the provinces which have been reintegrated in the German Reich, then I must bring a mistaken notion of history to the attention of the President. These nations have by no means lost their independence within Europe. Rather it was in the year 1918 when, through the breach of a solemn promise, they were torn from the communities they belonged to. The stamp of nationhood was imprinted on their brow, one they neither desired nor deserved. Independence was likewise forced on those who gained no independence thereby, but who instead were forced into a dependency on foreign powers whom they despised.

As far as the nation in Africa is concerned which supposedly lost its freedom too, this is evidently yet another case of mistaken identity. Not one nation in Africa has lost its freedom. Rather nearly all former inhabitants of this continent have been subjected by brute force to the sovereignty of other peoples. This is how they lost their freedom. The people of Morocco, the Berbers, the Arabs, the Negroes, and so on, all of them became the victims of foreign powers, whose swords assuredly did not bear the inscription "*Made in Germany*," but instead "*Made by Democracies*."⁴⁸²

8. Mr. Roosevelt then says that reports, which he trusts are not true, "insist that further acts of aggression are contemplated against still other independent nations."

Answer:

I hold such rumors, devoid of any basis in reality, to constitute a violation of peace and quiet in the world. I perceive therein an attempt to frighten small nations or at least an attempt to make them increasingly nervous. Should Mr. Roosevelt have concrete cases in mind, then I would request that he name the states threatened by an attack and the potential aggressors in question. Then it will be possible to eliminate from the face of this earth these outrageous and general accusations by short declarations.

9. Mr. Roosevelt declares that "plainly the world is moving toward the moment when this situation must end in catastrophe unless a more rational way of guiding events is found." He then goes on to declare that I have repeatedly asserted that I and the German people "have no desire for war. If this is true there need be no war."

My answer:

Once again, I would like to state that, first of all, I have not waged war. And, second, I have lent expression to my distaste for war as well as for

warmongering for many years.⁴⁸³ Third, I do not know why I should wage war.⁴⁸⁴ I would be greatly indebted to Mr. Roosevelt if he could explain all this to me.

10. Mr. Roosevelt finally espouses the opinion that “nothing can persuade the peoples of the earth that any governing power has the right or need to inflict the consequences of war on its own or any other people save in the case of self-evident home defense.”

My answer:

I hold this to be the attitude embraced by all reasonable men. Only it seems to me that in almost every war both parties tend to claim to be acting in self-evident home defense. Regrettably, the world does not possess any institution, including the person of Roosevelt, able to resolve this problem unequivocally. For example, there is no doubt that America did not enter into the World War in “self-evident home defense.” A commission appointed by Mr. Roosevelt himself to investigate the reasons for America’s entry into the World War arrived at the conclusion that this entry had been essentially for the realization of capitalist interests.⁴⁸⁵ Now, all there is left for us to do is to hope that the United States itself shall adhere to this noble principle in the future and will not make war on another people “save in the case of self-evident home defense.”

11. Mr. Roosevelt further argues that he speaks “not through selfishness or fear of weakness, but with the voice of strength and with friendship for mankind.”

My answer:

Had America raised its voice of strength and friendship for mankind in a more timely fashion and, above all, had this voice carried with it practical applications, then at least the treaty could have been prevented, which has become the source of the greatest disruption for mankind of all time, namely, the Diktat of Versailles.

12. Mr. Roosevelt further declares that it is clear to him that “all international problems can be solved at the Council table.”

My answer:

Theoretically that may well be possible, since one ought to think that, in many instances, reason would prevail in pointing to the justness of the demands on the one side, and to the necessity of making concessions on the other. For example, according to all laws of reason, logic, and the principles of an all-encompassing higher justice, even according to the commandments of a divine will, all nations should equally partake in the goods of this world. It is not right that one nation should occupy so large a Lebensraum that not even fifteen inhabitants live on one square kilometer, while other nations are forced to sustain themselves with 140, 150, or even 200 inhabitants per square kilometer. And, under no circumstances, could these fortunate nations then seek to restrict the existing Lebensraum of those already impoverished, for example, by taking away their colonies. Thus, I would be happy if these problems could actually be solved at the Council table.

My skepticism is based on the fact that it was America which lent expression itself to pronounced reservations regarding the effectiveness of

conferences. Without doubt, the greatest council of all time was the League of Nations. It was the will of an American President which created this body. All nations of this world together were to solve the problems of mankind at its Council table. However, the first state to withdraw from this endeavor was the United States. And this was the case because President Wilson himself already had voiced severe misgivings about the possibility of solving truly decisive international problems at the Council table.

With all due respect to your opinion, Mr. Roosevelt, it is contradicted by the actual fact that, in the nearly twenty years of the League of Nations' existence—this greatest permanent conference of the world—it did not manage to solve even one truly decisive international problem.⁴⁸⁶

Throughout many years, the Treaty of Versailles had selectively excluded Germany from active participation in this great international conference in breach of the promise given by President Wilson. In spite of the bitter experiences of the past, the German Government nevertheless did not believe it ought to follow the example of the United States, but instead chose to occupy its seat at the Council table at a later date. It was not until after many years of futile participation that I finally resolved to imitate the Americans and withdraw from this greatest conference in the world. And since then I have set out to solve the problems concerning my Volk, which regrettably were not solved at the Council table of the League of Nations like all the others, and, without exception, I solved them without resort to war!⁴⁸⁷

Beyond this, many problems were brought to the attention of international conferences in the past years, as emphasized earlier, without a solution of any kind being found. And, Mr. Roosevelt, if your view is correct that all problems can be solved at the Council table, then all nations, including the United States, must have been led either by blind men or criminals in the last seven or eight thousand years. For all of them, including some of the greatest statesmen in the United States, have made history not by sitting at Council tables, but by making use of the strength of their nation. America did not gain its independence at the Council table any more than the conflict between its northern and southern states was solved at the Council table. I am leaving out of consideration here that the same holds true for the countless wars in the course of the gradual conquest of the North American continent. I mention all this only to observe that, with all due respect to the assuredly noble nature of your views, Mr. President Roosevelt, they are not in the least confirmed by either the history of your own country or the history of the rest of the world.

13. Mr. Roosevelt further asserts that "it is therefore no answer to the plea for peaceful discussion for one side to plead that unless they receive assurances beforehand that the verdict will be theirs they will not lay aside their arms."

My answer:

Truly, Mr. Roosevelt, you cannot believe that when the fate of the nation is at stake any government or leadership of the nation will lay down its weapons before a conference, or surrender them, simply in the blind hope that the intelligence or insight, or whatever, of the other participants in the conference will make the right decision in the end? Mr. Roosevelt, there has

been only one people and one government in all of world history, which has adhered to the formula which you recommend: that of Germany. Acting on solemn promises by the American President Wilson and the endorsement of these assurances by the Allies, the German nation once trustingly laid down its arms. It approached the Council table unarmed. However, once it had laid down its arms, the German nation no longer was even invited to the conference. Instead, contrary to all assurances, the greatest breach of promise of all time was affected.

And then, one fine day, instead of resolving the greatest confusion of all time at the Council table, the most inhuman Diktat in the world brought about even more terrible confusion. The representatives of the German Volk, having laid down their arms and trusting in the solemn assurances of the American President, appeared unarmed to accept the Diktat of Versailles. They were received not as the representatives of a nation, which throughout four years had withstood the whole world with immense heroism in the struggle for its freedom and independence, but instead they were treated in a more degrading manner than could have been the case with Sioux Chiefs.

The German delegates were called names by the mob, stoned. They were dragged to the greatest Council table in the world no differently than prisoners to the tribunal of a victor. There, at gunpoint, they were forced to accept the most shameful subjugation and pillage of all time.⁴⁸⁸

Let me assure you, Mr. Roosevelt, that it is my own unshakeable will to see to it that not only now, but in the future as well, no German ever again shall step into a conference room defenseless. Instead, every representative of Germany shall perceive behind him the united force of the German nation, today and in the future, so help me God.

14. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "in Conference rooms as in Courts it is necessary that both sides enter upon the discussion in good faith assuming that substantial justice will accrue to both."

Answer:

The representatives of Germany shall never again enter into a conference, which means nothing other than a tribunal for them. For who is to judge them? In a conference, there is neither a prosecution nor a judge, there are only two warring parties. And if the common sense of the concerned parties cannot find a solution or a settlement, then surely they will not submit themselves to a judge's verdict by disinterested foreign powers. Besides, it was the United States which declined to step before the League of Nations for fear of becoming the unwitting victim of a court which could decide against the interest of individual parties, provided the necessary majority vote was attained.

Nevertheless, I would be greatly indebted to Mr. Roosevelt if he could explain to me how precisely this new world court is to be set up. Who are to be the judges? How shall they be selected? To whom shall they be held responsible? And, above all, for what shall they be held responsible?

15. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "the cause of world peace would be greatly advanced if the nations of the world were to obtain a frank statement relating to the present and future policy of Governments."

Answer:

In countless public addresses, Mr. Roosevelt, I have already done this. And in today's session, I have made such a frank statement before the forum of the Reichstag—insofar as this is possible within the span of two hours. I must decline, however, to make such statements to anyone but the Volk for whose existence and life I am responsible. It alone has the right to demand this of me. I render account of German policy objectives in so public a manner that the whole world can hear it anyway. Alas, these clarifications are of no consequence to the rest of the world, as long as there is a press capable of distorting any explanation, making it suspect, placing it in question, and concealing it beneath new mendacious answers.

16. Mr. Roosevelt believes that "the United States, as one of the nations of the western hemisphere, is not involved in the immediate controversies which have arisen in Europe." Hence, he trusts that I should "be willing to make such a statement of policy to him as the head of a nation far removed from Europe."

Answer:

Apparently Mr. Roosevelt seriously believes it would render a service to the cause of peace worldwide if the nations of the world would make such frank statements relating to the present policy of governments.

Why does President Roosevelt burden the German head of state so selectively with the request to make such a statement without inviting other governments to make similar statements relating to their policies?

I do not believe that it is permissible at all to demand that such statements be made to a foreign head of state. Instead, in accordance with President Wilson's demand at the time for the abolition of secret negotiations, such statements should best be made to the entire world. I have not only consistently been willing to do this, but—as mentioned before—I have also done so all too frequently. Regrettably, it was precisely the most important statements on the goals and intentions of the German policies which the press in many of the so-called democratic states either withheld from the people or misrepresented.

When, however, the American President Roosevelt feels called on to address such a request to Germany or Italy of all states simply because America is far removed from Europe, then, since the distance between Europe and America is equally great, our side also would have the right to question the President of the United States on the foreign policy goals pursued by America and the intentions on which this policy is based, for instance with regard to the states of Central and South America. In this case, Mr. Roosevelt surely would refer us to the Monroe Doctrine and decline this request as an uncalled-for interference in the internal affairs of the American continent. Now, we Germans advocate exactly the same doctrine with regard to Europe and, in any event, we insist on it insofar as this regards the domain and the interests of the Greater German Reich.

Besides this, of course, I would never allow myself to direct a similar request to the President of the United States of America, as I assume he would justly regard this as tactless.

17. Mr. Roosevelt now declares further that he is willing to “communicate such declaration to other nations now apprehensive as to the course which the policy of your Government may take.”

Answer:

By what means does Mr. Roosevelt determine which nations are apprehensive as to the course of the policy of Germany and which do not? Or is Mr. Roosevelt in a position, in spite of the surely enormously heavy load of work on his shoulders in his own country, to assess by himself the inner state and frame of mind of foreign peoples and their governments?

18. Mr. Roosevelt demands finally that we “give assurance that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory or possessions of the following independent nations: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, the Arabias, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Iran.”⁴⁸⁹

Answer:

As a first step, I took pains to inquire from the cited states whether, first, they are apprehensive. Second, I asked whether Mr. Roosevelt’s inquiry on their behalf was initiated by them or whether, at least, he had secured their consent in this. The responses obtained were negative throughout, in part even marked by outright indignation. However, a number of the cited states could not forward their response to us because, like Syria for example, they are presently not in the possession of their liberty since their territories are occupied by the military forces of the democratic states which have robbed them of all their rights.⁴⁹⁰

Third, far beyond this, the states bordering Germany have all received many binding assurances, and many more binding proposals, than Mr. Roosevelt requested of me in his peculiar telegram.

Fourth, should there be a question as to the value of these general and specific statements which I have repeatedly made, then would not any additional statement of this nature, even if it was made to Mr. Roosevelt, be equally worthless? After all, what is decisive is not Mr. Roosevelt’s opinion of such statements, but the value assigned to them by the states in question.

Fifth, I must yet point out to Mr. Roosevelt a few additional mistaken notions of history. For instance, he mentions Ireland and requests a statement that Germany not attack Ireland. Now, I have just read a speech by the Irish Prime Minister De Valera, in which, contrary to the opinion of Mr. Roosevelt, he oddly enough does not accuse Germany of oppressing Ireland and instead reproaches England for the persistent aggressions under which his state suffers. And, despite Roosevelt’s great insight into the needs and concerns of other states, it can safely be assumed that the Irish Prime Minister knows better what threatens his country than the President of the United States does.

Equally, it appears to have slipped Mr. Roosevelt’s mind that Palestine is not being occupied by German troops but by English ones. By brute force, England is curtailing Palestinian freedom and is robbing the Palestinians of their independence to the advantage of Jewish intruders for whose cause the

Palestinians suffer the most cruel of abuses. The Arabs living in this territory assuredly have not complained to Roosevelt of German aggressions. Rather, in persistent appeals to international public opinion, the Arabs lament the barbaric methods by means of which England seeks to overpower a people who loves its freedom and fights only to defend it.

This may well be one of the problems Mr. Roosevelt would like to see solved at the Council table. It ought to be decided by an impartial judge and not by brute force, military means, mass executions, the torching of villages, the dynamiting of houses, and so on. One thing is certain: in this case, England cannot claim to be repulsing the threat of an Arab attack on England. Instead England is the invader, whom no one bade come, and who seeks to establish his reign by force in a country not belonging to him. A number of similarly mistaken historic notions of Mr. Roosevelt are to be noted; not to mention how difficult it would be for Germany to conduct military operations in states and countries some of which are at a distance of two to five thousand and more kilometers.

I wish to state the following in concluding: the German Government nonetheless is willing to extend an assurance of the type desired by Roosevelt to each and every one of the cited states, if this state desires it and approaches Germany with such a reasoned request. However, there is one prerequisite: this assurance must be absolutely mutual in nature. This will be superfluous in a number of the cases of the states cited by Roosevelt since we are either already allied to them or, at the very least, enjoy close and friendly relations with them. And, beyond the duration of such an arrangement, Germany will gladly enter into agreements with each of these states, agreements of the nature desired by this state.

I would not like to let this opportunity pass without extending assurances to the President of the United States on the issues of territories of most immediate concern to him, namely, the United States itself and the other states of the American continent. And herewith, I solemnly declare that any and all allegations of a planned German attack on American territories or an intervention to be pure swindle and crude fabrication. Not to mention that, assessed from a military standpoint, such allegations can only be the products of an overwrought imagination.

19. Mr. Roosevelt declares in this context that he considers of crucial importance the discussions that are to "relate to the most effective and immediate manner through which the peoples of the world can obtain progressive relief from the crushing burden of armament."

Answer:

Mr. Roosevelt apparently is not aware that this problem already was completely resolved as far as Germany was concerned. In the years 1919 to 1923, the German Reich completely disarmed, as explicitly confirmed by the allied commissions, to the extent enumerated below.

And here once again followed Hitler's favorite listing in which he detailed the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, yes millions of guns, machineguns, trench mortars, and the like which Germany had

been forced either to surrender or to destroy after its defeat in the First World War. Hitler had used exactly the same listing on many previous occasions.⁴⁹¹ He could not well let this opportunity pass him by without demonstrating his intricate knowledge of military affairs.

The following were destroyed in the Army:

59,000 fieldguns and barrels; 130,000 machineguns; 31,000 trench mortars and barrels; 6,007,000 rifles and carbines; 243,000 MG barrels; 28,000 gun carriages; 4,390 trench mortar carriages; 38,750,000 shells; 16,550,000 hand grenades and rifle grenades; 60,400,000 live fuses; 491,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition; 335,000 tons of shell cases; 23,515 tons of cartridge cases; 37,600 tons of gunpowder; 79,000 ammunition gauges; 212,000 telephone sets; 1,072 flamethrowers, and so on.

Further destroyed were: sledges, mobile workshops, flak vehicles, limbers, steel helmets, gas masks, machines of the former war industry, and rifle barrels.

Further destroyed in the air were: 15,714 fighter planes and bombers; 27,757 aircraft engines.

At sea, the following were destroyed:

26 heavy battleships; 4 coastal armored ships; 4 battlecruisers; 19 light cruisers, 21 training ships and special ships; 83 torpedo boats; 315 U-boats.

Also destroyed were motor vehicles of all types, gas bombs and, in part, anti-gas defense equipment, propellants, explosives, searchlights, sighting devices, range finders and sound rangars, optical instruments of all kinds, harnesses, and so on; all airplane and airship hangars, and so on.

In accordance with the solemn assurances, which were given to Germany and corroborated in the Peace Treaty of Versailles, this was to constitute merely an advance payment to enable the outside world for its part to disarm without danger. As in all the other cases, having placed its faith in the promises given, Germany was to be shamefully deceived once more. As you are aware, all subsequent attempts sadly failed, in spite of years of negotiation at the council table, to bring about a disarmament of other states, which would have constituted no less than an element of intelligence and justice and the fulfillment of commitments made. I myself have contributed to these discussions a series of practical suggestions, Mr. Roosevelt, and I sought to initiate debate to at least reduce armament as much as possible. I suggested a 200,000-man ceiling for standing armies, an abolition of all offensive weapons, bombers, gas warfare, and so on.

20. Mr. Roosevelt finally asserts his preparedness to "take part in discussions looking towards the most practical manner of opening up avenues of international trade to the end that every nation of the earth may be enabled to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market as well as to possess assurance of obtaining the materials and products of peaceful economic life."

Answer:

I believe, Mr. Roosevelt, that it is not a matter of discussing these problems in theory. Instead, it is imperative to take concrete actions to remove actual

impediments to the international economy. The greatest impediments lie within the respective states themselves. Previous experiences have shown that all great international conferences on trade failed simply because the respective states were not capable of keeping their domestic economies in order. Currency manipulation carried this insecurity to the international capital market. Above all, this resulted in constant fluctuations in the exchange rates.

It likewise places an intolerable burden on world trade relations if, because of ideological considerations, it is possible for certain countries to unleash a campaign of wild boycotts of other peoples and their goods, and thereby to practically exclude them from participation in the market. I believe you would render us a great service, Mr. Roosevelt, if you took advantage of your strong influence in the United States to eliminate these particular impediments to the conduct of truly free trade.

However, it did not prove possible to see through these proposals in the rest of the world, in spite of Germany's complete disarmament.⁴⁹² I therefore advanced proposals for a ceiling of 300,000 men to be put up for discussion. The result was equally negative. I thereupon continued to place a series of other detailed disarmament proposals before the forum of the German Reichstag and hence before the international public.

Nobody even thought of joining in these discussions. Instead, the rest of the world began to reinforce its existing vast armament. It was not until the year 1934 that I ordered a thorough German rearmament, after the last of my comprehensive proposals on behalf of Germany, regarding the 300,000-man army, had been rejected for good.

Still, Mr. Roosevelt, I should not like to stand in the way of the discussion of armament questions in which you intend to participate. I would only like to request that, before you turn to me and Germany, you contact the others. I can still see in my mind's eye a sum of practical experiences and I am inclined to remain skeptical until reality sets me right. For I simply cannot believe that, if the leaders of other peoples are not even capable of putting in order production in their own states and of eliminating the campaign of wild boycotts for ideological reasons which so detrimentally affect international economic relations there can be much hope of international accords bearing fruit in the improvement of economic relations. Only in this manner can we secure the right for all to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market.

Besides this, the German Volk has made concrete demands in this context. I would be delighted if you, Mr. President, as one of the successors to the late President Wilson, would speak up for finally redeeming the promise which once led Germany to lay down its arms and to surrender to the so-called victors. I am speaking, in this context, not so much of the countless billions of so-called reparation payments extorted from Germany, as of the return of the areas stolen from Germany. The German Volk has lost three million square kilometers of land both within and beyond Europe. Moreover, unlike the colonies of other nations, the colonial possessions of the German Reich were not acquired by conquest but instead by treaties and purchase. President Wilson solemnly pledged his word that Germany's claims

to its territorial possessions, as well as all others, would undergo just scrutiny. Instead, those nations, which have already secured for themselves the mightiest colonial empires of all time, have been awarded the German possessions. This causes our Volk great concern especially today, and will increasingly in the future as well. It would be a noble deed if President Franklin Roosevelt redeemed the promise made by President Woodrow Wilson. This would constitute a practical contribution to the moral consolidation of the world and the improvement of its economy.

21. Mr. Roosevelt declared in conclusion that "Heads of great Governments in this hour are literally responsible for the fate of humanity in the coming years. They cannot fail to hear the prayers of their peoples to be protected from the foreseeable chaos of war." I, too, would be held "accountable."

Mr. President Roosevelt! Without any difficulty, I do understand that the greatness of your empire and the immense riches of your land allow you to feel responsible for the fate of the entire world and for the fate of all peoples. However, Mr. Roosevelt, my situation is much more modest and limited. You have 135 million inhabitants living on nine-and-a-half million square kilometers. Your land is one of untold riches and vast natural resources. It is fertile enough to sustain half a billion human beings and to provide them with all necessities.

I once took over a state on the brink of ruin thanks to its ready trust in the assurances of the outside world and the feeble leadership of a democratic regime. Unlike America, where not even fifteen persons live on one square kilometer, this state has 140 persons per square kilometer. The fertility of our soil does not equal yours. We lack the numerous natural resources which nature places at the disposal of your people. The billions of German savings, accumulated in the form of gold and currency during the years of peace, were extorted from us and taken away.⁴⁹³ We lost our colonies. In the year 1933, there were seven million unemployed in my country.⁴⁹⁴ Millions worked part-time only, millions of peasants were reduced to misery, commerce was nearly destroyed, trade was ruined; in short: chaos reigned.

I have been able to accomplish only one task in the years since, Mr. President Roosevelt. I could not possibly feel myself responsible for the fate of a world which showed no sympathy for the woeful plight of my own Volk. I saw myself as a man called on by Providence to serve this Volk and to deliver it from its terrible hardships. Within the six-and-a-half years now lying behind us, I lived day and night for the one thought: to awaken the inner forces dormant in this Volk forsaken by the outside world, to increase them to the utmost, and, finally, to use them in the salvation of our community.

I overcame chaos in Germany. I restored order, enormously raised production in all spheres of our national economy, labored to create substitutes for a number of the raw materials we lack, smoothed the way for new inventions, developed traffic, ordered the construction of gigantic roads. I had canals dug, colossal new factories brought to life. In all this, I strove to serve the development of the social community of my Volk, its education, and its culture. I succeeded in bringing those seven million unemployed, whose plight truly went to heart, back into a useful production process. Despite the

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difficulties faced, I managed to preserve his plot of soil for the German farmer, to rescue this for him. I brought about a bloom in German trade and fostered traffic.

To preclude threats from the outside world, I have not only united the German Volk politically, I have rearmed it militarily. Further, I have sought to tear to shreds page upon page of this Treaty, whose 448 articles represent the most dastardly outrage ever committed against a people and man. I have restored those provinces to the Reich which were stolen from it in 1919.⁴⁹⁵ I have led home to the Reich millions of despondent Germans torn from us. I have restored the one-thousand-year old, historic unity of the German Lebensraum. And I have labored to do so, Mr. President, without bloodshed and without bringing either upon my own Volk or other peoples the hardships of war.⁴⁹⁶

I have done this all by myself, Mr. President, although a mere twenty-one years ago, I was but an unknown laborer and soldier of my Volk. And, hence, before history, I can truly claim the right to be counted among those men who do the best that can reasonably and in all fairness be expected of them individually.

Your task is infinitely easier, Mr. President. In 1933, when I became Reich Chancellor, you became the President of the United States. From the start, you thereby placed yourself at the head of the largest and richest state in the world. It is your good fortune to have to nourish barely fifteen human beings per square kilometer in your country. You have virtually never-ending natural resources at your disposal, more than anyone else in the world. The vastness of the terrain and the fertility of the soil are capable of providing each individual American with ten times the foodstuffs possible in Germany. Nature permits you to do this. While the inhabitants of your country number barely a third more than those of Greater Germany, they have fifteen times its Lebensraum at their disposal.

Thus, the vastness of your country allows you to have the time and leisure to attend to problems of a universal nature. You hence conceive of the world as so small a place that you can intervene beneficially and effectively wherever this might be required. In this sense, your concerns and suggestions can be far more sweeping than mine. For my world is the one in which Providence has put me, Mr. President Roosevelt, and for which I am responsible. It is a much smaller one. It contains only my Volk. But I do believe I am thereby in a better position to serve those ends closer to the hearts of all of us: justice, welfare, progress, and peace for the entire community of man!

Hitler had instructed the German Chargés d'Affaires both in London and Warsaw to present to their host country's governments memorandums containing a formal abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 and the 1934 Pact⁴⁹⁷ at the same time as he was giving the speech before the Reichstag. The American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin received a transcript of the Reichstag speech as

Germany's official response to Roosevelt's message. Hitler assuredly thought he had achieved a great deal in the two-and-a-half hours he spoke before the Reichstag. He had relied both on tirades and sarcasm to give the English and the Poles a salutary shock by shredding the two treaties. Undoubtedly, they would now be reduced to subservience. The American President would be so embarrassed and disgraced by this forceful and cunning response to his ludicrous telegram that he would assuredly never again expose himself in a like manner. Instead, he would keep silent in the future, desist from speaking out against Hitler, and cautiously follow in the footsteps of a Brüning, von Papen, or Wels.

In spite of the great effort Hitler invested in his masterly speech, which represented beyond doubt an impressive rhetorical and mnemonic achievement, its effect abroad was negligible at best. The situation would not have been any different had he not said anything.

What counted in the end were not so much words as deeds, and the Führer's actions spoke against him. Anyone who employed phrases as grandiose as Hitler did, needed real power to back them up. In spite of impressive military displays, Germany's armed forces were obviously inferior to the united might of the Anglo-Saxon powers—not to forget their potential ally, Russia.

5

On April 29, Hitler wired his congratulations to the Japanese Emperor on his birthday.⁴⁹⁹

The next day, a festive session of the Reich Chamber of Labor took place in the Mosaic Hall of the new Chancellery at noon. The meeting prolonged the privileged status of the existing 103 “NS Musterbetriebe,”⁵⁰⁰ and bestowed the same title on 99 additional firms.⁵⁰¹ Once more speaking on the subject of economics, Hitler spoke for the “greatest of efforts in the production of foodstuffs and efficiency in the organization of labor.” In the service of the greater good of the collective, Hitler maintained that, by keeping its own affairs in order, each and every factory and farm, as a primary production cell, could greatly contribute to an increase in the productivity of the whole economy. It was hence the moral obligation of every man involved in the production process to view his work as service to the community, whether he was a simple worker, a foreman, an organizer, or a leader. Hitler then officially declared the “Third Industrial Productivity (*Leistungskraft*) Competitions” to be open.

In the afternoon of April 30, two politicians from the Balkans paid tribute to Hitler. The Hungarian Minister-President Teleki and his Foreign Minister Csáky called on Hitler at the Chancellery for a “lengthy discussion,” as the official Party newspaper put it.⁵⁰² Though Teleki was generally known both in his native country and in Italy as decidedly anti-German, he lavished praise on the German dictator that day. Despite his pronounced disdain for Hungarians in general, Hitler was forced to comport himself in a most congenial manner on this occasion in view of the highly conspicuous absence of other foreign dignitaries at the time. Hence, he even asked this politician from a country he had previously characterized as *Gerümpel* to a gala dinner at the Reich Chancellery that night. Hitler’s customary entourage

welcomed Teleki and the Governor of Rome, Count Colonna, as well as the latter's spouse.

On May 1, the celebration of the "German Volk's National Holiday" afforded Hitler the opportunity to deliver two major speeches. He was painfully aware that the tide of public favor had turned against him after the events in Prague. Despite his speech before the Reichstag with its staged applause and paid claqueurs, the dictator felt the lack of enthusiasm throughout the country. After all, the public was well aware that Hitler's reckless undertakings could spell ruin not only for himself, but for all of Germany. While Hitler indulged in rhetoric, his words revealed that friendly relations with Britain and Poland were no longer possible. The German public's appraisal of the situation was decidedly more realistic than Hitler's. The man in the street understood perfectly well that, if the German Government insisted on continuing its present course, Germany was headed for collision with numerous other states, primarily with the Western Powers and Poland, and would soon find itself entangled in another world war, unless a miracle occurred at the last minute.

It was hardly surprising that the prevailing opinion in the country greatly infuriated Hitler. Who did these ungrateful people think they were? Had not the incredible, indeed miraculous, story of his life demonstrated over and over again that he was always right? Had not his domestic struggle lent credence to the fact that he always reigned supreme in the end, and that it would be no different in his dealings abroad? Why did they no longer trust him?

Hitler finally arrived at the conclusion that it would be best for all concerned if he simply ignored the opinions of this "stubborn German Volk,"⁵⁰³ and these "old troublemakers,"⁵⁰⁴ who constantly indulged in undue criticism of their leaders. And it was thus that Hitler came to address Germany's youth which he hoped to prevent from following along the same path as their fathers before them. Hitler was still confident that, provided there was sufficient and systematic indoctrination, he could instill in the next generation the unshakeable belief in their Führer, to whom they owed blind obedience. Germany's youth was to be "steeled" against any foreign interference. If he were ever forced to call on them, so he contemplated, Germany's youth would stand united behind him and head off to do battle unto death in the name of their beloved Führer.

In the morning hours of May 1, Hitler addressed a crowd of 100,000 Hitler Youth members gathered at the Olympia Stadium in Berlin. In

the course of the past six years, this annual address to Germany's youth had become a national institution. Launched in 1933, in the days when Hindenburg was still alive, this forum served Hitler exceedingly well in his effort to rally Germany's youth around their leader. Without fail, every year, he found it necessary to remind them of how fortunate they were to live in "such great times as these." Since the tide was to turn against National Socialist Germany soon, this speech held on May 1, 1939 constituted the last in the series of Hitler's addresses to the youth. In the future, he would restrict his efforts to inspire proper young Germans to a selective grouping of officer cadets joining the Wehrmacht.

On May 1, 1939, Hitler would no longer speak of the "great times" in store for the German youth. At this point, appropriately, he placed many a demand on the unsuspecting young people whom he forewarned to stand ready "should the hour come." He challenged them to "steel" themselves to become "tough men" who "know from the start that nothing in life is free." Hitler's May 1 address had the following content:⁵⁰⁵

My German Youth!

In 1933 I was able to greet you for the first time, standing alongside the venerable Field Marshal von Hindenburg, in the Berlin Lustgarten. In greeting you then, my youth of Berlin, I greeted the youth of the Germany of that time! Six years have passed by since; years in which our Volk underwent a tremendous, historic transformation. The Germany then trod upon, an impotent empire, has become today's Greater Germany. The nation then not worthy of respect has become a Volk greatly respected. A people without arms has become one of the best armed nations in the world. What was then at the mercy of its surroundings has become something secure today, secure thanks to our own force and to the friends we possess today.

That you, the youth of today, should belong to a respected and strong Volk is exclusively the result of the work we wrought domestically. When, twenty years ago, the National Socialist Party was created, it already raised a new banner for the new Germany to be born. After barely fifteen years of struggle this symbol has become the official flag of the German state. Ever since, the resurrection of Germany has been inexorably tied to this new symbol.

You German boys and girls will one day be called on to assume the protection of this flag. But you shall be able to carry it forth and protect it successfully with dignity only if you stand by this flag with the same unity as does the National Socialist Movement and, through it, the German Volk of today. And for you, it will be decidedly easier. We had to laboriously fight for this flag. It is yours already today; you have been raised beneath this flag. In your youth already, you bear this symbol on your sleeves, you march on its orders. I count on you! You shall never forget what has made Germany

great. In your youth, you have witnessed the most profound and rare of historic transformations. Many of you cannot quite grasp this yet. Those among you who are more mature have experienced, and reflected on, its glowing essence. I know that your young hearts already beat strongly and sensitively when, in this year, I strode forth to fashion the Greater German Reich and to reassert its rights derived from a history one thousand years old.

You shall be called on, in light of the greatness of this time, to fulfill tasks as they confront you, and assuredly they will confront you above all. The German nation will one day in the future represent a power that has its point of departure in youth. We shall never be more than what we are essentially ourselves. And we shall never be more than what our youth is today.

And I expect of you that you shall become straightforward, tough German men and reliable German women. You shall be men who know from the start that nothing in life is free. You must struggle for everything in this world; you can keep only that for which you are willing, at all times, to stand up in defense, if necessary. The deceptive slogans of an outside world shall not penetrate your hearts; it tries to poison an upright Volk and thereby to introduce divisions and to destroy it. In your youth, you must already attend to both body and spirit. You must be healthy. You must resist everything which might conceivably poison your body. For the future will assess the individual German in accordance with the works of his spirit and the strength of his health. Above all, we want to see in you a youth which crosses its arms and forms a solid, impenetrable communion.

Germany has witnessed many years of profound inner divisions and impotence. These days are over now thanks to the inner resurrection of our Volk. It shall find its ultimate embodiment in you. And thus it is of supreme importance that you should be aware of this in your youth.

We are surrounded by peoples who do not desire this realization on our part. They wish to deny our Volk the plain necessities of life, the right to life so accepted as a matter of course for so many other peoples. We and the other young peoples must laboriously seek to regain this right to life which our forefathers so thoughtlessly forfeited.

Perhaps one day we shall even need to stand up for it. And in this, too, I count on you primarily, my German boys!

Above all, I expect that, should the hour come in which an outside world believes it can reach out for the freedom of Germany, a cry of millions will shatter the air. It will be a cry in unison and hence so forceful that all will have to acknowledge that the times of inner divisions in Germany are finally over. The hard school of National Socialist education will then have successfully fashioned the German Volk.

And thereby we shall obey the commandment of the Almighty who has imparted to us a common blood and a common language. In the acknowledgment of this commandment within the past six years, Germany has once more become great and respected, albeit perhaps not very popular [!]. Alas, we Germans shall have to be content with the love of our Volksgenossen.

And I am content to know that you, my Volksgenossen and my German youth, above all, stand behind me. I know I am in your hearts just as you know my heart belongs to you without reservation! And should the outside world

threaten us and thunder against us—they shall not succeed for the very reason they have never yet succeeded: German unity! That it will prevail in the future, for this you are the guarantors just as the great men of today guarantee this at present. Just as you have every right to look back to those who created Germany with great pride, so we wish to rest at ease looking to you in the future! The days in which our youth had to be ashamed of the generation then alive are over. You can truly be proud of the men who lead Germany today. And I am equally proud that you constitute the German youth of today.

In this spirit, we come together on this day which once marked Germany's inner divisions. Today it is the day of the unity of the German Volksgemeinschaft. It is the day of our faithful avowal; our avowal of our Volk and of our thousand-year-old Greater German Reich.

To our Volk and to our Greater Germany: *Sieg Heil!*

A mass rally of "creative laborers" took place in the Berlin Lustgarten at noon.⁵⁰⁶ The occasion was most opportune for Hitler to speak yet again. For once, he could uninhibitedly vent his frustration with the mood in Germany in general and its intellectuals in particular, the "educated class" whose members always knew everything much better than he did. By this time, the German workers formed the only social class still receptive to National Socialist propaganda. They were easily impressed by displays of military might and promises of a better future. Before this forum, Hitler felt he could make several caustic references to those who possessed their own "purse" and hence feared for their possessions in light of his reckless, haphazard politics, and to those who valued education sufficiently to clearly perceive just how dangerous the foreign policy pursued by Hitler was to the life and limb of the ordinary German.

Unwittingly, Hitler began what was to be his last May Day speech with sentimental reflections on springtime. The subsequent "party narrative" climaxed in the following exclamation: "Who can still doubt that we face the most epochal transformation of all time?!" Then he continued to speak on the subject of Lebensraum once again.

The foundations for the life of a people are not to be found in doctrines and theories, but in its Lebensraum, in what the earth affords it for sustenance. Hence, Lebensraum cannot be regarded separately from the *Lebenshöhe* (peak of life) of a Volk. And this Lebensraum is not enough by itself—and this also is a truly revolutionary realization—it must be complemented by a Volk's diligence, its energy, and its ability to manage to get the most out of its Lebensraum. And a still greater insight: this necessitates a Volksgemeinschaft, even if blood alone is insufficient for this.

My Volksgenossen! No leader can command greater strength than that accorded to him by his followers. What am I without you?! If you refuse me

your unanimous solidarity, what am I to do?! I am only one man. I can possess the greatest good-will possible—my will is of no greater worth to you than your will is worth to me!

He then spoke of his critics with great acerbity. Summarily, he mocked German intellectuals whom he had never yet won for his cause because they were not easily deceived by his rhetoric and most likely were aware of Germany's limited potential and the true distribution of power internationally. His contempt for science and education was reminiscent of the character Faust, influenced by Mephisto.⁵⁰⁷ Hitler's acidulous remarks revealed his great insecurity, his fundamentally pessimistic nature, and the characteristic inferiority complex. He philosophized:

How petty are all other vain differences in our lives in view of this! How easily is the individual deceived by vanity and notions of his own supreme importance, my Volksgenossen! One man thinks a great deal of himself for one reason, another for another reason. One prides himself on being ten centimeters taller than the other, yet another is happy simply because he considers himself better looking than the first. Yet another man thinks he looks even better because his ancestors already looked better—nothing is proven, of course. Yet another man holds himself to have an advantage because momentarily his purse is fuller than that of another. I say "momentarily" for experience has shown this phenomenon to mostly be short-lived.

Another man yet says: "I have graduated from more classes than you have. Do you have degrees like those I have?"—"No."—"Therefore I am worth more than you. My degrees prove this conclusively." So the story goes. So many men have extremely important degrees furnishing the basis for their own personal brand of arrogance.

How ludicrous is all this in view of the common fate we all share and which hangs so compellingly above all our heads! It is void of any significance before the one truth that all of us either unite in our struggle to survive or perish together. This applies just as much to the man with the so-called fatter purse as it does to the man with an older family name and his ancestors, and the man with the allegedly more thorough education. For better or for worse, we all depend on one another.

And to any man who fails to grasp this—I have no idea where he might be hiding out—the attitude of the outside world toward us should serve as ample proof. How do these people behave towards us? What can we expect of them? Are these not once again the very same advocates of a strategy of encirclement, the very same people who knew nothing but hatred in the year 1914? Yes, indeed, it is once more the same clique of warmongers which haunted us back then already. What can we expect of them, my Volksgenossen? I believe it is essential that all Germans throw overboard these ridiculous prejudices insofar as remnants of them exist yet today. It is imperative that we move closer together

in the conviction that together and united we can face off any danger. United we stand, divided we fall.

Hence we wish to educate our Volk in this spirit. And if one of those stubborn old heads is driving me to despair, then all I need to do is look at his son to regain hope. Even if all hope is lost with some of these old troublemakers (*alte Stänkerer*), the youth has already outgrown them—praise the Lord! This youth represents a new breed of man, the type we hope to introduce to the future.

We are doing everything that can be done in this educational undertaking. True, at times, we do overlook the so-called freedom of the individual in the process. I can easily imagine one man or another saying: “It is beyond me why my son should have to serve with the labor service just now. He was born for something greater than that. Why should he now be running around with a spade in his hand? Would it not be better if he exercised the powers of his intellect instead?” For goodness sake, what is it precisely you understand as “intellect,” my dear friend?! If your boy spends six months in the West wielding his spade for the sake of Germany, it may well be that he is doing Germany a greater service than your “intellect” could in a lifetime. And, above all: he has contributed to the overcoming of the worst form of “intellectual” confusion possible, namely, the inner fractures within a Volk. Of course, we cannot simply say: “Oh, if he does not want to, he need not work.” Do you truly believe that work at a chemical factory in one of the democracies is something so infinitely more delightful? Do not come up to tell me: “Oh, truly, this is the magic of work which smells so enticingly.” Assuredly not! It stinks, my dear gentlemen! But a few hundred thousands of workers simply have to take this on themselves and take it on themselves they do. Therefore, another can assuredly take on himself to pick up the spade. And he will pick up this spade.

And this brings up the problematic topic of liberty. Liberty? Insofar as the interests of the Volksgemeinschaft permit the exercise of liberty by the individual, he shall be granted this liberty. The liberty of the individual ends where it starts to harm the interests of the collective. In this case the liberty of the Volk takes precedence over the liberty of the individual.

By the way, in no other state is intellectual work as highly esteemed as in ours. I believe this is evident already in its leadership. In Germany, we pride ourselves in having men head our state who can well withstand any type of “intellectual” comparison to the representatives of any other state. Above the liberty of the individual, however, there stands the liberty of our Volk. The liberty of the Reich takes precedence over both.

In the concluding statements of this speech, Hitler returned once more to the question of “the securing of German Lebensraum.” In this context, he declared that he was arming Germany “with all [his] might.” Certain “international scribblers,” Jewish “cerebral parasites,” and “warmongers who do not do anything themselves” had already made the mistake of underrating him in 1933. And these same forces were mistaken once again on his account. He declared:

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The commandment of the hour is the securing of German Lebensraum. There is no need for me to stress that we love peace above all. I know that a certain international clique of journalists is spreading lies about us on a daily basis, placing us under suspicion and committing libel against us. This does not surprise me in the least. I know these creatures from back in the old days. They, too, are export articles for which the German nation has no use. In the American Union, a veritable campaign for boycotts against our German exports has been organized. It would have been more intelligent, so I believe, had they imported German goods instead of the most inferior German subjects. Well, at least, we can rejoice in having rid ourselves of these. How the people there will handle them, that is truly their problem. We shall see to it that these subjects do not pose an actual threat to us. I have taken the necessary precautions. I still recall vividly my political "friends" from the days before our rise to power. These fellows always insisted they knew no Fatherland. And, indeed, this is true as they are Jews and have nothing to do with us. These fellows now are reaffirming their attitudes and their pledges of old: they have launched a campaign of hatred against Germany which they pursue with all their might.

And I? I arm with all my might!

I love peace; my work perhaps best attests to this. And in this I differ from these warmongers. What is it I have wrought and what is it these elements are undertaking? There is a great Volk here for which I bear responsibility. I am attempting to make this Volk both great and happy. Enormous projects are being undertaken here: new industries are being born; enormous buildings are undergoing construction. They are to serve the uplifting of the Volk and to bear witness to our culture—not only here in Berlin, but also in a multitude of other German cities. The things we have created in the course of these years! The countless projects we have begun in these years! And so many of them will take ten to twenty years to be completed! Therefore, I have cause aplenty to desire peace. Yet, these warmongers need no peace. They neither advance peace nor do they labor for it.

There is no need for me to name names in this context. They are unknown international scribblers. They are ever so clever! They are truly omniscient. There is only one thing that they failed to foresee, namely, my rise to power. Even in January 1933, they could simply not believe it. They also failed to foresee that I was going to remain in power. Even in February 1934, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was going to liberate Germany. Even in 1935 and 1936, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was going to liberate our German Volksgenossen and to return them home. Even in 1937 and 1938, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was determined to liberate and return home the rest of them, too. Even in February of this year, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was going to eliminate the unemployment afflicting seven million. Even two, three years ago, they could simply not believe it. They failed to foresee that I was going to implement the Four-Year Plan in Germany with success. This they simply could not believe either. They foresaw nothing! And they know nothing even today!

These people have always been parasites. Lately I do not know, but I have the feeling sometimes that they are a kind of cerebral parasite. They know only too well what is happening in my brain, for instance. Whatever I say today, as I stand before you, they knew of it yesterday already. And even if I myself did not know of it yesterday—they did, these most excellent receptacles of wisdom!¹⁵⁰⁸

Actually, these creatures know everything. And, even if facts prove their pronouncements blatant lies, they have the nerve to come up with new pronouncements immediately. This is an old Jewish trick. It keeps the people from having time for reflection. Should people truly reflect on all these various prophecies, compare them to reality, then these scribblers would not get a penny for their false reports. Therefore their tactic and trick is, once one prophecy has been disproved, to come up with three new ones in its stead. And so they keep on lying, according to a type of snowball-tactics, from today until tomorrow, from tomorrow until the next day.

The current version of this is the claim that 20,000 Germans have failed to land in Morocco, although their imminent arrival had been reported earlier. Instead of landing in Morocco, they have landed in Liberia. Considering the initial report's assertion that these landings were supposed to be carried out by the Luftwaffe, it seems as though these planes have been floating about in mid-air ever since and have now unwittingly gone down over Liberia. Should no German be found in all of Liberia eight days hence, they will no doubt maintain: "It was not Liberia, after all, but Madagascar where they were heading." And if this turns out to be wrong also—well, then it must have been another place—I already have enumerated all the locations allegedly threatened by us before the Reichstag.

The warmongers who do not do anything and, in any event, cannot step before the world to say: "I have created this or that!"—they are the men who are attempting to plunge the rest of the world into disaster once again. And you will understand, that I cannot possibly rely on assertions or declarations by people who themselves are paid servants of these warmongers. No, indeed, I rely exclusively on my German Volk—on you!

Better safe than sorry. A declaration by the League of Nations is all very well, but I prefer our freedom to be guaranteed by the far more reliable fortifications protecting Germany in the West. And this, too, is the product of the diligent work wrought by Germans just as the inner attitude of our Volk is the product of the diligence and work of millions of its most active members. There is the German peasant who, loyally and bravely, assures bread for us by plowing his acres diligently and honestly. There is the German worker who, loyally and bravely, goes to work at the factory to assure other consumer goods for us earnestly and honestly. This is the basis of our existence.

As we reflect on the immense work done within these past six years, then I do believe we have a right to appoint a day once a year on which we shall join together to celebrate what we call the German Volksgemeinschaft. For this conveys the meaning of the First of May: a day to celebrate the work of Germans in the cities and in the countryside; a day to celebrate the creative

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man; a day to celebrate our Volksgemeinschaft. My Movement vouches for the proper education of our Volk! The German Wehrmacht vouches for its brave defense!

And, all of you whom I greet at this moment, you millions of Germans in the cities and in the countryside, you who constitute the German Volksgemeinschaft, you are the guarantors that it shall never again fall apart internally!

To our Greater German Reich and to our Volk, in East and West, and in North and South: *Sieg Heil!*

In the afternoon hours of May 1, Hitler attended the customary banquet at the Reich Chamber of Culture at the German Opera House. On this occasion, Goebbels publicly named the recipients of the annual awards in the service of German culture. The award for the best film went to movie director Carl Froehlich for his film *Heimat*. A Sudeten German author by the name of Bruno Brehm received the literary award for a trilogy on the First World War. Thereafter, Hitler hosted delegations from the German Labor Union and the national award winners of the professional competitions. According to the German News Bureau, Hitler's guests "enjoyed the good fortune of being received at the new Chancellery building." In the Mosaic Hall, Hitler personally shook hands with each of his guests whom he subsequently treated to an hour-long address.

The DNB summarized the contents of the speech in the following manner:⁵⁰⁹

All work is work for our Volksgemeinschaft. Everything we own is based on attainment. In the end, a steady and intensive increase in efficiency serves to render our lives more satisfactory and ever the more beautiful.

Following the speech, Hitler asked his guests to the Garden Room for coffee. On May 1, Hitler also established several awards, one of which was called the "Honorary Badge for the Cultivation of the German Volk."⁵¹⁰

I hereby found the Honorary Badge for the Cultivation of the German Volk for accomplishments in the promotion of the Volk's welfare, the Winterhilfswerk, the caring for the sick and injured in times of peace and war, the rescue services, the cultivation of German Volkstum and caring for German Volksgenossen abroad. I shall enumerate details on the artistic design, classifications, and form of the award in the by-laws to be decreed by my person.

Another award established that day bore the title "Medal in Commemoration of the Return of the Memel territory."⁵¹¹

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As a tangible expression of my appreciation and gratitude for services rendered in the reunion of the Memel territory with the German Reich, I hereby establish the Medal in Commemoration of the Return (*Heimkehr*) of the Memel territory to the German Reich. Details are enumerated in the by-laws.

Furthermore, Hitler honored military and civilian personnel who partook in the occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia on March 15 with a special medal to be awarded for merits earned there.⁵¹²

In extension of my ordinance on the establishment of the Medal in Commemoration of October 1, 1938, dated October 18, 1938 (RGBl. I, p. 1527), and the statutes pertaining thereto, I decree the following:

Article I

The Medal in Commemoration of October 1, 1938 shall be extended for services rendered in the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Article II

Those persons who have received the Medal in Commemoration of October 1, 1938 for meritorious service in the reunion of the Sudeten German territories with the German Reich and who have equally earned merits in the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, shall be awarded a clasp to be worn on a band.⁵¹³

Article III

The clasp bears a relief reproduction of the Prague fortress on its face.

Article IV

I charge the Reich Minister of the Interior, in connection with the State Minister and Chief of the Presidential Chancellery of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, with the implementation of this ordinance.

On May 2, Hitler congratulated Franco in a telegram on the occasion of the Spanish national holiday.⁵¹⁴ The following day Hitler left Berlin and headed for the Obersalzberg. He stopped in Nuremberg to inspect the construction site of the Reich Party Congress. There Albert Speer personally reported to him on the progress of this particular project.⁵¹⁵ Only a few days later, Speer visited the Berghof to discuss plans for the construction of a new opera house in Linz.⁵¹⁶

The time Hitler spent on the Berghof afforded him the opportunity of reflecting on the political and military situation. News from London and Warsaw had been anything but encouraging. The April 28 speech had failed to intimidate his opponents. Instead, speaking before a gathering of the Sejm on May 5, the Polish Foreign Minister had insisted on the previous stance espoused by Poland in both the issues of Danzig and the Polish Corridor.

Apparently, Hitler's castigations impressed neither the Poles nor the British. Undaunted, Hitler initiated steps in another direction. Should his strategy of intimidation indeed fail, then, so Hitler reasoned, a Russo-German pact, which he had earlier called a "devilish potion," would do the trick. Prospects for an alliance between National Socialist Germany and the Soviet Union were most promising. Soviet leaders had long advocated a similar rapprochement with Germany. In the days of the Weimar Republic close ties had developed between the Reichswehr and the Red Army. Command units had participated in exchange programs. The Red Army had trained German officers in the handling of modern weaponry, the possession of which the Versailles Treaty had prohibited to Germany, such as fighter planes, tanks, and heavy artillery; and Russia had clandestinely supplied the Reichswehr with the desired equipment.⁵¹⁷ Moreover, Russia desired to settle accounts to regain possession of the territories lost to Poland as a consequence of the 1920-21 Polish-Russian War. The Soviet Union sought to profit from Germany's efforts to re-establish the boundaries of 1914 in order to reclaim these lands located in Belorussia and the Ukraine. Russia had already made an overture to Germany in the dismissal of Litvinov on May 3. The Jewish origin of the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs had always been a thorn in the side of National Socialist Germany. His replacement by the highly conservative Molotov signaled Russia's favorable disposition to potential German advances.

Despite this most opportune climate in German-Soviet relations, Hitler was hesitant in the matter. Only if all hopes for coming to terms with Great Britain were shattered, would he turn to a possible alliance with Russia as a last resort. Not surprisingly, the progress of the talks in Moscow between May and July⁵¹⁸ was slow even though Hitler himself had initiated them.

In the meanwhile, Hitler was actively searching for alternative approaches to overcoming Britain's lack of interest in his proposals. He firmly believed that the British could be brought to reason by the display of Germany's sheer invincible military might, by the extension of diplomatic feelers and, in particular, by the introduction of a military component to the Axis and the Anti-Comintern Pact. Concluding a like intimidating military alliance was fraught with difficulty at this time as Japan sought to keep its distance from Germany after the embarrassment of Hitler's Czechoslovakia venture. While Mussolini was not favorably inclined towards a like revision of the Anti-Comintern Pact

either, he was not in a position to debate the virtue of Hitler's forays to the East. In the course of the past years, he had grown increasingly dependent on Germany as Italy's partner in European affairs. Moreover, he was haunted by the political repercussions of his own military faux pas. The Italian invasion of Albania had isolated Rome internationally. Thus Mussolini found his fate inextricably tied to Germany, and Hitler, all too well aware of this, justly felt confident that he could successfully pressure Italy into a military alliance with the Third Reich.

Hitler had dispatched the Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, to Italy as early as April 30. In the course of his stay, which lasted ten days, Brauchitsch repeatedly consulted with both King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini. On May 4, Göring followed in his footsteps and even put up temporary residence in San Remo. On May 6, Ribbentrop arrived in Milan to confer with Ciano. Following breakfast at the City Hall, the two Foreign Ministers had lengthy discussions on topics, so say the official reports, of "great historic significance." These talks allegedly served to restore "the balance of power in Europe" with the obvious intent of tilting it in the Axis' favor. After two days of discussion, Ribbentrop triumphantly wired Berlin the report of Italy's acquiescence to an extensive political and military agreement. Boldface headlines immediately informed the German public of this.

In his notes,⁵¹⁹ Ciano made a deliberate effort to portray the situation in Rome as though, after a telephone conversation with Berlin, Mussolini himself had proposed the conclusion of the treaty. However, this assertion was apparently intended to soothe Mussolini's wounded ego instead of serving to record a historic truth. In view of the extensive preparations made for the treaty in Berlin and the dispatching of three members of Hitler's immediate entourage to Italy, the evidence in support of this thesis was as meager then as it is today. At the time, it was clear beyond any doubt who initiated the conclusion of this particular military alliance and who sought to profit by it. Once more, Mussolini and Ciano fell prey to Hitler's persuasive powers.

On May 10, shortly after the good news from Milan reached Hitler, he found himself dictating the terms of a trade war which included protectionist measures in defense of Germany's domestic economy. The guidelines therefore complemented the domestic policy provisions of the April 11 directive for "Case White."⁵²⁰

Hitler believed the time had come to renew his psychological assault on the West, in a type of war of attrition, with a tour of the "West

Wall.” He aimed to intimidate the Western Powers by thus drawing media attention to the supposedly invincible, “mightiest fortress of all time.”⁵²¹ First, Hitler traveled to Aix-la-Chapelle for the inspection of a segment of the West Wall, the line of fortification which, in a speech on October 9, 1938, he had singled out in an intentional affront to the British.⁵²²

Accompanied by Himmler, Dietrich, and Bormann, Hitler reached the site early on May 14. Colonel General Keitel and General von Witzleben, in his capacity as Commander in Chief of the Second Army Group, along with Lieutenant General Jacob, the supervisor responsible for the fortifications, welcomed Hitler and his entourage there. Proceeding to the site where “work was either completed or nearing completion,” Hitler scrutinized the progress made in the building process.

On May 15, Hitler examined the strongholds erected in the Eifel region and in the Moselle River Valley. The next day, Hitler inspected construction in progress in the Saar. There Colonel General von Brauchitsch detailed the military aspects of the West Wall, “an impregnable wall of iron and steel,” to the Gauleiters and Reichsleiters assembled. Later in the day, Hitler attended a performance of Karl Millöcker’s operetta *Gräfin Dubarry* in the “Gautheater Saarpfalz” recently built in Saarbrücken. Incidentally, the foundations of the theater building formed part of the West Wall’s substructure along the Saar River.

On May 17, Hitler closely examined the Air Defense Zone West which, so he maintained, “extended in great depth far behind the lines of fortifications and tanks.” Along the Lorraine frontier, the various Gauleiters and Reichsleiters rejoined Hitler once again. With their “expert assistance,” Hitler observed the maneuvers taking place in the area. In the evening, Hitler took advantage of a conference of military and Party leaders to stress once more the importance of close cooperation between the Wehrmacht and the NSDAP. This communiqué summarized the contents of Hitler’s address:⁵²³

In the course of the evening, the Führer took the floor to outline the importance of the mighty bulwark (*Schutzwall*) to the west. In recapitulating the political situation, he lent expression to his confidence in the invincible nature of the Reich. Faith in the Reich suffused his person as well as the entire Volk, the Party, and the Wehrmacht.

On May 18, Hitler continued his tour of the West Wall by inspecting the segment linking Karlsruhe and Kehl. The next day, he speedily

toured the remaining sections in the area between Kehl and the Swiss border. In the afternoon, a gathering of generals took place at the train station at Efringen (Baden). Hitler spoke before them, expressing once more his profound gratitude to General von Witzleben and the General Building Inspector, Todt. The DNB published the following summary of Hitler's speech in appreciation of the work accomplished:⁵²⁴

The Führer underlined once more how profoundly impressed he had been with the exemplary comportment and spirit of each member of the border guards and each West Wall worker. This had reassured him a hundred percent in his existing belief in the present invincibility of the German West Wall.

On May 19, having spent six days inspecting and touring the West Wall, Hitler issued the following order of the day to the Wehrmacht from Efringen. In this context, Hitler's characterizing of the border in the West as "Western Front" was truly remarkable:⁵²⁵

Soldiers and Workers of the Western Front!

My tour of inspection of the West Wall has convinced me of its impregnability. The entire German Volk joins me to thank all those who have erected, through their unconditional all-out effort, the foundations for Germany's security in concrete and steel within a remarkably short time. In addition to the soldiers, construction workers, and the men of the Labor Service, I owe gratitude to the civilian population in the border region for proving the exemplary sense of solidarity of the National Socialist through its willingness to sacrifice.

On the same day, Hitler sent Franco a congratulatory telegram marking the Spanish Generalissimo's victorious entry into the city of Madrid:⁵²⁶

On this day, as your battle-tested troops celebrate the victory of Nationalist Spain over the forces of blind destruction in a parade, my thoughts and those of the German Volk turn to your person and equally to all contingents of your proud army in heartfelt solidarity. May a long period of peaceful recovery be bestowed on the Spanish people under your powerful leadership.

Hitler left Efringen by special train and headed for the Munsterlager training area in the Lüneburg Heath region where members of the SS Standarte *Deutschland* were conducting maneuvers. This final highlight of Hitler's inspection tour emphasized the enormous importance Hitler attached to the Waffen SS in view of the pending armed conflict.

On May 20, SS Obergruppenführer Heissmeyer and SS Brigadeführer Hausser, a former Reichswehr General, greeted Hitler at the Munster

station. Heissmeyer was in charge of the local SS headquarters while Hausser served as Inspector of the SS Verfügungstruppe. Surrounded by his hosts, Hitler reviewed the troop maneuvers in which live ammunition was used. The evening culminated in a military field parade which filed by Hitler,⁵²⁷ who returned to Berlin in the late evening hours. Here Ribbentrop signed an economic agreement with Lithuania before the day was through.

Sunday May 21 marked the celebration of Mother's Day in Germany. The political and military tensions overshadowed the carefully planned festivities, including the first presentation of the Mother's Honorary Cross Medal which Hitler himself had established.⁵²⁸

At 11:00 in the morning, Ciano reached Berlin intending to add the final touches to the German-Italian Pact.⁵²⁹ In the afternoon hours at the new Chancellery, Hitler received Ciano for a lengthy discussion of the situation.⁵³⁰ The Führer was most cordial on this occasion and even feigned enthusiasm when Ciano stated Italy's intent to turn Albania into "a stronghold which will inexorably dominate the Balkans."

On May 22, Ciano and Ribbentrop placed their signatures beneath the German-Italian "Pact of Friendship and Alliance" in the presence of Hitler. Great attention was paid to protocol on this day. Upon Ciano's arrival at the Chancellery at 11:00 a.m., Meissner and Ribbentrop first welcomed him. Then they led him to the Marble Gallery where Germany's leading military men awaited him. From there, all those assembled proceeded to a large reception hall where both the German and the Italian delegation lined up along the walls. Hitler then made his entrance and the party gathered around a large table. Seated between Ribbentrop and Ciano, the Führer attentively observed the signing of the treaty reproduced below:⁵³¹

Pact of Friendship and Alliance
between Germany and Italy

The German Reich Chancellor and His Majesty, the King of Italy and Albania, Emperor of Ethiopia, deem that the time has come to strengthen the close relationship of friendship and homogeneity, existing between National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy, by a solemn Pact.

Now that a safe bridge for mutual aid and assistance has been established by the common frontier between Germany and Italy fixed for all time, both Governments reaffirm the policy, the principles and objectives of which have already been agreed upon by them, and which has proved successful, both for promoting the interests of the two countries and also for safeguarding peace in Europe.

Firmly united by the inner affinity between their ideologies and the

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comprehensive solidarity of their interests, the German and Italian nations are resolved in future also to act side by side and with united forces to secure their Lebensraum and to maintain peace.

Following this path, marked out for them by history, Germany and Italy intend, in the midst of a world of unrest and disintegration, to serve the task of safeguarding the foundations of European civilization.

In order to lay down these principles in a pact there have been appointed plenipotentiaries:

by the German Reich Chancellor:
the Reich Foreign Minister,
Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop;
by His Majesty the King of Italy and Albania, Emperor of Ethiopia:
the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Count Galeazzo Ciano di Cortellazzo;

who having exchanged their full powers, found to be in good and due form, have agreed on the following terms.

Article I

The High Contracting Parties will remain in continuous contact with each other in order to reach an understanding on all questions affecting their common interests or the general European situation.

Article II

Should the common interests of the High Contracting Parties be endangered by international events of any kind whatsoever, they will immediately enter into consultations on the measures to be taken for the protection of these interests.

Should the security or other vital interests of one of the High Contracting Parties be threatened from without, the other High Contracting Party will afford the threatened Party full political and diplomatic support in order to remove this threat.

Article III

If, contrary to the wishes and hopes of the High Contracting Parties, it should happen that one of them became involved in warlike complications with another Power or Powers, the other High Contracting Party would immediately come to its assistance as an ally and support it with all its military forces on land, at sea and in the air.

Article IV

In order to ensure in specific cases the speedy execution of the obligations of alliance undertaken under Article III, the Governments of the two High Contracting Parties will further intensify their collaboration in the military field, and in the field of war economy.

In the same way the two Governments will remain in continuous consultation also on other measures necessary for the practical execution of the provisions of this Pact.

For the purposes indicated in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, the two Governments will set up commissions which will be under the direction of the two Foreign Ministers.

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Article V

The High Contracting Parties undertake even now that, in the event of war waged jointly, they will conclude an armistice and peace only in full agreement with each other.

Article VI

The two High Contracting Parties are aware of the significance that attaches to their common relations with Powers friendly to them. They are resolved to maintain these relations in the future also and together to shape them in accordance with the common interests which form the bonds between them and these Powers.

Article VII

This Pact shall enter into force immediately upon signature. The two High Contracting Parties are agreed in laying down that its first term of validity shall be for ten years. In good time before the expiry of this period, they will reach agreement on the extension of the validity of the Pact.

In witness whereof the Plenipotentiaries have signed this Pact and affixed thereto their seals.

Done in duplicate in the German and Italian languages, both texts being equally authoritative.

Berlin, May 22, 1939, in the XVIIth year of the Fascist Era

Joachim von Ribbentrop

Galeazzo Ciano

After the treaty was ratified, Ribbentrop officially reported to Hitler that the pact had indeed been signed. Thereafter, Hitler presented Ciano with the newly established Golden Grand Cross of the German Eagle.⁵³² Following the carefully orchestrated exit of the Führer, Ribbentrop and Ciano made the obligatory official statements to the journalists. Once the press conference was over, Hitler received the two Foreign Ministers in his study for further talks. At this time, Hitler also ordered the telegrams below to be sent to Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini respectively:⁵³³

Your Majesty!

Our foreign ministers have just set their signatures, as plenipotentiaries, beneath the German-Italian Pact of Friendship and Alliance. In this historic hour, I wish to express to Your Majesty my profound satisfaction at seeing both our peoples united in unshakeable friendship and community of fate.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

In this historic hour which witnesses the jubilation of the entire German Volk at the signature of the German-Italian Pact of Friendship and Alliance, I feel compelled to express to Your Excellency my great joy at seeing the inseparable bonds existing between Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany embodied in a formal, solemn treaty. Now the world can see that

the hopes placed in a weakening of the Rome-Berlin Axis were all in vain. As a block consisting of 150 million people, Germany and Italy stand side by side today, and shall continue to stand side by side in the future, in the defense of the holy heritage of civilization and in the securing of a peace founded in justice.

Adolf Hitler

After the official ceremonies, Ciano held a lunch reception at the Italian Embassy which Hitler himself attended.⁵³⁴ Later in the day, the Führer appeared sporting a white tunic [!] at an evening-dinner in honor of the Italian Foreign Minister which Ribbentrop had arranged at his residence in Berlin-Dahlem. A sash woven with gold threads worn by Hitler on other official occasions had already heralded the dawn of this more refined life-style in the Third Reich.⁵³⁵

On May 23, Ciano departed Berlin at 11:00 a.m., accompanied to the train station by Meissner who conveyed Hitler's regards to the Italian Foreign Minister. The German print media celebrated the so-called "Pact of Steel" as the "mightiest alliance in world history."⁵³⁶ The media accorded great attention to the treaty, and much *tamtam*, to use Hitler's expression,⁵³⁷ followed in its wake. The treaty, naturally, represented a renewed attempt to intimidate the Western Powers. Today it is not difficult to understand why this military alliance failed of its purpose. London interpreted the Pact of Steel as a thinly-veiled admission of insecurity by Hitler. Not surprisingly, England was to assess the "Three-Power Pact" of September 1940,⁵³⁸ which allied Germany, Italy, and Japan, in a similar manner. Hitler concluded both agreements from the need somehow or other to get around the unyielding English, who did not want to give in to his proposals.

The "Pact of Steel" did not impress the German public favorably. After all, the "unshakeable friendship" with Italy had always been loudly proclaimed and praised in the National Socialist media. And, in the course of his visit to Berlin in September 1937, the Duce himself had reaffirmed his country's determination to march side by side "to the end" with Germany.⁵³⁹ And Hitler had repeatedly pledged himself to "go through thick and thin" with his Italian colleague.⁵⁴⁰ Given all these grandiose proclamations, so "the man in the street" reasoned, why should the partners in this "unbreakable Axis"—which obliged them to assist one another in any event—feel the necessity of entering into yet another alliance?

There was no perceptible reason why another formal avowal of the commitment of Germany to Italy should have become necessary all of

a sudden—unless, of course, rifts in the relationship made the conclusion of this Pact necessary. Recollections of Italy's behavior in 1914 and 1915 caused many Germans to doubt its loyalty in any event. It was highly questionable, if push came to shove, whether Mussolini and the Italians would sacrifice themselves for the greater good of Hitler and his Third Reich.

Furthermore, Germany's military men knew all too well that should this German-Italian Pact have been intended as a balance to the military alliance of the Western Powers, this merely rendered the undertaking all the more questionable. Italy more likely constituted a weak point militarily in the Axis alliance. Given its long stretches of coastlines, it was indeed more vulnerable to attack than Germany itself. Hitler was greatly irked by the Armed Forces' misgivings on account of the Pact of Steel. Hence, he resolved to take up the issue at once and to dispel the military's fears in an address lasting several hours.

At midday on that May 23, Hitler attended the state funeral of the late Graf von der Schulenburg,⁵⁴¹ a retired Cavalry General and SS Obergruppenführer. The funeral service was held in the Potsdam Lustgarten where all Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht were in attendance, alongside various commanders of the Waffen SS; numerous Reichswehr generals; as well as a number of Reichsleiters and Gau-leiters. Brauchitsch gave the commemorative address and Hitler placed a huge wreath on the coffin of the deceased, carried by twelve junior officers.

This state affair had induced the appropriate mood in Hitler to reprimand the top brass of the Wehrmacht, along with their military adjutants, for their lack of confidence in his policies. How could they dare question his ability to bring about an understanding with Great Britain and how could they be so skeptical regarding the freshly concluded "Pact of Steel"? Outraged by the impertinence of his subordinates, Hitler summarily ordered the officers to his study in the new Reich Chancellery in the afternoon. Had not the late Graf von der Schulenburg "blindly" subjected his ambitions to the cause of the National Socialist Movement in his days as Chief of Staff of the Army Group *Deutscher Kronprinz*; had not the Heir to the Throne himself officially avowed his allegiance to Hitler in a public declaration in 1932;⁵⁴² and had not countless renowned generals of the Empire unconditionally subjected themselves to Hitler's will, amongst them General Litzmann ("the Lion of Brzeziny"), and General von Epp ("the Deliverer of Munich"). Even Field Marshal von Hindenburg finally

came to sign whatever he, Hitler, placed before him and did whatever he demanded of him. Equally pleasant were Hitler's recollections of Field Marshal von Mackensen who had turned his back on his beloved *Stahlhelm* solely because he, Hitler, so desired.⁵⁴³ The great warlord Ludendorff also had come to admit towards the end of his life that he, Hitler, indeed embodied the salvation of the German Fatherland. And now, these generals serving with the Wehrmacht he had just created possessed the impudence to doubt the wisdom of his policies, to regard with skepticism the Pact of Steel, and to question his ability to arrive at a settlement with England?!

He would teach these puny doubters a lesson. In the beginning of this lecture, which lasted several hours, Hitler set out to portray himself as the omniscient and omnipotent man of the hour, as a statesman of unequaled abilities. Indeed, to judge from his assertions, he was the only man who knew of every problem worldwide; the only man who could handle a difficult situation properly and resolve it as though it were mere child's play. Men led by such a "Führer" ought not trouble themselves with worries about the country's future or with recollections of the tragic course of events in the last World War. For he, Hitler, had no doubt: had he led Germany in 1914, there would not have been a disastrous defeat on the scale of that of 1918. The German military would not even have suffered partial defeats. He would have simply deployed "two more battleships and two more cruisers" and the victory would have been his. Even the battle for the Skaggerak could have been won had the assault been launched "in the morning." Had the German Navy proceeded in this manner, then "the British fleet would have been defeated and England forced to her knees. It would have meant the end of the World War."

Questions of the past were followed by a discussion of the current problems and Germany's prospects for the future. In swiftly addressing these unspoken questions of the military, doubts plaguing many ordinary German citizens as well, Hitler discussed the central issues of the day: the reliability of the pacts with Italy and Japan, the question of Danzig and Poland, the future stance of Great Britain and of Russia, and the alternatives facing the German military. To end debate as to whether there would be a war or not, and to convey to his audience that all discussion represented a waste of time in his opinion, Hitler declared that it was his goal "to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity." Laconically, he stated, "we cannot expect another Czechia. There will be war."

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He stressed the supreme importance of absolute secrecy surrounding Germany's military designs: "Secrecy is the decisive prerequisite for success. Our objects must be kept absolutely secret from both Italy and Japan." Hitler then dealt a slap in the face to the generals by declaring: "These studies [of the enemy's weak points] must not be left to the General Staff. Secrecy would then no longer be assured." Hitler's May 23 speech has survived in the form of a protocol drawn up by his Wehrmacht adjutant, then Lieutenant Colonel Schmudt, who took notes on the "general sense" of his superior's comments. Undoubtedly, the "party narrative" recapitulating the days before and after Hitler's rise to power, was far more lengthy and detailed than appears from Schmudt's minutes. The remaining passages must also have spanned several hours. Schmudt's protocol has the following wording:⁵⁴⁴

TOP SECRET

To be handled by officer only.

Place: The Führer's study, New Reich Chancellery.

Adjutant on Duty: Lt. Col. (General Staff) Schmudt.

Present: The Führer, Field Marshal Göring, Grand Admiral Raeder, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, Colonel General Keitel, Colonel General Milch, General (of Artillery) Halder, General Bodenschatz, Rear Admiral Schniewind, Colonel (attached to the General Staff) Jeschonnek, Colonel (General Staff) Warlimont, Lieutenant Colonel (General Staff) Schmudt, Captain Engel (Army), Lieutenant Commander Albrecht, Captain von Below (Army).

Subject: Briefing on the Situation and Political Objectives

The Führer gave as the purpose of the conference:

- (1) Review of the situation.
- (2) To set the Armed Forces the tasks arising from the situation.
- (3) Definition of the conclusions to be drawn from these tasks.
- (4) Ensuring that secrecy is maintained on all decisions and measures resulting from these conclusions. Secrecy is the prerequisite for success.

The gist of the Führer's statements is as follows.

Our present position must be viewed under two aspects.

- (a) Actual development from 1933-1939.
- (b) Germany's never-changing situation.

From 1933-1939 progress in all spheres. Our military situation is improved enormously.

Our situation vis-à-vis the surrounding world has remained the same.

Germany was outside the circle of the Great Powers. A balance of power had been established without Germany's participation. This balance is being disturbed by Germany claiming her vital rights and her reappearance in the circle of Great Powers. All claims are regarded as "breaking in". The English are more afraid of economic dangers than of ordinary threats of force.

The ideological problems have been solved by the mass of 80,000,000 people. The economic problems must also be solved. To create the economic conditions necessary for this is a task no German can disregard. The solution of the problems demands courage. The principle must not prevail that one can accommodate oneself to the circumstances and thus shirk the solution of the problems. The circumstances must rather be adapted to suit the demands. This is not possible without "breaking in" to other countries or attacking other people's possessions.

Living space proportionate to the greatness of the State is fundamental to every Power. One can do without it for a time but sooner or later the problems will have to be solved by hook or by crook. The alternatives are rise or decline. In fifteen or twenty years' time the solution will be forced upon us. No German statesman can shirk the problem for longer. At present we are in a state of national ebullience as are two other states: Italy and Japan.

The years behind us have been put to good use. All measures were consistently directed towards the goal. After six years the present position is as follows:

The national political unification of the Germans has been achieved bar minor exceptions. Further successes can no longer be won without bloodshed.

The delineation of frontiers is of military importance. The Pole is not a fresh enemy. Poland will always be on the side of our adversaries. In spite of treaties of friendship Poland has always been bent on exploiting every opportunity against us.

It is not Danzig that is at stake. For us it is a matter of expanding our living space in the East and making food supplies secure and also solving the problem of the Baltic States. Food supplies can only be obtained from thinly populated areas. Over and above fertility, the thorough German cultivation will tremendously increase the produce.

No other openings can be seen in Europe.

Colonies: A warning against gifts of colonial possessions. This is no solution of the food problem. Blockade!

If fate forces us into a showdown with the West it is good to possess a largish area in the East. In wartime we shall be even less able to rely on record harvests than in peace time. The populations of non-German territories do not render military service and are available for labor service.

The problem "Poland" cannot be dissociated from the showdown with the West. Poland's internal solidarity against Bolshevism is doubtful. Therefore Poland is also a doubtful barrier against Russia.

Success in war in the West with a rapid decision is questionable and so is Poland's attitude. The Polish régime will not stand up to Russian pressure. Poland sees danger in a German victory over the West and will try to deprive us of victory. There is therefore no question of sparing Poland and we are left with the decision: to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity.

We cannot expect a repetition of Czechia. There will be war. Our task is to isolate Poland. Success in isolating her will be decisive. Therefore the Führer must reserve to himself the final order to strike. It must not come to a simultaneous showdown with the West (France and England).

If it is not definitely certain that a German-Polish conflict will not lead to war with the West, then the fight must be primarily against England and France. Thesis: Conflict with Poland—beginning with an attack on Poland—will only be successful if the West keeps out of the ring.

If that is not possible, it is better to fall upon the West and finish off Poland at the same time. Isolating Poland is a matter of skillful politics.

Japan is a difficult proposition. Though at first she was rather reluctant to collaborate with us for various reasons, nevertheless it is in Japan's own interest to proceed early against Russia.

Economic relations with Russia are only possible if and when political relations have improved. In press comments a cautious trend is becoming apparent. It is not ruled out that Russia might disinterest herself in the destruction of Poland. If Russia continues to agitate against us, relations with Japan may become closer.

An alliance with France-England-Russia against Germany-Italy-Japan would lead me to attack England and France with a few devastating blows.

The Führer doubts whether a peaceful settlement with England is possible. It is necessary to be prepared for a showdown. England sees in our development the establishment of hegemony which would weaken England. Therefore England is our enemy and the showdown with England is a matter of life and death.

What will this conflict be like? England cannot finish off Germany with a few powerful blows and force us down. It is of decisive importance for England to carry the war as near as possible to the Ruhr. French blood will not be spared (West Wall!). The duration of our existence is dependent on possession of the Ruhr.

The Dutch and Belgian air bases must be militarily occupied. Declarations of neutrality can be ignored. If France and England want a war between Germany and Poland to lead to a showdown then they will support Holland and Belgium in their neutrality and have fortifications built in order eventually to force them to join company with them. Belgium and Holland will yield to this pressure albeit under protest. Therefore, if England wants to intervene in the Polish war, we must make a lightning attack on Holland. We must aim at establishing a new line of defense on Dutch territory as far as the Zuyder Zee. The war with England and France will be a war of life and death.

The idea of getting out cheaply is dangerous; there is no such possibility. We must then burn our boats and it will no longer be a question of right or wrong but of to be or not to be for 80,000,000 people.

Question: Short or long war? Everybody's Armed Forces and/or Government must strive for a short war. But the Government must, however, also prepare for a war of from ten to fifteen years' duration.

History shows that wars were always expected to be short. In 1914 it was still believed that long wars could not be financed. Even today this idea buzzes in a lot of heads. However, every State will hold out as long as it can unless it is immediately seriously weakened (for instance the Ruhr). England is similarly vulnerable. England knows that to lose the war means the end of her world power.

England is the motive force driving against Germany. Her strength lies in the following:

(1) The Briton himself is proud, brave, tough, dogged and a gifted organizer. He knows how to exploit every new development. He has the love of adventure and the courage of the Nordic race. The increase in quantity involves a lowering of quality. The German average standard is higher.

(2) England is a World Power in herself. Constant for three hundred years. Increased by alliances. This power is to be regarded as embracing the whole world not only physically but also psychologically.

Add to this immeasurable wealth and the solvency that goes with it.

(3) Geopolitical security and protection by a strong sea power and valiant air force. England's weaknesses.

If in the last war we had had two more battleships and two more cruisers and had begun the battle of Jutland in the morning, the British fleet would have been defeated and England forced to her knees. It would have meant the end of the World War. In former times it was not sufficient to defeat the Fleet. To conquer England she had to be invaded. England could feed herself. Today she no longer can.

The moment England is cut off from her supplies she is forced to capitulate. Imports of food and fuel oil are dependent on naval protection.

Luftwaffe attacks on England herself will not force her to capitulate in a day. But if the Fleet is annihilated instant capitulation results. There is no doubt that a surprise attack might lead to a quick decision. But it is, however, criminal for a government to rely on the element of surprise.

Experience has shown that surprise can fail because of:

- (1) Betrayal of secrets to individuals outside the competent military circles.
- (2) Some common occurrence that wrecks the whole action.
- (3) Human shortcomings.
- (4) Weather conditions.

The date for striking must be fixed well in advance. Over and above this one cannot endure tension long. It must be taken into account that weather conditions may render surprise attacks by the Fleet and Luftwaffe impossible.

Planning must be based on the most unfavorable conditions.

(1) The aim must be to deal the enemy at the start a smashing blow or the smashing blow. Here right or wrong, or treaties, play no part.

This is only possible if we do not "slide" into a war with England on account of Poland.

(2) Preparations must be made for a long war as well as for a surprise attack and every possible intervention by England on the Continent must be smashed.

The Army must occupy the positions important for the Fleet and the Luftwaffe. If we succeed in occupying and securing Holland and Belgium, as well as beating France, the basis for a successful war against England has been created.

The Luftwaffe can then closely blockade England from western France and the Fleet undertake the wider blockade with submarines.

Results:

England cannot fight on the Continent. The daily attacks by the Luftwaffe and the Fleet sever all vital arteries. Time will decide against England.

Germany does not bleed to death on land.

The necessity of such conduct of the war is proved by the World War and military operations since. The World War compels us to draw the following conclusions for the conduct of war.

(1) Had the Fleet been stronger at the beginning of the World War or had the Army been switched to the Channel Ports the war would have had quite a different outcome.

(2) A country cannot be forced down by the Air Arm. All objectives cannot be attacked simultaneously and a few minutes' interval brings into action anti-aircraft devices.

(3) It is important to use all means ruthlessly.

(4) Once the Army in cooperation with the Luftwaffe and the Fleet has taken the most important positions, industrial production will cease to flow into the bottomless Danaid cask of the Army's battles but will be available for the benefit of the Luftwaffe and the Fleet.

Therefore the Army must be able to capture these positions. The attack must be prepared according to plan.

Study of this is the most important task.

The aim will always be to force England to her knees.

The effect of any weapon will decide a battle only as long as the enemy does not possess it.

This goes for gas, submarines and the Luftwaffe.

This applies to the Luftwaffe as long as, for instance, the English Fleet has no defense against it but that would no longer be so in 1940 and 1941. Against Poland, for instance, tanks will be effective as the Polish Army lacks defense against them.

Where the effect can no longer be regarded as decisive it must be replaced by surprise and masterly handling.

This is the program of attack. The program demands

(1) The correct assessment of weapons and their effects, e.g.

(a) battleships or aircraft carriers: which is the more effective both in single cases and considered as a whole? The aircraft carrier is the better protection to a convoy.

(b) Is air attack on a factory more important than that on a battleship? Where are the bottlenecks in manufacturing?

(2) Rapid mobility of the Army. It must move straight from its barracks to overrun neighboring countries.

(3) Study of the enemy's vulnerable points. These studies must not be left to the General Staff. Secrecy would then no longer be assured.

The Führer has therefore decided to order the setting-up of a small planning staff in the OKW, composed of the representatives of the three branches of the Armed Forces and calling in, whenever necessary, the three Commanders in Chief or their Chiefs of Staff. The staff will have to keep the Führer currently informed and report to him.

This planning staff will undertake the planning preparations for the operations to the utmost degree and the resultant technical and organizational preparations. The object of any of the schemes drawn up is the concern of no one outside the staff.

May 23, 1939

However much our enemies may increase their armaments they must, at some time or other, come to the end of their resources and our armaments will be the greater.

French age groups yield only 120,000 recruits!

We shall not be forced into a war but we will not be able to avoid one.

Secrecy is the decisive prerequisite for success. Our objects must be kept secret from both Italy and Japan. As for Italy, we shall continue to abide by the Maginot Line break-through, which is to be studied.

The Führer thinks this break-through possible.

On studying the problem as a whole, coordination (grouping together) of the branches of the Armed Forces is important.

The object.

(1) Study of the problem as a whole,

(2) Study of how to set about it,

(3) Study of the resources needed,

(4) Study of the necessary training.

Members of the staff must be men of great imagination and the highest specialist competence as well as officers of sober and critical judgement.

Principles to be applied to this work.

(1) No one to be initiated who does not have to be.

(2) No one to know more about it than he has to.

(3) When is the latest for him to know? No one to know anything sooner than he has to.

Undoubtedly, this was one of the most muddled speeches ever delivered by Hitler. Contrary to a similar discussion with the generals on November 5, 1937, it completely lacked inner cohesion. No outline was discernible. Hitler appeared to be rambling on without any clear purpose other than to dispel the justified and well-founded misgivings of the military, to impress on the generals how self-confident he remained, and how little cause they had to doubt him. The only one who ventured to question Hitler in response to his convoluted state-ments was Göring. He inquired of the Führer as to what precisely constituted the concrete tasks to be carried out by the Wehrmacht. Further, he wanted to know when this war was anticipated to break out. Hitler was never short of a reply and, as Schmundt dutifully recorded in this notes, he responded in the following fashion:

In reply to Field Marshal Göring the Führer lays down that:

(a) the branches of the Armed Forces determine what is to be constructed;

(b) nothing will be changed in the shipbuilding program;

(c) the armaments program will be completed by 1943 or 1944.

Certified correct
Schmundt (Lt. Col.)

Item (c) above undoubtedly relieved the generals attending this confused conference at the Chancellery. 1943 and 1944 seemed far off in the distance in May of 1939. Four or five years hence—who knew what could happen by then? And, if one recalled the briefing in November 1937, the timeframe for a potential war then had been equally comfortably distant: the period 1943 through 1945.

Hitler's reference to this particular period in his speech of May 23 was remarkable in another context as well. Without doubt, Hitler referred to a similar time-frame in his talks with the Italian Foreign Minister in the course of the previous two days. Ciano confirmed this in his diaries.⁵⁴⁵ A letter Mussolini penned only eight days later, on May 30, 1939, further substantiates this theory. It contained the Duce's warning that Italy would not be ready for war until late 1942. On receiving this document from the hands of General Cavallero, a member of Italy's military mission in Berlin, Hitler replied that he intended to meet with Mussolini in the near future anyway.⁵⁴⁶ While Hitler did not say so, he apparently intended to make it perfectly clear to Mussolini orally that he, the Führer, exclusively had the right to set a particular date for the strike.

On May 24, Hitler attended the official opening of the Municipal Theater in Augsburg. The Berlin Professor Baumgartner had refurbished the building according to Hitler's instructions. A festive rendition of Wagner's *Lohengrin* served to celebrate the occasion.⁵⁴⁷

In the meantime, the Japanese had apparently determined that etiquette required the conveying of Japan's congratulations to Hitler on the conclusion of the "Pact of Steel." This did not indicate a change of heart on the part of the Japanese as they persisted in their refusal to join the pact.

On May 30, the German News Bureau published the following telegram in which Hitler expressed his thanks to the Japanese Prime Minister Baron Kishiro for the sentiments conveyed:⁵⁴⁸

Rejoicing in the realization that Your Excellency's assessment of the significance of the Italo-German Alliance Pact corresponds to my own interpretation, I wish to express to you my heartfelt thanks for the congratulations extended on the conclusion of this Pact.

Adolf Hitler

On May 31, a German-Danish Non-Aggression Pact was signed in Berlin. It was the first, though meager, fruit to be borne by Hitler's diplomatic campaign in response to Roosevelt's telegram. The treaty read as follows:⁵⁴⁹

May 23, 1939

Having resolved to firmly uphold the peace between Germany and Denmark under all circumstances, the German Reich Chancellor and His Majesty the King of Denmark and Iceland have agreed to reaffirm and reinforce this resolve by entering into a treaty. To this end, the German Reich Chancellor has appointed the Reich Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, as his plenipotentiary; His Majesty the King of Denmark and Iceland has appointed the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister in Berlin, Herr Herluf Zahle, as his plenipotentiary. After due and proper exchange of powers of attorney, they have agreed on the following:

Article I

The German Reich and the Kingdom of Denmark shall not wage war against each other, in any case, and shall desist from the application of force. Should a third power undertake an action of the nature described in Sentence 1 against one of the parties to this treaty, the other party to this treaty shall not lend its support to such an action in any way, manner, or form.

Article II

This treaty shall be ratified and the documents attesting to this ratification shall be exchanged in due form in Berlin as soon as possible. This treaty shall enter into force as of the day of the exchange of the documents attesting to its ratification. It shall enter into force for a period of ten years. Should neither party to this contract abrogate this treaty within one year prior to its expiry, it shall enter into force for another ten years. The same shall apply to subsequent time periods.

In acknowledgement thereof, the signatory powers below have affixed their signatures thereto. Drawn up in duplicate, the German and Danish texts of this treaty being equally authoritative.

Berlin, May 31, 1939

Joachim von Ribbentrop
Herluf Zahle

Additional Protocol

By their signature of this German-Danish Pact on this day, both parties thereto have agreed on the following:

For the purposes of this treaty, a status of belligerency on the part of the party to this treaty not involved in the conflict shall not be considered to exist in the sense of Article I, Paragraph 2, of this treaty, if this behavior complies with the customary rules affecting neutrality. It shall hence not be regarded as a violation of the terms of this treaty if the party to this treaty not involved in the conflict continues to pursue the normal exchange of goods with this third power and allows for the transit of these goods.

Berlin, May 31, 1939

Joachim von Ribbentrop
Herluf Zahle

There was no festive occasion to celebrate the signature of this pact in striking contrast to the official reception a few days later following

the conclusion of two similar pacts with Estonia and Latvia. It appeared as though Hitler was flustered by Denmark's failure to send a minister to Berlin to sign the document. In an apparent effort to avoid drawing attention to the conclusion of this ignominious pact, the Danish Government had simply empowered Herluf Zahle, its Envoy to Berlin, to act as plenipotentiary in this matter. Barely ten months after its signature, Hitler flagrantly broke with the provisions of the agreement on April 9, 1940.⁵⁵⁰

On May 31, Hitler also toured the Bellevue Castle in Berlin which had been transformed into an official guest house for prominent foreigners hosted by the Third Reich. Professor Baumgartner had supervised the refurbishing of the facilities.⁵⁵¹ Hitler displayed particular interest in the rooms assigned to foreign dignitaries. In spite of his ambitious intentions, these rooms were destined to serve only a second-rate clientele, insignificant politicians from the various Balkan states, because of the increasing isolation of Germany internationally.

On June 1, Hitler welcomed the first in a series of such visitors to Berlin: the Yugoslav Prince Regent Paul and his spouse Princess Olga.⁵⁵² Rejoicing in the fact that once more he found himself surrounded by foreign dignitaries paying a state visit to Germany, Hitler relished playing the role of the congenial host. He personally rushed to the Lehrte station at 3:50 p.m. to greet his guests and presented a bouquet of flowers to the Princess. Indeed, the entire visit of the royal couple in Germany bore striking similarity to the visit of the Yugoslav Minister-President Stojadinovic and his wife on January 15, 1938.⁵⁵³ After a triumphant entry into the city of Berlin, Hitler accompanied his guests to the Bellevue Castle. In the course of the afternoon, the royal couple called on Hitler at the Chancellery; he returned their call thereafter. On the latter occasion, he presented Princess Olga with a special issue of the honorary Red Cross Medal.⁵⁵⁴

At 8:30 p.m., Hitler gave a large dinner banquet in honor of the Prince and the Princess. The Yugoslav Foreign Minister attended the gathering, as did Göring, Ribbentrop, Raeder, Brauchitsch, Keitel, and various Reichsleiters. Neurath was also present, as he had consulted with Hitler at noon on matters regarding the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Hitler extended his welcome to the Yugoslav royalty in the following address:⁵⁵⁵

Your Royal Highness!

It is both a great honor and pleasure to welcome Your Royal Highness, the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia, and Her Royal Highness, Princess Olga, to

the capital of the German Reich. I also greet you in the name of the entire German Volk. It is suffused with sentiments of the most heartfelt friendship for His Majesty King Peter II, for your Fatherland, and for the Yugoslav people.

The friendship of Germans for the Yugoslav people is not only a spontaneous one. It gained in depth and substance amidst the tragic confusion of the World War.⁵⁵⁶ The German soldier then learned to respect and hold in high esteem his ever-so-valiant adversary. I believe this has been the case in reverse also. This mutual respect has found expression in common political, cultural, and economic interests. And hence we regard your present visit, Your Royal Highness, as evidence of the justness of this, our view. It instills in us the hope that the German-Yugoslav friendship will evolve further in the future and will become closer in nature.

We regard the presence of Your Royal Highness as a joyous opportunity for the friendly and open exchange of opinions. In this sense, it will assuredly prove beneficial to both our peoples and states. I am all the more convinced of this because firmly established, trusting relations between Germany and Yugoslavia have now taken hold, since historic events made us neighbors whose borders have been delineated for all time.⁵⁵⁷ This will serve not only to assure a lasting peace between our two countries and our two peoples, it will also serve to calm our nervously agitated continent.

This peace is the goal of all who are willing to work for a true recovery. I myself am filled with the hope that Your Royal Highness, in the course of your short stay in Germany, will gain an impression of the recovery, the desire for peace and work of the German Volk. It cherishes no other ambition than, given the preservation of the foundations of its existence and its natural rights, to advance toward a secure future in a pacified Europe through tireless work. Rest assured that Germany and its Government follow with sincere sympathy the ascent which, true to the legacy of King Alexander, the Yugoslav people have begun so successfully and which is so similar to ours. My best wishes and those of the German Volk accompany you in this work you are undertaking. In this spirit, I raise my glass to toast the health of His Majesty King Peter II, the personal happiness of Your Royal Highness and Her Royal Highness, Princess Olga; the welfare of the Regency, and the prosperity of the Yugoslav people.

On June 2, another impressive military parade filed by the Technical University in Berlin for two hours, only about half the time and length of the parade on Hitler's birthday on April 20. Hitler's intent to demonstrate to his guests the military potential of the Third Reich was all too obvious.⁵⁵⁸ Hitler apparently judged half the ceremony sufficient to duly impress his guests from Yugoslavia. In the evening, he accompanied them to a festive performance of *Die Meistersinger* at the State Opera.

On June 3, the royal couple toured Potsdam and placed a wreath at the tomb of Frederick the Great. In the evening, Ribbentrop asked the couple to attend a gala dinner at the Kaiserhof Hotel. Hitler

personally saw his guests from the Bellevue Castle to the hotel where he also attended a dinner in their honor.⁵⁵⁹ The next day, however, the Yugoslav royalty had to make do with Göring since Hitler was busy with more important matters.

On June 4, the first Greater German Reich Warriors' Convention convened in Kassel. This gathering of veterans appeared to Hitler precisely the forum required to deliver yet another intimidating speech against England. Hitler had a new interpretation of the First World War ready, one which he would present to a series of foreign guests throughout the subsequent weeks.⁵⁶⁰ He now maintained that Germany itself bore responsibility for its dismal performance in the First World War and its ignominious defeat, as it had "through a criminal neglect of German armament" allowed an "incompetent state leadership" to decide its fate.

Times had changed, so Hitler insisted. Under his leadership, there would be no more such nonsense. And he would not allow himself to be threatened by foreign statesmen pursuing their "policy of encirclement" of the German Reich. Further he declared: "I do not in the least suffer from an inferiority complex." This fact assured that "threats by whatever party do not intimidate me in the least." Though the "British policy of encirclement has remained the same as before the war, Germany's policy of defense has undergone thorough revision!" Hitler then expressed his hopes that this policy of strength "should not only be warmly welcomed by the veterans, but also merit their zealous support." The speech had the following content:⁵⁶¹

My Comrades!

It is for the first time today that I partake in a Reich Warriors' Convention; the first time that I speak before you, the veterans of the old and of the new Wehrmacht.

The Reichskriegsführer of the NS Reichskriegerbund, Comrade Reinhard, has greeted me, on your behalf, both as a soldier of the World War and as the Führer and Chancellor of the German Volk and Reich. In this, my dual capacity, I wish to return this greeting. As the Führer, I greet you as representative of the German Volk in the name of millions of Germans. These have placed their trust, their personal destinies, and hence the destiny of the Reich in my hands. They have done so not because of a constitutional exigency. This year especially the German Volk is inspired by a feeling of profound gratitude for all those who once fulfilled the most difficult and noble duty.

As an old soldier, I greet you with the feeling of comradeship, which can reveal itself in the deepest sense only to one who in war experienced the noblest transfiguration of this idea. For the magnificent spirit of manly

communion discloses itself in the most captivating manner only to him who has seen it stand the test of time in this, the toughest trial of manly courage and manly loyalty.

When I speak to you today, my Comrades, then I myself relive in my memory the violence of those times which now lie a quarter of a century behind us and which the soldiers of the Old Army in particular have felt to be the greatest in their own human existence and which still have them under their spell today.

Nearly twenty-five years now lie behind us since those spellbound, violent weeks, days, and hours in which the German Volk was forced to stand up for its existence after a period of peaceful, well-protected ascent. Twenty years have now passed since, in spite of an unequaled, heroic resistance, a Diktat was forced on us which, in theory, was to bestow upon the world a new order, and which, in practice, bore the curse of destroying any reasonable order founded on the recognition of the most natural rights to life.

The fateful grandeur of those five years from 1914 to 1919! The jolts and mortifications this meant for our Volk! What suffering followed in the wake of our collapse! What depths of degradation, deprivation, and destitution was Germany to suffer!

Still, how enormous a change which this doomed Reich underwent in the end—how it pulled itself back from the brink of imminent destruction and moved towards a renewed rise, regarding which we believe that it shall be better and, above all, more lastingly founded than any similar process in German history!

When soldiers gather their thoughts, conversations usually turn back to the years shared. Remembrance allows that to arise anew before their mind's eye which once constituted the shared meaning of their lives. As in epochs of long years of peace, the daily chores with their harsh demands on a sense of duty and on the bodily ability to perform constitute the sum of memories which are recollected at such gatherings, so, with us, these are made up of the memories of the greatest time with which human beings have ever been confronted on this earth. A quarter of a century then begins to pale before us, and the ever-present force of the most difficult, but greatest epoch in our history, casts its spell on us once more. Whatever the individual among us may wish to exchange from the cherished treasure of these, his dearest recollections with others, it is surpassed by what this period in its entirety meant for our Volk, as fateful as this may well have been for our individual lives. For me as the Führer of the German nation, when engaged in critical reflection, time and time again the question presents itself, which I judge as infinitely important not only for the fate we met with then, but also for the correct fashioning of our future, namely, the question of the inevitability of the events back then.

Twenty years ago, a miserable state leadership felt compelled—as it may well have believed—by an irresistible force to place its signature beneath a document which sought to burden Germany finally with the war guilt. Scientific research in the meantime has revealed this to be a lie and a deliberate deception. I solemnly undertook to erase this signature—given against better knowledge—beneath the Diktat of Versailles—and have

thereby paid a formal tribute to honor. Still, beyond this, we all must realize for ourselves: war guilt is inexorably linked to the presupposition of a war aim. No people and no regime will wage war simply for the sake of waging war. That anyone would stride forth into a war merely for the pure joy of killing and bloodshed—such a delusion can take hold only in the brains of perverted Jewish literati.

What is decisive in this context is that the German Government not only pursued no war aim in the year 1914, but also, in the course of the war, never managed to arrive at a reasonable or even precise determination of an aim to be pursued. The Peace Treaty of Versailles, by contrast, clearly reveals the true war aims of the British and French encirclement politicians: the theft of the German colonies; the elimination of German trade; the destruction of all bases for German life and existence; Germany's removal from all positions in power and politics. All in all this added up to precisely the same war aim the British and French encirclement politicians still pursue today.

In Germany at the time, regrettably, there were men who thought they need not pay any attention to the extremist proclamations of English papers and English politicians on the necessity of taking away the German colonies, of eliminating German trade, all goals already apparent in peacetime. The World War and the Peace Diktat of Versailles have instructed the German nation differently. What in former times apparently irresponsible journalists pronounced as the sick products of their own fantasy or hatred, became the goals of British policy, namely, the theft of the German colonies, the elimination of German trade, the destruction of the German merchant marine, the power-political nervous breakdown and destruction of the Reich, and by inference the political and bodily extermination of the German Volk. These were the goals of the British policy of encirclement before the year 1914.

And it is good that we should recall now that when faced with these intentions and war aims of our enemies, later to be affirmed in the Peace Diktat of Versailles, the German state leadership of the day was left without direction and, regrettably, completely without any willpower. And thus it came to pass that there were not only no aims in the war for Germany, but also that the necessary German preparations for the war, in the sense of an effective defensive build-up, were never undertaken. And in this the great guilt of Germany in the World War must be seen. Namely, it is the guilt of having facilitated for the surrounding world (*Umwelt*), through a criminal neglect of German armament, the propagation of thoughts of the destruction of Germany and the realization of these in the end.

In the year 1912, under pretexts incomprehensible to us today, expenditures for the necessary armament were cut; trivial appropriations were stinted; aspiring, honest soldiers banished to the desert; and thereby the convictions of our enemies reinforced the idea that a successful campaign against Germany might well be worth trying. Beyond this, the simple mustering of all men fit for service was conducted only to an insufficient extent and thereby many hundreds of thousands of able-bodied men did not receive training. In critical hours, a high percentage of those who were nonetheless drafted had to pay for this with their lives. All this only reinforces the picture of an

incompetent state leadership and therefore the only genuine conception of guilt, not only regarding the outbreak of the war, but, above all, the outcome of the fight.

When in spite of all of this the memory of the World War in particular has become a source of proud reminiscences, this is due not to the all-too-weak armament, the incompetent state leadership, and so on, but to the inner value, the unequalled instrument of the German Wehrmacht then, of the Army, the Navy, and later of the Luftwaffe. In terms of numbers the latter often faced an adversary who was many times superior to it, but who never attained its inner value.

Reflection on and recollection of this great time must make more firm in all of us, my Comrades, one conviction and one resolve:

1. The conviction that the German Volk can only reflect in general on its past with the greatest pride, and in particular on the years of the World War. As the Führer of the German nation, I may never for a second, as a former fighter, admit that anyone in the ranks of our Western enemies has the right to think himself or regard himself as someone superior to us Germans! I do not in the least suffer from an inferiority complex. On the contrary, I regard the memory of the four years of war, which I had the good fortune to experience thanks to a most gracious Providence, as a cause of proud trust in my German Volk and, as a soldier, in my own person, too. Deep inside, these years cause me to long for and desire peace in the recognition of all the horrors of war, and make me all the more convinced of the value of the German soldier in the defense of our rights. Hence threats by whatever party do not impress me in the least.

2. I and all of us have derived from this period the resolve never to allow the interests of our Reich and nation to be as criminally neglected as it was before the year 1914.

And now I wish to assure you, my old Comrades, of one thing: whereas the British policy of encirclement has remained the same as before the war, Germany's policy of defense has undergone thorough revision! It has already changed in that, at the head of the Reich, no longer is a civilian disguised as a major⁵⁶² seeing to affairs, but rather a soldier who will wear civilian clothes on occasion! There are no more Bethmann-Hollwegs amongst the German state leadership today.

I have taken care that anyone who has anything to do with state leadership is a hundred-percent man and soldier. Should I nonetheless perceive that the behavior of any one person cannot stand up to critical strain, then I shall immediately remove this individual, whoever he may be.

The Peace Diktat of Versailles did not come about coincidentally. It was the goal of those who throughout the years sought to encircle Germany, and who finally realized this goal.

We have no right to doubt that this same policy is being employed in the pursuit of the same goals today. We hence have the duty to tell this truth to the nation, without much ado, and to strengthen it in its resistance and in its defensive capacities to the utmost. I believe that I am hereby acting in the spirit of those comrades who once, regrettably and apparently in vain, had to give their lives for Germany. Just as I believe that now, twenty-five years after the

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outbreak of the World War and twenty years after the Diktat of Versailles, the German state leadership and behind it the entire German Volk can for the first time step up to the tombs of our heroes with their heads held high. At the very least, some atonement has been made for the sins once committed against them by weakness and a lack of direction and unity. Hence I expect that the policy to strengthen Germany's defensive capacities should not only be warmly welcomed by the veterans, but should also merit their zealous support. This policy should not conceive of its goal as a temporary recasting of civilians as military men, but rather of the education in principle of an entire nation to soldiership and soldierly behavior.

It is no coincidence that National Socialism was conceived in the Great War. For it is nothing other than the suffusion of our entire existence with a true fighting spirit for Volk and Reich. May none of us ever doubt one thing: as soon as the German Volk possesses a totally heroic leadership, it will adjust its own behavior to that of the leadership. It is my irrevocable determination to make certain that the highest political and military leaders of the nation think and act as courageously as the brave musketeer must whose task it is to give his own life, and who does so if he receives orders or necessity dictates as much. The heroic leadership of a nation, however, rests on a conscience compelled by the question whether or not a people shall exist.

When I speak to you in this manner especially, my Comrades, then I can already claim of German history the justification bestowed on him who not only speaks through words, but whose deeds attest to the same spirit and to the same persuasion. And this is why I can share more than any one else in the great comradeship of the eternal German soldiery. And because of this I am happy to be able to welcome you here in Kassel on the *Reichskriegertag*, as the representative of this soldiery.

Behind us lies the transfigured memory of the greatest time of our Volk and of our own existence. Before us lies the fulfillment of what this time, too, once, albeit unconsciously, struggled for: *Grossdeutschland!*

Over 300,000 German front-line soldiers attended the speech in Kassel, according to official reports. To hear Hitler speak, the military attachés of Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Slovakia had assembled along with the Japanese Ambassador, the Spanish general Queipo de Llano, a Finnish military delegation, and the President of the Italian Front-Line Soldiers' Association.

On June 5, Hitler personally accompanied Prince Paul and Princess Olga to the Lehrte station to see the couple off. They left the capital city at 7:38 p.m.⁵⁶³ for a subsequent tour of a number of German cities.

One day later, Hitler gave yet another speech to stress the might of the German Wehrmacht. A parade of the Condor Legion⁵⁶⁴ through Berlin's streets and a state occasion afterwards in the Lustgarten provided an excellent frame of reference for a like undertaking. Around 12:30 p.m., Göring reported the troops present. After this,

Hitler stepped up to review the troops, soldiers clad in camouflage uniforms and naval personnel. He was accompanied by the Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht and the last Commander in Chief of the Condor Legion, Freiherr von Richthofen.⁵⁶⁵ At the foot of the monument, Hitler laid down a huge wreath, the ribbon of which bore the inscription "Adolf Hitler." At the same time, members of the Hitler Youth arrayed themselves on either side of the tribune, raising plaques bearing the names of German military personnel who had perished in the Spanish Civil War. Then Göring stepped up to the rostrum to welcome those assembled.

When Hitler took center stage, he first sought to justify his 1936 decision to send German soldiers to Spain. In an aside, he claimed that this had constituted "the gratitude of the German nation" for Spain's benign behavior in the First World War. Moreover, this deployment of troops had precluded "a new international war in Europe." In a revealing manner, he commented on the "international forces" which had sought the escalation of the conflict in Spain.

This June 6, 1939 address represented the first documented case in which Hitler no longer spoke of the "Bolshevist enemy of the world," despite the appropriateness of such references in the context of the Spanish Civil War. Throughout the years 1936 and 1937 in particular, every speech on this topic had been replete with accusations of the Soviet Union. Hitler then had sought to instill in the German people the belief that international Bolshevism had raised its ugly head in Spain and that the German fighters there were indeed struggling against the Communist foe. With a swift change of heart and unprecedented rhetoric, Hitler now incongruously claimed that the "democracies" had instigated the civil conflict in the interest of "war-mongers" and "encirclement politicians." There was no longer any doubt that Hitler was seriously contemplating cooperation with the Bolsheviks of Moscow to force acquiescence by the unyielding British. His speech had the following wording:⁵⁶⁶

My Comrades!

Finally I can now greet you myself. I am so happy to see you here before me. And, above all, I am so proud of you! And the entire German Volk shares my feelings at this hour. All those millions who over the loudspeakers witness your entry and this reception, they are with you in their thoughts. They have taken you to their hearts, grateful and joyous that you are back with us in the homeland once again.

In the summer of 1936, Spain seemed lost. International forces fanned the flames of revolution there, which was earmarked not only to raze Spain to the

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ground, but Europe. And even the Christian democracies could not resist supplying weapons, fuel, and so-called volunteers, to this end. A terrible fate hovered threateningly above our continent. The most ancient civilized countries of Europe appeared to be in danger. Tens of thousands of Germans had to flee Spain. Everything they had was destroyed. Many were murdered. What, in a long, laborious, and honest struggle for existence, the Germans there had built up as the basis of their existence, was destroyed and eliminated within a few weeks.

German battleships, which I dispatched to Spain immediately upon hearing cries for help by our Volksgenossen, helped by assuming the protection of life and limb and by evacuating our Volksgenossen to the homeland, insofar as this was possible. And then, ever more clearly, a man rose up in this country, who seemed to be called on, according to the dictates of his own conscience, to act on behalf of his people.

Franco began his struggle for the salvation of Spain. Against him stood a conspiracy fed by all the world.

In July of 1936, I briskly determined to fulfill the request for help which this man directed to me, and to help him to the extent that and as long as the rest of the world lent its support to the internal enemies of Spain.

And thus National Socialist Germany began to take an active part in the struggle for the resurrection of a national and independent Spain under the leadership of this man. I ordered this in the realization that this would not only spare Europe, but also our Fatherland at a later point, a similar catastrophe. I did this also because of profound sympathy for the suffering of a country which maintained a friendly neutrality towards us in the World War despite all English attempts at extortion. I have hereby expressed the gratitude of the German nation.

Moreover, this occurred in complete agreement with Italy. For Mussolini, inspired by the same idealistic considerations, had likewise resolved to grant Italy's assistance to the saviour of Spain in his struggle against the internationally organized destruction of his country. For the first time, we witnessed a practical demonstration of the *weltanschaulich* solidarity between our two countries.

The international plutocracies were neither capable of comprehending nor accepting these idealistic motives. Throughout the years, British and French papers lied to their readers, claiming that Germany and Italy sought the conquest of Spain, its division, and the theft of its colonies. These trains of thought do appear less unnatural for the representatives of these countries than with us, since the theft of other peoples' colonies has apparently always belonged to the well-tried methods judged permissible by these democracies.

All of us still recall the infamous assertion, disseminated one fine day, that Germany had landed 20,000 men in Morocco in order to occupy it and to take it away from Spain. This libel helped politicians and journalists to stir up their peoples. Time and time again, they tried to have that catastrophe begin in Spain which the encirclement politicians, warmongers, and war profiteers, so eagerly longed for: a new international war in Europe.

Now, my Comrades, you have returned from Spain. Today's festive reception in the Reich capital at the same time signifies the conclusion and

the settlement of this mendacious democratic swindle. For I once sent you out to help an unfortunate country, to support a heroic man who, as a passionate patriot, sought to save his people from destruction and who has gloriously achieved its salvation.

You have now returned as the brave executors of my order. I would like to impart to the entire German nation, at this moment, how much cause it has to be grateful to you. You reported for the duty assigned to you, as upright and conscientious German soldiers, who are courageous and loyal and, above all, self-effacing. The high praise which the Spanish freedom fighter gave you can only make the German Volk all the more proud of you. It was painful for all of us to have to remain silent about your struggle throughout the years. However, at the time, I already had the idea, once this war was over, to give you the type of reception which all brave, victorious soldiers deserve.

Today, I have realized this project of mine for both you and myself. The entire German Volk greets you with joyous pride and in heartfelt solidarity. It also thanks all those who, as soldiers, had to sacrifice life and limb, and their health, in the fulfillment of this mission, and, finally, it thanks the survivors who today lament the sacrifice of such brave husbands and sons.

They fell, but their death and suffering will bestow life on countless other Germans in the future. No one appreciates this more than National Socialist Germany which itself, emerging from the struggles of the World War, has made so many sacrifices for the resurrection of Germany in the face of the same enemies. I thank you soldiers of the Legion, as well as the soldiers of the Navy for your readiness for service, your spirit of sacrifice, your loyalty, your obedience, your discipline, and, above all, for your silent fulfillment of duty.

Above all, my Comrades, your example will increase the German Volk's belief in itself all the more. It will strengthen the ties of comradeship to our friends and will leave the world in no doubt that—should the international warmongers realize their plan to attack the German Reich—then their attempt will be repulsed by the German Volk and the German Wehrmacht in a manner at which the imagination of the encirclement propagandists boggles. And in this sense, my Comrades, your struggle in Spain taught our opponents a lesson and, thus, it was a struggle for Germany.

Now that you yourselves have returned as hardened soldiers, this has not only enhanced your appreciation for the accomplishments of the German soldiers in the World War, but has also rendered you capable, to a high degree, of serving as examples and teachers for the young soldiers of our new Wehrmacht. Thus, you have helped to reinforce the belief in our new German Wehrmacht and in the quality of our new weapons.

At this point, we also wish to remember those at whose side you have fought. We remember the Italian comrades, who courageously and loyally gave their blood and life in this struggle of civilization against destruction. And above all, we remember the country itself from which you have just returned. Spain has suffered a terrible ordeal.

Soldiers of the Legion, you have seen the destruction with your own eyes. You have further lived to see the cruelty of this fight. But you have also gotten

to know a proud people, which has fought with determination for nearly three years, daringly and heroically, to preserve its freedom, its independence, and, hence, its national existence. Above all, you have been fortunate to be under the command of a military leader there, who, with a strength of purpose, staunchly believed in victory and became the saviour of his people. At this moment, all of us have the sincere and heartfelt desire that now the noble Spanish people may be permitted, under the inspired leadership of this man, to effect its ascent anew and with pride.

Legionaries and soldiers! Long live the Spanish people and its leader Franco! Long live the Italian people and its Duce Mussolini! And long live our Greater German Reich! German Volk, long live our German Legion! *Sieg Heil!*

After the official celebration, Hitler received the Spanish and Italian officers present, headed by General de Llano, at the new Chancellery. Also present on this occasion were the commanders of the German contingents deployed in Spain and of the naval units involved in the conflict. In addition, bearers of the Cross of Spain in gold were asked to attend the occasion.⁵⁶⁷

On June 7, Hitler signed several decrees into law. A number of these concerned urban construction projects in the cities of Düsseldorf, Cologne, and Weimar. Others pertained to the granting of a general amnesty in celebration of the “restitution of the Sudeten German territories and the appropriation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.”⁵⁶⁸ In the early morning hours of the same day, the Foreign Ministry in Berlin added the final touches to two non-aggression pacts linking Germany to Estonia and Latvia respectively. The contents of both were absolutely identical.⁵⁶⁹ Karl Selter signed the one for Estonia while Vilhelm Munters represented the Latvian Government. Afterwards, both Foreign Ministers were asked to join Hitler and Ribbentrop at the new Chancellery for “extensive talks.”⁵⁷⁰ In recognition of their obliging attitude, the representatives of these two Baltic states were awarded the Grand Cross of the German Eagle, though not in gold.

Given the headlines burgeoning with military parades and state visits—all of them supposedly having a great impact on world history—by officials of neighboring, small countries and the Balkan states, the German public had little opportunity to keep current on events elsewhere in the world. Little attention was paid in the German media to a visit by the British Royal Family to America. This high-level meeting with President Roosevelt was obviously intended to underline the strength of the ties existing between the United Kingdom and the United States.

6

In the afternoon of June 7, Hitler “unexpectedly” appeared at the construction-site of a new Volkswagen work at Fallersleben in the afternoon hours. He himself had placed the cornerstone for the factory on May 28, 1938.⁵⁷¹ Ferdinand Porsche, Robert Ley, and the factory director Werlin briefed Hitler on the progress being made there.

On June 9, the victory celebration of the Spanish troops occasioned an exchange of telegrams between Franco and Hitler. The contents of the two telegrams were not published in their entirety. Hitler found it awkward to remain consistent with his newly discovered affection for Bolshevist Russia in this context. After all, Spain had just recently assented to the Anti-Comintern Pact solely as a favor to Germany and Italy.⁵⁷² The press carried the following short note on Hitler’s telegram in reply to Franco:⁵⁷³

The Führer responded by conveying his own and the German Volk’s sincere wishes for a prosperous future for Spain and by expressing his conviction that ineradicable bonds between the German and Spanish peoples had formed in this common struggle against the forces of Bolshevism, which destroy culture and nations.

On June 10, Hitler congratulated the Reich Postal Minister, Ohne-sorge, on his birthday.⁵⁷⁴ In the afternoon, once again “unexpectedly,” Hitler arrived in Vienna to participate in the various activities surrounding the Sixth Reich Theater Festival Week. At 8:00 p.m., the State Opera featured a performance of the Richard Strauss opera *Friedenstag* which Hitler attended in celebration of the composer’s seventy-fifth birthday.⁵⁷⁵

The next day, Hitler was present at a rendition of Nestroy’s farce *Einen Jux will er sich machen* at the Burgtheater.

On the morning of June 12, Hitler left the Imperial Hotel in Vienna to head for the Aspern airfield shortly after 9:00. One hour later, he

caught his flight to Linz. He stayed in this city for a short time and then traveled on to Berchtesgaden by motorcar.

On June 15, Hitler appropriated direct control for himself over the Reich's monetary institution by signing a "Law on the German Reichsbank" at the Berghof.⁵⁷⁶ He had already announced this intention in his speech of January 30.⁵⁷⁷ On the same day, Hitler wired congratulations to the King of Sweden on the monarch's birthday.⁵⁷⁸ In addition, he exchanged telegrams in the customary manner with the Old Guard which was then touring Westphalia.

The following day, Hitler appointed the tank warfare instructors' regiment as the traditional troop component for the Army units deployed in the Spanish Civil War, the so-called *Imker-Verbände* (Bee-Keeper Contingents).⁵⁷⁹

On June 17, Hitler received the Saudi Royal Counselor Khalid Al Hud, sent as special envoy by King Ibn Saud, for a lengthy consultation at the Obersalzberg. After the talk, Hitler asked the emissary to join him and his entourage for tea.⁵⁸⁰

On June 18, Hitler expressed his condolences to the French State President Lebrun on the sinking of the French submarine *Phénix*.⁵⁸¹ Later in the day, he inspected a mobile, motorized drivers' education van which the NSKK had sent to the Berghof.⁵⁸² On the same day still, Hitler's "shield bearer,"⁵⁸³ Goebbels, delivered a speech from the balcony of the Danzig municipal theater. Undoubtedly at Hitler's instigation, he stated:⁵⁸⁴

German Men and Women of Danzig!

I have come from the Reich to convey to you the greetings of the Führer and of the German Volk. [—]

The Führer made the following perfectly clear in his last Reichstag address when he said: "Danzig is a German city and it wishes to return to Germany." One would think the world would have grasped this by now. It should know by now, based on past experiences, that the Führer's words are never empty ones. The world is committing a dangerous error if truly it believes he can be easily intimidated by threats or coerced by blackmail. There can be no talk of anything of the sort. [—]

On June 19, Hitler bestowed the Eagle's Shield of the German Reich on Dr. Heinrich Schrey and Professor Heinrich Sohnrey.⁵⁸⁵

On June 20, the topic of the day at the Berghof was the Fifth Olympic Winter Games scheduled to take place in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1940. The Reich Sports Leader von Tschammer und Osten, the President of the Organizational Committee Ritter von Halt,

General von Reichenau, and State Secretary Esser called on Hitler to inform him of the progress made in preparation for the Games. In this context, he approved of blueprints for the expansion of the sport complexes and also gave his blessings to the program worked out for the competitions.⁵⁸⁶

It was high time now for Hitler to take further preparatory steps in view of the upcoming launch of "Case White," scheduled for September 1 at the latest. As in the case of the planned war against Czechoslovakia ("Case Green") the year before, no official mobilization of reserve units was to be made public. To avoid attracting unwelcome attention, "autumn maneuvers" had started several weeks earlier and reserve units were called up in due course. These military exercises also served as a pretext for the requisitioning of motor vehicles, horses, and the like.

On June 22, Hitler effected the necessary measures.⁵⁸⁷ He was hesitant still, on the other hand, as far as the deployment of "training ships of the Navy" was concerned. He deferred decision on this matter to early August. At this time, Hitler apparently still considered it a distinct possibility to seize Danzig without simultaneously launching the war against Poland. A directive issued on June 24, in which he ordered the OKH to "prepare measures to capture intact the bridges over the Lower Vistula" and, "in view of the importance of the bridge at Dirschau, to consult with the Navy as to whether in the event of a *coup de main* against this bridge the surprise element might be endangered by previous naval measures in the Bay of Danzig,"⁵⁸⁸ indicated as much. This theory was substantiated further by another directive ordering the "occupation of the German Free State of Danzig" in late July.⁵⁸⁹

For the time being, Hitler cautiously proceeded with his strategy of intimidating England by displays of military might and political maneuvering. London had forwarded a memorandum to the Reich Government in Berlin on June 23 in which the British expounded their position on the unilateral abrogation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.⁵⁹⁰ The British Government pointed out the agreement itself had provided that a party signatory to the treaty could withdraw from this pact or effect a revision only after mutual consultations. Should the German government be interested in entering into another agreement with different terms distinguishing it from this particular treaty, then His Majesty's Government inquired as to the proposals of the German government to secure, for the course of its duration, the assent of both

contracting parties to either abrogation or change in the terms of the treaty.

Hitler did not deign to respond to so impudent an inquiry. Instead, he preferred to publicly emphasize the comradeship in arms between Germany and Italy. On June 25, a rally in Munich afforded him a proper setting for this undertaking. Approximately 500 front-line soldiers had arrived from Italy. They received a festive and warm welcome at the ancient City Hall. In the afternoon, several wreaths were placed at the the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in front of the Army Museum as well as at the Pantheons on the Königlicher Platz. Numerous contingents of the NS Reich Warriors' Association and the NS War Victims' Association marched up. Hitler made his appearance at 5:00 p.m. Accompanied by the president of the Italian Front-Line Soldiers' Association, Delcroix, who had lost his eyesight in battle, Hitler reviewed the line-up.

Later, a reception for the Italian guests at the Führerbau allowed Hitler once again to speak out against England:⁵⁹¹

Herr Präsident! Soldiers of Italy! Comrades!

I greet you in the city in which the National Socialist Revolution once had its beginnings. I greet you in the building which was erected as the headquarters of this revolution. You are visiting the German Reich at a time when all of us, the revolutionaries of the National Socialist Movement and those of Fascist Italy, together face a world filled with antagonism, envy, hatred, and animosity toward us. I am happy, however, that this visit is taking place at a time when, through our alliance, we form a united front against our common enemies. I am firmly convinced that any attempt by the democracies and the capitalist plutocracies to impose on us the destiny they have planned for us, will come to nothing because of the combined strength of our two nations and revolutions, the force of our ideals, our courage, and our determination.

After all, life belongs to those peoples who are prepared, if necessary, to give everything to secure their existence for the present and for the future. You yourselves once extended yourselves fully for your people, and we Germans did no less for our Volk. In the future, we shall extend ourselves fully together for Germany and for Italy; for our Reich which has risen up under the National Socialist Revolution; and for your Empire which your great Duce, Benito Mussolini, has created and formed. Despite the rest of the world's persuasions and prophecies, this man has made Italy great, strong, and mighty.

I believe that all the attacks by this outside world will come to nothing against this ineradicable community of our two nations and their common revolutionary ideals, and that, in spite of everything, the future will belong to us: to Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany.

These boasts failed to impress the Western Powers. Experts in the West were too well aware of the true value of the alliance between Germany and Italy to be frightened by it.

Hitler's June 25 speech likewise failed to make an impression on the Germans and Italians in the audience. The public shrugged the matter off. The address with its customary proclamations of the related nature of the National Socialist and Fascist philosophies was not capable of allaying the animosity still existing between German and Italian front-line soldiers who, after all, had been enemies in the First World War. Having spent two hours in the futile attempt to bring about changes in the public perception of his strategy, Hitler left his guests behind at the Führerbau. In the days to follow, the Italians toured Germany and the official itinerary of their visit naturally could not spare them the dutiful inspection of the new German fortifications in the West.

On June 26, Hitler conveyed by telegram his sympathies to the Italian Foreign Minister on the demise of his father, Count Constanzo Ciano.⁵⁹²

Two days later, the Commanding General of the Tenth Army Corps and Commander in Chief of the Tenth Defense District (Hamburg), Knochenhauer, passed away. Hitler ordered a state funeral for the departed and sent his widow a telegram.⁵⁹³

On June 29, Franz Seldte received a congratulatory telegram from Hitler on his fifty-seventh birthday.⁵⁹⁴

On July 2, in the company of Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Himmler, Hitler attended the commemorative services in honor of General Knochenhauer in Hamburg.⁵⁹⁵ Standing on the square in front of the City Hall, Brauchitsch delivered the address required by the occasion. Hitler placed a wreath adorned with orchids on the coffin and expressed his condolences to the bereaved. Passing through the City Hall, he returned to his quarters at the Atlantic Hotel.

In the course of the following day, Hitler toured a Luftwaffe test flight air base at Rechlin in the Brandenburg March. An extraordinarily large entourage followed him to the site.⁵⁹⁶ Göring and Lieutenant General Udet, a specialist for aerial mechanics, informed Hitler of the latest developments in the field of aerial technology.

On July 4, the Spanish Ambassador de Magaz secured an audience with Hitler at the new Chancellery and presented the German head of state with personal gifts sent by Franco (three paintings by the Spanish artist Zuloaga).⁵⁹⁷

July 5, 1939

The next day, statesmen from the Balkans called at the Reich Chancellery once again.⁵⁹⁸ The first in this succession was Infantry General von Werth, the "Chief of Staff of the Royal Hungarian Honveds." At noon, Hitler received this guest at his study and subsequently sent him off to tour the fortifications in the West. Georgi Kiosseivanov, who served in the dual capacity of Bulgaria's Minister-President and Foreign Minister, made an appearance at the Chancellery in the afternoon hours.⁵⁹⁹ Hitler spoke with him for one hour. The envoys of Germany and Bulgaria also attended this meeting, at which Ribbentrop and numerous other Bulgarian diplomats were present as well.

On July 6, Hitler personally expressed his best wishes to Lammers, the Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, on the occasion of his fortieth service anniversary. For his loyal and long-standing support, Lammers received the *Treuedienst-Ehrenzeichen* award.⁶⁰⁰ Later in the day, Hitler flew aboard the new Condor airplane 'Grenz-mark,' a four-engine machine.⁶⁰¹

One day later, Hitler appointed Lieutenant Commander Albrecht, his former personal assistant for naval affairs, as his personal adjutant. In connection with the captain's honorary discharge from the Navy, Hitler promoted him to NSKK Oberführer.⁶⁰² The appointment of the former adjutant, retired Captain Wiedemann, as Consul General to San Francisco had vacated this post.⁶⁰³

On July 10, in an apparent effort to underline the peaceful intent of the policies he pursued, Hitler had the Reich Press Bureau of the NSDAP issue the statement below concerning the upcoming "Reich Party Congress of Peace":⁶⁰⁴

The annual Reich Party Congress of the NSDAP will be held in Nuremberg from September 2 to September 11. The duration of the Reich Party Congress has been extended. This will not entail any substantial revisions of any particular section contained in the program of the Reich Party Congress, although the sequence of events may well differ from the one customary in earlier congresses.

This pronouncement, as well as the large-scale preparations for the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Battle of Tannenberg underway as of late June, was supposed to conceal the true nature of Hitler's designs. The festivities in commemoration of the battle were scheduled for August 27 and over 100,000 participants were expected.

On July 11, Hitler and Reich Minister Rust exchanged the customary telegrams connected to the maneuvers at Lake Faaker conducted by the National Political Educational Institutes.⁶⁰⁵

July 14 marked the Day of German Art,⁶⁰⁶ and the festivities in Munich were hailed as a “true celebration of peace.” At 8:00 p.m., an official reception at the Führerbau brought together the entire leadership of Party, State, and Wehrmacht. Hitler had also asked the Italian Minister for Popular Culture, Dino Alfieri, to attend.⁶⁰⁷ He had come up with a splendid idea on how to honor Mussolini in a special manner. And, on this occasion, he informed Alfieri of his designs, namely, that he had decided to construct a new “representative train station for arrivals and departures of foreign high-ranking guests of state visiting the Reich capital” close to the previous “Heerstrasse” leading to the existing station. This was where Mussolini had arrived for his state visit to Berlin in 1937. Hence, so Hitler had magnanimously resolved, the adjacent street was to be named “Mussolini Street.” Hitler also announced that—one of the greatest concessions to date—the “Adolf Hitler Square”⁶⁰⁸ nearby was to be christened “Mussolini Square.”

On July 15, the Reich Chamber of Creative Arts held its convention in the festival hall of the *Deutsches Museum*. Hitler honored this conference with a personal appearance. He lavishly distributed titles such as “professor,” “councilor,” and “state actor,” on this occasion.

On July 16, Hitler laid a wreath at the tomb of Professor Troost. Afterwards, at 10:00 a.m., he went to speak at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst. Cannons fired salutes as he stepped up to review the guard of honor awaiting him. At approximately 11:00 a.m., an hour of commemoration (*Weihestunde*) began at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, in the course of which Hitler launched what was fated to be the last “culture speech” in his lifetime. It started with the customary retrospective on cultural life in Germany before he came to power. He referred to Imperial Germany not necessarily in uncongenial, though in decidedly critical terms.⁶⁰⁹

I most assuredly do not wish to side with those who utterly condemn the artistic achievements of the latter half of the 19th century simply because they hold them to be the more or less glutted reflection of the styles of various past epochs. For I do not believe that this can ever be completely avoided, and I do not think that this must necessarily be detrimental. [—]

It is perhaps not so much the multifariousness of the artistic work back in the early days of the new Reich’s foundation to which we owe the general characteristics of this period, which are so unsatisfactory to us. Rather this is due to the obvious failure to give cultural expression to the recent, great historic accomplishment in an original manner. In other words, what was lacking was the strength to transform the total output into a cohesive whole,

to go beyond partially ingenious individual works, and to express all this in a manner worthy of a truly great age.

Perhaps the fundamental reason for this lay in the fact that a number of the men making history then lacked I would not say an appreciation of art, but had a more or less pronounced lack of interest in the arts. It even reached the point where the most successful statesmen, the greatest warlords, and the immortal artists of this otherwise great age did not know one another. Actually, this is a shameful as well as a shattering realization!

Naturally, Hitler reasoned, things had changed in the Third Reich. Despite the burden of his role as “the most successful statesman” and his aspirations to become the “greatest warlord,” he had always maintained close contacts to the Volk as well as to the “immortal artists” of his day. However, the differences between Hitler and his predecessors were not as great as he would have had them. For instance, William II, following in the footsteps of Frederick the Great, was well known for his patronage of the arts. Throughout his life, he was in touch with all sorts of artists: painters, sculptors, architects, and the like. His influence on the taste of his contemporaries has led to his age being referred to as *wilhelminisch* in some contexts. Even today, numerous cities in Germany bear the imprint of the Emperor’s style. The city of Wiesbaden is a textbook example.

Having laid his own claim to the culture of his day, Hitler pronounced the decision to apply more “stringent criteria” to subsequent exhibitions, to limit these to the display of “works of true talent.” To add an additional wing to the gallery, a “wonderful plan” had already been drawn up, Hitler announced, for a new building across the Prinzregentenplatz. He declared:

The primary goal of our artistic work in Germany has no doubt already been attained today. Just as the campaign for architectural recovery had its beginnings in this city, Munich, a cleansing of the perhaps even more devastated field of sculpture and painting was launched here three years ago. The whole swindle of fashionable art—decadent, diseased, and dishonest—has been swept away. A decent standard has been achieved, which means a lot. It has an uplifting effect on the truly creative genius. Not only do we believe, we know, that today already many bright stars have appeared on the horizon of artistic work in Germany.

This third exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst reinforces this belief. Therefore, we hope and expect all the more that those called on to practice art will approach their work with holy zeal. From one exhibition to the next, we are prepared to apply ever-more stringent criteria to select from the mass of decent average ability the works of true talent. We have already reached a level which makes it difficult to decide between two or three works

of equal merit. Therefore, I have ordered that, as last year, a part of the exhibited works shall be replaced, after their sale, by works of equal quality which were excluded solely from lack of space. Also I would like to express the hope that perhaps individual artists of true calibre will devote themselves to the experiences, the events, and the intellectual foundations of that age, which affords them the outward, material prerequisites for their work.

For as thousandfold as those earlier historic visions or other memories of the artist's life may well be, which stimulate his work, which he has in mind, and which inspire him, they are all surpassed by the greatness of his own era today, which is on a par with the most majestic epochs in our German history. Still we had to reject some works which placed themselves in the service of this cause since, regrettably, the force of the artistic design did not suffice to render justice to the intent, so that they could not withstand comparison to other works of similar inspiration of the past. Thus they failed of their purpose in the last instance. Still, insofar as these works reflect—as they so often do—the innocence of the soul, they do nonetheless merit our gratitude. Their almost pious undertaking, I would say, must be seen as an obligation for all those whom Providence has blessed and who can express in a more accomplished fashion what moves all leading and thinking men in our time.

I do not wish to let this hour pass without affording you and thereby all Germans an interest in the arts—perhaps a professional interest, perhaps just an enthusiasm—and those who follow with great sympathy the new ascent of our art, a brief insight into the planned further extension of this house.

We have secured the financial prerequisites for the construction of an additional building, thanks to the dedication of those already involved in the financing of the present Haus der Kunst and thanks to the magnanimous contributions received from German patrons of the arts. Professor Gall has come up with a truly wonderful plan for it. The building is being constructed on the opposite side of this unique street.

Thus, in the future, it will be possible for the Great German Art Exhibition to bring together all creations in the domain of the creative arts: the masterpieces of architecture, painting, and sculpture in a general survey of the work of German artists.

The cornerstone will be laid before this year is out. We hope to open this building in a few years. It will help to increase the significance of an event which I now declare open to the public.

A festive parade depicting “200 years of German culture” filed past Hitler in the afternoon hours of July 16.

The following day, Hitler entertained guests at his apartment at Prinzregentenplatz No. 16 at a breakfast meeting in honor of Dino Alfieri. A number of Third Reich notables were present that morning: Goebbels, Ley, Dietrich, Bormann, Epp, and Gauleiter Adolf Wagner. On this occasion, Hitler engaged the Italian in a lengthy conversation.⁶¹⁰

On July 18, Hitler forwarded a congratulatory telegram to General Franco.⁶¹¹

July 18, 1939

I extend to Your Excellency the most heartfelt congratulations on the anniversary of Spain's national uprising, on behalf of both myself and the German Volk, in the firm conviction that the glorious victory of the Spanish national uprising shall serve as a pledge of a proud future for your country.

Three days later, Hitler congratulated King Leopold in a telegram on Belgium's national holiday.⁶¹²

On July 24, Hitler instructed Meissner to present the Reich Minister of Transportation, Dorpmüller, with the Eagle's Shield of the German Reich on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. On the same day, the former president of the Reich Institute for Physics and Technology, Professor Johannes Stark, was awarded the Goethe medal for meritorious achievements in the arts and sciences.⁶¹³ Indeed, Hitler's activities in the month of July 1939 sought to impress on the contemporary, in Germany as well as abroad, the peaceful intentions of his regime, which apparently found nothing better to do than to dedicate itself exclusively to matters of culture.

On July 25, Hitler reviewed the progress made in the construction of the Congress Hall at the new Party Congress grounds at Nuremberg.⁶¹⁴ In the evening, he attended a performance of *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Bayreuth Festival and one day later a performance of *Tristan und Isolde*.⁶¹⁵ Still in Bayreuth on July 27, Hitler held a reception for Lord and Lady Kimsley at Wagner's estate Haus Wahnfried.⁶¹⁶ On the same day, his directive for the military occupation of Danzig was issued.⁶¹⁷ The order concerning "The occupation of the German Free State of Danzig on ... (Y-Day)" stated that

... the Führer has ordered the reunion of the German Free State of Danzig with the Greater German Reich and the immediate occupation of Danzig by the Wehrmacht for the protection of the German population. No hostile intentions are entertained towards Poland, as long as the latter does not resist the occupation by armed force.

On July 29, Hitler congratulated Mussolini on his birthday in the following telegram:⁶¹⁸

On the occasion of your birthday today, I greet you in loyal solidarity and extend my heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and the future success of your historic work. In gratitude, my thoughts today turn to the German-Italian Pact of Friendship and Alliance concluded in May of this year, which unites our two peoples in an inseparable community of fate. It will prove its strength in the preservation of the vital rights of our peoples as well as in the maintenance of peace in Europe.

Adolf Hitler

From Bayreuth, Hitler flew to Saarbrücken to inspect once more the “works to secure the defense zones of the Saar territory and the Saarpfalz.”⁶¹⁹ Troop maneuvers to demonstrate the “invincibility” of the fortifications occasioned this renewed visit. Reassured by the advanced condition of the structures intended to defend this section of the border, Hitler accepted “reports on the readiness of the security forces as well as of the troops exercising in the zone.” In the evening hours, Hitler returned to Bayreuth from the excursion, accompanied by Ribbentrop. On July 30, he attended a performance of *Die Walküre*.⁶²⁰ Two days later, he invited the artists who participated in the Bayreuth festival to a reception at Haus Wahnfried.⁶²¹

On that August 1 also, Hitler signed a decree which dealt with public relief and providing for members of armed SS units and their survivors.⁶²² It granted the same privileges as regular Wehrmacht units enjoyed to the SS Verfügungstruppen, SS Junkerschulen, SS Totenkopfverbände, and their reinforcements.

On August 2, the anniversary of Hindenburg’s death, Hitler ordered General von Kücheler, the Commander of Wehrkreis I (East Prussia), to place a wreath in honor of the Field Marshal at the foot of the Tannenberg memorial.⁶²³ On this day as well, Hitler established a decoration for those who had assisted in the construction of the “bulwark in defense of Germany,” i.e. the West Wall.⁶²⁴

The next day, Hitler had Speer show him cast models of the envisioned Party buildings to be constructed at Bayreuth. He himself issued detailed instructions to the architect on how to proceed with this particular project.⁶²⁵

On August 4, on the occasion of his chief Wehrmacht adjutant Schmudt’s twenty-fifth service anniversary, Hitler promoted him to the rank of colonel.⁶²⁶ Afterwards, the Führer withdrew to the Obersalzberg for the next three weeks.

At the Berghof on August 7, he received Gauleiter Albert Forster of Danzig for a talk. This meeting resembled that with Konrad Henlein on September 2, 1938.⁶²⁷ As with Czechoslovakia, reports of border incidents appeared in the daily newspapers with increased frequency. New reports from the border with Poland reached the Reich nearly every day. No one could doubt any longer that the patience of the Führer would be worn thin shortly. The only tangible outcome of the talks was a highly inflammatory speech Forster delivered at the Langer Market square in Danzig on August 10. The Gauleiter reiterated Hitler’s arguments for a resolution of the problem in the interest of Germany.

Particularly revealing in this context was the quotation of an alleged statement by Lloyd George concerning the ramifications of the Versailles Treaty on Poland.⁶²⁸

On August 8, another guest from the Balkans called at the Berghof: Count Csáky. Hitler again showered abuse on Hungary's Foreign Minister.⁶²⁹ The cause for the German Chancellor's fury was easily discerned. On July 24, the Hungarian Minister-President Teleki had addressed to Hitler and Mussolini one and the same correspondence and had declared that, while Hungary would indeed follow the lead of the Axis Powers in the event of a war, Budapest was not willing to engage in an armed aggression against Warsaw.⁶³⁰ This was truly unheard of in Hitler's view. The Hungarians had proven themselves a thankless lot. They had accepted his offer of the Carpatho-Ukraine yet now they failed to heed his summons.

In his harangue, Hitler simply reiterated the arguments he used with any other visitor at the time. First of all, he was a man of character. He would not be wearied by any threats; he knew no fear; the West Wall was invincible. Moreover, Poland stood isolated. Neither England nor France could make any moves at this point. Assuredly, Russia had better things to do than to come to Poland's rescue. For a man such as Count Csáky, Hitler's words fully sufficed to revise Hungary's foreign policy stance on the spot. He implored the Führer to disregard Count Teleki's letter.

On August 9, Hitler attended a performance of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* at the Salzburg music festival. This was the first time he participated in this particular event.⁶³¹ To judge by his demeanor there could truly not be a large-scale military conflict looming on the horizon.

Contrary to the rehearsed gaiety of the Salzburg celebration, the atmosphere on the streets of Germany was a gloomy one. Barely suppressed tension was compounded by the persistent hot and humid temperatures during those early days of August, 1939. Mobilization orders, requisitioning of vehicles, etc.—all these governmental measures betrayed the regime's far from peaceful intent. Indeed, a feeling of foreboding reigned everywhere. As though to warn the world of things to come, the planet Mars stood visibly closer to earth than usual. Of a dark red hue, it shone bright in the sky on every one of those August nights. Roman antiquity would have interpreted the odd appearance of this planet named in honor of the god of war as a sign of the imminence of war.⁶³²

Voices from abroad which managed to penetrate the walls of propaganda spelled out the Western Powers' intent to respond to the first shot fired from German guns with an unequivocal declaration of war. Chances for a last minute reprieve, of the 1938 Munich variant, became ever the more remote. The maze of Hitler's convoluted intentions, beliefs, and convictions had taken him prisoner. He knew of no way out of the situation. Only his most loyal followers among the German workers—unless they were die-hard communists—could still be so deceived as to believe that the Führer would “get things right in the end,” and thus prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

Individuals who were in a position to assess the situation better nonetheless also hoped that some type of timely occurrence would prevent the outbreak of war: after all, foreign powers might intervene, Poland might relent, or a change within Germany might still come about. Such hopes are all too easily understood, for who among ordinary Germans truly desired war?

Among all of Hitler's war adventures, however, his plan for a campaign against Poland made the most sense yet within the framework of the German mentality. Already in the days of the Weimar Republic, the existing situation had become intolerable in the eyes of many Germans because of the unfortunate delimitation of the eastern border of the Reich, the half-measures of Versailles, and the constant frictions along the border. Before and after 1933, the generals of the Reichswehr had almost exclusively concerned themselves with a possible war with Poland in their plans for the military. What they had had in mind at the time, however, was to retake the territories lost by the Reich in 1919. Opportunity for such a German move might arise in the course of an outside conflict such as a war between Poland and Russia. Also, a conflict between Moscow and the Western Powers seemed in the offing. By the summer of 1939, this no longer appeared within the realm of the possible. The outbreak of a war pitting a grand coalition of the Western Powers and the Soviet Union against a Germany under Hitler's regime had become decidedly more likely.

Hitler was right to suspect that his generals were less than thrilled with his plans for war. He had already noticed their lack of enthusiasm in 1938.⁶³³ They had grown fat in the years of peace and they liked it. Hitler showered money and awards on the military. Admittedly, medals for wartime performance were difficult to obtain without a bona fide war, but most German generals still had enough badges for outstanding service left over from the First World War. And the

younger members of Germany's military elite chose to satisfy this need in small-scale ventures abroad, as in the Spanish Civil War for example. In any event, Germany's military was not about to throw overboard the obvious benefits of peacetime service. Nor did the industrial complex desire a disruption of its lucrative trade by an involvement in a real war. While everyone seemed to enjoy drawing up operational plans, throwing about military terminology, watching parades and the like, no one wished to accept the final consequence of these engaging activities. However, like the legendary magician Dr. Faustus, the German military men would find it difficult to rid themselves of the evil spirits they had summoned.

Hitler's Chief of Staff Halder, who had drawn up the plans for an armed aggression against Poland, became increasingly anxious, as the long summer months dragged on. He encouraged the British Ambassador Henderson to remain unyielding in his defense of England's policy towards Hitler. This was to avoid war, so Halder hoped.⁶³⁴ Likewise, State Secretary von Weizsäcker and Erich Kordt, the German Legation Counselor in London, labored to persuade the British to make a determined stand against the German dictator.⁶³⁵

In all of this the British truly required little prompting. Ever since March 15, leading members of His Majesty's Government, e.g. Chamberlain, Halifax, and various prominent public figures had repeatedly and consistently underlined Great Britain's determination. They insisted that any form of aggression directed against Poland, inclusive of a military move against the Free City of Danzig, would entail a declaration of war against Germany. They maintained that, in the future, it would no longer be up to Germany to decide whether or not there was to be war.

For instance, on June 29, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax had unequivocally stated at Chatham House:⁶³⁶

It is our foremost resolve to end these attacks. Our second resolve is to abide by the world's desire and to secure the peace. Once we have been satisfactorily convinced that we all desire a peaceful settlement, then—this I will say definitely—we can discuss all problems which today trouble the world.

In a like new atmosphere we can resolve the colonial problem, the question of raw materials, of trade restrictions, the claims to 'Lebensraum,' and any other questions which touch upon the life of all European peoples.

Now, in a broadcast to the United States from London on August 8, Churchill declared:⁶³⁷

The architects of the American Constitution were as careful as those who shaped the British Constitution to guard against the whole life and fortunes, and all the laws and freedom of the nation, being placed in the hands of a tyrant. Checks and counter-checks in the body politic, large devolutions of State government, instruments and processes of free debate, frequent recurrence to first principles, the right of opposition to the most powerful governments, and above all ceaseless vigilance, have preserved, and will preserve, the broad characteristics of British and American institutions. But in Germany, on a mountain peak, there sits one man who in a single day can release the world from the fear which now oppresses it; or in a single day can plunge all that we have and are into a volcano of smoke and flame.

If Herr Hitler does not make war, there will be no war. No one else is going to make war. Britain and France are determined to shed no blood except in self-defense or in defense of their Allies. No one has ever dreamed of attacking Germany. If Germany desires to be reassured against attack by her neighbors, she has only to say the word and we will give her the fullest guarantees in accordance with the principles of the Covenant of the League. We have said repeatedly we ask nothing for ourselves in the way of security that we are not willing freely to share with the German people. Therefore, if war should come there can be no doubt upon whose head the blood-guiltiness will fall. Thus lies the great issue at this moment, and none can tell how it will be settled.

It is not, believe me, my American friends, from any ignoble shrinking from pain and death that the British and French peoples pray for peace. It is not because we have any doubts how a struggle between Nazi Germany and the civilized world would ultimately end that we pray tonight and every night for peace. But whether it will be peace or war—peace with its broadening and brightening prosperity, now within our reach, or war with its measureless carnage and destruction—we must strive to frame some system of human relations in the future which will bring to an end this prolonged hideous uncertainty, which will let the working and creative forces of the world get on with their job, and which will no longer leave the whole life of mankind dependent upon the virtues, caprice, or the wickedness of a single man.

The British stance was clear. Any attempt on the part of Germany, by whatever party, to bring about a revision of this political stand was doomed from the outset. Prior to armed hostilities, negotiations with the English remained possible. That the so-called German opposition still held a negotiated settlement with Britain to be a distinct possibility after the clash of arms, and advised the English what to do, amply illustrated their lack of understanding of the British mentality. This ignorance apparently pervaded all political circles within Germany. Hitler held the English to be senile and incapable of mounting serious opposition to the moves of his Third Reich. Members of the opposition thought they could prompt Great Britain to support a regime of

German generals and bring to power men such as Goerdeler, whose foreign policy goals were not perceptibly different from those Hitler pursued.⁶³⁸ Certainly, a change in leadership might have benefited Germany domestically. However, this consideration alone would not have sufficed to induce the British to intervene in Germany's internal affairs on behalf of the German population. Why should the British bolster those circles in Germany which had profited from Hitler's rise to power and now lacked the courage to move against him on their own?

Undoubtedly, one of the most curious German diplomatic undertakings before the outbreak of World War II was the attempt launched with the instrumental assistance of Göring's "personal friend," the Swedish merchant Birger Dahlerus, to plead with Britain not to oppose Germany's aggression against Poland. It was Hitler himself who had masterminded this peculiar venture behind the scenes.⁶³⁹ It officially began with a meeting of Dahlerus, accompanied by Göring, and several British emissaries at Sönke Nissen Koog in Schleswig Holstein on August 7. With numerous intermissions this curious attempt at mediation was to last until August 31. Dahlerus repeatedly flew to London, at Göring's bidding, carrying with him the latest of Hitler's friendship proposals and the treaties he desired to enter into with Britain. As time passed, the German proposals took on a note of urgency and desperation. Nevertheless, the British politely insisted they were willing to negotiate any subject short of the use of armed force.

It was not surprising that Hitler entrusted Göring with the conduct of this mission: of all his *Unterführers*, Göring was undeniably the most intelligent. Hitler relied on Göring's powers of persuasion, confident that this subordinate would not fail with the British where he had succeeded, in 1932, with the German Nationalists and other figures of importance.⁶⁴⁰ It was well known that Göring had great talent for adopting Hitler's ideas, repeating them verbatim to outsiders as his own. The conviction he demonstrated had a strain of loyal obedience and apparently naive ingenuousness.

For nothing in this world did Germany desire to enter into a war with Britain, so Göring declared. This was true indeed as neither Göring himself nor Hitler wished for complications in the West while they were engaged in the East. On the other hand, they were not willing to scale down their demands in the East. Both were convinced there was ample time as yet to bring the British to accept their position

by the force of persuasion, persistence, and insistence. Once the initial talks had been concluded, one of the participants, General Bodenschatz, traveled to Berchtesgaden to brief the Führer on the meeting's preliminary outcome. At this point still, Hitler might well have believed that decisive advances towards overcoming the stalemate in the West had truly been made.

August 11 presented the Führer with an ideal opportunity to engage in precisely the threatening rhetoric he was confident would frighten the British into submission. On this particular day, the League of Nations' High Commissioner for the Free City of Danzig, Professor Carl Jakob Burckhardt was scheduled to call on Hitler at the Obersalzberg. The declared purpose of the meeting was naturally a discussion of the situation in Danzig.⁶⁴¹ Hitler perverted the occasion to instill the fear of the Lord in Burckhardt. For hours, he raved that "even the slightest attempt" by Poland to intervene in Danzig would force him to deal with the situation in one "lightning strike" (*wie der Blitz*). And he would do so with the help of weapons of which the unsuspecting Poles knew nothing. In fact, and here Hitler reiterated previous comments on the subject, Imperial Germany had refrained from employing the full force of its weaponry in the First World War because the Kaiser had feared doing so. For himself, as the Führer of the Greater German Reich, he could only state that this was no longer the case. He would fight "relentlessly" (*unbarmherzig*), "with all means at our disposal."

On August 12, Hitler employed similarly grandiose phrases as he bade Ciano welcome to a lengthy conference at the Obersalzberg. Ciano had been forced to listen to the same arguments the day before, at a meeting with Ribbentrop in Fuschl near Salzburg. For several hours, Ribbentrop had reiterated point for point the Führer's claims in this context. Schmidt recalled that on this occasion the German Foreign Minister had once more proven himself well-worthy as the "voice of his master." Only a day later, the master himself imparted the familiar platitudes to Ciano:⁶⁴² "Everything is the fault of the English. The Polish direly need to be taught a lesson. The democracies are inferior to Germany. They will not fight." Should a war in the West become unavoidable, it was imperative to get it over with while both he and the Duce were still young.⁶⁴³ Hitler had decided, as he stated on this occasion, that within forty-eight hours of the next act of provocation he would "solve the problem" once and for all by attacking Poland. He warned that "in the present circumstances a move against Poland must be expected at any moment." Once Warsaw had fallen, the German

military would be in a position to concentrate one hundred divisions along the western frontier. Italy he expected "to give Yugoslavia a coup de grâce as soon as possible."

On this occasion, Ciano proved himself a worthy negotiator. Faced by this full attack of Hitler's rhetoric, he remained largely steadfast. He criticized the fact that Italy had not been fully informed of the German plans and voiced his conviction that a war with Poland could not remain limited for long. Hitler could not possibly tolerate such objections: "I retain my steadfast conviction that the western democracies will not risk unleashing a full-fledged general war." Undaunted, Ciano pointed to Italy's dependence on raw material imports. Rome could not possibly withstand more than a few months of war and being cut off from these sources. Again Ciano introduced into the discussion an earlier suggestion by Mussolini, who had advocated an international resolution of the issues threatening the peace in Europe. Questions of international competence in the resolution of conflicts between states had always irked Hitler. At the time, he had only grudgingly accepted the League of Nations' proposals on the Saarland and Sudeten German questions.⁶⁴⁴ To once more submit to the dictate of an international committee was out of the question as far as he was concerned. In order to preclude the success of an advance by Mussolini or Ciano from the outset, Hitler insisted that the Soviet Union be granted a seat on any international forum.

On August 13, in the course of the second talk with Ciano, Hitler became increasingly forward. He frankly rebuffed the Italian call for an international conference. Once again he stressed his determination to deal with Poland swiftly. When Ciano inquired as to the date of a strike against Poland, Hitler responded, "in late August." Hitler then commented once again on the supposed weaknesses of the French and the English, on the military superiority of the German Wehrmacht, on Germany's acknowledgment of the Mediterranean as an exclusively Italian sphere of interest, and on his personal admiration and respect for Mussolini. In conclusion, he stated: "I am firmly convinced that neither England nor France will enter into a general war." Faced with this display of Hitler's power of persuasion, Ciano's resistance faded and he replied meekly: "You have been right so many times before when we were of a different opinion that I believe it to be quite possible that you perceive things more correctly this time also."

Comfortably seated in the plane taking him back to Rome, Ciano apparently had second thoughts on this topic. He felt Hitler had out-

maneuvered him once again. Frustrated, he entered the following into his diary: "I return to Rome, completely disgusted with the Germans, with their leader, with their way of doing things." He felt the Germans "have betrayed us and lied to us," and that they "are dragging us into an adventure which we have not wanted."⁶⁴⁵

Apparently, Ciano was not as disgusted by the Germans as this entry in his diary would intimate. Only six weeks later, he was back in Germany to assure Hitler and Ribbentrop of his loyalty.⁶⁴⁶ While Ciano had a better character and sense of judgment than Mussolini, he also sported the attitude of many Italians of the time—and in particular the boastful Duce himself—who grumbled constantly about the barbaric and arrogant Germans, but then, when facing them personally, were nevertheless impressed and gave in at the decisive moment.

The following communiqué was published on the first round of the Hitler-Ciano talks in Germany:⁶⁴⁷

The meeting between the Führer and the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano, who is presently residing in Salzburg, took place at the Berghof on Saturday [August 12], in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. The members of the Italian delegation, Ambassador Attolico and Legation Counselor Count Magistrati⁶⁴⁸ attended a breakfast given by the Führer in honor of the Italian Foreign Minister. In attendance were: the Reich Foreign Minister, Reich Press Chief Dr. Dietrich, Reichsleiter Bormann, Ambassador von Mackensen,⁶⁴⁹ Under State Secretary Gaus, the gentlemen of the Reich Foreign Minister's entourage, as well as the personal and military adjutants of the Führer.

In the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer had a lengthy exchange of views with the Italian Foreign Minister. Afterwards, Count Ciano accepted the Führer's invitation to tea at the Kehlsteinhaus located near the Obersalzberg.

This note was published on the second round of the talks:⁶⁵⁰

The meeting between Count Ciano and the Reich Foreign Minister ended on Sunday [August 13]. According to well-informed circles, the two Foreign Ministers called at the Berghof again on Sunday. At noon, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop gave a breakfast at the Österreichischer Hof Hotel in honor of Count Ciano and several of his closest co-workers. The Reich Foreign Minister accompanied Count Ciano to the airport from where the latter's plane departed at 2:15 p.m. Members of the Reich Foreign Minister's staff, Ambassador Attolico and Legation Counselor Count Magistrati, as well as Gauleiter Rainer and his deputy Gauleiter Wintersteiner were on hand to take their leave of Count Ciano.

The ceremony demonstrated the heartfelt nature of the friendship of the two representatives of the leaders of Germany and Italy.

The tortuous nature of these two official notes, and the detailed listing of second-rank dignitaries, alone sufficed to reveal that the talks had not gone according to plan. The German side was far from pleased with their outcome: no joint communiqué on the "agreements reached" at this conference was published. To gloss over the obvious discord, the German News Bureau published a series of "press commentaries from abroad," which it claimed had originated in Italy. The *Messaggero* had allegedly maintained that it was simply absurd to even contemplate the possibility that there existed any differences of opinion between Germany and Italy on questions concerning the fate of their two peoples. Germany and Italy would continue to stand side by side on the issue of Danzig and on any other matter. They would march side by side to the end. Danzig was merely one aspect of the much larger, all-encompassing problem of obtaining a revision of the Versailles Peace Treaty. At stake was the attainment of a higher international justice according the "proletarian peoples" of this world a place in the sun and just access to the material goods of this earth.⁶⁵¹

If the move against Poland was to be launched in "late August," as Hitler had insisted in his meeting with Ciano on August 13, then time was beginning to run out. Barely two weeks remained to get either the British or the Soviets to commit themselves. While Hitler felt confident that Dahlerus' secret negotiations with the British would ultimately bear fruit, the question was when. Quick results were far from certain. To force England to its knees in a more timely manner as necessitated by the circumstances, Hitler resolved to pull the one ace he still held out of his sleeve: the "devilish potion."⁶⁵² The prospects for an agreement with the Soviets were good. Hastening its conclusion seemed not only possible, but attainable within a short time. There were many reasons for this. For centuries, Russians had cherished a certain weakness for Germans, irrespective of whatever regime ruled their vast lands. Time and time again, negotiated settlements between the two countries had been called into being with surprising swiftness.⁶⁵³ This was particularly true of all matters concerning Poland. The three partitions of that unfortunate country provided ample proof.⁶⁵⁴ Why should Germany and Russia fail to arrive at an understanding in this respect at this particular point in time? Why not seek a fourth partition of Poland? The Russians were still hurting from the loss of the Tsarist provinces in the Ukraine and in Belorussia which they had been forced to cede as a result of the war against Poland in 1920–21. Given the general propensity for revising the peace settlements of 1919–20 and

restoring national borders to what they had been in 1914, why should the Soviets not share in the spoils of such a revisionary movement? Why should they not demand or force a restitution of the territories lost to Poland, in the Baltic States, in Finland, and in the Balkans, in the course of the past two decades?

And ever since the Munich Agreement, the Russians could not help but feel that the Western Powers had resigned themselves to allowing Hitler to proceed as he desired and to conquer the Lebensraum he coveted in the East at the expense of the Soviet Union. The slow pace of the negotiations led by the British to integrate Russia into a unitary front in opposition to National Socialist Germany may well have reinforced them in this mistaken conviction, and the fact that only second-rank diplomatic personnel had been sent to Moscow to debate the potential role of the Soviets in the upcoming conflict lent further credence to this false notion.

In the meantime, not much progress had been made in the secret German talks with Moscow either, although they had led to Litvinov's dismissal, due to the German hesitancy to get involved too deeply. Up to this point, Hitler had been confident he could bring about a change of heart in the British attitude by continuing to pronounce exaggerated threats. As he was becoming increasingly pressed for time, he now began to take up the Russian matter once more. On August 14, Ribbentrop relayed an offer for an agreement to Moscow and proposed to travel there in person to conclude it.⁶⁵⁵ Based on what Hitler had experienced domestically in the Berlin traffic workers' strike in 1932, he firmly believed he could quickly reach an understanding with the "primitive" Bolsheviks, if this proved necessary.

In anticipation of what he considered the certain success of Ribbentrop's mission, Hitler made the following statements, according to Halder's notes, in a speech before the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht on August 14:⁶⁵⁶

England's position must be viewed in the light of internal politics. Decision in 1914. England would not have stepped in if she had foreseen the consequences. [—] England only stands to lose. [—] Even when a war is won the victor emerges with diminished strength. This is the key to an understanding of the actions of men of less than heroic cast. [—] In view of their experiences in the World War, there is little chance that opponents will deliberately run the risk of a major war. [—]

Russia is not in the least disposed to pull chestnuts out of the fire. Nothing to gain, but much to fear. War at the periphery a possibility, perhaps even welcome. Not so in the centre. A war lost as much a threat as a victorious army.

Interested in disruption of the Western States, access to Baltic. [—] Norway, Sweden, Denmark. Will be genuinely neutral, from inner convictions. Britain's overtures to Russia have caused intense irritation. [—] Switzerland will certainly remain neutral. Holland: neutral on principle; danger to Far East possessions. Belgium will endeavor to remain neutral. [—]

Hungary requires no mention. Italy is not interested in a major conflict, but would we come certain adjustments. A victory of the democratic nations would be the end of Italy. [—]

Spain will look with disfavor upon any victory of the Western Democracies. Democracies would introduce a monarchy and dependence on Western Powers. [—] England and France will have to shoulder burden alone. [—]

Offensive: Between Basle and Saarbrücken hopeless. [—]

No immediate relief could be afforded by any Anglo-French action. There is nothing to force them into a war.

The men of Munich⁶⁵⁷ will not take the risk. [—] Were England resolved to help, she would have given money to the Poles. But the English will not put any more money into a bankrupt business. [—] If England had made any positive commitments, the Poles would be much more cocky. [—] Führer concerned lest England hamper showdown by last-minute offers. [—]

Under consideration whether a negotiator should go to Moscow, and whether or not this should be a prominent figure. [—]

[Führer] has hinted to England that he will approach her with a new offer after disposal of the overriding Polish question. Has registered in London. Paris, too, is informed about his determination. So the great drama is now approaching its climax. [—] The British commotion happened because of some careless German boast that the Führer's calculations had always proved correct.

The other nations must be given proof that there will be a shooting war no matter what. (Poland will be polished off in six to eight weeks. Even if England should step in.) [—]

Central problem is Poland. Must be carried through at all costs. [—]

Attack possible with violation Belgian-Dutch neutrality. [—]

Success, political or military, cannot be had without taking risks. The Führer regards the foreign policy risks involved in a German attack on Poland in the light of the risks which he had to take in all his decisions to date, and which, to his mind, were great at first and then steadily decreased.

As opponents, only a matter of England—apart from Poland herself—with France towed in her wake.

England, unlike in 1914, will not allow herself to blunder into a war lasting for years. Talk of England wanting a long war discounted. No Government will make a long war their primary aim. England, knowing war, is well aware that she stands to lose in a war, and that even a victorious war would not make up for the cost of such a war.

Such is the fate of rich countries. England is overburdened with responsibilities because of the excessive size of her empire. She has no leaders of real calibre. ("The men I got to know in Munich are not the kind that start a new World War.") [—]

Further evidence that no determined action is to be expected on the part of England may above all be inferred from Poland's attitude. Poland would be even more cocky if she knew she could depend on England. [—] Even now England is putting out feelers to find out how the Führer envisages developments after Poland has been disposed of.

All this supports the conviction that while England may talk big, even recall her ambassador, perhaps put a complete embargo on trade,⁶⁵⁸ she is sure not to resort to armed intervention in the conflict.

In the eyes of the generals present at the talk, many of whom cherished fond memories of the Reichswehr's highly rewarding cooperation with the Red Army, the chances for Britain remaining uninterested seemed good at this point. That evening, Hitler once more journeyed to Salzburg to attend a performance of the Mozart opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.⁶⁵⁹

August 16 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of Hitler's entry into the military on August 16, 1914, with the Bavarian Infantry Regiment List. This was cause for a solemn celebration on the Obersalzberg.⁶⁶⁰ While Hitler had successfully claimed, and had indeed impressed on his generals ever since the Röhm Purge,⁶⁶¹ that he had issued forth from the ranks of the Reichswehr, he was by no means a professional soldier, and at best could commemorate his fifth anniversary as "Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht." Nevertheless, the story had to be upheld and thus the elaborate pomp and circumstance of the celebration.

Festivities surrounding the anniversary began as early as the night of August 15. At midnight, Hitler's personal staff, led by his two chief adjutants SA Obergruppenführer Brückner and Colonel Schmuntz,⁶⁶² called on him to secure for themselves a first place at the head of the long list of those to congratulate the Führer. At noon, Göring made his entry as senior officer and Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe. Raeder and Brauchitsch had to confine themselves to sending congratulatory notes to Hitler as their military duties required their presence elsewhere.

In the afternoon, a delegation of the Infantry Regiment 19 (Munich), which was the successor to the original Infantry Regiment 16 (List) and whose barracks had been named "Adolf-Hitler-Kaserne" in 1934, ceremoniously delivered its congratulatory address.⁶⁶³ In appreciation of their efforts, Hitler presented each member of the delegation with a signed photograph of himself. In the course of the day, the following individuals came to pay tribute to their Führer: Reichsführer SS Himmler, the two SS Gruppenführers Heydrich and

Wolff, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Reich Press Chief Dietrich, Reichsleiter Bormann, and General Building Inspector Speer. A list of the prominent figures to call on Hitler on the occasion was highly reminiscent of his fiftieth-birthday celebration.

In the meantime, Danzig was preparing for a reunion by force with the Greater German Reich. An "SS Heimwehr" (SS home defense militia) had sprung up. Officially created to supplement an already well-armed police unit—standing at readiness at its barracks—it consisted of individuals the Waffen SS had all too obviously trained in military matters.

On August 18, members of the SS Heimwehr, wearing field-gray SS uniforms and steel helmets and carrying rifles, marched up in the center of the town. Gauleiter Forster presented their commander, SS Obersturmbannführer Goetze, with a new ensign, a swastika flag sewn on the coat of arms of the city of Danzig in the manner of a cross. Afterwards, the company paraded down Hindenburgallee at a brisk pace. At the same time a 286-meter long water-way was declared open for traffic along the Weichsel (Vistula) river. It was to afford "Danzig a direct link to East Prussia."⁶⁶⁴

On August 19, the Soviet-German Commercial Agreement was concluded. The German News Bureau reported the following on the matter:⁶⁶⁵

The negotiations between Germany and the USSR concerning an expansion of bilateral trade, underway for a considerable time already, came to a successful conclusion on August 19, 1939. The outcome of the negotiations has been a trade and credit agreement signed by the deputy Legation Counselor Schnurre on behalf of Germany, and the deputy head of the Soviet Russian trade legation in Germany, E. Barbarin. The trade agreement provides for Germany extending a credit to the amount of RM 200 million to the USSR, the money being earmarked for the purchase of German goods. The agreement further stipulates that the USSR shall see to the delivery of goods to Germany, within the subsequent two years, to the amount of RM 180 million.

The text of the DNB note made perfectly clear that a rapprochement between Germany and the Soviet Union was being actively pursued. At least, by establishing ties with the Russians, the Germans hoped to thwart the effectiveness of potential economic sanctions by the Western Powers. These now appeared certain if there was an attack on Poland. Meanwhile, in spite of repeated interventions by the German Ambassador in Moscow, Graf von der Schulenburg,⁶⁶⁶ the

Russians proved insufficiently receptive to the urgency of the matter for Germany. Apparently, they could not, or were unwilling to, understand why such haste was suddenly needed for the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany. Further, a division of Eastern Europe between Soviet and German spheres of interest was not a matter to be clarified in the shortest possible time in the eyes of the Soviets.

Hitler, by contrast, grew increasingly nervous as the timeframe he had named for the attack, "late August" and "September 1," drew ever closer.⁶⁶⁷ Time was running out and the English appeared no less intransigent. They seemed not about to allow a German military intervention in Poland. Hitler urgently needed the Russians to cover for him in the East, unless he wished to scrap the plans for the war in view of the rapidly advancing cold season.

On August 20, given the pressure for a timely conclusion of the affair, Hitler once more resorted to his persuasive powers and penned the following personal note:⁶⁶⁸

Herr Stalin, Moscow

1) I sincerely welcome the signing of the new German-Soviet Commercial Agreement as the first step in the re-shaping of German-Soviet relations.

2) The conclusion of a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union means to me the establishment of German policy for a long time. Germany thereby resumes a political course that was beneficial to both States during bygone centuries. The Government of the Reich are therefore resolved in such a case to accept all the consequences of such a far-reaching change.

3) I accept the draft of the non-aggression pact that your Foreign Minister, Herr Molotov, handed over, but consider it urgently necessary to clarify the questions connected with it as soon as possible.

4) The substance of the supplementary protocol desired by the Soviet Union can, I am convinced, be clarified in the shortest possible time if a responsible German statesman can come to Moscow himself to negotiate. Otherwise the Government of the Reich are not clear as to how the supplementary protocol could be cleared up or settled in a short time.

5) The tension between Germany and Poland has become intolerable. Polish demeanor toward a great Power is such that a crisis may arise any day. Germany is at any rate determined, in the face of this presumption, from now on to look after the interests of the Reich with all means at her disposal.

6) In my opinion, it is desirable in view of the intentions of the two States to enter into a new relationship to each other, not to lose any time. I therefore again propose that you receive my Foreign Minister on Tuesday, August 22, but at the latest on Wednesday, August 23. The Reich Foreign Minister has full powers to draw up and sign the non-aggression pact as well as the protocol. A longer stay by the Foreign Minister in Moscow than one to two

days at most is impossible in view of the international situation. I should be glad to receive your early answer.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler was pressed for time indeed. The Reich Foreign Minister was to travel to Moscow on August 22, "at the latest on Wednesday, August 23." Ribbentrop was entitled to spend no more "than one or two days at most" in the Soviet capital. By August 25, Hitler wished the matter to be settled. Ribbentrop was to receive "full powers," i.e. the permission to sign anything the Russians desired so long as things moved along in a speedy fashion. To lure Stalin into cooperation with National Socialist Germany, Hitler insisted the agreement signified the "establishment of German policy for a long time." Close cooperation had always proven "beneficial to both States during bygone centuries."

On August 21, Hitler spent nearly the entire day at the Obersalzberg, waiting for news from Moscow. The atmosphere was tense. Only a call by von Papen relieved the situation a bit. Papen proposed to the Führer to reconcile Turkey to his plans by granting it deliveries of war weaponry from German suppliers.⁶⁶⁹ Hitler was content to agree with this proposal, restricted to items such as gun powder and anti-aircraft equipment. This was generally not considered "war material."

Another reprieve came from an exchange of telegrams between the Reich Chancellor and the International Viticulture Congress then convening at Bad Kreuznach. Hitler replied to the greetings received in the following manner:⁶⁷⁰

I thank the participants in the International Viticulture Congress in Bad Kreuznach for the cordial reetings telegraphed to me. I sincerely reciprocate in the hope that your congress may proceed with all success.

In the late evening hours of August 21, Hitler finally received recompense for his persistence. A telegram from Moscow conveyed that Stain had fallen for the all too tempting offers made in Hitler's telegram. Stalin wired the following reply:⁶⁷¹

August 21, 1939

To the Chancellor of the German Reich, Herr A. Hitler:

I thank you for the letter. I hope that the German-Soviet non-aggression pact will bring about a decided turn for the better in the political relations between our countries.

The peoples of our countries need peaceful relations with each other. The assent of the German Government to the conclusion of a non-aggression pact provides the foundation for eliminating the political tension and for the establishment of peace and collaboration between our countries.

August 21, 1939

The Soviet Government have instructed me to inform you that they agree to Herr von Ribbentrop's arrivin in Moscow on August 23.

J. Stalin

The German News Bureau speedily informed the public of this sensational and unanticipated turn of events that same evening. A radio broadcast at 11:30 p.m. carried the following official announcement:⁶⁷²

Berlin, August 21

The Reich Government and the Soviet Government have agreed to conclude a non-aggression pact. The Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop will journey to Moscow on Wednesday, August 23, to finalize negotiations.

Now Hitler felt in control of the situation once more. No doubt, so he thought, the Russians would not mount any opposition to a German attack on Poland. Faced with a like cooeration between Germany and Russia, the Western Powers would capitulate. They would bow to his will. Filled with renewed confidence, Hitler summoned his military commanders to the Obersalzberg for August 22. There he addressed them in the early morning hours. He was even more arrogant on this occasion than he had been on August 14. The outcome of his wager on Russia had greatly increased his confidence. His vanity knew no bounds. He claimed his "own personality," his "existence," and his "political talents" to be of historic importance. Mocking his opponents, he confidently proclaimed: "There is no outstanding personality in England and France." He spoke of his adversaries on the world stage in precisely the same terms he had already employed to deal with domestic opposition in 1932.⁶⁷³ At the time, he had maintained that, in regard to his opponents internally, he would consider himself better off "if [I] were faced with worthy fighters and not this stuff, this nature's run of the mill." Now he congratulated himself that "our enemies have leaders who are below the average. No masters, no men of action." These men he knew only too well: "Our enemies are little worms; I came to know them in Munich." In the end, he had always been right. After all, as he himself put it: "I should have been stoned if I had not been proven right."

A long and tiresome list of figures followed this peculiar self-laudation. Hitler strove to prove England's weak points. London commanded no more than "150 anti-aircraft guns." Certainly, it could "send at the most three divisions to the Continent." This was compounded by the fact that, so Hitler argued, "at the moment the English

Air Force has only 130,000 men.” Assured of the Luftwaffe’s superiority, he maintained: “England does not really want to support Poland. She is not risking eight million pounds in Poland, although she poured five hundred million into China.”

Hitler’s arguments boiled down to the fact that, as he himself proclaimed, “England cannot help Poland.” The Russians had been England’s last hope. The English had failed to take account of his “great strength of purpose” in their speculations. Certain that he himself had ruled out any adversity, he declared: “Personal contact to Stalin is established.” He continued: “Now Poland is in the position in which I wanted her.”⁶⁷⁴

The surviving notes on Hitler’s talk before his generals detail the following:⁶⁷⁵

I have called you together to give you a picture of the political situation, in order that you might have some insight into the individual factors on which I have based my decision to act and in order to strengthen your confidence.

After this we shall discuss military details.

It was clear to me that a conflict with Poland had to come sooner or later. I had already made this decision in the spring, but I thought that I would first turn against the West in a few years, and only after that against the East. But the sequence of these things cannot be fixed. Nor should one close one’s eyes to threatening situations. I wanted first of all to establish a tolerable relationship with Poland in order to fight first against the West. But this plan, which appealed to me, could not be executed, as fundamental points had changed. It became clear to me that, in the event of a conflict with the West, Poland would attack us. Poland is striving for access to the sea. The further development appeared after the occupation of the Memel Territory and it became clear to me that in certain circumstances a conflict with Poland might come at an inopportune moment. I give as reasons for this conclusion:

1. First of all two personal factors:

My own personality and that of Mussolini.

Essentially all depends on me, on my existence, because of my political talents. Furthermore, the fact that probably no one will ever again have the confidence of the whole German people as I have. There will probably never again in the future be a man with more authority than I have. My existence is therefore a fact of great value. But I can be eliminated at any time by a criminal or a lunatic.

The second personal factor is the Duce. His existence is absolutely decisive. If anything happens to him, Italy’s loyalty to the alliance will no longer be certain. The Italian Court is fundamentally opposed to the Duce. Above all, the Court regards the expansion of the empire as an encumbrance. The Duce is the man with the strongest nerves in Italy.

The third personal factor in our favor is Franco. We can ask only for benevolent neutrality from Spain. But this depends on Franco’s personality.

He guarantees a certain uniformity and stability in the present system in Spain. We must accept the fact that Spain does not yet have a Fascist party with our internal unity.

The other side presents a negative picture as far as authoritative persons are concerned. There is no outstanding personality in England and France.

It is easy for us to make decisions. We have nothing to lose; we have everything to gain. Because of our restrictions (*Einschränkungen*) our economic situation is such that we can only hold out for a few more years. Göring can confirm this. We have no other choice, we must act. Our opponents will be risking a great deal and can gain only little. Britain's stake in a war is inconceivably great. Our enemies have leaders who are below the average. No masters, no men of action.

Besides the personal factors, the political situation is favorable for us: In the Mediterranean, rivalry between Italy, France and England; in the Far East, tension between Japan and England; in the Middle East, tension which causes alarm in the Mohammedan world.

The English Empire did not emerge stronger from the last war. Nothing was achieved from the maritime point of view. Strife between England and Ireland. The Union of South Africa has become more independent. Concessions have had to be made to India. England is in the utmost peril. Unhealthy industrialization. A British statesman can only view the future with concern.

France's position has also deteriorated, above all in the Mediterranean.

Further factors in our favor are these:

Since Albania, there has been a balance of power in the Balkans. Yugoslavia is infected with the fatal germ of decay because of her internal situation.

Rumania has not grown stronger. She is open to attack and vulnerable. She is threatened by Hungary and Bulgaria. Since Kemal's death, Turkey has been ruled by petty minds, unsteady, weak men.

All these favorable circumstances will no longer prevail in two or three years' time. No one knows how much longer I shall live. Therefore, better a conflict now.

The creation of Greater Germany was a great achievement politically, but militarily it was doubtful, since it was achieved by bluff on the part of the political leaders. It is necessary to test the military [machine]. If at all possible, not in a general reckoning, but by the accomplishment of individual tasks.

The relationship with Poland has become unbearable. My Polish policy hitherto was contrary to the views of the people. My proposals to Poland (Danzig and the Corridor) were frustrated by England's intervention. Poland changed her tone towards us. A permanent state of tension is intolerable. The power of initiative cannot be allowed to pass to others. The present moment is more favorable than in two or three years' time. An attempt on my life or Mussolini's could change the situation to our disadvantage. One cannot forever face one another with rifles cocked. One compromise solution suggested to us was that we should change our convictions and make kind gestures. They talked to us again in the language of Versailles. There was a danger of losing prestige. Now the probability is still great that the West will

not intervene. We must take the risk with ruthless determination. The politician must take a risk just as much as the general. We are faced with the harsh alternatives of striking or certain annihilation sooner or later.

Reference to previous hazardous undertakings.

I should have been stoned if I had not been proven right. The most dangerous step was the entry into the neutral zone. Only a week before, I got a warning through France. I have always taken a great risk in the conviction that it would succeed.

Now it is also a great risk. Iron nerves, iron resolution.

The following special reasons fortify me in my view. England and France have undertaken obligations which neither is in a position to fulfil. There is no real rearmament in England, but only propaganda. A great deal of harm was done by many Germans, who were not in agreement with me, saying and writing to English people after the solution of the Czech question: The Führer succeeded because you lost your nerve, because you capitulated too soon. This explains the present propaganda war. The English speak of a war of nerves. One factor in this war of nerves is to boost the increase of armaments. But what are the real facts about British rearmament? The naval construction program for 1938 has not yet been completed. Only the reserve fleet has been mobilized. Purchase of trawlers. No substantial strengthening of the Navy before 1941 or 1942.

Little has been done on land. England will be able to send at most three divisions to the Continent. A little has been done for the Air Force, but only a beginning. Anti-aircraft defense is in its initial stages. At the moment England has only 150 anti-aircraft guns. The new anti-aircraft gun has been ordered. It will take a long time before sufficient numbers have been produced. There is a shortage of anti-aircraft warning devices. England is still vulnerable from the air. This can change in two or three years. At the moment the English Air Force has only 130,000 men, France 72,000, Poland 15,000. England does not want the conflict to break out for two or three years.

The following is typical for England. Poland wanted a loan from England for her rearmament. England, however, only granted credits in order to make sure that Poland buy in England, although England cannot make deliveries. This suggests that England does not really want to support Poland. She is not risking eight million pounds in Poland, although she poured five hundred million into China. England's position in the world is too precarious. She will not take any risks.

France is short of men (decline in the birth rate). Little has been done for rearmament. The artillery is obsolete. France did not want to embark on this adventure. The West has only two possibilities for fighting against us:

1. Blockade: It will not be effective because of our autarky and because we have sources of supply in Eastern Europe.

2. Attack in the West from the Maginot line: I consider this impossible.

Another possibility would be the violation of Dutch, Belgian and Swiss neutrality. I have no doubt that all these States, as well as Scandinavia, will defend their neutrality with all available means. England and France will not violate the neutrality of these countries. Thus in actual fact England cannot

help Poland. There still remains an attack on Italy. Military intervention is out of the question. No one is counting on a long war. If Herr von Brauchitsch had told me that I would need four years to conquer Poland I would have replied: "Then it cannot be done." It is nonsense to say that England wants to wage a long war. We will hold our position in the West until we have conquered Poland. We must bear in mind our great production capacity. It is much greater than in 1914–1918.

The enemy had another hope, that Russia would become our enemy after the conquest of Poland. The enemy did not reckon with my great strength of purpose. Our enemies are little worms (*kleine Würmchen*); I came to know them in Munich.⁶⁷⁶

I was convinced that Stalin would never accept the English offer. Russia has no interest in preserving Poland, and Stalin knows that it would mean the end of his regime, no matter whether his soldiers emerged from a war victorious or vanquished. Litvinov's replacement was decisive. I brought about the change towards Russia gradually. In connection with the commercial treaty we got into political conversations. Proposal for a non-aggression pact. Then came a comprehensive proposal from Russia. Four days ago I took a special step, which led to Russia replying yesterday that she is prepared to sign. Personal contact to Stalin is established. The day after tomorrow von Ribbentrop will conclude the treaty.

Now Poland is in the position in which I wanted her.

We need not be afraid of a blockade. The East will supply us with grain, cattle, coal, lead and zinc. It is a mighty aim, which demands great efforts. I am only afraid that at the last moment some cur (*Schweinehund*) or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation.

The political objective goes further. A start has been made on the destruction of England's hegemony. The way will be open for the soldiers after I have made the political preparations.

Today's announcement of the non-aggression pact with Russia came as a bombshell. The consequences cannot be foreseen. Stalin also said that this course will benefit both countries. The effect on Poland will be tremendous.

Once Hitler had concluded his talk, as the record noted, Göring "thanked the Führer and assured him that the Wehrmacht would do its duty." Then, those assembled dined together. Apparently, the mood of the generals, who had remained silent throughout, was far from what Hitler held to be desirable. In spite of their surprise at the unexpected accord with the Soviet Union, many of the generals still seemed to wonder whether England would go along with a German attack on Poland. They were far from convinced that the Western Powers, though held in check by this latest diplomatic victory, would indeed abandon Poland. And what if Hitler was mistaken on this account? Neither the Army nor the Navy were ready to engage in any venture directed against Great Britain.

His discomfort with these largely unspoken apprehensions on the part of Germany's leading military men led Hitler to speak again in the afternoon. In his mind, he simply had to instill some courage and confidence in these weaklings whom he had learned to despise over the years. It was immaterial, so he argued, what turn events would actually take, as he surely would emerge the undisputed victor from any type of conflict. After all, Germany had the "better men," not to mention the "spiritual factors" essential to the successful waging of a war. What mattered in a war was "not right ... but victory." He was determined to fight and to give "a propagandist reason for starting the war—never mind whether it is plausible or not." Backbone was what the generals needed: "Close your hearts to pity. Act brutally! . . . The stronger man is right! The greatest harshness!"

The memorandum on Hitler's admonitions to the generals that afternoon read as follows:⁶⁷⁷

Things can also work out differently regarding England and France. It is impossible to prophesy with any certainty. I am expecting an embargo on trade, not a blockade, and furthermore that relations will be broken off. The most iron determination on our part. No shrinking back from anything. Everyone must hold the view that we have been determined to fight the Western Powers right from the start. A life and death struggle. Germany has won every war when she was united. An inflexible, unflinching bearing, above all on the part of superiors, firm confidence, belief in victory, overcoming the past by becoming accustomed to the heaviest burdens. A long period of peace would not do us any good. It is therefore necessary to be prepared for anything. A manly bearing. It is not machines that fight each other, but men. We have the better men as regards quality. Spiritual factors are decisive.

On the opposite side they are weaker men. The nation collapsed in 1918 because the spiritual prerequisites were insufficient. Frederick the Great only achieved final success by his fortitude.

The destruction of Poland has priority. The aim is to eliminate active forces, not to reach a definite line. Even if war breaks out in the West, the destruction of Poland remains the priority. A quick decision in view of the season.

I shall give a propagandist reason for starting the war, never mind whether it is plausible or not. The victor will not be asked afterwards whether he told the truth or not. When starting and waging a war it is not right that matters, but victory.

Close your hearts to pity. Act brutally! Eighty million people must obtain what is their right. Their existence must be made secure. The stronger man is right! The greatest harshness! Swift action in making decisions is necessary. Firm faith in the German soldier. Crises are due solely to leaders having lost their nerve.

First requirement: Advance up to the Vistula and the Narev. Our technical superiority will shatter the nerves of the Poles. Every newly formed active Polish force is to be destroyed again immediately. A continuous process of attrition.

New German frontier delimitation according to sound principles and possibly a protectorate as a buffer state. Military operations will not be influenced by these considerations. The wholesale destruction of Poland is the military objective. Speed is the chief thing. Pursuit until complete annihilation. Conviction that the German Wehrmacht is equal to all demands. The order for the start of hostilities will be given later, probably Saturday morning.

Halder's entry into his diary for that day likewise affirms that, by this date, Hitler had already determined to begin the war against Poland on August 26.⁶⁷⁸ This reflected his general propensity for launching major military missions on a Saturday.⁶⁷⁹ Thereby he believed he would be able to catch the English off-guard, most of whom would already have set out to enjoy a long weekend. This, in turn, Hitler speculated, would slow the British ability to react to his moves in a timely fashion and hence would limit their room for action.

In the meanwhile, Ribbentrop had set out for Moscow, traveling from Berlin to Königsberg. Hitler had provided him the following sweeping authority:⁶⁸⁰

Full Powers

Obersalzberg, August 22, 1939

I hereby grant to the Reich Foreign Minister, Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop, full power to negotiate in the name of the German Reich with authorized representatives of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics regarding a non-aggression treaty, as well as all related questions, and to sign both the non-aggression treaty and other agreements resulting from the negotiations, with the provision, if need be, that this treaty and these agreements shall come into force immediately on signature.

Adolf Hitler

Nevertheless, Ribbentrop was not left solely to his own devices. Instead, in addition to the usual Foreign Ministry entourage, Ribbentrop found Heinrich Hoffmann at his side.⁶⁸¹ This odd procedure greatly upset Soviet protocol. Notwithstanding the strangeness of the situation, Hitler had appointed his friend and personal photographer Hoffmann his official representative on the occasion of the state visit. Needless to add, the public was not informed of this measure.

Hitler apparently placed greater stock in a frank report by Hoffmann than on the official and tedious account Ribbentrop was bound to render. Hoffmann would assuredly recount the impressions Stalin

made on him more colorfully and truthfully. While Hitler publicly placed great emphasis on "blind obedience," he personally felt only contempt for those who obeyed him so unquestioningly. Ribbentrop's fawning annoyed him at times despite the Foreign Minister's undeniable dedication and professed desire to serve his Führer well. Undoubtedly this all contributed to Hoffmann's singular commission. Stalin, however, accepted the presence of the German Head of State's peculiar "special emissary" at the talks. He even toasted the well-being of "Herr Hitler and his friend, Herr Heinrich Hoffmann."⁶⁸²

Speaking before the generals, Hitler had maintained that the "announcement of the non-aggression pact with Russia came as a bombshell." This was doubtless true, but especially for Hitler's friends, Japan and Italy, whom he had obviously not apprised in any way of his secret negotiations. They felt they had been lied to and betrayed, and rightly so. The Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, Hiroshi Oshima, went white as a sheet when the German State Secretary von Weizsäcker called on him to present him with the news.⁶⁸³ The completely unexpected turn of events ultimately forced the Japanese Prime Minister to step down.⁶⁸⁴

Mussolini was also nettled by this latest in a series of "surprise" moves Hitler had presented him with. This contributed to Mussolini's decision of August 25 to remain neutral in the upcoming conflict.

Hitler's alliance with Bolshevik Russia did not meet with approval in Germany either. Though there were voices which applauded this diplomatic feat as a "masterpiece of the Führer," most Germans were appalled. They were outraged less at the thought of Germany becoming the ally of a communist state than at the lack of character this implied on the part of Hitler, the self-proclaimed enemy of all Bolsheviks. As once before domestically, after the Röhm Purge, this complete turn-about in foreign policy revealed Hitler as a hazardous desperado, an opportunist of whom only the worst was to be expected in the future. To secure an advantage for himself, this man was ever ready to abandon the best and most worthy of his friends to the knife. Many Germans remembered only too well Hitler's resounding proclamations, his raving against the dangers of Bolshevism just three years earlier:⁶⁸⁵

And I believe that this ruin would come at that point at which the leadership decides to stoop to become an ally at the service of such a destructive doctrine. I would see no possibility of conveying in clear terms to the German worker the threatening misfortune of Bolshevik chaos which

so deeply troubles me were I myself, as Führer of the nation, to enter into close dealings with this very menace. As a statesman and the Führer of the Volk, I wish to also do myself ll those things I expect and demand from each of my Volksgenossen. I do not believe that statesmen can profit from closer contact. I broke off these relations and thus jerked Germany back from the verge of destruction. Nothing can persuade me to go any other way than that dictated by experience, insight, and foresight.

More pertinently, in a speech a year after these remarks, Hitler had insisted:⁶⁸⁶

I hold the Bolshevik doctrine to be the worst poison which can be administered to a people. I therefore do not want my own people to come into contact with this doctrine in any way. And as a citizen of this Volk myself, I will not do anything I would be forced to condemn in my fellow citizens. I demand from every German worker that he refrain from having any relations or dealings with these international pests, and for his part he will never see me quaffing or carousing with them. In other respects, every additional German contractual tie with the present Bolshevik Russia would be completely useless to us. It would be equally inconceivable for National Socialist German soldiers to ever need fulfill a helpmate function in protecting Bolshevism; nor would we on our side accept any aid from the Bolshevik state. For I fear that every Volk which reaches out for such aid will find it to be its own demise.

In 1939, nevertheless, the question remained of how this “devilish potion” now would truly affect those it had been brewed for. How would England and France react to news of the Soviet-German Agreement?

Papers in Paris carried one particularly revealing headline commenting on the new alignment of powers: “Brest-Litovsk 1939.” This was a succinct summation of the situation as it appeared to the perceptive French in 1939: Just as the conclusion of the separate peace⁶⁸⁷ between Germany and Russia at Brest-Litovsk had failed to prevent an Allied victory in 1918, the agreement binding the Soviet Union to Germany in 1939 would not prove effective. As unpleasant a reality as this may well have been for Germany’s leadership, “Brest-Litovsk 1939” simply meant that, while a German-Soviet collaboration might delay victory for the West, the Western Powers would, nevertheless, be victorious in the end.

Reactions in London were more pronounced still. At 2:40 p.m., Lord Halifax informed Warsaw by telephone that the Pact “does not modify the attitude or the policy of His Majesty’s Government or the relations between His Majesty’s Government and Poland.”⁶⁸⁸ The

Cabinet convened at 3:00 p.m. on August 22 and declared that "they had no hesitation in deciding that such an event [the German-Soviet Pact] would in no way affect their obligations to Poland."⁶⁸⁹

To assure that Hitler comprehended just how determined England was in the Polish case, Chamberlain addressed the letter below to the German Head of State. Once more he stressed the certainty of a British declaration of war in the event of a German attack on Poland and pointed to the experience of 1914:⁶⁹⁰

August 22, 1939

Your Excellency:

Your Excellency will have already heard of certain measures taken by His Majesty's Government and announced in the press and on the wireless this evening.

These steps have, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, been rendered necessary by military movements which have been reported from Germany and by the fact that apparently the announcement of a German-Soviet Agreement is taken in some quarters in Berlin to indicate that intervention by Great Britain on behalf of Poland is no longer a contingency that need be reckoned with. No greater mistake could be made. Whatever may prove to be the nature of the German-Soviet Agreement, it cannot alter Great Britain's obligation to Poland, which His Majesty's Government have stated in public repeatedly and plainly, and which they are determined to fulfill.

It has been alleged that if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914, the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in this allegation,⁶⁹¹ His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding.

If the case should arise, they are resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at their command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.

Having thus made our position perfectly clear, I wish to repeat to you my conviction that war between our two peoples would be the greatest calamity that could occur. I am certain that it is desired neither by our people nor by yours, and I cannot see that there is anything in the questions arising between Germany and Poland which could not and should not be resolved without use of force, if only a situation of confidence could be restored to enable discussions to be carried on in an atmosphere different from that which prevails today.

We have been, and at all times will be, ready to assist in creating conditions in which such negotiations could take place, and in which it might be possible concurrently to discuss the wider problems affecting the future international relations, including matters of interest to us and to you.

The difficulties in the way of any peaceful discussions in the present state of tension are, however, obvious, and the longer that tension is maintained, the harder it will be for reason to prevail. These difficulties, however, might be mitigated if not removed, provided that there could for an initial period be a truce on both sides, and indeed on all sides, to press polemics and to all incitement.

If such a truce could be arranged, then, at the end of that period, during which steps could be taken to examine and deal with complaints made by either side as to the treatment of minorities, it is reasonable to hope that suitable conditions might have been established for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland upon the issues between them (with the aid of a neutral intermediary, if both sides should think that would be helpful).

But I am bound to say that there would be slender hope of bringing such negotiations to a successful issue, unless it were understood beforehand that any settlement reached would, when concluded, be guaranteed by other Powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready, if desired, to make such contribution as they could to the effective operation of such guarantees.

At this moment I confess I can see no other way to avoid a catastrophe that will involve Europe in war.

In view of the grave consequences to humanity, which may follow from the action of their rulers, I trust Your Excellency will weigh with the utmost deliberation the considerations which I have put before you.

Neville Chamberlain

Instructions to request a reception by the German Reich Chancellor immediately reached the British Ambassador in Berlin at about 9:00 p.m. Henderson was to personally present Chamberlain's message to Hitler.⁶⁹² Hitler had no wish to engage in any direct discussions with the British prior to formal signature of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact. And, besides, what was it that this "little worm" desired at this hour? What else than to dissuade him from concluding the pact with Moscow? Moreover, it was actually not his responsibility at all to see to the Ambassador's wishes. After all, this was Ribbentrop's job. There was really no compelling reason why he, as the Reich Chancellor, should have to grant Henderson's request.

Somewhat uncertain about his arguments, Hitler determined how to proceed in this case in a rather peculiar manner: from the Berghof, he telephoned von Weizsäcker in Berlin to ask his opinion. "This was the first and last time," the State Secretary later recalled,⁶⁹³ "that Hitler spoke to me on the telephone. He wanted to know whether an Ambassador had the right to request an audience with him in the absence of the Foreign Minister. I said, yes, of course."

Well, if he did have to swallow this bitter pill, then he, Hitler, would do his best to make it a most unpleasant experience for the administering

nurse as well. He would make an unprecedented scene for Henderson. He would shout; he would scream; he would rant and rave. He would weary him with long lists of figures and resort to similar techniques pulled from the long register of his sublime rhetorical and theatrical accomplishments.

Henderson's reception at the Berghof was scheduled for 1:00 pm. Weizsäcker and Hewel⁶⁹⁴ joined the British Ambassador on his flight from Berlin to the Reich Chancellor's retreat. By all appearances, Weizsäcker had already relayed the contents of Chamberlain's letter to Hitler by this time.⁶⁹⁵

Once the men arrived at their destination, with Hewel serving as interpreter in the absence of Schmidt who was visiting Moscow with Ribbentrop, a reception of 45 minutes' duration began. Hitler used most of this time to hurl one accusation after the other at Poland. He spoke of persistent Polish transgressions; of provocations; of hundred of thousands of German refugees supposedly driven from their homes. He found fault with England for rebuffing his offers of friendship for over twenty years. Instead of an amelioration of the situation, what was it he had to bear witness to now? England was actively backing an insolent Warsaw Government just as it once had incited the Czechs to agitate against Germany. This was all a bit much, but the tirade did not fundamentally differ from the one he had confronted Chamberlain with the year before in the case of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁹⁶

All Henderson could do in light of this verbal assault was to insist on the British determination to fight. Time and time again, he emphasized that London would react to any form of aggression against Poland with an open declaration of war. As far as the Soviet-German Pact was concerned, Henderson remarked that he was relieved to see Germany rather than England allied with the Bolsheviks. This latter turn of phrase momentarily disconcerted Hitler, as Henderson reported.⁶⁹⁷ The German protocol of the conversation between Hitler and Henderson read as follows:⁶⁹⁸

The British Ambassador opened the conversation by stating that he was delivering a letter on behalf of the British Government. At first a more worthy personage was to have done this.⁶⁹⁹ However, the course of events had demanded speedy action especially since the news of the German-Soviet Russian Pact had come as a great surprise to the British Government.

The Führer stated that he already had a translation of the letter before him. He was about to prepare a written reply, but in the meantime he wished to make a few oral observations to the Ambassador on the same lines.

Henderson replied that it was to be hoped that a solution might be found to the difficult situation; it was understood in England that Anglo-German cooperation was necessary for the well-being of Europe.

The Führer replied that this ought to have been realized earlier. When the Ambassador objected that the British Government had given their guarantees and must now honor them, the Führer replied: "Then honor them. If you have given a blank check⁷⁰⁰ you must also meet it." He had, he added, made it clear in his reply that Germany was not responsible for the guarantees given by England, but England would be responsible for the consequences of these commitments.

It was England's business to realize this clearly. He had informed the Polish Government that any further persecution of the Germans in Poland would immediately entail action by the Reich. As he had learned from other sources, Chamberlain had provided for increased military preparations in England. Germany's preparations were confined to purely defensive measures. "If," said the Führer, "I should hear of any further measures of this sort being taken by England today or tomorrow, I shall immediately order general mobilization in Germany."⁷⁰¹

When the Ambassador remarked that war would then be inevitable, the Führer repeated his pronouncements regarding mobilization.

He then stated that the people in England were always talking about the "poisoned atmosphere." The fact was that the "atmosphere" had been "poisoned" by England. If it had not been for England he would have achieved a peaceful settlement with Czechoslovakia last year, and would certainly have done the same with Poland this year as regards the Danzig problem. England alone was responsible, and the whole of Germany was firmly convinced of this. Today, hundreds of thousands of *Volksdeutsche* were being ill-treated in Poland, dragged off to concentration camps and driven from their homes. He was in possession of extensive material on this which he had hitherto refrained from publishing. England had given a blank check for all this, and now she must pay for it. Since England had given the guarantees, he, the Führer, had been obliged to take a firm stand on this question. He could not allow tens of thousands of fellow-Germans to be slaughtered for the sake of one of England's whims.

He recalled that Germany had previously lived on good terms with Poland, and he had made a reasonable and fair offer to Poland. This offer had been sabotaged by the Western Powers and, as previously in the case of Czechoslovakia, largely by reports from the Military Attachés who spread false rumors about German mobilization.

Here the Ambassador objected that the Polish Government had turned down the German offer before England had given the guarantees.

The Führer went on to say that Chamberlain could not have found a better plan for ranging every German solidly behind the Führer by supporting Poland and a settlement of the Danzig question in Poland's favour. He saw no possibilities in negotiation because he was convinced that the British Government were simply not interested in such a settlement. He could only repeat once more that general mobilization would be proclaimed in Germany

should further military measures be adopted in England. The same applied to France.

When the Führer had emphasized that all this would be set down in writing, he declared that he had done everything humanly possible. England had made an enemy of the man who had wished to become her greatest friend. England would now make the acquaintance of a Germany very different from that which she had imagined for so many years.

Henderson replied that the people in England knew that Germany was strong and she had often demonstrated this in recent times.

The Führer declared that he had made Poland a generous offer, but England had interfered.

To this the Ambassador retorted that although the offer was made, it was nevertheless in the nature of a "dictate."

The Führer then described how several months before in this very place he had discussed the same settlement with Colonel Beck⁷⁰² who had described it as too sudden at the time, but had nevertheless seen possibilities in it.

He had repeated his proposals in March, and stated in addition that in this case Germany would renounce her interests in Slovakia. At that time, the Führer emphasized, Poland would have declared herself willing if England had not interfered. At the time the English press had said that now the freedom of Poland and also of Rumania was threatened. The Führer then continued that in the event of the slightest attempt by Poland to make any further move against Germans or Danzig, he would immediately intervene, and furthermore that mobilization in the West would be answered by German mobilization.

Ambassador Henderson: "Is that a threat?"

The Führer: "No, a protective measure!"

He then declared that the British Government had given preference to everything rather than cooperation with Germany. They had turned to France, Turkey and Moscow.

The Ambassador objected that it was now Germany who was coming to terms with Moscow; to which the Führer retorted that he was forced to do so because of the will to destruction of the Western Powers. The Ambassador disputed this and maintained that Britain did not wish to destroy Germany.

The Führer retorted that he was nevertheless firmly convinced; he had therefore built a Western Wall costing nine thousand millions in order to protect Germany from an attack from the West.

Henderson pointed out that the change in British opinion had taken place after March 15, to which the Führer retorted that Poland had become agitated about the Carpatho-Ukraine out of self-interest. Furthermore, conditions within Czechoslovakia had become intolerable for Germany. After all, Bohemia and Moravia had received their culture from the Germans and not from the English. He was convinced that the Czech solution was the best one. President Hácha had been happy to see a way out of the crisis; it was naturally a matter of indifference to the English whether there was any shooting in the heart of Central Europe.

Finally, the Führer assured the Ambassador that he was not blaming him, and that he had always appreciated his personal efforts on behalf of German-English friendship.

The Ambassador alluded to the great tragedy which would now be enacted, whereupon the Führer declared that, should it come to war, it would be a war of life and death, judging by English intentions in this respect. In this England had more to lose. Henderson observed that according to Clausewitz, war always brought surprises; he only knew that every one would do his duty.

The Führer said that Germany had never done anything to damage England, nevertheless England was taking her stand against Germany. He referred again to the question of Danzig and Poland, about which England adopted the attitude of "better war than anything to Germany's advantage."

Henderson declared that he had done his best. He had recently written to a Reich Minister saying that the Führer, who had taken ten years to win over Germany, would have to give England a longer period of time.

The Führer declared that the fact that England had taken a stand against Germany in the Danzig question had deeply shaken the German people.

Henderson objected, saying that they had only opposed the principle of force, whereupon the Führer countered by asking whether England had ever found a solution for any of the idiocies of Versailles by way of negotiation.

The Ambassador had no reply to this, and the Führer declared that according to a German proverb it always takes two to make love. The Ambassador emphasized that Chamberlain had always championed Germany, and the Führer declared that he too had always believed that until the spring.

Thereupon Henderson emphasized that he personally had never believed in an Anglo-Franco-Russian Pact. His view was that Russia only wished to be rid of Chamberlain by procrastination and then to profit from a war. He personally preferred that it should be Germany rather than England who should have a treaty with Russia.

The Führer answered: "Make no mistake. It will be a long treaty."⁷⁰³

Henderson said he thought that the Führer knew as well as he did that the Russians always made difficulties. In any case it was certain that Chamberlain had not changed.

To this the Führer replied: "I must judge by deeds in this matter."

The interview ended with the Führer stating that a written reply would be handed to the Ambassador in the afternoon.

As on many previous occasions, Hitler was exuberant immediately after the talk. He was certain he had just achieved a great rhetorical feat, as Weizsäcker recorded in his memoirs:⁷⁰⁴ "Hardly had the door shut on the Ambassador, when Hitler slapped himself on the thigh, laughed and said: 'Chamberlain will not survive that conversation; his Cabinet will fall this evening.'"

Hitler had always retained the conviction that his demands in his speech before the Reichstag on February 20, 1938⁷⁰⁵ had brought about the removal of the British Foreign Secretary Eden. Against the

background of the Hitlerian mental attitude, his hope that Chamberlain would be removed after reproof by the German Reich Chancellor—albeit expressed in a private discussion at the Berghof—was perhaps not a non sequitur as it may seem at first glance. The further course of events was to prove just how wrong Hitler's speculations had been. Neither the most cleverly thought-out speeches or declarations, nor the most refined letters, could move the British in their stand toward Germany. Unaware of these actual facts, Hitler penned a swift reply to Chamberlain's admonitions of August 22:⁷⁰⁶

August 23, 1939

Your Excellency!

The British Ambassador has just handed to me a communication in which Your Excellency draws attention in the name of the British Government to a number of points which in your estimation are of the greatest importance.

I may be permitted to answer your letter as follows:

1. Germany has never sought conflicts with England and has never interfered in English interests. On the contrary, she has for years endeavored—although unfortunately in vain—to win England's friendship. On this account she assumed in a wide area of Europe voluntary limitations of her own interests which from a national-political point of view it would otherwise have been very difficult to tolerate.

2. The German Reich, however, like every other State, possesses certain definite interests which it is impossible to renounce. These do not extend beyond the limits of the necessities imposed by earlier German history and conditioned by vital economic prerequisites. Some of these questions held and still hold a significance both of a national-political and of a psychological character which no German Government is able to ignore.

To these questions belong the German City of Danzig and the connected problem of the Corridor. Numerous statesmen, historians, and men of letters, even in England, have been conscious of this at any rate up to a few years ago. I would add that all these territories lying in the aforesaid German sphere of interest, and in particular those lands which returned to the Reich eighteen months ago, received their cultural development at the hands not of Englishmen but exclusively of Germans, and this, moreover, from a time dating back over a thousand years.

3. Germany was prepared to settle the question of Danzig and of the Corridor by the method of negotiation on the basis of a proposal of truly unparalleled magnanimity. The allegations disseminated by England regarding a German mobilization against Poland, the assertion of aggressive designs towards Rumania, Hungary, etc., etc., as well as the so-called guarantee declarations which were subsequently given, had, however, dispelled Polish inclination to negotiate on a basis of this kind which would have been tolerable for Germany also.

4. The general assurance (*Generalzusicherung*) given by England to Poland, that she would render assistance to that country in all circumstances,

regardless of the causes from which a conflict might spring, could only be interpreted in that country as an encouragement thenceforward to unloose, under cover of such a charter, a wave of appalling terrorism against the one and a half million German inhabitants living in Poland. The atrocities which since then have been taking place in that country are terrible for the victims, but intolerable for a Great Power such as the German Reich, which is expected to remain a passive onlooker during these happenings. Poland has been guilty of numerous breaches of her legal obligations towards the Free City of Danzig, has made demands in the character of ultimata, and has initiated a process of economic strangulation.

5. The Government of the German Reich therefore recently caused the Polish Government to be informed that they are not prepared passively to accept this development of affairs, that they will not tolerate further addressing of notes in the character of ultimata to Danzig, that they will not tolerate a continuance of the persecution of the German minority, that they will equally not tolerate the extermination of the Free City of Danzig by economic measures, in other words, the destruction of the vital bases of the population of Danzig by a kind of customs blockade, and that they will not tolerate the occurrence of further acts of provocation directed against the Reich. Apart from this, the questions of the Corridor and of Danzig must and shall be solved.

6. Your Excellency informs me in the name of the British Government that you will be obliged to render assistance to Poland in any such case of intervention on the part of Germany. I take note of this statement of yours and assure you that it can make no change in the determination of the Reich Government to safeguard the interests of the Reich as stated in point 5 above. Your assurance to the effect that in such an event you anticipate a long war, is shared by myself.

Germany, if attacked by England, will be found prepared and determined. I have already more than once declared before the German people and the world that there can be no doubt concerning the determination of the new German Reich rather to accept, for however long it might be, every sort of misery and tribulation than to sacrifice its national interests, let alone its honour.

7. The Government of the German Reich have received information to the effect that the British Government intend to carry out measures of mobilization which, according to the statements contained in your own letter, Mr. Prime Minister, are clearly directed against Germany alone. This appears to be true of France as well. Since Germany has never had the intention of taking military measures, other than those of a defensive character, against either England or France, and, as has already been emphasized, has never intended, and does not in the future intend, to attack England or France, it follows that this announcement as confirmed by you, Mr. Prime Minister, in your own letter, can only refer to a proposed act of menace directed against the Reich.

*I therefore inform Your Excellency that, in the event of these military announcements being carried into effect, I shall order immediate mobilization of the German forces.*⁷⁰⁷

8. The question of the treatment of European problems on a peaceful basis is not a decision which rests with Germany, but primarily with those who, since the crime committed by the Versailles Dictate, have stubbornly and consistently opposed any peaceful revision. Only after a change of spirit on the part of the responsible Powers can there be any real change in the relationship between England and Germany. I have all my life fought for German-English friendship; the attitude adopted by British diplomacy—at any rate up to the present—has, however, convinced me of the futility of such an attempt. Should there be any change in this respect in the future, nobody could be happier than I.

Adolf Hitler

At 5:00 p.m., Henderson called on Hitler at the Berghof a second time. Hitler handed the British Ambassador the written answer he had prepared in the meantime. In the ensuing discussion, Henderson emphasized that “the hostile attitude to Germany did not represent the will of the British people. It was the work of Jews and enemies of the Nazis.” The German protocol recorded the following:⁷⁰⁸

The Ambassador first read through the Führer’s written reply and expressed his regret at its contents. The Führer declared that there were people in the British Government who wanted war. The Ambassador vigorously denied this and declared that Chamberlain had always been a friend of Germany. The Führer mentioned the Minister of War,⁷⁰⁹ saying he could not imagine him as one. Henderson said he thought that the proof of Chamberlain’s friendship was to be found in the fact that he had refused to have Churchill in the Cabinet. The hostile attitude to Germany did not represent the will of the British people. It was the work of Jews and enemies of the Nazis.

The Führer assured the Ambassador that he did not include him personally among the enemies of Germany. His, the Führer’s, relationship with England had been a series of disappointments. Even before he came to power he had been warned by experts not to cherish too great hopes. However, as far as he was concerned the position was very simple:

He was now fifty, therefore if war had to come, it was better that it should come now than when he was fifty-five or even sixty years old. There could only be understanding or war between England and Germany. England would do well to realize that as a front-line soldier he knew what war was and would utilize every means available. It was surely quite clear to everyone that the World War would not have been lost had he been Chancellor at the time.⁷¹⁰

“At the next instance of Polish provocation,” continued the Führer, “I shall act. The questions of Danzig and the Corridor will be settled one way or another. Please take note of this. Believe me, last year—on October 2—I would have marched either way.⁷¹¹ I give you my word of honor on that!”

The Ambassador observed that after all England and Germany were equals and had equal rights, whereupon the Führer replied that, in that case,

England ought not to intervene against Germany if she were clearly safeguarding her own rights. He had once before handed the Baldwin Government a definite proposition, but it had met with no response.⁷¹²

The interview concluded with the Führer stating that the text of the letter would be delivered in London by the Ambassador⁷¹³ on the following day.

The official communiqué published on the meeting between Henderson and Hitler read:⁷¹⁴

On the explicit desire of the British Government, the Führer received the British Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, at the Berghof today. The Ambassador presented the Führer with a letter written by the British Prime Minister. This correspondence was penned in the spirit of yesterday's communiqué published after the Cabinet session. The Führer unequivocally stated that, irrespective of the obligations entered into by the British Government, Germany cannot be induced to desist from the pursuit of the nation's vital interests.

At the same time, the German press received instructions to portray the British policy as "muddled." The reason for this assessment was England's insistence on "blindly" fulfilling its obligations towards Poland.⁷¹⁵

As ratification of the Soviet-German Pact was scheduled for August 23, Hitler issued orders for the attack on Poland to be launched on August 26. Halder recorded in his diary: "Day Y definitely set for the 26th (Saturday)."⁷¹⁶ Simultaneously, a rationing of foodstuffs, fossil fuels, textiles, and certain raw materials was to enter into force.

Already on August 23, the Danzig senate passed a resolution elevating Gauleiter Albert Forster to the post of Head of State. This move was unconstitutional, as the statutes of the Free City of Danzig provided for no such office. However, Hitler had long resolved to see through a virtual coup d'état there and, for this purpose, he needed a reliable man in this key position. Forster, who apparently had been summoned to Hitler on August 21 once again,⁷¹⁷ was to take over the city. As soon as Hitler so desired, Forster would then be in a position to remove the troublesome City Senate and institute a "basic law." This in fact meant nothing less than presenting the world with the fait accompli of an annexation of the Free City by the Greater German Reich.

This curious undertaking reflected the excessive precautions Hitler always took in cases related to power politics. Undoubtedly, Danzig's Senate could well have passed a "basic law" without outside prodding. Its president, SS Gruppenführer and deputy Gauleiter Arthur Greiser,⁷¹⁸

might well have seen to this on his own. Nevertheless, Hitler was not taking any risks. He feared that, if he left the Senate to its own devices, legal bickering could delay timely action at a crucial moment. So he needed an absolutely reliable man, i.e. a stooge, to wield uncontested power in Danzig.

In the evening hours of August 23, the Berghof established yet another telephone connection with Moscow. Ribbentrop was confronted with a minor difficulty in his negotiations with Stalin, as the Soviets insisted on the Latvian ports Libau and Windau. And despite the vast power of attorney supplied by Hitler, Ribbentrop did not want to give in on this point on the Russians' agenda, unless he had Hitler's written approval in hand, on which he must insist, as he informed Hitler.⁷¹⁹ By 11:00 p.m., a telegram lay on the Foreign Minister's desk reading:⁷²⁰ "Answer is: Yes, agreed."

The swiftness of Hitler's decision in favor of the Soviets came as no surprise. He was understandably eager to have the treaty with the Russians signed and was largely indifferent to the precise terms of the contract laying the groundwork for such a collaboration, as he never really intended to uphold the provisions of the contract in any event. At this point, he would willingly have made even greater concessions to the Russians in the East: Belorussia, the Polish section of the Ukraine, Latvia, and Estonia could have belonged to the Soviet Union. Moscow could even have demanded Finland, half the Balkans, and perhaps Turkey. Hitler, however, stood always prepared to launch a surprise attack tomorrow on the ally of today.⁷²¹ Whatever he had to cede to Russia voluntarily during those days, he would surely try to take from it again by force at a later time.

On August 23, the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union was signed shortly before midnight. At 1:00 a.m. on August 24, Ribbentrop reported its successful conclusion to Hitler on the phone.⁷²²

The agreement read as follows:⁷²³

Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany
and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, desirous of strengthening the cause of peace between Germany and the U.S.S.R., and proceeding from the fundamental provisions of the Treaty of Neutrality, which was concluded between Germany and the U.S.S.R. in April 1926, have reached the following agreement:

Article I

The two Contracting Parties undertake to refrain from any act of violence, any aggressive action and any attack on each other either severally or jointly with other Powers.

Article II

Should one of the Contracting Parties become the object of belligerent action by a third Power, the other Contracting Party shall in no manner lend its support to this third Power.

Article III

The Governments of the two Contracting Parties will in future maintain continual contact with one another for the purpose of consultation in order to exchange information on problems affecting their common interests.

Article IV

Neither of the two Contracting Parties will join any grouping of Powers whatsoever which is aimed directly or indirectly at the other Party.

Article V

Should disputes or conflicts arise between the Contracting Parties over questions of one kind or another, both Parties will settle these disputes or conflicts exclusively by means of a friendly exchange of views or if necessary by the appointment of arbitration commissions.

Article VI

The present Treaty shall be concluded for a period of ten years with the proviso that, in so far as one of the Contracting Parties does not denounce it one year before the expiry of this period, the validity of this Treaty shall be deemed to be automatically prolonged for another five years.

Article VII

The present Treaty shall be ratified within the shortest possible time. The instruments of ratification will be exchanged in Berlin. The treaty shall enter into force immediately upon signature.

Done in duplicate in the German and Russian languages.

Moscow, August 23, 1939

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop

With full power of the Government of the U.S.S.R.: V. Molotov

A secret additional protocol, which was not published at the time, was added to this:⁷²⁴

Secret Additional Protocol

On the occasion of the signature of the Non-Aggression Treaty between the German Reich and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the undersigned plenipotentiaries of the two Parties discussed in strictly confidential terms the question of the delimitation of their respective spheres of interest in Eastern Europe. These conversations led to the following result:

1. In the event of a territorial and political transformation in the territories belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern frontier of Lithuania shall represent the frontier of the spheres of interest both of Germany and the U.S.S.R. In this connection the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna territory is recognized by both Parties.

2. In the event of a territorial and political transformation of the territories belonging to the Polish State, the spheres of interest of both Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narev, Vistula, and San.

The question whether the interests of both Parties make the maintenance of an independent Polish State appear desirable and how the frontiers of this State should be drawn can be definitely determined only on the course of further political developments.

In any case both Governments will resolve this question by means of a friendly understanding.

3. With regard to South-Eastern Europe, the Soviet side emphasizes its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares complete political désintéressement in these territories.

4. This Protocol will be treated by both Parties as strictly secret.

Moscow, August 23, 1939

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
With full power of the Government of the U.S.S.R.: V. Molotov

On the morning of August 24, Hitler summoned State Secretary von Weizsäcker for a discussion.⁷²⁵ The Führer was exuberant and certain of the future. He was fully confident that, after the scene he had made with Henderson, the British would yield finally. And once a change of heart was evident on the part of England, Poland had no choice but to retreat. A solution could then be reached “step by step and peacefully.” In fact, England would shortly drop Poland just as it had abandoned Czechoslovakia earlier when the danger of war was imminent.

Nonetheless, to Hitler’s astonishment, none of the news from London carried any reports of the fall of Chamberlain’s Cabinet.⁷²⁶ Flying back to Berlin and landing at the Tempelhof airport at 6:35 p.m., he was baffled and visibly disappointed not to find any such news on his desk at the Reich Chancellery.⁷²⁷

During the next hours, however, Hitler was far too busy to concern himself with the “confused” statesmen across the Channel. Ribbentrop had also just arrived in Berlin, at 6:40 p.m., together with his entourage—including the “special emissary” Heinrich Hoffmann. At 7:00 p.m., the Führer told Germany’s diplomatic delegation to the Soviet Union to report on its experiences.

The stories Hoffmann and Ribbentrop told of their days in Moscow left Hitler wide-eyed with the same utter disbelief Marco Polo once encountered when summoned to speak before the Doge of Venice of his journeys to the Far East. Napoleon had reacted in a similar manner to the tales Caulaincourt told of St. Petersburg. Ribbentrop declared to

have felt in Moscow “as though amongst old Party comrades, so to speak.”⁷²⁸ Hoffmann praised Stalin’s acumen, the authority he exuded, the sincerity and warmth of his speech.⁷²⁹

The persistent ridicule of the Russians in the German press was beginning to exact its toll. German propaganda had described the Bolsheviks as subhumans (*Untermenschen*), wild, raving animals, assuredly going about clad in nothing but furs and hides, gnashing their teeth. And now the representatives of National Socialist Germany had traveled to Moscow only to report back that the city looked like any other European metropolis. And people even drove cars in its streets—astounding, truly! Apparently, Russians were completely normal human beings. One could negotiate with them in a civilized manner, provided one treated them with friendship. Such a striking contrast to the official black-and-white propaganda naturally had to elicit a corresponding reaction, especially with many Germans of the time, who loved to rush from one extreme to the other.

Hitler truly desired nothing less than cultivating friendly relations with the Soviet Union in the future. The present alliance served as a means to an end. It was a last resort in his drive to eliminate Poland. A surprise military attack would do if all else failed. He must have been no more pleased than Napoleon⁷³⁰ at the sudden pro-Russian sentiments of his closest colleagues. If a two-day stay in Moscow was enough to turn convinced National Socialists into friends of Russia, then how much more detrimental to his cause might it be to allow further contacts with Russians?

Under no circumstances, thought Hitler, could he allow himself now to stray from the path assigned to him by his notions dating back to 1919. After all, the Russians were a notoriously primitive nation. Their lot was subservience to the German master race. They were to be subdued and their soil converted into “Lebensraum for Germany.” Germany’s true friends were England and Italy, even if the English failed to perceive this at this time. Surely England and Italy would allow their enthusiasm to surface once presented with the fait accompli of German territorial conquests in the East.⁷³¹ It might well prove disastrous to cede ground now. He simply had to persevere. The Italians and the British needed perhaps little more than yet another thorough working-over to come to see his point of view, which was inherently theirs as well.

7

On August 25, Hitler summoned the British Ambassador Henderson to the Reich Chancellery for a meeting at 1:30 p.m. Before this reception, he also addressed a lengthy correspondence to Mussolini. Hitler was aware that he needed to furnish the Duce with a rationale for having concluded the pact with the Soviet Union two days before. Once more Hitler proved himself extraordinarily adept at devising excuses for himself. Everything had been the fault of the Japanese and their “constant procrastination” over concluding a military pact with Germany and Italy, he argued.

Hitler’s letter to Mussolini read as follows:⁷³²

Duce!

For some time Germany and Russia have been engaged in an exchange of views concerning a reshaping of their mutual political relations. The necessity of achieving results in this direction was increased by:

1. The general situation of world politics in so far as this is decisive for the Axis Powers.

2. The constant procrastination of the Japanese Cabinet over taking a definite attitude. Japan had agreed to an alliance against Russia, which in the prevailing circumstances would have only a secondary interest for Germany, and, in my opinion, for Italy also. She had not, however, agreed to an equally definite obligation against England, and this, from the standpoint not only of Germany but also of Italy, would have been one of the decisive factors. Months ago the military party had asserted that it would be able to induce the Japanese Government in a short time to take up a definite attitude towards England too, but this had not been realized in practice.

3. Germany’s relations with Poland, through no fault of the Reich, but largely as a result of England’s interference, have been unsatisfactory since the spring, and in recent weeks simply intolerable. The reports about the persecution of the Germans in this area are not invented press reports but represent only a fraction of the terrible truth. Poland’s throttling of Danzig by a customs policy which for weeks past has led to a complete paralysis of all trade, will destroy the City if continued even for a short time.

August 25, 1939

These reasons led me to hasten the conclusion of the German-Russian conversations. I have not yet informed you in detail, Duce, since I had no idea of the possible extent of these conversations, or any assurance of the possibility of their success.

The readiness of the Kremlin to reshape its relations with Germany, which became apparent after the departure of Litvinov,⁷³³ has become ever stronger in the last few weeks and has now made it possible for me, after a preliminary clarification, to send my Foreign Minister to Moscow for the conclusion of a treaty which is the most extensive non-aggression pact in existence and the text of which has been made public. The pact is unconditional and includes also the obligation for consultation on all questions affecting Russia and Germany. Over and above that, however, I must tell you, Duce, that, through the agreements, the most benevolent attitude on the part of Russia in case of any conflict is assured, and, above all, that the possibility of intervention by Rumania in such a conflict no longer exists!

Even Turkey in these circumstances can only proceed to revise her previous position. But I repeat once more, that Rumania is no longer in a position to take part in any conflict against the Axis! I believe I may say to you, Duce, that through the negotiations with Soviet Russia a completely new situation in world politics has been produced which must be regarded as the greatest possible gain for the Axis.

As to the situation on the German-Polish frontier, I can only inform Your Excellency that for weeks we have been standing by for action (*Alarmzustand*); that, keeping pace with Polish mobilization, German preparations have naturally also gone forward; and that in case of intolerable events in Poland I will act immediately. The assertion of the Polish Government that they are not responsible for the inhuman activities, for the numerous frontier incidents (last night alone there were twenty-one Polish frontier violations), and for firing on German civil aircraft—which had already received orders to fly to East Prussia over the sea in order to avoid incidents—merely shows that the Polish Government are no longer in control of the soldiery which they have themselves stirred up. Since yesterday Danzig has been blockaded by Polish troops, a situation unendurable in itself. In these circumstances no one can say what the next hour may bring. I can only assure you that there is a definite limit beyond which I can in no circumstances retreat.

In conclusion I can assure you, Duce, that in a similar situation I should have complete understanding for Italy and that in any such case you could be sure of my attitude from the outset.

Adolf Hitler

Having penned this “diplomatic” correspondence to Italy, Hitler focused his attention on Great Britain once more. He began preparations for his talk with Henderson scheduled for the afternoon. Chamberlain and Halifax had delivered speeches before the House of Commons a day earlier. Hitler asked Schmidt to translate the text of the addresses for him,⁷³⁴ and listened thoughtfully. He remained silent as Schmidt

reiterated Great Britain's position. The Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact had dissuaded neither London nor Paris from seeing to the fulfillment of their respective contractual obligations towards Poland.

So much for the effectiveness of Hitler's "devilish potion": it was a complete failure. To restore the stubborn English to reason, so Hitler felt with an ever-increasing sense of urgency, he would have to resort to quite different means. Since the specter of a Bolshevik threat to the world had failed to give them the required start, he resolved to take refuge once again in his highly acclaimed oratorical powers and to approach the British with yet another "magnanimous offer" of friendship on his part. Indeed, he was ready to "accept the British Empire" and "to pledge himself personally for its continued existence and to commit the power of the German Reich for this."

That this "magnanimous offer" might represent a serious affront to the British—perhaps the worst conceivable insult—never occurred to Hitler. And even had he been aware of this, his tactics towards England had always been one of carrots and sticks. It simply had to work—what the devil!

While Hitler had acted like a madman in his discussion with Henderson two days earlier, he presented himself as a most congenial host at the meeting of August 25. Arriving at the Chancellery at 1:30 p.m., Henderson remarked that Hitler seemed "absolutely calm and normal and spoke with great earnestness and apparent sincerity."⁷³⁵

The notes on the conversation, which lasted nearly one hour, recorded the following:⁷³⁶

By way of introduction the Führer declared that the British Ambassador had given expression at the close of the last conversation to the hope, that, after all, an understanding between Germany and England might yet be possible. He, the Führer, had therefore turned things over in his mind once more and desired today to make a move towards England which should be as decisive as the move towards Russia which had led to the recent agreement.

Yesterday's sitting in the House of Commons and the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had also moved the Führer to talk once more to the British Ambassador. The assertion that Germany affect to conquer the world was ridiculous. The British Empire embraced 40 million square kilometers, America 9 1/2 million square kilometers, whereas Germany embraced less than 600,000 square kilometers. It is therefore quite clear who it is who desires to conquer the world.

The Führer makes the following communication to the British Ambassador:

1. The Polish acts of provocation have become intolerable. It makes no difference who is responsible. If the Polish Government deny responsibility, that only goes to show that they no longer themselves possess any influence

over their subordinate military authorities. In the preceding night there had been a further twenty-one new frontier incidents; on the German side the greatest discipline had been maintained. All the incidents had been provoked by the Polish side. Furthermore, commercial aircraft had been shot at. If the Polish Government stated that they were not responsible, this showed that they were no longer capable of controlling their own people.

2. Germany was in all circumstances determined to abolish these Macedonian conditions on her eastern frontier, and that not only in the interests of quiet and order but also in the interests of European peace.

3. The problem of Danzig and the Corridor must be solved. The British Prime Minister had made a speech which was not in the least calculated to induce any change in the German attitude. At the most, the result of this speech could be a bloody and incalculable war between Germany and England. Such a war would be bloodier than that of 1914 to 1918. In contrast to the last war, Germany would no longer have to fight on two fronts. The agreement with Russia was unconditional and signified a change in the foreign policy of the Reich which would last a very long time. Russia and Germany would never in any circumstance again take up arms against each other. Apart from this, the agreements reached with Russia would also render Germany secure economically for the longest possible period of war.

The Führer had always wanted German-British understanding. War between England and Germany could at the best bring some profit to Germany but none at all to England.

The Führer declared that the German-Polish problem must be solved and would be solved. He is, however, prepared and determined, after the solution of this problem, to approach England once more with a large comprehensive offer. He is a man of great decisions, and in this case he will be capable of a great action. He accepts the British Empire and is ready to pledge himself personally for its continued existence and to commit the power of the German Reich for this, if:

(1) His colonial demands, which are limited and can be negotiated by peaceful methods, are fulfilled and in this case he is prepared to fix the longest time limit;

(2) His obligations towards Italy are not touched—in other words, he does not demand that England give up her obligations towards France and similarly for his own part he cannot withdraw from his obligations towards Italy.

(3) He also desires to stress the irrevocable determination of Germany never again to enter into conflict with Russia. The Führer is ready to conclude agreements with England which, as he had already emphasized, would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire in all circumstances as far as Germany is concerned, but would also if necessary assure the British Empire of German assistance regardless of where such assistance should be necessary. The Führer would then also be ready to accept a reasonable limitation of armaments which would correspond to the new political situation and be economically tolerable. Finally, the Führer renewed his assurances that he is not interested in Western problems and that a frontier

modification in the West does not enter into consideration. The Western fortifications (*Westwall*), which have been constructed at a cost of thousands of millions, were the final Reich frontier on the West.

If the British Government would consider these ideas, a blessing for Germany and also for the British Empire might result. If they reject these ideas, there will be war. In no case would Great Britain emerge stronger from this war; the last war had already proved this. The Führer repeats that he is a man of great decisions by which he himself is bound, and that this is his last offer. Immediately after the solution of the German-Polish question he would approach the British Government with an offer.

This discussion was going nowhere, so it seemed. Hitler continued to insist that, before the launching of a new round of Anglo-German talks, the German-Polish question must be resolved. If necessary, this would be attained by force. Henderson repeated his Government's determination to enter into negotiations only provided the use of force against Poland was excluded *a priori*.

To impress upon Henderson the sincere nature of his arguments, Hitler finally became nearly sentimental and claimed:⁷³⁷

... that the only winner of another European war would be Japan; that he was by nature an artist not a politician, and that once the Polish question was settled he would end his life as an artist and not as a warmonger; he did not want to turn Germany into nothing but a military barracks and he would only do so if forced to do so; that once the Polish question was settled he himself would settle down; that he had no interest in making Britain break her word to Poland; that he had no wish to be small-minded in any settlement with Poland and that all he required for an agreement with her was a gesture from Britain to indicate that she would not be unreasonable.

Henderson, however, was not moved in the least. He declared the British Government willing to accept Hitler's "offer" exclusively provided that Germany was envisioning a peaceful settlement of its differences with Poland. To this Hitler replied: "If you think it useless then do not send my offer at all." This remark was not to be taken literally, of course. Once Henderson had left, Hitler sat down to write a message to him outlining the proposal. The note to be relayed by Schmidt contained an urgent request to consider this offer very seriously and to personally fly to London to convey the message.⁷³⁸

At 3:00 p.m., confident that his "magnanimous offer" had appeased the British and that all was well, Hitler summoned Keitel and ordered the attack on Poland to begin at 4:30 the next morning, August 26.⁷³⁹

In the interim, the Italian Ambassador Attolico had arrived in Berlin. Hitler had asked him to the Reich Chancellery, wishing to know

whether a response from Mussolini to his letter of that morning was forthcoming or not. Attolico found himself forced to reply in the negative, which left Hitler exceedingly displeased. After weeks of silence on his part, he had condescended to give Mussolini greetings in a telegram. And now, almost five hours later, an answer was still outstanding. Attolico maintained that an imminent receipt of a reply from Mussolini had already been announced.⁷⁴⁰ Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to immediately phone Ciano to inquire as to the whereabouts of this missing response. Ciano could not be reached, and so Hitler was forced to dismiss Attolico for the time being.

At 5:30 p.m., Hitler received Coulondre⁷⁴¹ in order to subject the French Ambassador to the same tirade Henderson had already been forced to endure. Raging against the Poles, he asserted his determination to proceed by force, if necessary, to "protect German interests." The extent and impunity of the Polish provocations had become intolerable. He would greatly regret it, should this force Germany and France into yet another war against each other. His anguish would be augmented by the fact that, through his solemn renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine, he had felt certain he had removed the last bone of contention between the two neighboring states. While Hitler spoke in the most eloquent and convincing terms, his interpreter Schmidt could not help remarking that, "at times, he appeared lost in thought, he recited his arguments mechanically, in the sequence already rehearsed in the talks with Henderson. Obviously, he had other things on his mind and was in a hurry to end the conversation."

Undaunted by this, the French Ambassador took the liberty to answer Hitler in as unequivocal a fashion; with nearly the same words as François-Poncet on September 28, 1938, at the height of the Sudeten crisis,⁷⁴² Coulondre stated: "In a situation as perilous as the present, Herr Reichskanzler, misunderstandings represent a grave danger. To provide clarity, allow me to give you my word of honor as a French officer that the French Army shall fight on the side of Poland, if this country should be attacked." To this, Hitler replied: "I would be greatly grieved to lead a war against France. Yet the decision is not mine. Please tell this to M. Daladier."

Hitler naturally placed even less stock in French assurances than he did in those of the English. Ever since the French had failed to take military measures against Germany after the Reich's withdrawal from the League of Nations on October 14, 1933,⁷⁴³ as he himself would have done had he been in their shoes, he no longer respected France. And

he knew only too well that France would be forced to follow the British no matter what they did. Now, too, everything hinged on the British. Was it not high time for them to bow to his command now that he had assured them of Germany's benign support in the defense of the British Empire?

Hitler was greatly upset in these rosy contemplations when the sobering news reached Berlin that afternoon: London had just made public that the military pact drawn up on April 6, 1939⁷⁴⁴ was to be ratified by both Poland and Britain in the evening hours of August 25; it hereby entered into force. Confronted with this revelation, Hitler could only stare at the floor speechlessly.⁷⁴⁵

In Hitler's eyes, this British move implied an unequivocal rejection of his "offer of friendship" that morning. In all likelihood, this was indeed the case.⁷⁴⁶ The British intended to prove to Hitler, by the ratification of the treaty with Poland, that they were determined to stand by their word. No hand extended in friendship, no other attempts at public deception and convolution of the issues, could induce them to abandon their opposition to the use of force in resolving the German-Polish differences. Still the Reich Chancellor was not about to heed such timely warnings.

Instead, baffled by England's behavior, Hitler clung ever more desperately to the conceptions he had developed regarding Hugenberg.⁷⁴⁷ After all, it had not been until January 30, 1933—literally five minutes before twelve o'clock—that Hugenberg had capitulated, yielding to the persistent pressure Hitler had exerted, and agreed to the Reichstag's dissolution. Thus, he had bowed to the Führer's command, and—of this Hitler was certain—Chamberlain would likewise give in in the end. Hitler could not allow himself to be duped by this "umbrella-carrying prototype."⁷⁴⁸ Rather, he would postpone the entire venture against Poland and send yet another host of messages to the British Government.

Shortly after 6:00 p.m., news of yet another development reached Berlin which would have forced Hitler to reschedule in any event. The Italian Ambassador asked to be received by the Führer, for the second time that day. Attolico wished to present him with Mussolini's reply to his letter of that morning. Mussolini detailed the following, after a few platitudes concerning the Soviet-German alliance:⁷⁴⁹

If Germany attacks Poland and the conflict remains localized, Italy will afford Germany every form of political and economic assistance which is requested of her.

If Germany attacks Poland, and the latter's allies open a counter attack against Germany, I inform you in advance that it will be opportune for me not to take the initiative in military operations in view of the present state of Italian war preparations, of which we have repeatedly and in good time informed you, Führer, and Herr von Ribbentrop. Our intervention can, nevertheless, take place at once if Germany delivers to us immediately the military supplies and the raw materials to resist the attack which the French and English would predominantly direct against us.

At our meetings, the war was envisaged for after 1942, and by that time I would have been ready on land, on sea, and in the air, according to the plans which had been concerted. I am furthermore of the opinion that the purely military measures which have already been taken, and other measures to be taken later, will immobilize, in Europe and Africa, considerable French and British forces.

I consider it my binding duty as a loyal friend to tell you the whole truth and inform you beforehand about the real situation. Not to do so might have unpleasant consequences for us all. This is my view, and since within a short time I must summon the highest governmental bodies, I beg you to let me know yours.

Mussolini

It was clear that the Duce had severe misgivings about engaging his country in the type of general European war which he feared that any German move against Poland at this point would engender.

Truly, this was not Hitler's day. Everything seemed to go wrong. First, the English turned down his offer of friendship. And now the Duce backed out! Throughout the next hour, "the Chancellery literally resounded with derogatory remarks about the disloyal Axis partner."⁷⁵⁰ As Schmidt recalled later, once Attolico was out of the room, Hitler could not help exclaiming: "The Italians are acting just as in 1914!" Indeed, the Italians were behaving in precisely the same manner, and so did the English. The simple reason for this was that the situation was the same both then and in 1939. Hitler was busily making precisely the same mistakes in the case of Poland which the Reich Government had already made with regard to Belgium in 1914, and which the Austro-Hungarian Empire had committed in its dealings with Serbia that same year.

Halder, who diligently recorded everything, even whether or not Hitler had passed the night well, described Hitler as "considerably shaken" in the evening hours of that fateful August 25, 1939.⁷⁵¹

However, it did not take Hitler long to recover from the shock. The world would learn that he was not the man to bow to the will of the decrepit English or of an Italian Duce. According to his revised strategy,

the order to attack Poland the next morning had to be rescinded immediately. Then a renewed effort to persuade England's leaders with rhetoric had to be launched instantaneously. He would curry their favor, even if he had to promise them "the moon and the stars."

Hitler lost no time. He summoned Keitel and instructed him, hastily: "Stop everything immediately! Get Brauchitsch here at once, I need time for negotiations."⁷⁵² He himself phoned Göring. As in 1932–33 with Papen and the German Nationalists, it seemed imperative to Hitler to devise an elegant and effective strategy. And, toward this end, Hitler knew he could rely on his "best man," who instinctively grasped his master's intentions and thus had proven himself a most worthy ally in the negotiations with the reactionary German Nationalists then in power. First, Hitler decided to inform Göring that "he had stopped the planned invasion of Poland." When Göring inquired whether this postponement was temporary or final, Hitler replied: "No, I will have to see whether we can eliminate England's intervention."⁷⁵³ He then asked Göring to the Reich Chancellery for further instructions.

In the meantime, Hitler dictated the following answer to Mussolini:⁷⁵⁴

Duce!

You have informed me that you can enter a major European conflict only if Germany supplies you at once with implements of war and raw materials in order to resist the attack which the French and British would launch predominantly against you. I would ask you to inform me what implements of war and raw materials you require and within what time, so that I may be in a position to judge whether and to what extent I can fulfil your demands for implements of war and raw materials. Furthermore, I thank you heartily for Italy's military measures, of which I have been acquainted in the meantime and which I already regard as a great relief.

Adolf Hitler

Under the circumstances, this letter could truly be called tame. Given Hitler's outrage at Mussolini, it demonstrated once again how well Hitler could control himself—if he so desired. The wording of this particular correspondence betrayed little of what had come to pass. Hitler acted as though nothing had happened. Apparent assent to Italy's requests and demands followed warm-hearted thanks for Mussolini's response. In the course of the war, Hitler continued to adhere to this strategy, remained indifferent to Mussolini's ill-concealed affronts, and proceeded as though no differences clouded German-Italian relations. This applied to Mussolini's invasion of Greece in October, 1940 as well as to his removal from office in July, 1943.

Hitler's behavior has led many historians to speculate that, perhaps, he did cherish sentiments of true friendship for Mussolini⁷⁵⁵ which blinded him to Italy's true colors and intentions. Nothing could be further from the truth. Hitler was an opportunist par excellence, incapable of feeling friendship for anyone. His support for Mussolini, and the tolerance displayed in his dealings with the Duce, had causes far different from any personal inclinations. Aside from ideological considerations, it was based firmly on Hitler's conceptions of 1919. Central to these was the notion that "in Europe there will be only two allies for Germany in the foreseeable future: England and Italy."⁷⁵⁶ This he had preached, and so it had to be—irrespective of a contrary reality. Mussolini and the Italians were his friends. They must remain his friends, no matter what the circumstances. If he admitted that, indeed, they no longer felt friendship for Germany and its Führer, this would mean that he had been wrong. And this was inconceivable. To acknowledge a mistake, to concede the Führer was only human and not infallible, this would have been tantamount to resigning all political office. He himself had demanded no less of any leader whose conduct revealed erroneous conceptions.⁷⁵⁷

The minute Göring arrived at the Chancellery, the Führer and his "best man" went into seclusion to confer privately on the options at hand. The question was how to proceed strategically to bring England to reason. A best-case scenario naturally demanded that the British stand by and observe Poland's destruction in silence.

Extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures. Once normal diplomatic procedure failed, it had to be replaced by other means: a secret avenue for negotiations with Great Britain had to be found. In this context, it was most fortunate that Göring's close friend, the Swede Birger Dahlerus, could walk in and out of His Majesty's Government's offices as though he himself were a British diplomat. Dahlerus had to be recruited immediately for this new, ingenious venture. The grounds for a like undertaking were well prepared. Already on August 24, Göring had revealed to Dahlerus portions of Hitler's offer of friendship to England while the Swede was staying at Karinhall.⁷⁵⁸

On August 25, Dahlerus had flown to London in the early morning. His mission had been to inform Downing Street of Hitler's most recent friendly advances toward England. Lord Halifax had received Dahlerus in the late afternoon. It was most opportune that the Swede called the Chancellery at 10:20 p.m., while Göring and Hitler were still in session, to inquire about the latest developments. Göring immediately seized

the opportunity to assure Dahlerus that he placed “high hopes on his trip to London.”

On August 26, the day on which Hitler had initially scheduled the war to be launched, the situation in Germany was a peculiar one indeed. Naturally, the day was a Saturday, as was customary with Hitler’s surprise ventures. Preparations for the attack on Poland had been halted the night before, but not the conversion of civilian enterprises and activities to wartime ones. Measures effecting the covert mobilization of forces rolled on.

The German public was completely taken by surprise by the sudden rationing of foodstuffs and raw material deemed essential to the war effort. This resulted in quite a few difficulties. Many Germans were still abroad, as the vacations in many Länder had not yet officially ended. A rush of anxious vacationers sought to return home as quickly as possible. Huge lines formed in front of those few gasoline stations still permitted to distribute fuel from their stocks in limited amounts. Train service was curtailed as well. Military supply convoys occupied most major routes leading East to West. Military trains followed one another at short intervals. Civilian carriers were grounded. Likewise, postal services were to be cut completely for ten days.

Several official announcements further instilled a feeling of dejection in the public. These shed much light on the actual situation and bore no good tidings:⁷⁵⁹

—Official communication: In view of the tense situation, the Tannenberg celebration scheduled for Sunday, August 27, will be cancelled.

—The Reich Press Bureau of the NSDAP announces: The Reich Party Congress scheduled to convene from September 2 through September 11⁷⁶⁰ will not take place. Whether the Congress can be expected to convene at a later point in time depends on the situation then.

—The *Schleswig-Holstein*⁷⁶¹ in Danzig: From a crowd of rejoicing citizens of Danzig lining the harbor, shouts of jubilation accompanied the arrival of the *Schleswig-Holstein*, the training ship of the German Kriegsmarine, on Friday morning. Two ocean-going tugboats, the *Albert Forster* and the *Danzig*, dressed with flags, hauled the large vessel into the Danzig harbor. Swastika flags were hoisted on all flagpoles along the stretch traversed by the ship. No flag decoration adorned the Westerplatte under Polish occupation. Proudly the gray ship sailed by the Polish part of the harbor where not a soul was to be seen. The enthusiastic crowd of citizens of Danzig all the more jubilantly and joyfully hailed the ship’s entry into the port. With renewed frenzied cries of joy, the people of Danzig accompanied the ship to its berth where it anchored at 10:00 a.m.

After repeated calls to Rome, ever more urgent in character, Hitler finally obtained a list of the raw materials Italy required. At around 1:00 p.m. on August 26, Attolico transmitted to him the desired paper.⁷⁶² The list of Mussolini's minutely detailed requests was so voluminous that Ciano remarked in his diary: "We go over the list. It's enough to kill a bull—if a bull could read it."⁷⁶³ All in all, the Duce asked for seventeen million tons of coal, steel, and crude oil. For the transport of such quantities at least 17,000 trains would have been necessary. The Italian dictator wanted everything on the spot, before the outbreak of hostilities. As ill-concealed as the true nature of these outrageous demands was, Hitler decided to let nothing show and to reply in all earnest.⁷⁶⁴

Duce!

Ambassador Attolico has just handed to my Foreign Minister the additional requirements which Italy would claim from Germany for the duration of a war. These requirements could be met in full as regards coal and steel, i.e. 6 million tons of coal and 2 million tons of steel. It would be impossible for Germany to deliver 7 million tons of petroleum. At the moment I cannot state exactly what amount we could contribute. Germany would be in a position to deliver a million tons of timber. The delivery of 150,000 tons of copper would be impossible; in anticipation of the shortage of copper, Germany herself has already changed over to the use of light metals and other substitute materials in most fields. The delivery of nickel in the quantity asked for could not nearly be met, for German industry itself has almost completely gone over to steels containing little or no nickel. Our own requirements in this field are therefore completely vanishing. If Italian workers were brought in, Germany would, however, be able in principle so to increase German munitions production, which has already changed over to available materials, that a great part of Italy's munitions requirements could be met. As regards anti-aircraft guns, the Reich would be able to contribute their 4-gun batteries at once; after the end of operations in Poland a further 30 batteries, and within a year another 30, all with German gun crews and predictors. Potassium salts could be sent at once. As for explosives, I must first obtain exact data. I consider it important, however, Duce, to send you this information at once.

Acting on verbal instructions, Ambassador Attolico stated that all material must be in Italy before the beginning of hostilities. This, Duce, is impossible for reasons of organization and transport. The 30 heavy anti-aircraft batteries could be sent at once; all the rest must be fitted into the general transport system. Since Ambassador Attolico described this request for immediate delivery of all the material before the outbreak of war as decisive, I regret that I regard it as impossible to fulfill your requests, as I have already stated, purely for reasons of organization and for technical reasons. In these circumstances, Duce, I understand your position, and would only ask you to try to achieve the pinning down of Anglo-French forces by active propaganda and suitable

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military demonstrations such as you have already proposed to me. As neither France nor Britain can achieve any decisive successes in the West, and as Germany, as a result of the Agreement with Russia, will have all her forces free in the East after the defeat of Poland, and as air supremacy is undoubtedly on our side, I do not shrink from solving the Eastern question even at the risk of complications in the West.

Adolf Hitler

The German Ambassador von Mackensen transmitted this wire to Mussolini shortly after 5:00 p.m. Having read Hitler's letter, the Duce did feel compelled to back down in his demands. Mussolini conceded that "even the Almighty Himself could not transport such quantities here in a few days."⁷⁶⁵

The Duce swiftly penned a second letter to Hitler. Wired at 6:42 in the evening, it reached Hitler in Berlin at 8:00 p.m.⁷⁶⁶ Mussolini openly stated that Italy was exhausted after the war in Abyssinia and its involvement in the Spanish Civil War. It was not in a position to withstand the pressures England and France were certain to exert on Rome in the event of war. Hence, Mussolini himself was in favor of a negotiated, political settlement.

In the course of that afternoon, the French Ambassador Coulondre also called on Hitler. He had received instructions to deliver a telegram from the French Premier to the Chancellery.⁷⁶⁷ In this correspondence, Daladier responded, albeit in a more cordial manner than the English, to Hitler's jeremiad of the day before which had hailed down on Coulondre. Daladier stressed the possible consequences of an armed confrontation with Poland. He now felt compelled to remind Hitler of the gravity of the situation both countries were facing at the moment.⁷⁶⁸

Paris, August 26, 1939

Your Excellency!

The French Embassy in Berlin has informed me of your personal message. Finding ourselves faced, as you remind me, with the gravest responsibility that can be assumed by the Heads of Government, that of allowing the blood to be shed of two great peoples who desire nothing but peace and work, I owe it to you and I owe it to our two peoples, to say that the fate of peace still rests in your hands alone.

You cannot doubt my sentiments towards Germany, nor France's peaceful sentiments to your nation. No Frenchman has ever done more than I have to strengthen between our two peoples not merely peace, but a sincere cooperation in their own interest as well as in that of Europe and the world. Unless you attribute to the French people a conception of national honor less high than that which I myself recognize in the German people, you cannot doubt, either, that France will be true to her solemn promises to other nations,

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such as Poland, which, I am certain, also want to live in peace with Germany. These two certainties are completely reconcilable. There is nothing today which need prevent any longer the pacific solution of the international crisis with honor and dignity for all peoples, if the will for peace exists equally on all sides.

I can vouch not only for the good will of France, but also for that of all her allies. I can personally guarantee the readiness, which Poland has always shown, to have mutual recourse to methods of free conciliation, such as may be envisaged between the Governments of two sovereign nations. In all sincerity I can assure you that there is not one of the grievances invoked by Germany against Poland in connection with the Danzig question which might not be submitted to decision by such methods with a view to a friendly and equitable settlement.

I can also pledge my honor that there is nothing in the clear and sincere solidarity of France with Poland and her allies which could modify in any manner whatsoever the peaceful inclinations of my country. This solidarity has never prevented us, and does not prevent us today, from helping to maintain Poland in her pacific inclinations.

In so serious an hour I sincerely believe that no man endowed with human feelings could understand that a war of destruction should be allowed to break out without a last attempt at a pacific adjustment between Germany and Poland. Your will for peace may be exercised in all confidence in this direction without the slightest derogation from your sense of German honor. As for myself, the Head of the French Government, concerned only for harmony between the French people and the German people and, on the other hand, united to Poland by bonds of friendship and by their pledged word, I am ready to make all the efforts that an honest man can make in order to ensure the success of this attempt.

Like myself, you were a soldier in the last war. You realize, as I do, how a people's memory retains forever a horror and condemnations of the disasters of war, whatever may be the result. The conception which I have been able to form of your eminent role as leader of the German people, to guide them along the paths of peace towards the full accomplishment of their mission in the common work of civilization, prompts me to ask you for a reply to this proposal. If the blood of France and of Germany flows again, as it did twenty-five years ago, in a longer and even more murderous war, each of the two peoples will fight with confidence in its own victory, but the most certain victors will be the forces of destruction and barbarism.

Édouard Daladier

While assuring Coulondre of a reply to be penned the next day, Hitler insisted on the strict confidentiality of the exchange. Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry received word from the British Chargé d'Affaires, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, that the British Government was reviewing the German Chancellor's proposals. Henderson would remit a definite reply the next day, August 27.⁷⁶⁹

President Roosevelt had sent similarly urgent appeals for peace to Hitler on August 24 and August 25.⁷⁷⁰ However, the German Reich Chancellor deemed neither of them worthy of a reply. After all, he still firmly believed that he had silenced Roosevelt once and for all in his Reichstag speech of April 28. How dare this “old gangster”⁷⁷¹ send him messages of this kind? In the evening of August 26, nevertheless, Hitler ordered Weizsäcker to inform the American Chargé d’Affaires in Berlin that he had submitted Roosevelt’s proposals to the scrutiny of the Reich Foreign Minister.⁷⁷²

In the course of the day of August 26, Hitler equally took care to assure Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland of Germany’s intentions to respect their status as non-belligerents.⁷⁷³ The following communiqué was published on the topic:⁷⁷⁴

The German Ambassador in Belgium and the German Envoys to the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, have transmitted to the aforementioned countries declarations by the Reich Government to the effect that, in the event of armed conflict, it shall respect the neutrality of these countries and it shall further promote the friendly relations existing with them.

At the end of the day, Hitler dictated another telegram to Mussolini. Apparently, Hitler had meanwhile come to terms with the fact that Italy was determined to remain neutral in the event of war. He set about to make the most of this disagreeable situation and signaled his assent to Italy’s policy stance. He painted the future in the rosiest colors and left Mussolini a venue for belated entry into the war.⁷⁷⁵

Duce!

I have received your communication on your final attitude. I respect the reasons and motives which led you to take this decision. In certain circumstances it can nevertheless work out well. In my opinion, however, the prerequisite is that, at least until the outbreak of the struggle (*Kampf*), the world should have no idea of the attitude Italy intends to adopt. I therefore cordially request you to support my struggle psychologically with your press or by other means. I would also ask you, Duce, if you possibly can, by demonstrative military measures, at least to compel Britain and France to tie down certain of their forces, or at all events to leave them in uncertainty. But, Duce, the most important thing is this: if, as I have said, it should come to a major war, the issue in the East will be decided before the two Western Powers can score a success. Then, this winter, at the latest in the spring, I shall attack in the West with forces which will be at least equal to those of France and Britain. The blockade will have little effect, particularly because of the new circumstance now prevailing in the East, and also thanks to my preparations for autarky. Its danger will not increase but diminish with the

duration of the war. I must now ask a great favor of you, Duce. In this difficult struggle you and your people can best help me by sending Italian workers, both for industrial and agricultural purposes. Should you later be compelled to intervene in the course of events, or find yourself after all in a position to do so, then the reinforced autarky of the Reich would be of the greatest importance to you too. In specially commending this request of mine to your generosity, I thank you for all the efforts you have made for our common cause.

Adolf Hitler

Around midnight Hitler finally retired. He was to find repose for a short time only.

On his return flight from London, Dahlerus had landed in Berlin at approximately 7:00 p.m. Göring immediately ushered his guest to a train, initially intending to take him to the recently constructed warlike headquarters site in the woods near Oranienburg. In the train,⁷⁷⁶ Dahlerus related the contents of a letter Lord Halifax had entrusted to him. Göring was greatly impressed by what he considered reasonable demands by the British. They declared themselves willing to enter into negotiations so long as Germany desisted from the application of force in the resolution of the Polish problem. Göring ordered the train stopped at the next station where he and Dahlerus got off. From there, they hurried back to Berlin by car, as Göring wanted to inform Hitler personally of the contents of Lord Halifax's correspondence.

No more lights were burning at the Chancellery by the time Göring's car pulled up at the entrance. A colonel told him that Hitler had already retired for the night. Thereupon Göring sent Dahlerus on to the Esplanade Hotel. For his part, he went up to the Führer's room to tell him that Dahlerus had arrived. Hitler rose immediately. In the midst of night, he ordered that festive illumination be turned on, that guards of honor march up. And all this was to be done within fifteen minutes.

While his subordinates were busy elsewhere, Hitler himself prepared a rhetorical masterpiece to impress upon Dahlerus the earnestness of his cause, the power and greatness of the German Reich and, last but not least, of its Führer and his character. The English were truly ill-advised to go against a Reich such as his.

Two colonels received orders to pick up Dahlerus at his hotel and to bring him to the Chancellery. As in Hácha's case, a host of honor guards and dress uniforms set against a background of drum rolls and rifle salutes were on hand to greet the Swede. Finally, Dahlerus was

led into the anteroom to Hitler's office. Then the curtain was raised, so to speak, and Hitler entered the room. For a minute, he struck a theatrical pose in the door frame and penetratingly fixed his eyes on the caller. Göring stood at his side looking content. Dahlerus went forward and said: "*Guten Abend, Exzellenz!*"

Hitler cordially replied in a few words. He then led Dahlerus to the side of the room, to a corner where guests usually took their seats. All three men sat down, Dahlerus expecting that Hitler would inquire about the contents of the British Foreign Minister's correspondence.

Instead, as on so many previous occasions, Hitler first embarked upon a lengthy "party narrative" to weary his caller and to dull his perception. Dahlerus recalled, regarding the further course of the meeting:⁷⁷⁷

[Hitler] . . . proceeded to give a long lecture about German policy and Germany's desire to come to an understanding with Britain, without alluding either to Halifax's letter or to my account of the British attitude which he had just heard from Göring. He recapitulated the incidents which had taken place since he became Germany's leader, and recalled all the difficulties which he had encountered. Several times he emphasised his vain appeals to England for co-operation, and added that he suspected that the British were not inspired by any genuine desire to co-operate. He repeated the observations which he set down later in his letter to Daladier⁷⁷⁸ of the same day—27th August—and then began a severe criticism of Britain and the British. Throughout this speech Göring had not uttered a word, and when we reached this point I began to fear that Hitler would go on still longer and that the meeting would come to an end without achieving any result. The whole scene was a typical proof of Hitler's demagogic desire, and a typical specimen of the method he used to force his point of view upon either adversary or interlocutor.

His monologue had lasted for about twenty minutes and he was becoming very much excited, especially when criticising England.

During a brief pause in the conversation, Dahlerus ventured to point out that though he regretted this, he could not share the Führer's assessment of England and its people. After all, he had spent some time in England as a worker and thus had gotten to know the various classes of English society well. Hitler immediately interrupted him to ask: "What's that? You have worked as a common labourer in England? Tell me about it." And now, for the next half hour, Dahlerus was obliged to report on the situation in England to this man whose knowledge of the English was "nil" as he was to discover shortly. His immediate curiosity satisfied, Hitler turned his attention back to more current

matters. Displaying his exceptional command of the latest statistics and the power of his rhetoric, Hitler continued his exposition, as Dahlerus reported:

He became excited, stood up, paced to and fro, while describing his interview with Henderson;⁷⁷⁹ there was no denying his eloquence. He had a seductive way of putting his own viewpoint in the most favourable light, but he suffered from a lamentable incapacity to see or respect the other party's point of view. After commenting on his proposals to Henderson, he ended by gesticulating and saying: "*Dies ist mein letztes grosszügiges Angebot an England.*" [This is my last magnanimous offer to England.]⁷⁸⁰ He continued by underlining the superior armed might of Great Germany. While doing so his face stiffened and his movements became very peculiar.

He sounded very arrogant and overbearing while he described the armed might which his leadership had created, declaring that he personally had studied in detail all the technical and strategic questions of decisive importance; he maintained that Berlin's anti-aircraft defences alone were as strong as those of the entire British Empire, and that his air force was unconquerable. Göring who had sat listening in respectful silence, giggled contentedly as he heard his Leader commending his own Service. Hitler now went on to say that the army possessed an equipment unequalled in history; a German infantry company had no resemblance to an infantry company in the ordinary sense of the word; it was equipped with anti-tank guns, small quickfiring guns and effective machine-guns, that it was in general such a well-designed fighting unit that it could be used for the most varied tasks of attack and defence. In company with all the other branches of the service the infantry had been subjected to an extraordinary training, in which the heads of the German Wehrmacht had applied the principle of economy in human material, above all teaching the individual soldier not to expose himself unnecessarily to the risk of becoming a casualty. He spoke of the armoured divisions and how his cars were so strongly protected that the anti-tank guns of an enemy could not pierce their armour. No British or French tank, on the other hand, could resist the German anti-tank weapons. His fleet, he admitted, was inferior to the British Navy, but his submarine service was so powerful that the German Navy was superior to all others. He showed a surprising grasp of detail here, producing figures to show the thickness of the deck armour of different types of British ships, explaining that he had ordered the Luftwaffe to be supplied with bombs capable of penetrating the thickest of these decks. It was clear that Hitler was riding his favourite hobby-horse and that he was excessively well informed⁷⁸¹ concerning the most minute details of the German forces.

Once Hitler had concluded his lecture on the combat readiness and superiority of the German Wehrmacht, Dahlerus was finally allowed to speak. The Swede pointed out that the other great powers still had to be reckoned with. After all, the First World War had amply shown

which powers were the stronger ones. Islands were the pillars of the British Empire. To attack them with an inferior fleet was folly. Naturally, such arguments were not to Hitler's liking. Regarding his response, Dahlerus recorded:

Hitler listened without interrupting me. I spoke slowly and quietly to avoid irritating him unnecessarily, since his mental equilibrium was patently unstable. He seemed to ponder what I said, but then suddenly got up, and becoming very much excited and nervous, walked up and down saying, as though to himself, that Germany was irresistible and could defeat her adversaries by means of a rapid war. Suddenly he stopped in the middle of the room and stood there staring. His voice was blurred and his behaviour that of a completely abnormal person. He spoke in staccato phrases, and it was clear that his thoughts were concentrated on the tasks which awaited him in case of war.

"*Gibt es Krieg,*" he said, "*dann werde ich U-boote bauen, U-boote bauen, U-boote, U-boote, U-boote.*" [If there should be war, then I shall build U-boats, build U-boats, U-boats, U-boats, U-boats.] His voice became more indistinct and finally one could not follow him at all. Then he pulled himself together, raised his voice as though addressing a large audience and shrieked: "*Ich werde Flugzeuge bauen, Flugzeuge bauen, Flugzeuge, Flugzeuge, und ich werde meine Feinde vernichten.*" [I shall build aeroplanes, build aeroplanes, aeroplanes, aeroplanes, and I shall annihilate my enemies.] He seemed more like a phantom from a story book than a real person. I stared at him in amazement and turned to see how Göring was reacting, but he did not turn a hair.

And, indeed, why should Göring appear moved? After all, he had witnessed countless rhetorical dramas staged by his Führer. Hitler continued, Dahlerus reported, as though in a trance:

"War doesn't frighten me, encirclement of Germany is an impossibility, my people admire and follow me faithfully. If privations lie ahead of the German people, I shall be the first to starve and set my people a good example. It will spur them to superhuman efforts." His eyes were glassy, his voice unnatural as he went on: "If there should be no butter, I shall be the first to stop eating butter, eating butter. My German people will loyally and gladly do the same." He paused, his glance wandered and he said, "If the enemy can hold out for several years, I, with my power over the German people, can hold out one year longer. Thereby I know that I am superior to all the others."

He began to pace up and down again, came close up to me, stopped, and said: "Herr Dahlerus, you who know England so well, can you give me any reason for my perpetual failure to come to an agreement with her?" He was still agitated, and I hesitated to give an honest answer. Then I began to speak very quietly and distinctly so as to underline by my severity the honesty and accuracy of my reply: "Your Excellency, with my comprehensive knowledge

of the English people, their mentality, and their attitude towards Germany, I must definitely assure you that I am absolutely convinced that these difficulties are founded on a lack of confidence in you personally and in your government.” Hitler flung out his right arm, smiting his breast with his left hand, and exclaimed: “*Idioten, habe ich je in meinem Leben die Unwahrheit gesagt?*” [Idiots! Have I ever told a lie in my life?]⁷⁸² I pointed out to him that the position was probably the same in major politics as in the business world, namely that a satisfactory agreement could only be based on mutual confidence; if this were lacking, with or without justification, then it must be created or restored.

Hitler walked backwards and forwards in his great study, pulled up and pointed at me: “You, Herr Dahlerus, you have heard my side. You must go to England at once and tell it to the British government. I do not think that Henderson understood me, and I really want to bring about an understanding.”

Dahlerus hereupon demanded more precise information from Hitler on particular subjects such as the question of the Polish Corridor.

When I said this Hitler smiled, the only time I ever, now or later, saw him do so. He turned to Göring and said: “Well, Henderson never asked me about that.” This gave me a chance to emphasise how important it was, *if* I should go to England, that I should have the most correct and exact information with me. Göring took an atlas, tore out a page and with red pencil outlined the territory to which Germany aspired.⁷⁸³ Then we went on to discuss the vital points contained in the proposal which Hitler had presented to Henderson to be forwarded to the British government. During our conversation Hitler became excited and verbose, and it was not so easy to get the gist of what he said. However, by degrees we did so.

Since he received no minutes of the highly detailed proposals Hitler had advanced, Dahlerus resolved to learn these by heart and reproduced them in the following manner:⁷⁸⁴

(1) Germany desired a pact or alliance with Great Britain, which would mean that all disputes of a political or economic nature should be eliminated by virtue of this pact.

(2) England was to help Germany to obtain Danzig and the Corridor, with the exception of a free harbour in Danzig which was to be at the disposal of Poland. Poland should also have a corridor to Gdynia, retain the whole of Gdynia and an adequate territory around it.

(3) Germany pledged herself to guarantee Poland’s boundaries.

(4) An agreement should be reached about Germany’s colonies. Germany wished to have these returned to her, or a settlement regarding colonies belonging to the British Empire, which Germany could receive as compensation. Germany required certain tropical territories to provide her with raw materials or foodstuffs which were vital for the industry and the feeding of her people.

(5) Adequate guarantees should be made for the treatment of the German minority in Poland.⁷⁸⁵

(6) Germany pledged herself to defend the British Empire with the German Wehrmacht wherever the former might be attacked (*"mit der Wehr-macht des Grossdeutschen Reiches wo immer es auch angegriffen werden könnte."*)

This last point was the subject of much discussion. Hitler pointed out how important it would be for Great Britain to know that wherever the Empire risked attack, Germany would come to her assistance. Nor was this all. Germany pledged herself not to support any nation whatsoever which might come into conflict with the British Empire.

Throughout the conversation, which had lasted several hours, Göring had merely contributed a few brief words to underline some utterance of Hitler, but now he joined in and pointed out that this latter clause would also mean that Germany would support England against Italy, if they should ever come into conflict with one another over Mediterranean or any other interests.

After the discussion, Göring accompanied Dahlerus as he made his way out of the building. Time and time again, Göring stressed the utmost import of informing the British Government of this discussion as soon as possible.

Dahlerus not only showed remarkable skill in his reproduction of Hitler's rhetoric, he demonstrated great insight into how Hitler sought to apply the methods he had employed in Germany domestically to the realm of foreign policy. Dahlerus appended the following note to this conversation:

His successes in Germany's internal conflicts had accustomed him to getting his own way, fulfilling his own demands and breaking down all opposition. Now he made the great mistake of using the same methods when dealing with other nations.

On Sunday, August 27, Hitler spent most of the day composing a reply to the French Premier. As usual, his answer was twice as long as Daladier's original letter. He reveled in verbose claims of his good-neighborly intentions towards Germany's "erstwhile gallant foe." He claimed to have sought improved relations with France throughout his period in office. He even went as far as to contend that all his previous actions had served the cause of peace. This included everything from the renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine, the "voluntary limitation of German vital claims in the West," to the billions of marks invested in the frontier fortifications in that area. The methods he had employed towards the resolution of many a dispute facing both nations had "made it possible in many instances to find a solution without fresh bloodshed." However, as far as Danzig and the Corridor were con-

cerned, a resolution had to be obtained in "one way or another." Otherwise, after all, he would have to "despair of an honorable future for my people." In the same sarcastic tone he was so well known for, Hitler paid the French Premier back for his repeated appeals to such worn concepts as "honor," and claimed that every "Frenchman of honor" would be compelled to act in the same manner.

The letter to Daladier read as follows:⁷⁸⁶

Dear Minister President!

I understand the misgivings which you express. I, too, have never overlooked the high obligations laid on those who are in charge of the fate of peoples. As an old front-line soldier, I know, as you do, the horrors of war. This conviction and this knowledge have led me, too, to strive honorably to remove all subjects of dispute between our two peoples. I assured the French nation quite openly of one thing, that the condition for this was the return of the Saar territory. When this had been returned, I at once solemnly affirmed my renunciation of any further claims whatsoever which might affect France. The German people has approved this attitude of mine. As you were able to convince yourself on your last visit here, conscious of their own attitude, they did not and do not feel any ill-will, much less hatred, for their erstwhile gallant foe. On the contrary. The establishment of peace on our Western frontier led to a growing sympathy, at least as far as the German people were concerned. A sympathy which has been shown in truly demonstrative fashion on many occasions. The construction of the great fortifications in the West, which swallowed and continues to swallow many thousands of millions, represents for both a deed of acceptance and a delimitation of the final Reich frontier. The German nation has renounced two provinces, which once were part of the old German Reich, which were conquered later at much cost in bloodshed and which, finally, were defended at still greater cost in bloodshed.

You, Your Excellency, will certainly grant me that this renunciation is indeed no tactical maneuver for foreign consumption, but a resolution which has been consistently reinforced by all the measures we have taken. You will not be able, Mr. Minister President, to adduce a single instance in which, in a single line or one speech, this final fixing of the frontier of the German Reich in the West has been repudiated. I had thought that by this renunciation and by this attitude I had eliminated every conceivable subject of dispute between our two peoples which might have led to a repetition of the tragedy of 1914-1918. This voluntary limitation of German vital claims in the West cannot, however, be taken as signifying acceptance of the Versailles Dictate for all other territories as well. Year after year I have truly striven for the revision, by way of negotiation, of at least the most impossible and the most intolerable clauses in this Dictate. But it was impossible. That revision must come was clearly realized by many intelligent people in all countries. Whatever can be adduced against my methods, whatever criticism it may be thought must be brought against them, it cannot be overlooked or gainsaid that this method made it possible in many instances to find a solution without fresh bloodshed,

which was not only satisfactory to Germany but, by the way it was done, relieved the statesmen of other nations of the obligation, often an impossible one for them, of accepting responsibility for this revision towards their own peoples. For Your Excellency must always grant me this: Revision had to come. The Versailles Dictate was intolerable. No Frenchman of honor, certainly not you yourself, Monsieur Daladier, would, in a like situation, have acted otherwise than I did. I have also tried, in this spirit, to remove the most unreasonable provision of all in the Versailles Dictate. I made an offer to the Polish Government, which startled the German people. No one but myself could have dared to come before the public with such an offer. Therefore it could only be made once and for all. I am most deeply convinced that if England, in particular, instead of unleashing a savage press campaign against Germany and launching rumors of German mobilization, had at the time somehow persuaded Poland to be reasonable, Europe today and for twenty-five years to come could have enjoyed a state of the most profound peace. But, as it was, Polish public opinion was excited by lies about German aggression, the clear decisions required from the Polish Government were made harder to take, and, above all, their insight into what was actually possible was obscured by the promise of the guarantee which followed. The Polish Government rejected the proposals. Polish public opinion, firmly convinced that Britain and France would fight for Poland, began making demands which might, perhaps, be dismissed as ridiculous lunacy if they were not so infinitely dangerous. Then an intolerable reign of terror set in, a physical and economic oppression of the Germans, who, after all, number over a million-and-a-half in the territories ceded by the Reich. I will not here go into the atrocities which took place. Danzig, too, through the continual encroachments of the Polish authorities, was made increasingly aware that she was apparently abandoned, without hope of deliverance, to the caprice of a power alien to the national character of the City and of its population. May I now ask, Monsieur Daladier, how you, as a Frenchman, would act if, as a result of the unfortunate outcome of a gallant struggle, one of your provinces were cut off by a corridor occupied by a foreign Power, a great city—let us say Marseilles—were prevented from professing allegiance to France, and the Frenchmen precisely in this region were persecuted, beaten, ill-treated, even bestially murdered? You are a Frenchman, Monsieur Daladier, so I know how you would act. I am a German, Monsieur Daladier. Do not doubt my sense of honor or my consciousness of my duty to act in just the same way. If you were suffering the same misfortune as we are, would you, Monsieur Daladier, understand it if, for no cause, Germany wished to intervene so that the corridor through France should remain, so that the stolen territories might not be restored, and so that the return of Marseilles to France should be forbidden? I cannot in any circumstances imagine, Monsieur Daladier, that Germany would fight against you on these grounds. For I and everyone have renounced Alsace-Lorraine in order to avoid further bloodshed. Still less would we shed blood to maintain an injustice which would be as intolerable for you as it would be meaningless to us. I feel as you do, Monsieur Daladier, about everything you write in your letter. Perhaps, just because we

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are old front-line soldiers, we can understand each other more easily on a number of subjects; but I only ask you to understand that it is impossible for a nation of honor to renounce nearly two million people and see them being ill-treated on its own frontiers. I have therefore put forward a clear demand: Danzig and the Corridor must come back to Germany. The Macedonian conditions on our Eastern frontier must be removed. I can see no way of inducing Poland to adopt a peaceful resolution as, under the protection of her guarantees, she now feels unassailable. I would, however, despair of an honorable future for my people if, in such circumstances, we were not determined to solve the problem one way or another. If, in consequence, destiny again compels our two peoples to fight, then there would still be a difference between the motives of either side. I, Monsieur Daladier, would then be fighting with my people to right an injustice done to us, and the others would be fighting to perpetuate this injustice. This is the more tragic, because many of the most important men, even of your own nation, have realized alike the senselessness of the 1919 solution as well as the impossibility of maintaining it permanently. I am clear as to the grave consequences which such a conflict would entail. But I believe that Poland would have to bear the heaviest consequences, for whatever the outcome of a war fought over this question, the Polish State of today would disappear in one way or another.

That, for this reason, our two peoples should now embark on fresh bloodshed in a new war of annihilation is very painful not only to you, Monsieur Daladier, but also to me. But, as I have already said, I see no possibility of our being able, on our side, to influence Poland in the direction of reason, so as to rectify a situation which is intolerable for the German people and the German Reich.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's correspondence might well have had the desired effect had he not made so frequent use of his alleged exertions for the cause of peace and Germany's "voluntary" renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine on so many previous occasions. Even the German Embassy in Paris had no choice but to cable to Berlin on August 28 that "as far as it is concerned," French public opinion "has corrected the arguments submitted by the Reich Chancellor." The diplomatic dispatch bore the headline: "The following is published, from a special quarter, as semi-official views on the exchange between the Führer and Minister President Daladier:"⁷⁸⁷

There is no doubt that in Paris we should have been pleased to note the renewed assurances that the French frontier would be respected, but the French character of the provinces which were recovered in consequence of the world war has never been in doubt, and the fact that they were annexed for fifty years never established any legal German claim for Germany to renounce or not as she pleased. As to the reference to Hitler's writing or speeches, it should be noted that *Mein Kampf*, the French publication of

which the author himself tried to forbid, has never been a reassuring document for France. As to Poland, it has not been forgotten that a ten-year treaty of good neighborly relations was concluded between Berlin and Warsaw, and that the result of this treaty was to reassure Poland as long as Germany was amending the map of Europe to her own advantage in other regions, and that when this readjustment was completed, Germany denounced the treaty. During the period of good German-Polish relations, Hitler repeatedly made statements in which he recognized the right of the Polish nation to exist and emphasized the incompatibility of the annexation of part of Polish territory with National Socialist doctrine, and Germany's desire to live at peace with Poland.

The argument of the existence of a considerable German minority in Poland is counterbalanced by the fact that, in Germany too, there is a not inconsiderable Polish minority. Furthermore, the number of Germans who have become Polish citizens is no more than 700,000 and does not amount to about two millions, as stated by Hitler.

The postponement of the attack on Poland had greatly upset Hitler's time table. As mentioned earlier, secret mobilization had continued. Gradually civilian life was being subjected to wartime demands. Hitler had planned an extraordinary Reichstag session for August 27,⁷⁸⁸ which would have been the second day of war had everything proceeded on schedule. The Reichstag would have served as a forum before which the Führer would rationalize the opening of hostilities as the result of "unbearable Polish provocations." The order to assemble in Berlin had not been rescinded and many of the deputies had already arrived.

Meanwhile, the unresolved nature of the talks with England demanded patience. The question was what to do with the deputies in the interim? As was his custom, Hitler sought to present the Reichstag with the *fait accompli* of the conquest of Poland. In any event, he was not about to risk a confrontation with the Reichstag beforehand. Though the man on the street jokingly referred to the Reichstag as the Führer's "choral society,"⁷⁸⁹ Hitler was not so foolish as to regard the parliament as a forum to do his bidding unquestioningly.⁷⁹⁰ Under no circumstances was he willing to leave the decision over war or peace to the Reichstag.

Hitler, of course, resolved the dilemma with which he was confronted. On August 27, an "informal gathering" of the Reichstag took place in the Ambassadors' Hall of the new Reich Chancellery at 5:30 p.m. Such a meeting required no one to preside over it, nor did it allow for any deputy to speak on the occasion. The only speaker scheduled to make an appearance was Hitler, who delivered a

relatively short address on the “gravity of the situation.” On this particular occasion, he wore his brown uniform with the swastika band on his arm for the last time. The only news of this odd event to reach the public was contained in the following short note:⁷⁹¹

Yesterday the Führer spoke before the members of the German Reichstag assembled at the Ambassadors’ Hall in the new Reich Chancellery. The deputies gave the Führer an enthusiastic, standing ovation at the end of his talk, which was marked by the gravity of the situation.

Even though Hitler had only delivered this speech to fill a void, the brevity and vagueness of the note published gave rise to speculations about its contents, especially abroad. A report by the frustrated Ciano was revealing in this context:⁷⁹²

Hitler, at a secret meeting, has spoken to the Deputies of the Reichstag in strong terms. However, I do not know what he said nor has Attolico been able to tell me.

Halder entered the following passage on the talk into his diary for the day:⁷⁹³

Conference at Reich Chancellery at 17.30 [5:30 p.m.]: Reichstag and several Party notables, Führer accompanied by Himmler, Heydrich, Wolff, Goebbels, and Bormann.⁷⁹⁴

Situation very grave. Determined to solve Eastern question one way or another.

Minimum demands: return of Danzig, settling of Corridor question.

Maximum demands: “Depending on military situation.”

If minimum demands not satisfied, then war: Brutal!

He himself will be in the front line.

The Duce’s attitude serves our best interests.

War very difficult, perhaps hopeless; “As long as I am alive there will be no talk of capitulation.”

Soviet Pact widely misunderstood by Party. A pact with Satan to cast out the Devil.

Economic situation.

Applause on proper cues, but thin.

After Hitler’s speech, the deputies were dismissed and could return home for the time being, until “Day Y.”

Another telegram authored by Mussolini reached Hitler that evening.⁷⁹⁵ In it, the Duce detailed the assistance Italy was prepared to render Germany in moral and military spheres in the event of an armed confrontation. Italy aspired to tie down British and French forces in this manner. Hitler chose not to reply to this particular correspondence. In his speech before the Reichstag on September 1, he would stress that

he stood prepared to “face these tasks himself” and that he did not wish “to appeal to foreign powers for help.”⁷⁹⁶ This remark was addressed to Italy in particular.

On August 27, Hitler signed two further ordinances. One provided “new regulations on honorary pay for bearers of the highest war decorations and an additional allowance for the disabled of the *Schutztruppe*.” A second allotted payment of a “veterans’ pension to front-line soldiers.”⁷⁹⁷ This in fact included veterans of the Franco-German War of 1870–71 and of the campaigns in Bosnia in 1878 and in South Dalmatia in 1882.

The German News Bureau claimed that these compensations were being awarded in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Tannenberg. Neither of the ordinances contained any references to this event. In all likelihood, the additional monetary allotments were intended—with regard to the upcoming conflict—to reflect the dedication of the Third Reich to its soldiers and veterans. The money was to serve as a tangible expression of the stock German men could place in the “Fatherland’s gratitude” in future engagements as well.

In the late evening hours of August 27, Hitler was waiting for news of Dahlerus’ latest undertakings in London. At 8:00 a.m., the Swede had set out for England once more by plane. On arrival, he requested an interview with Chamberlain, Halifax, and Cadogan.⁷⁹⁸ He related the contents of his conversation with Hitler to them and reiterated the “six-point proposal.” In spite of small deviations, the proposals largely reflected those presented to Henderson previously.

Hence, the English had no cause to alter their stance. Nowhere in the world were Hitler and his deceptive notions of friendship and political alliances better understood than in London.⁷⁹⁹ Besides this, the obvious preparations for war in Germany made it all too clear that Hitler did not envision a peaceful settlement of Germany’s differences with Poland. As in the case of Czechoslovakia eleven months before, Hitler was set on war.

In the 1938 precedent, the English had induced Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudeten German territories on the grounds that Germany’s claims were based on international law. Perhaps a cession of Danzig and the Polish Corridor could have precluded the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939. But by spring 1940 at the latest, Hitler would have annexed the remainder of Poland, under the dubious title of a German “General Government.” Then the *casus belli* would again be given.

In view of the situation, the agitated round of negotiations between Berlin and London, in part secret, in part open, took place more for appearances' sake than for the sake of diplomacy. On the one hand, Hitler wanted to dissuade England from siding with Poland by making all kinds of promises and extending all sorts of assurances to the English. On the other hand, London sought to demonstrate and document Hitler's guilt in the upcoming conflict.⁸⁰⁰

Hence, while the English were quite willing to lend an ear to Hitler's proposals, they were equally determined to give a cordial, though unequivocal reply. Originally, the British Government had resolved to entrust Henderson with a reply to Berlin on August 27. Having obtained Hitler's consent,⁸⁰¹ London relegated this task to Dahlerus. Henderson postponed his trip for another day and set out on his journey on August 28. The message in reply to Hitler's six-point proposal, which Dahlerus took to Berlin, had the following content:⁸⁰²

With regard to Point 1, England was in principle willing to come to an agreement with Germany that would assure a peaceable solution of the political and economic problems, but it was emphasised that the details of such a solution must be the subject of special negotiation.

As far as Danzig and the Corridor were concerned, the British Government was agreeable to a solution of the problem and recommended that the German and Polish Governments begin negotiations immediately in order to settle the matter once and for all.

Concerning Point 3 (the guarantees of Poland's boundaries), the British Government considered that, in view of the events of the last few years, it was unable to accept the solution suggested by the Germans. It recommended, instead, that Poland's borders be guaranteed by Russia, Germany, Italy, France and England jointly.

Regarding Point 4 (satisfactory guarantees for the German minority in Poland), England was ready to accept the German demands, and recommended that this question be decided by negotiation directly with Poland.

The demand in Point 5 that Germany's former colonies be restored to her was rejected by the British Government, which also refused to discuss the question at this time. Cadogan declared frankly that under the obvious threat implied by Germany's mobilization no British government would dare suggest to Parliament that Germany's old colonies be returned or that other colonial territory be awarded to her. Parliament would never consent to decide such a question at the point of a gun. The British Government agreed, however, that if other problems were solved and Germany demobilized, the matter would immediately be taken up for consideration and stated that it would be handled speedily and without prejudice.

Germany's offer in Point 6 to defend the British Empire "*mit der Wehrmacht des Grossdeutschen Reiches wo immer es auch angegriffen werden könnte*" was rejected most emphatically. To accept such an "offer" would

hardly be compatible with the policy of the British Empire; nor would it serve its interests.

The plane with Dahlerus on board landed in Berlin at 11:00 p.m. on August 27. Within ten minutes of his arrival Göring came to meet him. Having heard of the British response to Hitler's advances, Göring grew increasingly concerned. He called the British reply less than satisfactory. He himself understood the British position, as he was quick to point out to Dahlerus, but he was doubtful if Hitler would. As always, Göring was exceedingly ill at ease when it came to relating bad news to the Führer. As Göring confessed once: "When I stand in front of him, I lose heart."⁸⁰³

This time, however, he need not have troubled himself. Though it was well after midnight when Göring reached the Chancellery, Hitler was glad to hear of the British proposals. At this point, he was interested in entering into any kind of agreement that might distract the British. All the better, he thought, if such an understanding could be used to bind Britain's hands while he attacked Poland. Direct negotiations between Germany and Poland? Marvelous. This gave him the time and opportunity to prove the Poles wrong through some type of legal or diplomatic trick. International guarantees for a new Poland? Of course. Such guarantees could not possibly be fulfilled or reinforced, as Munich had amply proven. Deferment of the colonial question? Agreed. Hitler had never been serious in his demands for a return of Germany's colonies. The English did not wish any German divisions to assure the security of the British Empire? Well, then, they were on their own. In time, they would become more reasonable and beg him to help.

On August 28, Göring phoned Dahlerus at 1:30 a.m. to relay Hitler's assent to the British suggestions. Dahlerus instructed the British Embassy of this. In the early morning hours, he met once more with Göring. The latter reiterated the substance of his night-time talk with Hitler. He placed great emphasis on the pledge that Germany would not lend support to any power which might become involved in a conflict with Great Britain, not even "Italy, Russia, or Japan."

August 28 was dedicated to the commemoration of the Battle of Tannenberg. While 1939 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the event, the German public felt very little like celebrating. The battle had been won at the time, the war lost. And the situation in 1939 was not too different from that of 1914. Was war in the offing once again? Were

millions doomed to death once again? Would years of struggle once more culminate in a catastrophe unforetold? Nearly all Germans were haunted by these and like questions on this August 28, 1939. Undoubtedly, Hitler was aware of the somber reflections of the German public. Celebration of the Tannenberg anniversary was decidedly subdued. One detachment of reconnaissance pilots received the honorary title "Reconnaissance Detachment Tannenberg." The following official note informed the public of the renaming:⁸⁰⁴

Berlin, August 28

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the day of Tannenberg, the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has issued a decree which details:

"By their reports on the advance and positions of the Russian armies of Njemen and Narev, the reconnaissance detachments decisively contributed to the victorious outcome of the Battle of Tannenberg.

In commemoration of this, I order: the Reconnaissance Detachment No. 10 shall henceforth bear the title 'Reconnaissance Detachment Tannenberg' (*Aufklärungsgruppe Tannenberg*). On the right cuff of their uniforms, the officers, noncommissioned officers, and crews of this detachment shall bear a commemorative band with the inscription 'Tannenberg.'"

On the same day, Hitler also signed a "Law on the Pay, Feeding, Lodging, Clothing, and Health Care of the Relatives of Wehrmacht Members on Special Deployment," also called "Wehrmacht Deployment Taxation Law." These regulations affected the pay, housing, clothing, and health care for members of the Wehrmacht on "special deployment."⁸⁰⁵ The law was truly a wartime measure. It was to provide for family members and survivors of Wehrmacht active duty personnel. Given the widespread nervousness in the population, *Krieg* was not an opportune word to employ at this point. *Besonderer Einsatz* (special deployment) was an apt euphemism for the task at hand. The authorities judged it supremely important not to awaken memories of the horrors of the First World War, still vivid in the memories of millions of Germans, and to reinforce the perception that the move against Poland represented nothing more than a "police action" against a deviant neighbor state, an action deceptively termed "special deployment."⁸⁰⁶ The law's preamble is characteristic of Hitler's style. It made it clear that the "lives" of those entrusted with this seemingly harmless mission actually were at risk:

Every German is honor-bound to deploy (*einsetzen*) his forces and his life in the service of the honor and continued existence of Volk and Reich. The National Socialist State will treat all members of the Wehrmacht deployed in

defense of the Fatherland in accordance with an equality of principle. It will grant them, besides fair pay, free and equal provisions, and satisfactory medical care. It will equally provide for the support of their families insofar as this is not assured by other means.

Hitler had not yet completed his preparations for “the most difficult of circumstances” in terms of ordinances. On August 28 still, another “Decree of the Führer and Reich Chancellor on the Simplification of Public Administration” was signed into law:⁸⁰⁷

The Defense of Volk and Reich demands the smooth functioning of the public administration. To restore this so that, even under the most difficult of circumstances, it can fulfill its duty to Volk and Reich, I order the following:

Article I

(1) I expect unreserved efforts by all administrative bodies to make swift decisions free of bureaucratic encumbrance.

(2) I hold the heads of the Reich’s high administrative bodies responsible for the smooth cooperation among all administrative bodies in their areas and for insuring that there is no delay detrimental to the conduct of the state’s affairs.

(3) If a subordinate administrative body requires the approval of another administrative body or office in making a decision on regulations regarding laws, legal or administrative stipulations, then this assent is to be regarded as having been granted unless receipt of a written explanation of refusal of this permission has been received by the petitioning office within one week.

Article II

(1) Tasks related to the defense of the Reich take precedence over all other tasks to be attended to by administrative offices in the Reich, the Länder, the communities, and public corporations. The latter tasks are to be attended to according to remaining capacities.

(2) Every head of an administrative body is obliged to see to the conduct of his office in a manner which enables him first to attend to those urgent tasks connected to the defense of the Reich.

On August 28, the British Ambassador Henderson called at the Reich Chancellery at 10:30 p.m. to present Hitler officially with a memorandum from His Majesty’s Government answering the German proposals of August 23. The decisive passages of the British document were the following:⁸⁰⁸

1. His Majesty’s Government have received the message conveyed to them from the German Chancellor by His Majesty’s Ambassador to Berlin, and have considered it with the care which it demands.

They note the Chancellor’s expression of his desire to make friendship the basis of the relations between Germany and the British Empire and they fully share this desire. They believe with him that if a complete and lasting

understanding between the two countries could be established it would bring untold blessings to both peoples.

2. The Chancellor's message deals with two groups of questions: those which are the matters now in dispute between Germany and Poland, and those affecting the ultimate relations of Germany and Great Britain. In connection with these last, His Majesty's Government observe that the German Chancellor has indicated certain proposals which, subject to one condition, he would be prepared to make to the British Government for a general understanding.

These proposals are of course stated in very general form and would require closer definition, but His Majesty's Government are fully prepared to take them, with some additions, as subjects for discussion and they would be ready, if the differences between Germany and Poland are peacefully composed, to proceed so soon as practicable to such discussion with a sincere desire to reach agreement.

3. The condition which the German Chancellor lays down is that there must first be a settlement of the differences between Germany and Poland. As to that, His Majesty's Government entirely agree. Everything, however, turns upon the nature of the settlement and the method by which it is to be reached. On these points, the importance of which cannot be absent from the Chancellor's mind, his message is silent, and His Majesty's Government feel compelled to point out that an understanding upon both of these is essential to achieving further progress. The German Government will be aware that His Majesty's Government have obligations to Poland by which they are bound and which they intend to honour. They could not, for any advantage offered to Great Britain, acquiesce in a settlement which put in jeopardy the independence of a State to whom they have given their guarantee. [—]

7. It is unnecessary in the present reply to stress the advantage of a peaceful settlement over a decision to settle the questions at issue by force of arms. The results of a decision to use force have been clearly set out in the Prime Minister's letter to the Chancellor of the 22nd August,⁸⁰⁹ and His Majesty's Government do not doubt that they are as fully recognized by the Chancellor as by themselves. [—]

8. A just settlement of these questions between Germany and Poland may open the way to world peace. Failure to reach it would ruin the hopes of better understanding between Germany and Great Britain, would bring the two countries into conflict, and might well plunge the whole world into war. Such an outcome would be a calamity without parallel in history.

Once Hitler had read through the memorandum, Henderson expanded on its contents orally. The record of the conversation read:⁸¹⁰

He emphasized once again that it was completely wrong to imagine that the British Government's aim was to destroy Germany. Britain was perfectly willing to concede to Germany her vital rights, but she had given her word to Poland and could not break her word. The British people, and Mr. Chamberlain in particular, wanted understanding with Germany, but in order

to achieve this they needed the cooperation of Germany, which must try to reach an understanding with the Poles by peaceful means.

The Führer replied that he had been quite ready to settle the questions at issue with the Polish Government on a very reasonable basis. This attempt had failed owing to the behavior of the Poles, particularly because they felt secure under the protection of the British guarantee, and now, with their Slav mentality, they were becoming provocative and insolent. Things had now reached such a pitch that every day there were fresh incidents and acts of violence against the Volksdeutsche.

The Führer then quoted individual examples of shooting and ill-treatment of Germans in Poland. When he remarked in this connection that all this was a matter of indifference to Britain, Henderson, who had wrongly taken the remark as applying to himself, replied very heatedly that such things could not be said to him, who, ever since he had occupied his post in Berlin, and particularly just recently, had done everything in his power to prevent war and bloodshed. The choice between war and peace now lay with the Führer.

The Führer replied that this was not a correct picture of the situation and declared that the alternatives before him were either to defend the rights of the German people or to abandon them at the cost of an agreement with England. For him there was no choice: his duty was to defend the rights of the German people. Furthermore a Great Power like Germany must decline to be put on the same level as a country like Poland. The former alternative in the case of Czechia had been equally insulting to Germany, when England had also placed before herself the alternative of having either Germany or Czechia as a friend.⁸¹¹ Germany could not tolerate anything of that kind.

On parting, the Führer, after expatiating on the course of his efforts to reach understanding with England, again expressed most forcibly his desire to cooperate with England. He had always cherished this desire and had endeavored to realize it. England had repulsed him again and again and had thus forced him against his will into an alliance with others,⁸¹² which had not been in keeping with his original intentions. Even now he still wanted friendship with England and he expressed the sincere hope that England would not let this last chance slip.

It was not a question of Danzig or the Polish Corridor, so Henderson strove to underline, but of Britain's resolve to respond to force with force. He then asked Hitler whether he would be prepared to discuss a potential exchange of minorities with Poland and to enter into direct negotiations with the Poles. To this Hitler assented with the reservation that he had yet to submit the British response just presented to more detailed scrutiny. Also he wished to consult Göring on the matter. Despite the sharp tone of the conversation, Hitler remained "surprisingly calm," as Schmidt reported.⁸¹³

The following communiqué on this meeting was published on behalf of the German Government:⁸¹⁴

The British Ambassador arrived at the Reich Chancellery on Monday [August 28] at 10:30 p.m. where the Führer received him. A reception for the Ambassador was held in the court of the Reich Chancellery where a guard of honor paid him the customary tribute. Soldiers presented rifles and rolled drums. From the courtyard, State Minister Dr. Meissner and the Chief Adjutant of the Führer, SA Obergruppenführer Brückner, led the British Ambassador to the Führer's office.

Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Envoy Dr. Schmidt, in his function as interpreter, were present at the talk between the Führer and the British Ambassador.

It was Meissner to whom the task fell to accompany Henderson to the door after the meeting.⁸¹⁵ Once again the British Ambassador stressed that, in the event of a German invasion of Poland, Great Britain and France would immediately declare war on the Reich. Should Hitler fail to understand this, it would prove a fateful error. If Great Britain did not instantly rush to the Poles' side in the event of a confrontation, it risked losing its credibility as an ally in the eyes of the world. After all, Britain had pledged its full support to Poland in a formal alliance pact. And the British people, though they loathed war and loved peace, would undoubtedly close ranks behind their government in the case of an attack. Henderson implored Meissner to point this out once more to Hitler.

The State Minister duly did so in the presence of Ribbentrop, who stood by silently as Hitler listened. Once Meissner had finished, the Führer shrugged his shoulders and, in parting, remarked: "They'll change their minds yet."

British statesmen and diplomats were not alone in assuring Hitler of the inevitability of a declaration of war in the event of a German attack on Poland. The Reich's diplomatic representations in other western countries also wired report upon report to Berlin detailing what type of reaction by England and France was to be anticipated. Translated into English as *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, the Foreign Ministry's papers also provide ample proof that Germany's Chargés d'Affaires in London, Paris, Washington, and Lisbon, were well aware of the situation.⁸¹⁶ They fully realized that a forceful German venture against Poland would ultimately lead to an intervention by the United States, too, on behalf of its allies.

Having returned to Berlin for his annual vacation on August 14, the German Ambassador in London von Dirksen⁸¹⁷ unequivocally reiterated the British policy in the event of a Polish-German conflict.⁸¹⁸ Hitler

refused to receive him. Later, he relieved von Dirksen of his duties as Ambassador and effected his retirement.

After all, what need had an Adolf Hitler of experts in foreign relations? He desired that no information might reach him on events running contrary to the predictions he so confidently based on his conceptions of 1919. These were correct, not the "miserable reports" of German diplomats.⁸¹⁹

After Henderson's visit, Hitler conferred with Göring and Ribbentrop until 3:00 the next morning, discussing the situation and the latest developments. The Führer was in fact content with the course of events; his optimism was reinforced by Dahlerus' euphemistic report. Mockingly, he turned to Ribbentrop and said: "Do you still believe that Dahlerus is a British agent?"⁸²⁰ In the same meeting, Göring finally dared to tell Hitler: "We should stop playing this *Vabanquespiel* (risky game)." Hitler—laconically and with complete frankness—retorted with the remarkable words: "I have played *Vabanque* all my life."⁸²¹

On that August 29, Hitler took great care in composing a note in response to the British memorandum. After all, in his own words, "the great drama is now approaching its climax."⁸²² There remained only two more acts for him to suffer through. For one, the British had to be outmaneuvered so that they could not possibly move at the crucial point. Secondly, he had to insist on Polish compliance with deadlines impossible to abide by. Then, finally, he would have cornered his foe so that he could "strike straight at his heart."⁸²³

Hence Hitler declared himself willing, "in spite of severe misgivings as to the prospects of success" and "solely under the impression" made on him by the British friendly intentions, to agree to direct consultations with the government in Warsaw. However, he did so under the provision that a Polish negotiator arrive in Berlin by Wednesday, August 30, i.e. within 24 hours' time. Previously, Hitler had scheduled the attack upon Poland for August 31. It now appeared opportune to him to add another day onto this deadline. He proceeded in precisely the same manner as with Czechoslovakia the year before. Then, too, he had allowed the final date (September 30, 1938) to pass unnoticed and added onto it another day to prove his extraordinary love for peace. Next, he struck unexpectedly on the morning of the third day.⁸²⁴

On August 29, summoned to the Reich Chancellery, Henderson arrived around 7:00 p.m.⁸²⁵ Hitler handed him a reply which read as follows:⁸²⁶

August 29, 1939

The Führer and Reich Chancellor to the British Government

His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin has submitted to His Majesty's Government suggestions which I felt bound to make in order:

(1) To give expression once more to the will of the Reich Government for sincere German-British understanding, cooperation and friendship:

(2) To leave no room for doubt as to the fact that such an understanding could not be bought at the price of renunciation of vital German interests, let alone the abandonment of demands which are based as much upon common human justice as upon the national dignity and honor of our people.

The German Government have noted with satisfaction from the reply of His Majesty's Government and from the oral explanation given by His Majesty's Ambassador, that His Majesty's Government for their part are also prepared to improve the relationship between Germany and England and to develop and extend it in the sense of the German suggestions.

In this connection, His Majesty's Government are similarly convinced that the removal of German-Polish tensions, which has become unbearable, is the prerequisite for the realization of this hope.

Since the autumn of the past year, and on the last occasion in March, 1939, there were submitted to the Polish Government proposals, both oral and written, which, having regard to the friendship then existing between Germany and Poland, offered the possibility of a solution to the questions in dispute, acceptable to both parties. His Majesty's Government are aware that the Polish Government saw fit, in March last, finally to reject these proposals. At the same time, they used this rejection as a pretext or an occasion for taking military measures which have since been continuously intensified. Already in the middle of last month, Poland was in effect in a state of mobilization. This was accompanied by numerous encroachments in the Free City of Danzig due to the instigation of the Polish authorities; threatening demands in the nature of ultimatata, varying only in degree, were addressed to that City. A closing of the frontiers, at first in the form of a measure of customs policy but extended later to military and traffic and communications matters, was imposed with the object of bringing about the political exhaustion and economic destruction of this German community. To this were added barbaric acts of maltreatment which cry to Heaven, and other kinds of persecution of the large German national group in Poland, which extended even to the killing of Germans living there or their forcible removal under the most cruel conditions. This state of affairs is unbearable for a Great Power. It has now forced Germany, after remaining a passive onlooker for many months, in her turn to take the necessary steps for the safeguarding of just German interests. And indeed the German Government can but assure the British Government in the most solemn manner that a condition of affairs has now been reached which can no longer be accepted or observed with indifference. The demands of the German Government are in conformity with the revision of the Versailles Treaty, which from the beginning has been recognized as being necessary in regard to this territory: viz. the return of Danzig and the Corridor to Germany,

and the safeguarding of the existence of the German national group in the territories remaining to Poland.

The German Government note with satisfaction that His Majesty's Government also are in principle convinced that some solution must be found for the situation which has arisen. They further feel justified in assuming that his Majesty's Government too can have no doubt that it is a question now of conditions, for the elimination of which there no longer remain days, still less weeks, but perhaps only hours. For in the disorganized state of affairs obtaining in Poland, the possibility of incidents supervening, which it might be impossible for Germany to tolerate, must at any moment be reckoned with.

While His Majesty's Government may still believe that these grave differences can be resolved by way of direct negotiations, the German Government unfortunately can no longer share this view as a matter of course. For they have made the attempt to embark upon such peaceful negotiations, but, instead of receiving support from the Polish Government, they were rebuffed by the sudden introduction of measures of a military character in the form of the development alluded to above.

His Majesty's Government attach importance to two considerations:

(1) that the existence of a threatening explosion should be eliminated as quickly as possible by direct negotiation, and

(2) that the existence of the Polish State, in the form in which it would then continue to exist, should be adequately safeguarded in the economic and political spheres by means of international guarantees.

On this subject the German Government make the following declaration:

Though skeptical as to the prospects of a successful outcome, they are nevertheless prepared to accept the British proposal and to enter into direct discussions. They do so, as has already been emphasized, solely as the result of the impression made upon them by the written statement received from His Majesty's Government that they too desire a pact of friendship in accordance with the general lines indicated to Ambassador Henderson. The German Government desire in this way to give His Majesty's Government and the British people a proof of the sincerity of Germany's intentions to enter into a lasting friendship with Great Britain.

The Reich Government feel, however, bound to point out to His Majesty's Government that in the event of a territorial rearrangement in Poland they would no longer be able to bind themselves to give guarantees or to participate in guarantees without the U.S.S.R. being associated therewith.

For the rest, in making these proposals the German Government have never had any intention of attacking Poland's vital interests or questioning the existence of an independent Polish State. The German Government, accordingly, in these circumstances agree to accept His Majesty's Government's offer of their good offices in securing the despatch to Berlin of a Polish emissary with full powers. They count on the arrival of this emissary on Wednesday, August 30, 1939.

The Reich Government will immediately draw up proposals for a solution acceptable to themselves and will, if possible, place these at the disposal of His Majesty's Government before the arrival of the Polish negotiator.

Having read the document, Henderson could only call it “a very disappointing answer to the dignified, passive, and reasoned note of His Majesty’s Government.”⁸²⁷ Baffled, Henderson objected: “That sounds like an ultimatum,” because there were only twenty-four hours left for Poland to comply with these demands. Hitler categorically denied, with vocal support from Ribbentrop, that the paper represented an ultimatum. The constraints imposed on a possible time frame were due “to the urgency of the moment when two fully mobilized armies are standing face to face.”⁸²⁸

He then took advantage of the situation to state in strong terms his outrage at the alleged Polish transgressions and provocations. Again he resorted to his well-rehearsed fits of fury to impress upon his opposite the justness of his cause. This was a bit much for Henderson under the circumstances. Enraged, he hit the table with his fist and shouted that he was not willing to listen to any more nonsense about Great Britain being indifferent to the allegation that “Germans were slaughtered in Poland.”

On this curious phase of the negotiations, Henderson reported the following to Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax:⁸²⁹

I left Herr Hitler in no doubt of my disappointment: rightly or wrongly I felt that I must play Herr Hitler at his own game. He gave me the opportunity on a minor point by asserting [that] I or His Majesty’s Government did not care a row of pins whether Germans were slaughtered in Poland or not. I therefore proceeded to out-shout Hitler. I told him that I would not listen to such language from him or anybody. Such a statement was intolerable and an example of all his exaggeration.

I added a good deal more shouting at the top of my voice.

Later that day, Henderson commented further on this verbal exchange in a letter to Halifax:⁸³⁰

It is, of course, not the duty of a British representative to shout. But Hitler is an abnormality and, after my first interview at Berchtesgaden where, while answering him back all the time, I was careful to make a distinction between his own ravings and my calmness, I felt that sooner or later he would have to learn that the monopoly on shouting was not his alone. So when he gave me the opportunity on a minor point, namely our utter disregard for Germans murdered in Poland, I did fairly let him have it. But believe me I was not merely satisfying a long-felt want, but doing something which after careful prior consideration I had decided might do good. I must add that after the worst of it I started to get up to go, but he would not budge.

The decision of the British Ambassador to resort to a shouting match in his dealings with the Reich Chancellor did indeed “do good,”

as Henderson managed to silence Hitler for once. Inside Germany, regrettably, no one was to be found with such courage.

Regarding Henderson's visit, the following official communiqué was published:⁸³¹

Berlin, August 29, 1939

At the new Reich Chancellery on Tuesday evening, the Führer received the British Ambassador Sir Nevile Henderson in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. The British Ambassador was handed a reply to yesterday's note by the British Government.

Shortly after Henderson had left, i.e. before 9:00 p.m., the Italian Ambassador Attolico called on Hitler to present him with a letter penned by Mussolini and to transmit an oral message. The Duce proposed an Italian mediation between Germany and England. Rome entertained close and warm relations with London, said Mussolini. Should Hitler so desire, the Duce would be willing to relate a message to the British Government outside official channels.

One can easily imagine Hitler's outrage at such a proposal. As though he needed Mussolini's help to come to terms with the senile English! He could very well handle them himself.

As Schmidt reported,⁸³² Hitler turned to Attolico to state with pointed coldness that he had already entered into direct negotiations with London. And, moreover, he had already agreed to see a Polish negotiator.

The manner in which these "direct talks" with England had been conducted left much to be desired, however. Hitler was painfully aware of this, especially in the wake of the recent confrontation with Henderson. Who knew what reports this stubborn Englishman wired to London? It would be best, Hitler reasoned, to again ask Dahlerus to open a venue to Britain.

Hitler speedily summoned Göring. In the late evening hours, Hitler labored to detail minutely what tactics were to be employed in future negotiations with the British. It was of the highest importance to impress on the English the Führer's extraordinary love for peace. On the other hand, it was equally important to bring about a turn of events to indict the Poles should Polish-German talks fail.

Dahlerus was destined to hear of the results of this consultation between Hitler and Göring that very evening.⁸³³ Shortly before midnight, Göring asked him by telephone to come to his private apartment. There, Göring began a fervent accusation of the "inferior,

impudent Poles.” In vivid terms he described how downcast the Führer was because of the highly unpleasant confrontation with the British Ambassador. This had come at a time when he had just written a “conciliatory note” to the British Government. Now, after Henderson’s “fit of anger,” the Führer regrettably found himself forced once more to seriously question the goodwill of the English. Indeed, there seemed to be a certain “lack of will” in the English to come to an agreement.

This was all the more lamentable at this particular time, as Hitler had just sat down to compose yet another *grosszügiges Angebot* to Poland. And now, fretted Göring, this “verbal dispute” had perhaps changed everything. He, nevertheless, still cherished the hope that Hitler might persist yet in his original plans and finish the overture to Poland by the next morning. This would have been August 30. Assuredly, Hitler would then reveal the contents of his proposal. For the time being, he, Göring, was not empowered to reveal details of this plan. All he could do was to grant Dahlerus insight into the general nature of the advance toward Poland. Naturally, all this was “strictly confidential.” First among Hitler’s proposals was a return of Danzig to the Reich while, secondly, a plebiscite was to be held in the area approximately delineating the Polish Corridor. Should the population there cast its vote for Poland, then Germany would have the right to demand its own “corridor through the Polish Corridor.” When Dahlerus inquired precisely what geographical area was in question, Göring again tore a page from an atlas and sketched out a line following approximately the border of the Reich in 1914, but stretching as far south as Lodz.

In conclusion, Göring urged Dahlerus to fly immediately to London to report on the actual events of that evening. In particular, Dahlerus was to render the British Government an accurate, more insightful report on Germany’s willingness for peace. In a “strictly confidential” manner, Dahlerus was to inform them of Hitler’s intention to make renewed offers to Warsaw in the course of the next day. The conditions linked to these were of so facile a nature, Göring argued, that the Poles would assuredly agree to them shortly. The English could only favor a like resolution. Indeed, a German military plane left Berlin at 5:00 a.m. the next morning. Dahlerus was aboard, making his way to London.

8

On August 30, Hitler received the Gauleiter of Danzig, Albert Forster, at the Reich Chancellery.⁸³⁴ This early morning conference served to issue final instructions to Forster on how to proceed in staging a coup d'état. Seven days before, Forster had been appointed head of state of the Free City, in defiance of the constitution.⁸³⁵ On September 1, on Hitler's express orders, Forster would proclaim a "Basic Law for the Free State of Danzig," which would become an integral part of the Third Reich. This naturally would be done without allowing for any participation by Danzig's Senate.⁸³⁶

Besides the "generous offer" to Poland, Hitler had yet another task facing him on this August 30. Since military affairs would largely take up his time in the months to come, Hitler resolved to charge a deputy with the Reich's internal functioning. The natural choice for such a position was Göring, his "best man." In the past months, he had repeatedly proved his qualifications to represent his Führer. Hitler was content with his choice. Of course, he would not entrust even Göring with the power to make any real decisions. This function would be reserved for the "Reich Government" and the "Reichstag," in other words for Hitler himself.

Nevertheless, in spite of these efforts to provide for his anticipated absence from the domestic scene, Hitler had to ensure that the administrative apparatus functioned in the most effective manner possible. He was greatly apprehensive about the internal bickering and inability to perform so characteristic of any bureaucracy. To restrict this potential for delay, Hitler promulgated a "Führer Decree on the Establishment of a Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich."⁸³⁷

For the period of the present foreign policy tension,⁸³⁸ I order the following in the service of a coherent management of the administration and of the economy:

I

(1) As a permanent committee, a “Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich” shall be formed from the body of the Reich Defense Council.⁸³⁹

(2) The following shall serve as permanent members of the Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich:

Field Marshal Göring, as its president,
the Deputy of the Führer,
the Plenipotentiary General for the Administration of the Reich,⁸⁴⁰
the Plenipotentiary General for the Economy,⁸⁴¹
the Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery,
the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

(3) The President shall also be entitled to consult additional members of the Reich Defense Council as well as other persons.

II

The Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich is empowered to issue decrees which shall have the force of law, unless I order the passing of a law by the Reich Government or the Reichstag.

III

The powers of Field Marshal Göring based on the instructions for the implementation of the Four-Year Plan of October 18, 1936 (RGBl., I, p. 887) shall remain in force, in particular his right to issue directives.

IV

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery shall conduct the affairs of the Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich.

V

I shall determine the expiry of this decree.⁸⁴²

Berlin, August 30, 1939

The Führer Adolf Hitler
Göring, Field Marshal

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers

Previously, Hitler had placed the title “The Führer and Reich Chancellor” next to his signature beneath governmental decrees, ordinances, and laws. From now on, he began to prefer the abbreviated version, “The Führer,” although, along with this, the alternative “The Führer and Reich Chancellor” was still to be found on many official documents.⁸⁴³

On August 30, Hitler’s new “magnanimous offer” to Poland contained sixteen points. The Reich Government transmitted these proposals to the German Chargé d’Affaires in London personally with the provision: “Following proposals are to be regarded as strictly confidential pending further notice. They are not to be passed on to third persons.” The text of the sixteen points read:⁸⁴⁴

Proposals for a Settlement of the Danzig-Corridor Problem
as well as the German-Polish Minorities Question

The situation existing between the German Reich and Poland is at the moment such that any further incident may lead to an explosion of the military forces which have taken up their positions on both sides. Any peaceful solution must be so framed as to ensure that the events which lie at the root of this situation cannot be repeated on the next occasion offered and that thus not only Eastern Europe but also other territories shall not be brought into such a state of tension.

The causes of this development lie in:

1. the impossible delineation of frontiers as provided for by the Versailles Dictate;

2. the impossible treatment of the minorities in the ceded territories.

In making these proposals the Reich Government are, therefore, actuated by the idea of finding a final solution which will remove the impossible situation created by this frontier delineation, assure to both parties their vital lines of communication, remove the minority problem—as far as it is at all possible—and, in so far as this is not possible, make the fate of the minorities tolerable by a reliable guarantee of their rights. The German Government are convinced that in this connection it is essential that economic and physical damage done since 1918 should be revealed and full amends made. They of course regard this obligation as being binding for both parties.

These considerations lead to the following practical proposals:

1. The Free City of Danzig shall immediately return to the German Reich in view of its purely German character and also of the unanimous will of its population.

2. The territory of the so-called Corridor, which extends from the Baltic Sea to the line Marienwerder-Graudenz-Kulm-Bromberg (including these towns) and thence runs in a roughly westerly direction towards Schönlanke, shall itself decide as to whether it shall belong to Germany or to Poland.

3. For this purpose a plebiscite shall take place in this territory. The following shall be entitled to vote: all Germans who were either domiciled in this territory on January 1, 1918, or who were born in these up to that date, and similarly all Poles, Cassubians, etc., domiciled in this territory on the above day or born there up to that date. The Germans expelled from this territory shall return to it in order to exercise their vote. To ensure an impartial plebiscite and also to safeguard the extensive preparations necessary for it, the above territory shall, as in the case of the Saar territory, be placed under the supervision of an international commission, to be formed immediately and consisting of the four Great Powers, Italy, the Soviet Union, France and Britain. This commission shall exercise all rights of sovereignty in this territory. With this end in view, the territory shall be evacuated by the Polish armed forces, the Polish police and the Polish authorities, within a period of the utmost brevity, still to be agreed upon.

4. The Polish part of Gdynia, which is essentially Polish sovereign territory, in so far as it is confined territorially to the Polish settlement, shall

be excluded from the above territory. The exact frontiers of the Polish port should be determined between Germany and Poland and, if necessary, delimited by an international arbitration tribunal.

5. With a view to assuring the necessary time for the extensive work involved in carrying out a just plebiscite, this plebiscite shall not take place before twelve months have elapsed.

6. In order to guarantee unrestricted communication between Germany and East Prussia and between Poland and the sea during this period, those roads and railways shall be specified which will render free transit traffic possible. In this connection only such taxes may be levied as are necessary for the maintenance of the means of communication and for the provision of transport.

7. It shall be decided by a simple majority of the votes recorded to whom this territory shall belong.

8. In order to guarantee to Germany free communication with her Province of Danzig-East Prussia, and to Poland her access to the sea, after the plebiscite—regardless of the results thereof—Germany shall, if the plebiscite area goes to Poland, receive an extraterritorial traffic zone, approximately along a line from Bütow to Danzig or Dirschau, in which to construct a Reich Autobahn and a four-track railway line. The road and the railway shall be so constructed as not to affect the Polish lines of communication, i.e., they shall pass either over or under them. The breadth of this zone shall be fixed at one kilometer and shall be German sovereign territory.

Should the result of the plebiscite be in Germany's favor, Poland shall receive rights analogous to those which she would have accorded to Germany, i.e., similar extraterritorial communications by road and rail for the purpose of free and unrestricted access to her port of Gdynia.

9. In the event of the Corridor reverting to the German Reich, the Reich declares its readiness to proceed to an exchange of population with Poland to the extent to which the Corridor lends itself.

10. Any special rights desired by Poland in the port of Danzig would be negotiated on the basis of parity against equal rights for Germany in the port of Gdynia.

11. In order to remove any feeling in those areas that either side was being threatened, Danzig and Gdynia would be given the character of purely mercantile towns, that is to say without military installations or military fortifications.

12. The peninsula of Hela, which as a result of the plebiscite would go either to Poland or to Germany, would be similarly demilitarized in either case.

13. Since the Government of the German Reich have the gravest complaints to make against Polish treatment of minorities, and since the Polish Government, for their part, feel obliged to make complaints against Germany, both parties shall declare that they agree to have these complaints submitted to an internationally constituted commission of enquiry, whose task would be to examine all complaints regarding economic or physical damage as well as any other acts of terrorism. Germany and Poland undertake

to make good all economic or other damage done to minorities on either side since the year 1918, and to cancel all expropriations or, as the case may be, to provide complete compensation to persons affected by these and any other encroachments on their economic life.

14. In order to free the Germans remaining in Poland, and the Poles remaining in Germany, from the feeling that they have no rights under international law, and above all to secure them against being called upon to perform actions or to render services incompatible with their national sentiments, Germany and Poland shall agree to protect the rights of both minorities by means of the most comprehensive and binding agreements, so as to assure to these minorities the preservation, free development and practice of their national character (*Volkstum*), and in particular to permit them such organization as they may consider necessary for this purpose. Both parties shall undertake not to call upon members of the minority for military service.

15. In the event of agreement on the basis of these proposals, Germany and Poland shall declare themselves ready to order and to carry out the immediate demobilization of their armed forces.

16. The further measures necessary for the more rapid execution of the above arrangements shall be agreed upon between Germany and Poland conjointly.

Essentially, these proposals were not any different from previous ones. As the Führer confided to Halder, the only new feature was that Germany was raising “a barrage of demographic and democratic demands.”⁸⁴⁵ Hitler actively sought to foster the impression that he was serious about conducting a plebiscite in the disputed territory. However, the proposals were tantamount to a return of Danzig to the Reich and the annexation of the Polish Corridor. Poland had already rejected similarly ill-concealed advances made by Germany in March. Acquiescence to similarly clad, allegedly justified claims by the Reich would merely signal a postponed swallowing-up of the entire state a few months later. The case of Czechoslovakia had amply proven as much. Unless the English exerted decisive pressure on Poland, Warsaw could confidently be expected to reject Hitler’s latest proposals, precisely as he desired. The methods he employed bore witness to the legacy of Graf Berchtold⁸⁴⁶ who had proceeded along similar lines in presenting Austria-Hungary’s ultimatum to Serbia in 1914.

The only reason for Hitler’s “generous offer” to Poland lay in his desire to demonstrate to Great Britain his extraordinary “restraint” and “love for peace.” He sought to afford the British the opportunity to divorce themselves from their obligations toward Poland. After all, it was hardly feasible for the Poles to send a plenipotentiary to Germany

by midnight, August 30. Their lack of compliance with this supposedly simple demand by Germany would serve as evidence of the Poles' lack of "good will." Even should a negotiator miraculously appear, the talks would undoubtedly founder because of the same "ill will." In any event, the German Chargé d'Affaires in London could step forth to emphasize once more the "generosity" of Hitler's earlier proposal to the British Government. In this scenario, Hitler was certain, England could point to his well-documented and frequently demonstrated "love for peace" and the resistance of the Poles in order to rationalize neutrality in the upcoming conflict between Poland and Germany.

This was the master plan of the Führer and Chancellor of the Greater German Reich on that fateful August 30, 1939. Later he tried to relate his general train of thought to Schmidt in the following manner:⁸⁴⁷

I needed an alibi, especially with the German Volk, to show them that I had done everything to maintain the peace. Thus I made this generous proposal about the settlement of the Danzig and the Corridor questions.

Hitler needed this "alibi" more for his dealings with the British than "with the German Volk." After all, the immediate worries of his people were of little concern to Hitler. He did not actually wish "to bear responsibility" for his actions, nor did he intend to allow his contemporaries to "crucify" him, should his notions prove mistaken.⁸⁴⁸ And in light of past experiences with the Führer, hardly anyone in Germany at the time took Hitler's last-minute overture to Poland seriously. No one truly expected him to scale down his demands to Danzig and perhaps the Corridor.

Those in the Third Reich's inner circles had long known what to think of similar assurances by their Führer. And the German public at large knew assertions such as "We do not want any Czechs at all"⁸⁴⁹ not to be worth a penny, at least ever since Hitler had ordered the invasion of Bohemia and Moravia.

While the British were to gain knowledge of his proposal, for the sake of a historical alibi, Hitler did not desire that they should exert such overwhelming pressure on Warsaw as to induce the Poles to perhaps unconditionally acquiesce to the demands contained in his offer. In the course of the day, Dahlerus twice phoned Göring. Calling from the British Foreign Ministry, he inquired as to news of the concrete nature of the proposal, announcement of which was awaited at any moment.

Dahlerus also wanted to know if it was not possible to conduct the German-Polish negotiations at a different location, somewhere other than Berlin. To this, Göring replied:⁸⁵⁰ "Nonsense; the negotiations must take place in Berlin where Hitler has his headquarters."

The British Government informed Dahlerus as well as Ambassador Henderson⁸⁵¹ of their intent to carefully review the German note of August 29. However, they continued, it was irrational to anticipate procurement of a proper Polish negotiator to Berlin by the end of the day, August 30. At 5:30 p.m., Henderson transmitted to the Reich Foreign Minister a letter from Chamberlain. In response to the earlier correspondence received from Hitler, the Prime Minister wrote:⁸⁵²

We are considering the German note with all urgency and shall send an official reply later in the afternoon. We are representing at Warsaw how vital it is to reinforce all instructions for the avoidance of frontier incidents and I would beg you to confirm similar instructions on the German side. I welcome the evidence in the exchanges of views which are taking place of that desire for Anglo-German understanding of which I spoke in Parliament yesterday.

It was obvious that the English either did not desire or were unable to induce the Poles to send a negotiator to Berlin by the end of the day. This made things even easier for Hitler.

When Henderson phoned the Chancellery at around 11:30 p.m. to announce imminent delivery of a message from the British Government, Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to reveal the "substance" of his sixteen-point proposal to the British Ambassador. Under no circumstances, according to Hitler's strict instructions, was Ribbentrop to hand Henderson a written summation. This all served to preclude even the slight, though implausible, possibility that the British Ambassador might gain knowledge of the offer's concrete terms, rush to the telephone, and swiftly urge Warsaw to accept Hitler's conditions before midnight.

Hitler was not taking such a risk. This perhaps also reflected a dislike for written matter. Even in the negotiations with the Soviets on the Non-Aggression Pact on August 14, Hitler had insisted that Ribbentrop only read the proposals to those opposite him at the table and had explicitly forbidden the Reich Foreign Minister to present them with a printed summary of the Führer's suggestions.⁸⁵³

The method Ribbentrop was instructed to follow in presenting Hitler's sixteen-point proposal to Henderson at midnight both violated etiquette and standard diplomatic procedure. But Hitler had little regard for the requirements of diplomatic protocol. And Ribbentrop, as

always, was eager to comply with his master's wish. Visibly trembling with excitement, he finally received the British Ambassador.⁸⁵⁴ Henderson first presented the British Government's written communication to Ribbentrop.⁸⁵⁵ In content this reflected the general tone of Chamberlain's correspondence that afternoon:

While the British Government shared Berlin's desire for ameliorating Anglo-German relations, it also pointed out that it could not well "sacrifice the interests of friends in order to obtain that improvement." London urged transmission of concrete proposals which it promised to speedily relay to Warsaw. Though it agreed in principle to the need for swift action, "in His Majesty's Government's view it would be impracticable to establish contact" to initiate German-Polish discussions "so early as today." Both parties to the conflict would do well to assure "that during negotiations no aggressive military movements will take place." With unpleasant incidents precluded in this way, the British Government was confident that a workable *modus vivendi* could be established for the benefit of Danzig.

Henderson then offered to discuss his Government's memorandum with Hitler himself, if the latter so desired. Here Ribbentrop intervened to state that he would forward the note to Hitler. Upon this rebuff, Henderson chose to discuss the various telegrams he had received from his Government in the course of the day. When he mentioned allegations of German acts of sabotage in Poland, Ribbentrop shouted at him:⁸⁵⁶ "That is an impudent lie of the Polish Government. All I can say to you, Mr. Henderson, is that the situation is damned serious."

Now Henderson jumped up from his seat. Apparently, he had determined to give Ribbentrop the same lesson he had earlier accorded his master. Admonishingly, he shook his finger at Ribbentrop and shouted: "You just said 'damned.' That assuredly is not the language of a statesman in so grave a situation." As the interpreter Schmidt later recollected, for some time it appeared as if an exchange of blows was imminent. After a while, however, the diplomats regained their composure and returned to their seats.

Henderson then inquired whether the German proposals for Poland had yet been drafted. If this was so, he would gladly take them with him immediately. To this the Reich Foreign Minister sarcastically replied that all British efforts at mediation had previously borne fruit only in the general mobilization in Poland.⁸⁵⁷ Germany had been counting on the arrival of a Polish negotiator for this day, August 30. This deadline had not constituted an ultimatum, Ribbentrop argued,

but reflected the practical requirements of the moment. The Führer had said as much in the discussion the previous day. By midnight, the Reich Government had not received word from Warsaw on this subject. Ribbentrop claimed that therefore Germany's proposals to Poland were no longer on the table. To prove German good will, however, he would reveal the contents of Hitler's offer to England. He then pulled Hitler's "sixteen-point proposal" out of his pocket and proceeded to read it hurriedly to Henderson in German. The British Ambassador was barely capable of following. Given Ribbentrop's lack of politeness, Henderson did not even make an effort to understand, certain he would be handed the written statement after the reading. When Henderson asked for a typed copy of Hitler's proposal, Ribbentrop refused categorically, threw the document with a contemptuous gesture on the table, and said that it was now "too late" as the "Polish representative had not arrived in Berlin by midnight." Henderson then suggested that Ribbentrop might hand the proposals to the Polish Ambassador, but "in the most violent terms Herr von Ribbentrop said that he would never ask the Ambassador to visit him."⁸⁵⁸

The scene was truly a scandalous one on the eve of such historic developments. The grotesque scenario had been written by Hitler, and the entire act only served to prevent England and Poland from gaining timely knowledge of the German proposals. Hitler still feared that, if he did not take precautions, the Poles might accept his conditions. And this in turn might well delay the outbreak of hostilities in an inopportune fashion.

In an effort to rationalize his conduct before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, Ribbentrop declared, under oath, in March of 1946:⁸⁵⁹

. . . [the Führer had] explicitly forbidden me to let these proposals out of my hands. Hitler told me that I might communicate to the British Ambassador only the substance of them, if I thought it advisable. I did a little more than that: I read all the proposals from beginning to end.

Ribbentrop was indeed speaking the truth. He was only playing Hitler's game. Hitler himself admitted as much in a speech on September 19, 1939:⁸⁶⁰

I sat with my Government in Berlin for two days, and waited, and waited. In the meantime, I had worked out the new proposal. You are aware of it. On the evening of the first day [August 30], I had the British Ambassador informed of it. It was read to him sentence for sentence. Moreover, my Foreign Minister

gave supplemental explanations. The next day dawned. Nothing happened—not a thing!

The most recent diplomatic setback Hitler had suffered signaled the failure of his entire policy toward England. He had not been able to induce the British to abandon Poland by entreaties, memorandums, or by ever new promises. The British memorandum of August 30 and the encounter between Ribbentrop and Henderson gave evidence that all official attempts had failed to change the British stance. Unofficial initiatives fared no better. This became clear when Dahlerus returned to Germany at 1:30 a.m. on August 31.⁸⁶¹ At once, he rushed to Göring's apartment, but all he could report was that the British Cabinet persisted in its demands for a pledge to resolve the German-Polish crisis peacefully before entering into negotiations with Germany on the topic of a potential alliance.

Göring, in turn, was equally frank. He read the ominous "sixteen points" to his guest and later even permitted him to relay the gist of the matter to the British Embassy in Berlin by telephone.⁸⁶² Göring was greatly concerned should the Führer find out about this, especially since Hitler had explicitly forbidden the Reich Foreign Minister to give a copy of his demands to the British Ambassador. Evidently, Göring was not yet aware that the game was over by this hour. It was no longer a question of Great Britain gaining knowledge of the contents of Hitler's proposal; after all, no Polish mediator had made his presence known by the deadline required. And, within a few hours, a radio broadcast was to inform the German public of Hitler's supposed overture to Poland and Warsaw's impudent rejection. This would go a long way to prove that the Führer's "love for peace" was hampered by the "ill will" of the Poles.⁸⁶³

As always, Göring was nonetheless exceedingly anxious lest he upset his Führer. Throughout the war, he apparently was haunted by memories of his indiscretion toward Dahlerus. He greatly feared that someone might remember his role in the events of that day and that this might lead Hitler to punish him later. By the time of his testimony before the Nuremberg Court in 1946, however, he publicly boasted of his exploits in the name of peace and of the enormous risks he had taken for this cause.⁸⁶⁴

On August 31, when Hitler finally realized that both his official and unofficial strategies towards England had failed, he nonetheless remained intransigent. He continued playing his games despite the reports Ribbentrop and Göring rendered in the early morning hours

of that day. To Hitler it seemed the English were trying to bend his will to theirs.

Well, he would show them who was master of this game. Surely they would not wear him out.⁸⁶⁵

By 4:45 the next morning, German troops would be marching into Poland. That would turn the English position upside down. Hitler was rejoicing that someone like this “bastard” Chamberlain⁸⁶⁶ had not come up with a second Munich this time. After all, he had greatly feared up to this point that “at the last moment some cur (*Schweinehund*) or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation.”⁸⁶⁷ No one would ruin his entry into Warsaw. Prague was a thing of the past.

Hitler was truly furious with the present political leadership in Great Britain. If the British statesmen were so audacious as to declare war on the Third Reich, then these “little worms”⁸⁶⁸ would surely be swept out of office. He still had his friends among the English. These were men of greater standing and import, men such as Lloyd George.⁸⁶⁹ While this particular friend had somewhat disappointed Hitler by expressing his irritation with Germany, thereby displaying clear signs of senility,⁸⁷⁰ surely Lloyd George would not fail to lend his support to the Führer in this instance. And there was still the Duke of Windsor, the former King Edward VIII, to be reckoned with: in 1937, he had even called on him at the Berghof.⁸⁷¹ As recently as August 27, 1939, Hitler had received a wire from this “good friend.” This contact had to be maintained and cultivated in the interest of relations with Great Britain. Promptly Hitler undertook to respond to the Duke in a telegram.⁸⁷²

The Führer and Chancellor to The Duke of Windsor, Antibes, France

Berlin, August 31, 1939

I thank you for your telegram of August 27. You may rest assured that my attitude towards Britain and my desire to avoid another war between our peoples remain unchanged. It depends on Britain, however, whether my wishes for the future development of German-British relations can be realized.

Adolf Hitler

At 12:30 p.m. on August 31, Hitler issued definite orders for the attack on Poland, placing his signature beneath the following directive for wartime operations:⁸⁷³

Directive No. 1 for the Conduct of the War

1. Now that every political possibility has been exhausted for ending by peaceful means the intolerable situation on Germany's eastern frontier I have determined on a solution by force.

2. The attack on Poland is to be carried out in accordance with the preparations made of "Case White" (*Fall Weiss*), with the alterations, in respect of the Army, resulting from the fact that strategic deployment has by now been almost completed.

Assignment of tasks and the operational objective remain unchanged.

Day of attack . . . September 1, 1939.

Time of attack . . . 4:45 a.m.⁸⁷⁴

This timing also applies for the Gdynia-Gulf of Danzig, and Dirschau Bridge operations.

3. In the West, it is important that the responsibility for the opening of hostilities should be made to rest squarely on Britain and France. Insignificant frontier violations should, for the time being, be opposed by purely local action. The neutrality about which we have given assurances to Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland must be scrupulously respected.

On land, the German western frontier is not to be crossed at any point without my express permission.

At sea, the same applies for all warlike actions or actions which could be regarded as such.

The defensive measures of the Luftwaffe are, for the time being, to be restricted to those necessary to counter enemy air attacks at the Reich frontier, whereby the frontiers of neutral States are to be respected as long as possible in countering single aircraft and smaller units. Only if large French and British formations are employed over the neutral States in attacks against German territory and the air defense in the West is no longer assured, are counter measures to be allowed even over these neutral territories.

The speediest reporting to OKW of any violation of the neutrality of third States by our western opponents is particularly important.

4. If Britain and France open hostilities against Germany, it is the task of the Wehrmacht formations operating in the West to conserve their forces as much as possible and thus maintain the conditions for a victorious conclusion of the operations against Poland. Within these limits enemy forces and their military economic resources are to be injured as much as possible. Orders to go over to the attack are reserved to me in every case.

The Army will hold the West Wall and make preparations to prevent its being outflanked in the north through violation of Belgian or Netherlands territory by the Western Powers. If French forces enter Luxembourg, the demolition of frontier bridges is authorized.

The Navy will carry on warfare against merchant shipping, directed mainly at Britain. To intensify the effects a declaration of danger zones may be expected. OKM will report in which sea areas, and to what extent, danger zones are considered expedient. The wording of a public announcement is to be prepared in consultation with the Foreign Ministry and submitted to me through OKW for approval. The Baltic Sea is to be protected from enemy raids. The Commander in Chief of the Navy will decide whether the approaches to the Baltic Sea should be blocked by mines for this purpose.

The Luftwaffe is, in the first place, to prevent the French and British Air Forces from attacking the German Army and German Lebensraum. In

conducting the war against Britain, preparations are to be made for the use of the Luftwaffe in disrupting British supplies by sea, the armaments industry, and the transport of troops to France. A favorable opportunity is to be taken for an effective attack on massed British naval units, especially against battleships and aircraft carriers. Attacks against London are reserved for my decision.

Preparations are to be made for attacks against the British mainland, bearing in mind that partial success with insufficient forces is in all circumstances to be avoided.

Adolf Hitler

In retrospect, this decision to schedule the opening of hostilities against Poland for Friday, September 1, was the last one Hitler was to make of his own free will. All other ventures he was yet to embark on, until his dying day, were mere reactions to events and developments connected to the fateful decision of August 31, 1939.

As Churchill had aptly put it in a radio broadcast, the decision to begin the war had been Hitler's, but the decision to end the war would not be his.⁸⁷⁵ Hitler had thrown the first stone. The resulting avalanche, which would ultimately crush him, could no longer be stopped.

It was Hitler alone who took this fateful, final step towards the opening of hostilities against Poland. Neither Goebbels nor Himmler, Göring nor Ribbentrop, Keitel nor Brauchitsch, Raeder nor Halder, civil servant nor Party leader, military commander nor admiral, had assisted him in making this decision or influenced him in any manner.

The decision to go to war was fully in keeping with the ideas Hitler had conceived in 1919: the conquest of new Lebensraum in the East, with the "sacrifice" that "blood is shed,"⁸⁷⁶ and the British and Italians would provide friendly help. No well-meant advice, resolute warning, or extraneous development could induce Hitler to veer from his "preconceived" path.⁸⁷⁷ And it was hence that Germany's "train of Government"⁸⁷⁸ with Hitler at the helm set out on its journey towards destruction.

In retrospect, was the attack on Poland Hitler's only recourse at this point in the negotiations? Could he no longer restrain his generals, these "blood-hounds" who were supposedly "waiting to be unleashed"?⁸⁷⁹ Was it they who forced him to fire the first shot of this world war? Would rescinding the order to attack Poland have placed in question his authority within the Third Reich? Could he not have declared the military preparations simply a bluff? Would his Party comrades perhaps have staged a mutiny, or would the State apparatus have denied him its following by resorting to a vote of no confidence?

Nothing of the sort. The entire German Volk—Party members, politicians, leaders of the economy—they all would have greatly rejoiced had this bitter cup passed them by once more.⁸⁸⁰

What weighed so heavily on Hitler in autumn, 1939 was the force of his ego compelling him onward at all costs. He had rationalized his actions in the following manner in the 1936 campaign: "Because I am living *now*, that's why it has to be now!"⁸⁸¹ There had to be war because he was alive on this day in 1939. As he had explained his idiosyncratic stance to Henderson on August 23, "he was now 50, and therefore if war had to come, it was better that it should come now than when he was 55 or even 60 years old."⁸⁸² On July 4, 1944, Hitler maintained in speaking before the German leaders of the military and the economy: "I am of the conviction that no other man could have done what I have done. Another would not have had the nerves."⁸⁸³

Chamberlain hit the nail on the head when, in a speech before the House of Commons on September 1, 1939, he blamed "one man, the German Chancellor," for the outbreak of the Second World War.⁸⁸⁴

On the other hand, Hitler's decision to go to war was made long before August 31, 1939. It represented the culmination of a long process of decision-making. The story of his life led up to this one development, though he had undoubtedly envisioned the outcome of the war differently. The chain of reasoning which brought it about was evident already, also to experts abroad, in *Mein Kampf*. This edifice of ideas had remained unchanged.

Admittedly, it would be an over-simplification to place the fault for the war exclusively with Hitler and the Third Reich. However, it was undeniably Hitler who exploited the weaknesses of Germany's politicians and military, of other prominent members of society at the time, of the "stab-in-the-back" legend, of the Versailles Treaty, only to unleash a war on a scale hitherto unknown. He summoned those evil spirits which had inflicted so much woe and suffering on the German people on so many previous occasions.

One man who knew Hitler extraordinarily well, and whom the Führer mistakenly held to be a sympathizer of the National Socialist cause, was the British journalist Ward Price. Already in October 1937, he had observed the on-going preparations in Germany with great concern and had pointed out the strategic consequences to be drawn by Britain.⁸⁸⁵

Like any other compulsive gambler, Hitler soon found it impossible to stop even once he realized he might have gone too far. His early

successes clouded his view of the seriousness of the setbacks he later suffered. Neither reason nor common sense were at hand to restrain him. He was incapable of reviewing past actions or rescinding orders once he had given them. By 1939, he had become the prisoner of his own ideas.

To the British, Hitler seemed nothing other than a new Napoleon, or a new William II, who strove to subjugate Europe, behind each a country which had become mighty enough to disturb the balance of power on the Continent and hereby to threaten Britain's hegemony. Their behavior towards Hitler reflected this assessment, which the further course of events proved to have been correct.

British statesmen stood determined to declare war on the German dictator the minute he breached international peace and law. Hitler, whose knowledge of history was insufficient at best and of Britain was "nil,"⁸⁸⁶ was also ignorant of the limitations on his freedom of action. This ignorance doomed his efforts.

Matters of little consequence preoccupied Hitler in those few hours left between the issuing of orders and the actual marching of German soldiers in the morning hours of September 1, 1939. The Reich Chancellor composed a number of last-minute directives, proclamations, ordinances, and memorandums. Peripheral incidents still took place at the Chancellery, none of which was significant, however.

In the afternoon of August 31, the Polish Ambassador Lipski asked State Secretary von Weizsäcker to be received by either the Reich Chancellor or the Foreign Minister. Acting on a British request, the Government in Warsaw sought to alleviate the situation by sending its Ambassador to Berlin to satisfy the required presence of a Polish negotiator in that city.⁸⁸⁷ Hitler refused to see him.⁸⁸⁸

Instead, Ribbentrop inquired whether Lipski had arrived with the requisite powers. The latter responded that he was in Berlin in his capacity as Ambassador to the German Reich. He had instructions to deliver a message to the Reich Government.⁸⁸⁹ Ribbentrop bade him wait.

At 4:00 p.m., the Foreign Ministry noted the receipt of a Papal "appeal in the service of peace" to both the German and Polish Governments.⁸⁹⁰ Hitler chose not to respond to this, just as he had neglected to answer similar appeals by Roosevelt on August 24 and August 25.

At 4:50 p.m., a last effort at attaining an Anglo-German understanding was launched at Göring's apartment in the Leipziger Strasse. Hitler

granted his explicit consent to these peculiar last-minute talks. Göring asked Dahlerus to tea, the latter having initiated the conference, to consult with Henderson, Dahlerus, and the British Legation Counselor Sir Ogilvie-Forbes.⁸⁹¹

After initial small talk, these four men set out to discuss the situation at hand. A particular subject of interest was the possibility of establishing contacts between Poland and Germany belatedly. Göring presented an intercepted telegram, according to which the Polish Ambassador was not in the possession of full powers to negotiate with the German Government. Hence Göring urged a renewed round of Anglo-German talks. He also remarked that, should a war involving Germany and Britain indeed come about, he would be forced to bomb British cities, much to his regret. The means Göring employed to obtain British acquiescence to his proposals were nearly the same he had used to dissuade Hácha in March of that year, when he had threatened to rain bombs upon the city of Prague.⁸⁹² Needless to add, Göring's tea-time conference ended without any results.

At 5:00 p.m., Attolico called on Ribbentrop and conveyed Mussolini's "urgent desire that the Führer should receive the Polish Ambassador, Lipski, to establish in this way at least the minimum contact necessary for the avoidance of a final breach."⁸⁹³ Hitler did not reply to this appeal either.

At 6:30 p.m., Ribbentrop finally consented to see Lipski. The Polish Ambassador read the following note of the Polish Government to the German Foreign Minister:⁸⁹⁴

During the past night the Polish Government were informed by the Government of Great Britain of the exchange of views with the German Government regarding the possibility of direct conversations between the Reich Government and the Polish Government. The Polish Government are favorably considering the suggestions of the Government of Great Britain and will make them a formal reply on the subject within the next few hours.

Given the persistent cross-examination by Ribbentrop, the Polish Ambassador was finally forced to admit that he was not in possession of the vested powers of his Government. Thereupon Ribbentrop briefly summarized the exchange with the British Government and Germany's insistence that a Polish negotiator should have come to Berlin on August 30. The Führer had waited the entire day, Ribbentrop lamented. It was not until evening that the British Government had been prepared to provide a rather meaningless response. The meeting between Ribbentrop and Lipski took only a few minutes.

At 7:00 p.m., Hitler received Attolico, whom he engaged in a discussion reproduced in the German notes in the following terms:⁸⁹⁵

The Führer handed the Italian Ambassador a copy of the German proposals and a press notice, observing that, owing to the attitude of the Polish Government, the proposals no longer held good. The British attempt at mediation must thus be regarded as having failed. Ambassador Attolico then mentioned that, on the occasion of an offer to mediate made by Mussolini⁸⁹⁶ some days previously, the Führer had stated that Britain had just made a proposal and that it was desired first to wait and see its effect. Now that the Führer had himself stated that the British proposal must be looked upon as having failed, the question arose whether the Duce could not for his part undertake mediation. He therefore asked the Führer whether he would agree to the Duce now acting as mediator.

The Führer answered that we must first await the course of events. He had no desire to expose himself to repeated slaps in the face from the Poles, and did not want to place the Duce in an awkward position by accepting his mediation. He was convinced that in their present frame of mind the Poles would pay no attention to the Duce either. To Attolico's question as to whether everything was now at an end, the Führer replied in the affirmative.

At 7:20 p.m., the German Ambassador to Moscow, Graf von der Schulenburg, reported to Berlin that the Supreme Soviet had indeed ratified the Soviet-German treaty.⁸⁹⁷

At 8:00 p.m., Hitler ordered the staging of a Polish attack on the German radio station at Gleiwitz along the German-Polish border.⁸⁹⁸ This served Hitler's aim to "give a propagandist reason for starting the war, never mind whether it is plausible or not."⁸⁹⁹ The entire mission was as superfluous at this time as Hitler's other theatrics were. It neither provided a rationale for the assault on Poland, nor a justification for it. Hitler was deceived as to the role his words and allegations played in the assessment of Germany abroad. What counted were his deeds, since he had long ago discredited his rhetoric. Furthermore, Hitler would have had no need to resort to the Gleiwitz incident in attempting to promote the aggression against Poland. For example, German propaganda could have made use of a series of actual border transgressions which had occurred in the course of the last few days. The campaign against Poland in the press and the tension of the last weeks greatly contributed to these occurrences.

In front of both Henderson and Mussolini, Hitler himself had maintained that in the previous night twenty-one new border incidents had been recorded.⁹⁰⁰ Why then stage so dubious an attack as that upon the Gleiwitz station? This incident reflected nothing else than

Hitler's mania to reinsure himself by back-up operations which tended to be unnecessary under the circumstances.⁹⁰¹

At 9:00 p.m., Hitler had the following "official statement of the Reich Government" aired throughout Germany:⁹⁰²

His Britannic Majesty's Government informed the German Government, in a Note dated August 28, 1939, of their readiness to offer their mediation towards direct negotiations between Germany and Poland over the problems in dispute. In so doing they made it abundantly clear that they, too, were aware of the urgency of the matter in view of the continuous incidents and the general European tension. In a reply dated August 29, 1939, the German Government, in spite of being skeptical as to the desire of the Polish Government to come to an understanding, declared themselves ready in the interests of peace to accept the British mediation or suggestion. After considering all the circumstances prevailing at the time, they thought it necessary in their Note to point out that, if the danger of a catastrophe was to be avoided, then action must be taken promptly and without delay. In this sense they declared themselves ready to receive a personage appointed by the Polish Government up to the evening of August 30, with the proviso that he was, in fact, empowered not only to discuss but to conduct and conclude negotiations. Further, the German Government pointed out that they felt they could make the basic points regarding the offer of an understanding available to the British Government by the time the Polish negotiator arrived in Berlin.

Instead of a statement regarding the arrival of an authorized Polish personage, the first answer the Government of the Reich received to their readiness for an understanding was the news of the Polish mobilization, and only towards 12 o'clock on the night of August 30, 1939, did they receive a somewhat general assurance of British readiness to help towards the commencement of negotiations.

Although the non-arrival of the Polish negotiator expected by the Government of the Reich removed the necessary condition for informing His Majesty's Government of the views of the German Government as regards possible bases for negotiation, since His Majesty's Government themselves had pleaded for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr von Ribbentrop, gave the British Ambassador, on the occasion of the presentation of the last British Note, precise information as to the text of the German proposals which would be regarded as a basis for negotiations in the event of the arrival of the Polish plenipotentiary.

The German Reich Government considered themselves entitled to claim that in these circumstances a Polish personage should, at least belatedly, be nominated forthwith. For the Reich Government cannot be expected for their part not only to emphasize continually their willingness to start negotiations, but actually to be ready to do so, while being, from the Polish side, merely put off with empty subterfuges and meaningless declarations.

It has once more been made clear, as a result of a *démarche* which has meanwhile been made by the Polish Ambassador, that the latter himself has

no plenary powers either to enter into any discussion, or even to negotiate. The Führer and the German Government have thus waited two days in vain for the arrival of a Polish negotiator with plenary powers. In these circumstances the German Government regard their proposals as having, this time too, been to all intents and purposes rejected, although they consider that these proposals, in the form in which they were made known to the British Government also, were more than loyal, fair and practicable.

The Reich Government consider it advisable to inform the public of the bases for negotiation which were communicated to the British Ambassador by the Reich Foreign Minister, Herr von Ribbentrop.

Hitler's "sixteen points"⁹⁰³ were read after this statement. At 9:15 p.m., State Secretary von Weizsäcker officially presented the communication of the Reich Government, along with Hitler's long-awaited written proposal, to the British Ambassador. When Henderson inquired why he had been handed this important material at so late an hour and not until the radio broadcast, Weizsäcker could only state that he was acting on explicit instructions.⁹⁰⁴ In compliance with these directions, Weizsäcker disseminated the same materials to the French and Japanese Embassies, and to the Chargés d'Affaires representing the United States and the Soviet Union.⁹⁰⁵

A hot and humid summer night brought the last day of peace the Third Reich was destined to experience to a fitting close . . .

On September 1, the German cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein*, which anchored at the Danzig harbor, opened fire on the heavily-fortified Polish Westerplatte at 4:45 a.m.⁹⁰⁶ Startled from their sleep by the thunder of the cannons and the lightning on the horizon, the citizens of Danzig at first thought the pressing summer heat had finally been relieved by a thunderstorm. Yet the Polish military was not so easily deceived. The damage caused on the Westerplatte left no doubt what type of storm lay ahead. Major Sucharski, the commander of the fleet at Gdynia, issued the following brief at 4:50 a.m.:⁹⁰⁷

Westerplatte, September 1, 1939, 4:50 a.m.

At 4:45 a.m., the armored cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein* opened fire from all cannons on the Westerplatte. Shots continue to be exchanged.

Polish guards thereupon blew up the Dirschau bridge across the Vistula which led from Danzig into the Corridor region. The shots fired from the armored cruiser *Schleswig-Holstein* not only began Hitler's war against Poland, but also the Second World War. It would not be until five years and eight months later that the cannons thundering across Europe fell silent again.

The war against Poland had begun without any declaration of war, and this heralded a return to a darker age.⁹⁰⁸ In the morning of September 1, 1939, the entire length of the German-Polish border and of the Slovak-Polish frontier resounded with machinegun, rifle, and artillery fire. Luftwaffe squadrons penetrated Polish airspace to carry out their mission of destruction inside Poland.

Hitler accompanied this blood-drenched prelude to one of the greatest tragedies ever to engulf mankind with the following proclamation:⁹⁰⁹

To the Wehrmacht!

The Polish State has rejected the peaceful regulation of neighborly relations I have striven for and has appealed to arms.

The Germans in Poland are being persecuted by bloody terror and are being driven from their homesteads. A series of frontier violations, of a nature not tolerable for a great power, proves that the Poles are no longer willing to respect the German Reich's frontiers. To put an end to this lunacy, there remains no other recourse for me but to meet force with force.

The German Wehrmacht will conduct this struggle in the defense of the honor and the vital rights of the resurrected German Volk with adamant determination.

I expect that every soldier, in acknowledgment of the great and eternal German military tradition, will do his duty to the last.

Be aware, in each and every circumstance, that you are in fact the representatives of the National Socialist Greater Germany.

Long live our Volk and our Reich!

Berlin, September 1, 1939

Adolf Hitler

At 5:40 a.m., radio stations broadcast this appeal to Germany's soldiers throughout the Reich. The Bay of Danzig was declared a closed zone. Civilian aviation was banned from the skies above Germany as of that hour.

That much information reached Germany's representatives abroad. They were to draw their conclusions from this. Not a word was said to the effect that the war against Poland had become a reality. In a telegram disseminated on the evening of September 1, Germany's diplomatic missions received the following explicit instructions: "This action is for the present not to be described as war, but merely as engagements which have been brought about by Polish attacks."⁹¹⁰

Meanwhile, in Danzig, Gauleiter Albert Forster, Hitler's henchman, took center stage. For eight days he had acted as "head of state" of the Free City, in violation of its constitution.⁹¹¹ In this capacity, he sent Hitler the following telegram:⁹¹²

Mein Führer!

I have this minute signed the basic state law effecting the reunion of Danzig with the German Reich. It shall enter into force hereby.

Article I

The Constitution of the Free City of Danzig shall be suspended forthwith.

Article II

The head of state shall have uncontested exercise of all legislative and executive powers.

Article III

The Free City of Danzig, its region, and inhabitants, shall forthwith form a constituent part of the German Reich.

Article IV

Until final determination by the Führer regarding the introduction of German law, the statutes in force as of the decreeing of this basic state law, with the exception of the Constitution, shall remain in force.

In the name of Danzig and its citizens, I ask you, mein Führer, to assent to this basic state law and to effect Danzig's integration into the German Reich through Reich law.

In devotion, I pledge to you, mein Führer, Danzig's undying gratitude and eternal loyalty.

Heil to you, mein Führer!

Albert Forster

Forster had arbitrarily effected this "basic state law" in complete defiance of the Constitution and without consulting the Senate. In the Austrian case, the authors of the Anschluss had at least maintained a semblance of legality. On March 13, 1938, a puppet government in Vienna had passed a "Law on the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich."⁹¹³ Apparently such machinations were no longer judged necessary.

Hitler expressed his gratitude to Forster for work well done in the following telegram:⁹¹⁴

To Gauleiter Forster of Danzig!

I acknowledge the proclamation of the Free City of Danzig regarding its return to the German Reich. I thank you, Gauleiter Forster, and all of Danzig's men and women, for the steadfast loyalty they have shown throughout the years. Greater Germany greets them with a heart brimming with joy.

The law on the reunion will be executed immediately. I appoint you Chief of the Civil Administration for the Danzig area.

Berlin, September 1, 1939

Adolf Hitler

It was indeed interesting to note how Hitler apparently felt on this September 1, 1939—now that things had finally "gone off" and the first "bloodshed" for the great goal, the conquest of new Lebensraum, had occurred. For the previous day, August 31, Halder had noted: "Führer

calm; has slept well.”⁹¹⁵ His diary contained no similar entry for September 1, 1939. This was just as well, as Hitler was quite out of sorts that day. Yet the general tension by itself did not suffice to explain his miserable state, both of mind and of body.⁹¹⁶

This was certainly not the Hitler of the early days of September 1938, the self-confident politician who had been so secure in the pursuit of his ambitions. At the time he had been convinced he could, without difficulty, launch the invasion of Czechoslovakia “at 8:00 in the morning of October 2.” Not a doubt had entered his mind that he might not be able to grasp the laurels of an astounding military victory and enter Prague triumphant. Indeed, only the year before, everything had gone according to plan for Hitler. On September 26, 1938, he had given a speech full of confidence and enthusiasm before a crowd assembled at Berlin’s Sportpalast, and they hysterically applauded his every word.⁹¹⁷ It was not until he had attempted to speak to the German Volk from the balcony of the Reich Chancellery on September 27—as the Kaiser had done in 1914 when he appealed to his enthusiastic followers from a balcony at the Charlottenburg Castle—that Hitler sobered up considerably; the German people had failed to show up for the occasion.⁹¹⁸

Times had changed during the past twelve months. Hitler was only too aware of this. From the beginning of the tension with Poland, he had been reluctant to speak before his people. No popular rallies of consequence took place any more. And Hitler carefully avoided addressing the man in the street from the heights of the Reich Chancellery’s balcony.

This entire war had set out on a wrong foot, Hitler felt. Really, he had not wanted to wage war against the Poles at all, but against the Russians. The Poles should only have had to hand over Danzig and some other territories, which he would have incorporated into the Reich as a “Generalgouvernement.” Next they would have marched together against Russia, and perhaps he would generously have bestowed some territorial gains on the Poles, just as he had meant to do with the pliant Slovaks. And now he had to waste his time knocking out the Poles first! Furthermore, he had tarried far too long in his dealings with the English. And all had been for naught as he could not induce them to abandon their intransigent stance. Now, without the kind of security in the West which he had so successfully obtained in the East through the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union, this campaign entailed great risks.

Initially, he had planned to crown the launching of aggression against Poland with a historic, highly publicized speech before the Reichstag. He would have declared that Germany was carrying out a “castigation of the violator of the peace,”⁹¹⁹ a permissible “police mission” in concert with West and East.

But matters had developed differently. The latest events forced him to subdue celebrations, to step forth more cautiously. There was one thing, however, no one could prevent him from doing: he would take his field-gray tunic out of the wardrobe, as he had planned already in 1938,⁹²⁰ and wear it! This would show everyone, both at home and abroad, that he was set on playing his role as a warlord. And the sovereign symbol on the tunic’s left sleeve—as the *Waffen SS* was wearing it—would eradicate any lingering doubts among the generals whether the Führer would listen to their advice or not.

There was yet another precaution Hitler took on this September 1, 1939. This may have served to alleviate a guilty conscience. For, once the first shot in this war was fired, not only inferior peoples were bound to die. Members of the “master race,” too, were destined to perish in the ensuing carnage. To lower the cost of blood, Hitler sought to alleviate the situation by killing “worthless” elements within the German population itself. Hence, it was not as surprising as it may appear at first glance that Hitler signed a decree allowing the murder of thousands of retarded, deranged, or incurable Germans on this first day of war. The decree, which was not made public, read:⁹²¹

Berlin, September 1, 1939

I hold Reichsleiter Bouhler and Dr. Brandt responsible for expanding the competence of certain physicians, yet to be indicated by name, so that they may grant, in accordance with their best judgment, a merciful death to certain incurably ill patients, whose status must be regarded as terminal.

Adolf Hitler

Before taking the car to the Reichstag building, Hitler swiftly dictated the following message to be wired to Mussolini:⁹²²

Duce!

I thank you most cordially for the diplomatic and political support which you have been giving recently to Germany and her just cause. I am convinced that we can carry out the task imposed upon us with the military forces of Germany. I do not therefore expect to need Italy’s military support in these circumstances. I also thank you, Duce, for everything which you will do in the future for the common cause of Fascism and National Socialism.

Adolf Hitler

This was the first time in a long while that Hitler referred to the two terms “Fascism” and “National Socialism.” Undoubtedly, he sought to induce Mussolini to side with Germany on the basis of the alleged common Weltanschauung both countries shared, as all attempts at entering into a military or political wartime alliance with Italy had failed.

Shortly before 10 a.m., Hitler left the Chancellery to speak at a session of the Reichstag especially convened for this historic occasion. That morning’s newspapers had already informed the German public that Danzig had supposedly “returned home.” The man on the street also knew that the Führer expected “the German Wehrmacht to conduct this struggle in the defense of the honor and the vital rights of the resurrected German Volk with grim determination.” In view of these “grim” prospects, Germans felt even less desire than in September 1938 to applaud Hitler as his car headed for the Reichstag and passed through Berlin’s busiest streets. SA guards of honor formed lines on either side of the route leading from the Wilhelmstrasse to the Kroll Opera. Behind them stood only a few individuals. Cheering and jubilation were nowhere to be heard. Dahlerus, who witnessed the depressing scene, wrote of it in the following terms:⁹²³

The streets seemed rather deserted and as far as we could see from the windows of the Embassy the people in the streets with few exceptions stared in silence as Hitler passed on his way to the Reichstag.

Another eyewitness, the Berlin correspondent for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, wired the following report to Switzerland:⁹²⁴

From 8:00 a.m. on, columns of SA and SS men lined up at Unter den Linden and Wilhelmstrasse to form a cordon stretching, without interruption, to the Kroll Opera. There the Reichstag session was to be held. The Unter den Linden avenue appeared nearly entirely deserted. Automobiles were not allowed to circulate. Only a few pedestrians were in view. Where the Reich Chancellor’s vehicle was to pass near the Brandenburg Gate, a thin row of onlookers had assembled, perhaps because news of the Reichstag session had been made public belatedly. Applause was to be heard sporadically as Hitler’s car bore him, wearing his field-gray tunic for the first time since 1933,⁹²⁵ on to the Reichstag.

Because of the mobilization and their inability to arrive in time for the session, the seats of nearly 100 Reichstag deputies were vacant. A number of deputies undoubtedly chose consciously not to be present on this occasion. Foreseeing this lack of enthusiasm, however, Göring had taken care to close the ranks. He had simply assigned the empty

seats in the audience to Party functionaries! And he was unabashed in explaining his procedure. He openly proclaimed how he had gone about filling the ranks and had resolved to allow the “substitutes” to share in the vote on Danzig’s “basic state law”:⁹²⁶

My Deputies!

I have allowed bearers of political offices and their deputies to occupy the seats vacated by those deputies not among us today. With the powers accorded me in my capacity as the president of the Reichstag, I grant them participation in the vote.

Through this “presidential” trick, Göring was able to declare the assembly complete. Mainly for fear that empty seats might create the impression, on photographs, that deputies had purposely left their seats empty to protest Hitler’s war policy, Göring had gone to great length to obtain the desired effect. And indeed, this fear was not unfounded, as Thyssen’s disappearance the next day proved.⁹²⁷ Moreover, it might have increased Hitler’s insecurity to speak before a thinning crowd. Hitler truly was in bad shape that day. He made mistakes repeatedly, appeared confused and nervous. Just how ill-at-ease he felt was underlined by the fact that he refrained from launching another one of his tiring “party narratives.” He immediately embarked on a “verbal” assault against Poland. Despite the forceful tirade, he uttered not a word belittling the Western Powers as he had in April of that year. Instead, his speech before the Reichstag was replete with frequent references to the friendly sentiments he espoused for Great Britain. Nor were any threats made against the Jews in the speech that day. Later, Hitler would mistakenly claim to have threatened the destruction of Jewry in the event of a war⁹²⁸ in this talk, but this simply was not true. Rather, he had made such statements in his speech of January 30, 1939.⁹²⁹

While Hitler sought to boast of the ninety billion Reichsmarks he had spent on armament, he appeared decidedly insecure. This was evident when he spoke of “that tunic which has always been the most holy and dear to me,” and declared, “I shall not take it off again until after victory is ours, or—I shall not live to see the day!”

Hitler’s Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939 went as follows:⁹³⁰

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

For months a problem has tormented all of us. Long ago the Diktat of Versailles bestowed this problem on us. In its depravity and degeneracy it has now become insufferable. Danzig was a German city and is a German city! The Corridor was German and is German!

These regions owe their cultural development exclusively to the German Volk. Without this Volk, these eastern regions would still be plunged in the depths of barbarism.

Danzig was torn from us! Poland annexed the Corridor! The German minorities living there are being persecuted in the vilest manner imaginable. In the years 1919 and 1920 over one million men of German blood were forced to leave their homeland.

As always, I sought to bring about a change by peaceful means, by offering proposals to remedy this situation which meanwhile had become unbearable. It is a lie when others in the world claim that we sought to carry out our revisions by the use of force exclusively. Fifteen years before National Socialism's rise to power, there was ample opportunity to carry out these revisions by peaceful means. Nothing of the sort was done. In any event, I made proposals for a revision not once, but many times.

You know that all these proposals were rejected. There is no need for me to enumerate them: my proposals on the limitation of arms; if necessary, even for the complete elimination of weaponry; my proposals for limited warfare, for the abolition of methods employed in modern warfare which, in my eyes, are hardly reconcilable with international law. You know of my proposals on the necessity of restoring German sovereignty to the territory of the German Reich. You know of the endless attempts I made for a peaceful resolution of the problem of Austria, and later of the problem of the Sudetenland, of Bohemia and Moravia. It was all for naught.

There is one thing that is simply not possible: to demand that an impossible situation be resolved by means of peaceful revision—and then to consistently deny resolution by peaceful means.

It is likewise not possible to claim that the one who, under the circumstances, resorts to resolving this situation by himself, who undertakes the revisions on his own, is in breach of the law. For the Diktat of Versailles does not constitute law for us Germans.

You simply cannot uphold and proclaim a signature to represent sanctified law when it was extorted by holding a pistol to the signatory's head and threatening to starve millions of human beings if he failed to comply!

Thus I attempted, also in the case of Danzig and the Corridor, to obtain a resolution by means of proposals and their peaceful discussion. That these problems had to be resolved was entirely clear. That the western states were unconcerned with the time table is understandable. Yet it is of concern to us. It was—and had to be—of concern especially to those suffering.

In my talks with Polish statesmen I once more expounded those thoughts which you already heard in my last speech before the Reichstag.⁹³¹ No man can accuse me of employing inappropriate methods or of applying inappropriate pressure in an uncalled-for manner. It was I who had the German proposals formulated in the end, and I must repeat here that there is nothing more modest or loyal than these proposals. I should like to say this to the world: I alone was in the position to make such proposals! I know very well that in doing so I brought myself into opposition to millions of Germans. These proposals have been rejected. And not only this! They were answered by

mobilization, augmented terror, increasing pressure on ethnic Germans in these regions. The previously slow and exclusively economic and political throttling of the Free City of Danzig within the last few weeks has spilled over into an outright war against it, a choking off of traffic there and military isolation.

Poland has unleashed this war against the Free City of Danzig! It was not willing to settle the question of the Corridor in one manner or another, in a manner both reasonable and rendering justice to the interests of both states. And ultimately this meant that it was not willing to uphold its obligations toward minorities.

And here I must establish the fact that Germany has fulfilled its obligations! The minorities living within the Reich are not subject to persecution. There is not one Frenchman who can stand up to claim that the French in the Saar territory are being oppressed, tortured, or robbed of their rights. Not one can claim as much!

I have been silently standing by and observing the situation for four months now. Yet I have issued warnings repeatedly. And I have intensified these warnings of late.

As long as three weeks ago, I already had the Polish Ambassador informed that if Poland should send further notes to Danzig, in the nature of an ultimatum; if it should implement further discriminatory measures against the Germans there; or if it should attempt to destroy Danzig economically by imposing high customs on it; then Germany could simply no longer be expected to stand by without taking action.

I left no doubt that it would be a grave mistake in this context to compare the Germany of today to the Germany of days past.

There were attempts to justify recriminations against ethnic Germans by claiming that these constituted a response to prior "provocations." I know not what type of "provocations" those women and children had allegedly perpetrated who were abused and abducted. Nor can I imagine what provocations had been perpetrated by those who were sadistically and bestially tortured only to be murdered in the end.

Yet there is one thing I do know: no honorable great power could calmly tolerate such a state of affairs in the long run!

Nevertheless, I made one last effort. And this even though, in my heart, I was convinced that the Polish Government—especially given its dependence on the rabble of soldiers now freed of inhibitions—was not serious about attaining a true understanding. Nevertheless, I accepted the proposal at mediation of the British Government. The British suggested that while they were not willing to negotiate themselves, they would open a direct line of communication between Poland and Germany to initiate talks once more.

And now I am forced to state the following: I accepted this proposal! It was for this new round of negotiations that I drafted the proposals known to you. For two whole days I sat with my Government⁹³² and waited to see whether it was convenient for the Polish Government to send a plenipotentiary or not. Up to last night, it has not commissioned any such plenipotentiary. Rather it has informed us, through the offices of its Ambassador, that it is

presently contemplating whether or not it is in a position to consider the English proposals. It would impart as much to England later.

My Deputies! Should someone have the impertinence to expect the German Reich and its head of state to accept this, and should the German Reich and its head of state tolerate this, then truly the German nation would deserve no better than to take leave of the political stage! For I am wrongly judged if my love for peace and my patience are mistaken for weakness or even cowardice! Last night I informed the British Government that, under the circumstances, I no longer see any willingness by the Polish Government to enter into serious negotiations with us. And thus all attempts at mediation must be considered to have failed. For we had indeed received a response to our proposals which consisted of:

1. general mobilization in Poland and
2. renewed, heinous atrocities.

Similar events repeated themselves in the course of last night. And this after the recent perpetration of twenty-one border transgressions in the span of one single night. Yesterday fourteen additional violations of the border were recorded, among them three of a most serious nature. I have therefore resolved to speak to Poland in the same language that Poland has employed towards us in the months past.

Now that statesmen in the West go about declaring that this infringes on their interests, I can only regret this position. This cannot and will not, however, make me waver for a minute in the fulfillment of my duty. I have solemnly assured the Western states, and I repeat this here, that we desire nothing of them. We shall never demand anything of them. I have assured them that the border separating France and Germany is a final one. Time and time again I have offered friendship, and if necessary close cooperation, to England. But love cannot remain a one-sided affair. It must be met by the other side.

Germany is not pursuing any interests in the West. The West Wall delineates the Reich's border for all time. Our ambitions for the future are no different. And nothing shall ever change the Reich's standpoint in this matter.

The other European states, in part, comprehend our stance. Here I wish, above all, to thank Italy, which lent us support during this entire time. You will understand that we do not wish to appeal to a foreign power for assistance in this struggle. This is our task, and we shall carry it out ourselves.

The neutral states have already assured us of their neutrality. We earlier guaranteed this neutrality. We are deadly serious (*es ist uns heiliger Ernst*) in making this assertion.⁹³³ As long as other powers do not violate this neutrality, we shall likewise respect it scrupulously. For how could we wish to, or desire to, conduct ourselves differently towards these states?

I am happy to be able to inform you of a special development at this point. You know that two different doctrines govern Russia and Germany. There remained but one question to be resolved: as Germany has no intent of exporting its doctrine, and at the moment that Soviet Russia no longer contemplates exporting its doctrine to Germany, I no longer see any compelling reason why we should continue to take opposing stances. Both

of us are aware that any struggle between our two peoples would merely benefit third parties. Hence we have determined to enter into a pact which shall preclude the application of force between us for all time.⁹³⁴ It also obliges us to seek mutual consultation in certain European questions. Moreover, it shall render possible economic cooperation and, above all, ensure that the strength of the two great states is not squandered in rivalry with each other. Any attempt by the West to change this is doomed to failure! And of one thing I would like to assure all of you here today: this decision signals a fundamental change for the future and is a final one!

I believe the entire German Volk welcomes this political resolve. Russia and Germany fought each other in the World War only to suffer its consequences equally in the end. This shall not happen a second time!

Yesterday in Moscow and Berlin, the Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance Pact—which had originally entered into force upon signature—was accorded final ratification. In Moscow this pact was as warmly welcomed as you welcomed it here. I second every word of the Russian Foreign Commissar Molotov's speech.

Our goals: I am determined to resolve

1. the question of Danzig and
2. the question of the Corridor, and to see to it that
3. a change of tone comes about in German-Polish relations, so as to warrant peaceful coexistence.

Meanwhile I am equally determined to wage this war until the present Polish Government judges it opportune to assent to these changes, or another Polish Government shall be willing to do so.

I will cleanse Germany's borders of this element of insecurity, this civil-war-like circumstance. I will take care that our border in the East enjoys the same peace as along any other of our borders.

I will take the measures necessary in a fashion that does not contradict what I have pronounced to be my proposals to the world before you, my Deputies.

This means I do not wish to lead this war against women and children. I have instructed my Luftwaffe to limit its attacks to military objectives. Should, however, the enemy regard this as giving him license to employ reverse measures against us, then he shall receive so powerful a response that stars dance before his eyes!

This night for the first time Polish regular soldiers fired on our own territory. We have now been returning the fire since 5:45 a.m.⁹³⁵ (*Seit 5.45 Uhr wird jetzt zurückgeschossen!*) Henceforth, bomb will be met with bomb.

He who fights with poison shall be fought with poison gas. He who distances himself from the rules for a humane conduct of warfare can only expect us to take like steps. I will lead this struggle, whoever may be the adversary, until the security of the Reich and its rights have been assured.

For over six years I worked on the rearmament of the German Wehrmacht. I have spent over 90 billion⁹³⁶ on the rearmament of the Wehrmacht. Today it is among the best-equipped in the entire world. It completely defies comparison to that of 1914!

My confidence in it is unshakeable! When I call on this Wehrmacht, and when I now demand sacrifice from the German Volk, even the ultimate sacrifice should there be need, then it is because I have a right to do this, because today I am as willing as I was before to make any personal sacrifice. I am asking of no German man more than I myself was ready to do through four years!

Germans should not be asked to make any sacrifices I myself would not make without an instant's hesitation!⁹³⁷

I now wish to be nothing other than the first soldier of the German Reich. Therefore I have put on that tunic which has always been the most holy and dear to me.⁹³⁸ I shall not take it off again until after victory is ours, or—I shall not live to see the day!

Should something happen to me in this struggle, then my immediate successor shall be Party comrade Göring.

Should anything happen to Party comrade Göring, then his successor shall be Party comrade Hess. You shall owe this man—as your Führer—the same loyalty and blind obedience you owe to my person!

Should anything happen to Party comrade Hess, then through the offices of law I shall call upon the Senate, which is to determine the most worthy, i.e. the most valiant from its midst.⁹³⁹

As a National Socialist and a German soldier I enter into this struggle with a strong heart! My life was but one struggle for the German Volk, for its resurrection, for Germany. This struggle was governed by only one creed: faith in this Volk!

There is one word which I have never known and this word is: capitulation!⁹⁴⁰ If some now believe that we are facing hard times, then I would like to ask them to bear in mind that once a Prussian king with a ludicrously small state faced off a far more powerful coalition. And three battles later he stood victorious in the end, for he possessed that strong, believing heart, the kind which we need in these times as well.⁹⁴¹ I would like to assure the world around us of one thing: there shall never ever be another November 1918 in German history!

Since I myself stand ever ready to lay down my life for my Volk and Germany,⁹⁴² I demand the same of everyone else! Whoever believes he can oppose this national commandment shall fall! We will have nothing to do with traitors!

And all of us pledge ourselves to the one ancient principle: it is of no importance if we ourselves live—as long as our Volk lives, as long as Germany lives! This is essential.

I expect of all of you as the Reich's emissaries henceforth that you shall do your duty wherever you may be assigned! You must carry the banner of resistance forth regardless of the cost.

May no one approach me to report one day that morale is low in his Gau, in his Kreis, or in his group or cell. The one responsible for morale is you—the responsibility is yours!⁹⁴³ I am the one responsible for the morale of the German Volk. You are responsible for morale in your Gaus, in your Kreise! No one has the right to cast off this responsibility. The sacrifices demanded

of us today are no greater than those made by countless earlier generations. All men who have set out on this most bitter and strenuous of paths for Germany have accomplished nothing else than what we must also accomplish. Their sacrifice was not made without cost or suffering. It was no easier to make than the one demanded of us.

I expect every German woman to integrate herself into the great community-in-struggle in an exemplary fashion and with iron discipline!

It goes without saying that the German youth will fulfill, with a radiant heart, the tasks the nation, the National Socialist state, expects and demands of it.⁹⁴⁴

Provided all of us form part of this community, sworn together, determined never to capitulate, then our will shall master all need.

I conclude with the avowal I once pronounced as I began my struggle for power in the Reich. Back then I said: When our will is strong enough that need can no longer vanquish it, then our will and our German state will vanquish and conquer need.

Deutschland—Sieg Heil!

On this occasion as well, applause came “on proper cues, but thin,” as Halder had already observed after Hitler’s “private” encounter with this particular audience on August 27.⁹⁴⁵

Afterwards, the law on Danzig was put up for vote. In it, Forster had decreed the reunification of the Free City with the German Reich. Hitler himself would have been well-equipped to decide this issue himself, as he had done in the case of Austria where he had effected the Anschluss in a single decree of March 13, 1938.⁹⁴⁶ This time, however, Hitler had resolved to leave this apparently harmless affair to the Reichstag. Should, in the future, anyone rise to question the legitimacy of his wartime policy, Hitler could always point to this law and the Reichstag resolution as sanctioning his decision on either war or peace.

As Hitler had requested in his speech, Göring rose to pledge “loyalty and blind obedience.”

Mein Führer!

The German Reichstag as representative of the German Volk stands united behind its Führer in this historic hour. It represents the will of the German Volk to make all the necessary sacrifices for the honor and future of the nation and the Reich. Standing before the entire nation at this moment, it pledges loyalty and blind obedience to the Führer, in the face of despair and danger. The individual members of the Reichstag will all fulfill their duty to the utmost as soldiers at whatever location they may be assigned. Their trust in the Wehrmacht is unlimited, their belief in the final victory is unshakeable in this war forced on us while defending ourselves against unbearable attacks and seeking reparation for the wrong done to us in the Versailles Treaty.

September 1, 1939

The Reichstag promises, through its inner unity, to serve as an example to the nation. Deputies! Long live the Führer! *Sieg Heil!*

The meeting is adjourned.

Even though Hitler managed to have his way once more with the deputies, the impression the broadcast of the speech made on the man in the street was not the one desired. This was a fine “Führer” who pledged on the very first day of war, that should things go wrong, he had already determined not to “live to see the day!” Whoever had closed his eyes to reality up to this point now had a rude awakening. This speech revealed Hitler as an opportunist and gambler of the worst sort, devoid of any feeling of responsibility. He perceived himself as the center of life. If Germany took a turn for the worse, then he would just have to end it all by shooting himself. He would not suffer the consequences of his actions. He was indifferent to the fate of the German people.

One could only pity this Volk. This represented the net result of the faith vested in Adolf Hitler before his rise to power, of the idealism, of the patriotism, of the trust placed in his person. Millions of Germans had believed in him still in the first years of his reign. Millions had hoped for nothing more than bread and work, happiness at home, and the opportunity of making a career. Hundreds of thousands of simple SA men had served him willingly and without recompense. They had desired to be patriots, just like millions of German youth who had made Hitler their idol.

The youngsters strove to become as noble, selfless, patriarchal, peace-loving, and courageous as their “Führer.” The war revealed Hitler’s true nature. He claimed to offer these young idealists military glory, rule over foreign peoples, war medals—and a heroic death. In reality he offered them only tears, bloodshed, despair—and a highly unromantic death.

Around 11:00 a.m. on September 1, just after the Reichstag session, Hitler returned to the Chancellery. Once at his desk, he dictated yet another telegram to Mussolini, in which he attempted to rationalize the use of force against Poland:⁹⁴⁷

Berlin, September 1, 1939—12:45 p.m

To the Italian Minister President, Benito Mussolini

The latest attempt by Britain at mediation has also failed. I had once more declared myself ready to solve the problem between Germany and Poland by way of negotiations. For two whole days I have waited in vain for a Polish negotiator. Instead:

1. Polish general mobilization has been declared, and

2. a series of further intolerable acts of terrorism have been committed. Last night alone there were fourteen more cases of frontier violation, three of which were very serious. In these circumstances, having repeatedly warned Poland against continuing such acts, I have now decided to answer force with force. Come what may, I will carry through this struggle with all the fanaticism of which I and the German people are capable. I thank you, Duce, for all your efforts. I thank you in particular also for your offers of mediation.

But from the start I was skeptical about these attempts, because the Polish Government, if they had had even the slightest intention of solving the matter amicably, could have done so at any time. But they refused even to embark on any true understanding which, as things stood, would have involved concessions on their part. For, after all, it was not Germany who took away something from Poland,⁹⁴⁸ but Poland from Germany; and, conversely, it was not the Poles in Germany who were maltreated, but the Germans in Poland. For this reason, Duce, I did not want to expose you to the danger of assuming the role of mediator which, in view of the Polish Government's intransigent attitude, would in all probability have been in vain.

Come what may, National Socialist Germany will ensure, in one way or another, that that state of peace and calm shall also come to her Eastern frontier which we happily enjoy on all our other frontiers.

Adolf Hitler

That "state of peace and calm . . . which we happily enjoy on all our other frontiers" would not last long. Dark clouds were gathering in the West. There was the declaration of war by the Western Powers looming on the horizon, a fact which Hitler persistently declined to accept. To the contrary, he felt the time had come for a renewed advance toward England. Once more he set out to bring the British around by a combination of threats and entreaties. Persistence was the name of the game, Hitler reasoned. One more theatrical scene in front of the gullible Dahlerus and he would have things his way. All he needed to do was to utter wild threats to impress on Dahlerus that he was determined to destroy England, and capable of doing so, should it once again reject his hand extended in friendship. Dahlerus would report to London on the gravity of the situation for Great Britain, and all would be well in the end.

Shortly after 11:00 a.m., Hitler instructed Göring to telephone Dahlerus and to ask him to the Chancellery at once. Dahlerus, who came immediately, rendered the following account of the ensuing conversation:⁹⁴⁹

[Göring] asked me to go with him into a smaller reception room. Here we found Hitler, alone. His calm was skin-deep, but I could see that he was

nervous and upset inside. He received me graciously enough but from the very beginning his bearing struck me as abnormal. He came close up to me and with fixed, staring gaze began to speak. His breath was so foul that it was all I could do not to step back. He was obviously determined to snatch at every argument, however far-fetched, that would serve to absolve him personally for the decisions he had made.

He began by explaining that he had always been quite aware of the fact that England did not want peace, that her every move was inspired by her own selfish interests. He thanked me for all my efforts to promote understanding between the two nations and said that it was undoubtedly England's fault that they had been in vain. There was no longer, he said, any hope of coming to an agreement.

Göring, who so far had not entered into the conversation, chimed in at this point to say that it was essential that the German army advance to certain specific points but he in turn was interrupted by Hitler who declared that he was now determined to crush the Polish resistance and annihilate the Polish nation.

If England desired further discussions he would be willing to meet her half-way. "But," he said, "if the British don't understand that it is in their own interests to keep out of a fight with me, they will live to repent their folly." He grew more and more excited and began to wave his arms as he shouted in my face, "If England wants to fight for a year, I shall fight for a year, if England wants to fight two years, I shall fight two years . . ."

He paused and then yelled, his voice rising to a shrill scream and his arms milling wildly: "If England wants to fight for three years, I shall fight for three years . . ." The movements of his body now began to follow those of his arms and when he finally bellowed, "*Und wenn es erforderlich ist, will ich zehn Jahre kämpfen*" [and if it is necessary, I shall fight for ten years], he brandished his fist and bent down so that it nearly touched the floor.

On this occasion, the Führer's theatrics were a bit much even for Göring. He turned his back on both Dahlerus and Hitler.

There was much left to be done at the Chancellery once the conversation had finally ended and Dahlerus had departed. Hitler set himself the task of proving to the German Volk and to the world what a monumental, historical time had indeed begun.

9

The first war bulletin, edited by Hitler and published by the Wehrmacht on September 1, 1939, read:⁹⁵⁰

Das Oberkommando der Wehrmacht gibt bekannt

(The High Command of the Wehrmacht announces):

On the orders of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, the Wehrmacht has assumed the active defense of the Reich. Friday morning, in compliance with their mission to halt the Polish aggression, troops of the German Army passed all German-Polish border checkpoints to launch a counter-offensive. At this time, Luftwaffe squadrons started to put military objectives inside Poland out of action. The Navy has assumed the defense of the Baltic Sea.

While Hitler had embarked on what he considered to be a simple campaign against Poland at this time, he did re-establish the “Iron Cross,” the old Prussian war medal, on this September 1, 1939.⁹⁵¹

This was the moment he had waited for. He had longed to imitate, and even to outdo, the Prussian kings of old (Frederick William III, William I, and William II), who had so generously distributed this award. Everything that Prussian Kings or German Emperors had done before him, he could do better and in an even more grandiose manner. He would bring their undertakings to a conclusion, to a successful one at that. He would bestow on this award, which he proudly bore himself, honors untold and transform it, and its various ever-increasing classes and variants, into the embodiment of a wartime service medal.⁹⁵²

Hitler allowed himself to get so carried away in drafting the ordinance effecting the re-establishment of the Iron Cross that he completely lost sight of reality. He spoke of “former great wars,” while he himself had always insisted that the campaign against Poland was to be limited in nature. Apparently, he had also forgotten that the Iron

Cross had historically served to distinguish those who had partaken in wars against France and, since 1914, against Great Britain, too. After all, it was precisely this type of confrontation that he was trying to avoid at all costs, and it was he who likewise denied that such a confrontation was even possible. The ordinance read as follows:⁹⁵³

Ordinance on the Renewal of the Iron Cross

Now that I have determined to call the German Volk to arms in defense against pending attacks, I renew the Iron Cross medal in commemoration of the heroic battles in which Germany's sons prevailed in former great wars in the defense of the homeland.

Article I

The Iron Cross shall be awarded in the following categories and sequence: Iron Cross Second Class, Iron Cross First Class, Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross,⁹⁵⁴ Grand Cross of the Iron Cross.⁹⁵⁵

Article II

(1) The Iron Cross shall be awarded exclusively for special valor in the face of the enemy and for excellent service in the leadership of the troops.

(2) Award of a higher category presupposes possession of an award in the preceding category.

Article III

I reserve to myself the awarding of the Grand Cross in recognition of outstanding deeds of decisive influence on the course of events in the war.⁹⁵⁶

Article IV

(1) The Second Class and First Class of the Iron Cross shall correspond in size and design to the established ones with the provision that a swastika and the year 1939 shall be affixed to the face of the medal.⁹⁵⁷

(2) The Second Class shall be worn on a black-white-red ribbon⁹⁵⁸ either in the buttonhole or on the buckle. The First Class shall be worn on the left breast without a ribbon.

(3) The Knight's Cross shall be bigger in size than the Iron Cross First Class. Its rim shall be gold instead of silver, and it shall be worn around the neck on a broad black-white-red ribbon.

Article V

In the event that the recipient already is in possession of one or two classes awarded in the World War [1914–1918], he shall receive, instead of a second cross, a silver clasp with the emblem and the year 1939 in addition to the Iron Cross of the World War; it shall be worn on the ribbon of the Iron Cross Second Class, whereas it shall be pinned on above the cross of the Iron Cross First Class.⁹⁵⁹

Article VI

The recipient shall receive a title deed.

Article VII

In the event of the death of the recipient, the Iron Cross shall remain in the hands of the bereaved as a keepsake.

September 1, 1939

Article VIII

Provisions for implementation shall be decreed by the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht in agreement with the State Minister and Chief of the Presidential Chancellery.

Berlin, September 1, 1939

The Führer Adolf Hitler

The Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Keitel

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The State Minister and Chief of the Presidential Chancellery of the Führer
and Reich Chancellor, Meissner

Afterwards, Hitler signed an ordinance on the establishment of a badge for soldiers wounded in combat.⁹⁶⁰ Its provisions were similar to those of the badge accorded to the men who had sustained injuries in the Spanish Civil War.⁹⁶¹ The categories were the same. It differed from the badge awarded to the wounded of the First World War only in that the swastika was affixed to the steel helmet.

At noon on September 1, the American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, Alexander Kirk, called at the Foreign Ministry to deliver a message from his President.⁹⁶² Roosevelt had this note transmitted to all parties involved in the conflict. He urged bombardment to be restricted to purely military objectives:

The ruthless bombing from the air of civilians in unfortified centers of population during the course of the hostilities which have raged in various quarters of the earth during the past few years which has resulted in the maiming and in the death of thousands of defenseless men, women and children has sickened the hearts of every civilized man and woman and has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity. If resort is had to this form of inhuman barbarism during the period of the tragic conflagration with which the world is now confronted hundreds of thousands of innocent human beings who have no responsibility for and who are not even remotely participating in the hostilities which have now broken out will lose their lives. I am therefore addressing this urgent appeal to every government which may be engaged in hostilities publicly to affirm its determination that its armed forces shall in no event and under no circumstances undertake the bombardment from the air of civilian populations or of unfortified cities upon the understanding that these same rules of warfare will be scrupulously observed by all of their opponents. I request an immediate reply.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

While Hitler had ignored Roosevelt's two messages of August 24 and August 25, he now decided to answer in the following manner:

The opinion expressed in President Roosevelt's message, that it is a law of humanity to refrain in all circumstances during military operations from dropping bombs on non-military objectives, entirely coincides with my own

view, which I have always held. I therefore agree without reservation to the proposal that the Governments taking part in the present hostilities make a public declaration to that effect. For my part, I have already stated publicly in my speech in the Reichstag today that the German air forces have received the order to confine their operations to military objectives. It is of course a condition for the maintenance of this order that the air forces of the enemy observe the same rule.

Adolf Hitler

In the late afternoon hours of September 1, it had still not become clear how England and France would react to Germany's invasion of Poland. Would they declare war at once, as they had threatened to do earlier? Or would they limit themselves, for the time being, to diplomatic steps?

At 6:00 p.m., Chamberlain gave a speech before the House of Commons in which he stated:⁹⁶³

Eighteen months ago in this House I prayed that the responsibility might not fall upon me to ask this country to accept the awful arbitrament of war. I fear that I may not be able to avoid that responsibility. But, at any rate, I cannot wish for conditions in which such a burden should fall upon me, in which I should feel clearer than I do today as to where my duty lies. No man can say that the Government could have done more to try to keep open the way for an honourable and equitable settlement of the dispute between Germany and Poland. Nor have we neglected any means of making it crystal clear to the German Government that if they insisted on using force again in the manner in which they had used it in the past we were resolved to oppose them by force. Now that all the relevant documents are being made public we shall stand at the bar of history knowing that the responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man—the German Chancellor, who has not hesitated to plunge the world into misery in order to serve his own senseless ambitions. [—]

His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin and the French Ambassador have been instructed to hand the German Government the following document.

Chamberlain read out the verbatim content of the note⁹⁶⁴ and continued:

If a reply to this last warning is unfavorable, and I do not suggest that it is likely to be otherwise, His Majesty's Ambassador is instructed to ask for his passports. In that case we are ready. Yesterday we took further steps towards the completion of our defensive preparations. This morning we ordered complete mobilisation of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. [—]

The thoughts of many of us must at this moment inevitably be turning back to 1914, and to a comparison of our position now with that which existed then.⁹⁶⁵ It now only remains for us to set our teeth and to enter upon this struggle, which we ourselves earnestly endeavored to avoid, with determination

to see it through to the end. We shall enter it with a clear conscience, with the support of the Dominions and the British Empire, and the moral support of the greater part of the world. We have no quarrel with the German people, except that they allow themselves to be governed by a Nazi Government. As long as that government exists and pursues the methods it has so persistently followed during the last two years, there will be no peace in Europe. We shall merely pass from one crisis to another, and see one country after another attacked by methods which have now become familiar to us in their sickening technique.

We are resolved that these methods must come to an end. If out of the struggle we again re-establish in the world the rules of good faith and the renunciation of force, why, then even the sacrifices that will be entailed upon us will find their fullest justification.

Chamberlain spoke the truth. In Germany, one man bore the entire responsibility for the outbreak of the Second World War: Adolf Hitler, the Chancellor of the Greater German Reich. Neither the German people, leaders of the Party, civil servants, nor the leaders of the economy, not even the generals wanted this war. They all hoped that Hitler was bluffing and all would be well in the end. They were closing their eyes to reality. From the beginning, Hitler had been set on war. He had consistently pursued this goal. And now he had seen it through in spite of all opposition.

Inside Germany, regrettably, no real opposition to Hitler existed. No one mounted a determined resistance to Hitler; not the members of the Reichstag; the leaders of the Party and the economy; civil servants; generals; not the members of the so-called resistance movement. There was no man in any of these groups who could stand up to Hitler. They failed to make the most of peace in their opposition to the German Head of State. Once the war began, effective resistance was virtually impossible. With military law securely in place—and this was true of the democratic states as well—the rights of the individual were severely curtailed. The laws of war were imparted from above and unquestioning obedience was expected from below.

Many Germans cast uneasy glances at the future on this day. But what could they do? One Reichstag deputy was in a position to draw the proper consequences from the situation as it applied to his own person. His name was Fritz Thyssen—the same industrialist who, along with foreign members of the high finance, had already supported the NSDAP in the twenties and who, from 1932 onward, had done his utmost to secure the chancellorship for Hitler. Having realized just how precarious the situation had become, Thyssen fled to Switzerland.

Thereby he resolved the situation, at least for himself, albeit only temporarily.⁹⁶⁶

For the German people as a whole, the situation was far from resolved. Chamberlain's charge that the German Volk had allowed itself to be governed by a Nationalist Socialist regime was truly inappropriate. For this "Volk" consisted mainly of those who had little say in state affairs. The German Volk had not carried Hitler to power in the year 1932. While millions of Germans had cast their vote for Hitler, driven by despair and destitution, their numbers had never exceeded thirty-seven percent of the voters.⁹⁶⁷ This would not have sufficed to allow Hitler to take office the next year. It had been the reputable members of society back then whose support had secured the chancellorship for Hitler: the German Nationalists, the reactionary Junker class, the leaders of the economy, the members of international high finance and the aristocracy, the Reichswehr generals, Hindenburg's advisers, and Hindenburg himself. These men had made Hitler Reich Chancellor, thinking to serve their cause by according "the drummer" decisive influence over German politics. All of them—at least those within Germany—had fallen under Hitler's spell, the spell of the self-proclaimed savior of Germany.

The easing of the economic situation had brought relief to many Germans who therefore welcomed Hitler's reign in the early days. Even if a substantial part of the population had opposed Hitler early on, it would have made little difference in the end. Once in power, as Hitler himself openly stated, he was not about to let go the reigns again.⁹⁶⁸ The longer Hitler remained in power, the more the majority of the German people felt ill-at-ease under his rule. Never would they have sanctioned his ambitions for war. However, by the time the true nature of Hitler's motives became apparent, it was too late for any legal measures against him.

Given the behavior of Germany's "high society"—the prominent figures in the economy, in Party, State, Wehrmacht, and among the clergy, who all lacked the courage to stand up against Hitler—what could one truly expect of the man in the street? It was easy for Chamberlain to fault the German people with a development over which they had little to no control. The German Volk, too, had to bear the cross of Hitler's reign just like so many other unfortunate peoples. It was not spared the bitter cup. Only foreign governments had the power to deliver it from the tyrant. To demand this of the German people at that moment meant ignoring the actual situation. And has it

not always been England where greater respect is accorded to a man who remains a loyal patriot even under an evil regime than to someone who collaborates with the enemy in wartime?

While, before history, the people of Germany can no more be faulted with active participation in Hitler's assumption of power, in the preparation for and unleashing of the war, than the French people under Napoleon, this does not imply a wholesale pardon of all Germans of the age. Plenty of prominent figures in the Germany of the time—along with their fawning and blindly obedient subordinates—committed crimes against humanity in World War II. Their crime was not their service as soldiers, who simply carried out orders, or their employment in the armament industry. Their crime was to defy recognized international rules on the conduct of humane warfare, for example, the shooting of defenseless prisoners of war without fair trial. And this they did merely because Hitler ordered them to do so.

These apparent extremist acts were not surprising given the understanding of law fostered during Hitler's reign. In 1934, on the subject of the execution of prisoners without prior court hearing, the then Reich Minister of Justice, Gürtner, declared this did not violate the legal code, but instead constituted, as he put it, "a statesman-like duty."⁹⁶⁹ And it must be borne in mind here that Gürtner was a bourgeois jurist and not a National Socialist.

The practical implication of Chamberlain's proclamation became evident at 7:15 on the evening of September 1. At this hour, the Second Secretary at the British Embassy in Berlin, Harrison, phoned the Foreign Ministry to request an immediate audience for Ambassadors Henderson and Coulondre, who wished to consult with the German Foreign Minister "on a matter of urgency."⁹⁷⁰ The Foreign Ministry informed Harrison that it was not his place to communicate such a request by the French Ambassador. Thereupon the French Legation Counselor, Tarbé de St. Hardouin, phoned and relayed Coulondre's desire to be received that evening, in the presence of the British Ambassador. Ribbentrop declined. He agreed, for the time being, to receive the British Ambassador at 9:00 p.m.

On instruction by his Government, Henderson presented the following note to the Foreign Minister:⁹⁷¹

Berlin, September 1, 1939

Your Excellency!

On the instruction of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs I have the honour to make the following communication.

Early this morning the German Chancellor issued a proclamation to the German Army which indicated clearly that he was about to attack Poland. Information which has reached His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government indicates that German troops have crossed the Polish frontier and that attacks on Polish towns are proceeding.

In these circumstances it appears to the Governments of the United Kingdom and France that by their action the German Government have created conditions (viz. an aggressive act of force against Poland threatening the independence of Poland) which call for the implementation by the Governments of the United Kingdom and France of the undertaking to Poland to come to her assistance.

I am accordingly to inform Your Excellency that, unless the German Government are prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government have suspended all aggressive action against Poland and are prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfill their obligations to Poland.

As Henderson later reported, Ribbentrop was quite polite and most obliging that evening.⁹⁷² According to the records, this conversation ensued:

The Foreign Minister replied that there was no question of German aggression, but that Poland had been committing acts of provocation against Germany for months. [—]

He would transmit to the Führer the communication just handed over by the British Ambassador and would then give an immediate answer. The Foreign Minister added that if the British Government had displayed the same activity towards Poland as they apparently now intended to display towards Germany, a settlement with Poland would have been found long ago.

Sir Nevile Henderson replied that he would communicate these observations to his Government and asked that the contents of the communication be passed on to the Führer. He requested an answer as soon as possible.

The Foreign Minister replied that there had actually been no occasion to bring the German proposals to the notice of the British Government, as the non-appearance of a Polish negotiator had rendered these proposals invalid. Nevertheless he (the Foreign Minister) had read out these proposals to Henderson in the secret hope that Britain would after all bring Poland to see reason.

The Führer had waited another whole day in vain. Nothing had come from the Polish side but further acts of serious provocation.

Sir Nevile Henderson replied that he deeply regretted that, at his last conversation, the Foreign Minister had refused to give him [Henderson] the text of the proposals. [—]

The Foreign Minister pointed out that he had read the document slowly and clearly. [—] He had not been authorized to hand him the document.

It is more than noteworthy that the note transmitted by Henderson that night bore a striking resemblance to the British note of August 4, 1914—exactly one quarter of a century before when the preceding World War was imminent.⁹⁷³

At 10:00 p.m., the Reich Foreign Minister consented to see the French Ambassador, who handed him a note to the same effect as the one earlier presented by Henderson.⁹⁷⁴ The contents of both notes unequivocally stated the British and French positions. And, in view of the 1914 precedent, it was inexcusable not to take them seriously. In Hitler's mind, however, they were nothing other than empty protests against a *fait accompli* with which England and France would simply have to come to terms.

On September 2, the Italian Ambassador in turn called on the Foreign Ministry to relay a message from Mussolini to the German Government:⁹⁷⁵

For purposes of information, Italy wishes to make known, naturally leaving any decision to the Führer, that she still has the possibility of getting France, Britain, and Poland to agree to a conference on the following bases:

1. An armistice, which leaves the armies *where* they now are.
2. Convening of the conference within two or three days.
3. Settlement of the Polish-German dispute which, as matters stand today, would certainly be favorable to Germany.

The idea, which originally emanated from the Duce, is now supported particularly by France.

Danzig is already German, and Germany has already in her hands pledges which guarantee her the greater part of her claims. Moreover, Germany has already had her "moral satisfaction." If she accepted the proposal for a conference she would achieve all her aims and at the same time avoid a war, which even now looks like becoming general and of extremely long duration.

The Duce does not wish to insist, but it is of the greatest moment to him that the above should be immediately brought to the attention of Herr von Ribbentrop and the Führer.

These initiatives were doomed from the start in view of the notes presented by the French and British Governments the night before. Apparently, Mussolini had not yet gained intelligence of them when he penned his note to Hitler. In theory and in practice, Mussolini's suggestions might well have been workable. After all, the troops could conceivably have been halted along the lines they had reached.⁹⁷⁶ However, the only country favorable to such a settlement was France. Daladier was desperately searching for some kind of solution to forestall the impending catastrophe. In the course of September 2, he

had an intermediary inquire in Berlin whether at least a symbolic retreat of the German troops was not possible. Because a retreat of the German troops to their starting point was what London categorically demanded. Only then would Great Britain be prepared to enter into negotiations once more.

Of course, this was out of the question for Adolf Hitler. He could not well consider such proposals in view of his role as the author of numerous public statements to the contrary. Too often he had already made such unequivocal, albeit hasty pronouncements as:

What we once possess we will never again surrender!⁹⁷⁷

Wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain!⁹⁷⁸

Once German soldiers march, their mission cannot be rescinded!⁹⁷⁹

Every parcel of German earth, wherever the flag of the German Reich has been planted, shall remain German for all eternity!⁹⁸⁰

Moreover, as was well-known, Hitler loathed international conferences. Recollections of the Munich Agreement pained him like a thorn in his side. At the time, he had allowed an international forum to determine the fate of lands he had initially thought to take by force alone. Circumstances had forced his acquiescence. Now Hitler stood all the more determined never to let this happen again. On August 22, Hitler had explained the following to the generals at a gathering of the military's leaders on the eve of the war against Poland: "I am only afraid that at the last moment some cur or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation."⁹⁸¹ Another day later, on September 3, Hitler stated as much in a letter to Mussolini and revealed the true motivation which had led him to decline the Duce's offer at mediation:⁹⁸²

For the German troops have been engaged for two days in an, in parts, extraordinarily rapid advance into Poland. It would have been impossible to allow blood which was there sacrificed to be squandered through diplomatic intrigue.

This statement was true to character for the compulsive gambler Hitler. When "rapid advances" were being made, he felt it was impossible to halt operations for fear of "squandering" earlier successes. The blood shed to date might otherwise lose its significance. The same held true later, when the German armies were forced to retreat. It was simply inconceivable for Hitler to reverse directions and to ask for an armistice, for example.

He felt compelled to see matters through, until Providence would smile on him once again and he could dictate the terms of peace to others. William II and the German military leadership had operated

under the same assumptions during the years 1914 through 1918, as had Napoleon.

On September 2, 1939, however, Hitler pursued but one goal: to shift the responsibility for the failure of Mussolini's effort at mediation onto the shoulders of the English and the French. When the Italian Ambassador called at the Foreign Ministry at 12:30 p.m., Ribbentrop informed him that, before the Duce's correspondence could be considered, the question of whether or not the British and French notes of the night before constituted ultimatums required clarification.⁹⁸³ Attolico rushed out of the building to inquire with Henderson and Coulondre as to the nature of the notes.

By 12:50 p.m. Attolico was back at Ribbentrop's office to relay the message that the notes represented no ultimatums but constituted mere warnings.⁹⁸⁴ Ribbentrop asked Attolico if he could perhaps once more ascertain from Rome the character of the declaration and at the same time inform Rome that a German reply to the Anglo-French declaration could only be negative. Moreover, the Führer was presently reviewing the Duce's suggestions. Upon Italian confirmation that the joint Anglo-French declaration was not to be regarded as an ultimatum, he was intending to draft a response within the next one to two days. Attolico urged an earlier reply. Ribbentrop finally assented to procuring the Führer's answer by noon the next day (Sunday, September 3).

Hitler's vague assurances of penning a reply within one or two days were not coincidental. In all likelihood, Great Britain would not be able to restrain itself much longer, and within this period, the English were certain to issue some form of statement to relieve him of the drudgery of contriving excuses for not heeding Mussolini's call for a negotiated settlement. Hitler's speculations proved correct this time. At 8:50 p.m. on the evening of September 2, Attolico arrived at Ribbentrop's office to relay the following message:⁹⁸⁵

... the British were not prepared to enter into negotiations on the basis of the Italian proposal of mediation. The British demanded, before starting negotiations, the immediate withdrawal of all German troops from the occupied Polish areas and from Danzig.

This was welcome news for Hitler. After all, this meant he need no longer fear the potential convening of an international conference to arbitrate the conflict. Nevertheless, not all went his way on this September 2, 1939. In the afternoon, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Halifax, declared in the House of Lords:⁹⁸⁶

Up to the present no reply has been received to the warning message delivered to Germany last night. [—] The British Government would not find it possible to take part in a conference when Poland was being subjected to invasion and her towns were under bombardment and Danzig has been made the subject of unilateral settlement by force. [—]

At 7:30 p.m., the British Prime Minister rose to speak in a similar fashion before the House of Commons.⁹⁸⁷ He stressed with the same words as Lord Halifax that the presence of German troops on sovereign Polish territory kept Great Britain from participating in a potential conference and added:

His Majesty's Government will, as stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory. They are in communication with the French Government as to the limit of time within which it would be necessary for the British and French Governments to know whether the German Government were prepared to effect such a withdrawal.

Chamberlain warned that one should not mistake this statement for a sign of weakness. He asserted that a full clarification of the British stance would be forthcoming by the next day.⁹⁸⁸

Dahlerus' various missions of September 1 had evidently not borne fruit. The high hopes Hitler had stacked on this peculiar intermediary proved unjustified. While Dahlerus conferred with Göring repeatedly in the course of the first three days of September 1939, the Swede no longer ventured to London by plane. Rather he largely spent his days in seclusion at the British Embassy in Berlin.⁹⁸⁹

In his recollections, Dahlerus later remarked that Göring and his subordinates were changing by the day once the war had been launched for good. The initial successes of the Wehrmacht sent them into a frenzy. In the whirl of excitement, they were transported by the military glory the war allowed them to reap.

On September 2, according to the German records recovered, Hitler launched yet another effort at bringing the British around. He instructed Dr. Fritz Hesse, who served as press attaché at the German Embassy in London, to inquire with the British State Secretary Sir Horace Wilson whether he would perhaps be willing to initiate renewed talks. This last-minute intervention was as fruitless as its predecessors had been. On the night of September 2, Hesse wired the following account, "for the Führer and the Foreign Minister personally," to Berlin.⁹⁹⁰

I saw Wilson at 10 p.m. this evening. He received the proposal in a friendly but negative manner. He said that as long as German aggression in Poland

continued, it was impossible for the British Government to enter into a conference. It followed, therefore, that conversations of any kind were also impossible for him, Wilson. The status quo must first of all be fully restored by the withdrawal of German troops from Polish territory. After this, the British Government would be prepared to let bygones be bygones and to start negotiations immediately on the basis of the state of the conversations before the German aggression commenced. But for Mussolini's intervention, Henderson would this evening have presented in Berlin the British declaration of war, which the Cabinet had drafted this morning. By his statement today in the House of Commons on the reasons for Great Britain's delay in taking action, Chamberlain had excited the most violent indignation in the House of Commons and in the Cabinet, and the latter had threatened to resign in a body this evening unless Chamberlain tomorrow finally gave Germany a declaration with a brief time limit. Chamberlain had just telephoned to Daladier, in order to obtain his final assent. Thereafter a Cabinet meeting would decide this very night on the final statement to be made in the House of Commons tomorrow at 12 noon. In view of these facts, it appeared to him impossible to agree to the suggestion. Nevertheless he was at my disposal at any time should I have a further communication to make. I got the impression that Daladier was putting the brake on heavily, whereas public opinion here, owing to the German victories in Poland, was getting more and more excited at the inaction of the British Government.

Washington, too, left the Government in no doubt as to the reaction of the Western world to the German aggression against Poland. At 7:30 p.m., the German Chargé d'Affaires in the United States' capital, Thommsen, wired the following report to Berlin:⁹⁹¹

Based on Chamberlain's speech and the widely publicized British White Paper, the view continues to predominate here that the German Government never regarded the sixteen points as a serious basis for negotiations, but deliberately produced them only when the invasion had already been set in motion. Poland's scornful rejection of these sixteen points is suppressed. The German standpoint that our military actions were first and foremost precipitated by Polish general mobilization is not accepted by public opinion. Responsibility is placed exclusively on the German leadership which has cleverly understood how to exploit for its own purposes the always aggressive and warlike nature of the German people. Interventionist circles are attempting to silence the supporters of American isolation by accusing them of a lack of patriotism on the one hand, and, on the other, by appealing through their press to the American people to stand together in this critical hour for the defence of American ideals and for the vindication of American claims to exercise a decisive influence in world politics.

The first demand of the hour is said to be the establishment of a workable relationship between President and Congress. Congress must shelve domestic considerations and, instead of hampering the President, support his foreign policy.

Characteristic of the feelings in official circles here are the following remarks made by the deputy of the Press Chief in the State Department to the DNB representative: "The position is no longer as in 1914, not even 1917—there is no division of opinion; no for and against. We only pity your people, your Government already stand convicted; they are condemned from one end of the earth to the other; for this bloodbath, if it now comes to war between Britain, France and Germany, will have been absolutely unnecessary. The whole manner of conducting negotiations was as stupid as it could possibly be."

There was little to be added to such an unequivocal statement. Throughout the Western world, these sentiments were echoed by Germany's diplomatic representatives abroad. For Hitler, however, this could be but another sign of the diplomats' "lacking sense of reality."⁹²

Ribbentrop's assessment of the English revealed far greater insight into their national character and the true state of affairs in the world. He had spent sufficient time in both England and the United States to recognize the might and significance of the Anglo-Saxon Powers. From beginning to end, he knew deep down that the National Socialist policy of territorial expansion would ultimately lead to a clash with England. However, every time Hitler so confidently proclaimed the contrary, Ribbentrop eagerly agreed with his Führer. After all, who was he, Ribbentrop, to contradict this genius of a man, Adolf Hitler? Even as late as his trial before the Military Court of Justice in 1946, Ribbentrop proudly maintained:⁹³

I was always loyal to Hitler. I carried out his orders although I frequently disagreed with him and we had serious differences. I offered to resign on various occasions. However, whenever Hitler ordered me to do something, I always carried out the order in accordance with the principles of our *Führerstaat*.

In the early hours of September 3, as Ribbentrop sat waiting together with Schmidt at the Foreign Ministry, the British Embassy phoned that Henderson had just received instructions from London to present Ribbentrop with a note from the British Government at 9:00 a.m. Henderson requested an audience at the Ministry at this time.⁹⁴ To Ribbentrop it was clear that this could only mean a British declaration of war or a final, short-term British ultimatum. However, he was not about to relay such bad news to Hitler and, after all, in his speech before the Reichstag on September 1, the Führer had explicitly forbidden that negative reports be given to him. Thus, Ribbentrop

decided not to be available at the time requested and turned to Schmidt to remark: "Actually you could receive the Ambassador in my stead. Why don't you have somebody inquire with the English if they would agree to this as the Foreign Minister will be unable to attend."

The British agreed. Hence it was Schmidt to whom the sordid fate fell to be present at Ribbentrop's office at 9:00 a.m. on September 3. It was this career diplomat and expert translator—a man of great integrity, who in no way was responsible for the conduct of Hitler's foreign policy—who had to accept the document which meant nothing other than the demise of Hitler and his Third Reich. On arrival, declining the seat offered, Henderson remained solemnly standing in the center of the room. In an agitated voice, he stated:⁹⁹⁵ "I regret to have to present to you, in the name of my Government, the following ultimatum to the German Government." He then proceeded to read the note of His Majesty's Government:⁹⁹⁶

Your Excellency!

In the communication which I had the honour to make to you on September 1 I informed you, on the instructions of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom satisfactory assurances that the German Government had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would, without hesitation, fulfil their obligations to Poland.

Although this communication was made more than 24 hours ago, no reply has been received but German attacks upon Poland have been continued and intensified. I have accordingly the honour to inform you that unless not later than 11 a.m., British Summer Time,⁹⁹⁷ today September 3, satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the German Government and have reached His Majesty's Government in London, a state of war will exist between the two countries as from that hour.

Having read the document, Henderson turned to Schmidt: "I sincerely regret that it should be you of all people to whom I must present such a document as you were always most obliging." Schmidt, too, expressed his regret at this unfortunate development before the two diplomats took leave from each other. Both were well aware that this note signaled the rupture of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Weapons would speak hereafter as there was no doubt Hitler would refuse to furnish the requested reply by 11:00 a.m.

It was questionable, however, if any other German Head of State would have had the strength of character to yield to this ultimatum,

given the exigencies of the hour. In 1914, Bethmann-Hollweg had not been capable of jumping over his own shadow, so to speak, and had conducted himself no differently than Hitler. The only German Chancellor ever with the integrity and self-discipline required for this excruciating task may well have been Otto von Bismarck, a man who recognized and respected Britain's position in the world. In the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, Bismarck had attentively listened to voices of warning from England and had been careful not to carry things too far.

Once Henderson was gone, Schmidt left the Foreign Ministry for the Chancellery to inform Hitler of the contents of the British note. In his recollections, Schmidt described the ensuing scene in the following manner:⁹⁹⁸

When I entered the room, Hitler was sitting at his desk and Ribbentrop stood to his right at the window. As I came in, both looked up expectantly. I stopped at some distance from Hitler's desk and then slowly translated the British ultimatum. There was complete silence when I finished.

Hitler sat there as though petrified, staring before him. He did not lose his composure, as certain sources have since claimed. Neither did he fly into a fit of fury. After some time, which to me appeared an eternity, he turned to Ribbentrop who, completely paralyzed, had remained standing by the window. "*Was nun?*" asked Hitler.

"What now?" Indeed a good question. But how was a man such as Ribbentrop, who aspired to be nothing but the obliging servant of his master, to find an answer to this? He was an accomplice who immediately retracted his own opinions the minute these were no longer compatible with Hitler's latest utterances. And this Führer now demanded to know of him why the British had declared war on Germany, after having maintained throughout that this was an impossibility? The only response Ribbentrop could muster was: "I assume that the French will hand in a similar ultimatum within the hour."

"What now?" What a question to ask by a head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces in a situation which might well determine whether his people would live or die! And yet it was all Adolf Hitler could say at the moment, he, the man who had always claimed to have "provided for every eventuality from the start." His performance in this instance was just as pitiful as that of Bethmann-Hollweg, who had not known of a response to the British declaration of war, dated August 4, 1914, either. Up to the last minute, Bethmann-Hollweg had likewise claimed that the British, albeit not siding with Germany,

would assuredly remain neutral in the impending confrontation.⁹⁹⁹ In this context, it appears more than remarkable that the British ultimatum of September 3, 1939, and that of August 4, 1914, were nearly identical in content.¹⁰⁰⁰

It could well be considered the German tragedy that the same course of events was allowed to repeat itself twice in a twenty-year period. Neither in 1914 nor in 1939 did this absolve any of the leading German and Austrian statesmen of guilt for having failed to heed the demands of the age: not William II, Franz Josef I, Bethmann-Hollweg, Berchtold, nor Hitler. For they could and should have known of the reactions their deeds were bound to elicit abroad.

For a long time before the opening of hostilities, England had warned of the use of force, and this in both cases. None of the statesmen responsible had heeded these timely warnings. While in 1914 there was no precedent by which to judge whether the British threats needed to be taken seriously or not, in 1939 this could no longer be used as an excuse. The multitude of warnings issued by London from March through September 1939 left no doubt of Britain's intention and of its determination to oppose Germany as the aggressor state.

When Schmidt left Hitler's room, he found nearly all members of the cabinet and prominent figures of the NSDAP assembled in the antechamber. He informed them that, within two hours, a state of war would exist between Germany and Great Britain. Dead silence reigned after this announcement. Göring turned to Schmidt and said: "If we lose this war, then heaven have mercy on us!" This, however, was the last time in this war, at least until April 23, 1945, that Göring dared to say anything that might not entirely correspond with Hitler's wishes.

Goebbels stood in a corner by himself, silent, looking shamefaced, as Schmidt remarks. What else could he do, what could the "shield bearer" say—now that his leader had been terribly wrong . . .¹⁰⁰¹

Had Halder been present at this hour, he would have had to write in his diary, not as he had written on August 25: "Führer somewhat gone to pieces," but this time: "Führer totally gone to pieces!"

It was on this September 3, 1939, that the ambitious designs pursued by Hitler ever since 1919 led to the complete collapse of Germany's foreign policy. Already in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had claimed that, for the conquest of new Lebensraum which he envisioned in the East, "there is but one ally in Europe: England."¹⁰⁰² Over the years, Hitler had naively believed that England, not in public but deep inside, had feelings of friendship and admiration for Germany, that an alliance

between the two “Germanic peoples” against the peoples of the East was logical and feasible. Further, he had striven to instill in his subordinates the conviction that England lacked the resolve to stand up against him, just as the German Nationalists had lacked it at home. During the Italian Foreign Minister’s visit to the Obersalzberg on August 13, 1939, Hitler had recapitulated this stance repeatedly in his talks with Ciano: “I am firmly convinced that neither England nor France will enter into a general war.”¹⁰⁰³ He had built his entire conception of foreign policy on these mistaken notions. However, after the British declaration of war had proven his strategy wrong, Hitler was not able to draw the proper conclusions. This was all the more tragic in light of an early position statement made in *Mein Kampf*:¹⁰⁰⁴

A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung as such because he has recognized it to be false only then acts decently if, upon realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final consequence. In such a case, he must, at the very least, forego the public exercise of any further political activities. Because he was once mistaken in his basic beliefs, it is possible that this could happen a second time.

September 3, 1939, proved beyond doubt that Hitler was “mistaken in his basic beliefs” regarding a forcible expansion of the Reich in the East. He had erred to an inexcusable extent, spelling out ruin for both the German Reich and the German people. Still he could persuade himself neither to “act decently,” nor to refrain from involvement in “further political activities.” And, of course, he was far from resigning or committing suicide. Rather the German Volk and Reich should be crushed beneath the weight of the war before he could persuade himself to “draw the final consequence.”

Until then he would stick his head in the sand much like an ostrich and pretend not to notice what was going on. Having once maintained the British were his friends, he was convinced that they were to become his friends in the end, if only he persisted in his efforts. And on this September 3, Hitler may well have asked himself if the British were indeed serious in claiming that “a state of war” would exist as of 11:00 a.m. that morning. After all, was it not entirely possible that they had merely referred to a rupturing of diplomatic relations or perhaps to economic sanctions?¹⁰⁰⁵

Having recovered a bit from that morning’s fright, Hitler set out to pen half a dozen memorandums, notes, and proclamations. This he

was able to do in his sleep by now. The first of these documents was a rejection of the British ultimatum. In it, Hitler once more maintained that England had incited the Poles by handing them what amounted to a "general power of attorney" in their dealings with Germany.¹⁰⁰⁶ Therefore, England was responsible for the outbreak of the war.

At 11:30 a.m., Ribbentrop was instructed to hand the German memorandum to the British Ambassador who had been summoned earlier. It read:¹⁰⁰⁷

The German Government have received the British Government's ultimatum of 3rd September 1939. They have the honor to reply as follows:

1. The German Government and the German people refuse to receive, accept, let alone fulfill demands in the nature of ultimatata made by the British Government.

2. On our Eastern frontier there has for many months reigned a condition of war. Since the time when the Versailles Treaty first tore Germany to pieces, all and every peaceful settlement was refused to all German Governments. The National Socialist Government also has since the year 1933 tried again and again to remove by peaceful negotiations the worst rapes and breaches of justice of this Treaty. The British Government has been among those who by their intransigent attitude took the chief part in frustrating every practical revision. Without the intervention of the British Government—of this the German Government and the German people are fully conscious—a reasonable solution doing justice to both sides would certainly have been found between Germany and Poland. For Germany did not have the intention nor had she raised the demands of annihilating Poland. The Reich demanded only the revision of those articles of the Versailles Treaty which already at the time of the formulation of that Dictate had been described by understanding statesmen of all nations as being in the long run unbearable and therefore impossible for a great nation and also for the entire political and economic interests of Eastern Europe. British statesmen, too, declared the solution in the East which was then forced upon Germany as containing the germ of future wars. To remove this danger was the desire of all German Governments and especially the intention of the new National Socialist People's Government. The blame for having prevented this peaceful revision lies with the British Cabinet policy.

3. The British Government have—an occurrence unique in history—given the Polish State full powers for all actions against Germany which that State might conceivably intend to undertake. The British Government assured the Polish Government of their military support in all circumstances, should Germany defend herself against any provocation or attack. Thereupon the Polish terror against the Germans living in the territories which had been torn from Germany immediately assumed unbearable proportions. The Free City of Danzig was, in violation of all legal provisions, first threatened with destruction economically and by measures of customs policy, and was finally subjected to a military blockade and its communications strangled. All these

violations of the Danzig Statute, which were well known to the British Government, were approved and covered by the blank cheque given to Poland. The German Government, though moved by the sufferings of the German population which was being tortured and treated in an inhuman manner, nevertheless remained a patient onlooker for five months, without undertaking even on one single occasion any similar aggressive action against Poland. They only warned Poland that these happenings would in the long run be unbearable and that they were determined, in the event of no other kind of assistance being given to this population, to help them themselves. All these happenings were known in every detail to the British Government. It would have been easy for them to use their great influence in Warsaw in order to exhort those in power there to exercise justice and humaneness and to keep to the existing obligations. The British Government did not do this. On the contrary, in emphasizing continually their obligation to assist Poland under all circumstances, they actually encouraged the Polish Government to continue in their criminal attitude which was threatening the peace of Europe. In this spirit, the British Government rejected the proposal of Signor Mussolini which might still have been able to save the peace of Europe, in spite of the fact that the German Government had declared their willingness to agree to it.¹⁰⁰⁸ The British Government therefore bear the responsibility for all the unhappiness and misery which have now overtaken and are about to overtake many peoples.

4. After all efforts at finding and concluding a peaceful solution had been rendered impossible by the intransigence of the Polish Government covered as they were by England, after the conditions resembling civil war which had existed already for months at the Eastern frontier of the Reich had gradually developed into open attacks on German territory, without the British Government raising any objections, the German Government determined to put an end to this continual threat, unbearable for a great Power, to the external and finally also to the internal peace of the German people, and to end it by those means which, since the Democratic Governments had in effect sabotaged all other possibilities of revision, alone remained at their disposal for the defense the peace, security and honor of the Germans. The last attacks of the Poles threatening Reich territory they answered with similar measures. The German Government do not intend, on account of any sort of British intentions or obligations in the East, to tolerate conditions which are identical with those conditions which we observe in Palestine which is under British protection. The German people, however, above all do not intend to allow themselves to be ill-treated by Poles.

5. The German Government therefore reject the attempts to force Germany, by means of a demand having the character of an ultimatum, to recall its forces which are lined up for the defense of the Reich, and thereby to accept the old unrest and the old injustice. The threat that, failing this, they will fight Germany in the war, corresponds to the intention proclaimed for years past by numerous British politicians. The German Government and the German people have assured the English people countless times how much they desire an understanding, indeed close friendship, with them. If the

British Government hitherto always refused these offers and now answer them with an open threat of war, it is not the fault of the German people and of its Government but exclusively the fault of the British Cabinet or of those men who for years have been preaching the destruction and extermination of the German people. The German people and its Government do not, like Great Britain, intend to dominate the world, but they are determined to defend their own liberty, their independence and above all their life. The intention, communicated to us by order of the British Government by Mr. King-Hall,¹⁰⁰⁹ of carrying the destruction of the German people even further than was done through the Versailles Treaty is taken note of by us, and we shall therefore answer any aggressive action of England with the same weapons and in the same form.

At noon, the arrival of the Soviet Ambassador, Shkvartsev, and of the new head of the Russian military mission, Purkayev, forced Hitler to delay drafting further proclamations.

This September 3 had turned out to be a confusing day for Hitler. His friends, the English, sent him a declaration of war, while his proclaimed enemies, the Russians, were sending “delegations of friendship” to Berlin. What choice had Hitler? He pulled on the field-gray tunic, over it the gold-embroidered sword-belt, and went out to greet the Soviet delegation in the presence of Ribbentrop. No record of the exchange of greetings has survived, though assuredly Hitler lavished praise and attention upon his new-found friends.

The following communiqué was published on the unusual event:¹⁰¹⁰

Berlin, September 3, 1939

On Sunday afternoon, the Führer received, in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the newly appointed Ambassador of the U.S.S.R., Aleksander Shkvartsev, at the new Reich Chancellery. The Ambassador was accompanied by the military attaché and military plenipotentiary Maxim Purkayev. A Wehrmacht guard of honor paid tribute to the guests and saluted them upon arrival and departure. A lengthy exchange followed the presentation of the credentials.

At 12:20 p.m., Ribbentrop was on hand to receive the French Ambassador. Coulondre presented him with a French ultimatum which detailed a state of war to exist as of 5:00 p.m. in case a satisfactory response from Germany was not received.

A number of states allied with England declared war on Germany on this September 3, 1939: Australia, Burma, India, Jordan, Cambodia, Laos, New Zealand, Pakistan, and Vietnam. South Africa followed suit on September 6. Canada waited until September 10 to declare war. The United States was still hesitant officially—because public opinion was

not yet prepared—but unquestionably it was determined to side with Britain.¹⁰¹¹ For the time being, in a radio address on September 3, 1939, the American President expressed his hope that “the United States will keep out of this war” and concluded: “As long as it remains within my power to prevent, there will be no blackout of peace in the United States.” Roosevelt stated:

Tonight my single duty is to speak to the whole of America. Until 4:30 this morning I had hoped against hope that some miracle would prevent a devastating war in Europe and bring to an end the invasion of Poland by Germany. For four long years a succession of actual wars and constant crises have shaken the entire world and have threatened in each case to bring on the gigantic conflict which is today unhappily a fact.

It is right that I should recall to your minds the consistent and at times successful efforts of your Government in these crises to throw the full power of the United States into the cause of peace. In spite of spreading wars I think that we have every right and every reason to maintain as a national policy the fundamental moralities, the teachings of religion, and the continuation of efforts to restore peace—for some day, though the time may be distant, we can be of even greater help to a crippled humanity.

It is right, too, to point out that the unfortunate events of these recent years have been based on the use of force or the threat of force. And it seems to me clear, even at the outbreak of this great war, that the influence of America should be consistent in seeking for humanity a final peace which will eliminate, as far as it is possible to do so, the continued use of force between nations. [—]

When peace has been broken anywhere, peace of all countries everywhere is in danger.

It is easy for you and me to shrug our shoulders and say that conflicts taking place thousands of miles from the continental United States, and, indeed, the whole American hemisphere, do not seriously affect the Americas—and that all the United States has to do is to ignore them and go about our own business. Passionately though we may desire detachment, we are forced to realize that every word that comes through the air, every ship that sails the sea, every battle that is fought does affect the American future. [—]

Roosevelt’s address left no doubt about the country’s moral and political stance. Should England’s position be seriously threatened, it was clear that America would enter the war on its behalf.

At 2:30 p.m. on September 3, four proclamations by the Führer were read to the German people over the airwaves.¹⁰¹²

The first was addressed to the German people at large. Its contents greatly resembled the appeal of William II “to the German Volk” on August 6, 1914.¹⁰¹³ This was true especially of terms such as “love for peace” and the references to “the Lord God,” who would surely

intercede on Germany's behalf. However, Hitler's appeal to the "German Volk" was three times as long as that of the Kaiser.

Appeal to the German Volk!

For centuries England has pursued the goal of rendering the peoples of Europe defenseless against the British idea of world conquest by proclaiming a balance of power. This accords England the right, on the most threadbare of pretexts, to attack and destroy whichever European state appears to be the most threatening. Once this was true of the Spanish Empire, then of the Dutch, then of the French, and, ever since 1871, this has been true of the German Reich. We ourselves have borne witness to the policy of encirclement which Great Britain has sought to implement against Germany since before the war. The moment the German Reich, under National Socialist leadership, began to recover from the dreadful consequences of the Diktat of Versailles and threatened to overcome the crisis, the British policy of encirclement immediately set in once more.

The British warmongers known to us from the days of the World War do not want the German Volk to live. Before the World War, they lied to us, claiming their struggle was directed only against the House of Hohenzollern or against German militarism. They declared they had no designs on German colonies; they were not even as much as thinking about taking our merchant marine. Then, they forced the German Volk beneath the yoke of the Treaty of Versailles. Sooner or later, the obliging compliance with this new Diktat would have meant the eradication of twenty million Germans.¹⁰¹⁴

I then undertook to mobilize the resistance of the German nation against this, and, in a unique, peaceful effort, to secure bread and labor for the German Volk. To the extent that a peaceful revision of the outrage of the Diktat of Versailles appeared to proceed successfully and the German Volk once more began to live, a new policy of encirclement by England set in. The warmongers of 1914 made their appearance again.

Time and time again, I offered England and the English people an understanding and the friendship of the German Volk. My entire policy was built on this idea of an understanding. I was rejected time and time again. Instead, there was an ongoing search for ever new, hypocritical pretexts for limiting the German Lebensraum, even in areas where we never threatened British interests. Ever new attempts were made to render our lives more difficult and to cut us off.

It was England which urged on Poland the stance that rendered a peaceful understanding impossible. Its declaration of a guarantee opened for the Polish Government the prospects of provoking Germany without running into any danger, and even of being allowed to attack Germany.

The British Government has been mistaken on one account, however: the Germany of 1939 is not the Germany of 1914! And the name of its present chancellor is not Bethmann-Hollweg!¹⁰¹⁵

Moreover, in my speeches at Saarbrücken¹⁰¹⁶ and at Wilhelmshaven,¹⁰¹⁷ I declared that we shall defend ourselves in view of this British policy of encirclement. I left no doubt that, despite patience and endurance, the Polish

attacks against Germans as well as against the Free City of Danzig had to come to an end. Strengthened by the British guarantee and the assurances of British warmongers, Poland believed it could simply disregard these warnings. For two days now the German Wehrmacht has been fighting in the East to restore security to Reich territory. Our soldiers are breaking the Polish resistance.

May England realize: today's German Reich unites ninety million human beings!¹⁰¹⁸ And they are determined not to allow themselves to be strangled by England. Unlike England, they have not waged war to conquer forty million square kilometers of this earth. Yet they do have the will to live on the earth belonging to them. And they will not let England take this life from them.

We know that the English people in their entirety cannot be held responsible for all this. Rather it is the aforesaid Jewish-plutocratic and democratic upper class who would like to conceive of the rest of the world as obedient slaves; who hate our new Reich because it sees it as a pioneer of social work which it fears might infect their countries as well.

We shall now take up this struggle against this new attempt to destroy Germany. We shall lead it with National Socialist determination. The British money- and power-politicians shall find out what it means to wage war against National Socialist Germany without any cause whatsoever.

For months I have known that the goal pursued by these warmongers was a long-term one. The determination to attack Germany, at an opportune occasion, was arrived at long ago. My decision, however, to lead this war and to strike back at them is marked by even greater determination.

Germany will not capitulate ever again. Peace, under the conditions of a second Diktat of Versailles or worse, has no meaning.

We have never been a Volk of slaves! And we shall never be one in the future either! And the sacrifices so many Germans have made in the past shall be no greater than those which we are determined to take upon ourselves today. This decision is a relentless one. (*Dieser Entschluss ist ein unerbittlicher.*)¹⁰¹⁹

And this forces us to take decisive measures, above all, to take one: no one shall make a profit in this war while our soldiers are fighting at the front. No one shall try to escape fulfillment of his duties while our soldiers are fighting at the front. Whoever attempts to resist these measures cannot expect the Volksgemeinschaft to show consideration to him.

Beyond this, we all know: as long as the German Volk has stood united in its history, it has never yet been vanquished!¹⁰²⁰ Only the dissent of the year 1918 led to collapse. Thus, whoever now believes he can sin against this unity cannot expect anything other than his destruction as an enemy of the nation. If our Volk fulfills its highest duty in this respect, then the Lord Almighty will stand by. He has always bestowed His blessings on him who was determined to help himself!

The laws necessary for the defense and security of the Reich are being decreed, the men responsible for their implementation and compliance with them are being appointed. I myself go to the front on this day.

Berlin, September 3, 1939

Adolf Hitler

A second appeal was addressed to the soldiers fighting in the East:

Soldiers of the Army in the East!

For months England once more has engaged in that policy of encirclement directed against Germany which is known to us from before the World War. To this end, it has sought to take advantage of all states and peoples of Europe. Poland was chosen to play an ever more important role in this policy once the Soviet Union refused to subordinate its own interests to those of the English.

First and foremost, the persistent persecution of Germans in Poland, the all-out war against the Free City of Danzig, forced me to take steps along our Eastern Front for the Reich's security. The Non-Aggression and Mutual Consultation Pact with the Soviet Union has united these two biggest and strongest of European states in their determination never again to allow their peoples to fight one another. Poland must and will be forced to peace as the most important element in the chain of the British policy of encirclement and destruction.

Soldiers of the Army in the East! Within barely two days you have secured accomplishments upon which all of Germany reflects with pride. I know that you are aware of the magnitude of the task lying before you, and that you are doing your utmost to speedily throw down the adversary as a first step. The West Wall built with immense resources shall in the meantime shield Germany against France and England and thereby shall protect it.

As an old soldier of the World War and as your Supreme Commander, I go to the front to join you on this day.

Berlin, September 3, 1939

Adolf Hitler

A third appeal was aimed at the soldiers serving in the West:

Soldiers of the Army in the West!

Just as it did before the war, England has continued after the war to pursue the policy of encirclement against Germany. In spite of Germany's not making demands on any state located west of the Reich, in spite of Germany's not demanding territorial revisions in these areas, and in spite of Germany's extending its hand repeatedly to England and France, offering an understanding—yes, even friendship—in spite of all this, the British Government, urged on by the warmongers known to us from the World War, has determined to drop its mask and, on a threadbare pretext, to proclaim that a state of war exists between us. For months it has covered for the Polish attacks on the life and security of ethnic Germans and the rape of the Free City of Danzig with the promise to come to the rescue of the Poles should Germany dare to defend itself against this.

Now that Poland, given this feeling of protection, has undertaken acts of aggression against Reich territory, I have determined to break open this ring placed around Germany. The Non-Aggression and Mutual Consultation Pact with the Soviet Union affords us the security of a policy of peaceful understanding with this greatest of empires in the East. In response to Polish acts

of aggression, parts of the German Wehrmacht are fighting in the East to restore peace, a peace which is to secure life and liberty for the German Volk.

The Wehrmacht's advances have been crowned by success in only forty-eight hours. Although only a small portion of the German aerial fleet is being deployed in the East, it already reigns supreme in Polish air space. The German Volk and your comrades in the East now expect you, soldiers of the Western Front, to stand fast, as unshakeable as a wall of steel and iron which defends the borders of the Reich against any attack, as a system of fortification which is one hundred times stronger than the never-vanquished Western Front of the Great War. If you do your duty, then the struggle in the East will be brought to a successful conclusion within a few weeks. And then the undivided force of a state of ninety million will stand behind you.

As an old soldier of the World War and as your Supreme Commander, I go to the front to join the Army in the East on this day, suffused by my faith in you. Our plutocratic opponents will soon learn that another Germany faces them today than in the year 1914!

Berlin, September 3, 1939

Adolf Hitler

This series of proclamations culminated in an appeal to the NSDAP:

Our Jewish-democratic world-enemy has succeeded in bringing into existence a state of war between the English people and Germany. The reasons given for this are just as libelous and threadbare as those of 1914 were. Nothing has changed.

What has changed, however, are the forces and the will of the Reich to lead this struggle with the determination necessary to frustrate this intended crime against humanity. The year 1918 will not repeat itself. The German Wehrmacht will shatter the ring created by the English policy of encirclement in the East within a few weeks' time. In the West, by means of the greatest fortification system of all time, it will defend German soil. The German Volk will make this sacrifice in the realization that it need not fear this confrontation, given its numbers and its great historical past. History has only witnessed us beaten when we stood divided.

Let all of us pledge ourselves to the German Reich's entering this struggle and emerging from it in indestructible unity! In this lies the highest mission of the National Socialist Movement. Whoever resists the demands placed on him by the community, whoever seeks to distance himself from this community, or whoever believes he can even sabotage it, will be eradicated without mercy this time. The brave soldier at the front shall know that we value his life more highly than that of traitors.

And he shall likewise know that in this struggle, for the first time in history, one shall not profit while others bleed to death! Whoever believes he can enrich himself in these fateful months or years, shall not reap wealth in return but shall meet the grim reaper instead.

I hold all National Socialist functionaries responsible for taking upon themselves all sacrifices to be borne by the community in an exemplary fashion in their private lives.

What we possess today is of no import. What is important is that Germany wins!

What we lose today is of no import. What is important is that our Volk overcomes the aggressor and hence wins a future for itself. In a few weeks, the National Socialist combat readiness must have transformed itself into a unity sworn unto life and death. And then the capitalist war agitators in England and its satellite states shall shortly realize what it means to have attacked Europe's greatest Volk state without proper cause.

The path on which we stride forth today is no more difficult than that leading from Versailles up to 1939. We have nothing to lose, but everything to win!

Berlin, September 3, 1939

Adolf Hitler

This last statement in particular once more betrayed Hitler as the reckless opportunist he in fact was. Once again it revealed his mistaken belief that domestic policy could be reproduced internationally. He held the way "from Versailles up to 1939" to be a precedent for the upcoming struggle, and in the end, he was certain, he would triumph once again.

Less certain of this, and exceedingly doubtful whether Germany indeed had "nothing to lose and everything to win," were not only the German people, but also Germany's economists and generals. Even Hitler's most faithful Unterführers in the Party knew only too well how right Göring's remark, upon learning of the British declaration of war, had been: "If we lose this war, then God have mercy on us!" Indeed, Germany had "everything to lose" in this war.

While Hitler had not the courage to face the German public on this September 3, 1939, Chamberlain spoke before the British people in a radio broadcast shortly past 11:00 a.m. He personally instructed them of the state of war existing as of that hour and stated:¹⁰²¹

You can imagine what a bitter blow it is to me that all my long struggle to win peace has failed. [—]

We have a clear conscience, we have done all that any country could do to establish peace, but a situation in which no word given by Germany's ruler could be trusted, and no people or country could feel themselves safe, had become intolerable. [—]

Now may God bless you all and may He defend the right. For it is evil things that we shall be fighting against, brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression, and persecution. And against them I am certain that the right will prevail.

By noontime, Chamberlain was standing before the House of Commons, and declared:¹⁰²²

The statement which I have to make this morning will show that there were no grounds for doubt. We were in consultation all day yesterday with the French Government and we felt that the intensified action which the Germans were taking against Poland allowed no delay in making our own position clear.

In reference to the reading of the British ultimatum of 9:00 a.m., the Prime Minister concluded:

That was the final Note. No such undertaking was received by the time stipulated, and, consequently, this country is at war with Germany. I am in a position to inform the House that, according to arrangements made between the British and French Governments, the French Ambassador in Berlin is at this moment making a similar *démarche*, accompanied also by a definite time limit. The House has already been made aware of our plans. As I said the other day, we are ready.

This is a sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do; that is, to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself; I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established.

Chamberlain likened the renewed conflict to the Second Punic War between the aggressor Hannibal and the world power Rome, and maintained that England would win this war just as it had won the "First Punic War."¹⁰²³ This kind of reference to the previous World War naturally infuriated Hitler, and in a speech two months later, he replied:¹⁰²⁴

If now the English declare this battle to be the Second Punic War, history has not yet determined who shall play Rome and who shall play Carthage in this case. In the first [war] England assuredly did not play Rome, as Rome emerged victorious from the First Punic War. In the First World War England was not the victor, but rather others won that war. And in the second—I can assure you of as much—England will even less be the victor!¹⁰²⁵

At the same session in the House of Commons on September 3, 1939, Winston Churchill also spoke. In the course of the Second World War, Churchill would emerge as the main adversary of Hitler, gaining victory upon victory over him and ultimately vanquishing him. On this day in 1939, Churchill had joined Chamberlain's War Cabinet in the capacity of First Lord of the Admiralty, a post he had already occupied in the First World War. Speaking before the House of Commons, Churchill declared:¹⁰²⁶

We must not underrate the gravity of the task which lies before us or the temerity of the ordeal, to which we shall not be found unequal. We must expect many disappointments, and many unpleasant surprises, but we may be sure that the task which we have freely accepted is one not beyond the compass and strength of the British Empire and the French Republic. The Prime Minister said it was a sad day, and that is indeed true, but at the present time there is another note which may be present, and that is a feeling of thankfulness that, if these great trials were to come upon our Island, there is a generation of Britons here now ready to prove itself not unworthy of the days of yore and not unworthy of those great men, the fathers of our land, who laid the foundations of our laws and shaped the greatness of this country.

This is not a question of fighting for Danzig or fighting for Poland. We are fighting to save the whole world from the pestilence of Nazi tyranny and in defense of all that is most sacred to man. This is no war of domination or imperial aggrandizement or material gain; no war to shut any country out of its sunlight and means of progress. It is a war, viewed in its inherent quality, to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man.

Another illustrious speaker before the House of Commons that day was David Lloyd George. He had helped to secure the defeat of William II for Britain in the First World War. As mentioned earlier, Hitler had always mistakenly held Lloyd George to be his friend and a proponent of his policies. The former Prime Minister underlined that the British nation had justly claimed the victory in 1918 and stressed his conviction that this would again be the case in the present engagement.¹⁰²⁷

Hitler spent the afternoon hours of September 3 in various consultations, drafting political and military guidelines. Most prominent among these was the second "Directive for the Conduct of the War." It sought to bring action in Poland to a swift conclusion and ordered the exercise of great restraint in the West. Only the Navy was allowed to take measures against England in response to a corresponding British proclamation. With regard to France, French aggression was to precede any German steps against France. In both the case of England and France, the Luftwaffe was to keep in the background. Along the border to France, the Army was to remain in waiting positions. The directive, dated September 3, 1939 read:¹⁰²⁸

Directive No. 2 for the Conduct of the War

1. After the declaration of a state of war by the British Government, the British Admiralty on September 3, 1939, at 11:17 a.m. gave orders for the opening of hostilities.

France has declared that from 5:00 p.m. on September 3, 1939, she will be in a state of war with Germany.

2. The German war objective remains for the time being the speedy and victorious conclusion of operations against Poland. Any decision to transfer sizeable forces from the East to the West rests with me.

3. The principles for the conduct of the war in the West, in accordance with Directive No. 1,¹⁰²⁹ remain in force.

After the opening of hostilities by Britain, now announced, and the declaration of a state of war by France, the following conclusions have been reached.

(a) Against Britain

Navy

Offensive operations permitted.¹⁰³⁰ The warfare against merchant shipping is for the time being to be conducted according to the prize regulations, also by submarines. Preparations are to be made for intensification [of the war] pending the declaration of danger zones. The decision to put intensification measures into force rests with me.

The approaches to the Baltic Sea are to be blocked by mines without infringing on neutral territorial waters.

Barrage measures in the North Sea intended for our own defense and for the attack against Britain are to be carried out.

Luftwaffe

Offensive operations against British naval forces in naval ports and on the open sea (including the Channel), as well as against troop transports definitely identified as such, are only to be permitted if British attacks from the air on similar targets have taken place and if prospects of success are particularly favorable. The same applies to operations by naval air formations.

The decision on attacks against the British mainland and merchant shipping rests with me.

(b) Against France

Army

In the West the opening of hostilities is to be left to the enemy. The Commander in Chief of the Army will decide on reinforcements for the Western Army from the forces still available.

Navy

Offensive operations against France are only to be permitted if she opens hostilities. If she does so, then the orders given against Britain apply also against France in the same way.

Luftwaffe

Offensive operations against France are only to be permitted after French attacks have been made against German territory. The principle to be followed is that the beginning of the war in the air should not be caused by German measures.

Generally, in the use of the Luftwaffe in the West, it is to be borne in mind that its fighting power must be conserved for the decision against the Western Powers after the defeat of Poland.

4. The X Order issued with OKW No. 2100/39 g.K. WFA/L.II.c on August 25, 1939, will be extended to the whole of the Wehrmacht with effect from September 3, 1939.

September 3, 1939

The conversion of the whole of industry to war economy is ordered. Further mobilization measures in the civil sphere will be taken, on application of the Supreme Reich Authorities, by the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On the subject of Germany's representatives in neutral states, Hitler issued the following decree:¹⁰³¹

Berlin, September 3, 1939

1. As from today, for the duration of the war, all representatives abroad of the civil authorities or the Party offices and officials sent by them to uphold the policy of the Reich are to come under the authority of the Head of the German Mission in the country in question. The sending of new representatives or officials of the civil authorities or Party offices requires the sanction of the Foreign Ministry.

2. The above-mentioned representatives and officials are to send their reports to the Foreign Ministry through the Head of the Mission.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler could not well let this eventful day pass without a telegram to the Duce. It was relayed by wire to Rome at 8:51 p.m. and read:¹⁰³²

Duce!

I must first thank you for your last attempt at mediation. I would have been ready to accept, but only on condition that some possibility could have been found to give me certain guarantees that the conference would be successful. For the German troops have been engaged for two days in an, in parts, extraordinarily rapid advance into Poland. It would have been impossible to allow blood which was there sacrificed to be squandered through diplomatic intrigue. Nevertheless I believe that a way could have been found if England had not been determined from the outset to let it come to war in any case. I did not yield to England's threats because, Duce, I no longer believe that peace could have been maintained for more than six months or, shall we say, a year.¹⁰³³ In these circumstances I considered that the present moment was, in spite of everything, more suitable for making a stand.

At present the German Wehrmacht in Poland is so vastly superior in all technical fields that the Polish Army will collapse in a very short time. Whether it would have been possible to achieve this quick success in another year or two is, I must say, very doubtful in my opinion. England and France would have gone on arming their allies to such an extent that the decisive technical superiority of the German Wehrmacht could not have been in evidence in the same way. I am aware, Duce, that the struggle in which I am engaging is a struggle of life and death. In it my own fate is of absolutely no importance. But I am also aware that such a struggle cannot in the end be avoided, and that the moment for resistance must be chosen with icy deliberation so that the likelihood of success is assured; and in this success, Duce, my faith is as firm as a rock.

You kindly assured me recently that you believe you can help in some fields. I accept this in advance with sincere thanks. But I also believe that, even if we now march down separate paths, Destiny will yet bind us one to the other. If National Socialist Germany were to be destroyed by the Western Democracies, Fascist Italy would face a hard future. I personally was always aware that the futures of our two regimes were bound up, and I know that you, Duce, are of exactly the same opinion.

Concerning the situation in Poland I would only briefly remark that naturally we are leaving aside everything which is not important and are not wasting a single man on inessential tasks, but that all our actions are being directed by considerations of grand strategy. The Polish Northern Army, which is in the Corridor, has already been completely surrounded by this action of ours. Either it will be wiped out or it will surrender. For the rest, all operations are proceeding according to plan.¹⁰³⁴ The daily achievements of our troops have greatly exceeded all expectations. The mastery of our Luftwaffe is complete, although scarcely a third of it is in Poland.

In the West I shall remain on the defensive. France can shed her blood there first.¹⁰³⁵ The moment will come when we can pit ourselves there also against the enemy with the whole strength of the nation.

Please accept once more my thanks, Duce, for all the support you have given me in the past, and which I ask you not to refuse me in the future either.

Adolf Hitler

Finally Hitler was prepared to join the troops at the front as he had thrice announced in his various proclamations of that day. He left at 9:00 p.m., a special train bearing him to the front. Had the British declaration of war not reached Berlin that day, he might not have been all that eager. But as matters stood on this September 3, the day he suffered the greatest setback in his career and life to date, all Hitler desired was to escape the oppressive atmosphere of the Reich capital. He sought to avoid the questioning looks of his subordinates, of the foreign diplomats and, above all, of the German public. He no longer felt compelled to speak before his assistants or before the German Volk on which he had showered speech upon speech in the preceding years. In their hour of greatest need, he could not muster even one word of consolation or encouragement. Instead he disappeared somewhere in the distance, in a nebulous Führer headquarters. As was to become his habit increasingly during the war, he left it up to Göring¹⁰³⁶ to find the appropriate words to calm the public.¹⁰³⁷

Should there be war, Hitler had assured the Reichstag deputies on August 27, then he himself would "be in the front line." However, in those locations where the bullets were actually whistling overhead, Hitler was not to be found. His conception of the "front line" included

his comfortable special train and plane as well as the Casino Hotel of Zoppot. At a respectful distance from the actual fighting, which he eyed from time to time through a telescope to admire the effectiveness of the Wehrmacht's heavy artillery, war was indeed a pleasant affair for Hitler. This should not be the place for a polemic against the naturally more comfortable life of a military commander, but Hitler's assertions about his stay at "the front" must be seen in the right light.

On the night of September 3 to September 4, British squadrons flew reconnaissance missions over northern Germany. In the course of these ventures, they dropped six million leaflets over German cities.¹⁰³⁸

On September 4, in order that Germans not fall prey to the illusion that the confrontation was a "phony war" on the part of England, British aircraft attacked Cuxhaven and Wilhelmshaven at 6:00 p.m. The battleship *Tirpitz* also came under fire. According to the German News Bureau report, German flak artillery downed five of the twelve British planes involved in the assault.¹⁰³⁹

In the morning hours of September 4, Hitler left the comforts of his special train behind to venture into the terrain of the Polish Corridor. His car passed the checkpoints Crone and Prust. At noon, he watched the crossing of the Vistula south of Kulm (Chelmno) by German troops.¹⁰⁴⁰

On September 5, Hitler reviewed a transport of wounded returning from the front which had stopped over at a small train station in the vicinity of his special train. On this occasion he spoke briefly with the injured servicemen. The German News Bureau published the following report on the encounter:¹⁰⁴¹

The Führer expressed his gratitude to the wounded soldiers for their courageous comportment. Their eyes gleamed with exuberant joy at the unexpected visitor who repeatedly recalled his own period of convalescence during the World War.

On September 6, Hitler journeyed to the Tuchel Heath, located within the Polish Corridor in the area between Tuchel and Graudenz. Along the Vistula river in front of Graudenz, he arranged for a handful of ethnic German peasants to pay tribute to his person.¹⁰⁴² Perceptibly touched, he shook hands with the women and children present. For the rest, he appeared martial, wearing a leather belt and shoulder straps, and even carrying a 7.65 mm pistol in a leather holster.

On September 7, Hitler conferred first with Raeder and then with Halder and Brauchitsch in his special train. The object of the discussion

in both instances was the conduct of the war in the West. The relative calm along the Western Front¹⁰⁴³ reinforced Hitler in his belief that neither the English nor the French were serious about their threats of war against Germany. He felt certain that both states merely awaited an opportune moment to withdraw from this unpleasant and premature engagement. While the further course of events proved this assessment to be justified as far as the morale of the French was concerned, Hitler considerably underestimated the British resolve. For the moment, he labored not to provoke the English needlessly in order to leave open venues for a later understanding. Therefore, in their meeting on September 7, he explicitly instructed Raeder to "exercise restraint until the political situation in the West has been clarified, which should take approximately one more week. 'Case Athenia' is to be clarified only after the return of the submarines."¹⁰⁴⁴ The U-boats were to spare passenger liners in general, especially if these were of French origin, because the French had shown "restraint politically and militarily," and the British were equally "hesitant."

The general tone of the talk with Halder and Brauchitsch differed little from this, as that day's entry in Halder's diary proves:¹⁰⁴⁵

Case in the West not yet clear. Becoming apparent that no war is desired. [—] French Cabinet has no heroic attributes. From England also first, vague voices of realization to be heard [as to how senseless a war would be].

On the next day, Hitler signed a decree on propaganda which once more demonstrated his overestimation of psychological warfare and his mistaken method of applying domestically successful tactics to foreign policy. The main passages of the command read:¹⁰⁴⁶

Berlin, September 8, 1939

1. Propaganda is an important instrument of the leadership for forwarding and strengthening the will to victory and for destroying the enemies' morale and will to victory. In a war there are no jurisdictional problems. What counts is the effective use of the propaganda instrument. Compared with this, all other issues are inconsequential.

2. The propaganda apparatus of the Propaganda Ministry, which has been built up over a period of years, is the central agency for the practical application of propaganda. Breaking it up during the war would be comparable to breaking up certain components of the Wehrmacht.

3. In the cases where practical developments have caused analogous bodies with like purposes to grow up, such agencies shall be coordinated and shall carry out their tasks, however much alike, in genuine collaboration.

4. The conduct of the propaganda at home, i.e. its psychological orientation, is the responsibility of the authorities entrusted with the

administration of internal policies, except in cases where I reserve the right to give personal directives. The coordination of these directives in their practical application to propaganda is the responsibility of the Propaganda Minister.

5. In the domain of foreign policy propaganda, i.e. that propaganda which is aimed directly or indirectly at foreign countries, the general policy and the directives are issued by the Foreign Minister, unless I see occasion for personal directions. The entire propaganda apparatus of the Propaganda Ministry is available for the practical application of these directives. In so far as similar facilities already exist in the Foreign Ministry, their continued functioning shall not be impaired. Their further expansion, however, is undesirable; rather, the tendency should be to recognize in all circumstances the value of the central propaganda machinery which is now in existence and to utilize it for the given propaganda tasks.

6. To insure full coordination of the foreign propaganda effort through pamphlets, films, radio, press, etc., the Foreign Minister shall—in person, if possible—communicate his wishes and his directives to the Propaganda Minister. [—]

Hitler's assessment of the hesitating English and French stance, which he had explained two days before, was also echoed in the war directive of September 9:¹⁰⁴⁷

Directive No. 3 for the Conduct of the War

1. Operations in strength against the Polish Army and air force are to be continued until it is safe to assume that the Poles can no longer succeed in establishing a continuous front which would tie down the German forces.

2. When it becomes apparent that parts of the Eastern Army and the Luftwaffe are no longer required for this mission and for crushing resistance in the occupied territories, arrangements are to be made for their transfer to the West. Additional air defense units may be assigned for operation against our enemy in the West as the Polish air force loses more and more of its effectiveness.

3. Even after the irresolute opening of hostilities by Great Britain at sea and in the air, and by France on land and in the air, my express consent must be obtained in each of the following areas:

a. Every time our ground forces cross the western borders of Germany.

b. Every time one of our planes crosses the western borders of Germany, unless it is required to repulse enemy air attacks in force.

c. For every air attack on Britain.

The Luftwaffe may, however, be employed in the Bay of Heligoland¹⁰⁴⁸ over the declared mine area in the West, and in direct support of naval operations.

d. For the Navy the regulations laid down in Directive No. 2, paragraphs 3a and 3b,¹⁰⁴⁹ remain in force. No offensive actions at sea are to be undertaken against France.

Adolf Hitler

On September 9 also, Göring spoke before workers at the Rheinmetall-Borsig works located in Berlin-Tegel. In the broadcast of the speech, Göring labored to instill confidence in the German public and to alleviate its apprehension. Göring endeavored to be the worthy representative of his Führer who was “unavailable” to speak himself. Among other things, Göring stated:¹⁰⁵⁰

In the most moving tones, Chamberlain has declared he would like to live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed.¹⁰⁵¹ Well, I do not know about that—I have heard of Methuselah growing quite old, but I believe that Chamberlain would have to grow quite a bit older yet if he wants to live to see that day. England has declared war on us. So it says it has not declared war on the German Volk but on Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime. Yet when the English shoot, then they are shooting at the German Volk and not at the Nazi regime. This is truly an old story. [—] And one thing I can tell you today, and no one can disprove this: Germany is the best armed state there is in the world.

Perhaps the English believe they can go unpunished, attacking our harbors in the Northwest while we are fighting in Poland.¹⁰⁵²

England has done so only once. It has learned its lesson, namely, that German anti-aircraft defenses are on guard there, too. The loss of half its squadron should have taught it as much.

And when people say today that German battleships sustained heavy hits also, then I can assure you, Comrades, upon my word and upon my honor, that it was not a British bomb which fell onto the ship but a downed fighter.

If a British pilot wishes to fly about nightly at high altitudes and, on top of that, in German air space, to drop off those ludicrous leaflets, then really I am not opposed to this as a matter of principle. However, woe to them if they should mistake a bomb for a propaganda leaflet. They shall not have to wait long for retribution!¹⁰⁵³ Now, where is that great English blockade? All they can do today is to try and stop the import of goods we procure overseas.

As has been said, we only have one front now. And this is what is decisive, my German Volksgenossen, and this you must always bear in mind especially when thinking back upon the World War. I do understand if one or another of you feels oppressed at times and says: “Good Lord, now we are once more fighting a war against all other peoples, a war that might again last many years, bringing with it horrendous destitution and shortages, etc.” But then, please, take a minute to reflect on the situation soberly, think of how it was then and how it is today. And surely you will realize: it is not the same!

The drama staged for you by the English is the same, but the actual situation is not the same. England has once more incited the world to go against Germany. And yet, we do not have a war to fight on three, four, or five fronts like back then. Then we had to defend 3,800 kilometers, today we have only 250 to defend. And these 250 kilometers are not a line of trenches and shell craters, but an iron wall of hurdles, bunkers, and fortifications, which defy penetration.

Moreover—and I will return to this later—we do not want anything of the French. We do not want to take anything away from them! What is there for us to want of the French? We have guaranteed the border once and for all. And if France thinks it has to fight for England down to the last Frenchman, then that is solely its affair and not ours! We shall defend ourselves, rest assured. But attack? Why should we? We have absolutely nothing to do there.

These grandiose proclamations by Göring rang in the ears of many a German in later years. Then Germany would not only be fighting along one front of 250 kilometers in length, but along many fronts of thousands and thousands of kilometers. And further, Germany would not only have attacked in the West, but also in the East and North. Soon Germany would be fighting in North Africa, in the Balkans, and at many other locations.

On this September 9, Hitler undoubtedly was well satisfied with the speech of his “best man.” Göring’s address absolved him from the necessity of stepping before the public himself after the unexpected and highly embarrassing British declaration of war.

10

Still on September 9, Hitler signed into law a general amnesty for Germany's civilian population.¹⁰⁵⁴

After the conclusion of operations in the Polish Corridor, Hitler joined the Silesian Army Group. It was advancing to the Northeast, passing cities such as Tschenstochau (Czestochowa), Kielce, Konskie, and Radom. On September 10, Hitler made an excursion into the Kielce-Radom countryside. This was officially termed a flight along the front. Actually, he went sightseeing in Kielce where he admired the historic Voivode Society House.¹⁰⁵⁵

Hitler could not overcome his fear of assassination attempts. Haunted by this anxiety, he ordered his staff to publish the following ordinance:¹⁰⁵⁶

For the duration of the war, the Führer will not accept any flowers handed to him in the course of his travels. He requests that the flowers intended for his person be presented to the soldiers of the German Wehrmacht instead.

On September 11, Hitler boarded his plane to view from the air the area between Lodz and Warsaw. The aircraft carried him to an airport located at the front, whence a car took him to the divisional staff headquarters at Rava. In the afternoon, he again scanned the region by plane.¹⁰⁵⁷

On September 12, Göring arrived at the Führer Headquarters. Meeting with Hitler in the special train, Göring rendered a two-hour report on the deployment of the Luftwaffe.¹⁰⁵⁸ Then, for the first time, Hitler signed a decree into law which bore the heading "Führer Headquarters." The issue at stake was an expansion of the "Decree on Prizes" necessitated by recent British actions.¹⁰⁵⁹

On September 13, Hitler set out on yet another aerial review of the front lines in the region north of Lodz, where he visited a number of

divisional headquarters. At 3:00 p.m., Hitler triumphantly entered Lodz by car. The city had been in German hands for four days already and had largely been spared the destruction of war.¹⁰⁶⁰

The next day, Göring called once more at the Führer Headquarters to report on his own travels along the front.¹⁰⁶¹

On September 15, Hitler visited troops engaged in Galicia. He further attended the crossing of the San river in the vicinity of Jaroslav and Ubieszyn. Having traversed the river on wooden bridges, the soldiers marched by Hitler with arms outstretched in greeting.¹⁰⁶²

On September 16, the Führer entertained the acting president of the German Red Cross, SS Brigade Führer Grawitz, in his special train. Grawitz accounted for the Red Cross's activities. Hitler subsequently spoke with various Red Cross nurses and volunteers, expressing his appreciation for their work. He stressed his respect for the principles on which the Red Cross and the Geneva Convention were founded.¹⁰⁶³

Later that day, Hitler ordered German planes to drop leaflets on besieged Warsaw at 3:10 p.m. which read:¹⁰⁶⁴

To the population of Warsaw!

Your Government has made the city a battleground and has divorced it of its character as an open city. Your military leadership has not only allowed heavy artillery to fire into the city, it has also called on you to erect barricades in every street and to offer resistance to the German troops.

Your Government has violated international law in its request that the civilian population take up weapons to resist the German troops and thereby engage in guerrilla warfare. Because parts of the population of Warsaw have heeded this call, Warsaw has become a battleground. In spite of this, on the orders of the Führer, only those sections of the city which are of military significance, such as train stations, airports, barracks, and transit routes, have hitherto been subjected to bombing.

Hereby the following appeal is being addressed to the military commander of Warsaw:

1. Within twelve hours, all sections of the city are to be handed over to the German troops, which have surrounded it, for the purpose of occupation without a fight.

2. Within the same period, the Polish troops in Warsaw are to surrender to the German military commanders.

3. If these demands are fulfilled, the nearest German military commander is to be informed of the intent to surrender.

4. If these demands are not fulfilled, the civilian population has twelve hours to evacuate the city area along the routes leading to Siedlce and Garwolin. In this case, after the twelve hours have expired, the entire city of Warsaw will be regarded as a combat zone with all the consequences this entails. The twelve hours commence with the dropping of this leaflet.

On September 17, Russian troops invaded Poland, allegedly to protect the Belorussian and Ukrainian minorities living there. Hitler was not pleased with this turn of events, as he himself also eyed these territories. Adding to his frustration was Warsaw's persistent refusal to capitulate. Hitler feared that a Soviet intervention at this point might well spoil the picture of a Polish collapse due solely to Germany. This would rob the Wehrmacht of its glory.

On the other hand, he speculated that the appearance of Russia might well serve to point out to the British the danger of engaging in a war against Germany. After all, as a logical consequence, they would now be forced to declare war on Russia as well.¹⁰⁶⁵ After this healthy fright, London might be more inclined finally to accept Hitler's hand in order to protect itself from the evils of Bolshevism.

Hitler was mistaken on this point. The British were not about to do the Führer the favor of confronting the Soviet Union as long as the Russian advances remained restricted to areas east of the so-called Curzon Line.¹⁰⁶⁶ The Belorussian and Ukrainian regions had belonged to the Russian Empire at one point, and Britain was not going to oppose the Russian occupation of this terrain.

On September 19, the Führer Headquarters moved to the Casino Hotel in the Danzig seaside resort town of Zoppot. Reaching the former checkpoint Renneberg on the border of the former Free City of Danzig at 1:30 p.m., Hitler received a warm welcome by Gauleiter Forster.

In his reply, Hitler expressed his appreciation "for the loyalty, the combat readiness and determination, and for the brave endurance of the German city of Danzig." With church bells ringing in the back-ground, Hitler's motorcar passed through Oliva and took him to Zoppot.¹⁰⁶⁷

The Führer relished posing as the victorious warlord. Hence, he felt it exceedingly appropriate to celebrate his triumphant entry into Danzig by extending to Field Marshal von Mackensen, who had served as Commanding General of the city from 1908 through 1914, a "comradely remembrance." He composed the following telegram on September 19:¹⁰⁶⁸

Herr Generalfeldmarschall!

On the battlefield of your historic successes, my thoughts turn to you. I express these thoughts at the site of your service as Commanding General of Danzig, which has now returned home.

I extend to you comradely greetings,

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's motorcar left his quarters at the Zoppot Casino Hotel at 4:10 p.m. From there, the Führer slowly drove through the city to reach the Artus Courtyard along the Langer Markt in the center of Danzig. Gauleiter Forster and other prominent Party figures in the city, as well as the new military commander of West Prussia and Danzig, Artillery General Heitz,¹⁰⁶⁹ had already assembled there. Keitel, Ribbentrop, Lammers, Himmler, Dietrich, Bormann, and Hitler's various adjutants were also awaiting his arrival. After a welcoming speech by Forster, Hitler rose to address the crowd.

This was the first time he spoke directly to the German people, via radio broadcast, since his speech of September 1. In general, however, Hitler was still reluctant to address the public and preferred to speak before a carefully selected audience. This was characteristic of his behavior throughout the Second World War. A general tendency to avoid direct contact with the German people had already been prevalent on previous occasions when Hitler had cause to feel uneasy, pressured by a guilty conscience. Examples of this had been his hasty appropriation of the office of Reich President and the Röhm Purge.¹⁰⁷⁰

Hitler's speech in Danzig represented an attempt to rationalize the German aggression against Poland, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to claim that the campaign in Poland had already been concluded in only "eighteen days." In reality, Poland had not yet surrendered. Warsaw was still under siege, and resistance on the Hela peninsula was still active.¹⁰⁷¹ Nevertheless, Hitler insisted on his eighteen-day version. He would not abandon it in later years either, in spite of evidence to the contrary.

It was not really important whether the Germans, who outnumbered the Poles three to one, brought the country to its knees within a number of weeks or only after several months. However, Hitler had a good reason for insisting that the conquest had taken only "eighteen days," as the Soviet Union had launched its invasion on September 17. Under no circumstances was Hitler prepared to allow for doubts concerning the solely German character of Poland's defeat. He acted as though the Russian intervention was of no consequence to the fall of Poland, because Poland had been conquered already.

Hitler displayed the same anxious jealousy here, as he would in the case of the 1940 campaign in the West. In the latter instance, he also held off the eager Mussolini until the German armies had practically overrun France and victory was assured. Italy's intervention was treated as a question of flaying the dead.

Hitler's speech, however, also represented an appeal to Britain to agree to what he regarded as a reasonable settlement of the Polish question, namely, the speedy conclusion of peace with Germany. After all, he claimed, Germany pursued no objectives in this war as far as England and France were concerned. The speech given at Danzig was the opening act in a new "campaign for peace" on the part of Hitler. This initiative was to climax in his speech before the Reichstag on October 6, 1939.

In Danzig on September 19, 1939, Hitler declared:¹⁰⁷²

My Gauleiters! My dear Volksgenossen of Danzig!

This moment deeply moves not only you, but the entire German Volk is struck with profound emotion. I myself am aware of the greatness of the hour.

It is for the first time¹⁰⁷³ that I step on this soil, of which German settlers took possession half a millennium before the first white men began settling in what is today the State of New York. Half a millennium longer this earth has been German and has remained German. And—of this you may rest assured—it will always remain German.

The fate which beset this city and this beautiful countryside was the fate of all of Germany. The World War, this perhaps most senseless struggle of all time, has victimized this land and this city. This same World War which, in its wake, left no winners, only losers, also left a conviction in the minds of many, namely, that a similar fate would never again be repeated. Apparently, the main warmongers and war profiteers have forgotten the lessons of this slaughter of peoples (*Völkergemetzel*). As this bloody struggle, into which Germany had entered without any war objective, drew to an end, there was the desire to bestow upon mankind a peace which would lead to the restoration of law and hence to the final elimination of all despair. This peace was, however, not placed before our Volk at Versailles for discussion. Rather this peace was forced upon us by means of a brutal Diktat.

The fathers of this peace saw in it the end of the German Volk. Perhaps many men believed that this peace signaled the end of all destitution. Yet it meant only the beginning of new tribulations. For the warmongers and those who ended the war deceived themselves on one particular issue: this Diktat not only failed to resolve a single problem, it created a multitude of new problems. It was only a matter of time before the trampled-down German nation would rise up once more to resolve the problems forced upon it.

The essential problem was completely overlooked at the time. This was the fact that peoples exist whether or not this pleases one or another British warmonger. Eighty-two million Germans¹⁰⁷⁴ are united within this one Lebensraum. These eighty-two million Germans wish to live and they shall live whether or not this pleases these warmongers!

Germany was grievously wronged by the injustice of Versailles. When today a statesman of another people believes he is entitled to say that he has lost faith in the word of German statesmen or of the German Volk, then to

the contrary it is we Germans who are entitled to say that we have lost faith completely in the assurances of those who back then so pitifully broke the solemn promises once extended.

It is not the injustice of Versailles that I wish to speak of here. The worst thing in the life of the peoples was perhaps not even the injustice perpetrated, but above all the nonsense, the utter lunacy and stupidity, with which the men back then sought to impose upon the world a peace which simply ignored all historical, economic, ethnic, and political facts. At the time, measures were taken which in retrospect lead us to doubt the sanity of those who perpetrated this crime. Devoid of any understanding of the historical developments in the European Lebensraum, devoid also of a comprehension of the economic situation there, these men ravaged Europe, tore asunder states and geographical units, suppressed their peoples, and destroyed ancient cultures.

The land of Danzig also fell victim to the insanity of the time. The Polish State as such arose as a product of this insanity. Perhaps the world is not sufficiently aware of the sacrifices Germany was forced to make for this Polish State. For there is one thing I must say: all those territories incorporated into Poland owe their cultural development exclusively to German vigor, to German diligence, and to German creative work. Motives for the tearing of more than one province from the German Reich and for incorporating them into the new Polish State were supposed ethnic necessities. And this in view of the fact that later, as a result of plebiscites in these areas, it became clear that no one in these provinces longed to become part of this Polish State. The Poland which grew on the fertile lands drenched by the blood sacrificed by countless German regiments expanded at the expense of ancient lands settled by Germans, and, above all, at the expense of reason and economic opportunity.

The last twenty years have proven beyond doubt: the Poles, who had not founded this culture, were not even capable of sustaining it. Once more it was proven a self-evident truth that only he who himself is creatively endowed in the cultural sphere is also able to secure true cultural achievement in the long run. Fifty additional years of Polish mastery would have sufficed to restore these lands to that barbarism out of which Germans had brought them with arduous industry and diligence. Everywhere the first traces of regression and decline are already evident today.

Poland itself was a state of nationalities, a trait for which the old Austrian state was so faulted.¹⁰⁷⁵ Poland never was a democracy. A thin, consumptive upper class dictatorially ruled not only foreign nationalities, but also their own people, so-called. This state was founded upon violence. The rule of the policeman's baton governed this state, to be supplanted at last by the military. The fate of the Germans in this state was frightful. And we must differentiate here: it is one thing if a people of inferior cultural significance has the misfortune to be governed by one of greater import, and another if a people of high cultural standing has to experience the tragedy of being violated by one culturally less developed. For this culturally inferior people will take the opportunity to gratify all sorts of imaginable feelings of inferiority against the carrier of the higher culture. This superior people will be gruesomely and

barbarously mistreated. Germans have been subject to such a fate for nearly twenty years. There is no need for me to give a detailed account of the fate of these Germans here. All in all, it was an exceedingly tragic and painful one. Nevertheless, as always, in this instance, too, I sought to obtain an understanding which could have led to a reasonable settlement.

Once I endeavored to draw final borders for the Reich in the West and the South. Thereby I sought to relieve region after region from political insecurity and to secure the peace there for the future. I endeavored to attain the same here in the East.

At the time, a man of undeniable, realistic insight and great energy governed Poland. I managed to conclude an agreement with Marshal Pilsudski which would smooth the path toward peaceful understanding between both nations; an agreement which strove to secure at least a base, by completely ignoring the Versailles Treaty, for a reasoned, bearable cohabitation.

As long as the Marshal lived, it seemed as though this attempt could perhaps contribute to a relaxation of the tense situation. Immediately after his death, the fighting against Germans started anew. This struggle—which found a manifold expression—increasingly embittered and poisoned the relations between the two peoples. It is hardly possible in the long run to stand by patiently while the German minorities living in this state, whose existence means a great injustice to Germany, are being persecuted in an almost barbaric fashion.

The world which otherwise sheds many a tear if a Polish Jew who emigrated to the Reich only a few decades ago is expelled, this same world is blind and mute to the plight of the millions who were driven from their homes by the implementation of the Versailles Treaty. For after all, these are only Germans! And what so oppresses and outrages us is the fact that we had to bear this from a state which stood far beneath us.

In the final count, Germany is a great power, even if a few crazed men believe they can erase the right to life of a great nation by means of a senseless treaty or Diktat. For how could a great power such as Germany in the long run stand by to observe how a people far beneath it and a state far beneath it maltreated Germans!

Two special circumstances made all this even more unbearable:

1. A city, the German character of which no one could deny, was not only prevented from finding its way back to the Reich, but it also was subjected to purposeful attempts to Polonize it, albeit in a roundabout manner.

2. The traffic of a province severed from the German Reich was made dependent upon the mercy of the Polish State in between and was subject to manifold harassment.

No power on earth would have borne up under the circumstances as long as Germany did! And I know not what England would have said if a similar peaceful resolution had been applied at its expense, or how France would have taken it, not to mention America.

And I still sought to find ways to a bearable solution of even this problem. I brought these attempts orally to the attention of those in power in Poland

at the time. You, my Volksgenossen, know of these proposals: they can only be termed reasonable.

I strove to attain a balance between our desire to connect East Prussia with the Reich once more, and the desire of the Poles to have access to the sea. I strove to obtain a synthesis between the German character of the city of Danzig and its desire to return to the German Reich, and the economic demands of the Poles.

I believe I am justified in claiming that I was more than modest back then. There was many a moment in which I questioned myself, brooding, whether I could indeed answer to my own Volk for submitting such proposals to the Polish Government.¹⁰⁷⁶ I did it nonetheless because I wished to spare the German Volk and also the Polish people the suffering engendered by an armed confrontation.

The proposals then conceived I once more reiterated, in a most concrete manner, in the spring of this year:

Danzig was to return to the German Reich. An extraterritorial route was to be built to East Prussia—at our expense, naturally. In exchange, Poland was to enjoy full rights to the harbor at Danzig and be accorded extraterritorial access thereto. I was even willing, in turn, to guarantee the barely tolerable situation along our borders and moreover to allow Poland to share in the securing of Slovakia.

Truly I know not what strange state of mind inspired the Polish Government to reject my proposal. But I do know this was a great relief to millions of Germans who held that I had already ventured too far with this offer. Poland's only reply was an immediate mobilization of its troops, accompanied by a wild campaign of terror. My request to speak with the Polish Foreign Minister in Berlin, to once more discuss these questions, was declined. Instead of going to Berlin, he went to London!

Every week, every month, threats increased: threats of a nature barely tolerable for a small state. In the long run, this was simply insufferable for a great power. Polish newspapers informed us that Danzig was not the bone of contention; instead it was East Prussia which was to be annexed by Poland within a short time. The like continued day after day. Other Polish papers declared that East Prussia represented no solution to the underlying problem. Instead, it was absolutely necessary, under all circumstances, to integrate Pomerania into Poland also. Then the Oder river was questioned as Poland's frontier and many asked if the Elbe river did not in fact constitute the natural boundary of the Polish State.

Many racked their brains to determine whether it would be better to hack to pieces our army in front of Berlin or rather behind it. A Polish Marshal, who today has pitifully abandoned his army,¹⁰⁷⁷ declared at the time that he would hack Germany and the German Army to pieces.

Simultaneously, the martyrdom of our Volksgenossen began. Tens of thousands were abducted, abused, and murdered in a most gruesome manner. Sadistic beasts let themselves go and allowed their perverted instincts to run free. And the pious democratic world stood by without batting an eyelid.

I then asked myself: who could have so deceived Poland? Did the Poles truly believe that, in the long run, the German nation would stand for all this from so ludicrous a state? Apparently someone must have believed it, as this belief was reinforced elsewhere. This elsewhere has been the site where, not only in the last decades but in fact throughout the last centuries, the main warmongers have taken up residence—where they reside still as of this day!

There they declared that Germany need not be considered a power. There they convinced the Poles they could, at any point, mount a sufficiently strong resistance to Germany without great difficulty. There they went yet a step further, reassuring the Poles that, should their own resistance falter, others would instantly come to their rescue, i.e. relieve them of this burden. It was there they received this infamous guarantee effectively placing the decision whether or not to go to war in the hands of an insignificant, megalomaniac state.¹⁰⁷⁸ For these warmongers Poland was but a means to an end. Today they calmly proclaim that what is at stake in this war is not Poland at all, but the elimination of the regime in Germany!

I have always warned of these men. You will recall, my German Volksgenossen, my speeches in Saarbrücken and Wilhelmshaven. In both these speeches I pointed to the danger here: that in one country some men simply get up and, without restraint, preach that war is a necessity, as the gentlemen Churchill, Eden, Duff Cooper, and the like, have repeatedly done. I have pointed out how dangerous this is, especially in a country where no one knows if these men shall not be at the helm of government shortly.

Thereupon I was afforded the explanation that this surely would never occur. To the best of my knowledge, however, precisely these men govern today! And so precisely what I then predicted has occurred.

At the time I warned the German nation of these men. But I also left no doubt that Germany would not capitulate before their threats and their use of force. This answer of mine suffered the most shabby of attacks. A type of practice has become established in these democracies: there agitation for war is permissible; there foreign governments and heads of state may be subjected to slander, defamation, and insults, for there a liberal and free press reigns. In authoritarian states, one may not rise to protest this—for there discipline reigns! Accordingly, it is only permissible to agitate for war in undisciplined states, while in disciplined states no appropriate answer may be given.

In practice this would lead to the undisciplined states agitating for war and their peoples succumbing to it, whereas in disciplined states the people would not have a clue as to what was going on around them. Back then I decided to awaken the German Volk to these goings-on, to put it in a defensive posture. I judged this necessary so as not to be taken by surprise one day.

As September came, this situation had indeed become insufferable. You know the course of events in August; in spite of this, I hold that—without a British guarantee and the agitation of these apostles of war—it might well have been possible to reach an agreement in these last days.

At one particular point, England itself attempted to bring about direct talks between us and Poland. I was willing. The Poles, however, failed to

show up, naturally. I sat with my Government in Berlin for two days, and waited, and waited. In the meantime, I had worked out the new proposal. You are aware of it. On the evening of the first day [August 30], I had the British Ambassador informed of it. It was read to him sentence for sentence. Moreover, my Foreign Minister gave supplemental explanations. The next day dawned. Nothing happened—not a thing! Then came the general mobilization in Poland, renewed acts of terror, and endless assaults on Reich territory.

In international relations, one ought not to mistake patience for weakness. For years, I have stood these persistent provocations with sheer boundless patience. What I myself suffered in these days few can truly appreciate. For barely one month passed, barely a week went by, in which a delegation from these territories did not come to me to describe the unbearable nature of the situation, and to implore me to finally intervene.

Time and time again I bade them to exercise patience just a little longer. The years passed by in this manner. Lately, however, I have taken to issuing warnings that things had to come to an end finally. And after months of waiting, making ever new proposals, I finally determined, as I have already declared in my speech to the Reichstag, to speak with Poland in the language Poland itself believes it is uniquely entitled to employ. Evidently this is the only language Poland understands.

And still, at this minute, the peace could have been saved yet one more time. Befriended Italy, the Duce, intervened to make yet one more proposal for mediation. France agreed to this, and I also pronounced my agreement.¹⁰⁷⁹ But England believed it was in a position to reject this proposal and to place a two-hour ultimatum before the German Reich, an ultimatum which contained provisions impossible to comply with.

However, the English were mistaken on one account. Once, in November 1918, they faced a government they themselves helped to prop up. And, apparently, the English now mistook the present regime for this puppet-regime of old and the present German nation for the German Volk then blinded and misled. Germany can no longer be handed ultimatums—of this London ought to take note.

Within the last six years, we have suffered great outrages from states such as Poland. Nevertheless, I never sent any of them an ultimatum. Now that Poland has chosen war, it has chosen it because others incited it to enter into this war. Those who incited it believed that this war would allow them to attain their great ambitions in world and financial politics. In doing this, however, they will not obtain the greatest profits, but the greatest disappointments.

Poland chose the struggle—and it got it! It chose the struggle with a light heart because certain statesmen in the West assured it that they had detailed documentation on: the worthlessness of the German army; the inferiority of its equipment; the deficient morale among its troops; the defeatist sentiment throughout the interior of the Reich; the gulf supposedly separating the German Volk from its Führer. The Poles were persuaded that it would be exceedingly easy not only to resist our armies, but to throw them back as well.

And it was thanks to this advice by the western chiefs of staff that Poland apparently conceived its entire military strategy.

Since then eighteen days have passed. Scarcely ever before in history was this saying more appropriate: "Man and steed and wagon, the Lord struck all of them down."¹⁰⁸⁰

And, as I am speaking to you now, our troops are arrayed along a long line stretching from Lemberg [Lvov] to Brest and northwards. Since yesterday afternoon, endless columns of the badly beaten Polish Army have been marching from the Kutno area as prisoners of war. Yesterday morning, they numbered 20,000; there were 50,000 last night; 70,000 this morning. I do not know how great their numbers are at present, but there is one thing I do know: whatever remains of this Polish Army west of this line will capitulate within a few days and lay down its arms, or it will be smashed!

It is at this moment that our grateful hearts fly to our soldiers! The German Wehrmacht has accorded those ingenious statesmen, who were so well informed on the state of affairs in the German Reich, the necessary practical instruction. Marshal Smigly-Rydz has a poor sense of direction. Instead of in Berlin, it has landed him in Czernowitz. And with him went his entire government and all those seducers who have so deceived the Polish people as to drive them into this insanity.

On land, at sea, and in the air, the German soldier, however, has done his duty and fulfilled his obligations in an exemplary fashion!

Once more the German infantry has proven its unparalleled mastery. Time and again, others have sought to attain its level of valor, courage, and expertise. All have failed. The new weaponry of our motorized units has proven itself worthy to the utmost. The soldiers of our Navy have fulfilled their duty in an astounding manner.

And above all this, it is the German Luftwaffe which keeps watch and secures the air space. All those who dreamed of crushing Germany, of reducing German cities to ashes, all are far less outspoken now because they know only too well that for every bomb on a German city five or ten will be dropped in return!¹⁰⁸¹ They should not act as though they exercised such restraint because of humanitarian considerations. They are less concerned about humanity than retribution.

Let us take this occasion to render justice to the Polish soldier. He fought courageously at many sites. The lower ranks of the military made desperate efforts; the middle-rank leadership lacked intelligence; its upper-echelon leadership was bad beyond criticism. Its organization was Polish!

At this moment, around 300,000 Polish soldiers are German prisoners of war. Nearly 2,000 officers and many generals share their fate.

I must also mention, however, that this admitted valor of many Polish units stands in contrast to the dirtiest deeds perhaps committed throughout the past centuries. As a soldier in the World War who fought only in the West, I never had the opportunity to witness such deeds: the thousands of slaughtered Volksgenossen; the brutishly butchered women, girls, and children; the countless German soldiers and officers who fell, wounded, into the hands of the enemy and who were massacred, bestially mutilated with

their eyes gouged out. And worse yet—the Polish Government has openly admitted this in a radio broadcast—the Luftwaffe soldiers forced to parachute were killed in a cowardly fashion. There were moments when one had to ask oneself: under these circumstances, should one exercise restraint oneself? I have not heard whether any of the democratic statesmen found it worth their while to protest against these acts of barbarity.

I have instructed the German Luftwaffe to lead this war in a humane manner, i.e. only against fighting units. The Polish Government and the head of the armed forces have instructed the civilian population to lie in ambush, to fight this war as snipers.

It is most difficult to exercise restraint oneself here, and I would like to stress on this occasion: the democratic states ought not to be so vain as to believe this state of affairs can continue forever! If they would prefer things to go differently, well then they can have them differently. Here, too, I may lose my patience.¹⁰⁸²

In spite of this perfidious method of warfare which has not been paralleled throughout the past decades, our armies have dealt with the enemy at lightning speed (*in Blitzesschnelle*). A few days ago, an English paper wrote I had relieved a colonel general of his duties because I had counted on a Blitzkrieg for this operation and had been deeply disappointed by the slow pace of the mission. Authors of this article may well have been those strategists who advised the Poles on how to array their troops.

Hence, we have beaten the Poles in scarcely eighteen days. Thereby we brought about a situation which may well enable us to speak with the representatives of these people calmly and in reasoned terms. In the meantime, Russia has felt it necessary, to safeguard the interests of its Belorussian and Ukrainian minorities, to march into Poland as well. And now we witness how England and France are outraged at this cooperation of Germany and Russia. It is termed a heinous crime—yes, one Englishman even writes that it is perfidious. Here the English are experts!

I believe the English conceive of this perfidy as the failure of cooperation between democratic England and Bolshevik Russia in view of the success of the attempt of National Socialist Germany and Bolshevik Russia at cooperation.

I would like to make a declaration here: Russia remains precisely what it is, and Germany will also remain what it is. On one point there is total agreement between both regimes: neither the Russian nor the German regime wishes to sacrifice even one man to the interests of the Western democracies.

The lessons of four years of war are sufficient for both states and both peoples. Ever since then we have known only too well that either one or the other would have the honor to come to the rescue of the ideals of the Western democracies. Both states and both peoples say no thank you to such a mission. We intend to attend to our interests ourselves from now on. And we have found that we are best able to realize these interests when both great peoples and states come to an understanding.

And this is all the easier as the British claims concerning the unrestrained nature of German foreign policy objectives are lies. I rejoice in being able to contradict these assertions of the British statesmen in reality now. Persistently

they claimed that Germany intended to rule Europe up to the Ural Mountains. Accordingly they should be happy to learn of the limited nature of Germany's ambitions. I believe I am robbing them of yet another rationale for going to war when I proclaim this—as they declare they must fight the present regime because it pursues “unlimited war aims.”

Well, my dear gentlemen of the Great Britannic World Empire, Germany's objectives are very limited in fact. We have discussed this in great detail with Russia, as the Russians are our next-door neighbors and, in the end, those most immediately affected. Accordingly, England ought to welcome the understanding arrived at by Germany and Soviet Russia. For the arrival at this understanding should remove once and for all the haunting images of the present German regime being out to conquer the world, an image which robbed the British statesmen of their sleep so many nights. It ought to be reassuring to know that it is not true that Germany wishes to conquer the Ukraine, or wished to do so in the past.

Our interests are of a very limited nature.¹⁰⁸³ However, these interests we are determined to pursue, no matter what the danger or who opposes us. The last eighteen days should have amply proven that we are not joking in this respect.

What state formations shall populate this vast terrain in the end depends foremost upon the two countries which possess vested, vital interests in this area. Germany strides forth in pursuit of limited, but unyielding demands. Germany will realize these demands in one way or another. Germany and Russia will create a situation which some day one will only be able to call a relaxation of tensions, here on the site of a storm-center of Europe.

I would like to make a few statements in reply to the West, where many, especially in England, have announced their determination not to allow, under any circumstances, anything of the kind and, if need be, to do battle to this end in a war of three years' duration, of even five or eight years in length.

1. With difficult sacrifices, Germany has accepted a redrawing of the Reich's frontiers in the West and in the South in order to obtain a final pacification of these borders. At the time, we truly believed this could indeed be attained. And I still believe we would have been successful had not certain warmongers had a vested interest in the disruption of the peace in Europe.

I do not pursue any war aim against either England or France. Ever since I came into office, I have sought to slowly restore close relations and trust with the former enemies in the World War. I endeavored to remove all tensions which once existed between Italy and Germany. And it is with a feeling of great contentment that I say that I was extraordinarily successful in this. Close and heartfelt relations have been established between both countries and have found a firm foundation in the close human and personal relationship between the Duce and myself.

I went further yet. I endeavored to accomplish the same thing with regard to France. Immediately after the resolution of the Saar question, I solemnly, for all time, renounced the further pursuit of revision of the borders in the West. I did this not only in theory but in practice as well. I have placed the

entire German propaganda apparatus in the service of this, my idea. I eliminated every trace of what might have furnished occasion for doubt or apprehension in Paris.

You know of my proposals to England. All my ambitions were to enter into a sincere and friendly relationship with England. Now that all of them have been rejected and today the English believe they must wage war against Germany, I must say the following: never again will the Poland of the Versailles Treaty arise! Not only Germany guarantees this, the Russians do so as well!

And now that England has chosen to refocus its war aims, i.e. now that it has finally betrayed its true objectives in this war, I would like to comment on this.

In England they say that this war is about Poland, although this is only of secondary importance. What is of greater import is the present regime in Germany. In this context, I am accorded the honor of a special mention as the representative of this regime.

Since, apparently, this is the primary objective pursued, I would like to reply as follows to the gentlemen in London:

It is an honor for me to be judged in such a manner. As a matter of principle, I have educated, taught the German Volk to regard as contaminated any regime our enemies praise. Hence the German Volk will reject it. Should the gentlemen Churchill, Duff Cooper, Eden, etc., choose to accord their approval to a German regime, this would be interpreted to mean that this regime is being propped up and paid for by these gentlemen. Hence it would not represent a viable option for Germany.

This cannot be said of us, naturally. Condemnation by these gentlemen constitutes praise in our eyes. For my person, I can assure you of one thing: should these men praise me, I would be greatly upset. I am proud to furnish a target for their attack.

Should they truly believe they can divorce the German Volk from me in this fashion, then they hold the German Volk to be as weak in character or as stupid as they themselves are!

They are mistaken on both counts! National Socialism has not re-educated the German man for naught these past twenty years. All my men have known only attacks from our opponents throughout their lives. This has merely served to reinforce the love of our followers for them and has created inseparable bonds between them.

And just as the National Socialist Party took up the challenge throughout the years to emerge victorious in the end, so the National Socialist German Reich and the German Volk rise to the challenge today!¹⁰⁸⁴

May the gentlemen rest assured: their ludicrous propaganda campaign no longer has the ability to divide the German Volk. These propaganda amateurs would do well to serve an apprenticeship with us here for an extended time.

Should peoples indeed perish, then this shall not hold true for the German Volk which is fighting for its right. The German Volk does not want war, yet it was attacked. No, other peoples shall perish, those who are slowly learning who their seducers are; they are slowly realizing what little cause

they had for entering into this war. Yes, a small clique of profiteers actually is the only party with a viable political interest in this war.

And now that the English further declare that this war shall last three years, I can only express my compassion for the French *Poilu*.¹⁰⁸⁵ It does not know what it will be fighting for, but it does know, at least for starters, that it will have the dubious honor of fighting for three years at a minimum. Whether this war will truly last three years depends a bit on us, too, however. Should it indeed last three years, the chapter will no more close with the word "capitulation" than it would at the end of a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, or a seventh year.

May the gentlemen please note: the generation now leading Germany is not the generation of Bethmann-Hollweg. Today they once more face a "Frederician" Germany!

The German Volk will not be divided by this struggle. It will stand ever the more firmly united. If anything shall be divided thereby it will be those states whose substance is as inhomogeneous as that of these plutocratic world democracies, these so-called world empires, whose might rests on the suppression and rule of foreign peoples.

We fight for our national existence! And we will let no one among these narrow-minded propagandists (*beschränkte Propagandafatzken*) tell us that what is at stake is our regime—that is a lie!

Imagine the people who say: "Oh, in this country, there is someone in power who is not to our liking. Therefore, we will just have to engage in war for the next three years. Naturally, we will not wage this war ourselves. No, we will search the world for someone who will wage it in our stead. We will provide the cannons and grenades to him and he will provide the grenadiers, the soldiers, and the men."

What recklessness! What would they have said of us had we, at some point, stood up to declare: "We do not like this regime which presently rules—let us say for instance—France or England. Therefore we will engage it in war now."

What utter recklessness! To drive men to their deaths for that?! Let there be no doubt as to one thing: We shall pick up the gauntlet! We shall fight in the manner of the enemy! The English have already once more, under the cover of deceit and dishonesty, begun conducting war against women and children.

England possesses one weapon under the umbrella of which it believes it cannot be attacked, namely, its naval forces. And now the English say: because we ourselves cannot be attacked with this weapon, this entitles us to use this weapon not only against the women and children of our enemies, but also against the neutral states, if this should be necessary.

One ought to be careful not to let oneself be deceived here either! Soon there could come a time in which we would use a weapon with which we ourselves cannot be attacked.¹⁰⁸⁶

I hope it will not be then that others begin to suddenly recall the term "humanity" and the "impossibility" of conducting war against women and children. We Germans do not want this! In this campaign also I have issued

orders to spare the cities, if possible. Should however, a column choose to march across the market square and is attacked by fighter planes, then it cannot be excluded that someone else might become a victim as well.

As a matter of principle, we have consistently exercised mercy. In towns where no crazed or criminal elements have put up resistance, not a window pane was smashed. In a city such as Cracow, for example, not one bomb fell on the city itself. Only the airport and the train station, purely military objectives, were subject to bombardment. If, however, in a city such as Warsaw the war involves the civilian population, if it spreads to all street corners and houses, then, of course, we must involve the entire city in the war. We have abided by this general rule in the past and wish to do so in the future as well.

It is up to England either to conduct this blockade in compliance with international law, or in violation of international law. We shall follow suit. However, let no one be deluded as to one fact: the English objective in this war is not the elimination of a regime—it is the elimination of the German Volk, of German women and children, and, therefore, we shall act accordingly. And, in the end, one thing is certain: this Germany will never capitulate!

We know only too well what the fate of such a Germany would be. Mr. King-Hall has kindly informed us on behalf of his masters: a second Versailles Treaty, worse yet. For we have in the interim been afforded precise illustration of what they have in mind for us: how Germany is to be torn to pieces, how large sections of its southern lands are to be severed from it; what lands are to be restored to Poland; what type of new states are to be erected, and which princes are to be crowned as their heads of state. The German Volk acknowledges this information and will fight accordingly!

I would like, above all, to express my gratitude to the German Volk on this occasion. It has not only rendered evidence of its inner unity within these past weeks. It has also given us ample proof of its truly valiant character.

And here, too, National Socialism has wrought a change: "The German Volk is not as enthusiastic as in 1914!" Oh no, it is all the more enthusiastic! Only the enthusiasm of today is a flame burning inside which steels people. It is not a superficial "hurrah" patriotism. Rather it is a fanatical determination. It is the serene enthusiasm of men who know war. They have lived through one war already. They have not entered into this one light-heartedly. Once forced into another war, however, they will wage it in the manner the old German front once waged it.

As I saw numerous regiments and divisions in the course of my visits to the front—the young, the old, all with one state of mind—I saw before me the entire German Volk. We need no "hurrah" patriotism. All of us know how terrible war is. Yet we still are determined to bring these developments to a victorious conclusion, come what may. Not one of us is worth any more than the men and women who lived in the past. All the sacrifices they had to make back then were no easier than the sacrifices we must make today.

Every sacrifice demanded of us is no more difficult than the sacrifices borne in the past. We are determined, in one way or another, to see this struggle through and to survive it.

We have but one desire: that the God Almighty who has now bestowed His blessings on our weapons might enlighten the other peoples, that He might impart to them insight into how senseless this war, this struggle of the peoples, will be. May He induce them to contemplate the blessings of a peace they abandoned merely because a handful of infernal warmongers and war profiteers sought to drive the peoples into a war.¹⁰⁸⁷

It is for the first time that I am in this city of Danzig today.¹⁰⁸⁸ It shared the fateful path of the German Volk throughout many a century. It shared in the fighting of the Great War through its sons. After the war, its fate was one of particular suffering, a bitter one. Now, after twenty years, it returns to the great German Volksgemeinschaft. Much has changed in the Reich since. The former state of classes and castes has become the German Volk State. This state which was once defined and ruled by the interests of a few groups has now become a Reich, which is the possession of the German Volk. The ideas reigning supreme in this state were preached in this city for many, many years. Yes, you have helped to raise the spirit which made it possible to retain the German character of this city and to suffuse it with faith, and to persist until the hour of deliverance and liberation had finally come. This hour has now come! Imagine my own feeling of joy to be called upon by Providence to realize that goal which the best of Germans have always longed for. Imagine how deeply I was touched when, in these hallowed halls, I stood up to speak to you and the people of this city and of this land. Once I resolved not to journey to Danzig before this city belonged again to the German Reich. I wished to make my entry into this city as its liberator. And it is today that this proud happiness has been imparted to me!

I regard and receive this happiness as ample recompense for numerous hours, days, weeks, and months of great inquietude. Please, my dear men and women of Danzig, see in me also an emissary of the German Reich and of the German Volk which, through me, embraces and admits you into our eternal community, and which never again shall release you.

Whatever suffering shall be imparted to individual Germans within the next months or years, it shall be easier to bear in the acknowledgment of the inseparable community encompassing and forming our great German Volk.

We accept you into this community with the firm resolve never again to permit you to withdraw from it. This decision also forms a commandment for the entire Movement and for the entire German Volk. Danzig was German, Danzig has remained German, and Danzig shall be German from now on as long as there exists a German Volk and a German Reich!

Generations will come and generations will pass. They will reflect on the twenty years of absence of this city from the annals of German history as a sad epoch. And they will not only think the same of the year 1918, but they will also think with pride of the period of Germany's resurrection. And they will remember the German Reich, that Reich which has now brought together all German tribes to form one unity for which we shall stand up until we draw our last breath.

To this Germany, to this German Volksgemeinschaft of all German tribes, to this Greater German Reich—*Sieg Heil!*

On September 20, a delegation of Japanese officers called at the Zoppot Casino Hotel at 6:30 p.m. General Count Terauchi and Admiral Osumi headed the delegation which had originally been en route to attend the Reich Party Congress of Peace. At Naples, news of Hitler's war had caught them by surprise. Half an hour before their meeting with Hitler, Ribbentrop had received the Japanese and instructed them about Hitler's latest assessment of German-Japanese relations. Hitler gave the Japanese a lengthy explanation of the motives for his aggression against Poland. He emphasized the successes of the German Wehrmacht, and thereupon set out to discuss relations with Tokyo. According to the records of the meeting, Hitler stressed the following points:¹⁰⁸⁹

1. Germany and Japan were the only two Great Powers between which there were no conflicts of political interest.
2. In addition, the two states and also Italy were young, aspiring nations of whose rise England was envious. The Foreign Minister added that he was firmly convinced that Japan would be very deeply affected by the fate of Germany. If Germany fared well in Europe Japan would also fare well in East Asia; but if things went wrong for Germany, they would go wrong for Japan, too. On the other hand, Germany was in like manner interested in the success of Japan in East Asia. He was convinced of this now and had been for a long time.
3. Both were martial peoples and the bond of the soldierly spirit made understanding easier.

These compliments apparently rang false in the ears of the Japanese who undoubtedly recalled how Hitler had deceived them the month before, regarding his new relations with Russia. The German protocol merely remarked that Terauchi "confined himself mainly to listening and to remarking that this was also his opinion."

The itinerary of the Japanese delegation for the next day was occupied nearly entirely by viewing the fortifications in the West, while Hitler sought to impress Germany's incomparable military might upon his guests from the Far East.

In the morning of September 21, Hitler visited the Westerplatte and boarded the *Schleswig-Holstein*, which had fired the first shots in the war against Poland. The crew lined up in parade formation and the Führer, relishing his new role as victorious military commander, solemnly stepped up to review them. Afterwards, Hitler proceeded to Gdingen (now called Gotenhafen) and reviewed the troops lined up in parade formation here, too. Göring joined Hitler at this point. Together they toured the combat area in the proximity of Oxhoeft.¹⁰⁹⁰

On September 22, Hitler flew to join the Army Group North stationed in the area between Warsaw and Minsk. On this occasion, he also visited with the staff of the army surrounding Warsaw. With the help of a telescope, Hitler viewed one of the city's suburbs called Praga.¹⁰⁹¹

At nearly the same time, Colonel General von Fritsch was allegedly killed in combat, fighting on the streets in one of Warsaw's other suburbs.¹⁰⁹² Hitler barely took note when the news reached him.¹⁰⁹³ Fritsch had been one of the few prominent figures in the Army to outspokenly oppose Hitler's war policy. Had his death not been so timely, Hitler undoubtedly would have seen to his removal by force in much the same manner as with his predecessor Schleicher.

Returning to Zoppot, General Jodl, Wehrmacht Chief of Operations, briefed those present on the situation and, in this context, stated: "Today one of the best soldiers ever to serve with the German Army fell: Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch."¹⁰⁹⁴ In reply to Jodl's remark, Hitler hypocritically declared: "Oh, if only I had not permitted his deployment!"

In commemoration of Fritsch, Hitler issued the following order of the day which, while published in the Army Law Gazette, was not made available to the general public:¹⁰⁹⁵

On September 22, the former Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, was killed in action before Warsaw. With a burning desire to join the ranks of the Army, in this struggle for the vital rights of the Volk to whom his life belonged, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, as chief of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment, accompanied his regiment in the Polish campaign. With his regiment he shared all battles the East Prussian Army engaged in.

The morning of September 22 sees him in the front line before Warsaw. Here the Colonel General falls prey to enemy machine gun fire, amidst young soldiers. The German Wehrmacht lowers its flags in deference to this great model and example of German soldierly spirit. At the barracks of the Twelfth Artillery Regiment flags shall fly at half-mast until the funeral as an external symbol of commemoration.

Führer Headquarters, September 22, 1939

The Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, Adolf Hitler

The German public was informed of Fritsch's death with laconic brevity:¹⁰⁹⁶

Berlin, September 23

Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch was killed in action in the battles before Warsaw on September 22. The Führer and Supreme Commander of the

Wehrmacht paid homage to General von Fritsch in an order of the day. The Führer has ordered a state funeral.¹⁰⁹⁷

On September 25, Hitler wired his congratulations to Christian X, King of Denmark, who was to celebrate his sixty-ninth birthday the following day.¹⁰⁹⁸ Later, Hitler again viewed the front lines from the air in the Bzura area.¹⁰⁹⁹

On that same day, he signed "Directive No. 4 for the Conduct of the War."¹¹⁰⁰

Führer Headquarters, September 25, 1939
CHEFSACHE (TOP SECRET MILITARY)

1. No final decision has yet been made regarding the political future of the erstwhile Polish territory between the line of demarcation and the German frontier.

After the conclusion of the battles around Warsaw and Modlin, the line of demarcation is to be safeguarded adequately by less heavily equipped units.

Sufficient Army and Luftwaffe units are to be left in the East to put a quick end to Polish resistance continuing behind the line of demarcation (San-Vistula-Narew-Pissa). I request a report regarding the strength of forces earmarked for both of these tasks.

2. I shall decide later, in accordance with the results of local attacks and attrition warfare, on whether Modlin and the part of Warsaw west of the Vistula are to be taken by a general attack before October 3. However, this attack is to be prepared.

3. The flow of refugees from the east to the west across the line of demarcation is to be stopped immediately, with the exception of *Volksdeutsch* elements and Ukrainian activists.

4. The decision regarding the future strategy of the war will be made shortly.

Up to that time the measures of the Wehrmacht with regard to organization and armament are to be such as will not conflict with any possible decision. The possibility must be kept open for an offensive in the West at any time.

In East Prussia sufficient forces must be kept in readiness to occupy Lithuania quickly, even in the case of armed resistance.

5. (a) On land the directives already given for the war in the West will, for the time being, remain in effect.

(b) At sea the former limitations are cancelled, and warfare on merchant shipping is to be conducted against France as well as Britain in accordance with prize law.

In addition the following operations may be carried out: Attacks upon French naval and air forces, French merchant vessels in convoy, and all troop transports; mining operations off the North African coast (embarkation points); war on merchant shipping by naval air units, in accordance with prize law.

As heretofore, no attacks are to be made on liners or large steamers which are evidently carrying passengers in large numbers in addition to goods.

(c) In the air, in the West, the limitations hitherto prevailing remain in force. Flights beyond the German border are permitted only for short-range or combat reconnaissance and for attacks upon artillery fire-control planes and captive balloons. The Luftwaffe may also carry out operations in the Bay of Heligoland, in the western declared mine areas, and in direct support of naval operations against British or French naval units.

Permission for long-range reconnaissance will be given at a later date.

6. With regard to submarine warfare, from now on only the following designations are to be used:

For submarine warfare in compliance with prize law: Warfare against merchant shipping (*Handelskrieg*).

For unrestricted submarine warfare: Naval siege of the British Isles (*Belagerung Englands zur See*).

7. British merchant vessels which are armed beyond any doubt may be attacked by submarines without warning.

Adolf Hitler

On September 25 also, Hitler sent a telegram to Tiso to thank him for the military assistance Slovakia had rendered in the war against Poland. The wire read:¹¹⁰¹

Dear Minister-President!

I feel compelled, after conclusion of the Polish campaign, to thank you, dear Minister President, the Slovak Armed Forces, and the Slovak people for the determined stand and the demonstrated comradeship in arms. You may rest assured that the German Volk and its Government greatly appreciate this attitude and fully reciprocate the proven conviction.

Adolf Hitler

At this time, Hitler awarded the Iron Cross to the Slovak Minister of Defense, General Catlos, and to two additional Slovak generals. Moreover, he granted Slovakia a strip of land in Poland.¹¹⁰²

Indeed, he was most "generous" in his dealings with obedient vassal states. He would have been as liberal in his recognition of Polish assistance had Warsaw shown greater tolerance for his desires and helped Germany in its planned aggression against Russia. However, the Poles had refused him and now, alas, they were left to bear the consequences.

On September 26, the Führer Headquarters were relocated to Berlin in a timely fashion, i.e. just after the state funeral for Fritsch had ended. Major General Erwin Rommel¹¹⁰³ had headed military operations on this first outing. A special Kommando unit had been delegated to accompany the Führer Headquarters wherever it went, and a party

from the Foreign Ministry joined it. Simultaneously, the so-called *Begleitbataillon des Führers* ("Escort Battalion of the Führer"), guard units dispatched to do duty at the Führer Headquarters and to assure his safety on the various journeys undertaken, set up temporary quarters at the barracks of the "General Göring Regiment" located in Berlin-Reinickendorf. Hitler awarded the guard units their own banner adorned with the "Führer emblem and the sovereign symbol of the Reich."

Ribbentrop meanwhile was preparing for his visit to Moscow, whither he was to fly aboard the *Grenzmark*, to discuss further the "border and friendship treaty." In the interim, Hitler received Birger Dahlerus once again, in the presence of Göring.¹¹⁰⁴ The Swede had spent the preceding days largely in Oslo, where a section of the British Embassy staff previously located in Berlin had retreated. Dahlerus labored to convince Hitler that it might still be possible at this point, even after the conquest of Poland, to reach an understanding with England. Apparently, Dahlerus was acting not on official instructions by the British Government since, after all, it had publicly stated that it stood determined to see this confrontation through to the end. On the other hand, the English experts—who had long had intelligence of Hitler's absurd fancies of obtaining England's friendship—might have deliberately set up Dahlerus to win time by dissuading Hitler from taking military steps against the Empire. Whatever may have been the case, Dahlerus' words on the British intentions for peace were, naturally, all grist for Hitler's mill.

By way of introduction, Dahlerus pointed out:

... that the British were such great egoists that they were now deliberating, in view of the present situation, how they could extricate themselves from the whole affair. [—] Poland was considered lost, so they took the position that it was now a matter of at least saving their own skins.

Hitler apparently felt he had to play the skeptic and retorted:

... that the worst of it was that the British had always considered everything pure bluff and immediately interpreted all restraint and patience on his part as weakness. Because he (the Führer) had for years put up with certain things from the Poles, because there was not always immediate resort to shooting, England had come to the false conclusion of mistaking for weakness the considerateness and forbearance of the Führer. The British were now trying something similar with their declaration of a three-year war. If Germany declared that this threat was a matter of indifference to her, that, too, would be considered bluffing. But they should not let themselves be

deceived about the Führer; he would soon wage war toward the West, also, in such a way as to stun the British. He had destroyed Poland in three weeks. The British should stop and think what could happen to them in three months.

The Führer then stressed the fact that he had always come out for friendship with England, but that today an abysmal hatred for England was gradually spreading among the German people. The British were now foolishly also dropping leaflets which bore witness to their absolute ignorance of the German frame of mind. Particularly when they attacked a person like the Führer, to whom Germany looked with gratitude, this produced a state of mind in the German people which made agreement with England more and more difficult. The British would by this method finally drive things so far that a rapprochement with England would be impossible because the people would not want it. If the British, instead of a three-year war, contemplated a seven-year war, or one even longer, Germany would survive it, too, and in the end turn England completely into a heap of ruins. [—]

Germany had won a victory in Poland which was without precedent in history.

In 14 days he had completely destroyed a country of 36 million inhabitants which had an army of 45 divisions, in part well equipped, and whose soldiers had fought bravely. In these circumstances, the Führer had no intention of allowing anyone to interfere in the solution of the Polish question. Moreover, the Russians also had a weighty word to say in the matter. They, too, had occupied large portions of Poland.

The Führer pointed out in this connection that in view of the campaign of lies directed against him and Germany because of an alleged German lust for conquest, he was now completely disinterested himself in all regions that did not affect Germany's interests. It was a matter of complete indifference to him whether another country appropriated territory anywhere outside the German sphere of interest.¹¹⁰⁵ [—]

Then Hitler advised the English how to proceed so that he could "join in guaranteeing the status quo in Europe:"

If the British still wanted to salvage something of Poland he could only advise them to hasten the peace discussions. Beyond this he was entirely prepared to join in guaranteeing the status quo of the rest of Europe. [—]

If the British desired peace in Europe they should make it clearly understood. Germany would in any case be prepared for it, for she needed peace in order to cultivate the newly acquired areas in the East that had formerly belonged to the German cultural sphere. This would require at least fifty years. [—]

If the British actually wanted peace, the Führer continued, they could have it in two weeks without losing face. A prerequisite for this, to be sure, was that they reconcile themselves to the fact that Poland could not again arise. Russia, too, had something to say about the matter and was not inclined to give up again the areas she occupied. [—]

The question arose as to what the British wanted in Europe. He, the Führer, was prepared to guarantee them security for their own country, as he had previously done when he had concluded the Naval Agreement with England, which he had not terminated until the British took a hostile attitude. For France he was prepared to give a guarantee forthwith. The West Wall was the unalterable western border of Germany. He had repeatedly offered guarantees for Belgium and Holland. He was prepared to incorporate all these things in a European treaty. He could only repeat once more that Germany did not wish any conquests in the west or in the Balkans; in the Balkans she had only commercial interests.

Thereupon followed an avid discussion amongst Hitler, Dahlerus, and Göring, on which person would be the best suited to approach the British Government with suggestions for renewed talks: the Duce, the Queen of the Netherlands, or perhaps the British General Ironside. Finally it was agreed to try to arrange for a meeting of intermediaries in the Netherlands. At the conclusion of the conversation, Hitler evidently felt it necessary to impart to Dahlerus threats to be communicated to London:

... the British could have peace if they wanted it, but they would have to hurry, for not for long would leaflets alone be dropped. [—]

The world would be amazed when once it perceived what Germany was producing in the way of airplanes, arms, ammunition, submarines, and E-boats (*Schnellboote*). So if peace was wanted, one would have to hurry somewhat. A way could then perhaps be found. At the same time, of course, the honor of a victorious army would by all means have to be respected.

After the talk, Hitler once more thought a decisive step towards a definite Anglo-German peace settlement had been made. The pending new agreement with the Soviet Union would further propel matters in this direction. Should the English again ignore his beckoning, his well-meant call for peace, then Hitler was determined to launch an attack in the West. This would give the West a healthy fright, undoubtedly. First, he would march into Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg. Then, he would deal summarily with France, the British outpost on the mainland. Nonetheless, he would be careful to spare the English themselves as far as possible, since he still wanted them to become Germany's allies in the quest for new Lebensraum in the East. Therefore, he resolved to merely drive them "back to the Thames."¹¹⁰⁶

According to Brauchitsch's testimony before the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, Hitler informed the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht of his intentions to this effect in a briefing of September 27, where he scheduled the initial attack for November 12.¹¹⁰⁷

On September 27 also, Hitler received the newly appointed Turkish Ambassador R. Hüsrev Gerede, who called at the Reich Chancellery to present his credentials. Nothing was published on the contents of his conversation with the German Head of State.¹¹⁰⁸ This notwithstanding, surviving notes taken by State Secretary von Weizsäcker reported the following:¹¹⁰⁹

At today's reception of the new Turkish Ambassador, the Führer spoke at length and in a friendly manner about German-Turkish relations. To be sure, he twice brought up certain unfriendly tendencies in the Turkish press, but explained to the new Ambassador, by referring to historic events¹¹¹⁰ and certain ideological parallels, that good political and especially economic relations were advisable and rich in prospects.

On September 28, Hitler "unexpectedly" stopped over in Wilhelmshaven. The German News Bureau reported the following on the visit:¹¹¹¹

Wilhelmshaven, September 28

In Wilhelmshaven today, the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, in the company of the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Grand Admiral Raeder, unexpectedly visited the crews of German U-boats which have returned from successful operational cruises to their home ports. He thanked the officers and men, many of whom already wore the Iron Cross on their chests, for their admirable and brave service. In this context, he expressed his appreciation of their great successes. During a comradely get-together afterwards, the men of the German U-boat fleet related their voyages and successes for their Führer and Supreme Commander.

Signature of the "German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty" was scheduled for September 28 in Moscow. Negotiations had not gone as well as anticipated. This was due largely to Stalin's demand that the spheres of interest, as delineated in late August, be revised: the Soviet Union desired possession of Lithuania. In return, while previously the Vistula and San rivers had constituted the border of Germany's sphere stretching into Poland, the Reich was to be accorded all lands up to the Bug river. The Russians valued the Baltic States as a buffer in the event of a German aggression against their sovereign territory. For reasons of both foreign and domestic policy, the Soviet Government apparently thought it opportune to restrict themselves to the Belorussian and Ukrainian strips of land in Poland. Ribbentrop would have liked to see the German side claim the oil-rich territories of Drohobycz and Boryslav. Yet the only additional terrain yielded was Suwalki, between East Prussia and Lithuania.

September 28, 1939

Having obtained Hitler's consent by phone, Ribbentrop and his Soviet counterparts proceeded with the signature of the treaty.¹¹¹² It read:¹¹¹³

German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty
Moscow, September 28, 1939

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR consider it as exclusively their task, after the disintegration of the former Polish state, to re-establish peace and order in these territories and to assure to the peoples living there a peaceful life in keeping with their national character. To this end, they have agreed upon the following:

Article I

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR determine as the boundary of their respective national interests in the territory of the former Polish state the line marked on the attached map¹¹¹⁴ which shall be described in more detail in a supplementary protocol.

Article II

Both parties recognize the boundary of the respective national interests established in article I as definitive and shall reject any interference of third powers in this settlement.

Article III

The necessary reorganization of public administration will be effected in the areas west of the line specified in article I by the Government of the German Reich, in the areas east of this line by the Government of the USSR.

Article IV

The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR regard this settlement as a firm foundation for a progressive development of the friendly relations between their peoples.

Article V

This treaty shall be ratified and the ratification shall be exchanged in Berlin as soon as possible. The treaty becomes effective upon signature.

Done in duplicate, in the German and Russian languages.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop

By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

In addition to the treaty, three secret protocols were also signed in Moscow that day, none of which was published:¹¹¹⁵

Confidential Protocol

The Government of the USSR shall place no obstacles in the way of Reich nationals and other persons of German descent residing in its sphere of influence if they desire to migrate to Germany or to the German sphere of influence. It agrees that such removals shall be carried out by agents of the Government of the Reich in cooperation with the competent local authorities and that the property rights of the emigrants shall be protected.¹¹¹⁶

September 28, 1939

A corresponding obligation is assumed by the Government of the German Reich in respect to the persons of Ukrainian or White Russian descent residing in its sphere of influence.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

Secret Additional Protocol

The undersigned plenipotentiaries declare the agreement of the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR upon the following:¹¹¹⁷

The Secret Additional Protocol signed on August 23, 1939,¹¹¹⁸ shall be amended in item 1 to the effect that the territory of the Lithuanian state falls to the sphere of influence of the USSR, while, on the other hand, the province of Lublin and parts of the province of Warsaw fall to the sphere of influence of Germany (cf. the map attached to the Boundary and Friendship Treaty signed today). As soon as the Government of the USSR shall take special measures on Lithuanian territory to protect its interests, the present German-Lithuanian border, for the purpose of a natural and simple boundary delineation, shall be rectified in such a way that the Lithuanian territory situation to the southwest of the line marked on the attached map falls to Germany.¹¹¹⁹

Further it is declared that the economic agreements now in force between Germany and Lithuania shall not be affected by the measures of the Soviet Union referred to above.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

Secret Additional Protocol

The undersigned plenipotentiaries, on concluding the German-Russian Boundary and Friendship Treaty, have declared their agreement upon the following:

Both parties will tolerate in their territories no Polish agitation which affects the territories of the other party. They will suppress in their territories all beginnings of such agitation and inform each other concerning suitable measures for this purpose.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

The talks in Moscow also opened prospects for the conclusion of a large-scale economic agreement. The German press carried an exchange of correspondence by Ribbentrop and Molotov on this subject.¹¹²⁰ A joint statement of the Reich Government and the Soviet Government received explicit mention in the German press as Hitler accorded it paramount importance. He hoped this statement would greatly impress peace activists in England.

Bold-faced headlines announced the publication of this declaration, which read:¹¹²¹

After the Government of the German Reich and the Government of the USSR have, by means of the treaty signed today, definitely settled the problems arising from the disintegration of the Polish state and have thereby created a firm foundation for a lasting peace in Eastern Europe, they mutually express their conviction that it would serve the true interest of all peoples to put an end to the state of war existing at present between Germany on the one side and England and France on the other. Both Governments will therefore direct their common efforts, jointly with other friendly powers if occasion arises, toward attaining this goal as soon as possible.

Should, however, the efforts of the two Governments remain fruitless, this would demonstrate the fact that England and France are responsible for the continuation of the war, whereupon, in case of the continuation of the war, the Governments of Germany and of the USSR shall engage in mutual consultations with regard to necessary measures.

For the Government of the German Reich: v. Ribbentrop
By authority of the Government of the USSR: V. Molotov

The author of this “joint declaration” undoubtedly was Hitler. It singularly served his aims, namely, to exert pressure on the British to conclude an early peace.

Should they prove recalcitrant once again, they would have to face joint German-Soviet action “with regard to necessary measures.” This in particular was to create the impression that the Russians would declare war on England should it fail to comply with Hitler’s persistent demands.

The further course of events clearly demonstrated how naive this notion was on the part of Hitler. The English were better able to judge the situation, and to foresee future developments, than to fall for so obvious a ploy.

On September 29, Ribbentrop returned from his trip to Moscow. Only half an hour after his arrival at Berlin-Tempelhof, Hitler called him to the Reich Chancellery for a report on his undertakings.¹¹²² Later the same day, Hitler penned a congratulatory telegram to Franco on the anniversary of the Spanish dictator’s taking office.¹¹²³

The next day, Hitler summoned the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht to the Reich Chancellery. He also received the commanders of the units deployed in the Polish campaign, upon whom he bestowed the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.¹¹²⁴

On September 30 also, Hitler signed another directive for the conduct of the war. It concerned mainly the ramifications of the

conclusion of the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty regarding the situation inside Poland and read:¹¹²⁵

Directive No. 5 for the Conduct of the War

1. After concluding the Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, with Russia, it is intended to regulate the political organization of the former Polish territories within the German sphere of interest according to the following guiding principles:

a. The new political frontier of the Reich in the East will, in general, include the former German-colonized area and, in addition, those territories which are especially valuable for reasons of military expediency, war economy, or communications. The final demarcation line has not yet been settled in detail. I request that suggestions on this subject be submitted to me through the OKW.

b. The present line of demarcation (Prissa-Narew-Vistula-San) will be constantly strengthened as a military security belt towards the East. The required garrisons are also to be permanently located beyond the German political frontier. I likewise request suggestions regarding location of this security line in detail, to be submitted to me through the OKW.

c. The line laid down according to the Russian Boundary and Friendship Treaty, the details of which are expected to be settled by a supplementary protocol, is to be considered the limit of the German sphere of interest as far as Russia is concerned.

d. I myself shall set up the political organization of the territory between this line and the new political boundary of the German Reich.

2. First of all, the entire territory of the former Polish state, up to the line established in the Russian Boundary and Friendship Treaty and including the Suvalki triangle, will be organized under a Military Government controlled by the Commander in Chief, Army. I request the Commander in Chief, Army to submit to me at an early date the measures required for bringing about the following:

a. The pacification of the territories to be occupied. The time will be settled after the conclusion of the Moscow agreements.

b. The occupation of the security line along the former line of demarcation.

c. The occupation of the entire territory by occupation troops. This mission is to be accomplished east of the military security line with minimum forces after pacification has been completed. The Commander in Chief, Air will leave in the East the forces required by the Command in Chief, Army for this mission.

d. The subdivision of the military government territory into districts or else the extension of existing military government districts to include the newly acquired territories.

3. On the basis of the latest political developments, the troops intended for East Prussia in accordance with Directive No. 4, paragraph 4, last sentence, do not need to be held in readiness.

4. The restrictions hitherto prevailing for naval warfare against France are cancelled. The war at sea is to be fought against France just as against Britain.

The war against merchant shipping is, on the whole, to be fought according to prize law, with the following exceptions: Merchantmen and troopships recognized beyond doubt as hostile may be attacked without warning. The same applies to ships sailing without lights in the waters around the British Isles.

Armed force is to be employed against merchantmen which use their radio transmitters when stopped.

As before, no attacks are to be made upon passenger vessels or large steamships that appear to be carrying passengers in large numbers as well as goods.

5. For air warfare in the West the restrictions in force until now will remain in effect. Flights across the Reich border are permitted for short-range and combat reconnaissance, for attacks upon artillery fire-control planes and captive balloons, and, to a limited degree, for long-range reconnaissance for the Commander in Chief, Air. The Army's requests for long-range reconnaissance are to be handled through direct cooperation between Army and Luftwaffe.

Furthermore, the Luftwaffe is authorized to carry out offensive actions in the North Sea against British and French naval forces at sea, and to carry on the war against merchant shipping according to prize law.

6. The orders under paragraphs 4 and 5 will replace paragraphs 5b, 5c, and 7 of Directive No. 4 for the Conduct of the War.

Adolf Hitler

On September 30 also, Hitler received Chvalkovsky, now serving as the envoy of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, for talks at the Reich Chancellery.¹¹²⁶ Furthermore, Hitler appointed Lieutenant Commander Captain von Puttkammer Adjutant with the War Navy, effective as of October 1, 1939.¹¹²⁷

On October 1, Hitler once more found occasion to stage an evening gala reception at the Reich Chancellery, since Ciano had arrived in the Reich capital earlier that afternoon. The Italian Foreign Minister had departed from Berlin on August 13, "completely disgusted with the Germans, with their leader, with their way of doing things."¹¹²⁸ Apparently, his disgust had faded by the time Ribbentrop informed him on September 30 that Hitler requested to see either Mussolini or him. At once, Ciano rushed to heed Hitler's summons.

Barely one hour after his train had pulled into the capital, Ciano found himself at the Chancellery. The meeting which began at 6:45 p.m. lasted nearly two-and-a-half hours, according to the German protocol.¹¹²⁹ As Ciano recorded, Hitler's customary monologue occupied the better part of the first two hours.¹¹³⁰ Although he said "nothing new"—as Schmidt, who was present in his capacity as interpreter, later recalled¹¹³¹—Hitler displayed his command of figures in order to

impress Ciano. In an endless sequence he produced the precise numbers of prisoners of war taken; of plunder obtained; of dead and wounded in the Polish campaign; of enemy planes downed; of Polish ships sunk. Hitler did not fail to make an impression on Ciano, who recapitulated this particular encounter with the Führer in the following manner:

I found Hitler very serene. At Salzburg the inner struggle of this man, decided upon action but not yet sure of his means and of his calculations, was apparent. Now, on the other hand, he seems absolutely sure of himself. The test he has met has given him confidence for future tests. He was wearing a green-gray jacket with his usual black trousers. His face bore traces of recent fatigue, but this was not reflected in the alertness of his mind.

Hitler spoke for almost two hours and cited figure after figure without referring to a single note. With respect to Italy, his attitude was the same as before. What is past is past. From now on he looks to the future and wants to have us with him. But I must say that all our suggestions as to military collaboration have been discussed quite openly. What most impressed me is his confidence in ultimate victory. Either he is under hallucinations, or he really is a genius. He outlines plans of action and cites dates with an assurance that does not admit contradiction.

Ciano left Berlin at noon on October 2. Hitler sent Keitel to bid Ciano farewell at the train.¹¹³²

German troops occupied Warsaw on October 1 and October 2. In celebration Hitler ordered church bells to ring throughout the Reich from noon to 1:00 p.m. daily for the next seven days.¹¹³³

On October 5, Hitler himself journeyed to Warsaw to attend the victory parade there. It was the first and last such celebration which Hitler ordered in the capital city of a conquered country in the course of the Second World War. At 11:30 a.m., Hitler landed at the Kielce airport. There a delegation greeted him consisting of Colonel General von Rundstedt and the generals Blaskowitz and von Reichenau. The Eighth Army troop parade filed through the Ujazdowski Avenue, in Warsaw's diplomats' quarter, for two hours. Arms extended in greeting, they passed by in front of their Supreme Commander, who sported a dark leather coat on this occasion.

In the afternoon, Hitler toured the Belvedere Castle where Marshal Pilsudski had lived until his death. The official report detailed:¹¹³⁴

A German Wehrmacht guard of honor stands at the entrance to the Castle. The Führer spends a few minutes in the office of the great deceased who had wrought for his people a peace which the men who seized power upon his demise so shamefully betrayed.

October 5, 1939

Immediately after touring the Castle, Hitler returned to Berlin. On arrival, he penned the following proclamation:¹¹³⁵

Berlin, October 5, 1939

Soldiers of the Wehrmacht in the East!

On September 1, on my orders, you set out to defend the Reich against the Polish attack. In exemplary comradeship in arms between the Army, the Luftwaffe, and the Navy, you have fulfilled your mission. You have fought courageously and bravely.

Today, I was able to greet the troops engaged against a fortified Warsaw. This day brings to an end a battle which is testimony to the best of German soldiery.

The German Volk proudly joins me in thanking you. Thanks to you, the nation looks once more to its Wehrmacht and leadership with unshakeable faith.

We honor our fallen who gave their lives, as did the two million dead of the World War, so that Germany might live. Beneath the banners flying high and proudly throughout the German lands, we stand closer together than ever before and tie the straps of our helmets tighter.

I know that you are prepared for anything in your belief in Germany.

Adolf Hitler

On October 6, the Reichstag, which Hitler had summoned in celebration of the military victory in Poland, convened. Now that the Wehrmacht had gloriously concluded the campaign, Hitler felt confident he could step before the Reichstag deputies without fear of their reaction to the opening of the war and, above all, of their questions regarding the British declaration of war.

Moreover, Hitler intended to take advantage of the occasion to announce his new “generous offer of peace” publicly before the Reichstag. After all, he reasoned, why had England declared war on Germany? Solely because of Poland, was it not so? Well, Poland no longer existed. Germany and Russia had shared in the spoils. There was no longer a reason for this ludicrous state of war to exist between the Reich and England. He was willing and ready to forget.

These and similar thoughts apparently compelled Hitler forward at this time, as the further course of events clearly demonstrated. His ideas of the English and his knowledge of their sense of honor and determination to fight were so restricted that he actually believed they would contemplate such dishonorable conduct. The war between Germany and Britain had barely started, the English had not yet been beaten in even one encounter, and already Hitler thought they were so desperate as to abandon their obligations to Poland and to grasp

eagerly his hand extended in friendship. Hitler did not stand alone in self-deception. Even in 1941, one of the leading members of the German resistance movement, Carl Goerdeler, the former Mayor of Leipzig, who sought to succeed Hitler after his death, was to submit similar proposals for British consideration. Goerdeler even demanded a return of Germany's colonies in his advances to London.¹¹³⁶

Hitler might well have been less confident in his speech of October 6 had he taken seriously the reaction his proposals, relayed to London by Dahlerus, had elicited in Great Britain. As early as October 1, in a radio broadcast, Churchill had put it in no uncertain terms:¹¹³⁷

Directions have been given by the Government to prepare for a war of at least three years. That does not mean that victory may not be gained in a shorter time. How soon it will be gained depends upon how long Herr Hitler and his group of wicked men, whose hands are stained with blood and soiled with corruption, can keep their grip upon the docile, unhappy German people.

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough. [—]

Our desire to see an unarmed world was proclaimed as the proof of our decay. Now we have begun. Now we are going on. Now, with the help of God, and with the conviction that we are the defenders of civilization and freedom, we are going to persevere to the end.

After all, Great Britain and France together are eighty-five millions, even in their homelands alone. They are united in their cause; they are convinced of their duty. Nazidom, with all its tyrannical power, controls no more than that. They, too, have eighty-five millions; but of these at least sixteen millions are newly conquered Czechs, Slovaks and Austrians, who are writhing under their cruel yoke and have to be held down by main force.

We have other resources. We have the oceans, and with the oceans the assurance that we can bring the vast latent power of the British and French Empires to bear upon the decisive points. We have the freely given ardent support of the twenty millions of British citizens in the self-governing Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. We have, I believe, the heart and the moral conviction of India on our side. We believe we are entitled to the respect and good will of the world, and particularly of the United States.

These statements were only empty phrases in the eyes of Hitler. They constituted nothing other than "the antics (*Blödeleien*) of British phrasemongers."¹¹³⁸

Hitler began his speech before the Reichstag on October 6 in the following manner:¹¹³⁹

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

In a most fateful hour, my Deputies, you met here on September 1 of this year as the representatives of the German Volk. At the time, I had to inform you of the difficult decisions forced on me by the intransigent, provocative attitude of a certain state.

Five weeks have passed since. When I asked you to come here once more today, I did so in order to render account of the past and to afford you the necessary insight into the present situation and the future, insofar as this is possible.

For two days now, the flags and symbols of our new Reich have decorated our cities, markets, and villages. With bells ringing, the German Volk celebrates this great victory, which, in its own way, is unique in history. After all, a state of thirty-six million inhabitants stood up against us, with an army of fifty infantry and cavalry divisions. Its goals were far-reaching ones, its confidence in the destruction of the German Reich was seen as a matter of course.

Only eight days after the beginning of this war, the dice fell. Wherever Polish troops clashed with German units, they were either repelled or beaten. The daring structure of Poland's offensive strategy against German Reich territory pitifully collapsed after the first forty-eight hours of the campaign. After death-defying attacks and unrivaled marches, the German divisions—the Luftwaffe, Panzer force, and units of the Navy—took the initiative. Not for one moment could it be wrestled from them again. After only fourteen days, the majority of the Polish Army had either dispersed, had been taken prisoner, or had been encircled. In this period, the German armies had covered distances and occupied territories whose mastering, twenty-five years ago, had necessitated more than fourteen months.

After these introductory comments, Hitler turned his attention to the resistance mounted in the cities of Warsaw, Modlin, and Hela. The opposition to the German occupation had lasted well into the month of October, in spite of Hitler's assurances that operations had been brought to a "successful conclusion" by September 18. Understandably, this greatly irritated him. He began to claim that this resistance had been possible due solely to his "sense of responsibility" toward the civilian population in Poland and toward the German soldier. Had he so desired, Warsaw could have been in German hands as early as September 10. Hitler argued:

While a number of particularly spirited newspaper strategists elsewhere in the world have sought to portray the speed of this campaign as a disappointment for Germany, we all nonetheless know that, to date, there has hardly been a greater achievement testifying to such high soldiership recorded in the history of war. That remnants of the Polish armies were able to hold on until October 1 in Warsaw, Modlin, and Hela, was not a result of their capabilities, but of our cool prudence and our sense of responsibility.

I forbid the sacrifice of more men than absolutely necessary. This means: I consciously freed the German leadership in the war of the view, which was still prevalent in the World War, that, for reasons of prestige, certain tasks have to be solved within a certain time at all costs. What absolutely needs to be done will be done, irrespective of sacrifice. What can be done without, will remain undone.

It would not have been a problem for us to break the resistance in Warsaw by September 10 or September 12, as we did break it from September 25 to September 27. For one thing, I sought to spare the lives of Germans. Second, I still cherished the hope, though it was a deceptive one, that, for once, a sense of responsibility and reason would prevail over this irresponsible madness on the Polish side.

On a small scale, the same drama repeated itself here, which we had already been forced to witness before to a larger extent. The attempt to convince the person responsible for the leadership of the Polish troops—insofar as he even existed—of the senselessness, the craziness, of resistance in a city of millions, failed. A Generalissimo, who himself took to flight in a less-than-glorious fashion, forced on the capital of his country a resistance which could only lead to its destruction.

When it had been realized that the fortifications would not withstand a German assault, the entire city was transformed into a fortress, with barricades crisscrossing it. Batteries took up position in all squares, all streets, and all courtyards. Thousands of machinegun hideouts were mounted and the citizens were called on to take part in the fighting. Out of pity for the women and children, I offered the ruling powers in Warsaw to permit at least the civilian population to evacuate the city. I had hostilities suspended and the necessary exit routes secured. And we all waited in vain for a parliamentarian to appear, as we had waited in vain for a Polish negotiator at the end of August. The proud Polish commandant of the city did not even honor us with a reply.

I had the deadlines extended just in case. I instructed bombers and heavy artillery to attack only purely military objects. I repeated my request. It again was futile. I then offered not to shell one part of the city, Praga, and instead to reserve it for the civilian population, so that it might have the opportunity to withdraw there. The Poles again showed their contempt for this suggestion. Twice I made an effort to remove the international colony from the city. Only after encountering numerous difficulties, this attempt finally succeeded, although, in the case of the Russians, only at the last minute.

I then ordered the attack begun on September 25. The same defenders, who had first felt it was beneath their dignity to even consider these humanitarian proposals, then swiftly shifted their ground. On September 25, the German attack began, and on September 27, they capitulated.

With over 120,000 men, they did not have the courage—as our German General Litzmann once had lying before Brzeziny with much inferior forces—to make a daring sortie. Instead, they chose to lay down their arms. One should not make a comparison between this and Alcázar.¹¹⁴⁰ There, for weeks, the Spanish heroes heroically braved heavy attacks and rightly gained

immortality thereby. Here, however, a great city was unscrupulously left to destruction only to capitulate after forty-eight hours. While the individual Polish soldier fought bravely in some locations, his leadership can only be described, from top to bottom, as irresponsible, unscrupulous, and incompetent. Outside of Hela, I ordered the sacrifice of not a single man without thorough preparation. There, too, the city surrendered only after the German attack had finally been announced and had actually begun.

I am making these statements, my Deputies, to preclude the creation of historic myths. For, if this campaign should ever generate such a myth, then this myth should only tell the story of the German musketeer who, both in the offensive and on the march, has added yet another page to his own eternal, glorious history. This myth should form around the heavy weaponry which, after exertions beyond words, came to the rescue of this infantry. Worthy of this myth also are the black-clad men (*schwarze Männer*) of our Panzer forces whose bold determination, without regard to the superior strength and resistance [of the enemy], brought the attack up to the front time and time again. Finally, this myth should glorify our airmen who, undaunted by death, knew that every downing which did not kill them in the air would lead to a terrible massacre on the ground. Nevertheless, they persevered steadfastly and persistently, attacking with bombs and machine guns when ordered to do so and when a target came into view. The same holds true for our U-boat heroes.

When, within four weeks, a state of thirty-six million inhabitants and of such military force is completely destroyed, and when, during this period, the victor does not experience a single setback, then this is evidence not of fortune's favor, but of the most excellent training, the best leadership, and the most death-defying valor.

German soldiery has once more firmly clasped the laurel wreath, which had been craftily snatched from the German soldier in 1918 and presses it onto its head. In profound gratitude and deeply moved, we all stand before the many unknown and indescribably brave men of our German Volk. For the first time, they have taken their place, coming from all of the Gaus of Greater Germany. The blood shed together will bind them even more closely together than any construction of constitutional law ever could.

The consciousness of the strength of our Wehrmacht fills all of us with self-assured calm since it has proven its power not only in the attack, but also in the retaining of what has been acquired. The excellent training of the individual officer and man has stood the test to the utmost. The exceedingly low casualty figures are to be ascribed to this. While individually painful, the losses in sum are far below what we believed we had to expect. And yet the casualty total does not draw an accurate picture of the toughness of the individual battle. After all, there are regiments and divisions whose blood sacrifice was heavy because either superior Polish units attacked them or they encountered them in the course of their own attack.

From the rapid succession of battles and struggles, I will cite only two episodes as examples for many: Just as the divisions of the Army of General von Blaskowitz were moving in echelon against Warsaw along the left flank

of the Army of General von Reichenau, who was charging in the direction of the Weichsel river, with the mission of repulsing the attack of the Central Polish Army on his flank, its full thrust suddenly hit the marching armies of General von Blaskowitz at a moment when the Polish armies were assumed to be retreating to the Weichsel river. This was a desperate attempt by the Poles to break out of the ring surrounding them. Four Polish divisions and several cavalry units threw themselves against the German lines formed by one active German division spread out along a front of nearly thirty kilometers. In spite of the enemy outnumbering it five to one, even six to one, and in spite of the great weariness of the troops, who had been fighting and marching for days, this division countered the attack. At several points, it repulsed the enemy in bloody hand-to-hand fighting. It neither yielded nor retreated until the necessary reinforcements had been brought up. And while enemy radio was already triumphantly disseminating news of a breakthrough at Lodz, the division's general, with his shot-apart arm in splints, reported to me on the course of the attack, on the prevention of the breakthrough, and on the brave conduct of his soldiers. Of course, the losses here were great.

Together with small additional units, a German Landwehr division had the task of forcing the Poles into the northern section of the Corridor, to take Gdingen and to advance in the direction of the Hela peninsula. Facing this Landwehr division were Polish elite forces, shore-based naval troops, schools of officer cadets and non-commissioned officers, sailors, artillery, and cavalry.

With calm resolve, this German Landwehr division approached the fulfillment of its mission, even though this meant facing a numerically far superior opponent. Within the next few days, the Poles were forced to retreat from one position to the next: 12,600 prisoners were taken, Gdingen was liberated, Oxhoeft was taken by storm, another 4,700 men were pushed back to the Hela peninsula and surrounded. The scene which met one's eyes as the prisoners marched off was truly touching: there stood the victors, mostly elderly men with medals of the Great War on their chests, and past them marched the columns of prisoners of war, many of them young men between twenty and twenty-eight years of age.

I ask you to rise, as I now proceed to announce the number of our dead and wounded. While their numbers are but one-twentieth of the figure which we believed we had to anticipate at the beginning of this campaign—thanks to the training of the troops, thanks to the effectiveness of our weaponry, and thanks to the leadership of our units—we should not forget that every single one of those who gave their lives here has sacrificed the greatest good for his Volk and our Reich which a man can give his people.

According to the figures of September 30, 1939, which cannot be expected to be greatly altered subsequently, casualties in the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe, officers included, amount to: 10,572 fallen on the battlefield; 30,322 wounded; 3,409 men missing. Of those missing in action, regrettably, we must consider a part as having been massacred or killed.

We owe gratitude to those who sacrificed themselves during the campaign in Poland, care to the wounded, sympathy and assistance to their families.

The campaign in Poland has come to an end with the fall of the fortresses of Warsaw and Modlin, and the surrender of Hela. The protection of the country against stray marauders, bands of robbers, and single terrorists, is being pursued with determination. The outcome of the battle was the destruction of all Polish armies. This led to the dissolution of the state. 694,000 prisoners have set out on the march to Berlin.¹¹⁴¹ The amount of the captured material cannot yet be ascertained.

Ever since the outbreak of the war, the German Wehrmacht has been standing in calm readiness in the West also, awaiting the enemy. The Reich Navy has done its duty in the battle for the Westerplatte, Gdingen, Oxhoeft, and Hela; in the securing of the Baltic Sea and of the Bay of Heligoland. Our U-boats meanwhile are fighting in a manner worthy of the unforgotten heroes of yesterday.

In view of the historically unique collapse of this so-called body politic, the question no doubt arises for everyone how such a development could come about. The cradle for the Polish state stood at Versailles. Not Poles, but Germans and Russians, made the immeasurable blood sacrifice from which this entity was born. What had proven unfit for life centuries before was now artificially inseminated by a German state leadership, equally unfit for life, in the year 1916, and, no less artificially, was born in 1920.

After this jab at the "German state leadership" of 1916, so infinitely inferior to his own, Hitler turned his attention to the Polish economy in order to vent his anger at the demonstrated inability and arrogance of the Poles. This subject led him to a discussion of the guarantee England had extended to Poland.

No, to extend a guarantee to this state and this state leadership in the manner this was done, could only lead to the greatest of misfortunes. Neither the Polish government, the clique propping it up, nor the people of this Polish state, were capable of assessing the extent of the obligation half of Europe undertook on their behalf. The conduct of the Polish government in the period from April to August of last year was based, on the one hand, on this passion that had been incited, and, on the other hand, on the sense of the security that had been guaranteed the Poles under all circumstances. The reaction to my proposals for pacification also was caused by this.

The government rejected these proposals because it felt that public opinion backed it, perhaps even urged it on. And public opinion backed it and urged it on in this direction because the government did not set the public right and, above all, because it felt sufficiently secure externally at every stage. All this had to lead to an increase in frightful acts of terror against ethnic Germans, to the rejection of all settlement proposals, and, finally, to ever greater incursions into Reich territory.

Given such a mentality, it was understandable that German forbearance was seen as weakness, i.e. that every time Germany yielded this was seen as proof of the opportunity of further forays. The warnings issued to the Polish Government to refrain from harassing Danzig with further ultimatums and,

above all, from strangling the city economically in the long run, did not lead to an easing of the situation. To the contrary, it led to the city being cut off from traffic. The warning to finally stop, that is to counter, the eternal shootings, abuse, and torment of ethnic Germans, led only to an increase in gruesome acts, and to an aggravation of the appeals and inflammatory speeches by the Polish voivodes¹¹⁴² and military rulers. A general mobilization was the answer to the German proposals for arriving, at the last minute, at an acceptable and reasonable settlement. The German request to send a negotiator—in accordance with a suggestion made by England—was not complied with. On the second day, a response arrived in the form of a most injurious declaration.

Under the circumstances, it was clear that, in the event of further attacks on Reich territory, Germany's patience was bound to end. What the Poles mistakenly interpreted as weakness was in reality our sense of responsibility and my will to arrive at an understanding, if this was still possible. However, since they believed that this patience and forbearance, this weakness, allowed them everything, there was no choice but to instruct them of this error and to strike back at them with the same weaponry they employed themselves over the last years. Under the impact of these strikes, this state disintegrated within a few weeks, and was swept away. One of the most nonsensical deeds of Versailles was thus disposed of.

That a community of interests with Russia ensued from this German action was due not only to the similarity of the problems regarding both states, but also to the similarity of the conclusions both states arrived at in the course of reworking their relations with one another.

In my speech at Danzig, I already declared that organizational principles different from our German ones govern Russia. However, since Herr Stalin no longer views these Soviet-Russian principles as an impediment to entering into friendly relations with states of different convictions, National Socialist Germany can no longer see any reason for employing a different means of assessment. Soviet-Russia is Soviet-Russia, National Socialist Germany is National Socialist Germany. One thing is certain: the minute both states agree to respect their different regimes and their respective principles, then there is no longer any cause for animosity to exist between them.

In long periods of history, it has been proven that the peoples of these two greatest states within Europe were the happiest when they lived in friendship with one another. The Great War in which Germany and Russia once struggled against one another has become the misfortune of both countries. It is understandable when the capitalist states of the West today have a vested interest in pitting these two states and their principles against each other, if possible. To this end, they would be willing to regard Soviet Russia as sufficiently presentable, of course, to enter into advantageous military alliances with it. And yet they regard it as perfidious if their most honorable advances are rejected, and if instead those two powers, which have all the more cause to be interested in peaceful cooperation, approach one another to expand their economic relations and thereby to pursue the happiness of their peoples.

Speaking before the Reichstag one month ago, I already declared that concluding the German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact represented a decisive change for German foreign policy in general. The new Boundary and Friendship Treaty concluded between Germany and Russia will secure not only peace for both states, but also render possible a happy, lasting cooperation.¹¹⁴³

Germany and Russia will jointly divorce one of the most dangerous spots of Europe of its threatening character. In this area, they will contribute to the welfare of the human beings living there, and thereby make a contribution to European peace. If certain circles today see in this cause to hope for the ready defeat of Russia or Germany, then allow me to respond: for many years, German foreign policy goals have been credited with characteristics which could only spring from the mentality of a high school student. At a moment when Germany is struggling to consolidate a Lebensraum which encompasses little more than 100,000 square kilometers, saucy newspaper journalists in other states, which rule forty million square kilometers, claim that Germany strives for world supremacy in this struggle. The German-Russian agreements should necessarily have an enormously calming effect on these disquieted advocates of world freedom. For these agreements present authentic proof that allegations of Germany's drive towards the Ural Mountains, the Ukraine, Rumania, and so on, are but the outgrowth of an overwrought Martian fantasy (*Marsphantasie*). In one respect the resolution of Germany remains unchangeable, namely: to bring about peaceful, stable, and hence tolerable conditions also in the East of our Reich. And here especially German and Soviet Russian interests and wishes are completely compatible.

Both states have resolved not to allow problematic situations to arise between them which might bear within them the seeds of internal unrest and, therefore, of external disruptions, or which might detrimentally effect the relationship between these two great powers. Germany and Soviet Russia have clearly delineated their respective spheres of interests. Each has resolved to see to peace and order in its part of the world and to prevent everything which might possibly be to the detriment of its partner.

The goals and tasks resulting from the disintegration of the Polish state are approximately the following, insofar as the German sphere of interest is concerned:

1. The establishment of a Reich frontier which renders justice to the historic, ethnographic, and economic conditions.

2. The pacification of the entire area in the service of the establishment of a tolerable form of law and order.

3. The absolute guarantee of security not only for Reich territory, but for its entire sphere of interest.

4. A new order, a new structuring of economic life and traffic there, and hence of cultural and civilized development.

5. As the most import task, however: a new ordering of ethnographic relations, which means a resettlement of the nationalities so that, after the conclusion of this development, better lines of demarcation are given than is the case today.

In this sense, this is not a problem restricted solely to this area. It is a task going far beyond this. For all of Eastern Europe and its southeastern part are filled with intolerable splinters of German ethnic groups. In this we see a reason and a cause of persistent international friction. In the age of the principle of nationalities and of racial thought (*Rassegedanken*), it is utopian to believe that these members of a superior people could be assimilated without further ado.

And hence it is one of the missions of a farseeing new order of European life to see to these resettlements in order to diffuse at least part of the potential for conflict in Europe. Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics have agreed to assist each other in this. The German Reich Government will therefore not allow the developing Polish remnant-state (*Reststaat*) to irritate the Reich or to become an irritant in the relations between the German Reich and Soviet Russia.

As Germany and Soviet Russia undertake this redevelopment project, both states can rightly point out that the attempt to resolve this problem with the methods of Versailles has completely failed. And it had to fail since these tasks cannot be resolved at a green table or through simple directives. Most of the statesmen who gave their opinion on this most complicated matter at Versailles did not have any training in history; indeed, often they did not even have the faintest idea of the essence of the task that had been posed.

These statements brought Hitler to his favorite topic: the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations.

They bore no responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Recognition that their work was not correct was of no significance, as there was no way of obtaining an actual revision in practice. While the Versailles Treaty provided for the possibility of such revisions, all efforts to obtain revisions failed in reality. They had to fail all the more since the League of Nations, as the highest authority in this instance, ceased to have the right to carry through such a procedure. Once America declined to sanction the Peace Treaty of Versailles or to so much as join the League of Nations, and other peoples soon followed suit, as they no longer regarded their presence in this group as compatible with the interests of their countries, this association deteriorated more and more, to become a circle for those with an interest in the Diktat of Versailles.

The fact remains that none of the revisions deemed necessary from the outset was ever carried through by the League of Nations. Now it is becoming a custom to consider a government on the run still existent, even if it has but three members, so long as these three have brought enough money not to become a financial burden for the democratic host countries. It is to be assumed that the League of Nations will bravely continue to exist even if the nations united therein number only two. Perhaps even one alone would suffice! In accordance with the statutes of this union, any revision of the provisions of Versailles would be left to the judgment of this illustrious association, or in other words, would be impossible for all practical purposes.

Now, the League of Nations does not live, but is something dead, while the concerned peoples are not dead, but live. And they will continue to pursue their vital interests even if the League of Nations is incapable of seeing, comprehending, or considering them.

Hence National Socialism is not a phenomenon whose growth in Germany can be attributed to its mischievous plan to hinder the League of Nations in its attempts at revision, but a Movement which came into being because for fifteen years there has been no revision of the suppression of the most natural human and ethnic rights of a great nation. And, for my part, I won't stand for foreign statesmen stepping up to declare I went back on my word because I saw to this revision!¹¹⁴⁴ To the contrary, I gave the German Volk my word to eliminate the Treaty of Versailles and to restore to a great nation its natural right to life.

The extent to which I secured this right to life is a modest one. When forty-six million Englishmen on the Isles appropriate for themselves the right to reign over forty million square kilometers of this earth, then it is not an injustice when eighty-two million Germans demand the right to live on 800,000 square kilometers, to tend the land and to ply a trade. Further it is not wrong for them to demand restitution of colonial possessions which were once their own and which they did not take from others by theft and war, but which they legally purchased, bartered in, or obtained through entering into contracts.

And, moreover, in all the demands I make I try to obtain the desired revisions by negotiation. I have always declined, however, to submit Germany's vital interests as a most obliging plea to the jurisdiction of some form of inappropriate international consortium.¹¹⁴⁵ As little as I presume Great Britain must plead for respect to be accorded its vital interests, one should not expect this of National Socialist Germany.

I feel compelled to note here and to pronounce in the most solemn manner that I have always limited Germany's demands. In every instance where I felt the vital rights of my Volk threatened, I counseled the Volk to exercise restraint and to relinquish.

These eighty million must live somewhere, however. The Treaty of Versailles has not been able to eradicate this fact of life: while it dissolved states in the most senseless of manners, tore apart economic units, severed traffic lanes, etc., the peoples, the living substance of flesh and blood, still exist and will continue to exist in the future.

There is no denying that since the German Volk has received and realized its resurrection through National Socialism, a clarification of German relations to the surrounding world has taken place to a high degree.

The insecurity burdening the coexistence of peoples is not the result of German demands, but rather has resulted from the widely publicized accusations in the so-called democracies. The German demands presented were concrete and precise in nature. They were fulfilled, thanks not to the League of Nations in Geneva, but to the dynamics of natural evolution. At no time did the Reich's foreign policy which I conducted aim at anything but the securing of existence and hence life for the German Volk, to eliminate the

injustice and insanity of this Treaty which not only destroyed Germany economically, but which equally brought ruin to the victorious nations.

And, besides this, the entire work aimed at the rebuilding of the Reich was inwardly oriented. Yearning for peace was greater in no other country of the world, was no more vibrant than within the German Volk. Mankind should rejoice, not despair, that I succeeded in eliminating in a peaceful manner the most insane impossibilities of the Treaty of Versailles, and cast off the burdens foreign statesmen had imposed on Germany. That this process of elimination may have been a painful one for certain interest lobbies is understandable. And all the greater yet is the merit earned in peacefully arriving at this new order in all instances, with the sole exception of the latest, and without bloodshed. The latest revision could well have been equally bloodless had not the two circumstances I mentioned earlier come to pass and had they not brought about the contrary.

To blame for this are primarily those who knew not how to rejoice in the earlier peaceful revisions, but to the contrary lamented having to witness the peaceful rebuilding of a new Central Europe, a Central Europe which increasingly could give its inhabitants work and bread once more.

I mentioned the intent of the Reich Government to lend clarity to its relations with our neighbors earlier. And here I may cite a few facts which cannot be erased by the lies spread throughout the world by international press scribblers.

In an effort to underline his unparalleled love for peace, Hitler now embarked on a “brief” enumeration of those states which he had, for the time being, graciously allowed to continue to exist:

1. Germany has entered into non-aggression pacts with the Baltic States. German interests there are of an exclusively economic nature.

2. Germany has never had conflicts of interests with the Nordic States, not even in the past. There have never been any bones of contention and the same holds true today. Germany offered to enter into non-aggression pacts with Sweden and Norway; they refused simply because they felt no need to in the absence of any real threat.¹¹⁴⁶

3. In its relations to Denmark, Germany has not drawn any consequences from the cession of territory dictated in the Treaty of Versailles. Instead, it has established loyal and friendly relations with Denmark. We have not demanded a revision, but instead have entered into a non-aggression pact with Denmark. Relations with this state are unalterably based on loyal and friendly cooperation.

4. The new Reich has endeavored to continue friendship with Holland. It has neither taken up any differences from the past nor created new differences.

5. Immediately after taking over the affairs of the state, I labored to fashion relations with Belgium in a friendly manner. I abstained from revision and from expressing as much as a desire for revision. The Reich has not made any demands that might be construed by Belgium as a threat of any kind.

6. Germany assumes the same stance toward Switzerland. The Reich Government has not allowed any doubts as to its desire for a loyal form of relations between the two states. And it has never complained about any aspect of relations between the two countries.

7. Immediately after concluding the Anschluss, I informed Yugoslavia that hereafter Germany regarded the border with this state as unchangeable. We wished only to live in peace and friendship with this state.

8. For many years traditional bonds of close and heartfelt friendship have tied us to Hungary. Here also the borders are unchangeable.

9. Slovakia itself addressed Germany with its desire for assistance after the foundation of its state. The Reich respects Slovakia's independence and shall not infringe upon it. Yet it was not only with these states that Germany sought to clarify and regulate relations, which had partially suffered great strain due to the imposition of the Treaty of Versailles, but also with the great powers.

In concert with the Duce, I have brought about a change in the relations between the Reich and Italy. Both have solemnly recognized the borders separating the two empires as unchangeable. The potential for conflicts of interest of a territorial nature was eliminated. Between the two foes of the World War a heartfelt friendship has developed in the meantime. A normalization of relations was supplemented by the subsequent conclusion of a pact, based on *weltanschaulich* and political principles, which has evolved into a strong influence on cooperation in Europe.

Above all, I undertook to make clear our relationship with France, to render it bearable for both nations. As much as possible, I clarified and specified the German demands. I have not distanced myself from this clarification. The return of the Saar territory was the only demand which I saw as essential for the creation of prerequisites for a German-French understanding. After France itself undertook to solve this problem in a loyal manner, all other demands were rendered obsolete. No further demands exist and no additional demands shall ever be made.

In other words: I have declined even to bring up the question of Alsace-Lorraine, not because I was forced to do so, but because this affair is not a problem which should trouble German-French relations. I accepted the 1919 settlement. I declined to let a problem drive us into a bloody war, a question which stands in no relation to Germany's vital interests. The only thing it is fit for is to plunge every other generation into a renewed fruitless war. France is aware of this. It is simply impossible for a French statesman to rise up now and to declare that, at one point or another, I made any demands on France which could not be reconciled with France's honor and its interests.

Instead of placing demands on France, I have addressed to it the one wish to let us forget about the animosity of the past once and for all. I wished our two nations with their great, historic past to find the way to one another once more. I have labored to wring a change in the German Volk, to eradicate even the thought of an inevitable archenemy. Instead, I sought to instill in the German Volk respect for the great attainments of the French people, for their history, and for the attainments of the French armed forces, which every German soldier highly respects.

No less were my endeavors to obtain a German-English understanding, yes, going further yet, to strive for friendship between Germany and England. Never, and in no instance, have I ever really stood in the way of British interests. Only too often, regrettably, I was forced to ward off British intervention in German interests, even in instances where England's interests were not concerned in the least.

I have come to almost regard it as the mission of my life to bring both peoples closer together, not only in terms of reason, but in terms of sentiment above all. The German Volk willingly followed my lead in this. That I did not succeed in this is to be attributed to a hostility, one I personally was greatly shaken by, of some of the British statesmen and journalists. They had few qualms about openly proclaiming their sole ambition to engage Germany in another war at the first opportune occasion. The reasons for this we fail to understand.

The less these men have factual reasons for this undertaking, the more they resort to empty phrases to improvise a motivation supposedly justifying their actions. Yet, on this day still, it is my conviction that a true pacification of Europe and of the world can be attained solely if Germany and England arrive at an understanding. This conviction repeatedly compelled me to take steps towards such an understanding. It is truly not my fault if the desired result eluded us.

And finally, I have attempted to obtain a normalization of relations with Russia and to lend these a basis in friendship. Thanks to a similar line of thought in Stalin, I succeeded in this. And we now enjoy durable, friendly relations with this state, the consequences of which will entail blessings for both peoples.

In summary, the revisions of the Treaty of Versailles that I implemented have not created chaos in Europe. To the contrary, they constituted prerequisites for the creation of clear, stable and, above all, tolerable conditions here. Only he who hates this putting into order of Europe, and who desires disorder instead, only he can oppose these steps.

And to whoever believes that he, acting ever so innocent, must reject the methods employed to secure a tolerable order in the lands of Central Europe, I can only reply that, in the last instance, what is decisive is not so much the methods used but the beneficial results obtained.¹¹⁴⁷

Before I took office, Central Europe had succumbed to the misery of sheer endless unemployment lines. This affected not only Germany, but the surrounding states as well. Production fell, and this led forcibly to a decline in consumption. The standard of living declined; misery and destitution were the consequences. Not one of these criticizing foreign statesmen can deny that we have succeeded in eradicating these signs of decay not only within the Old Reich, but also in the areas now united with it. And we did so under the most difficult of circumstances.

This has proven that the lands of Central Europe make up a viable structure only if they are united. Those who saw to their division committed a crime against humanity. To have expunged this crime does not constitute a promise broken by me; rather it is a great honor for me which I take pride

in, an accomplishment of truly historic proportions. Neither the German Volk nor I have been sworn to the Treaty of Versailles. I am sworn solely to defend the welfare of my Volk whose representative I am, and the welfare of those whom Fate has placed within our Lebensraum and has thereby inextricably bound up with our own welfare.¹¹⁴⁸

To secure existence and hence life for all of you, this is my only care. Attempts to criticize, judge, or reject my actions from the lecturer's desk of international dilettante righteousness are both unhistorical and leave me, personally, cold as ice. The German Volk has called upon me through its vested trust in me. This has strengthened me against the attempts at foreign critique or intervention.

For the rest, I have prefaced every single one of my revisions with proposals. I have attempted, by negotiation, to secure and obtain only what was absolutely necessary. In this I have succeeded in several cases. In other cases, regrettably, my willingness to negotiate and the limited nature of my demands, the modesty displayed in my proposals, have been interpreted as signs of weakness. And it has been thus that my proposals have been rejected.

I myself have regretted this more than anyone else. Alas, there are necessities in the lives of peoples which cannot be realized by peaceful means, but here strength (*Kraft*)¹¹⁴⁹ must find its application.

Though this may be regrettable, it applies to the life of the community as it applies to the life of the individual citizen. Undeniably, there is some truth to the maxim that the stubbornness of the individual or the ill-will of individuals or communities must not, by necessity, contradict the greater common good. I have put forth reasonable proposals to the Poles. They met not only with rejection; they were met with a general mobilization order in this state. The rationale for this mobilization revealed how the modesty of my proposals was held to reaffirm my weakness—yes, even my fear.

After these reflections, Hitler thought it opportune once more to discuss his latest “reasoned” proposal to England at great length. Just as Napoleon had once done,¹¹⁵⁰ Hitler strove to render the English a graphic and wordy account of the horrors of war and the advantages of a peaceful settlement, hoping to frighten them into acquiescence in his demands.

Actually these past experiences should make one shy away from bringing forth any more reasoned and weighed proposals. Still, these days I read in certain papers that any attempt at the peaceful settlement of the relations between Germany on the one hand, and England and France on the other, was doomed to failure from the beginning. Any step in this general direction merely proved that I feared an imminent collapse of Germany. Cowardice or a guilty conscience was supposedly driving me to make such an offer.

And so, as I continue to render account of my thoughts on the subject, I risk being seen as either a coward or a desperado. This I take upon myself. I can do this because these miserable little scribblers will not be the ones to write history, thank God; instead my life's work will speak for itself. And I am

able to do this also because I am indifferent to the judgment passed upon me by these folks at this moment.

My prestige is great enough to permit me something of this kind. The further course of events shall prove whether or not the thoughts I will promptly enumerate owe their conception to fear and despair.

Today all there remains for me to do is to express my regret that these folks who cannot get enough of war cannot squelch their thirst for blood by actually being at the site where the war is being fought. In the past, too, they were never on location for the shooting. I understand quite well that certain people have a vested interest in war as they earn more in wartime than in times of peace. I further understand that there exist deviants among international journalists who find it far more interesting to report on a war than to describe events in peacetime, much less to discuss peacetime's cultural attainments, which defy their understanding. And finally it is clear to me that a certain Jewish-international capitalism and journalism cannot feel with the peoples whose interests they purport to represent. Rather these glory-seeking vandals (*Herostraten*) of human society¹¹⁵¹ conceive of arson as the greatest attainment of their lives.

There is yet another reason I feel I must raise my voice on this occasion. When I read certain organs of the international media today or listen to the speeches of various, hot-blooded glorifiers of war, then I feel called upon to speak and answer in the name of those who are forced to constitute the living substance of the mental occupation of these authors of war aims; this living substance of which I formed part for over four years as an unknown soldier in the World War. It truly sounds grandiose when a statesman or journalist steps up to proclaim, in glowing terms, the necessity of eliminating a regime in another country for the sake of democracy or something of that kind. The implementation of these glorious phrases looks decidedly different, however. Today newspaper articles are written which are certain to inspire enthusiastic acclaim in a well-to-do readership. The realization of the demands contained therein is far less inspiring, however.

I will not discuss the power of judgment or the mental capacities of these people here. Whatever they may write, the essence of what comes to pass in reality is left untouched. Before the Polish campaign, these scribblers declared the German infantry to be "not bad." The Panzer force, especially the motorized units, were inferior and would undoubtedly fail us miserably in actual battle. Now—after the defeat of Poland—the same people callously write that the Polish armies broke down only because of the German Panzer force and the remaining motorized units owned by the Reich. Further they write that the German infantry has declined in a truly remarkable manner and, in every encounter with the Poles, it lost out. "In this," so one of these writers recently remarked verbatim, "we can rightly see a comforting sign for the conduct of the war in the West, and the French soldier shall take note." I believe this also, insofar as he actually gets to see as much and is able to recall it later. In all likelihood, he will then want to pull this military prophet up by the ears. Regrettably, he will probably not be able to do this for these folks never actually venture out on the battlefield to test their theory on the

superiority or inferiority of the German infantry. They just describe it in their editorial offices.

Six weeks—oh no, fourteen days of drumfire would suffice for these war propagandist gentlemen to quickly arrive at different conclusions. They always speak of the necessary occurrences in global politics, but they know nothing of the military course of things. Alas, I know it much better. And hence I hold it to be my duty to speak here even with the danger that these warmongers will once more interpret my speech as an expression of my fear and the extent of my desperation.

Why should there be war in the West? To restore Poland? The Poland of the Treaty of Versailles shall never rise again! This two of the world's greatest states guarantee.

The final structure of this area, the question of the restoration of a Polish state, are problems which cannot be resolved through war in the West, but rather solely by Russia on the one side and Germany on the other. Besides, exclusion of these two powers from the areas in question would not lead to the formation of a new state, but to complete chaos. The problems which need to be solved there will not be solved at the conference table or in editorial offices, but only through the work of decades.

For it does not suffice that a few statesmen, uninterested in the fate of those immediately concerned, come together at the conference table and arrive at resolutions. Instead, it is necessary that someone, who shares in the life of these areas himself, works to restore an enduring situation there. The Western democracies have done nothing, at least in recent times, to prove their capacity to work for the establishment of such orderly situations. The example of Palestine amply proves that it is better to attend to current tasks and to solve these in a reasonable fashion, than to preoccupy oneself with problems which lie within the vital interests and spheres of interest of other peoples who are better equipped to deal with them.

In any event, Germany has not only seen to restoring law and order in its Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, but, most important, has laid the basis for a renewed blossoming of the economy and for an ever closer relationship between the two nations. England has yet much to do until it can point to similar successes in its Palestinian Protectorate. Moreover, it is common knowledge how senseless it is to destroy millions of human lives and hundreds of billions in terms of material value only to once more prop up a structure which, already at the time of its inception, was termed a miscarriage by all non-Poles.

What is the reason then? Has Germany placed demands on England which might threaten the British world empire or might have placed into question its existence? No. To the contrary, Germany has not addressed any such demands to either England or France.

Should this war really be waged only to institute a new regime in Germany, then this would mean the destruction of the present Reich; the creation of a new Versailles; the senseless sacrifice of millions of human beings. Neither will the German Reich fall apart nor will a new Versailles rise up.

And even if this should be attained after a war of three, four, or eight years, a second Versailles would only bear within it the seeds of renewed conflict for subsequent years. In any case, a settlement of the problems of the world in disregard of the vital interests of its strongest peoples will not end a whit differently in, say, five or ten years from now than this attempt of twenty years ago ended today. No, this war in the West will not settle any problems, with the possible exception of the ruined finances of a few armament industrialists and newspaper owners, or other international war profiteers.

Two problems are up for discussion today:

1. The settlement of the questions arising from the disintegration of Poland, and

2. the problem of the removal of those international concerns which burden the political and economic lives of all peoples.

What are the goals entertained by the Reich Government with regard to a settlement of the situation in the lands west of the German and Soviet-Russian line of demarcation, recognized as the German sphere of influence?

1. The establishment of a Reich border which, as stressed already, renders justice to the historic, ethnographic, and economic conditions;

2. the ordering of this entire Lebensraum by the criteria of nationalities, i.e. the resolution of the minorities questions which not only concern this area, but all southern and southeastern European states;

3. in this context: the attempt at putting into order and regulating the Jewish problem;

4. the rebuilding of the infrastructure and the economy to the benefit of all peoples living in this area;

5. the guarantee of the security of this entire area, and

6. the establishment of a Polish state, the structure and leadership of which affords us a guarantee that it shall not become yet another source of fire against the German Reich, nor a central office for intrigues spun against Germany and Russia.

Beyond this, we must immediately undertake to eliminate or at least assuage the direct effects of the war, i.e. to attempt through practical help to alleviate the existing, overwhelming suffering. These tasks can well be discussed at the conference table—as stated earlier—but they can never be resolved there. Should Europe truly value law and peace, then the European states should be grateful that Germany and Russia are ready to restore peaceful development to this zone of unrest, and that these two countries are taking upon themselves responsibility for this, and the sacrifices necessary. For the German Reich this mission, which cannot be regarded as an imperialist one, means an occupation for fifty to a hundred years. The justification for this German mission lies in the political ordering of these areas as well as in their economic development. In the end, all this benefits Europe.

The second task, which in my eyes is the far more important of the two, is the creation not only of a feeling, but of a knowledge of European security.

To this end it is necessary:

1. to clarify the foreign policy goals of all European states. Insofar as this regards Germany, the Reich Government stands ready to provide complete

and final clarity on its foreign policy ambitions. It prefaces this declaration with the statement that the Versailles Treaty has been rendered obsolete in its eyes. The German Reich Government and with it the entire German Volk see neither cause nor occasion for further revisions of any nature, with the exception of a demand for appropriate colonial possessions for the Reich, i.e. first and foremost the restoration of Germany's colonies. The claim to these colonies is founded not only on a historically argued legal right, but above all on an elementary right to partake in the earth's raw material resources. This claim is not made in the form of an ultimatum. Force does not stand behind this claim, but political justice and economic common sense.

2. Demands for a true blossoming of the international economy, in connection with an increase in trade and traffic, require the establishment of order in the various domestic economies and within the production process in individual states. A new order of markets must be established to facilitate the exchange of products. Equally necessary is a final regulation of the currency system in an effort to slowly dismantle the barriers now encumbering free trade.

3. The most important prerequisite for a true blossoming of the European economy, and the economies outside of Europe, is the establishment of an absolutely guaranteed peace. The individual peoples must enjoy a feeling of security. This is only possible in the context of a final sanctioning of the European state, and, above all, through a reduction of armament to a reasonable and economically viable level. A clarification of the range of application and use of certain modern weapons will also have to contribute to this feeling of security. For their effectiveness allows one people to strike at the heart of another, at any time. This is largely responsible for the feeling of insecurity prevalent today. In previous speeches before the Reichstag I already made several advances in this direction. They were rejected largely because I initiated them.

I believe, however, that the feeling of national security in Europe will not set in until we have obtained, in this sphere, clear international and final regulations and a definition of the terms of permissible and impermissible resort to arms.

Next, Hitler set forth a series of suggestions for international agreements which he declared himself willing to sign out of love for peace. He spoke of an agreement detailing deployment of the Luftwaffe, and ended with the condemnation of war against women and children. He even consented to the elimination of "weaponry that has become superfluous." Hitler had already made similar proposals after the occupation of the Rhineland on April 1, 1936. However, neither then nor now were the topics raised by Hitler truly up for discussion. The issue at stake in both instances was an act of aggression already perpetrated by Germany. Hitler's attempt to act innocent failed all the more to make the desired impression abroad.

As the Geneva Convention once managed, in relations among civilized states, to prohibit the killing of the injured, the maltreatment of the ill, and fighting against non-belligerents; and as it gained in respect over time; so it must equally be possible to define the deployment of the Luftwaffe, of poison gas, etc., of submarines, as well as the term "contraband of war," in such a manner as to divorce war of the horrid character of a fight against women and children, and against non-belligerents. The condemnation (*Perhorreszierung*) of certain methods will render obsolete, in and of itself, certain weaponry that has become superfluous. In this war against Poland, I have endeavored to restrict the application of the Luftwaffe to so-called strategically important objects or, as the case may be, when active resistance was mounted in one specific location. It must nevertheless be possible to attain a universally accepted international regulation of these issues, in the fashion of the Red Cross perhaps.

Only given these prerequisite steps can our densely populated continent enjoy a peace freed of distrust and fear. Only then are the prerequisites for a blossoming of our economic life satisfied. I believe there is no truly responsible European statesman who does not wish, in the depth of his heart, for the economic welfare of his people.

Realization of this wish is possible only within the framework of general cooperation between the nations of this continent. To secure this cooperation alone must be the supreme goal of every man sincerely involved in the struggle for the future of his own people. And in order to attain this great goal, the great nations of this continent shall have to come together once again to provide for a comprehensive regulation, to draw up a statute, to accept and to guarantee it. Only this can afford them a feeling of security and quietude and thereby peace.

It is impossible that such a conference should convene without extensive preparation, i.e. without clarification of individual points and without thorough preparatory work. It is equally impossible that such a conference, to determine the fate of this continent for decades to come, should set to work against a background of roaring cannons and under pressure from mobilized armies. Should this problem sooner or later demand clarification, then it would surely be best to approach this resolution before millions of men senselessly bleed to death and billions in assets are destroyed.

Maintaining of the present situation in the West is unthinkable. Every day will demand ever increasing sacrifices. Perhaps, one day, France will aim at Saarbrücken for the first time and demolish it. The German artillery then, for its part, will take revenge and shatter Mulhouse. France will then point its cannons at Karlsruhe in retribution. Germany will then take on Strasbourg. Then the French artillery will target Freiburg, and the German Colmar or Schlettstadt. Then guns with greater range will be drawn up, and on both sides the destruction will reach ever farther into the countryside. What cannot be reached by long-range projectiles will be destroyed by aircraft. And all this will be of great interest to certain international journalists, and beneficial for producers of aircraft, weaponry, ammunition, etc. But it will be a gruesome affair for the victims.

And this struggle unto destruction will not remain restricted to the Continent. No, it will reach across the Sea. There are no more islands today.¹¹⁵²

The wealth of Europe's peoples will burst beneath a rain of grenades. The strength of these peoples will drain onto the battlefield. A frontier shall separate Germany and France once again some day, but fields of ruins and endless cemeteries will populate the stretch once home to blossoming cities. Let Mr. Churchill and his cohorts interpret these convictions of mine as weakness or cowardice. I am not concerned with their opinions. I am making this declaration because, as is only natural, I wish to spare my Volk suffering.

Should, however, the attitudes of Mr. Churchill and his entourage prevail, then today's declaration will have been my last one.¹¹⁵³ We will have to fight then. Neither the force of weapons nor time will bring Germany to its knees. A November 1918 will not repeat itself in German history. Hopes staked on a division of our Volk are childish.

Mr. Churchill may be convinced that Great Britain shall be the victor. I doubt not for a minute that Germany will be the victor. Providence shall determine who is right. One thing is sure, however; in world history, there have never been two victors, while far too often there have been only losers. To me, this seems to have been the case in the last war already.

May those people and their leaders rise up to speak who share this conviction. And may those push my hand back who believe themselves forced to regard war as the preferable option.

At this moment, as Führer of the German Volk and as Chancellor of the Reich, I can only thank the Lord for so miraculously bestowing His blessings on us in this our first, difficult struggle for our rights. I implore Him to allow us and all others to find the proper path so that not only the German Volk, but all of Europe, may rejoice in the new happiness of peace.

11

On October 7, Hitler signed a “Decree for the Consolidation (*Festigung*) of German *Volkstum*.”¹¹⁵⁴ This empowered Himmler to carry through the resettlement of Germans abroad and the “elimination” of minorities in Germany.

On October 9, Hitler lost patience since he had still not received word from the British. If they did not promptly make it “apparent” that they were prepared to refrain from war, he would be exceedingly sorry to drive them “back to the Thames.” In his anger, Hitler swiftly wrote his sixth war directive:¹¹⁵⁵

Directive No. 6 for the Conduct of the War

1. If it should become apparent in the near future that England, and, under England’s leadership, also France, are not willing to make an end of the war, I am determined to act vigorously and aggressively without great delay.

2. If we wait much longer, not only will Belgian and perhaps also Dutch neutrality be lost, to the advantage of the Western Powers, but the military strength of our enemies will grow on an increasing scale, the neutrals’ confidence in a final German victory will dwindle, and Italy will not be encouraged to join us as a military ally.

3. Therefore I give the following orders for further military operations:

a. Preparations are to be made for an attacking operation on the northern wing of the Western Front through the areas of Luxembourg, Belgium, and Holland. This attack must be carried out with as much strength and at as early a date as possible.

b. The purpose of this attacking operation will be to defeat as strong a part of the French operational army as possible, as well as the allies fighting by its side, and at the same time to gain as large an area as possible in Holland, Belgium, and Northern France as a base for conducting a promising air and sea war¹¹⁵⁶ against England and as a protective zone for the vital Ruhr area.

c. The timing of the attack depends on the readiness of tanks and motorized units for use—this must be speeded up by every possible effort, also on the weather conditions then prevailing and the weather prospects ahead.

October 9, 1939

4. The Luftwaffe is to prevent the Anglo-French air force from attacking our own Army, and, if necessary, to give direct support to the Army's advance. In this connection, it will also be essential to prevent the establishment of the Anglo-French air force in Belgium and Holland, as well as British troop landings there.

5. The Naval Command must concentrate for the duration of this attack entirely in giving direct and indirect support to the operations of the Army and Luftwaffe.

6. Apart from these preparations for starting the attack in the West according to plan, Army and Luftwaffe must be ready at any time and with increasing strength, to meet an Anglo-French invasion of Belgium as far forward on Belgian territory as possible, and to occupy as much of Holland as possible in the direction of the West Coast.

7. The camouflage used for these preparations must be that they are merely precautionary measures in view of the threatening concentration of French and English forces on the Franco-Luxembourg and Franco-Belgian borders.

8. I request the Commanders in Chief to give me, as soon as possible, detailed reports of their plans on the basis of this directive and to keep me currently informed, via the OKW, of the state of the preparations.

Adolf Hitler

In addition to this directive, Hitler also drafted a lengthy memorandum on this October 9. He sought to justify the offensive in the West by referring to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia.¹¹⁵⁷ Ever since then, a confrontation had been certain and had merely been postponed. Developments had come to a head in 1939, and any further delay would doubtless be to Germany's detriment. Hence, the upcoming conflict had to be viewed as a matter of course.

The German objective in this war must include the final military destruction of the West, i.e. the destruction of the power and capability of the West to oppose yet again the consolidation of German statehood and the further development of the German Volk within Europe. [—]

No treaty and no agreement can permanently assure the continued neutrality of Soviet Russia. At this time, indications are against an abandonment of this neutrality. Things might well look different eight months, or one or more years hence.

On October 10 at 11:00 a.m., Hitler read this memorandum to Göring, Raeder, Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Halder. Thereafter, he handed them the information and insisted on the immediate start of the offensive in the West, i.e. before the beginning of winter. The generals were shocked at Hitler's proposals, not only because a winter campaign went contrary to all previous military tradition, not to

mention common sense. They were also haunted by memories of a similar, and ill-fated, move in the First World War and greatly feared a second Verdun.¹¹⁵⁸ The experts' misgivings failed to dissuade Hitler. He had other things on his mind than arguing with disgruntled generals.

For the afternoon hours of October 10, Goebbels had scheduled a rally to take place at the Berlin Sportpalast for the opening of the fund-raising drive for the wartime Winterhilfswerk. This presented Hitler with the opportunity to address the German public and to use this forum to exhort the English "one last time" to accept his proposals for peace. He intended to threaten the British with ultimate destruction and portray himself as a man of firm resolve whom nothing could shake, stun, or bring to despair. "On the contrary! Whatever the outside world shall choose, let it have its choice."

Hitler opened his speech at the Sportpalast with the following deliberations:¹¹⁵⁹

German Volksgenossen!

The Winterhilfswerk belongs to those National Socialist institutions which today we have almost begun to regard as a matter of course. This relief campaign eases the worries of public relief organizations and the load of work of many public institutions of the State, the Länder, and local governments. And the individual Volksgenosse has gotten used, over the years, to making a contribution to this institution. The masses do so willingly; only a minute percentage of them do so propelled by the fear of looking bad otherwise. But, in the end, it makes no difference why the individual contributes; the main thing is that he does make a contribution!

The idea of this institution was to call on the Volk to help itself. We could have done things differently. Instead of appealing to the Volk's willingness to sacrifice, we could have directed our appeal to the taxpayer. We consciously and deliberately did not do so because we wanted to educate the German Volk to come together in this common sacrifice, and therein to begin to understand the nature of the community; to comprehend the duties this community demands of us and to satisfy these of our own free accord without relying on the taxpayer.

Finally, our appeal was to afford the individual a lasting impression of the real poverty afflicting so many Volksgenossen. The persistent attracting of attention through the collection of donations served one goal: the individual realization that happiness and a life of luxury have not been lavished on all Volksgenossen, that perhaps this is not possible. Much help is still needed and infinitely much remains to be done and must be done!

And finally this organization has afforded the individual member of its gigantic army of helpers not only an insight into the poverty of large circles of our Volk but, more important, also an insight into the possibility of

remedying this situation. There has been poverty at all times. Perhaps poverty is actually a relative term. Only a few days ago, I saw areas where the average standard of living is far below what would be considered the depth of poverty here with us in Germany. Just how fortunate our Volk is, thanks to the efforts of the community, they seem to realize the least who do not have the opportunity to see beyond it.

One thing is certain: poverty has always existed. There is poverty even now and there will always be poverty. At all times, people have had the obligation to control this poverty, to counter it, and to alleviate it.

The voluntary nature of this sacrifice allows the individual to better assess himself and correspondingly his obligations than any governmental measures possibly could. In the context of this great social institution, we have created many things with the intent of wiping away all class differences in the German Volk and to awaken in it a pronounced consciousness of solidarity. If we look at the results of this social education within the last years, no one can deny that the course taken was the right one and a successful one. Our successes were so great that, perhaps, we can see in them reasons for a certain displeasure in the outside world. It is frightened at the thought that the national-socialist principles of our Reich could prove attractive beyond our borders and could perhaps rouse [the social] conscientiousness in this context in other countries. If at times the work of our collectors appears to be a little bit disagreeable to some Volksgenossen, may they not forget how much more disagreeable the work is to the collector. How much easier is it to be approached two or three times with the request to give than to suffer perhaps thousands of refusals of your request to receive. In the first instance, we have a momentarily disagreeable experience; in the second one, we have the repeated sacrifice of free time in the service of the Volksgemeinschaft.

Now destiny has forced us to take up arms in the defense of the Reich. Within a few weeks, the most insolent of states, which thought it could freely threaten the interests of the Reich, was thrown to the ground.

And this thanks to a military feat unique in our history! Thanks to the brave heroism of our soldiers! Thanks to our brilliant leadership!

Here Hitler issued yet another appeal to the Western Powers not to foolishly reject his efforts for a peaceful settlement. In vivid terms, he stressed the might of Germany's military as proven in the recent campaigns.

We do not know what the future will bring. But one thing we know for certain: no power in this world shall ever overpower Germany again! No one shall vanquish us militarily, destroy us economically, or trample on our souls! And no one shall see us capitulate—under any circumstances.

I have expressed our willingness for peace. Germany has no reason to wage war against the Western Powers. They have started this war on a threadbare pretext. In the event this willingness meets with rejection, Germany stands determined to take up the struggle and to fight it out—one way or another!

Neither a momentary fright nor any proclamation regarding the length of the war shall weary us or make us despair. Before us we see the eternal life of our Volk. However long it may take to assist in the birth of this life, nothing shall shake us, stun us, or bring us to despair. On the contrary! Whatever the outside world shall choose, let it have its choice.

Once I set out on a most difficult path to uplift Germany from the destruction imposed on it by the Treaty of Versailles. Since then, twenty years have passed. The Reich stands mightier today than ever before. The path lying before us can be no more difficult than the path lying behind us. If we did not lose heart striding forth on the path leading from then to now, then we shall no more lose heart striding out on the path leading from now to the future.

As we set out on this path, the community of the German Volk which we have now achieved gives us heart. The period now perhaps lying before us will reinforce and lend depth to the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft. It will only speed up the social process of becoming this Volk. The wartime winter now facing us will find us ever the more prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to ease the struggle for existence for our Volk.

The wartime Winterhilfswerk (*Kriegswinterhilfswerk*) thereby becomes a relief organization for the Red Cross. The Red Cross itself will not be collecting this time. Instead, as an integral part of the wartime Winterhilfswerk, the Red Cross will receive allowances from this organization.

When I point to the Red Cross, all of us immediately realize how minuscule the sacrifices demanded of the individual are in comparison to the sacrifices many of our Volksgenossen are making at the front, and, if it so pleases the ill-will of our adversaries, the sacrifices they will have to continue to make.

May no one think any longer of the greatness of his own sacrifice. May he instead think of the greatness of the common sacrifice and of the unsurpassable sacrifice of those who have already given themselves for their Volk or who may still have to give themselves. Compared to these sacrifices, the sacrifices made at home are nothing. Nevertheless, they can help to underline in the consciousness of our Volk the bonds of our inseparable community.

Thus this wartime Winterhilfswerk must surpass everything which has previously been attained in this realm. Perhaps, this will best provide an answer to the stupidity of the world in thinking it can divide the German Volk internally.

We will show them the results of their stupid experiments! We will show them how they are just making the German Volk stand closer together, how they make it stick together all the more.

Perhaps it is in this manner that we can best rid them of the delusion that they can simply have their say on the state of mind of us Germans, just as it may happen to please one of them out there. We shall teach them the necessary respect for the state of mind of other peoples.

May the world rest assured: what we have to suffer as a community, we shall endure! I hope the others shall likewise be able to do this! The time will

come when National Socialism can develop all the more its powers to shape, educate, and uphold the Volk.

War once carried us National Socialists forth. The experiences of war fashioned our intellectual world. And in time of war, if need be, we shall once more prove our worth!

The final decision on this is no longer in our hands, but in those of the outside world. With us rests only the grim determination to take this decision upon ourselves. Then, however, we shall fight things out to their logical conclusion. And thus the wartime Winterhilfswerk must contribute to making this German Volksgemeinschaft stronger than ever before! A community in struggle, a community in victory, and, in the end, in peace! After all, the more determined and the more steeled we now are as we take upon our shoulders the sacrifices which war can entail, the more certain we will be to win this peace our Volk so longs for. At one point, this is also my conviction, this time of insecurity must have an end.

It must be possible for the German Volk to fashion its life according to its own wish and will, within the limits of its own Lebensraum, and without persistent harassment from others. It must be possible for the German Volk to partake in the goods of this world to the extent it can rightfully claim because of its numbers and value.

Hereby I open the Winterhilfswerk campaign for 1939–40. I ask the helpers to dedicate themselves to this work as I ask the German Volk to now prove itself worthy of its heroes, to atone for the sins which the homeland committed against the German Volk and its soldiers in the years 1914 through 1918.

This rhetoric once more failed to make the desired impression abroad, although the Irish dramatist George Bernard Shaw was among the few who did lobby for the conclusion of a peace with Hitler.¹¹⁶⁰ A speech by the French Premier later the same evening clearly demonstrated that this “very last” of Hitler’s appeals was destined to bear no more fruit than its predecessors. Daladier insisted that France was prepared “to defend a just cause to the end.”

The British also realized the gravity of the situation, as evidenced in an address by Chamberlain before the House of Commons on October 12.¹¹⁶¹ It included an unequivocal rejection of Hitler’s “peace proposals.” Chamberlain faulted these German advances for being too “vague and uncertain” in nature, i.e. too imprecise to constitute a viable alternative. He stressed that they “contain no suggestions for righting the wrongs done to Czechoslovakia and Poland.” Past experiences had proven that no reliance could be put on “promises” given by the Reich Government. If Germany truly desired peace, Chamberlain argued, then “acts—not words alone—must be forthcoming.” Hitler would have to give “convincing proof” of his peaceful intentions.

In Hitler's eyes, this represented a most impudent response to his "extraordinarily concrete" proposals. On October 13, Hitler was still so enraged by Chamberlain's statements that he abandoned all caution and disclosed Chamberlain's arguments to the public in the form of an official declaration of the Reich Government in response to the British Prime Minister's address:¹¹⁶²

While, in his appeal for peace, the Führer showed the way, by extraordinarily concrete proposals, to the viable attainment of a security guarantee for Europe's peoples which may well have led to action following word, given the goodwill of England and France, the same man whose behavior previously precluded said action declared hypocritically: "Acts—not words alone—must be forthcoming," before the British people and France, their valiant and trusted ally, would be justified in abandoning this struggle to the utmost of their strength.

One sentence was the extent of what Chamberlain could muster with regard to the great satisfaction with which Germany's neutral neighbors welcomed the Führer's guarantee of their national security, of respect for their vital interests. He declared he would omit those passages of the Führer's speech which aim to give renewed assurances to the Führer's neighbors for they well know the worth of these.

This is convincing evidence that Chamberlain and his governing clique of warmongers have no intention of concerning themselves with the Führer's proposals for peace or questions of the neutral states. All they desire is to wage war against the German Volk.

At the end of the legal maneuvering with which he seeks to deceive the world, which is yearning for peace, and by means of which he hopes to drive his own people as well as the unfortunate French into a senseless war, Chamberlain had the temerity to give the following outrageous ultimatum, namely, that the German Government shall either have to produce "convincing proof" of the sincerity of their desire for peace by definite acts and through the creation of effective guarantees of their intent to fulfil their obligations, or Britain will be forced to persevere in her attitude to the end.

The British Prime Minister has rejected, through this speech void of any sense of responsibility and replete with lies and hypocrisies, the hand extended in peace by the Führer in his exposition of October 6.

Hitler instructed Ribbentrop to forward a telegram to the German Chargé d'Affaires in Helsinki on October 15. This particular correspondence clearly betrayed Hitler's continued outrage at Chamberlain's words:¹¹⁶³

Please tell the Finnish Foreign Minister in reply to his question that Chamberlain rejected the Führer's magnanimous peace offer in the most insolent manner and that this closes the subject for us. You will please make no further explanations about the matter.

Ribbentrop

Since Finland had rejected Hitler's recent offer of a non-aggression pact, Hitler was not inclined to lift a finger in its defense. His disposition towards the other small states which had also spurned his overtures was no more favorable. As he had already explained to Dahlerus earlier, he was "completely disinteresting himself in all regions that did not affect Germany's interests."¹¹⁶⁴ He now declared these countries free to turn to England for protection, if they so desired.

Hitler ordered the text of the telegram to Finland to be relayed to Germany's diplomatic representatives in all neutral states on October 18. In addition, he issued instructions for the launching of a discrete propaganda campaign. German diplomats were to "confidentially" point out to their counterparts abroad the terrible revenge in store for England now that it had declined Hitler's last offer for peace.

One month later, partially in response to this campaign, Churchill announced to the English people in a radio broadcast:¹¹⁶⁵

Nowadays we are assailed by a chorus of horrid threats. The Nazi Government exudes through every neutral State inside information of the frightful vengeance they are going to wreak upon us, and they also bawl it around the world by their leather-lunged propaganda machine. If words could kill, we should be dead already. But we are not disturbed by these blood-curdling threats. Indeed, we take them as a sign of weakness of our foes. We do not make threats in time of war. If at any time we should have some ideas of an offensive character, we should not talk about them; we should try to see how they worked out in action.

We do not at all underrate the power and the maliciousness of our enemies. We are prepared to endure tribulation.

On October 12, 1939, Hitler promulgated the following decree on the administration of the occupied territory in Poland:¹¹⁶⁶

To restore and to maintain law and order and public life in the occupied Polish territories, I order:

§ 1

The territories occupied by German troops, insofar as they are not incorporated into the German Reich, are to be placed under the Governor General for the occupied Polish territories.

§ 2

(1) I appoint Reich Minister Dr. Frank as Governor General for the occupied Polish territories.

(2) I appoint Reich Minister Dr. Seyss-Inquart as Deputy of the Governor General.

§ 3

(1) The Governor General is directly subordinate to me.

(2) All branches of the administration are assigned to the Governor General.

In creating the “Governor-Generalship” in Poland, Hitler followed Ludendorff’s lead. In the course of the First World War, Ludendorff had set up a similarly short-lived structure by the same name. Hitler, however, in the campaign aiming at the eradication of the Polish intelligentsia, of the Polish Catholic clergy, and of the Polish Jews, went far beyond the measures implemented by his predecessor. This move surpassed anything the world had previously seen.

It was on Hitler’s orders that his cohorts in the SS indulged in an unprecedented murder spree among a small people left virtually defenseless. Despite his obvious involvement, Hitler nevertheless refused to “bear all responsibility” in this case. He had equally shied away from assuming responsibility for the events of the 1938 Crystal Night, and he would do so again later in the wholesale extermination of Jews. As in November 1938, Hitler played the innocent before the German public, acting as though he had no connections to the gruesome murders perpetrated in Poland and elsewhere.

The man most closely tied to the liquidation of the Polish upper class, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, Hitler’s most diligent and conscientious servant, repeatedly and unequivocally implied while speaking with the German generals that Hitler had personally issued orders for this campaign. In Koblenz, in March 1940, Himmler declared in this context: “I do nothing of which the Führer is not aware.” On a different occasion, Himmler stated: “The person of the Führer must not be mentioned in this context under any circumstances. I will assume all responsibility.”

For the record, Reinhard Heydrich, the Chief of the Reich Central Security Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA), noted on July 2, 1940, that he was acting on “special orders of the Führer.” As to the contents of the instructions received, Heydrich remarked: “Order for the liquidation of numerous Poles in leading circles, amounting to thousands.”

The Governor General of Poland, Dr. Hans Frank, recorded the following in his diary on May 30, 1940, after attending a gathering of police officers: “The Führer told me: ‘What we have now determined as the leadership of Poland is to be liquidated; what grows back needs to be secured by us and, after an appropriate period, it is to be removed also.’” On October 2, 1940, Hitler himself stated in a briefing that “all members of the Polish intelligentsia” were to be killed off. Though he admitted this might sound harsh, he claimed it was nothing other than the “law of life.”¹¹⁶⁷

On October 16, 1939, Hitler received the Swedish Asia explorer, Sven Hedin,¹¹⁶⁸ at the Reich Chancellery at noon. On this occasion, Hitler expressed his frustration with the intransigence of the British and their determination to go to war.

In considering the German notes on this one-hour-and-fifteen-minute encounter,¹¹⁶⁹ the reader has great difficulty in warding off the impression that the two men conversing either lived utterly divorced from reality, or were completely insane.

Both Hitler and Hedin sought to outdo one another with references to England's weakness and the pending collapse of the British Empire. Hedin stressed his belief "that the British Empire was finished." Against the new German aircraft factories "those in England were a joke." He described the British measures as *dilettantisch*. And Hitler stated that he did not want the Poles, that "riff-raff" (*Geschmeiss*) within his own borders.

Soon, however, it became apparent why Hedin had come to Berlin. The Swede wished to feel out the Reich Government on its stance regarding a potential Russo-Finnish War. He expressed fears that Sweden, by helping Finland, would thereby "place herself in opposition to Germany." Nettled by Finland's earlier behavior, Hitler declared that he would not "attack Sweden from the rear." He added that:

. . . he had written off the South and likewise the North where he had experienced only ingratitude and antipathy,¹¹⁷⁰ although he had never done them any harm. He could say that these countries had acted abominably (*niederträchtig*) in public statements and in their press.

Hedin wondered what the French, "England's slaves who face ruin," were fighting for. Hitler's answer was that "France will sacrifice her national strength." The Swede further asked whether the war would be over quickly. To this, the official note remarked the following:

The Führer replied that he did not know. His first war plan was for four years, but he could go on fighting even eight or ten years. In a final showdown, he would triumph and England would be a field of ruins. The British were stupid enough to believe that they were safe from the German submarines, but they were thinking of submarines used in the World War, which had long since been improved upon. There were no weapons against our present submarines.

If England wanted peace, she could have it. She was playing a role in Europe that no longer convinced anyone. In the Far East, the British were waning already. He could not say this publicly, but the only man in England

that he would care to call a genius was Lloyd George. Eden was a foppish nonentity (*pomadisierte Null*) and Churchill incompetent (*unfähig*). Of all the British to whom he had spoken to date, Lloyd George had made the greatest impression upon him.

Hitler's summation was that "England was to blame for everything that was happening today," and that "there was only one chance for England, and that was to recognize Germany's interests."

On October 17, Hitler promoted the Commander of the Submarine Fleet, Lieutenant Commander and Commodore Dönitz, to the rank of Rear Admiral in recognition of his services to the German U-boat force.¹¹⁷¹

On October 18, in the presence of Raeder, Hitler received Lieutenant Commander Günter Prien at the Reich Chancellery. On October 14, Prien had steered his submarine 'U 49' into Scapa Flow, where the British battleship *Royal Oak* lay anchored, and sunk the 29,000-ton vessel. The following official report was published on the reception for Prien and his men:¹¹⁷²

Lieutenant Commander Prien reported the lined-up crew of the U-boat present to the Führer. The Führer shook the hand of each individual officer and member of the crew. In an address, the Führer then expressed his personal gratitude and that of the entire German nation for their deed. He reminded the men who stood before him today that they had accomplished this unique feat precisely in the same location where a weak government had once abandoned the German fleet in the deceptive hope of perhaps getting it back.

There one German Admiral¹¹⁷³ had kept the fleet from this ultimate disgrace and rescued it. The great and daring feat of the men, whom he was happy to be able to personally welcome, had only reinforced the German Volk in its unshakeable belief in victory.

In moving words, the Führer then expressed how proud he and the entire German Volk were of the men of the German U-boat force. What these men had achieved was the proudest exploit a German submarine could undertake and accomplish. Not only had this feat profoundly moved Germany, it had carried its glory forth into the world.

Thereupon he presented the captain, Lieutenant Commander Prien, with the highest distinction possible for a German soldier: the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. This decoration likewise honors the entire crew. Lieutenant Commander Prien then proceeded to report to the Führer on his adventures in the bay of Scapa Flow. Thereafter, the commander and the crew of the U-boat were the Führer's guests for lunch at his apartment.

On October 18, Hitler issued "Directive No. 7 for the Conduct of the War." It allowed the Army to penetrate French territory for

“reconnaissance” purposes, providing for the Luftwaffe to “send fighter escorts into French territory,” and permitting the Navy to “attack enemy passenger ships which are in a convoy or are sailing without lights.” Truly remarkable was the following passage: “In case a Franco-British invasion into Belgium must be repulsed, the Army will be permitted to enter Luxembourg territory.” The entire text read:¹¹⁷⁴

Directive No. 7 for the Conduct of the War

Until the planned attack against the western enemy is begun, the previous directives for warfare in the West are supplemented herewith.

1. Permission is granted effective immediately as follows:

The Army may cross the French border with patrols but only as far as this is necessary for reconnaissance and for keeping in touch with an enemy avoiding contact.

The Luftwaffe may send fighter escorts into French territory as far as this is necessary for protecting our reconnaissance; may raid British naval forces in naval harbors (oral advance notification).

The Navy may attack enemy passenger ships which are in a convoy or are sailing without lights.

The Führer will decide on all other measures suggested for the purpose of intensifying the war against British shipping, as soon as these measures have been checked by the OKW as to their political and economic effect.

The attacks against British naval vessels at sea and in naval harbors are to be continued at every favorable opportunity, the Navy and the Luftwaffe cooperating closely.

2. In case a Franco-British invasion into Belgium must be repulsed (Directive No. 6, paragraph 6), the Army will be permitted to enter Luxembourg territory.

If that occurs, the Luftwaffe will support the Army directly and will protect it from raids by British and French air forces. Our Luftwaffe will also interfere with the approach and transport of enemy forces. A further objective is to prevent British troop landings in Belgium and Holland and to prevent British and French air forces from gaining a foothold there. For this purpose flights will be allowed over the entire western frontier of Germany. Raids on industrial targets and such raids as might endanger the civilian population to a high degree are not permitted in Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg.

For the Navy, the principles stated in Directive No. 6, paragraph 5, apply in this case, also.

3. Besides the measures taken by the commanders of the individual branches of the Wehrmacht, the offices directly subordinate to the OKW (particularly the Inspector of the Wehrmacht Signal Communications and the Intelligence and Propaganda Division) should work together to conceal our preparations for an attack.

Pertinent suggestions and requests are to be submitted as soon as possible to the OKW, Operations Planning.

By order: Keitel

As the directive revealed, Hitler was already actively in search of pretexts to justify an intervention in the neutral states in the West.

On October 18 also, Hitler established a War Service Cross. Its statutes opened with the following words:¹¹⁷⁵

I establish the War Service Cross (*Kriegsverdienstkreuz*) award as a sign of appreciation for services in the war forced upon us, which could not find proper recognition through the Iron Cross.

On October 19, ratification of the "German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty" was effected in Berlin.¹¹⁷⁶ German protocol officials had hoped in vain that Molotov might travel to Berlin to attend the official ceremonies.¹¹⁷⁷ Later that day, Hitler promoted the Inspector General for Railroad Construction, Todt, to the rank of Major General.¹¹⁷⁸

Relations to Slovakia were growing warmer by the day, since this state obligingly performed in accordance with Hitler's wishes. Evidently, Hitler thought the Slovaks less senile than the British. On October 21, he received the Slovak Envoy Cernak at the Chancellery. The following official communiqué was published:¹¹⁷⁹

At the conference, the Führer explained to the Envoy that Germany will satisfy the Slovak Government's requests, based on historic and ethnic considerations, for a reunion with the territories taken possession of by the former Polish State in the years 1920, 1924, and 1938.¹¹⁸⁰ A treaty on the state level between Germany and Slovakia shall effect the restitution of these territories.¹¹⁸¹

Hitler proved most considerate toward Slovakia in October 1939. He awarded Minister-President Tiso the Great Cross of the Order of the German Eagle and commissioned Göring to travel to Pressburg to personally present Tiso with this distinction on October 25.¹¹⁸²

On October 24, Hitler received the Japanese Ambassador General Oshima, who bade the Chancellor farewell as he had just been recalled to Tokyo. The parting Ambassador took advantage of the occasion to hand Hitler four works of modern Japanese art, gifts of the Japanese industrialist Fujiwara who, according to the DNB report, sought to thereby express his deference to Hitler.¹¹⁸³

Two days later, the Slovak Parliament unanimously elected Tiso as the President of the Slovak Republic. Previously, Tiso had served as Slovakia's Minister-President. Naturally, Hitler immediately wired his "heartfelt congratulations" to Tiso.¹¹⁸⁴

On October 27, Hitler awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross to eleven generals and three other officers.

The German News Bureau reported the following on the reception at the Reich Chancellery:¹¹⁸⁵

In a short address, the Führer expressed, in the name of the entire German Volk, his gratitude and appreciation for their outstanding achievements to the officers assembled. He requested the commanders to relay this appreciation to their troops. Thereafter, the officers were the Führer's guests for lunch at his apartment.

At this reception, a remark slipped Brauchitsch's lips to the effect that the Army would not be ready for action in the West before November 26. Hitler immediately retorted that this was far too late. He insisted that the offensive to the West be launched on November 12. Upon hearing this, the generals began to feel increasingly uncomfortable. Apparently, Hitler was set on launching the Western offensive while it was still November. And this although snowfall had already been recorded in the Palatinate Forest in October. The upcoming winter was threatening to be anything but mild.

Hitler insisted on marching through Belgium with all his might, despite Germany's repeated assurances of Belgian neutrality. That he intended "not to justify the breach of neutrality as idiotically as in 1914"¹¹⁸⁶ was of little comfort to the generals. After all, this did not change the fact of the violation of neutrality in the least.

The generals pondered the situation. Some already thought of themselves as "conspirators"¹¹⁸⁷ as they contemplated a purge before the launch of the offensive in the West. The only question was: how?

On November 5, Brauchitsch set out to dissuade Hitler from his plans by pointing out the disadvantages of beginning a campaign in the West. He wrote a memorandum and, with this in hand, approached Hitler at his office in the Chancellery. Initially, Hitler remained relatively calm as he listened to Brauchitsch reading the memorandum.¹¹⁸⁸ Gradually, however, Brauchitsch's exposition took on a tone of urgency. Deliberately exaggerating, the general claimed that the morale of the German infantry was worse than in the First World War. Hitler could no longer contain himself. As Halder recorded in his diary, the Führer then burst out "raging, wants documentation: In what units lack of discipline? What happened? Wants to fly there tomorrow. What to be done? Death sentences. West or East? Army did not want to fight."

Brauchitsch could not get a word in edgewise. This ended his report and the attempt at rebellion against the Führer. No longer did any of the generals dare to oppose Hitler's strategic plans for fear of

sharing the fate of a Blomberg or a Fritsch who had expressed their misgivings to Hitler only two years earlier and whom Hitler had dealt with most severely. Neither Brauchitsch nor Halder were keen on following in their footsteps.

On November 6, Hitler wired a congratulatory telegram to Arthur Greiser. He had appointed him Gauleiter of the newly formed Gau Wartheland-Posen on October 23.¹¹⁸⁹ Greiser had forwarded Hitler a wire earlier and had pledged his loyalty to the Führer at no less than thirty-two rallies in his Gau. Hitler replied to Greiser:

I thank you and the Germans of the new Gau Wartheland for the greetings related to me by telegram from yesterday's rallies. I reciprocate in a heartfelt manner and in the secure conviction that, after years of oppression and decline, the Warthegau shall stride forth on a path to new development and a happy future.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, German troops had concentrated along the borders of Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The Wehrmacht's moves in these areas understandably caused grave concerns in the neighboring states. The troop movements were so obvious in fact they must have struck even the most innocent of passers-by. The Belgian King and the Dutch Queen hoped to intercede at the last moment by directing a joint declaration to Hitler. In their telegram, they offered their services as mediators in the peaceful settlement of the dispute "before the war in Western Europe begins in full violence."¹¹⁹⁰

On November 7, Hitler ordered Keitel to postpone the initial date for the attack (scheduled for November 12) for another three days. The telegram from the Dutch Queen and the Belgian King figured little in his considerations. Adverse weather conditions made a further postponement of the attack appear opportune.¹¹⁹¹

As was well-known, Hitler had never been too terribly fond of attempts at mediation. He was not inclined to accept the royal offers, especially not now that Chamberlain had so outspokenly refused his peace proposal in public. Hitler had had enough of "neutral forces," such self-appointed intermediaries as Dahlerus, who attempted to meddle in the Reich's affairs, and—via Göring and Ribbentrop—he let Dahlerus and the Legation in Sweden know that "the German Government is no longer interested in his sounding out England, because the official attitude of the British Government has already indicated unequivocal rejection of the German position."¹¹⁹²

The representatives of the Netherlands and Belgium would be summoned to the Foreign Ministry on November 15, because of the efforts at mediation by their respective Royal Families.¹¹⁹³

In the name of the Führer, Ribbentrop informed the representatives of Belgium and the Netherlands that the German Government regarded the advance towards peace initiated by the Belgian King and the Queen of the Netherlands as obsolete due to the English and French Governments' brusque rejection of it.

And it was due to this recalcitrant British stance, so Hitler further made clear to other non-belligerents, that he was now forced to allow the Soviets a free hand anywhere they chose outside of the German sphere of influence. Therefore, he demonstratively commissioned Göring and Ribbentrop to attend a festive reception at the Soviet Embassy in Berlin on November 7, on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

On the next day, Hitler held the customary address in commemoration of the November 1923 Putsch. As usual, the festivities took place in the Bürgerbräukeller at Munich. This particular speech has entered the history books due to the mysterious attempt made on Hitler's life: the detonation of a bomb shortly after he had left the premises.

A number of curious circumstances accompanied the whole event of November 8. At first, official announcements had informed the public that Hess was scheduled to speak on November 8. A corrected version of this statement then indicated that Hess would deliver a radio address a day later, at 7:30 p.m. Finally the public was informed that Hess would not speak at all.

Another official pronouncement informed the public that, "in view of the state of war in existence," the program for the festivities on November 8 and November 9 had been cut short. The annual "Convention of the Old Fighters" was scheduled earlier than normal, for 7:00 in the evening of November 8. For the next day, the National Socialist Party Press informed the public that the placing of wreaths at the Feldherrnhalle and at the other memorials was the only official act provided for. No commemorative march was to take place.¹¹⁹⁴

In all likelihood, "blackout" (*Verdunkelung*) played a role in the planning for an early start of the 1939 commemoration. Hitler's speech was not significantly shorter than on previous occasions of this nature. Allegations that he spoke more hurriedly and excitedly than customary

could not be verified by the radio audience. These speculations were in all likelihood due to later reconstructions of the event in light of the bomb explosion and the alleged “sixth sense” of the Führer.

What was indeed remarkable in this speech was that Hitler abbreviated the customarily lengthy “party narrative” to a few sentences. The Bürgerbräukeller address of 1939 presented nothing but a vicious tirade directed against England. He was less than convincing in his attempt to play the devil’s advocate. Particularly ludicrous were a number of derogatory statements such as:

Germany already had a culture when *die Halifaxe* had no inkling of the term yet. [—] Within the last six years more has been done for culture in Germany than in England within the last 100 years. [—]

I believe that a single German, let us say, Beethoven, achieved more in the realm of music than all Englishmen of the past and present together!

Moreover, Hitler concentrated on the parallels Chamberlain had drawn with the Second Punic War. He threatened the British by saying that he would make them “scurry back to the Thames.”

Hitler’s speech of November 8 read as follows:¹¹⁹⁵

Party Comrades! My German Volksgenossen!

I have come to join you for a few hours to relive in your midst the memory of a day which has become of supreme significance to us, to the Movement, and hence to the entire German Volk.

It was a most difficult decision which I had to make and see through at the time. The apparent failure led to the birth of the great National Socialist Liberation Movement. It was as a result of this failure that the big trial came about, which allowed us, for the first time, to step before the public in defense of our views, our goals; it allowed this decision of ours to bear the responsibility in order to acquaint the broad mass of our Volk with our ideas.

That it was possible for the National Socialist Movement to grow so much in the span of the four years leading from 1919 to 1923, for it to succeed in mobilizing the entire nation, for the first time, by this eye-opening event, must largely be ascribed to the general situation in Germany at the time. A terrible catastrophe had come over our Volk and our land. After a peace of nearly forty-five years, Germany had been driven into a war. The question of guilt in this war has been much debated.

We know today—and we already knew it back then—that, up to the year 1914, the Reich Government was guilty of only one thing, namely, of not having done everything which could have been done and should have been done, in the service of the nation’s recovery. Moreover, it could be blamed for allowing Germany to enter the war only at the most inopportune moment. Undoubtedly, had Germany truly wanted war, there would have been many better opportunities earlier.

The forces which opposed us at the time have also engineered the present war against Germany—with the same empty phrases and the same lies. All of us, insofar as we were soldiers back then, know that neither the English nor the French conquered us on the battlefield. A monumental lie was needed to rob this Volk of its weapons.

Today there may be one or the other man abroad who is surprised at my great self-confidence. I can only say to him: I won this self-confidence on the battlefield! In those four years, I never for a moment had the conviction or the oppressive knowledge that any of our enemies was superior to us. Neither the French nor the English displayed greater courage, greater valor, or greater defiance of death than did the German soldier.

What brought Germany to the ground back then were the lies of our enemies. It was the same men who lied then who lie today once more, since they are the same old warmongers who already opposed Germany in the Great War. At the time, Mr. Churchill agitated for war. At the time, there was a weak government in Germany. And it is the same Mr. Churchill who is agitating for war today. But in Germany, there is another government! It was the government of today which fought the British back then. It has no more respect for them than for any other party. And it does not feel inferior in the least. To the contrary, it is convinced of its superiority.

The lies back then were the same ones as today.

Why did England go to war back then? In 1914, the English claimed: Great Britain is fighting for the freedom of the small nations. Later we all saw how Great Britain dealt summarily with the freedom of these small nations, how little its so-called statesmen cared for the freedom of these small nations, how they repressed the minorities there, abused the peoples. And this is precisely what they are doing today and what they do whenever it suits their ends and programs.

They claimed at the time: England is fighting for justice! Well, England has been fighting for justice for three hundred years now and, as recompense, the dear Lord has given it about forty million square kilometers of soil on this earth and, in addition, the “right” to rule over 480 million human beings. Such is the Lord’s recompense for “people who fight only for justice.” Especially for people who fight only for the “right of others to self-determination,” as, in 1914, England supposedly fought for this “right to self-determination.” It declared: “The British soldier is not fighting for his own interests, but for the right of all peoples to self-determination.” Now, England could well have proclaimed this right to self-determination for the peoples of the British Empire at the time. Apparently, it was saving this for the next war!

And then England was fighting for “civilization,” which can be found only in the British Isles. Civilization reigns supreme only in the English miners’ districts, in the English slums, in Whitechapel, and the other quarters of mass destitution and social debasement.

Moreover—as usual—England set out to do battle for the cause of “humanity.” Humanity was stuffed into shells as gunpowder. After all, you can employ whatever weapons, as long as you are fighting for a noble, lofty goal. And this is something England has always done!

They went a step further yet to declare: We English are not fighting against the German Volk; to the contrary, we love the German Volk. We—Churchill, Chamberlain, and the others—are only fighting the regime which oppresses the German Volk. For we English have only one mission: to deliver Germany from this regime and to thereby make the German Volk happy. And to this end, the English are fighting primarily to relieve the German Volk of the burden of militarism. Yes, the day will come when it will not need to carry any more weapons. We English will make it totally free of weapons.

Moreover, they declared it was a shabby thing to write that German trade was a thorn in their side. “On the contrary, we want free trade. We have nothing against the German merchant marine!” That is what Herr Churchill said at the time. They declared it was disgraceful slander to claim that England had its eyes on Germany’s colonies—even to think as much was disgraceful. They declared this in 1914, 1916, 1917, and in 1918 still.

They went a step further to say they were fighting not for victory, but for a peace of understanding, a peace of reconciliation, and, above all, a peace of equality of rights. And this peace would make it possible to renounce armament in the future.

Hence, in all truth, they were fighting against war. England fought against war, to eliminate war, to wage war against those fighting wars, to fight the resistance of those invaded. Thus, they declared there could be no talk of reparation payments as a goal in British war policy. On the contrary, they were seeking a peace devoid of reparations. This peace was to be attained through a general disarmament. This peace was to be crowned by the creation of an institution uniting all peoples.

And England’s great second, Wilson, summed all this up in Fourteen Points, supplemented by three further ones. They assured us that we had nothing to fear, that we would be treated fairly. All we needed to do was to lay down our arms and to trust England. Then we would be welcomed with open arms into a true community of man, ruled by law. There, the colonies would be redistributed fairly in a manner in which all justified claims to colonies would be heard. This would be done in all solemnity in the League of Nations. War would be abolished for good, and eternal peace would reign.

From the English point of view, it was understandable that a power, which ruled over forty million square kilometers and 480 million human beings with only forty-six million Englishmen, should desire peace after nearly three hundred years of world conquest by England. “For three hundred years, we have subjugated country after country, thrown down people after people. We now rule the world and we would like to have some peace and quiet for this, please!” This was clear, and it was comprehensible that the League of Nations was set up in an effort to warrant stabilization¹¹⁹⁶ of the state of affairs which thus had come about.

Things developed differently, however.

And today, an English minister steps up, tears in his eyes, and says: “Oh, how we would love to come to an understanding with Germany. If we could only trust the word of the German leadership!”¹¹⁹⁷ The same is on the tip of my tongue! How we would love to come to an understanding with England.

If we could only trust the word of its leadership! When has there ever been a people more vilely lied to and tricked than the German Volk by English statesmen in the past two decades?

What happened to the promised freedom of the peoples? What happened to justice? What happened to the peace without victors and vanquished? What happened to the right of all peoples to self-determination? What happened to the renunciation of reparations? What happened to the fair settlement of the colonial question? What happened to the solemn declaration not to take its colonies from Germany? What happened to the sacrosanct assurance not to burden us unnecessarily? What finally happened to the assurances that we would be welcomed as equals into the open arms of the so-called League of Nations? What happened to the assurances of a general disarmament?

All lies. Broken promises.

Our colonies were taken from us. Our trade was ruined. Our merchant marine was robbed. Millions of Germans were torn from us and abused. Reparation payments were demanded of our Volk which it could not possibly have paid in a hundred years. We were all thrust into deep poverty.

The National Socialist Movement came into being because of this poverty.

Let no one act as though today, if only Germany were not National Socialist, a golden British heart would open up to it.

God knows the Germany we once knew was completely different from the National Socialist one. That Germany was democratic, it was cosmopolitan, it blindly believed in the assurances of British statesmen. That Germany still knew trust, it disarmed itself, and it dishonored itself. And it was lied to and tricked all the more! Our Movement came into being because of the misery this brought on. From the greatest breach of faith of all time came the events at Spa¹¹⁹⁸ and then the shameful Diktat of Versailles.

You know, my old Comrades in Arms, how I expounded this treaty before you time and time again from this very spot. Point for point. Over 440 articles, each of which represented an insult and a violation of a great nation. Destitution and despair took hold of the Volk. Then followed the years of inflation, robbing the Volk of all means of sustenance, the times of rampant unemployment, of enormous numbers of suicides¹¹⁹⁹ in Germany. In two years, we had more suicides in Germany than Americans were killed in the course of the war in the West. The National Socialist Movement came into being because of this great poverty; and from its beginnings it had to make the most difficult decisions.

One of these decisions was the decision to revolt on November 8, 1923. It ended in failure, or so it appeared at the time. Still, its sacrifices brought the delivery of Germany. Sixteen dead! Millions of living were revived through their deaths. National Socialism then set out on its triumphant march.

In the days since then, Germany has become a world power—thanks to our Movement! Of course, it was understandable that the enemy of old began to agitate once more the minute we overcame the aftereffects of the defeat.

Undoubtedly, there are two kinds of Englishmen.¹²⁰⁰ We do not wish to be unjst here. There are many men in England, too, who dislike all these hypocritical airs, and who wish to have nothing to do with this. Either they

have been silenced or they are helpless. What is decisive for us is that, despite searching for years, we have not found this type of Englishman.

My Party Comrades, you know how I worked for an understanding with England for nearly two decades. How we limited ourselves in the conduct of German politics to bring about this understanding! This was the case with France also. The things we wrote off, the things we renounced!

One thing was obvious: no German Government can renounce Germany's right to life! And, above all, a National Socialist Government has no intention of renouncing such a right to life! On the contrary, our protest was spurred by the renunciation of this right to life once made by our democratic politicians. Therefore, I shall carry through the life and the security of the German Volk and Reich under all circumstances!

I have never presumed to interfere in British or French affairs. If an Englishman stands up today to say, "We feel responsible for the fate of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe," then I can only reply to this gentleman: Then we are just as responsible for the fate of the peoples of Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, and, for all I care, of India as well.

Should a fourth Englishman say, "For us the frontier runs along the Rhine," and the next comes up to say, "For us the frontier runs along the Vistula river," then all I can reply is: Scurry back to the Thames, gentlemen, or else we will have to help matters along!

In any event, today's Germany stands determined to secure its borders and to preserve its Lebensraum. It is an area not cultivated by the English. We did not go anywhere the English brought culture before us. Since, in his speech yesterday, Lord Halifax declared himself to be a champion of the arts and culture, and because of this Germany had to be destroyed, then all we can say is: Germany already had a culture when *die Halifax*¹²⁰¹ had no inkling of the term yet.

Within the last six years more has been done for culture in Germany than in England within the last 100 years. And in those locations which we have reached to date, we have not found any monuments of British apostles of culture, but only cultural monuments of great Germans. In vain I searched for British monuments of culture in Prague and Posen [Poznań], Graudenz and Thorn, Danzig and Vienna. Perhaps they can be found only in Egypt or India.

In any event, we uplifted the German nation year by year, beginning in the year 1933 and throughout the years 1934, 1935, and 1936. One stage at a time, step by step we liberated Germany and made it strong! And in this instance, I do understand the plight of the international warmongers. To their great regret, they were forced to realize that the new Germany is by no means the old Germany.

And I strove not only to develop the cultural aspects of our life, but also to revise our position in power politics, and this thoroughly. We have built up a Wehrmacht—and I can well permit myself to say so today: there is not a better one to be found in the world! And behind this Wehrmacht stands the Volk with its ranks closed as never before in German history! And above this Wehrmacht, above this Volk, there stands a government of zealous willpower, the like of which has not been seen in Germany in the past centuries!

And, as you know, this new German Reich possesses no war aims in this struggle against England and France. In my last speech, in which I held out my hand to England and France one last time,¹²⁰² I already made clear where I stand in this matter. When we are attacked now, this cannot have anything to do with the questions of Austria, Czechoslovakia, or Poland, because they are brought up as the occasion demands only to be promptly forgotten.

The case of Poland proves that England is not interested in the existence of such states; otherwise it would have had to declare war on the Soviet Union as well, since Poland was divided approximately in half.¹²⁰³ But now the English say that this is not really decisive any longer; we have a different war aim. First, it was the independence of Poland, then the elimination of Nazism, then again guarantees for the future. It will always be something else. They will wage war as long as they find someone willing to wage the war in their stead, someone willing to sacrifice himself for them. The reasons are the same old empty phrases. If it declared it wished to stand up for liberty in general and in particular, Great Britain could set a wonderful example for the world by granting full liberties to its own peoples.¹²⁰⁴

How noble might this new British crusade look, had it been preceded by the granting of liberty to 350 million Indians or a proclamation of independence and the right of free elections for the remaining British colonies! How gladly would we bow to such an England! Instead, we see England oppressing these millions, just as it stood by and watched the oppression of several million Germans.

Hence it cannot move us in the least when today an unctuous British minister proclaims England has an eye only to ideals and not to any selfish goals. Of course—I have mentioned this before—the British have never yet fought for selfish goals. And, as recompense for this selfless struggle, the dear Lord presented them with so many lands and so many peoples.

And when, on this day, they declare they are not fighting for any selfish goals, then this is simply ridiculous! The German Volk cannot help but be astounded at the simplicity of those who believe, after twenty years of this incredible deception of the world, they can approach us once more with the same swindle.

Or when they say that they stand up for culture: England as the creator of culture is a chapter in its own right. The English cannot tell us Germans anything about culture: our music, our poetry, our architecture, our paintings, our sculptures, can more than stand a comparison to the English arts. I believe that a single German, let us say, Beethoven, achieved more in the realm of music than all Englishmen of the past and present together! And we take care of this culture better than the English are capable of doing.

Now that they say their only aim in this war is to finally end all wars—well, why did they begin this war in the first place? This war began solely because England so desired! And we stand convinced that there shall be war as long as the goods of this earth are not fairly distributed, and as long as this distribution is not a voluntary and a just one. This could have been done long ago! And today they say: “Yes, we simply cannot return the colonies to National Socialist Germany, as much as we regret this. We would truly like

to redistribute the raw materials of this earth, but we would need to be able to give them to someone we could trust." Well, gentlemen, there were other governments in power in Germany before ours. And these were governments greatly to England's liking, in part even propped up by England. You should have been able to vest your trust in them! Why did you not let them have some of the goods, these governments which you trusted? After all, there would have been no reason to redistribute them, had our belongings not been stolen from us in the first place.

And we, too, are of the opinion that this war must come to an end. War cannot, should not, and will not come to haunt us every few years. We hence think it necessary for nations to limit themselves to their spheres of influence. In other words, there must be an end to this situation where one people takes upon itself to play the world's policeman and interferes in everybody else's affairs. The British Government will come to realize that, at least as far as Germany is concerned, the attempt to erect a police dictatorship over us will fail, and must fail.

Neither in the past nor in the present have we encountered members of the British Government in their role as self-proclaimed apostles of culture—and in the role of policemen we simply cannot bear to see them.

The true reason for their actions is a different one. They hate social Germany (*das soziale Deutschland*)!

What have we done to them? Nothing at all. Have we threatened them? Not in a single instance. Were we not ready to conclude an agreement with them? Yes, we were. And we even did so. Did we not restrict ourselves in our armaments?¹²⁰⁵ Alas, all this was of no interest to them.

What they hate is the Germany which sets a dangerous example for them, this social Germany. It is the Germany of a social labor legislation which they already hated before the World War and which they still hate today. It is the Germany of social welfare, of social equality, of the elimination of class differences—this is what they hate! They hate this Germany which in the course of seven years has labored to afford its Volksgenossen a decent life. They hate this Germany which has eliminated unemployment, which, in spite of all their wealth, they have not been able to eliminate. This Germany which grants its laborers decent housing—this is what they hate because they have a feeling their own peoples could be "infected" thereby. They hate this Germany of social legislation, this Germany which celebrates the first of May as the day of honest labor.

They hate this Germany which has taken up this struggle for improved living conditions. This Germany they hate! They hate this Germany, this ethnically healthy (*volksgesund*) Germany, where children are washed and are not full of lice, and which does not allow conditions to take hold, such as their own press now freely admits to.

It is their big money men, their Jewish and non-Jewish international banking barons, who hate us because they see in Germany a bad example potentially rousing other peoples, especially their own people. They hate this Germany with its young, healthy, blossoming new generation, the Germany which takes such care of the well-being of this generation.

And, of course, they hate the strong Germany, the Germany on the march, which takes upon itself sacrifices voluntarily.

We have just seen how much they hate us. We drew up a Four-Year Plan to help ourselves. We have not taken anything from anyone through this Four-Year Plan. When we turn coal into gasoline or rubber, or when we see to other forms of substitution, what are we thereby taking from others? Nothing, nothing at all. To the contrary, they should have been happy and said: "Then they do not burden our markets. If they make their own gasoline, they do not need to export to be able to import.—All the better for us!" No, they fought this Four-Year Plan because it made Germany healthy! That was the only reason.

It is a fight against a free, an independent, a viable Germany! That is their fight.

And this we oppose in our fight. This struggle is our eternally unchanging National Socialist fight for the erection of a healthy, strong Volksgemeinschaft; for an overcoming and repairing of the damage done to this community and for the security of this community against the outside world. And this is the goal: we fight for the security of our Volk, for our Lebensraum. We shall allow no one to interfere in this!

And now that the English declare this battle to be the Second Punic War, history has not yet determined who shall play Rome and who shall play Carthage in this case. In the first war England assuredly did not play Rome, as Rome emerged victorious from the First Punic War. In the First World War England was not the victor, but rather others won that war for it. And in the second—I can assure you of this much—England will even less be the victor!

This time a different Germany faces the England of the World War; this it will be able to appreciate in the foreseeable future! It is a Germany suffused by a tremendous will and it can only laugh at the antics (*Blödeleien*) of British phrasemongers. And now if an Englishman comes and says, "We fight for the freedom of the world; we fight for democracy; we fight for culture; we fight for civilization; we fight for justice; and so on," then this will be met with resounding laughter in Germany.

And, moreover, a generation is still alive today which personally can appreciate the "uprightness" of such British versions of the war. And even if we have not learned anything since then, we have not forgotten anything either. And not only have we not forgotten anything, we have learned something.

And every British balloon which the wind blows over our lines and which drops off more or less spirited leaflets here proves to us that time stood still in this outside world during the past twenty years.

And every echo elicited in Germany should prove to them that a Movement has taken place here, a Movement of enormous proportions, of enormous force and effectiveness. England does not want peace! We heard this again yesterday.

In my speech before the Reichstag, I already declared that, for my person, I have nothing to add. The rest we shall discuss with the English in the only language which they seem capable of understanding. I regret that France has

entered the service of these British warmongers, and has allied itself with England in this manner. As concerns Germany, we have never been afraid of one front. Once we successfully defended two fronts. We have one front now, and we shall hold our own on this front with success—of this rest assured!

I regarded the success in arriving at an understanding with Russia not as a triumph of German politics, but as a triumph of reason. Once before these two peoples engaged each other in war and nearly fatal blood-letting. Neither of us profited from this and now we have resolved not to do the gentlemen in London and Paris this favor a second time.¹²⁰⁶

We are facing times of great change today. Struggle carried National Socialism forth. We all were soldiers back then. A great number of us have pulled on the gray tunic once more. The others have remained soldiers. Germany has undergone a thorough change. Just as the Prussia of 1813–14 could not be compared to the Prussia of 1806, so the Germany of 1939, 1940, 1941, or 1942, cannot be compared to the Germany of 1914, 1915, 1917, or 1918.

What happened then will never again happen in the future!

We will make sure, and the Party shall vouch for this, that the occurrences we were so unfortunate as to witness in the World War will never again happen in Germany. We squarely dealt with them, my National Socialist fighters, when we were fighting still as a ludicrously small minority within Germany. Then we had only our belief. Nevertheless, we brought down these manifestations and eliminated them. And, moreover, today we have power!

Our will shall not bend in this external struggle any more than it did in the internal struggle for power. Then I repeatedly told you: everything is conceivable with one exception: we will never capitulate. And as a National Socialist standing before the world today, I can only repeat: everything is conceivable—a German capitulation never! And if someone informs me, “Then the war will last three years,” I answer: Let it last as long as it will.¹²⁰⁷ Germany will never capitulate: not now and not in the future!

I was told that England is preparing for a three-year war. On the day of the British declaration of war, I ordered the Field Marshal to immediately gear all preparations toward a duration of five years. I did so not because I believe this war will take five years, but because we shall not capitulate at the end of five years either—for nothing in the world!

We shall show these gentlemen the force of a people eighty-million strong, united under one leadership, led by one will, forged together in one community. Commemoration of our great dead drives the Party to labor all the more in fulfillment of its great mission. It has become the bearer of the will, the unity, the integration, and hence of the German Volksgemeinschaft as such.

Whatever the individual among us must bear in terms of sacrifice will pass and is of no importance. What is and remains decisive is only the victory! Thanks to our preparations we are able to wage this war under far more favorable circumstances than in the year 1914. Then Germany blindly stumbled into the war. Today we have a nation which prepared psychologically

for many years. Above all, it is economically prepared. We have taken great pains to assure through our planning that the German planes do not run out of fuel. We have taken care that from the day the war is declared rationing sets in immediately, so that, in the first year of the war, costly goods are not squandered, wasted, or destroyed.

We have secured all prerequisites necessary for the longest time possible.¹²⁰⁸ We have furthermore developed Germany's potential to the fullest in all other areas as well. Thus, today, I can give you the assurance: they shall not overpower us either militarily or economically—not in the least. There is only one possible victor: it is we.

That Mr. Churchill cannot believe this I attribute to his great age.¹²⁰⁹ Others have not believed it either. Had the English not driven them into this war, our Polish enemies would never have gone to war. England backed them, propped them up, and incited them. The course of this war has perhaps for the first time shown precisely what mighty military instrument the German Reich has meanwhile forged for itself.

It was not, my Volksgenossen, as if the Poles were so cowardly that they ran away—this was not the case! The Poles fought with great valor at many a location. And although this state of over 36 million men had nearly fifty divisions with recruits numbering 300,000 every year as compared to the 120,000 in France presently—this state was militarily beaten in an unbelievable ten [!] days, was destroyed in eighteen days, and was forced to finally capitulate in thirty days.

In this we acknowledge as well how much Providence has helped us here. It has allowed our plans to ripen fully and has visibly blessed their fruits. Otherwise, this work could not have succeeded in such a short time. Hence, we believe that Providence willed what has come to pass. I often used to tell you that the defeat of 1918 was well-deserved, as we had never before shown ourselves worthy of great victories and have not known how to preserve them. No one shall accuse us of this in the future.

With profound gratitude, we bow before our heroes, our valiant soldiers, our dead comrades, and our injured men. Through their sacrifice they have contributed to the defeat, within only thirty days, of the first enemy who brought about this war. May every German realize that the sacrifice of these men is worth no less than the one another man may have to make in the future. No one has the right to regard his future sacrifice as a more demanding one. As National Socialists, we have gathered knowledge and made vows in veneration of the dead of November 9 in the history of our Movement. May the realization always be with us that the cause for which the first sixteen died is worthy of the similar sacrifices to which it obliges many others, if necessary.

Countless millions fell on the battlefield for this, our German Volk, in the course of the centuries, even the millenniums. Millions of others shed their blood for it. Not one of us knows if this will not be his fate also. Yet every one of us must know that he is not making a greater sacrifice than others have made before him, and others after him will have to make. The sacrifice of the woman bearing a child for this nation is equal to that of the man who defends this nation.

We National Socialists have always been fighters. This is a great time. And in it, we shall prove ourselves all the more as fighters.

In so doing, we shall best honor the memory of this first sacrifice made by our Movement. I cannot end today's evening without, as always, thanking you for your loyal following throughout those long years, or without promising you to hold up high our old ideals in the future. We shall stand up for them and we shall not shrink from putting our own lives on the line to realize the program of our Movement, that program which demands nothing but to secure our Volk's life and existence in this world.

This is the first commandment of our National Socialist profession of faith and it also is the last one which hangs over every National Socialist when, after the fulfillment of his duties, he departs this life.

Sieg Heil—to our Party Comrades of the National Socialist Movement, to our German Volk, and above all to our victorious Wehrmacht!

Once Hitler had ended, he departed for Berlin, supposedly on "urgent state business." This was not entirely true, however. There were no events requiring his presence in the Reich capital on the morning of November 9. Hitler possibly did not desire to be present in Munich for the festivities on the following day. He dreaded the public appearance connected of necessity to these. After all, his speculations on the conclusion of pending friendly accords with Great Britain had been disproved beyond doubt by England's declaration of war on September 3. Moreover, the British rejection of the peace proposals of October 6 had further embarrassed Hitler and his misconceived policy. In a 1934 precedent—the aftermath of the Röhm Purge—Hitler had also canceled his participation in the march to the Munich Feldherrnhalle to escape inconvenient exposure to the public and its scrutiny.

Yet it was peculiar that Hitler wanted to use the scheduled train for Berlin that day absolutely.¹²¹⁰ He had arrived in Munich by plane. In the afternoon, however, he had discussed the weather forecast with Baur, as his pilot later recorded,¹²¹¹ and had determined to take the train. Thus, his special train compartment was to be connected to the ordinary train leaving for Berlin in the evening.

In all likelihood, the circumstances and motives behind the explosion at the Bürgerbräukeller and Hitler's mysterious escape will never be completely resolved. A scenario was much discussed in the aftermath: that Hitler knew of the bomb attack, which was a bogus assassination attempt staged with the help of the Gestapo. Thus, Hitler was eager to leave the Bürgerbräukeller earlier than scheduled. This explanation is not very convincing, however, as Hitler had a paranoiac

fear of attempts on his life. Undoubtedly, he would not have spoken that long, since technical problems could well have caused the bomb to go off prematurely. Further, Hitler immediately rejected the first report of a detonation in Munich, which Goebbels brought him at the train's stop in Nuremberg, with the statement: "This is a false report."¹²¹² Then, after thinking for some time, he stated: "I am completely calm now. That I left the Bürgerbräu earlier than usual is a confirmation that Providence wishes me to attain my goals."

The *Völkischer Beobachter* naturally appropriated Hitler's supernatural interpretation.¹²¹³ The November 9 edition bore the heading: "The miraculous delivery of the Führer." The paper published the following official account of the occurrence:¹²¹⁴

Munich, November 9

The Führer arrived in Munich on Wednesday [November 8] for a short visit on the occasion of the anniversary celebration of the Old Fighters. In the place of Party Comrade Hess, the Führer himself gave the address at the Bürgerbräukeller. State business forced the Führer to leave the Bürgerbräukeller earlier than planned and to return to Berlin that night. From the Bürgerbräukeller he proceeded to the station and boarded the train awaiting him.

An explosion took place in the Bürgerbräukeller shortly after the Führer had left. Of those present seven were killed,¹²¹⁵ and sixty-three sustained serious injuries. The names of the dead are: [here a detailed listing of those killed followed, with names, date of birth, and last place of residence]. News of the assassination attempt, which bore traces of foreign instigation, immediately brought forth a fanatical outrage among Munich's population. Reward for the apprehension of the culprit is set at 500,000 Marks, a sum raised to 600,000 Marks by the voluntary contribution of a private individual.

The devastating explosion in the Bürgerbräukeller occurred at approximately 9:20 p.m. At this time the Führer had already left the hall. Nearly all leading men of the Movement, Reichsleiters, and Gauleiters accompanied him to the station gate. There he boarded the train to return to Berlin for urgent state business, immediately after ending his speech. It can only be termed a miracle that the Führer escaped this attempt on his life which was simultaneously an attempt against the security of the Reich.

The supposed "fanatical outrage among Munich's population" was pure fabrication by the paper. Germany's general public was not greatly disconcerted by the event. Most acknowledged the news silently, as there was something decidedly odd about the entire occurrence. This suspicion on the part of the public was not allayed either by a DNB article which appeared November 21, 1939 and which contained the Police Chief's official position on the matter as well as a description of the alleged perpetrator. According to the statement by

the police, “a thirty-six year old mechanic by the name of Johann Georg Elser had already penetrated the building 144 hours before the explosion.” The police claimed that this one man had devised a time bomb and had mounted it on one of the pillars in the cellar. On the night of November 7 to November 8, the assailant had entered the building once more in order to make sure that the alarm clock inside the time bomb still ticked properly. The police apprehended him the following night as he attempted to escape across the border into Switzerland.¹²¹⁶

The feeling of skepticism about the background of the event was echoed abroad. Ciano noted the following in his diary: “The attempt on Hitler’s life at Munich leaves everybody quite skeptical, and Mussolini is more skeptical than anyone else. In reality many aspects of the affair do not altogether convince us of the accuracy of the account given in the papers.”¹²¹⁷

On that November 9, yet another mysterious incident occurred at the Dutch border. From Dutch sovereign territory, a German special Kommando abducted two British Secret Service agents and brought them to Germany where they were subsequently arrested. The two men had come to a local café in the Dutch frontier city of Venlo, where the young SS Gruppenführer Walter Schellenberg had lured them to a secret meeting, using the alias “Captain Schemmel of the German opposition.”¹²¹⁸

This event was obviously intended to furnish the “propagandistic pretext” for German aggression against the Benelux States. The method employed reflected the Polish precedent, especially since Alfred Naujocks headed the operation once more. Naujocks had staged the alleged Polish assault on the Gleiwitz radio station of August 31.¹²¹⁹ And indeed—on May 10, 1940—Hitler recalled the “Venlo incident” in his exposition of motivations behind the German invasion of the Netherlands.¹²²⁰

On the morning of November 9, Hitler’s train arrived on schedule at the Anhalt station. There Göring and Lammers were on hand to welcome him back to the capital.¹²²¹ In Munich, Hess conducted the remaining official ceremonies, placing wreaths at the Feldherrnhalle and at the Königlicher Platz in commemoration of the 1923 Putsch.

Meanwhile, telegram upon telegram reached the Reich Chancellery to congratulate Hitler on his “miraculous escape.” From Italy King Victor Emmanuel wired his felicitations, as did Mussolini, the Italian Marshals Balbo and Graziani; Ciano and Dino Porrone, a minister in

Mussolini's Cabinet; King Leopold of Belgium; King Boris of Bulgaria; Queen Wilhelmine of the Netherlands; King Carol of Rumania; Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia; the Hungarian Regent Horthy; the Slovak State President Tiso. Pope Pius XII likewise wired his congratulations to Hitler.¹²²²

Hitler's telegraphic reply to the Italian King read:¹²²³

I ask Your Majesty to accept my profound gratitude for the friendly words relayed to me by telegraph. Adolf Hitler

Mussolini received the following wire:¹²²⁴

For the sympathies expressed to me, in the name of Fascist Italy, on the death of my old comrades in arms and for your friendly words for my person, I thank you with all my heart. I accept them, with grateful contentment, as renewed evidence of the comradely sentiments existing between us. With my best greetings and my sincere best wishes for you and Fascist Italy, I remain your devoted friend,

Adolf Hitler

On November 11, back in Munich again, Hitler attended the memorial ceremony in front of the Feldherrnhalle at 11:00 a.m., dedicated to those killed in the explosion.¹²²⁵ Rudolf Hess delivered the commemorative address on the occasion. Wearing a black crape ribbon attached to the left sleeve of his coat, Hitler then stepped forth to place a wreath before the numerous coffins. Thereupon he shook the hands of the surviving family members. Another brief "moment of silence" in front of the coffins followed before Hitler left the "site of the state act" and returned to the Munich Residence. From there he went to the surgical division of the city hospital and to the hospital on the right bank of the Isar, where the wounded were being cared for. Later, he toured the site of the bomb's detonation.

On this day also, Hitler forwarded a telegram to Gauleiter Adolf Wagner, expressing his "gratitude and appreciation for the self-sacrificing service in the rescue mission after the bombing and assassination attempt." Later in the day, further congratulatory telegrams reached the Reich Chancellery from the following: the Japanese Emperor; the Shah of Iran; the King of Greece; the Spanish Head of State, Franco; the Emperor of Manchukuo; the State President of Finland; the State President of Lithuania; and the Prince of Liechtenstein.¹²²⁶

On November 11, Hitler ordered the publishing of a general statement of gratitude to the German Volk which read:¹²²⁷

In the wake of the wicked assassination attempt in Munich, the Führer received countless telegrams and letters from all Gaus of the German Reich and from many Germans beyond its borders, expressing heartfelt sympathy and sincere rejoicing at his delivery from this crime. As it is not possible for the Führer to reply individually to all these expressions of loyalty and of compassion for the victims of the assassination attempt, he wishes, in this manner, to convey his deeply felt gratitude to all Volksgenossen, who in the past days thought of his person, and of the dead and injured comrades and women.

On November 11 also, Hitler wired his congratulations to King Victor Emmanuel, who had turned seventy years old on this day.¹²²⁸

November 15 was the day the offensive in the West, in violation of the neutrality of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, was to have been launched according to the most recent schedule. Hitler judged it opportune to once more postpone this drive towards France.¹²²⁹ The upcoming winter played no crucial role in this since the weather was "equally bad" for both sides, as Hitler had already expounded in his October 27 speech before the generals. Far more decisive was the consideration that an element of surprise was no longer assured; troop movements along the border had been all too apparent and had put the neighboring states on the alert. Media attention paid to the Venlo incident and the explosion at Munich had further reinforced public concern with Hitler's latest moves, and Churchill had already expressed fear of a pending invasion and of its consequences in a radio broadcast of November 12, in which he stated:¹²³⁰

I shall not attempt to prophesy whether the frenzy of a cornered maniac will drive Herr Hitler into the worst of all his crimes; but this I will say without a doubt: that the fate of Holland and Belgium, like that of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, will be decided by the victory of the British Empire and the French Republic. If we are conquered, all will be enslaved, and the United States will be left single-handed to guard the rights of man. If we are not destroyed, all these countries will be rescued and restored to life and freedom.

In spite of the confidence Hitler displayed, Churchill's statement undoubtedly made an impression upon him. It may well have caused him to further delay action in the West for the time being. Later Hitler was to claim that, had he known of the military strength of Russia, he would have launched his offensive in the West in 1939, and would already have turned against the Soviet Union in 1940.¹²³¹ But such retrospective claims on the part of Hitler usually bore little significance.

They tended to serve the justification of some envisioned move on his art, or to account for a mistake already committed, and so were just rhetoric.

On November 18, Hitler issued the following proclamation “to the German Landvolk” (peasants):¹²³²

This year’s harvest has come to an end. In spite of the adverse weather conditions and the manpower shortages, the seeds for next year’s crop are already in the earth. The German Volk thanks its peasants for the great work which is of decisive significance in the struggle forced on us.¹²³³ With the help of the Almighty, for the coming year, we have secured nourishment for the Volk on our own soil.

Adolf Hitler

This pronouncement was truly a poor substitute for the lengthy official speeches Hitler customarily gave on the *Erntedankfest* and other occasions when he traditionally issued appeals to the German peasants. The previous year, however, festivities already had been canceled because “all means of transport” were bound up in the military occupation of the Sudetenland.¹²³⁴ And now these same “means of transport” were engaged elsewhere, and Hitler was too preoccupied with military matters to give much thought to the German peasants.

On November 18, Hitler signed into law another decree concerning the “struggle forced on us.” The subject matter was a postponement of the celebration of the Protestant Day of Prayer and Repentance. The official justification read as follows:¹²³⁵

Berlin, November 18, 1939

The struggle forced on the German Volk commands exertion of all our forces. Therefore the Day of Prayer and Repentance on Wednesday, November 22, will be postponed until Sunday, November 26.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

On the next day, Hitler wired his condolences to Ecuador on the demise of State President Narváez.¹²³⁶

On November 20, Hitler issued “Directive No. 8 for the Conduct of the War.” It commanded that readiness in the West be “maintained in order to be able to continue at any time the assembly of forces which has already begun.”

To have greater freedom of action, he ordered the Wehrmacht to prepare carefully for the attack, but “in such a way that the attack can still be canceled.” The directive read:¹²³⁷

Directive No. 8 for the Conduct of the War

1. For the time being a state of readiness must be maintained in order to be able to continue at any time the assembly of forces which has already begun. Only in this way is it possible to take advantage immediately of favorable weather conditions.

The branches of the Wehrmacht will make their preparations in such a way that the attack can still be canceled, even if the order to that effect arrives at the High Commands as late as 11 p.m. on A-1 day. At that time, at the latest, the High Commands will receive either the code word "Danzig" (go through with the attack) or "Augsburg" (withhold the attack).

The Commanders in Chief, Army and Air, are requested to report to OKW, Operations Planning, immediately after the day of attack has been determined, the hour of attack agreed upon between them.

2. Contrary to the directive given previously all the proposed measures against Holland may be taken without special orders when the general attack begins. The attitude of the Dutch Armed Forces cannot be predicted. Where no resistance is met, the invasion is to be given the character of a peaceful occupation.

3. Land operations are to be executed on the basis of the directive of October 20 concerning assembly of forces.

That directive is supplemented as follows:

a. All preparations are to be made to facilitate a quick shift of the focal point of the operation from Army Group B to Army Group A, in case greater and quicker successes are scored there than at Army Group B, which seems likely with the present distribution of enemy forces.

b. Holland, including the West Frisian islands off the coast (excluding Texel for the present), is first of all to be occupied up to the Grebbe-Maas line.

4. The Navy's submarines will be allowed to take blockading measures against Belgian and, contrary to previous directives, also against Dutch harbors and shipping lanes during the night *before* the attack; its surface vessels and airplanes will be allowed to take such measures after the time the Army's attack begins. Even where the submarines are concerned, however, the space of time between the beginning of blockading operations and the time of the land attack must be kept as short as possible.

Operations against Dutch naval forces are permitted only if the latter take a hostile attitude

At the coastal areas to be occupied, the Navy will be in charge of the coastal artillery defense against attacks from the sea. Preparations are to be made for this.

5. The duties of the Luftwaffe remain unchanged. They have been supplemented by the special verbal orders issued by the Führer concerning airborne landings and the support to be given to the Army during the capture of the bridges west of Maastricht.

The 7th Airborne Division will be used for air landing operations only after the bridges across the Albert Canal are in our hands. The message to this effect is to be assured the quickest possible transmission between OKH and OKL.

Population centers, especially large open cities, and industries are not to be attacked either in the Dutch or in the Belgian-Luxembourg area without compelling military reasons.

Closing the border:

a. Traffic and communications across the Dutch, Belgian, and Luxembourg borders are to be maintained in the customary manner until the beginning of the attack, in order to preserve the element of surprise. Civil authorities are not to be involved in the preparations for closing the border until that time.

b. When the attack begins the German border with Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg is to be closed to all nonmilitary traffic and communications. Orders to that effect will be given by the Commanders in Chief, Army, to the military and civilian offices concerned. At the beginning of the attack, the OKW will inform the highest government authorities that measures to close the border are being ordered directly by the Commander in Chief, Army, even at those parts of the Dutch border which are outside of the area of operations.

c. At the other (neutral) borders of the Reich no restrictions will be made for the time being concerning traffic and communications. Further measures prepared with regard to the supervision of border-crossing by persons and communications will be put into effect if the need arises.

In the winter months of 1939–40, Hitler would take advantage of a combined strategy of both “Danzig” and “Augsburg” cases by repeatedly giving and rescinding orders to launch the offensive. This kept the troops on the alert and preserved a certain element of suspense in the operations. It also left the West in doubt as to whether the most recent order was to be taken seriously or not. This approach served its author well as the West began to succumb to laxness in responding to German moves.¹²³⁸

On November 23, Hitler first received a number of persons at the Reich Chancellery who had demonstrated merit in the construction of the West Wall, to award them the corresponding distinction.¹²³⁹ Among those who had distinguished themselves were: the Inspector General for Railroad Construction, Todt; Colonel General von Witzleben and General der Flieger Kitzinger, the Commanding Generals of the Army and Luftwaffe in the West; the Inspector of Fortresses, Lieutenant General Jacob; the Reich Leader of the Labor Service, Hierl, and the Reichsorganisationsleiter, Ley, who were jointly in charge of the Labor Service units deployed in the construction work and of those forced to do compulsory labor service there.

At noon on the same day, Hitler received the Commanders in Chief of the three Wehrmacht branches in the Reich Chancellery. The German News Bureau published the following official note on the lengthy lecture the generals were subjected to:¹²⁴⁰

Berlin, November 23

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht assembled about him the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht in the new Reich Chancellery as in the previous year.¹²⁴¹ Among other topics discussed, the Führer afforded them an evaluation of the combat experience gained in the East. These are to serve as guidelines for the future conduct of the war.

The reason for this summons of the heads of the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe was not difficult to divine. Hitler sought this occasion to psychologically prepare the generals for the pending launch of the offensive in the West. The military men constantly failed to show the proper enthusiasm for offensive action. Ever since November 1937, and especially before the campaign against Poland, this greatly disconcerted Hitler. As in his addresses of May and August,¹²⁴² he was driven by the urgency of instilling in the generals the conviction that their understanding of military strategy was flawed. He, to the contrary, knew himself to be an expert on these matters. All he needed to do now was to proceed as he had in the summer when he had prefaced the invasion of Poland with a great and effective rhetorical appearance before the generals. Poland should have amply demonstrated to the generals that he was always right in the end.

He argued that, after “the hardest of all decisions,” i.e. his resolution to become a politician in 1919, he had always chosen the right path when confronted with a difficult situation. His rise to power; his decision to withdraw from the League of Nations; Germany’s rearmament; the military occupation of the Rhineland, of Austria, of Bohemia and Moravia, of Poland; all these decisions had proven right in the end. Naming Poland in this context took nerve on the part of Hitler who failed to mention that German troops there had encountered determined resistance and that this move had brought on a series of declarations of war against Germany. Hitler persuaded the generals that in the future as well everything would go just as he prophesied. If Germany won the war, not a soul would reproach him with the breach of neutrality. At any rate, going to war represented his “unalterable decision.” He stated he “did not organize the armed forces in order not to strike” and continued that “the decision to strike was always in me.”

Hitler openly showed his disdain for the military preparedness of the West in this speech. He faulted France for having allowed its army to “deteriorate” after the First World War. He accused England of having “neglected the expansion of its fleet.” The British Army, he claimed, “has only a symbolic meaning.” Moreover, he confidently

maintained that British anti-aircraft defenses possessed “only guns from the last war.” Having never thought much of the “primitive” Russians, he claimed, not surprisingly: “It is a fact that at the present time the Russian Army is of little worth.”

Exaggerated self-confidence and vanity pervaded the entire speech. Among other things, Hitler reasoned:

“As the last factor I must in all modesty describe my own person: Irreplaceable. Neither a military man nor a civilian could replace me.”

“I am convinced of my powers of intellect and of decision.”

“The fate of the Reich depends only on me.”

“I have the greatest experience in all armament questions.”

“No one has ever achieved what I have achieved.”

Moreover, he expressed his determination in the following revealing words: “I shall shrink from nothing and shall annihilate everyone who is opposed to me.”

In summary, these were nearly the same arguments Napoleon had employed in June of 1805 to dispel the misgivings of his Arch-chancellor Cambacérès: “Trust me. Place trust in my power of action. The swiftness and power of my strikes will leave Europe astounded.”¹²⁴³

A record of the November 23, 1939 conference recovered from among the OKW documents found at Flensburg detailed the following:¹²⁴⁴

November 23, 1939—12:00 hours

Conference with the Führer, to which all principal military commanders are ordered. The Führer gives the following speech:

The propose of this conference is to give you an idea of the thinking which governs my view of impending events, and to tell you my decisions. The building up of our armed forces was only possible in connection with the ideological education of the German people by the Party.

When I started my political task in 1919, my strong belief in the final success was based on a thorough observation¹²⁴⁵ of the events of the day and the study of the reasons for their occurrence. Therefore, in the midst of the setbacks which were not spared me during my period of struggle, I never lost my belief. Providence had the last word and brought me success. On top of that, I had a clear recognition of the probable course of historical events and the firm will to make brutal decisions.

The first decision was in 1919, when after long internal conflict I became a politician and took up the struggle against my enemies. That was the hardest of all decisions. I had, moreover, the firm belief that I would arrive at my goal. First of all, I desired a new system of selection. I wanted to educate a minority which would take over the leadership. After 15 years I arrived at my goal, after strenuous struggles and many setbacks.

When I came to power in 1933, a period of the most difficult struggle lay behind me. Everything existing before that had collapsed. I had to reorganize everything beginning with the mass of the people and extending it to the armed forces. First internal reorganization, abolition of the appearances of decay and of the defeatist spirit, education to heroism.

While still engaged in internal reorganization, I undertook the second task—to release Germany from its international bonds. Two particular landmarks are to be pointed out in this connection—secession from the League of Nations and denunciation of the Disarmament Conference.

It was a hard decision. The number of prophets who predicted that it would lead to the occupation of the Rhineland was large; the number of believers was very small. I was supported by the nation which stood firmly behind me when I carried out my intentions.

After that the order for rearmament. Here again there were numerous prophets who predicted misfortunes, and only a few believers. In 1935 came the introduction of compulsory military service. After that, militarization of the Rhineland, again a step believed to be impossible at that time. The number of people who put trust in me was very small. Then the beginning of the fortification of the whole country, especially in the West.

One year later came Austria; this step also was considered doubtful. It brought about a considerable strengthening of the Reich. The next step was Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland. But this step could not be accomplished in one move. First of all, in the West the West Wall had to be finished. It was not possible to reach the goal in one effort.

It was clear to me from the first moment that I could not be satisfied with the Sudeten-German territory. That was only a partial solution. The decision to march into Bohemia was made. Then followed the establishment of the Protectorate and with that the basis for the conquest of Poland was laid, but I was not quite clear at that time whether I should start first against the East and then against the West or vice-versa.

Moltke often made the same calculations in his time. By the pressure of events it came first to the fight against Poland. It will be charged against me: Fight and fight again. In fighting I see the fate of all creatures. Nobody can avoid fighting if he does not want to go under. The increasing number of people requires larger Lebensraum. My goal was to create a rational relation between the number of people and the space for them to live in.

The fight must start here. No nation can evade the solution of this problem. Otherwise it must yield and gradually go down. That is taught by history. First migration of peoples to the southeast, then adaptation of the number of people to the smaller space by emigration. In later years, adaptation of the number of people to insufficient space by reducing the numbers of births. This would lead to death of the nation, to bleeding to death. If a nation chooses this course all its weaknesses are mobilized. One yields to force from the outside and uses this force against oneself by the killing of the child. This means the greatest cowardice, decimation in numbers, and degradation. I decided on a different way—adaptation of the Lebensraum to the number of people.

It is important to recognize one thing. The state has a meaning only if it supports the maintenance of its national substance. In our case 82 million people are concerned. That means the greatest responsibility. He who does not want to assume this responsibility is not worthy of belonging to the body of the people. That gave me the strength to fight. It is an eternal problem to bring the number of Germans to a proper relationship to the available space. Security of the needed space. No calculated cleverness is of any help here, solution only with the sword. A people unable to produce the strength to fight must withdraw.

Struggles are different from those of 100 years ago. Today we can speak of a racial struggle. Today we fight for oil fields, rubber, mineral wealth, etc. After the Peace of Westphalia, Germany disintegrated. Disintegration, impotence of the German Reich was determined by treaty. This German impotence was removed by the creation of the Reich when Prussia realized her task. Then the opposition to France and England began. Since 1870, England has been against us. Bismarck and Moltke were certain that there would have to be one more action. The danger at that time was of a two-front war. Moltke was, at times, in favor of a preventive war. To take advantage of the slow progress of the Russian mobilization. German armed might was not fully employed. Insufficient hardness of the leading personalities. The basic thought of Moltke's plans was the offensive. He never thought of the defense.

Many opportunities were missed after Moltke's death. The solution was only possible by attacking a country at a favorable moment. Political and military leadership were to blame that the opportunities were lost. The military leadership always declared that it was not yet ready. In 1914, there came the war on several fronts. It did not bring the solution of the problem.

Today the second act of this drama is being written. For the first time in sixty-seven years, it must be made clear that we do not have a two-front war to wage. That which has been desired since 1870, and considered as impossible of achievement, has come to pass. For the first time in history,¹²⁴⁶ we have to fight on only one front; the other front is at present free. But no one can know how long that will remain so. I have doubted for a long time whether I should strike in the East and then in the West. Basically I did not organize the armed forces in order not to strike. The decision to strike was always in me. Earlier or later I wanted to solve the problem. Under the pressure of events, it was decided that the East was to be attacked first.

If the Polish war was won so quickly, it was due to the superiority of our armed forces. The most glorious event in our history. Unexpectedly small losses of men and material. Now the eastern front is held by only a few divisions. It is a situation which we viewed previously as impossible of achievement. Now the situation is as follows: The opponent in the West lies behind his fortifications. There is no possibility of coming to grips with him. The decisive question is—how long can we endure this situation?

Russia is at present not dangerous. It is weakened by many internal conditions. Moreover, we have the Treaty with Russia. Treaties, however, are kept as long as they serve a purpose. Russia will only keep it as long as Russia herself considers it to be to her benefit. Bismarck also thought so. One recalls

the Reinsurance Treaty.¹²⁴⁷ Now Russia still has far-reaching goals, above all the strengthening of her position in the Baltic.

We can oppose Russia only when we are free in the West. Further, Russia is seeking to increase her influence in the Balkans and is driving toward the Persian Gulf. That is also the goal of our foreign policy. Russia will do that which she considers to her benefit. At the present moment internationalism has retired to the background. In case Russia renounces it, she will go over to Pan-Slavism. It is difficult to see into the future. It is a fact that at the present time the Russian Army is of little worth. For the next one or two years, the present situation will remain.

Much depends on Italy, above all on Mussolini, whose death can alter everything. Italy has great goals for the consolidation of her empire. Fascism and the Duce personally are exclusively the proponents of this idea. The Court is opposed to it. As long as the Duce lives, so long can it be calculated that Italy will seize every opportunity to reach her imperialistic goals. However, it is too much to ask of Italy that she should join in the battle before Germany has seized the offensive in the West; similarly Russia did not attack until we had marched into Poland. Otherwise, Italy will think that France concerns herself only with Italy since Germany is sitting behind her West Wall. Italy will not attack until Germany has taken the offensive against France. Just as the death of Stalin, so the death of the Duce can bring danger to us. How easily the death of a statesman can come about I myself have experienced recently.¹²⁴⁸ Time must be used to the full; otherwise one will suddenly find himself faced with a new situation. As long as Italy maintains this position then no danger from Yugoslavia is to be feared. Similarly the neutrality of Rumania is assured by the attitude of Russia. Scandinavia is hostile to us because of Marxist influences, but is neutral now. America is still not dangerous to us because of her neutrality laws. The strengthening of our opponents by America is still not important. The position of Japan is still uncertain; it is not yet certain whether she will join against England.

Everything is determined by the fact that the moment is favorable now; in six months it might not be so any more.

As the last factor I must in all modesty describe my own person: Irreplaceable. Neither a military man nor a civilian could replace me. Attempts at assassination may be repeated. I am convinced of my powers of intellect and of decision. Wars are always ended only by the annihilation of the opponent. Anyone who believes differently is irresponsible. Time is working for our adversaries. Now there is a relationship of forces which can never be more propitious for us. No compromises. Hardness toward ourselves. I shall strike and not capitulate.

The fate of the Reich depends only on me.

I shall act accordingly. Today we still have a superiority such as we have never had before. After 1914¹²⁴⁹ our opponents disarmed themselves of their own accord. England neglected the expansion of her fleet. The fleet is no longer sufficiently large to safeguard the shipping lanes. Only two new modern ships—*Rodney* and *Nelson*. New construction activity only in the Washington class which were, however, an unsatisfactory type.

The new measures can become effective only in 1941. In the Abyssinian war, England did not have enough forces to occupy Lake Tana. At Malta, Gibraltar, and London, little anti-aircraft protection. Since 1937, rearmament has begun again. At present, however, only a small number of divisions, which must form the nucleus of new divisions. Material for the Army being gathered together from all over the world. Not before next summer is a positive action to be expected.

The British Army has only a symbolic meaning. Rearmament in the air is proceeding. The first phase will end in the spring of 1940. Anti-aircraft has only guns from the last war. A German flyer at 6,000 meters altitude is safe from English anti-aircraft fire. The Navy will not be fully rearmed for one to two years. I have the greatest experience in all armament questions, and I know the difficulties which must be overcome therein.

After 1914,¹²⁴⁹ France reduced the length of service. After 1914,¹²⁴⁹ decrease in military might. Only in some artillery branches are we inferior. Only the French Navy was modernized. In the time after the war the French Army deteriorated. There were no changes until Germany rearmed and announced her demands.

In summary: (1) The number of active units in Germany is at the highest, (2) superiority of the Luftwaffe, (3) anti-aircraft beyond all competition, (4) the tank corps, (5) large number of anti-tank guns, five times as many machine guns as in 1914, (6) German artillery has great superiority because of the 10.5 guns, and (7) there is no French superiority in howitzers and mortars.

Numerical superiority, but also the value of the troops is greater than with the others. I was most deeply pained when I heard the opinion that the German Army was not individually as capable as it should have been. The infantry in Poland did not accomplish what one might have expected from it. Lax discipline.¹²⁵⁰ I believe that troops must be judged on their relative value in comparison with the opponent.

There is no doubt that our armed forces are the best. The individual German infantryman is better than the French. No hurrah-enthusiasm, but tough determination. I am told that the troops will advance only if the officers lead the way. In 1914, that was also the case. I am told we were better trained then. In reality we were only better trained on the drill field, but not for the war. I must pay the present leadership the compliment that it is better than it was in 1914. Mention of the collapse while storming Liège. There was nothing like this in the campaign in Poland.

Five million Germans have been called to the colors. Of what importance is it if a few of them disappoint. Daring in the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe.

I cannot bear to hear people say the Army is not in good order. Everything lies in the hands of the military leader. I can do anything with the German soldier if he is well led. We have succeeded with our small Navy in clearing the North Sea of the British. Recognition of the small Navy, especially the Commander in Chief of the Navy. We have a Luftwaffe which has succeeded in safeguarding the entire German Lebensraum. The land Army achieved outstanding things in Poland. Even in the West it has not been shown that the German soldier is inferior to the French.

Revolution from within is impossible. We are even superior to the enemy numerically in the West. Behind the Army stands the strongest armament industry of the world.

I am disturbed by the stronger and stronger appearance of the British. The Englishman is a tough opponent. Above all on the defense. There is no doubt that England will be represented in France by large forces at the latest in six to eight months.

We have an Achilles heel—the Ruhr. The conduct of the war depends on possession of the Ruhr. If England and France push through Belgium and Holland into the Ruhr, we shall be in the greatest danger. That could lead to the paralyzing of the German power of resistance. Every hope of compromise is childish. Victory or defeat! The question is not the fate of a National Socialist Germany, but who is to dominate Europe in the future. This question is worthy of the greatest efforts. Certainly England and France will assume the offensive against Germany when they are fully armed. England and France have means of pressure to bring Belgium and Holland to request English and French help. In Belgium and Holland the sympathies are all for France and England. Mention of the incident at Venlo.¹²⁵¹ The man who was shot was not an Englishman, but a Dutch general staff officer. This was kept silent in the press. The Netherlands' Government asked that the body of the Dutch officer be given up. This is one of their greatest stupidities. The Dutch press does not mention the incident any more. At a suitable time I shall exploit all that and use it to motivate my action.

If the French Army marches into Belgium in order to attack us it will be too late for us. We must anticipate them. On one more thing. U-boats, mines, and Luftwaffe (also for mines) can strike England effectively, if we have a better starting point. Now a flight to England demands so much fuel that sufficient bomb loads cannot be carried. The invention of a new type of mine is of greatest importance for the Navy.¹²⁵² Aircraft will be the chief mine layers now. We shall sow the English coast with mines which cannot be cleared. This mine warfare with the Luftwaffe demands a different starting point. England cannot live without its imports. We can feed ourselves. The continuous sowing of mines on the English coasts will bring England to her knees.¹²⁵³ However, this can only occur if we have occupied Belgium and Holland. It is a difficult decision for me. No one has ever achieved what I have achieved. My life is of no importance in all this. I have led the German people to a great height, even if the world does hate us now. I am setting this work on a gamble. I have to choose between victory or annihilation. I choose victory. Greatest historical choice,¹²⁵⁴ to be compared with the decision of Frederick the Great before the first Silesian war. Prussia owes its rise to the heroism of one man. Even there the closest advisers were disposed to capitulation. Everything depended on Frederick the Great. Also the decisions of Bismarck in 1866 and 1870 were no less great.

My decision is unalterable. I shall attack France and England at the most favorable and earliest moment. Breach of the neutrality of Belgium and Holland is of no importance. No one will question that when we have won. We shall not justify the breach of neutrality as idiotically as in 1914. If we do

not violate neutrality, then England and France will. Without attack, the war cannot be ended victoriously. I consider it possible to end the war only by means of an attack. The question as to whether the attack will be successful no one can answer. Everything depends upon a kind Providence. The military conditions are favorable. A prerequisite, however, is that the leadership must give from above an example of fanatical unity. There would not be any failures if the leaders of the people always had the courage a rifleman must have. If, as in 1914, the commanders suffer a collapse of nerves,¹²⁵⁵ what should one demand of the simple rifleman?

The only possible conclusion: The enemy must be beaten by attack. Chances are different today than during the offensive of 1918. Numerically, we have more than 100 divisions. With respect to men, reserves can be supplied. The material situation is good. As for the rest, what does not happen today must happen tomorrow. The whole thing means the end of the World War, not just a single action. It is a matter of not just a single question but of the existence or nonexistence of the nation.

I ask you to pass on the spirit of determination to the lower echelons. (1) The decision is irrevocable. (2) There is only a prospect for success if the whole Wehrmacht is determined.

The spirit of the great men of our history must hearten us all. Fate does not demand from us any more than from the great men of German history. As long as I live, I shall think only of the victory of my people. I shall shrink from nothing and shall annihilate everyone who is opposed to me. I have decided to live my life so that I can stand unashamed when I have to die.

I want to annihilate the enemy. Behind me stands the German Volk, whose morale can only grow worse. Only he who struggles with destiny can have a kind Providence. Even in the present development I see the work of Providence.

If we come through this struggle victoriously—and we shall come through it—our time will go down in the history of our Volk. I shall stand or fall in this struggle. I shall never survive the defeat of my people. No capitulation to the outside, no revolution from within.

After this fiery speech, the generals were dismissed to return home or to their posts of assignment. Hitler felt confident he had taught them a lasting lesson. Assuredly, from now on, not one of the generals would dare to oppose him any longer.

There was one general, however, of whom Hitler was less certain: Brauchitsch. He summoned the Commander in Chief of the Army to his office at 6:00 p.m. the same day. Brauchitsch reported the following on the ensuing conversation in his statement before the Nuremberg Tribunal:¹²⁵⁶

I received orders to go to the Führer once more on the evening of November 23. In a lengthy discussion, he again reiterated all the accusations against the Army. In the course of this discussion, I offered to resign. He

declined, saying I had to fulfill my obligations and do my duty just like any other soldier.

On November 26, Hitler came to Munich one more time. He visited those injured in the Bürgerbräukeller explosion, who were confined at various hospitals in the city. Furthermore, Hitler called on the Reich Treasurer Schwarz at the latter's private apartment to congratulate him on his sixty-fourth birthday.¹²⁵⁷

On November 28, having returned to Berlin from his travels, Hitler decreed the port of Gotenhafen a Reich war harbor.¹²⁵⁸

On November 29, Hitler issued Directive No. 9 which read:¹²⁵⁹

Directive No. 9—Principles for the Conduct of the War
against the Enemy's Economy

1. In [our] war against the Western Powers, England sparks the determination to fight and is the leading power of our enemies. To throw down England is the prerequisite for final victory. The most effective means to achieve this is to paralyze England's economy by disrupting it at critical points.

2. The development of the situation and of our armament may, in the near future,¹²⁶⁰ create favorable conditions for extensive warfare against England's economic foundations. The necessary provisions must therefore be made as early as possible to strike an annihilating blow at England's economic strength by concentrating suitable arms of our Wehrmacht on the most important targets. The nonmilitary means of warfare, complementary to the measures of the Wehrmacht, will be put into effect according to special instructions.

3. As soon as the Army has succeeded in defeating the Anglo-French Field Army [*Operationsheer*] and in occupying and holding a part of the coast facing England, the task of the Navy and the Luftwaffe of carrying out the struggle against England's economic strength will become of prime importance. Efforts for cooperation of the S- and K- Organization are to be made.

4. To the Navy and Luftwaffe will fall the following joint tasks, enumerated here in the sequence of their importance:

a. Attacks on the main English ports of transshipment by mining and blocking the approaches to the harbors and by destroying vital port installations and sea locks.

In this connection the role of the mine-laying planes will be a very important one, especially with regard to the harbors on the west coast of England, in narrow waterways, and estuaries.

b. Attacks on English merchant shipping and against the enemy fleet protecting it.

c. Destruction of English supplies, oil reserves and of food in refrigerated warehouses and grain elevators.

d. Disruption of English troop and supply transports to the French coast.

e. Destruction of industrial plants, the elimination of which is of decisive importance for the conduct of the war; above all of key-plants of aviation

industry and the factories producing heavy ordnance, anti-aircraft guns, ammunition, and explosives.

5. The most important English transshipment ports which handle 95 percent of the foreign trade and could not be adequately replaced by others, are: London; Liverpool; Manchester for imports of food, timber, and oil, and the processing thereof. These three harbors, handling 58 percent of the peacetime imports, are of decisive importance. Newcastle; Swansea; Blyth; Cardiff; Sunderland; Barry; Hull for the export of coal.

The following may be considered alternate harbors, but to a limited extent and for certain goods only: Grangemouth; Holyhead; Leith; Bristol; Middlesbrough; Belfast; Grimsby; Newport; Southampton; Goole; Glasgow; Dundee.

It will be necessary to watch continuously for any possible shifting in the use of these harbors. Besides it will be important gradually to compress and shift English foreign trade into areas which are within easy range of our naval and air forces.

French harbors will be attacked only in so far as they play a role in the siege of England, or if they are of importance as debarkation points for troops.

6. In harbors which cannot be blocked effectively with mines, merchant shipping is to be paralysed by sinking ships in the roadsteads and by destroying vital harbor installations.

Special emphasis is to be laid upon the destruction of the great canal locks at the harbors of Leith, Sunderland, Hull, Grimsby, London, Manchester (Ship Canal), Liverpool, Cardiff, Swansea, and Bristol-Avonmouth. Particularly on the west coast these locks are very important in regulating the water level and, through it, the harbor traffic.

7. In preparing these actions it will be important to do the following:

a. Continually to check and supplement the basic data available on English harbors, their installations and capacity, as well as information about the English war industries and supply depots.

b. To rush the development of an effective method enabling planes to lay moored mines also.

c. To provide a supply of mines sufficient for the very high demands and numerous enough to meet the operational needs of the Navy and Luftwaffe.

d. To coordinate the conduct of operations of the Navy and Luftwaffe, as to time and location.

These preparations are to be made as soon as possible. I request the Commanders in Chief of the Navy and the Luftwaffe to keep me continuously informed about their plans.

I shall decide later as to when the restrictions still in effect in the naval and air war will be lifted. This probably will coincide with the start of the big offensive.

Adolf Hitler

In this directive Hitler once more played the brilliant statistician, detailing the supposed capacities of British harbors. As Napoleon had vainly sought to strangle England economically by blockading the

continent, Hitler truly believed these measures would “force England to her knees.” This did not prove realistic.

It was pure insanity, as anyone with a better knowledge of history could have assured Hitler, to attempt to “throw down England” by means of “paralyzing” England’s economy. Had it been necessary, Britain could have summoned the economic assistance of nearly half the planet, as far as the expanses of the British Empire stretched. It was Hitler’s fate to learn first hand just how strong the English were economically as well as militarily.

At 10:30 p.m. on the night of November 29, diplomatic relations between Russia and Finland ruptured. A few hours later, open hostilities broke out between the two countries. The situation in Finland resembled that of the Baltic States. Finland had also formed part of the Russian Empire before 1918. Now that Hitler had launched a forcible revision of the peace settlement of 1918-20, Moscow felt itself equally entitled to reclaim its former provinces. Russia had already carried through border revisions in the Baltic States, largely because Germany seemed to concur.

In Finland matters stood not so very differently. Its government had initially considered voluntarily ceding the military bases and strips of territory the Soviet Union demanded in the vicinity of Leningrad. Then, however, Helsinki resolved to put up resistance in the hope that the Western Powers, as well as Germany, would oppose Russian aggression. This proved a grave error. The Western Powers were already involved in a confrontation with Germany. They were not about to risk a conflict with Russia at this point for fear this might drive their potential ally against Germany too far into Hitler’s arms. And Germany was not in the least inclined to oppose any Soviet move at this time. Hitler was not willing to risk Soviet neutrality and friendship, and most certainly not for the sake of Finland.

On December 4, Hitler sent Franco a congratulatory telegram on his birthday.¹²⁶¹ On the same day, Hitler appointed the members of a special criminal division with the Reichsgericht. These were entitled to rescind an already binding and essentially non-appealable sentence passed by the Reich Court of Justice.¹²⁶² This legal forum convened for the first time on December 6. It was a well-known fact that Hitler abhorred judges—although they conformed absolutely with the NS regime—because of their theoretical right to independence from his person. Hence he would not rest until the Reichstag accorded him the privilege to arbitrarily depose any judge he wished to rid himself of.¹²⁶³

On December 6, Hitler decided to congratulate his “comrade” Mackensen personally at noon. Mackensen was celebrating his ninetieth birthday at his home in Prüssow. The German News Bureau reported on the event in the following manner:¹²⁶⁴

One of the most popular leaders of the struggle of peoples (*Völkerringen*), Field Marshal August von Mackensen, celebrated his ninetieth birthday on Wednesday [December 6] in the best of mental and physical health with his family on his estate Prüssow in the Uckermark. The Führer and Supreme Commander personally expressed his best wishes to von Mackensen. In his capacity as speaker for the entire German nation he was expressing the sentiments of all Germans towards this man today who, through his deeds and his behavior in times of war and peace, had always embodied the best of German soldiery, and who on this day still shares in the German Volk’s fateful struggle with a warm and beating heart.

Field Marshal von Mackensen thanked the Führer for his visit in touching words, especially for the Führer’s coming at this hour. He stated that it was his greatest desire on this day to be allowed to live to witness the victory of the German Volk led by the Führer.¹²⁶⁵ The Führer who had arrived around noon at the family’s estate Prüssow near Prenzlau in Uckermark spent some time with the immediate family of the Field Marshal.

Meanwhile, Finland had appealed to the League of Nations seeking redress for the Russian invasion. The Soviet Union on the other hand denied the competence of the League of Nations to arbitrate in the matter.¹²⁶⁶ There was great sympathy for Finland in many of the Western countries and the neutral states. However, Hitler felt the occasion opportune to seek revenge for Finland’s rejection of the proposed non-aggression pact with Germany in the spring of 1939.¹²⁶⁷

On December 8, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published an official description of the relations between Germany and Finland at this time. Hitler himself had obviously written the article.¹²⁶⁸ It contained a complete and detailed reiteration of the arguments he had already enumerated in his talk with Sven Hedin on October 16. Characteristic was this phrase: “It is both naive and sentimental to expect that the German Volk should push aside its struggle for its future all of a sudden to rush to the side of a small state which previously could not get enough of defaming and denigrating Germany.” The article read:¹²⁶⁹

Berlin, December 7

GERMANY AND THE FINNISH QUESTION

In the context of the crisis between Soviet-Russia and Finland, which has now evolved into an open conflict, numerous parties, above all the kitchen of lies (*Lügenküche*) of British and French official and editorial cabinets, have

attempted to implicate Germany in the events to the North. They maintain that Germany is violating its apparently self-evident obligation to help Finland, a country to which it is tied by a multitude of bonds. In the face of such malicious as well as foolish and—politically speaking—childish insinuations, it appears necessary to subject to critical scrutiny the relations between Germany and the Northern countries during the past twenty years.

Beyond all doubt, the Nordic peoples have always occupied a special place in the hearts of Germans for historical and sentimental reasons. This love, however, has become increasingly one-sided in the course of the past twenty years. The German Reich in its position of power has always been a natural friend of Nordic interests. It has remained true to this principle throughout its entire history. Countless instances have evidenced this favorable predisposition to the small Nordic States. And as, at the end of the World War, the German Reich was left in a position of impotence due to the broken promises of the Allies which left it the defenseless and helpless prey of the unjust and excessive demands of the so-called victorious powers, Berlin counted less on the active assistance of the Nordic countries (they were not in a position to render it), but, at the very least, on their sympathy and moral support for the unfortunate German Volk.

The opposite, however, occurred. In these years so bitter for Germany, not one of these countries has thrown its weight on the scale to balance the dreadful injustice done to the German Volk.

Any reasonable person must have known at the time that, sooner or later, this injustice would result in retaliation. It was clear that this would cause great upheaval in the world, if it was not possible to obtain a timely revision. However, instead of moving in this direction, the Nordic states were from the beginning the most loyal adherents and defenders of the Geneva League of Nations, whose entire structure aimed at nothing but the eternal repression of Germany.

The Nordic states remained loyal to the League of Nations even at a time when its true role as the executor of Versailles and the preserver of the status quo must have been clear to even the most naive of political minds. In vain Germany awaited a sign of sympathy, some form of tangible moral support. Either one was too uninterested at the time or too involved in the endless, dry and exhausting ideological discussions within the framework of the debating club of Geneva. The Nordic states increasingly got on the political track of England.

And as National Socialism rose to power in Germany and the German Volk, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, began to shake off its shackles, the majority of the press in the North did not rejoice and welcome this event, but rather subjected to savage criticism nearly every step made toward German independence and every deed dedicated to an elimination of the Treaty of Versailles. In the name of humanity, in the name of liberalism and democracy, Germany was brought into disrepute, reviled, and boycotted economically.

Barely a day passed without one move or another in German politics being impudently and insultingly criticized by countless papers in the Nordic states. Every statement by the Third Reich was interpreted to its detriment,

which was accompanied in the papers by truly incomprehensible attacks. This systematic rejection of everything emanating from the Third Reich reached so far into the leading circles that the German side was often forced to resort to official channels in order to counter this unbearable state of affairs. The consequences of this systematic campaign against Germany in the Nordic states crystallized when, in the course of this year, Germany declared its willingness to enter into a series of non-aggression pacts with them. While pacts with Denmark and the Baltic States were concluded, Sweden, Norway, and Finland showed no interest.

Sweden and Norway declared their lack of interest as a matter of principle. Finland, however, declined conclusion of a non-aggression pact with the German Reich, although Germany would not have been the first country with which Finland had entered into such a pact. While, at the time, this Finnish stand was incomprehensible to Germany's leading political circles, the experiences since then have taught us that the notion is assuredly not mistaken that English warmongers largely influenced the Finnish decision. This speculation has been reinforced by the fact that England, through the offices of other Scandinavian politicians, has established a web of vibrant ties to Helsinki.

These countries thus revealed that, in spite of repeated assurances of neutrality, they actually placed less stock in a determined and symmetrical preservation of peace in relation to all sides, than in the hope for the political predominance of the one side with which they sympathize so greatly, though assuredly not for reasons of neutrality.

In this context, it was characteristic of this peculiar understanding of neutrality by the Nordic states that it was the Scandinavia countries which accorded the Valencia Government recognition and moral support not only until the end, but up to a point when this government had already ceased to exist. They continued to withhold long-overdue recognition from Franco even at a time when any further delay could only be interpreted as unilateral partisanship against Franco, Italy, and Germany.

And since the outbreak of the war with the Western Powers, the Nordic countries have not changed their stance. Rather Germany, which has no differences with them and which has always stood up for their interests in the course of its history, had to experience once more that it was precisely the states of the North whose press and actions demonstrated anything but a benign comportment toward German concerns. Every country is entitled to distribute its sympathies as it sees fit.

Then, however, this country should not complain that it is not receiving its due in terms of sympathy—sympathy which others have been waiting for years to receive from it.

This present war has been forced on the German Volk by the British warmongers who, last but not least, have received the support of Scandinavian journalists and politicians. It is both naive and sentimental to expect the German Volk to push aside its struggle for its future in order to immediately rush to the side of all the small states which previously could not get enough of disparaging and denigrating Germany. For years, the Reich has met with

cool indifference, with haughty disapproval, and with often ill-concealed hostility. "*Wie man in den Wald hineinruft, so schallt es auch wieder hinaus.*" (As one shouts into the forest, so it echoes back.)¹²⁷⁰

The German Reich is well aware of the obligations gratitude and loyalty entail. Still, its friendship is not to be found lying about in the streets where, if he feels like it, anyone can come back to pick it up again once he has refused it. The German Reich is loyal to those who are loyal to it. The German Reich stands by those who stand by it. The German Reich benefits those who benefit it. The German Volk has nothing against the Finnish people. On the contrary, the German Volk harbors no animosity against the peoples of the North. The hope remains that, one day, the masters of all destinies of our Northern neighbors will reflect thereupon and ask themselves whether it was truly wise to lend an ear, in the past years, to the whispering of the English warmongers and apostles of the League of Nations, or whether it would not have been better to lend visible expression to their peoples' natural interest in friendship with Germany.

On December 8, Rudolf Hess officially opened the "Adolf Hitler Channel" for traffic, construction of which had begun in 1933. He also inaugurated a new harbor at Gleiwitz. Later the same day, Hess dug the first hole to begin work in Blechhammer on the planned 320-kilometer long channel connecting Moravia to the Danube.¹²⁷¹

On December 12, Hitler received the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Grand Admiral Raeder, at the Reich Chancellery at noon. The topic for discussion was the state of affairs in Northern Europe after the outbreak of open hostilities between Russia and Finland.¹²⁷² In attendance were: Keitel, Jodl, and Hitler's Adjutant for Naval Affairs, von Puttkammer. In the course of the conference, Raeder advocated a clear, determined stand by Germany. He was against military assistance for Finland, since he judged the route via Sweden insufficiently reliable. Further he favored advances towards Russia, such as making available oil supplies for the refueling of Soviet submarines. This might help in eliciting similar collaboration from the Russians such as materialized in the holding of alien ships in the harbor of Murmansk until three days after the departure of the *Bremen*.¹²⁷³

Hitler seconded Raeder's motions. Then the Admiral recounted a meeting with the Norwegian politician Vidkun Quisling¹²⁷⁴ who had proposed, in the event of a German occupation of his country, to head the government there. While Quisling promised to render Germany good services, Raeder suggested caution in the Reich's dealings with this individual. According to a record of the conversation, Hitler "considered whether he should speak to Quisling personally, in order to form an impression of him."

On December 16, collections for the Winterhilfswerk began anew in Berlin. Two "*Pimpfe*" (members of a pre-Hitler Youth organization, the so-called *Jungvolk*) appeared at the Reich Chancellery to request donations. Hitler took the opportunity to make a contribution in full view of the public.¹²⁷⁵

Two days before, on December 14, the High Command of the Wehrmacht had made public that, "after successful operations against British merchant ships in the Atlantic," the "Panzerschiff *Admiral Graf Spee* had come into contact with the enemy" in South America and had then "retired" to the Plate estuary.¹²⁷⁶ This circumlocution bore no good tidings for the fate of ship and crew. After its sea battle against the British cruisers *Ajax* and *Exeter* and the New Zealand cruiser *Achilles*, the German pocket battleship was forced to take refuge in the port of Montevideo to tend to repairs. The German Envoy there requested the Uruguayan Government to permit a stay of fourteen days for the *Admiral Graf Spee* in the capital city's harbor. British warships lay in wait beyond the three-mile zone. Tensions in Berlin ran high as the Reich Government awaited a response.

On December 16, the Uruguayan Government declined the request to allow for a prolongation of the ship's seventy-two hour stay in Montevideo. The Captain, Hans Langsdorff,¹²⁷⁷ wired Berlin to inquire: "In the event that a break-out would lead to the certain destruction of *Spee* without the possibility of damaging the enemy, I request decision whether sinking in spite of insufficient water depths in La Plata Estuary or internment." He received the following response: "No internment."¹²⁷⁸ On December 17, the *Admiral Graf Spee* departed the harbor and sailed out to sea at 4:56 p.m. (local time). The crew blew up the ship just outside Uruguayan territorial waters. On the men's return to port they were taken prisoner by Uruguayan officials. Hans Langsdorff shot himself in Montevideo two days later.

The next day, an official communiqué was published:¹²⁷⁹

Berlin, December 18

The Uruguayan Government denied the Panzerschiff *Admiral Graf Spee* permission to remain in harbor for the time necessary to restore the vessel's seaworthiness. Under these circumstances, the Führer and Supreme Commander gave Lieutenant Commander Langsdorff orders to destroy the ship by dynamiting it. Orders were carried out beyond Uruguayan territorial waters.

The High Command of the Wehrmacht indicated December 17, 8:00 p.m., as the date and time of the ship's sinking. It reported that

Captain Langsdorff had “followed his ship,” and thereby had “fulfilled like a fighter and hero the expectations of his Führer, the German Volk, and the Navy.”¹²⁸⁰

In the period between December 14 and December 18, Vidkun Quisling called on Hitler on three occasions.¹²⁸¹ This ambitious former minister sought, with Hitler’s help, to rise to power in Norway. In the course of the Second World War, his name became a synonym for all those petty politicians who betrayed the interests of their countries, usually small states neighboring Germany, in order to gain personal advantages.

While Hitler stood prepared to benefit from the treasonous intent of men like Quisling, he was not in the least inclined to allow the Norwegian any decisive influence over the events in his homeland. As mentioned before, his obsession with questions of power and his fear for his own position prevented Hitler from even permitting tried and true foreign National Socialists to assume posts of responsibility in former Reich territories after the annexation of these. He feared the loyalty of such men might be compromised by their heritage. Conceivably they might first and foremost consider the interests of their tribal affiliates or other forms of allegiance. Hence they might not unconditionally answer to Hitler. Based on these considerations, Hitler always preferred Reich Germans for such posts even if these possessed absolutely no qualifications for the job.

On December 19, Hitler hosted a series of diplomatic receptions at the Reich Chancellery. The following communiqué was issued on these events:¹²⁸²

Berlin, December 19

Today, in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer received the newly appointed Japanese Imperial Ambassador Saburu Kurusu at the new Reich Chancellery to accept his credentials. The Legation Counselor Usani, Military Attaché Major General Kawabe, and Naval Attaché Rear Admiral Yendo accompanied the Ambassador. Afterwards, the Führer hosted the new Estonian Envoy Rudolf Möllerson. A division of the SS Leibstandarte paid the guests military tribute on arrival and departure.

The mention of the reception of the Estonian Envoy in one short communiqué alongside the Japanese Ambassador was characteristic of Hitler’s gruff treatment of Japan in this period. He was decidedly more courteous towards Russia.

On December 21, Hitler congratulated Stalin on the Soviet dictator’s sixtieth birthday in the following telegram:¹²⁸³

December 19, 1939

I ask you to accept my sincere congratulations on your sixtieth birthday. With this I associate my best wishes for your personal welfare as for a prosperous future for the peoples of the friendly Soviet Union.

Adolf Hitler

The days from December 23 to December 25 Hitler spent along the Western Front, making Christmas calls on soldiers in the area of the Hunsrück and in the vicinity of Saarbrücken.¹²⁸⁴

On December 23, Hitler toured a landing strip and visited with one of the reconnaissance squadrons of the Luftwaffe. Later in the day, he made a guest appearance with the Infantry Regiment *Grossdeutschland*. In the evening, Hitler participated in yuletide festivities staged by the SS Leibstandarte, where he expounded the “meaning of the struggle.”

On December 24, an anti-aircraft battery, part of the aerial defense division West, was honored by Hitler’s presence. He joined a heavy flak battery for lunch. On this occasion, too, Hitler delivered a brief address before the men, one of whom handed him a hand-carved German eagle. Significantly, the eagle was not decorated with the swastika. In the afternoon hours, Hitler advanced to the so-called “HKL” (*Hauptkampflinie*, main front line) and visited several Panzer factories in the area of Saarbrücken. As the *Völkischer Beobachter* put it, the Führer spent “Christmas Eve between the front lines.” For the first time since 1918, he crossed over onto French terrain in the vicinity of Spichern where a French retreat had left a section of land in German hands. In the late evening, he returned to his quarters. On December 25, he called on a fighter-pilot group at its wartime station. Later he visited with the “resurrected” Infantry Regiment List.¹²⁸⁵

On December 26, Hitler sent a telegram to the Hungarian Regent Horthy to thank him for his donation of several tons of foodstuffs for the benefit of the wartime *Winterhilfswerk*.¹²⁸⁶ This constituted the only voluntary contribution Hungary was evidently prepared to make to Germany’s war effort.

The establishment of an Infantry Storm Badge was announced on December 29, and simultaneously the public received word of the creation of a *Panzerkampfwagenabzeichen* (Tank Badge) at the end of this first war year.¹²⁸⁷

The Year 1940

Major Events in Summary

Hitler entertained many ambitious designs in 1940. For one, he stood determined to defeat the Anglo-French Field Army in the West¹ and thereby to chase the English “back to the Thames.”² Second, he envisioned taking possession of the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France to establish operational bases for the Navy and the Luftwaffe; they would pursue the “economic warfare” that would overcome England.³ Third, by taking possession of Norway and Denmark, he would expand “economic warfare” from their coasts. The Government in London would undoubtedly perceive the necessity of extending its hand in friendship to Germany once England had been forced to retreat from the Continent, German submarines attacked British vessels, and the Luftwaffe’s raids penetrated the British coastal waters and the mainland.

From Hitler’s point of view, these arguments made perfect sense. From the standpoint of Britain, however, none of these considerations could induce it to give up its firm stance in opposition to Germany. The United Kingdom was not about to lower its flag at the mere sight of Hitler, no more than it had been willing to do so when Napoleon’s specter arose on the Continent.

Nevertheless, Chamberlain’s insistence that Hitler had “missed the bus”⁴ proved premature; for the time being, everything went according to plan for the Führer. The Third Reich was able to launch its surprise invasion of Denmark and Norway on April 9. Denmark was forced to surrender within hours of the attack. The strike was less successful against Norway. Norwegians mounted an unexpectedly strong opposition to the invading troops along the coastline. This inflicted heavy losses upon the German naval units in particular, a development compounded by the unanticipated intervention of the Royal Air Force and the British Navy. A relatively small Anglo-French Expeditionary Force furthermore interfered with the actions of the German troops. Nevertheless, within eight weeks, the overwhelming might of the German troops eliminated active resistance.

In Germany, the undeniably audacious move against Denmark and Norway was hailed as an unparalleled masterpiece of Hitler's military strategy. Assuredly, he had proved himself a master in conquering smaller states. Already in the Sudeten crisis of 1938, he had boasted that the conflict had pitted "75 million Germans against 7 million Czechs."⁵ He pointed to a Germany of "90 million"⁶ as having conquered 25 million⁷ Poles within little more than one month's time. In a similarly glorious military feat, the Third Reich's numerical superiority brought success in the subjugation of Denmark with its population of 3.7 million and of Norway with its 2.9 million inhabitants.

The victories attained proved deceptive ones in the end. They tied down the Wehrmacht and hence worked more to the advantage of Great Britain than to that of Germany. The German forces stationed in these areas could not actively participate in the overall war effort.⁸ The swift nature of the conquest brought no advantage, as the subsequently necessary occupation of the vanquished territories cost Germany enormous forces. Naval vessels carrying supplies could reach the areas only with difficulty and the re-supplying operations imposed a heavy toll upon the military.

Denmark and Norway were not destined to be the last entries in the roll call of countries Hitler assaulted without any declaration of war. On May 10, the 300,000 inhabitants of Luxembourg, who possessed virtually no military defenses to speak of, became the next to fall victim to his insatiable lust for power, along with the peoples of Belgium and the Netherlands. The 8.4 million strong population of the Netherlands capitulated on May 15. Resistance among the 8.3 million Belgian nationals collapsed by May 28.

In northern France, military operations also went precisely in accordance with Hitler's plans. Once more a crucial role was played by the strategically located city of Sedan, which had already gained prominence in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.⁹ At the time, Bismarck had masterminded the invasion of France, carefully avoiding any violation of Belgium's territorial integrity. Undoubtedly, a repetition of this approach would have been possible in 1940, had the German military received like instructions. As in 1870, France stood isolated and would have had to face Germany largely by itself while Germany was not yet tied down along two fronts as it had been in the First World War.

By 1940, as a final consideration, Germany claimed a population nearly twice that of France, and its soldiers were correspondingly more

numerous. Given the circumstances, France was bound to collapse if the United Kingdom and the United States failed to come to its rescue.

By May 13, German Panzer armies achieved a breakthrough at Sedan and by May 20, they reached the English Channel. The Anglo-French Field Army stood isolated. German troops turned to the North to completely cut off the enemy forces. They could easily have dealt a deadly blow to the contingent thus encircled. However, Hitler ordered the tanks to halt in order to allow the British divisions to use the gateway of Dunkirk to flee to just across the Channel. While the majority of their equipment had to be left behind, these Englishmen were extraordinarily fortunate to escape with their lives. This magnanimous behavior of Hitler's was to demonstrate that he desired no military confrontation with Great Britain and once more was extending his hand to the British in a gesture of genuine friendship. This notwithstanding, caution ought to be exercised in the assessment of this event. Even had the Wehrmacht eliminated the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk, this would have meant that His Majesty's Armed Forces would ultimately have had a few divisions less at their disposal and one to two hundred thousand English soldiers would have languished as prisoners of war in Germany. The outcome of such a scenario would have had a negligible influence upon the future military confrontation on a larger scale. The English escape was of no decisive importance to the outcome of the war. In this sense, it constituted a historic parallel to the 1914 Battle of the Marne;¹⁰ even the remarkable victory scored then by the Imperial troops failed to prevent Germany's ignominious defeat in the First World War. The 1940 campaign in the West was equivalent to a new Battle of the Marne, and its ringing successes no more determined the outcome of the Second World War than the Battle of the Marne prevented ultimate defeat in 1918.

Had the British Expeditionary Force been annihilated in 1940, had the British Isles been occupied, then, just as Churchill had foretold on November 12, 1939, the United States would have taken up the struggle.¹¹ Germany would have been laid low, perhaps somewhat later, but inevitably all the same.

The occupation of Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and northern France signaled the end of the first phase of the war, the successful implementation of "Case Yellow." On June 5, Hitler issued a proclamation which pronounced that the "greatest battle of all time"¹² had assured Germany's victory. To his great chagrin, the English whom

he had just driven “back to the Thames” failed to realize this and refused him the well-deserved capitulation offer. Uncertain of how to proceed, he resolved to punish them indirectly by occupying all of France. Thereby, he secured for Germany France’s Atlantic coast as a base for future operations against Great Britain. Faced by German troops stationed as far south as the Spanish border, the English would assuredly acknowledge the futility of further resistance and reconcile themselves to Hitler’s undisputed reign. Then they would no longer rudely rebuke his peace proposals, but gladly accept these from the hand of the man who ruled virtually the entire Continent.

Dawn on June 5 witnessed German troop advances across the Somme and Aisne rivers in the South and the Southwest. These moves heralded the implementation of “Case Red,” the actual battle for France. It was not until five days later, on June 10, with the collapse of France imminent, that Hitler allowed the impatient Mussolini to enter the war. The German dictator was not about “to share the victory with anyone.”¹³ Had Berlin allowed Rome to declare war on the Western Powers at an earlier date, this might have created the impression, so Hitler feared, that Italy’s entry into the war had contributed substantially to the fall of France.

The German full-scale assault upon the Maginot Line began on June 14, and on this same day Paris fell into the hands of the aggressor. German troops were crossing the Rhine at Colmar by June 16. One day later, the French Government requested an armistice.

In the ceasefire agreement, Hitler “generously” granted France an unoccupied zone in the South and the Southeast. However, the Wehrmacht laid claim to the entire Atlantic coastline. German troops occupied a large terrain in northern France as well as the capital city of Paris.

In view of these recent developments, Hitler speculated that just one more effective speech by him was needed to sway the British and to induce them to seriously consider a peace settlement with Germany. Graciously he extended yet another “generous peace proposal” to England, although he had earlier designated the overture on October 6, 1939 as absolutely the Reich’s last offer.¹⁴ In fact, the renewed “peace proposal”—detailed in Hitler’s speech before the Reichstag on July 19, 1940—surpassed that of a year earlier in its grotesqueness. At the time, he had audaciously instructed the British to end their involvement in the conflict as the country at stake in the war no longer existed. By 1940, he had resolved to “appeal to England’s reason” to accept the fact

that a continuation of the war had become senseless in view of the capitulation of France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway. For his part, Hitler declared: "I see no reason compelling us to pursue this fight." He thought the Axis destined to "infuse new life into Europe." Hitler was at his wits' end when Churchill, "one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals (*Herostratennaturen*) in world history,"¹⁵ failed to respond in the desired fashion to the rhetoric the Führer had so carefully employed in his speech before the Reichstag.

On July 16, three days before delivering the speech, Hitler had issued a directive for the implementation of "Operation Sea Lion," i.e. the military invasion of the British Isles. Naturally, this was merely a precautionary measure intended primarily to serve as an additional trump card in the unlikely event that Britain felt it had not yet sustained sufficient "blows" to warrant capitulation. Realistically, Hitler no more believed in the feasibility of a like undertaking than Napoleon had as he waited for the response of the English to reach him at Boulogne in 1805.¹⁶ Beyond this, the possibility of a future alliance with Great Britain was indispensable to Hitler's 1919 conceptions. Hence, it was imperative not to anger the British too readily.

Nevertheless, as the British statesmen persistently refused to toe the line, Hitler determined to frighten them into acquiescence. Relying once again upon his fabled powers of oratory, he resolved to severely admonish them at yet another "public speaking engagement" (*Volkskundgebung*). He chose his annual address to the Kriegswinterhilfswerk on September 4 as the setting for this verbal onslaught. There, he threatened Britain with heavy aerial bombardment and even his own appearance on the Isles should the English persevere further.¹⁷

Actual heavy bombardment notwithstanding, the terror that would rain from the skies upon British cities failed to produce the results desired. The "Battle of Britain" (*Luftschlacht um England*) in fact proved a fiasco for Germany's foreign policy. Instead of weakening the English public's support of His Majesty's Government, the terror strikes merely reinforced the determination of the English to persist in the struggle. To add insult to injury, the British anti-aircraft defenses and the Royal Air Force's fighters, which Hitler had mocked so often, proved more than a match for the Luftwaffe squadrons upon which they inflicted heavy losses. Even a Headquarters report by the Wehrmacht on September 16 had to concede that the British had downed forty-three German fighter planes on that day alone. The "war

in the air” was a debacle of untold proportions both militarily and politically speaking. Soon German planes no longer dared to attack London during daylight hours. As a result, German aerial attacks had to be restricted to nighttime sorties. Infuriated by the “cruel, wanton, indiscriminate bombings of London”¹⁸ in the dark of the night, Churchill announced retaliatory measures.

Faced by such determination on the part of the British, Hitler began a desperate search for allies in his struggle against England. On September 21, the conclusion of a triple alliance comprising Germany, Italy, and Japan was made public. This in turn was to demonstrate to the English that should they refuse to desist from their military engagement in Europe, the Empire’s colonial possessions in the Far East might well fall victim to Japanese expansionism. Threats like this stood in striking contrast to Hitler’s assurances, made in August of 1939, that he was ever ready to defend the United Kingdom’s colonies in this region should His Majesty so desire!

This so-called Tripartite Pact was also intended to deter the United States from contemplating intervention in the war on behalf of Great Britain. The Pact completely failed of its purpose in this respect. Neither America nor England was in the least impressed by this latest political move, while the Soviet Union cast a suspicious eye on this resurrection of the basic structures of the Anti-Comintern Pact of earlier days.¹⁹

In October, Hitler went on trips to court additional allies in Europe. Two potential candidates were Spain and France, and separate meetings were arranged, one with Franco at Hendaye and another with Marshal Pétain at Montoire. Neither bore fruits; Hitler’s oratorical gift could not sway Franco and Pétain to abandon their states’ non-belligerency.²⁰

The autumn of 1940 was replete with misfortune upon misfortune for Hitler. To compound the dilemma, his friend Mussolini resolved to strike out daringly on his own and failed to consult his master Hitler prior to Italy’s invasion of Greece. Moreover, the Duce’s timing, just before the onset of winter, was most unfortunate for both Rome and Berlin.

In the meantime, Hitler had reflected upon the cause of his persistent failure with the British. They refused his hand extended in friendship time and time again, in spite of the Wehrmacht’s driving them “back to the Thames” and Germany’s annihilation of Britain’s allies Poland, France, and a series of smaller neutral states. Hitler

simply could not comprehend why the British treated him so inconsiderately in light of the generosity he had once more displayed in magnanimously allowing for the escape of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk. No, there had to be another explanation for their insistent refusal to play the role of Germany's ally in Europe which he had assigned them in 1919.

Having arrived at this point in his contemplation, Hitler concluded that all Great Britain was indeed waiting for was the Soviet Union's declaration of war on Germany. However, so he conceived, they were to be quickly disappointed in this hope, because he was inspired to strike out at Russia before it could turn against Germany. This would allow him to conquer the Lebensraum in the East essential to Germany's future, in accordance with his thesis of 1919. And in turning against Russia instead of Great Britain, he would assure the Third Reich of the latter's everlasting gratitude.

One must concede to Hitler that the English did their utmost to reinforce this absurd idea in the German Chancellor's mind. In nearly every speaking engagement on the topic after September 1939, Churchill had interpreted Russia's comportment with regard to Poland, the Baltic States, etc. as directed against Germany's interests. Supposedly, the Soviet Union was laboring to erect a line of fortification to thwart Germany's expansionist designs in the East. For the English it was only natural to seek to deflect Hitler's fury toward the East, away from their island—a similar strategy had proved its worth already in Napoleon's day. This feat could be easily accomplished once more, as the influential circles in England were only too well aware of Hitler's distorted understanding of world politics and they had known the theses expounded in *Mein Kampf* for a long time. It is, however, more than remarkable that Hitler should start his campaign against Russia in 1941 on exactly the same day as Napoleon did in 1812: on June 22.²¹

Before directly confronting Russia, Hitler launched one last effort to induce the Soviets to share in the "spoils" of the British Empire—perhaps in the Middle East, with a drive toward the Persian Gulf or India. Should the Russians really fall for this trick, then he could graciously turn to England to offer the Third Reich's protection against the Bolshevik onslaught.

On a visit to Berlin in November of the previous year, Molotov had listened to Hitler's rambling without batting an eyelid. Once Hitler had ended, Molotov had immediately returned to the topic of the pending difficulties in the German-Soviet relationship: the question of Finland

and the Baltic States; the Balkans, where Germany apparently intended to gain a permanent foothold. Hitler was indignant. The same day Molotov returned to Moscow, Hitler attended a reception at the Japanese Embassy, as if to signal that his indulgence to the Russians had come to an abrupt end. The future in fact would find him back among his former cohorts of the Anti-Comintern Pact.

Hence the year 1940 drew to a close on a note quite different from what Hitler had anticipated. Granted, the English had been driven “back to the Thames,” and the Third Reich’s sphere of influence extended all the way from the North Cape to the Pyrenees. These outward successes were deceptive ones, however. Hitler felt he had been outmaneuvered by the British. This suspicion was a well-founded one. England had neither come to conclude peace with Germany nor was the prospect of friendship with this state any closer than it had been at the beginning of the year. As always when Hitler was disconcerted or unsure of how to proceed, he resolved to adhere all the more fervently to the ideas he had formed in 1919, as if his unshakeable willpower alone sufficed to change magically the course of events. If the dream of conquering new Lebensraum in the East came true, why should the friendship of England further elude him? In this context, for Germany, there was and would be “but one ally in Europe: England.”²²

Report and Commentary

1

On January 1, 1940, Hitler issued the customary “New Year’s Proclamation to National Socialists and Party Comrades.”

Every line showed the strangeness of the arguments by which he sought to justify the policies which had plunged Germany once more into a large-scale, armed confrontation in Europe. Callously, Hitler remarked: “These measures have not robbed the outside world of anything. They have not done it any injury.” To state as much merely added insult to injury in view of the Third Reich’s conduct in Poland ever since September 1939. He proclaimed further that the “Herren warmongers” in the West who had dared to reject his “offer of peace” would henceforth get war from him. Then he spoke of “the creation of a new Europe” and relied again on “the grace of Providence” and on the “Lord God.” Following the “party narrative,” he declared:²³

After mastering its internal divisions, National Socialist Germany has proceeded step by step to cast off its enslavement. A struggle of historically unprecedented proportions and the yearnings of a thousand years have culminated in the consolidation of the German Volk within the boundaries of the Greater German Reich. These measures have not robbed the outside world of anything. They have not done it any injury. They have but accorded the German Volk what all other peoples have long possessed.

Nevertheless, the Jewish-internationalist capitalists in connection with socially reactionary classes in the Western States have successfully roused the world democracies against Germany. Publication of documents on the events preceding the outbreak of the German-Polish conflict prove beyond doubt today that the English warmongers not only desired no peaceful settlement of the problem, they also did everything within their power to promote a conflict with Poland in order to free the way toward either a shaming of Germany or a declaration of war upon Poland. Once the first option failed them, these international warmongers resorted to the second. Poland allowed itself to be deluded into believing that it could realize its unlawful interests by the use of brute force. Within eighteen days,²⁴ its weapons fell silent. The

new National Socialist Wehrmacht outperformed even the highest of expectations placed upon it: the Poland concocted by the Diktat of Versailles exists no more!

A series of events of enormous import for the history of our Volk characterized the year 1939:

1. The pacification of Central Europe and the security of the German Lebensraum were attained by the integration of the ancient German Reich territories of Bohemia and Moravia as protectorates within the framework of the Greater German Reich. Germans and Czechs shall live and labor peacefully next to one another in the future as they have throughout many a century in the past.

2. The return of the Memel territory to the Reich.

3. The elimination of the Polish State allowed for a restoration of the ancient borders of the Reich.

In all three cases, non-viable structures of the Treaty of Versailles were eradicated.

The Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance Pact with the Soviet Union constituted the most outstanding feature of the year now past. From the outset, the attempt of the plutocratic statesmen of the West to pit Germany and Russia against each other was foiled; the desired blood-letting in both nations to the advantage of third parties was forestalled; an encirclement of Germany was prevented.

That we were able to successfully bring about this political development is a fact we owe exclusively to the inner reorientation which National Socialism wrought for the German Volk. This educational process undertaken by the National Socialist Movement has begun to bear fruit economically and politically. The military resurrection of the Wehrmacht was successfully complemented by a new economic policy not only making the Reich economically independent of the outside world, but also permitting us to overcome unemployment to a degree not even realized in today's richest countries of the West.

Domestically organized and consolidated; economically prepared; militarily armed to the teeth; thus we stride forth, entering into the most decisive year in the history of Germany.²⁸

For there is one thing we all know for certain, National Socialists: the Jewish-capitalist enemy of the world facing us knows but one goal—to destroy Germany, to destroy our German Volk!

Our foes may strive to disguise their intention beneath phraseology, but this does nothing to deter them from the pursuit of this goal!

First, they declared that they wished to help Poland. This would have been easy enough had they not unscrupulously urged Poland into this war. Once Poland had paid the price for this by being mercilessly beaten by the might of our Wehrmacht, the pursuit of a restoration of the Polish state no longer sufficed as a goal in this war. Now they aimed for the elimination of my person, i.e. the extinction of National Socialism. They barely had realized that the German Volk could not be duped by this most stupid fraud, in light of its experiences in 1918, and so it failed to react to it, when they did indeed

finally divulge the truth: namely, that they sought to eradicate the German Volk as such and to dissolve and destroy the German Reich. Cowardice led them not only to recruit so-called “neutrals” in this effort; they did not stop short of hiring paid murderers either.²⁶

The German Volk did not want this fight. Up to the very last minute, I offered my hand in friendship to England. Even after Poland was dealt with, I made suggestions regarding a long-term guaranteed pacification of Europe.²⁷ In this, I received the support of Fascist Italy’s Duce above all, who, guided by the spirit of our friendship, labored sincerely to prevent a development which bore no good tidings for anyone in Europe.

However, the reactionary Jewish warmongers in the capitalist democracies were not willing to let this opportunity to destroy Germany pass: too long had they prepared for this. For years they had waited for this hour. These Herren warmongers wanted war: they were to get it.

The first phase of this conflict has shown the following:

1. no one dared to attack the German West Wall, and
2. in those instances in which German soldiers confronted their adversaries, this once more justified the glory of the German soldier and the reputation of our weapons.

May the year 1940 bring about a decision. Whatever the future may hold for us, there is but one outcome possible: our victory! Whatever may be demanded of the individual in sacrifice until then is of no import in comparison to the dedication of the German nation, in comparison to the horrendous fate looming above should power once more fall into the hands of those criminal liars of Versailles. Hence ours is a clearly defined goal in this war: Germany, and Europe moreover, must be liberated from the violating grasp, the persistent threat posed by the England of the present and of the past. We must make a final stand to tear the weapons from the hands of these warmongers going about declaring war on everyone. We fight not only against the injustice of Versailles, but we also fight against renewed injustice poised to take its place. And in a more positive sense: we fight for the creation of a new Europe! Unlike Mr. Chamberlain, we fail to perceive why this new Europe would do well to be fashioned along the lines dictated by decaying and decrepit world powers, at the hands of so-called statesmen who are not even capable of resolving the most primitive of problems within their own countries. We are persuaded that only those peoples and powers are called upon to refashion Europe whose present comportment and previous accomplishments clearly demonstrate them to be young and virile nations. The future belongs to these young nations and systems! The Jewish-capitalist world will not outlive the twentieth century!

National Socialists! German Volksgenossen! In this past year, thanks to the workings of Providence, the Reich of the German Volk was able to accomplish such miraculous and outstanding achievements of historical proportions! At the beginning of this year 1940, let us implore the Lord God to continue to bestow upon us His blessings in this struggle for freedom, independence, and hence for the life and the future of our Volk! With this realization in mind, let us ourselves not tarry in our enterprise; let us not lack

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the courage to fulfill the task lying before us in this year. By helping ourselves, relying on our own resources, let us implore the Lord Almighty not to deny the German Volk His intervention in the year 1940. For then we must and we will succeed!

At the beginning of the new year, Hitler addressed the Wehrmacht in the following decree:²⁸

Soldiers!

The year 1939 afforded the Greater German Wehrmacht the proud opportunity to prove its worth. With the weapons entrusted to you by the German Volk, you have victoriously struggled in this war forced on us. In a mere eighteen days, through the cooperation of all, it was possible to secure the Reich in the East once more and to eradicate the injustice of Versailles.

Suffused with gratitude, we recall at the end of this historic year those of our comrades who have sealed their loyalty to Volk and Reich in blood!

For the coming year we wish to implore the Almighty, who in the past has so visibly extended His protection to us, to bestow His blessings on us once again and to strengthen us in the fulfillment of our duties! For before us lies the most difficult of struggles for the existence or non-existence of the German Volk!

Filled with pride and confidence, the German Volk and I look to you! For: with such soldiers Germany must win!

Adolf Hitler

Also on January 1, Hitler extended his “best wishes for the New Year” to the public in the following telegram:²⁹

Berlin, January 1, 1940

Through this venue, the Führer relays his best wishes for the New Year to his colleagues, his acquaintances, his friends, as well as to the whole German Volk. In this manner, he equally wishes to express his gratitude for all congratulatory wishes extended to his person.

The German press published accounts of a series of telegrams Hitler sent out on this occasion:³⁰

To the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel III:

I ask Your Majesty to accept, at the beginning of the New Year, my own and the entire German Volk’s sincere best wishes for the welfare of Your Majesty yourself and for the Royal House. To this I add my best wishes for the prosperous future of the allied Italian nation.

Adolf Hitler

To the Head of Government, Mussolini:

On the advent of this New Year, I wish to express to you, Duce, my heartfelt best wishes and dedication. In the coming year as well, may complete success be granted to Fascist Italy, allied to National Socialist

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Germany and guided by your strong and proven leadership, in the solution of its national mission.

Adolf Hitler

To Generalissimo Franco:

On the advent of this New Year, I convey to Your Excellency my sincere best wishes for your personal welfare and for the good fortune and greatness of Spain. May many years of happiness succeed this year of military victory.

Adolf Hitler

To the Regent of Hungary, Horthy:

I ask Your Highness to accept my sincere best wishes on the occasion of the advent of this New Year. I add to this my and the German Volk's best wishes for the prosperous future of the friendly Hungarian nation.

Adolf Hitler

Apparently, Hitler had carefully selected these individuals for special recognition in an effort to underline Germany's friendly relations with the powers they represented. A second category was constituted by King Boris of Bulgaria, King Carol of Romania, and the Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia. The contents of Hitler's telegrams to them were not published, but the responses received were mentioned in the press. Certain persons not particularly in good graces with the Führer were referred to in one short note, forming a third category in this list:

The Führer also exchanged New Year's telegrams of friendly contents with the Kings of Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Norway, and Sweden, as well as with the former Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the Prince Regent of Italy, the State President of Slovakia, and President Háchá. Moreover, on the advent of the New Year, he received New Year's greetings from the Shah of Iran, from the Kings of Afghanistan and the Yemen, from the President of the Regent's Council of Thailand. For all these he returned thanks in the form of telegrams.

The customary New Year's reception of the diplomatic corps was canceled in 1940 because of the state of war. In past years, this event had been scheduled around January 10.

On January 2, the following official note was published on the topic:

Since, due to the special circumstances created by the war, the New Year's reception for the entire diplomatic corps had to be canceled this year, as well as the other customary, festive New Year's receptions, the Apostolic Nuncio and Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps called upon the Presidential Chancellery to relay the New Year's wishes of the Pope and the Diplomatic Corps to the Führer. He was succeeded by the ambassadors, envoys, and chargés

d'affaires, remaining in Berlin, who entered themselves in the visitors' book lying open in the Presidential Chancellery to lend expression to the best wishes of the heads of state, governments, and peoples they represent.

It was remarkable that none of these publications contained mention of Russia and Japan, which undoubtedly had participated in this traditional exchange of greetings. After all, Russia and Japan were presently "friendly powers" of the first rank.

On January 3, Hitler received a lengthy letter from his friend Mussolini. The frequent exchange of correspondence between the two so prevalent in late August and early September 1939 had subsequently slowed down to a trickle. Nor had a meeting between the two taken place, although one had originally been planned for August. Mussolini, who had not dared to contradict the German dictator since 1937, was now so infuriated by Hitler's behavior that he mounted the courage to summarily reprimand Hitler, although only in writing. The main points in his letter were the following:³¹

1. Hitler should undertake a restoration, i.e. "creation of a Polish state." The Poles had deserved a better treatment than that "which is said to have been meted out (by the Germans)," in accordance with British reports.

2. Hitler was "in any event (to) refrain . . . from taking the initiative on the Western Front" for "the United States would not permit a total defeat of the democracies."

3. The German-Russian friendship was in fact impossible. "The solution of your Lebensraum problem is in Russia and nowhere else." Russia could not be turned from the "world enemy number one" into "friend number one."

4. Italy offered to serve as Germany's "reserves" and to afford it its "political, diplomatic, economic, and military" assistance.

Hitler naturally was outraged by the impertinence of Mussolini's message. This would-be Duce who always liked to talk big was surely not in a position to give him, the Führer, advice! For the time being, Hitler resolved to ignore the Italian. Once the occasion presented itself, he would reply to him in kind, in a letter three times as long and three times as insolent.³²

On January 7, the public corporation "Haus der Deutschen Kunst" published an appeal for contributions to the Greater German Art Exhibition of 1940. By special orders of the Führer, it was to take place in spite of the war. The appeal to "Greater Germany's creative artists," obviously edited by Hitler himself, contained the following paragraph:³³

And thus, in these sinister days of war, it is the express will of the Führer that art should not remain silent, but instead to regard it as its most beautiful

and exalted obligation, through its creations, to uplift and fill with joy the German man in this time of the greatest and, for the existence of our Volk and its culture, most important decisions.

On January 8, Professor Richard Klein of Munich, who had designed the “Reich Party Congress” badges of earlier years, celebrated his fiftieth birthday. On this occasion, Hitler presented him with an autographed picture of himself.³⁴

On January 11, Hitler issued a “Basic Directive” regarding the treatment of “secret affairs.” No office or officer was to gain knowledge of such affairs beyond what was immediately necessary and this only at the very last minute. This concern with secrecy may well have been connected with the emergency landing of a German military plane in the vicinity of Mechelen-sur-Meuse.³⁵ On the other hand, such a move was well in keeping with Hitler’s general paranoid preoccupation with secrecy.³⁶ The order, which was to be posted above all military desks, read:³⁷

Berlin, January 11, 1940

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

Basic Directive:

1. No one, no office and no officer may gain knowledge of secret affairs, unless their duty absolutely necessitates this.

2. No office and no officer may gain more knowledge of secret affairs than is absolutely necessary for the performance of their mission.

3. No office and no officer may gain knowledge of secret affairs, or the parts thereof of which they must know, at a date earlier than essential to the performance of their mission.

4. The thoughtless relaying, in accordance with some general distribution key, of orders whose secrecy is of decisive importance, is prohibited.

Adolf Hitler

On January 12, Hitler visited Göring at his Berlin flat to personally congratulate him on his forty-seventh birthday.³⁸

On January 17, on the occasion of Attolico’s sixtieth birthday, Hitler instructed Meissner to relate to the Italian Ambassador his heartfelt best wishes in a handwritten note and to present him with a bouquet of flowers.³⁹

On January 21, Hitler assigned Alfred Rosenberg, responsible for the “indoctrination of the Party” and hitherto officially called “*weltanschaulicher Schulungsleiter*” (ideological instruction leader), to a post yet more obscure in nature. The public had heard little of Rosenberg ever since 1933. It was common knowledge that Hitler thought little

of this self-proclaimed “philosopher of the Party,” and had only ridicule for Rosenberg’s book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*.⁴⁰ In order to avoid possible embarrassment to the Party, Hitler appointed the ambitious Rosenberg to head a “*Hohe Schule*” to be established only after the war. Meanwhile, he kept Rosenberg busy gathering material for a library to be founded especially for this new, although mysterious institution. Hitler’s decree read:⁴¹

Notice to Party and State administrative offices:

The “*Hohe Schule*” shall one day constitute a center for National Socialist research. It shall be established after the war. In order to promote the preparatory work already under way, I order Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg to continue these provisional measures—especially in the sphere of research and the foundation of a library. All administrative offices of Party and State are urged to lend him any and all support necessary thereto.

Berlin, January 21, 1940

Adolf Hitler

January 24 marked the anniversary of Frederick the Great’s birthday.⁴² On this occasion, Hitler spoke before an assembly of 7,000 officer cadets at the Berlin Sportpalast. Already in the previous year, in timely concurrence with the completion of the new Reich Chancellery, Hitler had singled out newly appointed officers and officer cadets for several addresses.⁴³ Now, in time of war, he wished to conjure up the spirit of Frederick the Great, of his “staying power,” to create the impression that he too, Adolf Hitler, would secure victory in the end.

Before the year 1943, Hitler delivered a total of eight such war appeals in front of officer cadets, almost without exception at the Berlin Sportpalast.⁴⁴ Naturally these were only a pale reflection of the early grandly staged Party or SA rallies which Hitler had held at this location in the days after his rise to power. Hitler’s style had changed as had the size of his audience: five to ten thousand officers as compared to twenty thousand Party functionaries or SA men. Hitler’s military audience was less likely, due to discipline, to break out in extended exuberant shouts of “*Heil!*” Nor were the officers likely to disrupt Hitler’s speech with thunderous applause. They restricted themselves to curt responses: “*Heil, mein Führer!*” when Hitler greeted or bade them leave in a resounding military tone, shouting, “*Heil, Offiziersanwärter!*”

These military roll calls were among the few “mass rallies” that Hitler could afford to stage during the war. He tended to be out of sorts on these occasions, however. Apparently, he no longer took care to prepare himself specially for routine appeals where he usually

repeated the same thoughts without giving any attention to current affairs. He evidently thought these repetitions a matter of no import, as the officer cadets appearing before him every year naturally were always different ones.

Thinking he need not come up with anything new, he reiterated the following “philosophical considerations” in the Sportpalast appeals during the war:

1. “Party narratives,” more or less lengthy in nature, gave way to reflections upon German history as interpreted by Hitler. Therein he expounded Germany’s fate throughout the past centuries and millenniums much in the manner already employed in *Mein Kampf*. The term “struggle” as the essence of life, its sense and mission, played a central role in these expositions.

2. The relationship between population size and Lebensraum, which was to be and had to be resolved through “adaptation.” Either population figures “adapted” themselves to the Lebensraum available (possible either through starvation or a decline in birth rates), or the Lebensraum was “adapted” to an ever increasing population (and this unequivocally meant conquest of new lands). Hitler had already expounded this topic in his speech before the generals on November 23, 1939.⁴⁵

3. The German Volk in its role as not only the best, but the numerically strongest people in Europe, and, with the exception of China, in the entire world. Hence Germany had to win and would win. Hitler had warmed to this argument previously when, on November 10, 1938, he resorted to it for the first time in a speech before representatives of the German press.⁴⁶

On Hitler’s address to the 7,000 officer cadets on January 24, 1940, the following communiqué reached the public:⁴⁷

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht assembled officer cadets of the Army and Luftwaffe at the Sportpalast on Wednesday [January 24]. These candidates await appointment as officers and return to their contingents along the front after the completion of their training. Junkers of the SS Verfügungstruppen also participated in the roll call.⁴⁸ In consideration of the meaning and vital necessity of struggle in life, the Führer spoke of the duties and tasks of the officer in the National Socialist Wehrmacht. On the anniversary of the great King, the Führer pointed to Frederick the Great and his soldiers as models of the best soldiery.

The 7,000 young soldiers enthusiastically reacted to the Führer’s words. Field Marshal Göring led them in endless cries of *Sieg Heil* for the first soldier of the Reich.

Some gems from Hitler's speech of January 24 are quoted below:⁴⁹

"We have two states as our enemies: England and France! These two states owe their existence as world powers and as great powers solely to the century-long decline of the German Volk."

"We Germans number eighty-two million people in today's Reich. [—] This means that we are the only state, aside from China, to boast such a great number of people of one *Volkestum* in a contiguous setting."

"Germany has become a factor again [in world politics] through National Socialism."

"This war was an inevitable one! This Europe at the mercy of France and England begrudges the German Volk its existence since it does not want to bear German greatness and power and because it believes it cannot bear this structure. However much we limit ourselves we shall never be able to appease France and England!"

"You are soldiers today. I, too, was once a soldier and I remain one today. Though this struggle for my Volk was an inevitable one [historically], I have the absolute will to see this struggle through in my lifetime. Then today's German generation shall take up this great task, and it shall not say it will leave it to its children."

"Today, for the first time in German history, the German giant faces only one front and is armed better than ever before. They believed that they would be able to engage us in struggle along several fronts this time, too, but in this they failed because of the alliances and treaties formed."⁵⁰

"The one enemy was eliminated within eighteen days."⁵¹

"They [Germany's enemies in the West] are all waiting for action. We decide when these actions will take place.⁵² Let no one entertain any doubt, however, that they will indeed take place. No struggle in world history was ever decided by inaction, by staying low or on the sidelines. Rather, any historic struggle is decided only by victory, and any victory is decided only in the struggle."

While undoubtedly there was some truth to Hitler's theory on inaction in battle, it was ironically he himself who shied away from engagements with the British by "staying low." When he spoke of struggle or battle, he obviously had only France or small neutral states in mind. He was still convinced that, driven "back to the Thames," the British fighting forces would collapse. Thus, he was surprised anew every time he met with England's determination to pursue victory on the battlefield instead of at the conference table.

On January 25, an internal report of the High Command of the Wehrmacht revealed: "The Panzerschiff *Deutschland*, which has participated in merchant warfare in Atlantic waters since the outbreak of war, returned home some time ago." At the same time, the following announcement was published:⁵³

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht has ordered the Panzerschiff *Deutschland* to be renamed *Lützow* since the name *Deutschland* is to be reserved for a larger vessel. The heavy cruiser originally christened *Lützow* shall be renamed correspondingly.⁵⁴

On January 27, Keitel announced the following desire of the Führer to the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht:⁵⁵

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht desires "Study N" to be placed directly under his personal supervision and to be worked on furthermore in the closest connection with the overall conduct of the war. For these reasons, the Führer has commissioned me to attend to all future provisional measures. To this end, a working staff will be set up at the High Command of the Wehrmacht which will later serve as the nucleus for a functional operational staff. [Technical details follow.]

"Study N" would later be called "Weser Exercise" (*Weserübung*), the code name for the military occupation of Norway and Denmark.⁵⁶ In December of the preceding year, Hitler had laid the groundwork for the formulation of this study.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, he apparently felt it necessary at this point to underline that all preparations to be implemented were to "be placed directly under his personal supervision." One reason for this was that "Study N" had not originated with him, but with Raeder. The Grand Admiral had approached Hitler with the idea for a foray to the North in October of 1939.⁵⁸ Hitler had expanded on Raeder's suggestion to take Norway by force and he wished all those involved in the project to know that actually the very idea was his.

Like all other prominent figures in the Third Reich, the Commander in Chief of the Navy had been taken by complete surprise when news of the British declaration of war reached him in Berlin. Raeder had shared the Navy's prevalent conviction that a like move on the part of England was not to be anticipated prior to 1944.⁵⁹

It was not only Raeder's personal ambition to appropriate a role of importance for the German Navy in the conflict which steered Hitler's attention to the possibility of the Third Reich occupying Norway. This particular Scandinavian state proved especially alluring as its long coastline afforded the Navy excellent points of departure for maritime missions against the British Isles and against British escorts crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Such a step would equally underline the might of the Navy and its potential for future operations.

These were not the only considerations prompting Raeder's interest. A role of similar importance was played by a conviction

known as the "Navy theory." It had gained a significant following in reactionary circles in Germany after the First World War and ranked second only to the "stab in the back legend" of earlier days. The "Navy theory" blamed the German naval leadership of the First World War, primarily consisting of Grand Admiral Tirpitz and the Kaiser himself, for having tarried in the deployment of Germany's High Seas Fleet. Inactivity, the worst form of activity for real soldiers,⁶⁰ had slowly but surely corroded the morale of the Navy's personnel. The "*blaue Jungs*," as sailors were popularly known, had then launched the revolution of November 1918 in the ports of Wilhelmshaven and Kiel. This had then spread like wildfire throughout Germany, precipitating the Reich's defeat in the war. There is no need to go into this obvious nonsense.⁶¹

In 1940, it was a fact, however, that the Navy greatly suffered from the "shame" with which the "boys in blue" felt burdened psychologically and historically. The impression that the Navy had been the first to give way to the pressures of 1918 and had thus abandoned the Reich to the enemy pervaded most of Germany. Hence Raeder stood determined not to allow, under any circumstances, a similar impression of inactivity by the fleet to be generated in the Second World War. He yearned for action. He preferred the sailors to demonstrate that they "knew how to die valiantly"⁶² rather than that the Navy should remain idle in the harbor. Undoubtedly, Hitler was pleased by this predisposition for action on the part of the Navy, although at first he had proved hesitant to initiate a potential military move against Norway.

The Russo-Finnish War had put the possibility of a joint Franco-English intervention in this conflict, across Norwegian territory, back up for discussion. Germany would be harmed by any such move. Two thirds of the German armament industry depended on iron ore imports from Sweden for its output. In winter, this precious and desperately needed raw material could be shipped only through Norway's ice-free port of Narvik. Repercussions from a violation of Norwegian neutrality were a consideration for the Allied Chiefs of Staff as well as for their German counterparts. Intercession in the so-called "Winter War" with Russia on behalf of the gallant Finns was truly tempting for Great Britain and France at this time. And thus, the Allied Chiefs of Staff, too, were drawing up plans to overrun the territory of Norway, in spite of its status as a non-belligerent power.

After all, then as now, it is the task of Chiefs of Staff to contemplate all possibilities. In this context, it should be noted that the German Chiefs of Staff were cleared of charges at Nuremberg related to the

constitution of an "organization of war criminals." Decisive in the assignment of guilt and responsibility in such matters was not the actual planning of the invasion of Norway, but rather its ruthless implementation, responsibility for which lay entirely with the German statesmen involved.

In England, for instance, pressure to intervene in Finland by way of Oslo was great also, yet Chamberlain and Halifax put up a determined resistance and refused to hear of an invasion of Norway to protect British interests.⁶³ Instead, in the case of Norway, the Allied politicians resolved to leave it up to Hitler to violate neutral territory and thereby assume the burden of the blame.

Though Hitler prided himself on forestalling the actions of his foes by a few days and even as little as "twenty-four hours,"⁶⁴ he could not possibly maintain that the Western Powers seriously considered violating Norwegian neutrality. Even had this been the case, there was a decisive difference between Germany and its adversaries: Germany had to use force to persuade Norway to abandon its neutrality, while the West commanded sufficient political clout to pressure Norway to give it up more or less voluntarily, if need be.

When, in 1940, Hitler determined to see through "Operation Nord," he evidently was still convinced he could force Norway and later Denmark into acquiescence to his visions of "economic warfare" against Great Britain. With no more Danish bacon for breakfast, the English might well be more disposed to coming to terms with Germany. In any event, the strategic value of the North Sea shores of both countries would greatly enhance Germany's capabilities for action against England. These contemplations were reinforced by Hitler's unyielding belief in the "Germanic Reich of the German nation," which he had formulated as early as 1937.⁶⁵ This he greatly desired to expand to encompass all "Germanic" lands, such as Norway and Denmark, of course.

On January 29, Hitler signed a law "on the representation of the new eastern territories in the Reichstag" which read:⁶⁶

In order to afford representation in the Greater German Reichstag to the German Volksgenossen residing in the eastern territories now returning home, the Reich Government promulgates the following law which is hereby made public:

§ 1

The Greater German Reichstag, elected on April 10 and December 4, 1938, supplemented by the law of April 13, 1939 (RGBl. I, pp. 762 f.), will gain as

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many more deputies as the total of the residents of the various eastern territories who are above twenty years of age, can be divided by the figure 60,000.

§ 2

The deputies entering the Greater German Reichstag in accordance with § 1 are to be appointed by the Führer and Reich Chancellor from among the number of German Volksgenossen residing in these territories who are above twenty-five years of age.

This law also served to silence those Germans who had clamored and hoped for the Reichstag to convene on January 30. Hitler did not feel inclined to speak on this day of commemoration which, customarily, he took advantage of to deliver a lengthy speech. No news of spectacular victories was at hand. Lack of any specific attainment to be applauded might prompt one of the delegates to interrupt the session to demand a vote on either war or peace—so he feared needlessly.

Therefore, Hitler preferred to have Goebbels stage a “mass rally” at the Berlin Sportpalast on this date. Among the audience, he wished “modest worker’s dress” to predominate. Reich Ministers, Reichsleiters, and generals received instructions to seat themselves on the rostrum. Hitler’s speech of January 30, 1940, was replete with empty phrases and rhetorical statements on the war, a tirade against England with its colonial possessions and most annoying propaganda ministry. The only statement worthy of note in the address read: “And I can only say to France and England: you, too, shall have your war!” He placed great emphasis on his determination to attack in the West shortly, an intention he had already underlined in his New Year’s appeal.

Hitler made the following statements before those assembled at the Sportpalast:⁶⁷

German Volksgenossen!

Seven years are a short time indeed. They are only a fraction of a normal human life—only a second in the life of a people. And yet the seven years lying behind us today seem longer than many decades of the past. Within them we feel the concentrated force of historic evolution: the resurrection of a great nation in danger of extinction. This was an eventful, tumultuous period indeed. We were fortunate not only to witness it, but to fashion it in part. At times we nearly lost sight of it.

Today there is much talk about democratic ideals in the outside world. But not in Germany! For here in Germany we had more than enough time—fifteen years—to acquaint ourselves with these democratic ideals. And we ourselves had to pick up the legacy left behind by this democracy.

Now we are being credited with many a truly astounding war aim, especially by the English. After all, England is quite experienced in issuing

proclamations of objectives in warfare as it has waged the greatest number of wars the world over.

Truly astounding are the war aims announced to us today. A new Europe will arise. This Europe will be characterized by justice. This justice will render armament obsolete. This will lead to disarmament at last. This disarmament in turn will bring about an economic blossoming. Change and trade will spring up—much trade—free trade. And with the sponsorship of this trade, culture shall once more blossom, and not only culture will benefit, but religion will also prosper.

In other words: we are heading towards a golden age!⁸

Well, we have heard of this golden age before. Many times precisely the same people attempted to illustrate its virtues to us who are now flooding us with descriptions of its benefits. The records are old ones, played once too often. We can only pity these gentlemen who cannot even come up with a new idea to trap a great people. For all this they had already promised us in 1918. Then, too, England's objectives in the war were the creation of this "new Europe," the establishment of a "new justice," of which the "right to self-determination of the peoples" was to form an integral part. Back then already they promised us justice to render obsolete—for all time—the bearing of any sort of weaponry.

Back then already they submitted to us a program for disarmament—one for global disarmament. To make this disarmament more evident, it was to be crowned by the establishment of an association of nations bearing no arms. These were to settle their differences in the future—for even back then there was no doubt that differences would still arise—by talking them to death in discussion and debate, just as is the custom in democratic states. There would be no more shooting under any circumstances! In 1918, they declared a blessed and pious age to come!

What came to pass in its stead we all lived to see: the old states were destroyed without even as much as asking their citizenry. Historic, ancient structures were severed, not only state bodies but grown economic structures as well, without anything better to take their place. In total disregard of the principle of the right to self-determination of the peoples, the European peoples were hacked to pieces, torn apart. Great states were dissolved. Nations were robbed of their rights, first rendered utterly defenseless and then subjected to a division which left only victors and vanquished in this world.

And then there was no more talk of disarmament. To the contrary, armament went on. Nor did any efforts materialize to settle conflicts peacefully. The armed states waged wars just as before. Yet those who had been disarmed were no longer in a position to ward off the aggressions of those well armed.

Naturally, this did not herald economic prosperity but, to the contrary, produced a network of lunatic reparations payments which led to increasing destitution for not only the vanquished, but also the so-called victors themselves. The consequences of this economic destitution were felt most acutely by the German Volk.

And culture meanwhile received no support. Instead, it was abandoned to the arbitrary reign of crazed ideas and distortions. Religion, too, had to take a back seat. In these fifteen years, not one Englishman recalled the Christian ideals of charity or of love for one's fellow man. The gentlemen went for walks not with the bible under their arms, but with the Treaty of Versailles in hand as their bible. It contained those 440 articles, all of which represented a burden, an obligation, an indictment, and an extortion of Germany. The League of Nations guaranteed this Versailles. It was not an association of free and equal nations. It was not even a League of Nations; its founding father refused it recognition from the start. It was a so-called League of Nations with the sole intent of guaranteeing this most vile of all Diktats. Its mission was to force us to fulfill this Diktat.

This was the age of democratic Germany! Now that foreign statesmen repeatedly act as though they could not possibly trust present-day Germany, one should remark that this cannot possibly be applied to the Germany back then. This former Germany was their own creation, their own work. They should have been able to place trust in it. Yet, instead, just how badly did they treat it!

Let us recall the true story of those years: the despondency of the collapse of 1918; the tragedy of the year 1919; all those years of economic decline domestically; the continuation of the enslavement; the misery of our Volk; and, above all, the utter hopelessness of those years! Even today the memory of these years profoundly shakes us. Those were the days when a great nation slowly lost not only its belief in itself, but all hope for justice in this world. During this entire period, democratic Germany hoped in vain, pleaded in vain, and protested in vain.

International finance remained brutal and squeezed our Volk ruthlessly. The statesmen of the allied nations closed their hearts to it. In cold blood, they declared that we were twenty million Germans too many.⁶⁹

In those days when all hope was for naught, all pleas were in vain, and all protests bore no fruits, in those days the National Socialist Movement came forth from the realization that, in this world, one must never stoop to hoping, pleading, or protesting. Instead, in this world, it is imperative first and foremost to help oneself.

Belief in our German Volk and the mobilization of its values took the place of hope. We had few real means at our disposal back then. What we regarded as building blocks for our new Reich, besides our willpower, was first our Volk's ability to work, second its intelligence, and third what our soil, our Lebensraum, afforded us.

And thus we began our work and began Germany's inner uplifting. It did not threaten the world. It was a work of purely inner, domestic reform. And nevertheless, it immediately elicited the hatred of others. These got wind of the renewed rise of the German Volk. And it was because we knew of this that we undertook to mobilize Germany's strength.

You know it well: in the year 1933, the year we assumed power, I was forced to declare our withdrawal from the League of Nations and from the Disarmament Conference. This forum was incapable of according us justice.

In 1934, Germany's rearmament began on a large scale. In 1935, I introduced general conscription. In 1936, I had the Rhineland occupied militarily. In 1937, the Four-Year Plan was launched. In 1938, the Ostmark and the Sudetenland were integrated into the Reich. In 1939, we began to establish protection for the Reich against those enemies who had meanwhile cast aside their masks.

The steps taken in 1939 served the defense of the Reich. Everything could have developed quite differently had the outside world had as much as an ounce of understanding for the vital concerns of Germany. Often it is said we should have waited for a negotiated settlement. Remember, my Volksgenossen: did I not repeatedly place the colonial question, for instance, before the world to obtain a negotiated settlement?! Did we ever receive a response? None other than brusque replies and ever new hateful reactions.

The moment the Reich began to re-emerge, the leading classes of England and France determined to take up the battle once again. They wanted it thus. For over 300 years, England has sought to prevent a real consolidation of Europe, just as France sought to prevent a consolidation of Germany for many a century. Today Mr. Chamberlain stands up to preach his pious war aims to the outside world. To this, all I can say is: English history has already betrayed your intent, Mr. Chamberlain!

For 300 years, your statesmen have spoken just as you do today, Mr. Chamberlain, at the onset of war. They always fought for "the Lord and religion." They never had "a material goal." And just because they never fought for such "a material goal," the Lord so richly rewarded them in material terms! That England always declared itself "a fighter for truth and justice" and "a protagonist of all virtues," this Dear Lord has not forgotten. Generously He has bestowed His blessings on the English. In those nearly 300 years, they have subjugated forty million square kilometers of soil on this earth. Naturally, they did this not from egotistical motives or because they lusted for mastery, riches, or enjoyment. To the contrary, they were merely fulfilling a mission in the name of the Lord and religion.

Of course, England did not wish to be the sole crusader for the Lord's cause, and thus invited others to partake in this noble exploit. It did not even seek to claim the battle's greatest burdens for itself. For ventures so pleasing to the Lord one can always find others. And England still does this today. And all this is richly rewarding for England:

Forty million square kilometers obtained through conquest: a succession of rape, extortion, tyrannical abuse, oppression, pillaging. Events mark English history inconceivable for any other state or for any other people. The English waged war for any old reason. They waged war to expand trade; they waged war to force others to smoke opium; they waged war for gold mines and for mastery over diamond mines. Their goals were always material in nature, though hidden beneath a cloak of noble ideals.

And this last war was led in the service of noble purposes, too. To have pocketed German colonies in the process was the Lord's will; to have taken our fleet from us; to have pocketed German accounts abroad. All these exploits were mere side effects of the "noble struggle for a holy religion." When I see Mr. Chamberlain go about, bible in hand, preaching his noble war

aims, I cannot help having the impression of watching the devil, bible clasped under his arm, creeping up to a poor soul.

All this is no longer original. It is all in exceedingly bad taste. Nobody believes him anymore. Sometimes I fear he is coming to doubt himself.

Besides, every Volk burns its fingers only once. Only once were the children of Hamelin herded off by the Pied Piper; only once was the German Volk herded off by that apostle of the international brotherhood of man.⁷⁰

In this context, I must praise Mr. Churchill. He frankly states what old Mr. Chamberlain only thinks quietly to himself and hopes for secretly. He says, our goal is the dissolution, the destruction of Germany. Our goal is the extermination, if possible, of the German Volk. Believe me, I welcome this openness.

And the French generals also freely discuss what is actually at stake. I believe we can understand each other more easily in this manner. Why always fight with lies and empty phrases? Why not be open about things? We should greatly prefer this. We know the objective they are pursuing whether or not Mr. Chamberlain walks about with the bible in hand or not; whether he is acting piously or not; whether he speaks the truth or not. We know their goal: it is the Germany of 1648 which they envision, a Germany disintegrated and torn to pieces.⁷¹

They know only too well that over eighty million Germans sit in this Central Europe. These human beings have a right to live—they have a right to a piece of the pie—and for three hundred years they were cheated out of it. They could only be cheated since their disintegration led to the weight of their numbers being proportionally undervalued. And thus today we have 140 men living on one square kilometer. And when such numbers unite, they have power. When they are divided, they are defenseless and impotent. There is a moral imperative lying within their unity also. What does it matter when thirty, fifty or 200 small states rise to protest or to claim their vital rights? Who takes note? When eighty million men rise up—that is a completely different story!

Hence the disinclination against the state-forming activities in Italy, the unity of Germany. They would much prefer to see these states dissolve into their former elements once more.

A few days ago, an Englishman wrote: "So it is, indeed. The hasty foundation of the German Empire—that was not right." Indeed, it was not right. It was not right that eighty million men came together to jointly realize their vital rights.⁷² Instead, they would much prefer to see us under 200 or 400 different little flags or, if possible, in some 200 or 300 dynasties. Every dynasty would rule some 100,000 odd men and these would be silenced, never to be heard of by the rest of the world. Then we as a Volk could try to survive as a people of poets and philosophers. Besides this, poets and philosophers also need less food than hard laborers do.

This is the problem up for discussion today. Here are great nations which in the course of the centuries were cheated out of their right to life in this world due to their divisions. These nations have now overcome their inner divisions. Today they have entered, as young peoples, the circle of all others

and are staking their claim. They are opposed by the so-called owners. These latter peoples who today possess and block large sections of the world without sense or purpose; these who pillaged Germany only a few years ago; these now place themselves in the same position as the so-called possessing classes within a society do.

On the world stage, the same thing is repeated which we have already witnessed inside the life of a people. Here, too, there were economic analysis and political opinion to the effect that he who has something, has something; he who has nothing, has nothing. It was to please the Lord that the one should possess while the other should not. And it was to remain so for eternity. New forces have come to oppose this. The one simply cries out: "We want only to destroy! What we cannot possess we will destroy!" This nihilistic force has raged in Germany for a decade and a half.⁷ Constructive National Socialism has overcome this force. It has refused to acknowledge the existing state of affairs and undertaken its modification. It changed the method of eradicating the state of affairs by saying: "We want to change this state of affairs by gradually permitting the non-possessing classes to partake in the national wealth and by educating them to partake in it."

Under no circumstances can the man who possesses everything presume himself to possess all-encompassing rights while the other man has no rights. It is no different in the world either. It is not acceptable for forty-six million Englishmen to simply block forty million square kilometers on this earth and to declare: "The Good Lord gave us this. Twenty years ago we got a little more yet from you. Now this is in our possession, and we shall not give back any of it."

And France? With its truly none-too-fertile people, numbering hardly eighty men per square kilometer, it has set out to conquer over nine million square kilometers of soil. Germany with its eighty million men possesses barely 600,000 square kilometers. This is the problem which must be solved, and it will be solved just as other social questions will be solved.

And what we witness today is a larger replay of the same drama we already observed on a smaller stage in the interior when National Socialism launched its struggle for a truly tolerable order and a true community of man for the benefit of the broad masses of the Volk. At the time, liberal and democratic circles—i.e. the possessing classes, and their parties—attempted to destroy National Socialism. "Dissolve the Party! The Party must be outlawed!" This was their eternal battle cry. They saw the Movement's dissolution or prohibition as the only means of destroying this force which they feared might well prove capable of bringing about a change in the existing state of affairs.

National Socialism dealt squarely with these other forces; it survived; it inaugurated a new order in Germany and has persisted in so doing. And today the possessing part of the world is crying: "We must dissolve Germany! We must atomize these eighty million. They should not be allowed to remain within a contiguous state structure. Thereby we can rob them of the force to see their demands through!" And these are the objectives England and France are pursuing in this war!

Our answer to them nevertheless remains the very same one with which we replied to our adversaries internally. My Old Party Comrades! You know well that the victory of the year 1933 was not a gift. It was the outcome of an unparalleled struggle which we had to lead for nearly fifteen years; of a nearly hopeless struggle.

You will recall that Providence did not all of a sudden bestow a great movement upon us. A handful of people founded it. They had to laboriously fight to attain their position back then and subsequently to expand upon it. This handful of people then became hundreds; then thousands; then tens and hundreds of thousands; and finally the first million. Then they grew into a second million, later into a third and fourth million. And it was thus, in the course of a long struggle against thousandfold resistance and assaults, pillage and violation of our rights, that we grew. And we became strong through this struggle: strong internally. And it was thus we struggled for power in these fifteen years. We received it not as a gift from the Lord, but as recompense for an unequaled, tough struggle; for courageous persistence in the struggle for power.

As I took hold of this power in the year 1933 and took over responsibility, along with the National Socialist Movement, for the future of Germany, I realized that the liberty of our Volk must no longer be restricted. I further realized that our struggle had by no means come to an end, but had only begun to be led on a far larger scale. For before us we had not only the victory of the National Socialist Movement, but the delivery of our German Volk! This was our objective! What I have labored for since is but a means to an end: Party; Labor Front; SA and SS; all other organizations like the Wehrmacht, the Army, the Luftwaffe, and the Navy; all these were not ends in themselves, but means to an end.⁷⁴ The imperative of securing the liberty of our Volk reigns above all of these.

Naturally, at home as well as abroad, I have tried to see through the most urgent, inalienable demands by means of negotiations and appeals to reason. I have succeeded in doing so only in a number of cases and instances. In 1938, the realization forced itself upon us that the old war agitators of the World War were beginning once more to get the upper hand in the hostile states. It was then already that I began to issue warnings. For what should we think of these states when they first sit down at Munich to conclude an agreement, only then to depart for London to resume agitation, to denounce this agreement as a disgrace—even to insist such a thing would not be repeated a second time—in other words, to declare a voluntary understanding precluded and inconceivable for all times.

It was then that the outsiders appeared on the stage in the so-called democracies. I immediately warned of them. For it was perfectly clear: the German Volk harbored hatred neither against the English nor the French people. The German Volk desired only to live in peace and friendship with them. The demands we make do not do injury to these peoples, they rob them of nothing.

Hence the German Volk has never been educated to harbor hatred for them. Yet at this point, in England, certain circles launched an impertinent,

intolerable campaign. To me, this indicated the moment had come to say: we cannot stand by silently any longer. For one day these agitators in London might well find themselves in government and realize their plans. And then the German Volk will not know what precisely hit it. And thus I gave orders to enlighten the German Volk regarding this campaign. And from this moment on, I also stood determined to secure the Reich's defenses in one way or another.

In 1939, the Western Powers finally dropped their masks. Despite all our attempts and our advances, they sent us their declaration of war. And today they freely admit: "Indeed, Poland may well have given way, but we did not want it to." Today they admit it would have been possible to arrive at an understanding. But they wanted war.

This was precisely what my domestic opponents used to tell me. I held my hand out in friendship to them. But they also refused it. And they also cried: "No reconciliation. No understanding. Only war!" Well, they got their war! And I can only say to France and England: you, too, shall have your war!

The first phase in this war consisted of political action. It freed our rear first of all. For years Germany collaborated with Italy in policy formation. This policy has not changed to this day. The two states are close friends. There is a common denominator to their interests.

In the past year, I have tried to rob England of the means to allow the conflict it envisioned to escalate into a general world war. The pious Mr. Chamberlain who studies, reads, and preaches the bible, labored for months to arrive at an understanding with the atheist Stalin. He attempted to conclude a pact with him. In this he failed at the time.

I understand that England is raging now that I have done what Mr. Chamberlain in vain sought to do. And I also comprehend that what was pleasing to the Lord in Mr. Chamberlain's case should be far less pleasing to the Lord in my case. But, nevertheless, I do believe the Lord Almighty to be well pleased that a senseless war on so vast a terrain was prevented.

Throughout centuries Germany and Russia have lived next to each other in peace and friendship. Why should this not be possible in the future once again? I believe it to be possible since both peoples so desire! Any attempt on the part of the British and French plutocracies to raise renewed controversy between us will fail as we realize their true intentions.

And thus today Germany does not have to worry about its rear politically.

The second task of the year 1939 was to secure this rear militarily as well. The strength of our Wehrmacht trampled to the ground the hope of the English military experts that under no circumstances could the war against Poland be decided in less than six months or a year. The state to which England had extended its guarantee was swept from the map within eighteen days.⁷⁵ Hence the first phase of this war has come to an end, and the second one begins.

Mr. Churchill is already dying to start it. He cherishes the hope, as expressed by intermediaries as well as by his own person, that bombardment should finally, and as soon as possible, feature in this war. And already they are crying that this war should not pay heed to women and children. For when

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has England ever paid heed to women and children?! After all, this entire blockade warfare is nothing other than a war against women and children, just as once was the case in the Boer War. It was then that concentration camps were invented. The English brain gave birth to this idea. We only read about it in the encyclopedias and later copied it—with one crucial difference: England locked up women and children in these camps. Over twenty thousand Boer women died wretchedly at the time.⁷⁶ Why should England fight differently today? We have anticipated this and we have prepared ourselves.

May Mr. Churchill rest assured that we do know what has happened in England within these five months and in France, too. However, he apparently does not know what has happened in Germany within these five months!

Evidently these gentlemen are of the conviction that we slept through these past five months. Since the day I stepped onto the political stage, I have never yet slept through a single day of importance, not to speak of five months.

I can assure the German Volk of one thing: in these five months, we have scored enormous achievements. What was built within Germany in the previous seven years pales in comparison to the attainments of these five months! Our armament program was launched according to plan. The plan proved its worth. Our foresight is just now beginning to bear fruits. These fruits are of so impressive a nature that our adversaries are beginning to imitate us. Alas—they are poor imitators. Naturally, the English broadcast services know better. According to them, the skies above England are so darkened by British squadrons flying overhead that the sun can no longer shine there today; the world is one immense arsenal, equipped by England, working for England, supplying the massive British armies; Germany is standing on the brink of a total breakdown.

I just heard today that we possess only three more U-boats. This is truly disastrous—not for us, however, but for English propaganda, since should these three items be destroyed—and this could be as early as today or tomorrow—what will be left to be destroyed? The English will then be forced to sink U-boats preemptively which we are to build only in the future. And then somehow they will have to come to terms with a method of resurrecting U-boats. Undoubtedly, English ships will continue to be sunk and, as we possess no more U-boats, the U-boats attacking them will have to be U-boats which the English have previously sunk.

Further I read that I have succumbed to deep despair and sadness as I had expected us to build two U-boats every day, while we were turning out only two every week. To this I can only say: it is not good to have one's war reports and especially one's radio broadcasts authored by members of a people which has not fought for several thousands of years. For after all, the last documented battle involving the Maccabees is slowly losing its instructive value for military history.

When I turn to look at this foreign propaganda, my belief in our victory grows to the immeasurable! For this propaganda I experienced once before. For nearly fifteen years, this propaganda was directed against us. My Old Party

Comrades, you remember this propaganda! There are the same words, the same phrases—yes—when we look more closely we see the same heads speaking the same dialects.

I finished off these people as a lonely, unknown man who gathered but a handful of people about him. Throughout fifteen years I finished off these people. And today Germany is the greatest world power.⁷

It is not as though age as such results in wisdom. No more are the blind restored to sight by old age. Whoever was afflicted with blindness before remains so today. Whoever is afflicted with blindness will be cursed by the gods.

Today the German Wehrmacht, the best of its kind, is fencing off these forces. Above all, the German Volk is fencing off these forces with its insight and its discipline. For seven years, National Socialist work has educated it in all areas. That this is not just a fantasy is something you can see today. This education has overcome differences of classes and ranks. It has eliminated parties, eradicated different *Weltanschauungen*, and has placed the community in its stead. Today the soul of this community is suffused with a singular, glowing trust and a fanatical will. This time this community will not make the mistake of 1918.

When today Monsieur Daladier expresses doubts regarding this community, or when he believes that parts of this community are lamenting their lot, or when he is quoting my own homeland—oh, Monsieur Daladier, you shall yet get to know my men of the Ostmark (*Ostmärker*)! They shall personally instruct you. You shall get to know their divisions and regiments just as well as the other German ones. Perhaps then you shall be cured of a peculiar form of insanity, namely, the insanity of believing you are faced by the German tribes of old. Monsieur Daladier, you are faced by the entire German Volk today! And it is the National Socialist German Volk!

This Volk for which National Socialism has so struggled and which through laborious works has received its present-day education, is immune to these international delusions. And this in fact represents a permanent cure. The National Socialist Party guarantees this.

And the hopes they entertain to drive a wedge between Volk and Party, or Party and State, or Party and Wehrmacht, or Party and me, are childishly naive. Fifteen years ago my adversaries clung to exactly the same hopes.

As a National Socialist, I have known nothing other than work, struggle, worries, labors. I believe Providence has destined our generation for nothing else. Once, twenty-five years ago, the German Volk set out to fight a war forced upon it. The Volk was not well armed. France applied the power of its people in a fashion quite different from the Germany of the time. Russia was the mightiest adversary. The whole world was successfully mobilized against this Germany. Thus the Volk set out to do battle and wrought many a wondrous heroic deed. And Providence was with our Volk.

The year 1914 delivered our homeland from the threat of foreign break-ins. The year 1915 improved the situation of the Reich further still; 1916, 1917; year after year; battle after battle. At times, everything seemed on the verge of collapse when, as though by miracle, the Reich was rescued. Germany then

afforded us with truly astounding proofs of its internal strength. Obviously, Providence had blessed it. Then the German Volk became ungrateful. Then it began to listen to the promises of others, instead of looking trustingly to its own strength and hence to its own future. And finally, in its ungratefulness, the German Volk turned against its own Reich, its own leadership. And it was then that Providence turned away from the German Volk.

Since then, I have come to regard this catastrophe as something not wholly undeserved. I have never complained that Providence had somehow wronged us. On the contrary, I always supported this thesis: Providence only gave to us what we deserved in the end. The German nation was ungrateful. Therefore it was deprived of its recompense!

This will not happen a second time in our history.

The National Socialist Movement has already passed through a trial period. The fifteen years of struggle were not only days of glory, of marvelous victories. They were a time of many a worry. At times, our enemies were already jubilantly hailing our destruction. Yet the Movement held its own with a heart filled with strength and joy. Time and time again, trusting in the necessity of our struggle, it leapt up once more to face the enemy and to carry the victory in the end.

This is the task of the German nation today. Eighty million men are stepping up to the line now. As many enemies are standing across from them. These, our eighty million today, enjoy an excellent internal organization—the best possible in fact. They have a strong faith. Their leadership is not bad. Rather, as I am convinced, it is the best.

Führer and Volk today realize that no understanding is possible if we do not insist upon our rights. We do not wish the struggle for these rights to burst forth anew in two, perhaps three or five years. The rights of eighty million are up for discussion, not those of a party or a movement. For who am I? I am nothing other than your speaker, German Volk, the speaker for your rights!

The Volk has vested its trust in me! I will prove myself worthy of this trust. I wish to draw attention not to my own person and my surroundings, but rather to the past and to the future. I wish to stand up in honor before the past and the future, and with me the German Volk shall honorably hold its own.

The generation of today—it is the bearer of Germany's destiny; of Germany's future or Germany's fall. Our enemies, they already cry out today: Germany shall fall! Yet Germany can give but one answer: Germany will live, and hence Germany will win!

At the beginning of the eighth year of the National Socialist revolution, our hearts turn to our German Volk and its future.

We want to serve this future. We want to fight for it and, if necessary, fall for it. We will never capitulate—for Germany must win and it will win. *Heil!*

Hitler's speech of January 30 made little impression abroad, not even in Italy. Ciano entered the following remark in his diary: "Hitler has made a speech for which I see no reason, except that of celebrating the date of his assumption of power."⁷⁸

On January 30 also, Hitler accorded General Governor Frank the right to pronounce a general amnesty in the Polish territories captured. The decree read:⁷⁹

In the Polish territories occupied I, given the right to delegate powers, transfer the exercise of suppressive measures as well as full powers for pronouncing or denying general amnesty in all questions concerning matters of amnesty to the General Governor for the occupied Polish territories. I reserve for my person the right of decision in individual instances.

Little information reached the public in the next two weeks regarding Hitler's activities. In early February, according to Ciano, Hitler sent Prince Philip of Hesse to Rome to stretch out feelers for a possible summit meeting with Mussolini.⁸⁰

On February 6, Hitler took a short leave of absence from Berlin where he returned on February 10 to confer with Halder. He also viewed a newly developed anti-tank weapon.⁸¹ Later in the day, he sent the Tenno a congratulatory telegram on the 2,600-year anniversary of the foundation of the Japanese Imperial House.⁸²

On February 12, Hitler suffered from a cold and was hence unable to hear his military attachés' report of the day. By the next day, his condition had improved so that the briefing could proceed on schedule. On this occasion, Hitler voiced his opinion that it was entirely possible that the Western Powers would remain inactive even in view of a German occupation of Holland and Belgium.⁸³

On February 15, Hitler called on the Head of Political Organization at his Berlin flat to congratulate Ley on his fiftieth birthday.⁸⁴ On the same day, Hitler addressed the following handwritten note to Ley, detailing provisions for a "generous old age pension" plan:⁸⁵

To the end of the further realization of the National Socialist Party program, I commission you, Party Comrade Ley, to see to the establishment of principles and conditions for implementing an all-encompassing and generous old age pension for the German Volk, in cooperation with the appropriate offices of Party and State. You are to review the matter, clarify issues, scrutinize the resulting proposals without delay, and submit these to me. This new piece of legislation for the buildup of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft shall for all time remind our Volk of the common struggle at the front and at home for the freedom and independence of the Greater German Reich.

This "historic" task, as the *Völkischer Beobachter* instructed the reader, was apparently intended as a "birthday present" for Ley, whom Hitler had once termed "our greatest idealist."⁸⁶

On February 16, an incident in the waters off Norway disturbed the general calm sometime between 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. The crew of the British cruiser *Cossack* boarded the German steamer *Altmark* traversing the Jössing Fjord. As a supply ship, the *Altmark* had accompanied the pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* which had been scuttled off the coast of Uruguay on December 17, 1939. In this function, the *Altmark* had captured British seamen aboard who had been taken prisoner on English ships sunk by the armored vessel. The *Cossack* boarded and liberated the Englishmen held captive aboard the *Altmark*. In the course of the skirmish, six German sailors were killed, several others wounded, one of whom subsequently died of his injuries. An additional German seaman was declared missing.⁸⁷

The English exuberantly hailed the brave foray of the British cruiser to free its fellow countrymen.⁸⁸ Among neutral states, the adventurous undertaking equally elicited unreserved enthusiasm. This was true even of Italy.⁸⁹ Hitler did not share this enthusiasm, naturally. He reacted by pressing for an occupation of Norway and Denmark and speeding up preparations.

On February 19, Hitler ordered his Envoy Dr. Bräuer to place a wreath at Sogndal, the burial site for those killed aboard the *Altmark*.⁹⁰ That day, Jodl confided to his diary:⁹¹

Führer exceedingly displeased with behavior of the *Graf Spee* guys on the *Altmark*. No resistance. No English losses. Führer pushes preparations for Weser Exercise very much. Fit steamers. Hold units ready. Wants to speak to staff.

On the same day, Hitler wired his congratulations to Sven Hedin on his seventy-fifth birthday. Through the offices of the German Envoy in Stockholm, Hitler had Hedin presented with the Grand Cross of the German Eagle.⁹²

On February 21, Hitler summoned General von Falkenhorst,⁹³ whom Jodl had indicated as a candidate for the position of Commander in Chief for the occupation of Norway. Falkenhorst had served under General von der Goltz in Finland in 1918. Jodl recorded in his diary:⁹⁴

Führer speaks with General von Falkenhorst, entrusts him with preparations for Weser Exercise. Falkenhorst accepts joyously. Directives issued to all three branches of the Wehrmacht.

Before the Nuremberg court, Falkenhorst recounted that, upon entering the room, he was made to sit down by Hitler and to tell him of his experiences in Finland.⁹⁵ Then Hitler led him up to "a table

covered with maps.” Finally, Hitler dismissed Falkenhorst with the instructions to return later that afternoon with concrete plans for the envisioned military move against Norway. Falkenhorst later recalled:

I went out and bought a Baedeker in order to find out just what Norway was like. I didn’t have any idea. Then I went to my hotel room and worked on the Baedeker. At 5:00 p.m., I went back to the Führer.

On February 23, on Hitler’s orders, Chief of Staff Lutze placed a wreath at the tomb of Horst Wessel.⁹⁶

On the following day, Hitler congratulated the Reich Leader of Labor, Konstantin Hierl, on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁹⁷

Later that day, Hitler delivered an address in the hall of the Hofbräuhaus at Munich on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Party program. In commemoration of the event, a bronze plaque, with Hitler’s profile engraved upon it, was affixed to the wall behind the rostrum. Standing in front of this metal relief reproduction of his facial features, Hitler exalted the “hardest and most fanatic decision of his life” which had first led him into this hall. He congratulated himself on the mediocrity of his adversaries: “At home and abroad, I have always had the misfortune of fighting against zeroes.” Further, he stated, “I am nothing other than a magnet which, in constantly passing over the German nation, extracts the steel from within this nation,” and, “as, during these thirteen years, I fought at home for the freedom of my Volk, against its domestic oppressors, exploiters, and so on, I will fight today abroad as well, if necessary.” Indeed, “if necessary,” Hitler also declared himself willing to fight against England. Still it was his belief that it would not actually come to this fight, as with the German Nationalist “zeroes” so many years before. Now, he had to deal squarely with “zeroes” such as Churchill, Chamberlain, Duff Cooper, Eden, and the like. Hitler had only contempt for his adversaries, mocking them for dropping “leaflets . . . for lack of other ammunition.”

On the topic of Russia, Hitler sought to dissuade the English from placing hopes on any abrupt rupture of friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union: “Once I set out on a path, I follow this path to the end. The hope that this might change tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, this hope is in vain!” The “party narrative” culminated in the following exclamation:⁹⁸

In four years of struggle, this Volk faced off twenty-six states and was only vanquished by betrayal and dishonesty! Had there not been Germans back

then to undermine trust in their own regime, England and France would never have won! Had then [in 1918] a certain Adolf Hitler, instead of serving as a German musketeer, been German Reich Chancellor, do you really believe that then the false gods of capitalism and international democracy would have carried the victory?!

Thereafter Hitler turned to ridicule the Western statesmen:

When I conjure up all these so-called international statesmen in the democracies, who today talk big in Europe, before my mind's eye and envision their lives' achievements, then all I can say is: At home and abroad, I have always had the misfortune of fighting against zeroes. These folk rule over the largest of terrains on this earth and yet are not even capable of eliminating unemployment in their own countries. And these folk speak of the necessity of a new order for Europe. That reminds me of the talk of our own democrats of earlier days who preached the necessity of a new order for Germany. This new order was indeed established—although without them. And a new order will be established in the world—although equally without them!

My struggle for the liberty of our Volk was a struggle against Versailles. What was at stake were not so much the endless paragraphs of Versailles, but beyond this it was a struggle against the mentality which found its expression in the Diktat of Versailles. Its roots lie in the conception that two to three peoples have simply been ordained by the Lord to rule over the entire earth, and that, every time one people refused to be subjected to their rule, they have the right to claim that this one people is set on mastery of the earth. Mr. Chamberlain is saying as much at a time when all of India is rising up in protest against him, at a moment when Arabs are calling for resistance to him.

Against such a background, this Mister stands up to declare: England is fighting against a German attempt at forcible mastery of the world.

With similar phrases it was perhaps possible to make some impression on the Germany of the year 1918. But this is no longer the case with National Socialist Germany! The Lord Almighty assuredly did not create this earth for the English exclusively! The Lord Almighty has assuredly not provided that a few small races, which cannot supply their own people with basic necessities, should subjugate three quarters of the earth and condemn all other peoples to starvation. This all became possible only due to the weakness of these other peoples. But this weakness has been overcome!

And these peoples are now staking their own vital claims. I have expressed this claim in the most modest of terms. Our goal was:

1. To secure our own Lebensraum. And this Lebensraum encompasses, in my understanding, all that was cultivated, civilized, and economically developed by us Germans, and not by the English. There are several of these areas. At least in Central Europe, the inspiring influence of Great Britain has not yet been felt, neither in the past nor in the present. Germany built up this Central Europe. We desire to live in this German Lebensraum. Here we will not stand for foreign threats. Here we will not stand for political alliances being constructed to our detriment. And,

2. I demanded the return of the German colonies, our German rightful possessions which the world plutocrats have robbed us of without any discernible benefit for their own peoples. The goals I set were limited in nature. I took all precautions to clearly delineate our claims against England and France so that their peoples could under no circumstances feel threatened. In spite of this, our old acquaintances from the World War made their appearance once more and so did their agitation for war. Mr. Churchill, Mr. Duff Cooper, Mr. Eden, and Mr. Chamberlain himself rose up, followed by the specter of the eternal Jew Hore-Belisha. In the Great War, Mr. Churchill had already served as the well-known party whip who belongs to those people who today make no bones about having plunged the world into a war back then. Back then I was only an exceedingly small, unknown soldier without any political clout. I did my small duty just as any other German. Hence we came from completely different worlds: there was the capitalist war agitator and here the simple German soldier. After the war the people there went about their business in the armament industry and pocketed enormous profits. I, however, fought then for my German Volk. And just how hard I fought you know best yourselves as my witnesses.

For years now, these people have agitated for war once again. Once more they make no bones about their one, actual objective: to wage a great war. And once more they cherish the hope that other people shall step in for them. And this hope is not unfounded on the one hand as they have their Jewish cohorts sitting everywhere. On the other hand, this hope has already been disappointed. For this time a German front-line soldier has risen up against them and, for his part, has taken all precautionary steps. He has done so as thoroughly as only a man can who is suffused with his duty towards his own Volk.

I warned of these people when it became necessary. I never left a doubt as to one thing: it is my unshakeable will and decision to free Germany again. That they should hate me for this fills me with the greatest of pride. You know well, my Old Party Comrades, how often I told you in this very hall: when the Jews and all that other riffraff running about Germany at the time turned to scold me—how often did I tell you this in this very hall—then I felt this to be a great honor.

Had they turned to praise me, I should have felt like the greatest scoundrel. And this holds true today.²⁹ When a man like Churchill says he hates me—then: I must thank you, Mr. Churchill, for this compliment! When Mr. Chamberlain declares that he cannot trust me—I must equally thank you, Mr. Chamberlain, for not believing that I could ever become a traitor to my Volk. When Mr. Duff Cooper or Mr. Eden asserts that, in their eyes, I am a most despicable monster—I am happy that they do not count me among their friends, at least.

I have only one ambition: to struggle for the love and affection of my own Volksgenossen and to preserve this! The hatred of my enemies does not move me in the least. Neither did it move me in the thirteen years I struggled for power in Germany, nor does it move me in the least now. As, during these thirteen years, I fought at home for the freedom of my Volk, against its

domestic oppressors, exploiters, and so on, I will fight today abroad as well, if necessary. They do not know us. The best proof for how little they know us lies in the British hope, so I believe, to see another year 1918 come to pass. This probably best explains the idiotic leaflets they drop on Germany for lack of other ammunition.

Apparently, they believe they can repeat the maneuvering of the years 1917 and 1918 in the Germany of the present. The gentlemen are completely ignorant of today's Germany. Today the situation has changed significantly from that of the year 1914 and has done so in a number of spheres. First of all, foreign policy has changed, as Germany is Italy's friend today. It is not only the friendship of the two regimes, I may well say the friendship of the two leading men, but it is above all the realization that the two countries' futures lie with each other and are dependent one upon the other. And towards Russia, too, our relations have changed. The hope to spark a great war between Russia and Germany as in 1914, this hope has pitifully failed its authors.

I do understand that London is nettled by the "baseness" with which I of all people succeeded in precluding this move all of a sudden. But I do believe that, in this instance, the Russian and the German regimes did something most beneficial for both peoples as both of us are too good to bleed to death only so that the London stock exchange and all of Jewry might rejoice. With this another mighty state deserted the front against Germany. And you know, my Volksgenossen, that I do not do anything by halves. Once I set out on a path, I follow this path to the end. The hope that this might change tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, this hope is in vain! And Japan, too, which also joined the ranks of Germany's enemies in 1914, stands on our side as a close friend this time. That makes three mighty states which were our foes then and today stand by our side in the most benign neutrality. Quite a significant change in the political landscape.

And militarily the situation has changed also. I have armed and—as always in my life I go the whole way and not just half the way—I have thoroughly carried out this armament. For years I did not speak of this for reasons you can well imagine. I did not want to upset the others needlessly!¹⁰⁰

For years I remained silent, but as you all know I did work. We built up a Wehrmacht which looks quite different today from the one of 1914. Back then, it was poorly equipped; in part it was truly wretchedly short of supplies.¹⁰¹ This time we spared no efforts to equip our Wehrmacht with the most modern armament in the world. That this is not an empty phrase was proved in the Polish campaign. I believe it went a bit faster than the strategists in London and Paris had anticipated.

And the future will continue to confirm this. As for the spirit of this Wehrmacht, beyond all material considerations, you may all rest assured. The spirit of the soldier is always the spirit of the supreme leadership. May the Lord see to it that this supreme leadership of today is not mistaken for the leadership of the year 1914! And in economic matters also, we have prepared ourselves in a different fashion. For years, I have had the basis for self-sufficiency secured, much to the anger of our enemies. Actually our

opponents should have rejoiced at this and said: "Thank God, the Germans are assuring their own existence within their sphere of life." But no, they were angered instead, since they knew only too well that this self-sufficiency robs them of the opportunity to suddenly attack Germany and to strangle it with a blockade. This blockade nevertheless affords us certain loopholes, and we are protected against blockades today in a manner quite different from 1914.

Back then our resistance to the blockade was almost zero, just as were our preparations for self-sufficiency. Today we are actively resisting from day one on. This resistance is made possible through the securing of thoroughly organized bases for economic self-sufficiency to rest on. Neither militarily nor economically can Germany be wrestled to the ground! Decisive, nonetheless, is the leadership. And when I speak of leadership here, I am not speaking of myself alone, but of all those who have come together in the leadership in Germany within the twenty years since I first spoke to you.

I have often told you: I am nothing other than a magnet which, in constantly passing over the German nation, extracts the steel from within this nation. I have often declared the time would come when everyone who counts himself a man in Germany will stand on my side, as he who does not stand on my side is not worth much anyway. I have termed this process the formation of the historic minority. And it came to pass as I predicted. In the course of thirteen years, a sum of personal energies gathered in the National Socialist Party, from the smallest Blockwart or Zellenwart to the Ortsgruppenleiter, the Kreisleiter, the Gauleiter, the Reichsstatthalter, the Reichsleiter, and so on. Selection took place in all areas. Enormous energies were mobilized and today are positioned in the appropriate places.

If you find it difficult to grasp the whole picture at first glance, just imagine any old national event of the years 1903 or 1905, let us say 1908, 1910, or 1912. And then look at a similar national celebration today. Let us think of the unveiling of a memorial dedicated to a national hero, let us say Bismarck, or the launching of a ship. The first impression: a sea of top hats—only top hats—no real people anywhere. And today there are real people and no top hats. That is the difference! When I speak to you today, my dear Old Party Comrades, you will say to yourselves: our dear old revolutionary Führer!—Sorry, your head of state. And do not forget how all this would look abroad if a head of state were speaking.

Just as it might have looked twenty or fifteen years ago. Look at the picture today. Today we truly have a German Volk and at its head we see leaders all over today, leaders who issued forth from the people, irrespective of descent. It is truly an immense sum of manly energy and determination which leads the German nation today. It is truly worth something when a nation is so well organized that at each post someone stands who issued forth from the Volk itself. He does not stand there by virtue of name or high birth, but only due to his ability as a man of action. And one last point: we have a different Volk today. This Volk has straightened itself up, it has found its way back to itself. It has recovered its self-confidence to an unprecedented degree. It knows nothing is impossible in this world. It knows our history. It knows that in our resolve today we are no less than the great heroes of our past.

The German Volk graduated from a school which, in Western Europe, no other Volk possesses, with the exception of Italy. It is a school of enlightenment and political education. This Volk is organized through and through. When today one of those English top hats wants to make propaganda, propaganda to work inside our Volk, then I say: Others have tried and have failed faced with us. Mr. Chamberlain might use his phrases for his own people. With us they have no effect whatsoever.

We know these gentlemen; we know their advisors better yet. We know them exceedingly well because only eight years ago they were still among us. We recognize their accents when they speak.

They speak German as awkwardly as they probably speak English awkwardly. We had these people living in our midst once when they ruled Germany by force. Today they have no force other than the force of their voices. These find little resonance here in Germany. The German Volk dislikes this jargon. It does not want to hear it. And when it sees the persons hiding behind these voices, the German Volk has already seen more than enough. What these people say is of no import; no one in the German Volk believes a word of it. They lie their heads off—this every German knows.

No, this German Volk has become a different one today. There are no more Bethmann-Hollwegs among its leadership.¹⁰²

No more Spartacist gangs permeate the Volk. All this is over. A new Volk has come and this Volk will wage the war forced upon it. And I am determined to wage this war! Doubtless there will be some who say: "But why not wait a few years?" No, it is better this way since the fight cannot be avoided. These gentlemen forced it upon us now. And, moreover, it is intolerable that, every other decade, one people should say to another, which is eighty million strong: "We do not want you to do this or that. And if we feel like it we will cut you off from imports through a blockade, and then you will get nothing and starve." We will not tolerate this! We will eliminate this organized terror of this despicable clique of world plutocrats! We have routed these sharks of international finance in Germany, and we will not stand for others telling us what to do now. The German nation has the same right to life as other peoples do.

We are hence determined to wage this war until we break this reign of terror abroad, just as we once destroyed the reign of terror of this clique at home! That I have no respect for these people is founded on a few facts of life:

Insofar as they were already here with us in former times, you will understand that there is no need for me to respect them. Those who held power before in Germany, after thirteen years, had to vacate their posts for me, an anonymous, unknown soldier. Why should I respect them? And abroad, the story is no different. As a soldier, I myself sat across from these people for four years. No one can tell me they were better than we were! At the time, they faced us with gigantic superiority. They no longer possess this superiority today, not even in terms of weaponry.

And that I have taken advantage of the intervening time, this you, my Old Party Comrades, will certainly believe. Whatever I may be blamed for—one

thing assuredly not: that I have ever been lazy, or that I sat around for half a year with my hands folded in my lap and did not do anything. I worked during these past five months as only a man can work. Actually it was relatively easy, as I had only to launch something we had prepared for launching long ago. And now that it is launched, it runs and does so thoroughly. The German Volk today is better prepared militarily than ever before in its history. We can calmly vest our trust in its leadership. And its military leadership is also at the height of its potential to meet the demands of the day. The others still have to prove what we have proved already.

Besides that, I believe one thing: there is a Lord God! And this Lord God creates the peoples. And, as a matter of principle, He accords all these peoples the same fundamental rights. We Germans terribly misbehaved in history some twenty, twenty-two, twenty-three years ago. There came a revolution and hence we suffered a defeat.

Then began the resurrection of our Volk in immeasurable labor. And during this entire period, Providence blessed our work time and time again. The more brave we were, the greater were the blessings accorded us by Providence. And within the last six years, Providence was constantly on our side for, believe me: some call it luck, some have another name for it, but in the end such great works cannot be accomplished without its approval. And just a few months ago, I myself bore profound testimony to the workings of Providence which stands by mankind and assigns it missions to be fulfilled. And we serve it through these missions. What we desire is not the oppression of other peoples, but our freedom, our security, the securing of our Lebensraum. It is the securing of our Volk's life itself. For this we fight!

Providence has blessed us in this fight, a thousand times over. Could it have done this, would it have done this, had it harbored the intent now, all of a sudden, to allow this battle to end to our detriment? Here I believe in a higher and eternal justice. It is imparted to him who proves himself worthy of it. And it was in this belief that I stood up before you here for the first time twenty years ago. Back then I believed: it simply cannot be that my Volk is forsaken. It will be forsaken only if there are no men to be found to rescue this Volk. If, however, someone pledges himself with a trusting heart to this Volk and works for it, who places himself wholly at the disposal of this Volk, then it cannot be that Providence will allow this Volk to perish. Providence has wrought more than miracles for us in the time since.

All I can ask of you now: Firmly take hold of your faith as old National Socialists. It cannot be any different: we must win, and therefore we will win!

And even if our foes so terribly threaten and press upon us, it cannot be any worse than it was once before. Our ancestors were forced to endure all this many times. And thus we all want to bring ourselves to pronounce once more the great avowal of faith once spoken by a mighty German: "And if there were only devils in this world, we would still succeed!"¹⁰³

Hitler's idiosyncratic logic, "We must win, and therefore we will win!" was destined to become the German leadership's main slogan in the war years.

2

On February 28, Hitler sent the President of the Dominican Republic a telegram congratulating the Caribbean state on the anniversary of its independence.¹⁰⁴

For late February–early March 1940, President Roosevelt's Undersecretary of State, Sumner Welles, had announced to the Axis Powers his intent to visit first Rome and then Berlin. Thereafter he planned to journey to London and Paris, before returning to Rome.

On February 29, the Führer himself dictated guidelines for the "Conversations with Mr. Sumner Welles." This extraordinary step notwithstanding, those German officials scheduled to meet with the American representative were in no need of special instructions. Göring, Hitler's fabled "best man," was surely intelligent enough not only to reiterate his master's arguments but to do so with zeal in an attempt to convince his caller that these ideas were indeed his own. However, Ribbentrop repeated Hitler's slogans with that monotony that made Göring dub him "Germany's No. 1 parrot."¹⁰⁵

The reason Hitler troubled himself with penning the secret directive for the talks to be conducted with Sumner Welles was undoubtedly so that he could transmit these to the Italians and thereby influence their behavior towards the American emissary as well.

The guidelines to be observed read as follows:¹⁰⁶

1. In general I request that on the German side reserve be exercised in the conversations, and that as far as possible Mr. Sumner Welles be allowed to do the talking.

2. With regard to Germany's relations with the United States, it may be stressed that the present situation is unsatisfactory to both nations. The Government of the Reich has done nothing for its part to bring about this development in the relations between the two countries; if by sending Mr. Sumner Welles to Berlin the American Government is seeking to bring about

a change in this regard, that would doubtless be in the interest of both peoples.

3. Germany's viewpoint with regard to the international situation and the war has been made known to the world through my speeches. In particular, the following points are to be stressed: Germany did not declare war on the Western Powers, but, on the contrary, they declared war on Germany.

England and France had no just reason at all for a war against Germany. Just as on the basis of the Monroe Doctrine the United States would firmly reject any interference by European governments in Mexican affairs, for example, Germany regards the Eastern European area as her sphere of interest, concerning which she must come to an understanding with Russia alone, but never with England and France. After the end of the Polish campaign, Germany came to terms with Russia on Eastern questions and thus conclusively safeguarded her European position by this revision in the East which had become unavoidable. Then at the beginning of October, I again made one last offer of peace to England and France. Thereupon both these countries committed the biggest blunder they could possibly have made: they considered this offer a sign of weakness and rejected it with scorn.

Germany drew the only possible conclusion from this: she accepted the challenge of England and France.

Since then the war aim of England and France has been revealed more and more clearly. It consists, as it now openly stated, in the destruction of the German state and the dismemberment of the German people under a Versailles system even worse than before. Considering this development, Germany, as a state under attack, has nothing to say on the subject of peace. She is unshakeable in her determination once and for all to break the will to annihilate [Germany] which now dominates British and French policy and to use the power of her 80 million people to this end. Not until the Anglo-French will to annihilate [Germany] has been broken can a new, really peaceful Europe be built. While in their unprecedented delusion England and France are more and more openly proclaiming as their war aim the annihilation of Germany and a new division of Europe into nations with rights and others without rights, even today Germany does not demand the annihilation of the British Empire and France; rather she regards the satisfaction of the vital interests of the great nations in their natural Lebensraum as a guarantee for the consolidation of Europe, in which there is room for small states which have proved their viability in the course of history as well as for the large ones. Germany is convinced that this goal can be attained only by a German victory.

4. As regards economic matters, it can be stated that the British blockade is not of decisive importance to Germany. In both food and raw materials Germany can defeat any blockade by her self-sufficient economy and her trade with European countries, with Russia, and by way of Russia with Japan and a large part of the world. National Socialist Germany is not at all opposed to a world economy. The trade policy of the world forced upon her the development of her own self-contained economy. Only with its attainment, which is coming ever closer to realization, will Germany be in a position to participate in the world economy again as a sound partner.

5. A discussion of single concrete political questions, such as the question of a future Polish state, is to be avoided as much as possible. In case the other side brings up subjects of this kind, the reply should be that such questions are decided by me. It is self-evident that it is entirely out of the question for Germany to discuss the subject of Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, which has constantly been brought up by England and France.

6. Attention may be called to Germany's completely changed international position as compared to 1914. All statements are to be avoided which could be interpreted by the other side to mean that Germany is in any way interested at present in discussing possibilities of peace. I request rather that Mr. Sumner Welles not be given the slightest reason to doubt that Germany is determined to end this war victoriously and that the German people—united today as never before in their thousand-year history—and their leadership are unshakeable in their confidence in victory.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's intent in pursuing the strategy indicated above was an obvious one: he wished to convince Sumner Welles of his "unshakeable" determination to fight and his certainty he would win. This the American was to duly relate to London. The unity and determination of the German people he portrayed were to dissuade the English from further opposing Germany.

The English did not take fright as desired, since the supposed "unity" of the one belligerent rarely outweighs the numerical superiority of the arsenal commanded by the other in a real conflict. The old myth still roamed at large in Hitler's brain: the idea that the divisiveness of Germany had prevented its rise to world power and had precipitated its fall. In the Second World War, the German people were "united," i.e. they resigned themselves to Hitler's reign, and yet the outcome was no different. Germany was not in a position in either of the World Wars to pursue an aggressive policy of expansion opposed by the remainder of the world.

Hitler's resolve to attack in the West shortly, to move against France at the very least, was apparent from a new regulation published in the Army Decree Gazette on the same day he received Sumner Welles, namely on February 29:¹⁰⁷

In view of the changed situation, there are no more objections to singing the song: "*Siegreich woll'n wir Frankreich schlagen.*"¹⁰⁸

On March 1, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Horthy on the occasion of his twentieth anniversary as Regent of Hungary.¹⁰⁹ Later the same day, Hitler received Lieutenant Commander Schultze at the Reich Chancellery to award him the Knight's Cross. With his U-boat, Herbert

Schultze had sunk sixteen enemy ships with a total tonnage of 114,000 tons.¹¹⁰

On this same March 1, Hitler also signed the directive for “Weser Exercise” (*Fall Weserübung*) which detailed the following:¹¹¹

1. The development of the situation in Scandinavia requires the making of all preparations for the occupation of Denmark and Norway by a part of the Wehrmacht (Weser Exercise).

This operation should prevent British encroachment on Scandinavia and the Baltic. Further it should guarantee our ore base in Sweden and give our Navy and Luftwaffe a wider start-line against Britain. The part which the Navy and the Luftwaffe will have to play, within the limits of their capabilities, is to protect the operation against the interference of British naval and air striking forces.

In view of our military and political power in comparison with that of the Scandinavian States, the force to be employed in Weser Exercise will be kept as small as possible. The numerical weakness will be balanced by daring actions and surprise execution. On principle, we will do our utmost to make the operation appear as a peaceful occupation, the object of which is the military protection of the neutrality of the Scandinavian States. Corresponding demands will be transmitted to the Governments at the beginning of the occupation. If necessary, naval and air demonstrations will provide the necessary emphasis. If, in spite of this, resistance develops, it is to be crushed by all available military means.

2. I put in charge of the preparations and the conduct of the operation against Denmark and Norway the Commanding General of the XXI Army Corps, General of Infantry von Falkenhorst (Commander of “Group XXI”). In questions of the conduct of operations, the above-named is directly under my orders. The Staff is to be completed from all three branches of the Wehrmacht.

The forces which will be selected for the purpose of Weser Exercise will be under separate command. They will not be allocated for other operational theaters. The part of the Luftwaffe detailed for the purpose of Weser Exercise will be tactically under the orders of Group XXI. After the completion of their task, they will revert to the command of the Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe.

The employment of the forces which are under direct Naval and Luftwaffe command will take place in agreement with the Commander of Group XXI.

The administration and supply of the forces posted to Group XXI will be ensured by the Wehrmacht branches themselves to the demands of the Commander.

3. The crossing of the Danish border and the landings in Norway must take place simultaneously. I emphasize that the operations must be prepared as quickly as possible. In case the enemy seizes the initiative against Norway, we must be able to apply immediately our own countermeasures. It is most important that the Scandinavian States as well as the Western opponents should be taken by surprise by our measures. All preparations, particularly those of transport and of readiness, drafting and embarkation of the troops,

March 1, 1940

must be made with this factor in mind. In case the preparations for embarkation can no longer be kept secret, the leaders and the troops will be deceived by fictitious objectives. The troops may be acquainted with the actual objectives only after putting to sea.

On March 2, Hitler received the American Undersecretary of State, Sumner Welles, at the Reich Chancellery in the presence of the American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, Kirk, and of Ribbentrop and Meissner.¹¹² Although he himself had ordered that "Mr. Sumner Welles be allowed to do the talking,"¹¹³ Hitler could not restrain himself for long. Barely had the American made a few introductory statements, when Hitler found himself dominating the conversation. In long monologues, he lamented how England and France were bent on destruction, how America was incomprehensibly blockading the transport of goods to Germany. He reiterated details of German-American financial relations and of his own ever so "generous" proposals for disarmament. Having exhausted these topics, Hitler proceeded to lecture Sumner Welles on the formation of "public opinion." He dwelt on "historical memories," spoke of political interests and various theories of international trade. Afterwards, he sought to document his familiarity with the American scene by referring to the Monroe Doctrine and the 1932 Ottawa Conference.¹¹⁴ These examples led him right up to the outstanding issue of the return of Germany's former colonies.

Sumner Welles possessed sufficient discretion to respond to Hitler's professorial discourse. He also briefly philosophized on politics and economics, and then came to the point, asking what precisely Hitler's intentions were regarding disarmament and economic woes in the event of a peaceful settlement. Hitler naturally immediately retorted by proposing international conferences which, given certain prerequisites, might serve as a means for solving problems:

The Führer repeated that the decisive thing was that it was not a matter of the German war aims but the war aims of the others who were seeking the annihilation of Germany. He could assure Mr. Sumner Welles that Germany would never be annihilated. He had been a soldier on the western front for four years, and was of the opinion that Germany would not have been defeated then either if there had been another regime at the helm. It was not a question of whether Germany would be annihilated; Germany would know how to defend herself from annihilation, and in the very worst case everyone would be annihilated. Today Germany was in a totally different situation from the last war and he, the Führer, had made all preparations, and made them

thoroughly, in order to be able to break the will to annihilation of the others. The German war aim—"peace"—stood opposed to the war aim of the others—"annihilation." The German people, who had learned from the terrible experience of 1918, stood behind him to a man. Anybody who wanted to establish peace had to induce Germany's opponents to abandon their war aims of annihilation. Germany was of the view that America even with the best will in the world—which was recognized by the Germans without question—would find it difficult to attain this goal.¹¹⁵

Sumner Welles thereupon thanked Hitler for the "open and candid way in which he had made his statements" and assured him he would relay the thoughts expressed to President Roosevelt. The American Government nevertheless hoped that "all" parties to the present conflict were spared destruction rather than only Germany. Hitler's rhetoric had apparently failed to impress the American. On a side note, Sumner Welles was the last Anglo-Saxon statesman Hitler was to speak to in person before his death, with the exception of the American Chargé d'Affaires, who remained in Berlin until 1941.

On March 3, Hitler wired the following note to the office in charge of the Leipzig fair:¹¹⁶

I wish the best of success to the Leipzig spring fair 1940 which opens its gates as a war exhibition today. It will bear testimony to Germany's unbroken economic might and—insofar as it promotes the export of German quality products to the neutral states—it will serve the peaceful exchange of goods among the peoples of this world in time of war as well.

Adolf Hitler

On March 4, Sven Hedin was once again Hitler's guest at the Reich Chancellery.¹¹⁷ Unlike in their previous encounter, the two men no longer exchanged platitudes on the "hopeless" nature of the situation England faced. Almost immediately, Hedin inquired whether Germany was not inclined to perhaps intercede in the Russo-Finnish conflict in an effort to end the bloodshed. He came to the wrong man with such a plea. For one thing, Hitler did not share the sympathies for the Finns cherished in certain German circles ever since 1918.¹¹⁸ On a side note, this German inclination towards their "Nordic" neighbors was not reciprocated by the Finns. Second, Hitler undoubtedly still harbored resentment because of the negative stance Finland had up to now taken toward the Third Reich, and because it had rejected his offer of a non-aggression pact in the spring of 1939.

Not surprisingly, Hitler turned to express his regret at not being able to oblige Hedin, explaining that, according to Schmidt's notes:

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There was really not the slightest justification for Germany to step in. As a result of the new relationship which she had established with Russia, her sympathies were naturally also on the side of that country.

Sven Hedin interjected here that some consideration should be given to the Finns, too, who were fighting so bravely. The Führer admitted that the Finns were brave, but their policy had been entirely senseless. It was absolutely sure that they would not stand up against the Russians in the long run. Up to now the bad weather had been extremely advantageous to them. They should never have entered into a conflict with the Russians, for Stalin had after all asked nothing more of them than a secure access to an ice-free sea. Stalin was undergoing a change, anyway. He was no longer the international Bolshevik, but showed himself as an absolute Russian nationalist and was in the last analysis following exactly the same natural policy of Russian nationalism as the Tsar.

Sven Hedin countered by pointing to the danger of a Russian advance across Finland in a drive towards Sweden and Norway. It was conceivable, so Hedin stated, that Moscow had cast an eye on the Swedish iron ore mines.

The Führer stated in this connection that he did not believe that Stalin had such expansionist aspirations; he again stressed Stalin's policy of Russian nationalism with its drive for an ice-free port and emphasized that once this goal had been achieved there need be no fear of further expansion. He was also not concerned about a possible advance by the Russians into the Baltic, which was being discussed so much abroad as an alleged threat to the German position there. In the age of the airplane, the Baltic was no longer an operations area for navies. Even the North Sea had lost this character for the British Navy as a result of German air supremacy in that area.

When Sven Hedin asked once more that something be done for the poor Finns by means of mediation between Finland and Russia, the Führer refused with the observation that he predicted the Finns would certainly not thank him, but at most blame him subsequently for the loss of Hangö or other areas. The Finns had every reason, by the way, to be grateful to Germany, for without the active interference of the German troops in 1918 Finland would never have come into being at all.

After stating as much, Hitler dismissed Sven Hedin. Unanticipated future developments would force Hitler to be less brusque in his dealings with the Finns, as he was to sorely need their support for his aggression against the Soviet Union later.

On March 5, the President of the Society for the Development of Heavy Industry in Manchuria, Aikawa, called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery.¹¹⁹

For the same day, Hitler had scheduled an important conference with the heads of the Wehrmacht branches. "Weser Exercise" was to

be discussed. As Jodl noted in his diary,¹²⁰ Göring took advantage of the occasion to express his outrage that he had not been consulted beforehand. Hitler sought to appease the angered Field Marshal by making small, insignificant concessions. As a result of the talk, forces at Narvik were reinforced while armored vessels received instructions to continue their wait off the shore of Trondheim. Six instead of five divisions were earmarked for the offensive. A base was to be established at Copenhagen immediately.

On March 6, Hitler had a wreath laid at the funeral of Dr. Muck, who had served as general music director in Stuttgart.¹²¹

On March 8, Hitler finally determined that the time had come to respond to Mussolini's insolent letter of January 3. It was imperative to strengthen the Axis upon which the Italian aspect of his conceptions of 1919 hinged. Hitler could ill afford a vacillating Mussolini in view of Sumner Welles' pending second visit to Rome. The Reich Chancellor's letter of March 8, 1940, was to tie Rome even closer to Germany militarily, and to prevent the Duce from perhaps succumbing to Anglo-American overtures. Its ultimate goal was to induce Mussolini to commit Italian forces on the side of the Third Reich.

Not surprisingly, Hitler's correspondence was nearly twice as long as the Duce's exceedingly forward letter.¹²² Hitler, in view of the situation, found it opportune to restrain the fury he had felt two months earlier. Lest he offend the Duce, he conscientiously responded to all questions raised by Mussolini: the unexpected declaration of war by the Western Powers; Germany's treatment of Poland; the Russian question; the issue of the Balkans; and so on. Still he could not resist mentioning his conviction that he had always been proved right by events in the end.

Particularly absurd was Hitler's overt attempt to make the Duce feel guilty and induce him to be obliging by blaming Germany's difficulties with England on the implications of Italy's aggression against Ethiopia:

Duce!

From the moment when England discovered during the Ethiopian conflict that Germany is not a vassal state that can be ordered about at will, and especially since the intervention by the Reich in Spain on behalf of the Spanish Nationalist regime, she began to think about and prepare for the conflict with the Reich.

Hitler was naturally eager to defend his pact with the Soviet Union: "Specifically, however, what Germany has done was simply a clear-cut

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delimitation of zones of interest with respect to Russia, in which nothing will ever change again.” Like his talk with Sven Hedin, the letter of March 8 revealed how little good will Hitler bore in his heart for the Finns:

The Finnish state owes its existence entirely to a sea of blood from German soldiers, German regiments and divisions, and its subsequent independence is also due to German units under General von der Goltz. In appreciation of this Finland later took sides against Germany on every occasion, and so far as it was possible took active part in every repressive measure against Germany. This does not imply, Duce, that the German people feel any hatred for the Finnish people; it merely signifies that we have no cause to champion Finland’s interest.

Hitler came to the point in the final section of his letter. Obviously, he sought to render the Italian dictator immune against potential American overtures. He labored to draw Mussolini into a closer alliance yet; for Italy to “fight together” with Germany:

Regarding the visit of Sumner Welles, the American representative, all there is to say is that it contributed no new element for appraising the situation. I have already sent you, Duce, the protocols of the conversations for your information. Whatever may have been intended by this visit, one thing seems to be certain: it cannot bring about any change in the war aims of the British and the French, even if this was sincerely intended. Thus any notion of practical results in the sense of advancing the cause of peace is ruled out. On that account I also believe that in such circumstances one should at least listen to the views of those who claim that the only purpose of this intervention is to gain time for the Allies, that is, to paralyze any German intentions for an offensive. I need not assure you, Duce, that quite apart from this, Germany’s decisions are governed exclusively by military considerations and therefore cannot be affected in any way by influences of that kind.

Germany has absolutely no other war aim than peace! England and France have basically no other war aim than the annihilation of the totalitarian peoples’ states, and thus of Germany. Germany will therefore fight until this plutocratic clique of war criminals is forced to abandon this design once and for all. This resolve cannot be shaken! It can all the better be understood because over and above this task we must in any case settle a chapter of world history which, through fraud on one side and weakness on the other, forced the German people into the most humiliating and frightful period of their entire development.

In summing up, let me thank you once more for your last letter, Duce, and the exposition which you gave me. Let me also ask you to believe that I understand and appreciate your attitude. And, finally, let me assure you that in spite of everything I believe that sooner or later Fate will force us after all to fight side by side, that is, that you will likewise not escape the clash of arms, no matter how the individual aspects of the situation may develop today, and

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that your place will then more than ever be at our side, just as mine will be at yours.

I, too, would be glad if a personal meeting could be arranged to talk about the gigantic complex of the general and special problems connected with the situation. There are many things which can be explained only in lengthy discussions. In conclusion, let me hope that it might be possible to strengthen even further the economic relations between our two countries and just at this time to find a solution for the coal problem, which is perhaps causing you great concern. For anything that helps to make one of our two countries stronger is of benefit to both!

In this belief I salute you cordially, with my best wishes for you and your country!

Your Adolf Hitler

The Führer placed great hopes on the effectiveness of the bait of "coal shipment" via land routes. He knew Italian industry depended on this raw material in particular, and the furnishing of these supplies would tie Mussolini inexorably to the Führer. Immediately he instructed Ribbentrop to personally travel to Rome to lure the Duce into the trap and to transmit the Führer's letter and sentiments.

On March 9, the daily military briefing particularly angered Hitler, as Jodl recorded in his diary:¹²³

Great indignation on part of Führer when he hears that Prince Oskar¹²⁴ leads a Rgt. [regiment]. Schmundt was just about to propose that he obtain a Div. [division] and was able to suppress this barely in time.

Hitler was so outraged he missed the luncheon meeting. His resentment was comprehensible, given that he had just thought he had finally removed all persons who could somehow challenge his power from positions of influence. The only men he still felt compelled to fear, in the event things took a turn for the worse in the war, were the Princes of the House of Hohenzollern. The appeal of the Princes to the masses as traditional leaders might well challenge that of the Führer. To entrust an entire division to Oskar Prince of Prussia, the youngest surviving son of William II, to accord him the power of military leadership, was truly an ill-considered political move as far as Hitler was concerned. In general, the Führer could find no rest until all descendants of the House of Hohenzollern had been removed from the Army. Even after the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, for instance, Hitler's first thought was that the culprit had issued forth from among the Prussian Princes.¹²⁵ He need not have worried. Members of the Hohenzollern family generally distanced themselves from plots against him as did other leading segments of German society.

On March 10, the customary festivities took place in celebration of Heroes' Memorial Day. At 11:00 a.m., Hitler delivered an address before the Third Reich's dignitaries assembled at the Berlin Zeughaus. In the radio broadcast of the speech, the German public heard him praise the German soldiers for their "unequaled victorious campaign in the East." He declared them ready to "take up the defense of the Reich in the West against the enemies of old." The content of Hitler's speech, reproduced by the German News Bureau, was as follows:¹²⁶

It is at a solemn hour that the German Volk celebrates its Heroes' Memorial Day today. With more justification than ever before in the past twenty years can one step before the spiritual eye of those who once, as courageous sons of our Volk, sacrificed themselves for the future of the nation, the greatness and inviolability of the Reich. What once resounded as empty phrases of an unworthy posterity has today become an expression of proud gratitude by a worthy present. After an unequaled victorious campaign in the East, the soldiers of our Field Army's divisions, the crews of our ships, the fighters of our Luftwaffe, are henceforth prepared to take up the defense of the Reich in the West against the enemies of old with the same sense of duty, the same obedience, as true to their orders as soldiers of the Great War. Behind them stands the homeland, cleansed of elements of disintegration and fragmentation. For the first time in our history the entire German Volk steps before the countenance of the Lord Almighty to implore Him to bestow His blessings on our struggle for existence.

The struggle of our soldiers is a hard one. Insofar as we comprehend nature and have gained insight into its ways, we know that just as life, to sustain itself, demands sacrifice time and time again to bear new life and deals out pain to heal wounds, the soldier is the foremost representative of life itself. At all times, he represents the cream of a people. He places his life at risk, and gives his life if need be, to render possible and to secure the life of his contemporaries and hence of posterity. In the hour in which Providence shall come to weigh the intrinsic worth of a people, he steps up before the Lord Almighty to face trial by ordeal.

And through him, the nations shall be weighed. They will be judged either too light and hence they will be erased from the book of life and the book of history, or they will be deemed worthy enough to create new life. Only he who himself had the opportunity to fight under the most adverse of conditions, who himself saw death's shadow pass him by time and time again in years of struggle—only he can measure the greatness of the risk taken by the soldier, only he can appreciate the graveness of the sacrifice. The instinct of survival has engraved upon mankind universal principles for the evaluation of those who were willing to give up themselves so that the life of the community should be sustained.

Mankind places the idealist in opposition to the repulsive egoist. And when it despises the one as a coward, then its gratitude for the other is all the greater in the subconscious realization of the sacrifice brought. It glorifies him

as a hero and raises him above the mass of other, indifferent phenomena. No one has a greater right to celebrate its heroes than the German Volk!

Given the most precarious geopolitical location of its lands, it was possible to assure the existence of our Volk time and time again only thanks to the heroic mustering of its men. And if we have enjoyed a historic existence within these past 2,000 years, then we did so only because men were willing, time and time again within these 2,000 years, to place their lives at risk for the community—and, if necessary, to sacrifice their lives. Every one of these heroes gave his life not in the mistaken belief that he would deliver future generations of this duty. All the achievements of the past would be for naught should only one future generation lack the strength to make similar sacrifices. For the life of a nation resembles a chain without end until the day one generation decides to sever this link and thereby brings to an end the course of evolution. No one has the right to celebrate heroes who is not himself capable of such conviction. No one has the right to speak of tradition who is not himself willing to enrich this tradition through his own life and works. This principle applies to all peoples just as to all statesmen. And it applies to soldiers no less than to generals.

From within the sacred halls of this building, relics of an incomparably glorious past speak to us. They were fought for and sealed with the blood of countless German heroes. We have no right to enter into this hall unless we bear in our hearts the solemn resolve to be no less valiant than the bearers of these weapons, of these emblems, and of these uniforms before us. The risking of his life was no less difficult for a musketeer in the Seven Years' War than for one who, 1,000 years before, as a German knight, fought off the hordes of the East to protect the German lands. And it was no less difficult than that demanded of us today. The power of decision, the cool daring courage of the great statesmen and warlords of the past were not less than those expected of us today. Then, too, the gods loved these great statesmen and warlords only because they attempted and demanded the apparently impossible. Hardly one of the great battles in the history of our Volk and, above all, in the history of Prussia, already betrayed its likely outcome at the beginning. Based on numerical and material superiority, many an action seemed destined to success, only to end in defeat due to the lack of spirits of the fighters. Conversely, many others which seemed doomed from the very start, based on all human intuition, entered into history as glorious victories. The secret of the miracle of life will never reveal itself to the pale theoretician. He will always see amiss the mighty formative force of existence that he himself most sorely lacks, namely: willpower, boldness in making and carrying out decisions.

And thus we commence this day of commemoration of our heroes with a feeling of new, inner dignity. Not with heads bowed, but rather with heads carried high and with pride we greet them, conscious that we are their equals, capable of the same achievements, and—should this be necessary—willing to take upon ourselves the same sacrifices.

What they once fought for, we now fight for ourselves. What was noble enough a goal for them to fight and, if necessary, to die for—every hour will

find us braced for a like deed. The faith which inspired them has grown within us. Whatever life or destiny might deal to the individual among us, the existence and future of the community takes precedence over it. There is something which carries us further yet than in the ages past, namely, the realization of what it was that many earlier ages unconsciously were forced to fight for: the German Volk!

To be allowed to live within it is our greatest earthly good. To belong to it is our pride. To defend it in unconditional loyalty even in the worst of times, is our fanatic defiance. The greater the dangers surrounding us, the more precious this treasure of our community seems to us. All the more important is, therefore, the realization that in its development and promotion lies the strongest *raison d'être* for German survival. Now that the outside world of plutocratic democracies has declared the wildest of campaigns against National Socialist Germany and has pronounced its destruction as the loftiest of war aims, then this simply reaffirms to us what we already know: the thought of a National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft alone has made the German Volk especially dangerous in the eyes of our enemies, because it has made it invincible. Above all differences of class or rank, profession or confession, and above all the usual confusion of everyday life, looms the social union of the German man, irrespective of caste or origin, based on blood, forged in communal life throughout thousands of years, bound together by destiny for better or for worse.

The world desires our dissolution. Our answer to this can be but a renewed oath sworn to the greatest community of all time. Their aim is the disintegration of Germany. Our avowal of faith is German unity. They hope for the success of capitalist interests, and we will the victory of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft!

In nearly fifteen years of laborious work, National Socialism has delivered the German Volk from its state of tragic despair; in a unique historic work, it has uplifted the conscience of the nation and has driven away the wretched specter of a defeatist capitulation; it has built the general political foundations for a rearmament. In spite of all this, I stood prepared throughout the years to extend my hand to the world for a true understanding. They rejected the idea of a reconciliation of all peoples based on equal rights.

As a National Socialist and a soldier, I have always upheld the principle of securing the rights of my Volk either in peace, or—if necessary—in a fight.

As the Führer of the nation, the Chancellor of the Reich, and the Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, I live today for the fulfillment of one great task: to think of the victory, day and night; to struggle for it; to work for it; and to fight for it. If necessary, I shall not spare my own life either in the realization that this time around the future of Germany shall be decided for centuries to come.

As a former soldier of the Great War, nevertheless, I have devoutly pleaded with Providence to accord us the grace of closing honorably this last chapter in the great struggle of nations (*Völkerringen*) for the German Volk. Then the spirits of our fallen comrades shall rise from their graves to thank all those whose courage and loyalty have now once more atoned for the sins

committed in an hour of weakness against them and against our Volk. Let our avowal of faith on this day be a solemn oath: the war forced upon the Greater German Reich by the capitalist rulers of France and England must be transformed into the most glorious victory in German history!

Truly a resounding speech, one Jodl celebrated as simply “wonderful” in his diary.¹²⁷ If wars were decided by speeches, then Hitler would have assuredly done decidedly better than he did in the end. Still the most rousing of speeches can accomplish little if there is no power base for it in reality. “Willpower” alone was not decisive in the conflict, despite Hitler’s proclamations to the contrary. His determination to obtain his ends by force [“if necessary—in a fight”], called up a coalition of opponents in the West whom he had not the means to keep at bay.

After the speech, Hitler toured an exhibition entitled “The Campaign in Poland,” set up in the courtyard of the Zeughaus.¹²⁸ Thereafter, he reviewed a guard of honor at the avenue Unter den Linden.

On that same March 10, Ribbentrop’s train reached Rome. The Duce received the German Foreign Minister without delay. Ciano and the German Ambassador von Mackensen were present at the meeting as well.¹²⁹

Ribbentrop immediately presented Mussolini with Hitler’s correspondence and brought up “the coal problem.” When Mussolini indicated that Italy’s total requirements ranged from 500,000 to 700,000 tons per month, Ribbentrop at once interjected that Germany stood prepared to furnish a “total requirement of one million tons per month” to be transported by rail. “If there should be any further wishes of an economic nature on the part of Italy,” so the German Foreign Minister obligingly continued, his government would gladly discuss these. Remarkably, he took it upon himself to dominate the conversation, something he habitually shied away from, adding to Hitler’s own long-winded exposition speculations of his own: “The French Army would be beaten before next fall and after that the only British soldiers left on the Continent would be prisoners of war.” He was persuaded that the German troops and “the special tactics” they employed would wreak havoc at the Maginot line. For his part, he stood “fully convinced that the British and French Armies were moving toward the greatest disaster of their histories.”

Mussolini expressed his approval at the proper cues. “In any case, events proved the Führer to be right,” commented the Duce in one instance. And then, pointing to Hitler’s letter, he obligingly stated: “I believe the Führer is right.”

Having brought the conference with Mussolini to a close on so congenial a note, Ribbentrop turned his attention to the second objective of his journey. While equally important, it was naturally secondary to conferring with the Duce and seeing the Italian King. Nevertheless, Ribbentrop had in fact requested an audience with Pope Pius XII to convey the Führer's greetings and to discuss Hitler's proposals for a "basic settlement between National Socialism and the Catholic Church."

This advance on the part of Hitler may well have appeared astonishing in consideration of his slight of the Holy Father during his visit to Rome in 1938 when Pius XI had occupied the Holy See. The Pope became increasingly unpopular with the National Socialists over time. His successor, Pius XII, was known to be more inclined towards the German Government than Pius XI had been from about 1937 on. In view of the pending confrontation in the West, Hitler sought the support of the Vatican or at least assurances of its neutral stance should a conflict erupt. Naturally, this was a question of power politics and not of such peripheral concerns as religious conviction.

On March 11, the Pope granted Ribbentrop the audience requested. The German Foreign Ministry kept the following record of the Foreign Minister's statements to the Pope:¹³⁰

The Führer was of the opinion that a basic settlement between National Socialism and the Catholic Church was quite possible. There was, however, no point in wanting to settle the relations between these two by raising separate questions of this or that kind or by provisional agreements. Rather, they must come at some time to a comprehensive and, so to speak, secular settlement of their relations; this would then form a really lasting basis for a harmonious cooperation between them. However, the time had not yet arrived for such a settlement. Germany was engaged in a struggle for existence which she would fight, in all circumstances, to a victorious end; naturally, this occupied all her efforts and did not permit the Führer to get interested in other problems. Moreover, it ought to be borne in mind, that an understanding between National Socialism and the Catholic Church depended on one principal preliminary condition, namely, that the Catholic clergy in Germany abandon any kind of political activity and limit itself solely to the care of souls, the only activity which was within the clergy's province.

The recognition of the necessity of such a radical separation, however, could not yet be considered to be the dominant view of Catholic clergymen in Germany. Similar to the manner in which England, in international politics, had claimed the role of a kind of guardian of the continent and the right of intervening in every possible problem of third countries, the Catholic Church had also become accustomed, in the course of events, to intervention in politics. The Catholic Church in Germany had come into the possession of

positions and rights of the most various kind which it considered, to be sure, duly acquired, but which were not compatible with the absolutely necessary limitation to its spiritual functions.

The Catholic clergy must be imbued with the realization that with National Socialism an entirely new form of political and national life¹³¹ had appeared in the world. Only after this had happened could a fundamental settlement and understanding be approached with any chance for a lasting success. One must not repeat the mistake made with the prematurely concluded concordats (Länder concordats and Reich concordat), which already had to be considered out of date, if only on account of the formal constitutional development in Germany which had taken place since they were concluded. In the opinion of the Führer, what mattered for the time being was to maintain the existing truce and, if possible, to expand it. In this respect, Germany had made very considerable preliminary concessions. The Führer had quashed no less than seven thousand indictments of Catholic clergymen. Also, it should not be forgotten that the National Socialist State was spending 1 billion RM annually for the Catholic Church; no other state could boast of such an achievement.

The Pope showed complete understanding toward the Reich Foreign Minister's statements and admitted without qualifications that the concrete facts were as mentioned. True, he attempted to turn the conversation toward certain special problems and complaints of the Curia, but did not insist on going on, when the Reich Foreign Minister once more emphasized the necessity of a fundamental and comprehensive settlement of the whole relationship between Church and State which would be possible only at some later date.

In conclusion, the Foreign Minister pointed to the historic fact that never before in history had a revolution as radical as that carried out in the total life of the German people by National Socialism done so little injury to the existence of the Church. On the contrary, it was due, in the last analysis, only to National Socialism that Bolshevik chaos did not break out in Europe and thus destroy Church life altogether.

Hitler's favorite references to the threats of "Bolshevism" and to his role as the "savior of Europe," which was now enlarged upon to read "savior of Christianity and of the Church," concluded his wordy message to Rome. Ribbentrop could not let the opportunity pass him by without pointing to the imminent collapse of the Western Powers: "We believe that France and England will sue for peace yet this year. This is the conviction of the entire German Volk."

Having been heard by the Holy Father, Ribbentrop faced a conference with the Papal Secretary of State Maglione, who was not content with hearing only platitudes. Insistently, Maglione pointed to the desperate situation of the confessional schools and especially to the dire straits in which the Catholic Church in Poland found itself during

these days. But he could not induce Ribbentrop to veer from the letter of Hitler's instructions not to say or discuss any concrete matter. All he got were vague promises that the German Government would investigate the issue of anticlerical writings by the late Ludendorff.¹³²

Returning to the Palazzo Venezia later in the day, Ribbentrop was met by a pleasant surprise. Mussolini had thought matters over and eagerly acquiesced to playing the role assigned by Hitler. He now completely agreed with the Führer's conception of world affairs.¹³³ He even strove to outdo his counterpart in terms of optimism, declaring: "It was his conviction that the United States would never enter the war. . . . The Americans . . . took that attitude because they were doubtful of the success of the Allies and did not want to put their money on a losing horse." Hitler had indeed achieved what he had set out to do. He no longer needed to fear Mussolini's vulnerability to any advances Sumner Welles might seek to make.¹³⁴ Reassuringly, the Duce was eager to meet shortly with the Führer for further consultations at the Brenner Pass.

In the meantime in Berlin, Hitler had occupied himself with the penning of statutes for a new order of merit, i.e. the introduction of an "oak leaf" category in addition to previous stipulations for the Knight's Cross.¹³⁵ He had also sent out two telegrams. In one he expressed his condolences on the death of the State President of the Dominican Republic, Peynado,¹³⁶ while in the other he congratulated the Pope on the anniversary of the coronation.¹³⁷

On March 12, a peculiar guest called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery. His name was Colin Ross, a world traveler of German origin, who sought to present Hitler with his views on the United States and Canada.¹³⁸ As customary, Hitler received him because his guest's opinions appeared to coincide with his own propositions of 1919. Whether or not these corresponded to reality was a matter of indifference with Hitler. And it was thus that men like Sven Hedin, Colin Ross, etc., travelers with absurd political opinions or questionable expertise, were welcome guests at the Führer's office.

On this March 12, Colin Ross stated:

. . . that after long study he had reached the following conclusion. If Germany succeeded in convincing the Americans that it was in accordance with our German and National Socialist principles that the Western Hemisphere belonged to the Americans (since in the contemporary world large spaces were being formed on the basis of geopolitics such as, for example, the Soviet Union as ruler over the western Asiatic space, the union of Chinese and

Mongols in East Asia under Japanese leadership, and the union of central Europe under German leadership), then the Americans would develop very much understanding for our struggle since they would, after all, derive a clear profit from it. He had worked out a map on which he had marked in, from north to south, the English spheres of influence against [!] the United States. If an American should see this map and should, moreover, hear that in Germany's view the Western Hemisphere should belong to the Americans, America automatically would take a position directed against England. It was his great desire to be active and to work in this direction and he was waiting for an instruction by the Führer in order to continue his work in this special field of his.

Hitler immediately directed the Foreign Ministry to render "Herr Colin Ross . . . every possible assistance." Once Ross had left, Hitler turned to Legation Counselor Hewel to remark, according to the latter's records, "that Colin Ross was a very intelligent man who certainly had many good ideas."

Late that evening, he received Ribbentrop, who had in the meantime returned from Rome. The report on Mussolini's obliging disposition greatly relieved Hitler: the Führer was "very content," as Jodl noted.¹³⁹ He instructed Ribbentrop to schedule the envisioned rendezvous at the Brenner Pass for as early as March 18.

By March 12, or rather March 13, the Russo-Finnish War had surprisingly ended.¹⁴⁰ Hitler's notion that the Russians were driving to occupy the ice-free harbor of Petsamo was proved wrong.¹⁴¹ Apparently, they were seeking primarily to secure Leningrad, establishing control on land (the Isthmus of Carel; Wyborg; Lake Ladoga), as well as at sea (the islands in the Gulf of Finland; lease of the Hangö peninsula).

All in all, the Finns got off lightly in the peace settlement, considering that the Soviets did occupy militarily and annex, wholly or in part, all other states which had belonged to Russia prior to 1918, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

The Finns had been forced to lay down their arms after only three and a half months, realizing that in spite of all the courage they had mustered they could not prevail in the long run. The Russians had shown little enthusiasm in the pursuit of this peripheral conflict. Most of the troops deployed came from the neighboring district of Leningrad. At any rate, the General Staff of the Leningrad Military District issued the daily war bulletin for the duration of the conflict.

Foreign Soviet experts who interviewed Russian prisoners of war in the Finnish camps arrived at the conclusion that no elite troops had been used in the fighting.¹⁴² In spite of this, the leading men in Finland

and particularly in Germany remained persuaded that the Russo-Finnish War had clearly demonstrated the inferior capacities of the Red Army. Hitler felt that the Winter War of 1939–40 confirmed his theory on the “primitive Bolsheviks,” who would just as easily be crushed by force abroad as the communists at home. Little more than a year later, at Hitler’s instigation, the Finns allowed themselves to become involved in yet another war with the Soviet Union. The irony of this in view of the Führer’s previously demonstrated lack of sympathy for the Finns cannot be denied.

On March 13, Hitler sent the Slovak State President Tiso a congratulatory telegram on the “Slovak National Holiday,” the celebration of one year of independence.¹⁴³ That day also, Hitler visited State Minister Meissner in person at the official’s Berlin residence to congratulate him on his sixtieth birthday.¹⁴⁴

As Jodl noted on that March 13, Hitler was “still searching for a justification” for launching “Weser Exercise.”¹⁴⁵ The unanticipated end of the Russo-Finnish confrontation had robbed him of a good excuse. The “*Altmark-Cossack* incident” was of too delicate a nature to furnish the desired pretext for attacking in the North.

On the next day, Hitler wired his best wishes and congratulations to the Shah of Persia on his birthday.¹⁴⁶

On March 15, Hitler signed into law a decree on the termination of the office of Reich Commissar for the Reunion of Austria with the German Reich. The post was pronounced non-existent as of March 31.¹⁴⁷ Legislative powers within the city of Vienna would nonetheless remain Bürckel’s prerogative even as he served as Reich Governor with his seat in Vienna.

In addition to this, Hitler exchanged telegrams with dignitaries commemorating the creation of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia a year earlier. Telegrams arrived at the Chancellery from State President Hácha and from Neurath, who served as Reich Protector.¹⁴⁸

In his response to Hácha, Hitler wrote:

Recollections of our first meeting a year ago, Herr Staatspräsident, move me deeply. The realization of the necessity that both people coexist peacefully on so little terrain is an irreversible, historic fact which obliges all of us. It is hence not the goal or intention of the German Reich to burden the Czech people unduly, to thereby threaten its national existence or to bring its national conscience into conflict with the general necessities compelling the Reich. Therefore, I hope we shall succeed in sparing this section of the Reich the horrors of war. Hereby the wise foresight of the decisions of March

1939 is best proven.

I thank you, Herr Präsident, for the best wishes relayed for this great struggle which our common Reich has to lead today. It is my wish that victory in the end will secure a lasting peace, prosperity, and rich social benefits for the German Volk just as much as for the Czech people.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler sent the following response to von Neurath:

I thank you, Herr Reichsprotektor, for your remembrance of the anniversary of the day on which the German Reich extended to the old lands of Bohemia and Moravia its strong arm in protection. For nearly a thousand years these two lands belonged to the most beautiful of pearls in the old German Reich. It is my wish that these loyal relations shall constitute a blessing for the German and Czech peoples alike in the new Reich for all eternity.

Adolf Hitler

On March 17, Hitler appointed Todt as Minister for Armament and Ammunition. The corresponding decree read:¹⁴⁹

Berlin, March 17, 1940

To place under a single command all offices involved in the production of armament and munitions in the Greater German Reich, as well as in the General Government and the occupied Polish territories, and to effect the highest production possible, I appoint a Reichskommissar for Armament and Ammunition.

I name the General Inspector for Railroad Construction in Germany, Chief Engineer Dr. Todt, Reich Minister for Armament and Ammunition. I reserve to my person the decree effecting implementation.

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

At noon, Hitler, accompanied by Ribbentrop, left Berlin aboard a special train bearing him towards his meeting with Mussolini in the Alps.

On March 18, the train arrived at the station at the Brenner Pass at 10:10 a.m., where Mussolini and Ciano were awaiting their German guests. Having reviewed the honor guard, the men entered the Duce's train compartment just across the platform. It was then that the announced conference "of world historic import" began. It lasted nearly two and a half hours, during which Hitler indulged in his customary long-winded monologue. Hitler resorted to his tried rhetorical tricks and his astounding capacity to retain numbers to impress Mussolini. The interpreter Schmidt vividly described the scene in his memoirs in the following terms:¹⁵⁰

Full of self-confidence, Hitler furnished the attentively and almost

admiringly listening Mussolini a highly detailed exposition of his military successes in the Polish campaign and of his preparations for the great confrontation with the West. Numbers followed on numbers: the strength of troops; casualty figures; size of reserves; all this Hitler had in his head as astoundingly clear as the technical specifications of cannons, tanks, and infantry weapons. He seemed less interested in Air Force or Navy matters. At any rate, he knew just how to squash Mussolini beneath the weight of all these figures and facts. His big, brown eyes wide open with astonishment, his eyes nearly falling out, Mussolini sat there like a small child you hand a new toy to for the first time.

Schmidt remarked that despite Hitler's lengthy exposition, he neither uttered a word regarding the planned move against Norway and Denmark, nor did he mention *Fall Gelb* ("Case Yellow," the code name for the attack in the West). This was not surprising, since Hitler customarily insisted on complete secrecy for all pending ventures even as far as allies, like the Italians or the Japanese, were concerned.¹⁵¹

In his recollections, the interpreter noticed the following about Mussolini's behavior towards the end of the meeting:

The few minutes which remained for Mussolini to voice his own opinion he spent, to my surprise and to the horror of his colleagues as I found out later, reinforcing with strong words his determination to enter the war on the side of Hitler.

Ciano noted in his diary:¹⁵²

The conference . . . is more a monologue than anything else. Hitler talks all the time, but is less agitated than usual. He makes few gestures and speaks in a quiet tone. He looks physically fit. Mussolini listens to him with interest and with deference. He speaks little and confirms his intention to move with Germany. He reserves to himself only the choice of the right moment.

Mussolini was veritably intoxicated by Hitler's words. It was not until a day later that he sobered up. His subsequent assessment of the conference reflected this, as Ciano remarked:

Actually he is rather angry because Hitler alone spoke all the time; he had made up his mind to tell him many things, but instead he sat there in silence.

The following communiqué was issued on the Hitler-Mussolini talk at the Brenner Pass:¹⁵³

The conference between the Führer and the Duce lasted two and a half hours. Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano were both in attendance. The meeting was characterized by great warmth.

Hitler left for Germany at 1:11 p.m. Mussolini and Ciano waved

goodbye from the platform. This was the fifth personal encounter of the two fellow dictators.

On the return trip, the train stopped over in Innsbruck where the Führer stepped out to review an honor guard. According to the Party newspaper, he was “very touched by the enthusiasm demonstrated by the Tiroleans.” Significantly, they sang the “Englandlied” to greet him.¹⁵⁴ March 19 found Hitler back in Berlin where he had returned, as Jodl noted, “radiant with joy and highly content” with the success of his journey.

One day later, Hitler received the Icelandic poet Gunnar Gunnarsson at the Reich Chancellery.¹⁵⁵

On March 22, Hitler penned the following telegram to be sent to Colonel General von Brauchitsch:¹⁵⁶

On the fortieth anniversary of the day you entered the Army, my thoughts turn to you in heartfelt gratitude for your service and for the services you rendered the Armed Forces.

Adolf Hitler

On March 29, Hitler awarded the Yugoslavian Minister-President Dragisha Cvetkovich the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle. The German Envoy in Belgrade presented the distinction to the Minister-President.¹⁵⁷

Two days later, Hitler sent the King of Thailand a congratulatory telegram in celebration of the Thai New Year’s festivities.¹⁵⁸

On April 1, Hitler wired the following telegram to Franco:¹⁵⁹

On the anniversary of that memorable April 1, 1939, the day on which the Spanish people’s fight for independence under your leadership was crowned with victory, I send Your Excellency my heartfelt best wishes and greetings. As in the years of fighting, the German Volk now also takes an active interest in the work of reconstructing the peace which may furnish the basis of a prosperous future for the Spanish people.

Adolf Hitler

At noon, General von Falkenhorst was summoned to appear before Hitler to present his thoughts on the “Weser Exercise.” A briefing of the respective heads of the Wehrmacht branches took place subsequently.¹⁶⁰

On April 2, Hitler conferred once again with Falkenhorst, Göring, and Raeder at 3:30 p.m. Thereafter, Hitler issued orders to implement the provisions for “Weser Exercise” on April 9, i.e. to begin the invasion of Norway and Denmark on that day.¹⁶¹

April 3 witnessed the first massive troop movements in a northerly

April 3, 1940

direction. Steamers left harbor to ferry the soldiers to the Norwegian coast. Naturally, the other countries were aware of what was going on. Already on the next day, the Swedish Government inquired at Berlin as to the meaning of "preparations for redeployment of troops at Stettin."¹⁶²

Also on April 3, the British War Cabinet convened and determined to grant the Admiralty full powers to mine Norwegian coastal waters, beginning April 8. In the event of German measures to counter this move, a British brigade and a French contingent were free to proceed to Narvik. Additional units would then be ordered to advance towards Stavanger, Bergen, and Trondheim.¹⁶³

On April 4, Hitler drafted the appeals, or rather memorandums, which were to be presented to the Governments in Oslo and Copenhagen on April 9.¹⁶⁴ On the same day, he sent a telegram of condolences to the President of Argentina, Robert Ortiz, on the death of his wife.¹⁶⁵

Hitler ordered a state funeral on April 8 for the deceased President of the Reich Research Council, Artillery General Professor Karl Becker.¹⁶⁶ As announced, the British began mining the waters off the coast of Norway on that day. The intent obviously was to hinder the advance of the German troop transports.

On April 9, the operation "Weser Exercise" was launched at 4:20 a.m. As usual, Hitler had not initiated Mussolini into his plans. Instead he had him roused at 7:00 a.m. to inform him by a written "message" of the beginning of the operation. This was the first in a series of letters which, in the subsequent two months, would reach Mussolini at short intervals. Their sole purpose was to impress upon the Duce Hitler's various military measures and successes and his detailed knowledge of operations.¹⁶⁷ The High Command of the Wehrmacht issued the following statement on April 9, which informed the German public of Hitler's latest foray:¹⁶⁸

To thwart the current British assault upon the neutrality of Denmark and Norway, the Wehrmacht has undertaken the armed defense of these states. To this end, strong German forces of all branches of the Wehrmacht have entered, or rather landed, in these countries in the morning. To protect these operations, vast mine barriers have been erected.

At the time military operations against Norway and Denmark began, the respective German Envoys Bräuer and Renthe-Fink presented the Governments in Oslo and Copenhagen with the memorandum

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reproduced below. The German diplomats had been informed of Hitler's intentions only the night before.¹⁶⁹

Berlin, April 9, 1940

MEMORANDUM

Contrary to the sincere desire of the German people and their Government to live in peace and amity with the English and French peoples, and in spite of the absence of reasonable grounds for a conflict between them, those in power in London and Paris declared war on Germany. With the unleashing of this war of aggression against the existence of the German Reich and the German people for which they had long been preparing, England and France also started a maritime war against the neutral world.

While with complete disregard of the most elementary rules of international law they sought to direct a hunger blockade against German women, children, and old people, at the same time they subjected neutral states to their ruthless blockade measures. The immediate consequences of these methods of warfare initiated by England and France, which are contrary to international law and which had to be met by Germany with countermeasures, were the most severe damage to neutral shipping and to neutral trade. This English procedure, however, dealt the very concept of neutrality a shattering blow. Yet Germany, for her part, has made serious efforts to preserve the rights of neutral countries by her endeavors to limit maritime warfare to maritime zones lying between Germany and her opponents. In contrast to this, England, with the object of diverting danger from her own islands and at the same time of preventing German trade with neutral countries, has expended greater and greater efforts on carrying maritime warfare into neutral waters. In pursuance of this truly British method of waging war, England has taken belligerent action at sea and in the air and even in the territorial waters and on the territory of Denmark and Norway to an ever increasing degree and in flagrant breach of international law.

From the outbreak of the war Germany had foreseen this development. Through her economic policy at home and abroad she has known how to frustrate the attempt made by the British to set up a hunger blockade against the German people and to prevent the strangulation of German trade with neutral states. This has caused the complete collapse of the British blockade policy to become increasingly evident in recent months.

This development, together with the hopelessness of any direct attack on German western defenses and the growing anxiety in England and France in the face of successful German counterattacks at sea and in the air, has recently caused both nations to make increasingly serious efforts by every means in their power to transfer the theater of war to the neutral mainland both within and outside of Europe. It goes without saying that following British tradition, England and France, in making these attempts, have the territories of the small European states primarily in view. During recent months English and French statesmen have quite openly proclaimed the extension of the war to these territories to be the fundamental strategical concept of their conduct of the war.

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The Russo-Finnish conflict offered the first occasion for this. The English and the French Governments expressed quite openly their intention to intervene with military force in the conflict between Soviet Russia and Finland, and to use the territory of the northern states as a base of operations for this purpose. Only the early conclusion of peace in the north, which occurred contrary to their wishes and expectation, hindered them from putting this decision into effect at that time. When the English and French statesmen subsequently declared that they had intended to make the carrying out of this action dependent upon the concurrence of the northern states, that was a gross untruth. The Reich Government has documentary proof in its possession showing that England and France had together decided, if necessary, to carry out the action through the territories of the northern states even against their will.

The decisive factor is, however, the following:

From the attitude of the French and English Governments before and after the conclusion of the Soviet-Finnish peace, and from the documentary evidence in the hands of the Reich Government, there is indisputable proof that the decision to assist Finland against Russia should over and above that serve to aid further plans.

The further aim of England and France in Scandinavia was and is rather:

1. By occupation of Narvik to cut off Germany from her ore supply route from the north.

2. By the landing of English and French fighting forces in Scandinavian countries to establish a new front in order to attack Germany's flank from the north.

In this way the northern countries would serve as a theater of war for the English and French forces, while the northern people in accordance with age-long English tradition would be allotted the role of auxiliary and mercenary troops. As by reason of the conclusion of the Finnish-Russian peace this plan was frustrated, it then became even clearer to the Reich Government that England and France were making definite endeavors immediately to realize and develop their plans in a different way. With the continued necessity of preparing an intervention in the north, the English and French Governments in recent weeks have openly proclaimed the thesis that there could be no neutrality in this war, and that it was the duty of small countries actively to take part in the war against Germany. This thesis was spread abroad by the propaganda from the Western Powers, supported by ever increasing political pressure on the neutral countries.

If there ever was the slightest doubt regarding the definite intention of the Western Powers to intervene in the north, it has finally been removed during the last few days: The Reich Government has in its possession conclusive evidence that England and France intended to effect a surprise occupation of certain territories in the northern countries within the next few days. The northern countries have on their part not only not offered any resistance to these encroachments by England and France thus far, but have even tolerated without taking any countermeasures the gravest encroachments on their sovereign rights.

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The Reich Government must, consequently, assume that the Royal Norwegian Government will adopt the same attitude toward the action now being planned and about to be carried out by England and France. But even if the Royal Norwegian Government had been intending to take countermeasures, the Reich Government is quite certain that the Norwegian military forces would not be sufficient to be able to oppose the English-French operations successfully. In this decisive phase of the fight for existence forced on the German people by England and France, the Reich Government can in no circumstances tolerate that Scandinavia should be made by the Western Powers the theater of war against Germany, and that the Norwegian people, whether directly or indirectly, be misused in a war against Germany.

Germany does not intend to await idly or to put up with such a realization of her opponents' plans. The Reich Government therefore has today begun certain military operations, which will lead to the occupation of strategically important points on Norwegian territory. The Reich Government therewith undertakes the protection of the Kingdom of Norway for the duration of the war. It has resolved, from now on, to protect and definitely assure peace in the north with all its power against any English-French attack.

The Reich Government did not wish this development. England and France alone bear the responsibility. Both States proclaim quite hypocritically the protection of small countries. In reality, however, they offer violence to them in the hope of being able thereby to realize their will to destroy, directed against Germany and every day proclaimed more openly.

The German troops therefore do not set foot on Norwegian soil as enemies. The German High Command does not intend to make use of the points occupied by German troops as bases for operations against England, as long as it is not forced to do so by measures taken by England and France. On the contrary German military operations aim exclusively at protecting the north against the proposed occupation of Norwegian bases by English-French forces. The Reich Government is convinced that by this action it is at the same time serving Norway's interests. For this protection by the German Wehrmacht offers the Scandinavian peoples the only guarantee that during this war their countries will not become a field of battle or the scene, perhaps, of most terrible engagements.

The Reich Government therefore expects that the Royal Norwegian Government and the Norwegian people will respond with understanding to the German action and offer no resistance to it. Any resistance would have to be and would be broken by all possible means by the German forces employed and would therefore lead only to absolutely useless bloodshed. The Royal Norwegian Government is therefore requested to take all measures with the greatest speed to ensure that the advance of the German troops may take place smoothly and without difficulties.

In the spirit of the good relations between Germany and Norway which have existed hitherto, the Reich Government declares to the Royal Norwegian Government that Germany has no intention of infringing by her measures the territorial integrity and political independence of the Kingdom of Norway now or in the future.

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The bombastic tone of the memorandum, the rhetorical references to the "fight for existence forced on the German people" and the "protection of the Scandinavian peoples," did not change the facts. It was clear that Hitler had once more overrun two neutral states, despite repeated prior pledges to respect the declared neutrality of these countries. As recently as May 31, 1939, Hitler had even entered into a solemn pact of non-aggression with Denmark.¹⁷⁰

Still, why should a man like Adolf Hitler feel obliged to uphold his own promises when visions of a "Germanic Reich of the German Nation" were dancing in his head? On the same day German troops were raping Denmark and Norway, Hitler declared in front of his closest assistants: "Just as the year 1866 gave birth to the Reich of Bismarck, so this day will give birth to the Greater Germanic Reich!"¹⁷¹

Resistance to German troops led by General von Kaupisch lasted but a few hours in Denmark.¹⁷² The Danish soldiers on Jutland put up resistance as best they could. The country's ports were taken by complete surprise, however. Crews were fast asleep when German soldiers boarded their various battleships, supply or transport vessels. Copenhagen was taken with equal ease. Only the Danish royal guards made a desperate attempt to liberate the citadel already in German hands. Several of the German troops' commanders had already arrived in Denmark several days earlier, disguised as tourists.¹⁷³ The familiarity they acquired with the future theater of operations was of great benefit to them on April 9. Rumors of a "fifth column," consisting of ethnic Germans residing in Denmark and Danish traitors, which allegedly rendered the surprisingly speedy defeat of this country possible, were completely unfounded.¹⁷⁴ Rather it was the element of surprise which figured heavily in the easy victory and which forced King Christian X and the Danish Government to surrender by 7:30 a.m.

From the Allies' standpoint, it is true that the swift defeat of the Danes was regrettable. However, even had resistance continued, it would have been only a matter of days before the Wehrmacht trampled it to the ground. Resistance was senseless in view of the vast numerical superiority of the German forces deployed.

News of the Danes' early capitulation delighted Hitler. Consequently, he was extraordinarily lenient in his treatment of Denmark, which was to occupy a type of most-favored nation status among the territories the Third Reich conquered. Both the King of Denmark and his government were allowed to retain office, though only symbolically. Supplies of foodstuffs throughout the war remained better there than

in any other occupied territory. Hitler neither insisted on repatriating northern Schleswig to Germany, nor on “shredding” the paragraph of the Versailles Treaty which had transferred this province to Denmark after the First World War.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, his leniency could be termed “magnanimous”—so Hitler might well have applauded himself. In fact, he was most generous in his treatment of others as long as they abided by his terms.

In Norway, too, Hitler had entrusted the occupation of the territory exclusively to the Wehrmacht. This was his habit in all his foreign policy dealings.¹⁷⁶ Having already judged the collaboration of ethnic Germans, even if they were tried and true National Socialists, in such ventures as an element too unreliable, he was reluctant to accord men like Vidkun Quisling a role of importance in the new administration.¹⁷⁷ There could be even less talk of a “fifth column” operating in Norway than in Denmark, where at least a few ethnic Germans in northern Schleswig had openly welcomed the advancing German troops.

In Norway, however, the element of surprise in the Wehrmacht’s assault was not as complete as had been the case in Denmark. Already on the previous day, the Norwegians had torpedoed the German steamer *Rio de Janeiro* off the southern coast of the country. Hundreds of German soldiers had saved their lives by jumping overboard and swimming ashore, where the Norwegian officials took them prisoner.

The element of surprise was maintained in locations such as Bergen, Trondheim, and Stavanger only. The attack on Narvik could equally be considered a success. Most of the aerial landings went according to plan. Still, enemy fire was heavy in the fjord of Oslo. The heavy cruiser *Blücher* sustained artillery and torpedo hits there and sank.¹⁷⁸ The cruiser *Karlsruhe* suffered a similar fate off Kristiansand.¹⁷⁹ At Bergen, the cruiser *Königsberg* was lost.¹⁸⁰ News from Narvik left no doubt that, should British destroyers appear on the horizon, the German ground forces would not be able to hold on for long.

A far greater setback for Hitler, though mostly psychological, was the Norwegian rejection of the German memorandum which the Envoy Bräuer had transmitted in compliance with instructions from Berlin. King Haakon and his government summarily dismissed the German summons to surrender in the following statement: “We will not submit voluntarily: the struggle is already under way.”¹⁸¹

But Hitler was not a man easily discouraged. He persisted in repeated attempts to change the King’s mind at the Court’s place of refuge about 100 kilometers to the North of Oslo (first located at

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Elverum, later at Nybersund). Time and time again Bräuer received instructions to try persuading the King and his ministers, as on April 10 and April 11. And time and time again the German Envoy failed. In face of the unyielding stance of the Court and the Norwegian Government, Hitler finally resolved to have the King's refuge bombed. This failed to eliminate the indomitable King and his cabinet.

On April 11, Hitler sent out another "urgent" letter to the Duce, asking him to make a military contribution or demonstration of some kind. Hastily Mussolini replied in the affirmative. Ambassador Attolico received prompt instructions to relate to the Reich Chancellery that "our preparation in the air and on land is proceeding at an accelerated pace."

Ciano further noted that Hitler "has given optimistic reports on the course of the present aero-naval battle. I wonder. Only time will prove whether the Führer has acted as a strategist or has run into a dangerous trap."¹⁸²

3

The military occupation of Denmark and Norway took the German public by complete surprise, much like the rest of the world. Few Germans were familiar with these countries, at best having passed their coasts on board KdF ships on holidays prior to the war. Even within the Party, few Germans were of a “Nordic” orientation or enthusiastic about all things “Germanic.” Least of all was Germany a “seafaring” nation. The sea meant nothing to the population at large.

There was but one thought in the heads of most who bent over the maps reproduced in the newspaper that morning: Why should their sons and brothers fight and die so far away? Not even in the First World War had it appeared that German soldiers were perishing in such distant lands. The fact that the newspaper reports claimed only two ships had been lost, namely the *Blücher* and the *Karlsruhe*, and remained silent on the sinking of the *Königsberg*, did little to relieve the oppressive atmosphere.

Naturally, everyone realized that the further developments in Norway hinged especially on the reaction of the Allies to the unexpected German aggression. German soldiers in the North were doomed should large Allied contingents enter the war. Nonetheless, there was little enthusiasm on the part of the Allies to transform Norway into the main theater of war.

Churchill was persuaded that it was of singular importance to point to the Wehrmacht’s assault upon two defenseless, neutral states without prior declaration of war as an act to be condemned, violating international law and custom. He likened the Wehrmacht to a waterfall. It would be against all rules of common sense to subject oneself to its concentrated onslaught. It was more cautious to wait until the stream of water had broadened and the forces dissipated. Once the German military was engaged along many fronts, the Allies could deal

far more effective blows to the Wehrmacht. Norway with its long coastline, its many fjords and mountains, provided the Wehrmacht ample opportunity to water down its forces in the attempt to occupy the entire country. On April 11, Churchill commented on the German conquest of Denmark and Norway:¹⁸³

The strange and unnatural calm of the last few weeks was violently broken on Monday morning by the German invasion of Norway and Denmark. This crime had, of course, been long and elaborately prepared, and it was actually set in motion in the last week of March. For several months past we have received information of large numbers of German merchant ships being fitted as transports and of numerous small vessels being assembled in various Baltic ports and, also, in the mouths of the River Elbe. But no one could tell when or against what peaceful country they would be used. Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were, as it seemed, all equally liable to a sudden, brutal, capricious and, in any case, unprovoked attack. [—]

The Nazi German Government is accustomed to spreading through its channels a continuous flow of threats and rumors. These are put forth by all their agents in neutral countries, by the “hangers-on” of their legations and by their sympathizers and backers, wherever they may be found. All these countries have been threatened, and as the German Government are not restrained by law or scruple, and as they have an obvious preference for striking at the weak rather than the strong, all the small countries on their borders were, and still are, in a high state of alarm. [—]

In the small hours of Monday morning we learned that Norway and Denmark had drawn the unlucky numbers in this sinister lottery.

Given the Allies’ intent to engage Germany in a long and costly war, it was not surprising that the Allied military commanders resolved to play a subdued role in Norway. Nevertheless, the invading German troops suffered heavy losses at the hands of the British Navy and Royal Air Force. At Narvik, the English sank all ten German destroyers deployed. A joint Anglo-French ground force set out from the two small ports of Namsos and Andalsnes, and from the area north of Narvik. These were but small operations and largely symbolic in nature. Nonetheless, they served their purpose of reinforcing the Norwegian Army’s willingness to resist the German invaders.

Despite the small scale of the British operations, the measures taken in the vicinity of Narvik nearly caused Hitler to panic. He had not anticipated any armed resistance by the Western Powers to the German onslaught in Denmark and Norway. Even the slightest move on their part now induced him to fear for “Case Yellow,” his favorite brainchild, namely the attack first on Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and then on northern France. The urgent calls for help from the

German mountain infantry units, led by Lieutenant General Dietl,¹⁸⁴ did little to relieve Hitler's concern.

On April 14, Hitler was so downtrodden at the plight of Dietl's men and at the other unexpected developments that he contemplated instructing them to fight their way south. He even thought of issuing orders for them to retreat to Swedish territory and to let themselves be taken prisoner.

By April 17, an inconsolable Hitler even studied plans for an aerial rescue mission to rescue Dietl's group. Technically speaking, this was impossible. Desperation authored the plan. In view of Hitler's desolation, Jodl was forced to encourage his Führer to take heart. Finally, he persuaded Hitler to sign an order for Dietl to hold out as long as possible.¹⁸⁵

On April 17 also, Hitler issued the following appeal to the Kriegswinterhilfswerk, now including the Red Cross, too:¹⁸⁶

For seven months now, the German soldier has been risking his life on land, at sea, and in the air, in the defense of the homeland. In turn, he expects that, should he be injured or fall ill, the homeland will afford him the best of care and attention.

For this task, the men and women of the Red Cross, as the most experienced personnel with the best technical means, are at his disposal day and night. As manifold as the tasks of the Red Cross are, as great are its needs for technical equipment. I have hence ordered proceeds of the Kriegswinterhilfswerk collections in the coming months to benefit the Red Cross. I appeal to the German Volk to show itself worthy, through its contributions, of the sacrifices of its soldiers.

Adolf Hitler

On April 18, Hitler signed into law new statutes for a German library in Leipzig, and thereby incorporated it under public law.¹⁸⁷

On April 19, Hitler was forced to concede that his repeated attempts had failed to induce the Norwegian King and his government to place themselves under German "protection." In frustration, he expelled the Norwegian Envoy in Berlin, Scheel, from the Reich and recalled the German Envoy in Oslo, Bräuer. At this time, he also summoned the Gauleiter and High President of Essen, Terboven,¹⁸⁸ to Berlin. After a short talk that evening, he appointed Terboven Reichskommissar for the occupied Norwegian territories.¹⁸⁹ Terboven was devoted to Hitler as a convinced National Socialist. As with Bürckel in the case of Austria, his expertise was not "burdened" with any bonds to Norway or intimate knowledge of the country.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, Hitler judged him well-suited to assume the position of Reichskommissar and to see

through the Third Reich's designs in Norway. He placed Terboven directly under his command.¹⁹¹

April 20, 1940, marked Hitler's fifty-first birthday. Celebrations were subdued in view of the war. No gigantic parade rolled through Berlin's streets. Merely a few delegations of representatives of the "Volk," with adults attired in traditional costumes and children bearing flowers for the Führer, were summoned to the Wilhelmsplatz to demonstrate their dedication to the head of the nation. From the early morning hours on until 8:00 p.m., Hitler made several token appearances on the balcony of the Reich Chancellery.

The following communiqué was issued on the occasion:¹⁹²

The Führer spent his birthday surrounded by a small circle of his political and military co-workers in the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. This year he distanced himself from official celebrations of the event.

Taking advantage of the military's morning briefing, the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht branches, Field Marshal Göring, Grand Admiral Raeder, and Colonel General von Brauchitsch, relayed the Wehrmacht's congratulations to the Führer. Field Marshal Göring reported on the scrap metal collection of the German Volk, which has proven an overwhelming success. Approximately at noon, the Deputy of the Führer, Reich Minister Rudolf Hess, congratulated the Führer. The Reich Ministers, Reichsleiters, and Gauleiters present in Berlin followed suit.

The number of foreign dignitaries who sent their best wishes to Hitler on his birthday was significantly smaller in 1940 than in any previous year. In the course of the war, their numbers were to decline further. The German News Bureau published the following statement on this topic:¹⁹³

Numerous foreign heads of state and heads of government have remembered the Führer on his birthday again this year.

And thus the Führer received congratulatory telegrams of a heartfelt nature from: the King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia; the Emperor of Manchukuo; the King of Belgium; the King of Denmark; the Queen of the Netherlands; the King of Romania; the King of Thailand; the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia; the Spanish Head of State, Franco; the Regent of Hungary, Horthy; the State Presidents of Slovakia and of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Moreover, the Italian Head of Government relayed his friendly congratulations to the Führer by telegram. The Royal Foreign Minister Count Ciano transmitted his congratulations by telegram as well, as did other prominent personalities abroad. The foreign representatives accredited in Berlin expressed their best wishes by signing their names to the guest book open to the public at the Presidential Chancellery of the Führer.¹⁹⁴

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Hitler thanked King Victor Emmanuel and Mussolini in the two following telegrams:¹⁹⁵

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt gratitude for the best wishes conveyed to me on the occasion of my birthday today.

Adolf Hitler

My heartfelt thanks, Duce, for the best wishes you sent me on behalf of the Fascist Government and the people of Italy. I reply to your greetings in the unshakeable faith that, thanks to the solidarity of our Weltanschauungen and our goals, our allied nations shall victoriously emerge from this struggle for their vital rights.

Adolf Hitler

On the occasion of his birthday, Hitler awarded the Knight's Cross to Schniewind and Dönitz. The following statement was issued to the public:¹⁹⁶

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross to the Chief of Staff of the War Navy, Vice-Admiral Schniewind, and to the Commander in Chief of the Submarine Fleet, Rear Admiral Dönitz. The Führer has hereby bestowed this high distinction on two officers who, respectively, exercised decisive influence on the planning and conduct of operations at sea and bore responsibility for the deployment of the U-boat force.

In addition, Hitler effected a series of promotions in Army, Navy, Luftwaffe, and the police on that day.

On April 22, Hitler published the following expression of gratitude for the congratulations received on his birthday:¹⁹⁷

From all circles of the German Volk and of ethnic Germans living abroad issued forth the best wishes and other tokens of appreciation which I have received on the occasion of my fifty-first birthday. As it is impossible for me to express my thanks for each of them individually, I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to each individual Volksgenosse in this fashion.

In the latter part of April, Hitler exchanged a significant correspondence with King Gustav V of Sweden. The topic was Sweden's future neutrality and Germany's intention to respect it. It was not until some weeks later, that the following official statement on this subject was made public:¹⁹⁸

In the second half of April, the Führer and the King of Sweden engaged in an exchange of ideas on the political situation. This exchange of ideas has reasserted, in addition to the respective public declarations of the German and the Swedish Governments, full agreement on the further conduct of mutual relations.

On April 22 and April 23, as Jodl noted in his diary, Hitler grew “increasingly uneasy about the English landings.”¹⁹⁹ By April 24, however, the situation had improved vastly. Reassured, Hitler now signed into law a decree on the exercise of governmental functions in Norway. In part, this edict yielded to the generals’ demands by according them a certain “military sovereignty.” Nevertheless, none of the generals received any political powers to speak of. The decree read:²⁰⁰

The Nygaardsvold Government,²⁰¹ by virtue of its proclamations, its conduct, and its initiating of military action between Norway and the German Reich, has created a state of war. In order to ensure public life and public order in the Norwegian territories under the protection of German troops, I hereby give the following orders:

Article I

The occupied Norwegian territories are to come under the jurisdiction of the “Reichskommissar for the Occupied Norwegian Territories.” His headquarters are to be in Oslo. The Reichskommissar is to be the protector of the Reich interests and to exercise supreme governmental power in the civilian sector.

Article II

The Reichskommissar may make use of the Norwegian Administrative Council²⁰² and of the Norwegian authorities for the execution of his orders and for administrative purposes.

Article III

(1) The hitherto existing body of law shall remain in force wherever it is compatible with the occupation.

(2) The Reichskommissar may issue laws by decree. The decrees will be published in the official Gazette for the occupied Norwegian territories.

Article IV

The commander of the German troops in Norway shall exercise the supreme military authority; his requests will be carried out in the civilian sector exclusively by the Reichskommissar. He shall have the right to order measures necessary for the execution of his military mission and for the military security of Norway, in keeping with military requirements.

Article V

The Reichskommissar may make use of German police organs for the execution of his orders. The German police organs shall be at the disposal of the commander of the German troops in Norway as far as is necessary in the interest of military requirements and compatible with the duties of the Reichskommissar.

Article VI

The Reichskommissar shall be directly responsible to me and shall receive his guidance and directives from me.

Article VII

I appoint Oberpräsident Terboven Reichskommissar for the Occupied Norwegian Territories.

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Article VIII

Regulations for the implementation and supplementation of this decree will be issued in the civilian sector by the Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery and in the military sector by the Chief of the OKW on the basis of my directives.

Berlin, April 24, 1940

The Führer Adolf Hitler

The Chairman of the Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich,
Göring, Field Marshal

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Dr. Lammers

The Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Keitel

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

On April 26, Hitler visited Rudolf Hess in his Berlin flat to congratulate him on his forty-sixth birthday.²⁰³

Two days later, the Führer sent yet another letter to the Duce to brief him on his latest military exploits in Norway.²⁰⁴

On April 29, Hitler penned two congratulatory telegrams, the first addressed to the Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia, and the second to the Japanese Emperor Hirohito. In addition, one day later, Hitler instructed Duke Carl Eduard of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to present the Imperial family in Tokyo with his congratulations on the 2,600th anniversary of the Japanese Emperor's lineage.²⁰⁵

Also on April 30, Hitler awarded the famous operetta composer, Franz Léhar, on his eightieth birthday, the Goethe Medal for the Arts and Sciences.²⁰⁶

Moreover, Hitler called on Ribbentrop at his house in Berlin that day to congratulate him on his forty-seventh birthday.²⁰⁷

At 1:35 in the afternoon, Jodl reported to Hitler that German troops had established a land bridge between Oslo and Trondheim. Hitler was "overjoyed" at the news, as Jodl carefully noted in his diary. That day Jodl was granted the special distinction of sitting next to Hitler at the dinner table.²⁰⁸ It was only natural that Hitler would rejoice at this development since it heralded the end of the war in the central and southern sections of the country at least. This was a first step towards a swift end to the unpleasantly prolonged engagement.²⁰⁹

In the late evening hours of April 30, Hitler issued the following proclamation, addressed to the German soldiers fighting in Norway:²¹⁰

Berlin, April 30, 1940

Soldiers of the Norwegian Theater of War!

Through tremendous advances, German troops have established a land connection between Oslo and Trondheim. Thus, the ambition of the Allies

to force us to our knees by belatedly occupying Norway has been quelled for good.

Units of the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe have in exemplary cooperation secured an achievement, the boldness of which does great honor to our young German Wehrmacht.

Officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men! You have fought in the Norwegian theater of war against all adversity at sea, on land, and in the air, and against enemy resistance. You have solved the immense task which I was forced to impose upon you in my belief in you and your strength. I am proud of you. Through me, the nation expresses its gratitude to you.

As an outward sign of appreciation and gratitude, I bestow upon the Commander in Chief in Norway, General von Falkenhorst, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

By recommendation of your Commanders in Chief, I shall decorate the most valiant among you as well. May the greatest reward to you consist in the knowledge that you have contributed decisively in this struggle of our Volk for existence. I know that you shall continue to fulfill your assigned mission in the future as well. Long live our Greater Germany!

Adolf Hitler

May 1 marked the "national holiday of the German Volk" in the National Socialist tradition. In previous years, the festivities usually culminated in two public addresses by Hitler. By 1940, however, he no longer felt comfortable at mass rallies and chose not to appear before the German public. Instead, he left it to Hess to say a few appropriate words on the occasion of a gathering at the Krupp Engine Works.

On this first day of May 1940, Hitler set the date for "Case Yellow": May 5.²¹¹ The swift progress made in Norway, especially the pending conclusion of hostilities, compelled him forward. He wished to lose no more time and to finally launch the assault on the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. May 5 was a Sunday and in light of Hitler's preference for starting his ventures on weekends, if possible, this date appeared very suitable. Yet adverse weather forced a postponement until the sixth, then the seventh, then the eighth, and finally the tenth of May.

On May 2, Hitler conferred with Göring and other high-ranking Luftwaffe officers. They discussed the deployment of airborne assault units and paratroopers to conquer "fortress Holland."²¹²

On May 3, in the Berlin Sportpalast, 6,000 officer cadets were summoned to bear witness to an appeal by the Führer. For the occasion, Hitler dressed in riding pants and knee boots as though to underline he was ready for a "fight." The following statement was published on Hitler's appeal to the cadets:²¹³

On Friday [May 3], the Führer and Supreme Commander once more gathered about him candidates for officer and leadership positions in Army, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS at the Sportpalast. In an impressive address, the Führer outlined the tasks his young comrades would face at the front in the fight to decide the existence or non-existence of our Volk. Field Marshal Göring concluded the appeal with a *Sieg Heil* shout for the Führer. The young soldiers demonstrated that they had understood their Supreme Commander with enthusiastic shouts of *Heil*.

The speech was typical for the appeals which Hitler enjoyed making to this audience,²¹⁴ as it included all major points usually discussed on similar occasions.

Key phrases were: the adaptation of the Lebensraum to increasing population; Germany as the most populous nation on earth, with the exception of China; struggle as the essence of life. Hitler's comments were decidedly colored by the imminent launch of the offensive in the West.

Hitler spoke of the "second act in a gigantic struggle," referring to the First World War as the "first act," and of a "period of rapidly approaching great decisions of world-historic import." He could not resist mocking "the pitiful leadership of the World War" which constantly "stumbled over threads" and dared not "step across lines drawn in crayon." Hitler need not have worried himself; he was not the man to be held back by threads, such as those tying Germany to its obligations under international law or contracts previously entered into with other states. His "philosophy of state" was decidedly less complex in nature. It was steeped in the concept of brute force which he had already set forth in *Mein Kampf*.²¹⁵ And he had few qualms about frankly admitting this in various boasts before the young officers sitting in front of him: "The earth is there for him who takes it. [—] It is a challenge cup which is taken from those peoples who become weak, . . ." because: "Strength (*Kraft*) determines right on this soil."

Hitler began his speech as follows:

Heil Offiziersanwärter!

The battle in the midst of which Germany finds itself today is the second act of the great, decisive struggle which will determine the future of our race, of our Reich. You often hear the term balance of power these days: the balance of power in Europe. In particular of late, you will have had occasion to read that the cause for this battle lies with the threatened disruption of this balance of power in Europe.

Now what is the meaning of this thesis? Germany's racial core consists of a mass of Volk of over eighty million men. Throughout the centuries, albeit

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in lesser numbers, this mass of Volk formed the center of gravity in Europe. Over the past 300 years, this center of gravity in terms of the Volk's mass has lost its significance in power politics.

At the end of the Thirty Years' War, the political unity of this mass began to disintegrate and to evolve into a conglomerate of small, individual states. With this, it lost its inner value—and, in particular, the impact in terms of power normally attributed to the center of gravity in Europe. The Peace of Münster—it established at least the vision of the political divisiveness of the German nation. Hence, it created the prerequisites for the rise of other powers to hegemony on the world stage—to a degree far beyond the numeric significance and value of these other races. Without this fragmentation of Germany, this political atomization, the rise of England as a world power over the past three hundred years would not have been conceivable. Without this, France would never have become what it became later, after overcoming its political, internal multifariousness, and what it would still like to be today. Broadly speaking, these two world powers are nothing other than the result of the elimination of the German nation as a factor in power politics. By the same token, the political impotence of the German nation remains a prerequisite to their continued existence in the future, as well. Hence, a balance of power has established itself in Europe devoid of a foundation in terms of the masses. The strongest European nation by far has rendered this exaggerated significance possible through its political fragmentation. Without this fragmentation, Germany undoubtedly would still constitute the determining factor in Europe as was the case earlier. And thus came about a state of affairs called the balance of power in Europe. Its mission is to eliminate the strongest European force as a factor in power politics by fostering its internal fragmentation.

For us Germans, the question arises: is a modification of this state of affairs necessary? Today, we need not reply to this any more. Its answer lies in the natural drive of all living beings. Its political answer goes back to the time when at the moment of collapse, or rather when the collapse of the Old Reich was imminent, a rebirth already became evident in the creation of a new cell, that of the Brandenburg-Prussia of the day.

He then proceeded in detail to the subject of *Lebensraum*.

Yet, beyond this, there is another compelling reason to seek a modification in this balance of power in Europe. The problem presents itself in the following manner to us Germans. There are two decisive elements in the life of a Volk. On the one hand, there is a variable: the Volk's numbers; and, on the other hand, there is the *Lebensraum* as a given—a fact which does not change by itself. The Volk's numbers and the *Lebensraum* exist interdependently and this interdependence is of fateful significance in the lives of peoples. Man lives not by theories alone. He lives not by phrases, nor does he live by programs. Man lives by what the *Lebensraum* at his disposal affords him in terms of foodstuffs and raw material, and by what he is then able, thanks to his industriousness, to reap from it through his work. Nonetheless, the *Lebensraum* is of primary importance, of course. For while a Volk of great

industry may be able to fashion a bearable existence from even the most modest of Lebensraums, there will come a time when the discrepancy between the Volk's numbers and the Lebensraum becomes too great. This then leads to a restriction of life, even to an ending of life.

And thus, ever since there has been a history of man, this history has consisted of nothing other than the attempt to bring into harmony the naturally increasing numbers of a Volk with the Lebensraum. This meant either to adapt the Lebensraum to the Volk's numbers or to adapt the Volk's numbers to the Lebensraum. These are the two ways of establishing a tolerable relationship here.

I will begin with the first alternative: people adapt to the Lebensraum. This can occur naturally as the insufficient Lebensraum cannot provide for people. Weak peoples then begin to capitulate in the face of necessity and to abandon the foundation of their existence. This means that they start to reduce their numbers, primarily due to need.

There is yet another way of adapting the Volk's numbers to the Lebensraum. It is called emigration. In both ways, Germany has lost human material of immense value throughout the centuries. In centuries past already, need had been great in the German lands. Often this has led to a virtual decimation of men. The second way robbed us of yet more German blood. Throughout centuries, pressured by insufficient Lebensraum of their own, German men left their homeland and helped to build up those foreign states which now face us as enemies.

Another, third way was found of adapting the Volk's numbers to the given Lebensraum. It is called: voluntary reduction of birth rates. After the first way—that of hunger—no longer appeared tolerable and the second way—that of emigration—was blockaded by the Peace Treaties of Versailles, people turned to the third way in increasing numbers. It was even hailed as a virtue to voluntarily limit the strength of one's own Volk, to reduce the Volk's numbers. I need not tell you where this led. In the end, the result of all these attempts was that the potential for natural selection in a people was severely curtailed.

And, in the end, it begins to surrender its forces to better peoples. For it is emigration above all which, like a magnet, draws the active element out of a race, a Volk, and leaves behind only the weak, the cowardly, the meek. And if such a state of affairs is allowed to persist over the centuries, then a formerly important people will slowly but surely lose its steel and turn into a weak, a cowardly mass of men, willing to accept any fate.

This is the first way of establishing balance between a Volk's numbers and the Lebensraum. This way, no matter what the circumstances, will always lead to the destruction of a Volk. In the future, this will lead to a reduction of such a Volk in comparison to those peoples who choose the second way, namely, not to adapt the Volk's numbers to the Lebensraum, but rather to adapt the Lebensraum to the Volk's numbers. This is the way chosen by all vigorous nations of this earth. It is the natural way since Providence has placed man upon this earth and has given him this earth as his playground, as the basis for his existence. Providence has not initiated man in its designs. It has not

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assigned peoples certain Lebensräume. Instead Nature has placed these beings on this earth and has given them freedom. He who wants to live asserts himself. He who cannot assert himself does not deserve to live. He will perish. This is an iron, yet also a just principle. The earth is not there for cowardly peoples, not for weak ones, not for lazy ones. The earth is there for him who takes it and who industriously labors upon it and thereby fashions his life. That is the will of Providence. That is why it has placed man upon this earth, along with the other beings, and has paved the way for him, has freed him to make his own decisions, to lead his own struggle for survival.

And should he fail in this struggle, should he become weak in asserting his existence, then Providence will not rush to his aid. Instead, it will sentence him to death. And rightly so. Other men will come. The space will not remain empty. What the one man loses, another will take. And life continues in accordance with its own eternal rhythm without consideration for the weakling.

The earth is a challenge cup. It is a challenge cup which passes into the hands of those peoples who deserve it, who prove themselves strong enough in their struggle for existence, who secure the basis for their own existence. It is a challenge cup which is taken from those peoples who become weak, who are not willing, at the risk of the life of one generation, to secure the life of later generations. The right to this soil is given equally to all these peoples. On this earth, no Englishman has more rights than a Frenchman, no Frenchman has more rights than a Russian, no Russian has more rights than a German, no German has more rights than an Italian, and so on. Strength (*Kraft*) determines right on this soil. And strength is nothing other than an expression of a healthy sense of self-assertion. Peoples who start to lose this strength are no longer healthy and therefore lose their right to this earth. And to be able to exercise this strength, which is first of all a question of will, it is necessary to create certain organizational prerequisites. Foremost amongst these is the inner unity of a Volk. In Germany, we have witnessed the long, almost tragic evolution which was necessary to lead us from inner political conflicts once more to the core not of a new philosophy of state, but to the creation of a new state.

The core which gave us not only political unity, but above all the foundation of ethnic unity. Hereby it created the prerequisites for the inner unity of the German nation. What has come to pass in this realm within these seven years is the greatest of chapters in German history. Not only have countless political forms, old, no longer viable structures, been broken down, but also, in the realm of society, the birth of a new Volksgemeinschaft and hence of a new German Volk became apparent. In the course of the last years, we were able to observe how the toughness and the power of resistance of this new formation passed the test. I do not doubt that it will hold its own in emerging victoriously from this greatest trial in German history. And hence out of this social and moral revolution grew the new German Volksstaat.

Hitler could not resist the temptation of exaggerating in his “party narrative” either:

Since 1933, this new German Volksstaat has undergone change, strengthened its inner formation, through numerous acts of a lawgiving nature. And thus, this Volksstaat has now begun to create the elements necessary for its external liberation. What has been attained in this area within these seven years, is one of the greatest chapters in German history. In these seven years—I feel free to avow this openly before history—we have not wasted a single month in securing that power, without possession of which a people is doomed in its search for justice on this earth.

Its lack has shown us how helpless a Volk is when it depends upon the insight or mercy, the compassion or goodwill of other peoples whom it must implore and for which it must beg. And thus the Greater German Reich has fashioned its own arms. And with the increases in its arms and its power, the Greater German Reich itself has been strengthened. And today, we find ourselves in the midst of a great historic conflict, the second phase in a gigantic struggle. The initial phase we once lost not because our arms were bad by themselves, rather we lost it because the leadership failed and the German Volk in its inner formation was not yet prepared to see through such a struggle, as it lacked inner cohesion and strength. I have striven to make up for this within twenty years' time. And, so I believe, I succeeded. Whereas once the German soldier fought a lonely battle at the front, today he knows behind him the united force of a uniformly led and orientated Volk. This Volk today expects of the German soldier that he fulfill the mission of his life. The German soldier today can rest assured that the Volk standing behind him will recognize his needs and fulfill his wants.

Hitler then reproached the “small skeptic, the apprehensive man,” for his misgivings regarding victory in the end:

And then comes the question which will plague every small skeptic, every apprehensive man, one time or another, and which might well make you ill-at-ease also in the most trying of hours: “Is it actually possible to win this fight?” And, from the depths of my convictions, I would like to give you the following reply. I give it to you not as a pale theoretician, not as a man who is a stranger to the demands facing you at present. I face them myself. I am acquainted with all the needs, all the worries, all the cares, and all the hardships, which you will encounter and which some of you have already encountered.

I have experienced them all myself. And in spite of this, after the greatest of collapses then suffered, I already immediately knew the answer to this question. I found it for myself. At no moment was there any doubt in my heart that Germany would survive and that it would win this most difficult of struggles in its history.

Having proved the veracity of his convictions beyond all doubt in this proclamation, Hitler once more focused on the numbers and value of the German Volk and claimed that “there is no Volk better on this earth than the German one.”

Reasons for this belief lie not with some sort of fanatical hope, rather they are founded in recognition. For one, the numbers of the Volk. Even the most expert and most worthy of peoples can fail in their struggle for survival if the discrepancy of their numbers is too great and too obvious in view of the tasks faced and especially, of the forces of the environment. Antiquity furnishes us with two great, tragic examples: Sparta and Hellas. They were both doomed to failure in the end because the world in which they lived was numerically so superior to them that even the most successful of struggles was bound to tax their forces beyond measure.

When we look at today's Germany in light of this consideration, then, my young friends, we recognize a fact which occasions great joy: certainly, there is a British Empire, but there are only forty-six million Englishmen in the motherland. There is a huge American state, but amongst its 130 million inhabitants, there are barely sixty-five million true Anglo-Saxons, and that's that. The rest are Negroes, Jews, Latins, Irishmen, and Germans, and so on.

There is a huge Russian state. However, it has not even sixty million true Great Russians as its bearers. The rest consists of, in part, greatly inferior races. There is also France, spanning over nine million square kilometers of earth and with more than 100 million men, but amongst them are perhaps at most thirty-seven million true Frenchmen who must uphold this structure.

Well, here we stand, my young friends, a state of a total of 82 million German Teutons (*deutsche Germanen*). At present, we are the ethnically most numerous political structure of one race which exists on this earth, with the exception of China. This fact is not new. In former times as well, the German Volk determined, thanks to the force of its numbers, Europe's destiny.

And now there arises a second question, one of equal decisiveness, namely, that of the value of the Volk. For all of us know that numbers by themselves are not in the final instance decisive. And here, my young friends, we are able these days to proudly acknowledge: there is no Volk better on this earth than the German one. Believe me, in the days and months of the collapse of 1918, one thought uplifted me, put me back on my feet again, and returned to me my faith in Germany. It made me strong internally to begin and to take up this gigantic struggle. It was the conviction that even the World War had not proven us to be second class. On the contrary, it had proved us to be undoubtedly the best Volk, especially insofar as this was a question of soldierly virtues. And this is apparent again these days. Here is a Volk which in terms of numbers is the strongest state people on this earth. And beyond this, it is also the best Volk in terms of value, for this value in the end becomes apparent in the soldier. A Volk which does not cherish soldierly virtues is like straw on this earth; it will be blown away by the wind. However, a Volk which possesses as much metal as the German one needs only to develop its values and to apply these subsequently. Then no one can take its future from it.

There is yet another factor which must give all of us internal confidence: it is the ability of our Volk, also its economic ability. Here as well, great feats have been accomplished. The German Volk has wrought a miracle economically within these barely seven years. You all know of our great plans. They were inspired but by one thought.

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Naturally, Hitler did not forget to mention the Wehrmacht, with “the best equipped soldier of the world.”

Above all reigned the thought of the resurrection of the German Wehrmacht, the increasing independence of our economy, its freedom from exterior influences, its stability in the event of a blockade. These were the principles which moved us from day one to implement all these plans, which in the final instance found their realization in the Four-Year Plan. We have an economy in Germany today which ranks at the top of the world economy in particular as far as production in realms of vital importance to the war is concerned.

There is something else, too: the German organization. It is today's organization of our *Volkswesen*, of our Volksgemeinschaft. Said organization which today encompasses the entire German Volk, which reaches into every home, into every village, and there again into every farmstead, into every factory, into every craftsman's shop. There is no German who is not integrated into this gigantic organization. We have created a miracle instrument which enables us to issue a single directive and to drive it home into even the most remote hut within a few hours.

No Volk in the world today possesses a better form of organization than the German Volk; most do not even possess one nearly as good. A state of affairs which is accepted as a matter of course in other countries even today, we have long overcome. You need only think of the parliamentary theatrics in these states and, as soldiers, apply this mentally to a company or a battalion.

You will laugh at the idea of being able to hold your own in battle with such a lot. With such peoples, you cannot score successes in the long run. And this is better, too: we are the state which has created the most profound harmony between political organization and its military implementation; the state in which soldierly principles have been applied in the buildup of the Wehrmacht and which, in turn, have already found their political translation therein. And thus we can say that between the Wehrmacht and its principles on the one hand, and the political organization and the constructive elements therein on the other hand, there exists complete harmony. To this we must add the German soldier as a warrior. His equipment—today we have the best-equipped soldier of the world in our Army and in our Luftwaffe.

And secondly, the German soldier and his training. When today we hear of so low—relatively low²¹⁶—losses across the board, which stand in no relation to the losses which I myself had the opportunity to witness in the World War, then we owe this to the improved training of the individual soldier. But also we owe it to the leadership experienced in war, the more thorough training. Surely, today we have the best Wehrmacht there is in the world at this time.

The most important factor, however, was the leadership and the trust in this leadership, i.e. Adolf Hitler. In this context, Hitler portrayed himself as the role-model for the young soldiers. He claimed that he had not forgotten the “gnawing fear of death” which had

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gripped hold of him, too, as he had lain in the trenches. He had compassion for the young officers, but still he insisted: "It is of no import whether the individual among us lives—what must live is our Volk!"²¹⁷

Hitler relished playing the role of a Frederick the Great and called upon the soldiers to be "brave and valiant." Other phrases followed, such as "the German is no scoundrel that he will ever abandon his company commander," since "he will love him who leads him." Hitler stated in detail:

And finally, and this ought to be almost at the top of the list, there is one more thing which ought to reinforce us in our belief in victory: trust in the German leadership; in the leadership on top and way down. Trust in a leadership that knows only the thought of winning this battle, which subordinates all other concerns to this, which is suffused with the fanatical will to do everything and to risk everything for success in this battle, which unlike the pitiful leadership of the World War does not stumble over threads or is unable to step across lines drawn in crayon.

Instead the German Volk and above all you, as soldiers and future officers, must know that at the helm of the Reich there stands a leadership which night and day knows only the one thought: to force the victory under all circumstances! And to risk everything for it. And beyond this, you must know that this leadership naturally can only accomplish what is provided for by the highest echelons of leadership. And that you yourselves form part of this total leadership. Every one of you will have to struggle with the same problems which are not spared the supreme leadership of today either. For when I look back upon the war myself, then I have not forgotten those difficult hours full of worries, the gnawing fear of death, and all those other sentiments which man experiences in face of these most horrendous stresses placed upon nerves and willpower, of physical strain. I have not forgotten these—yet, still, how easy do all the decisions of the soldier then appear to me as opposed to the decisions which one later has to take upon oneself in positions of responsible leadership. How easy all of this is when it is merely a question of one's own life as opposed to holding, in the final instance, the nation's life and destiny in one's hands.

Whatever situation you may encounter individually, never forget one thing: Every decision you make, every action you order, every stand you occupy, all this will not be any more difficult than the same decisions, the same stands, the same willpower asked of those who in other places have to bear the responsibility, and have to bear it overall. In this respect, a great community of leadership must take hold in which every one occupies his place, is ready to fulfill his mission, is ready to rejoice in taking on responsibility in the one thought: It is of no import whether the individual among us lives—what must live is our Volk!

We now stand in the midst of the most decisive struggle for Germany's entire future. Of what importance is it should the individual amongst us, every

individual included, leave the stage? What is decisive is that our Volk can assert itself. And it will only then be able to assert itself when its leadership, at every instance, is willing to fanatically do everything for the one goal: To win this struggle. And believe me, my young friends, the individual man is always brave and valiant; the musketeer, he is always decent basically, he looks up to his leaders, he sees his company commander before him, his platoon leader. And let no one forget: The German is no such scoundrel (*Hundsfott*) that he will ever abandon his company commander. He would never do such a thing. He will follow his leader, but his leader must make it easy for him through his dedication, his daring, his courage. Such a leader will then always find a following and will chain it to himself—whatever his position may be, at the top or at the head of a group or platoon, or company. It will always be the same. The result: he will love him who leads him!

And even if life is wonderful and the sacrifice of life ever so hard, my young friends, many generations lived before us. That we are here today we do not owe to their peaceful existence, but to their placing at risk their own lives in the struggle. For the soil upon which we stand today was not given us by the Good Lord as a gift. It had to be gained in battle. And time and time again, there were Germans to be found who were willing to place their lives at risk in the past so that life might be given to later generations. And it is not as though placing one's life at risk was any easier then than it is today. It was just as bitter and just as difficult.

When we speak of the dead of the World War, then we should never forget that every single one of these two million gave his life for the future of the nation just as this may be asked of us and of you individually at one point. Another thing yet is certain: the more determined a Volk is in taking up a fight, the more ruthlessly it acts, the less the sacrifices will be!

And thus, I expect of you in this era of an approaching great, world-historic decision that you shall first be valiant, courageous, and exemplary officers, that you shall be comradely and loyal not only amongst yourselves, but also with the men placed in your care. Today you have a Volk—not mercenaries, not vagrants caught along country roads. Rather Volksgenossen are entrusted to your leadership. And this you may never forget. These Volksgenossen will all the more attach themselves to you, the more they feel they can see in you true leaders of the German Volk, of the Volk in arms. Expand your horizon, for the soldier needs—beyond heroics and courage and enthusiasm—the true foundations of knowledge. Here, too, knowledge is power. Above all, apply this expertise and knowledge in the care for the Volksgenossen entrusted to you. It is because of the absolute authority this state grants you that you are obligated to carefully attend to this authority in the service of the leadership of the men entrusted to you. To be a leader means to truly care for all those with whose care one has been entrusted. Above all, be a man in the hours of great trial. Persevere and above all be persistent.

Such ideas were not far off the mark when one attacked smaller, weaker nations. Hitler remarked that “today Germany fights as the strongest military state against a front of enemies inferior to it in terms

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of numbers and value.” However, with a superior adversary, the same maxims quickly turned against the aggressor. Hitler’s beloved metaphor of the “last battalion”²¹⁸ did not apply to Germany, no matter how loudly he proclaimed it:

The great victories of world history were accorded to that party which commanded the last battalion on the battlefield, i.e. the men who knew how to carry their heads high to the last minute. It is not as though the dice fell during the first minute of any battle. It is not as though one could say in the first minute already: naturally there will be success for the one side, it will carry the victory, no one can deny it, while on the other side, there will be only destruction. Great world-historic decisions seldom look like successes from the start. Many times the struggle is a difficult one and victory appears elusive. In the end, it will bestow its favors upon him whose persistence, whose fanatical, indestructible stand makes him the more deserving one. And here we Germans can look with pride to one soldier who has entered the halls of history as an immortal.

If there are men who doubt success or the possibility of success, then all we can say to them is: today Germany fights as the strongest military state against a front of enemies inferior to it in terms of numbers and value. Once a man, with a state of 2.7 million, dared to attack the monarchy in the Reich of the day and, after three wars against a European coalition of over forty million men, he carried the victory in the end. His were not only victories. What was so wonderful in all this was his attitude in the most critical of situations, his attitude when he faced defeat. Everyone can suffer a defeat now and then. What is decisive is his character, how he takes it, and immediately goes on the offensive again. This, my young friends, must be instilled in your flesh and blood, and this you must instill in your soldiers: we may be defeated once perhaps, but vanquished—never! And in the end, the victory will be ours—one way or another!

Thereupon, Hitler indulged in sentimental reminiscences on his “eventful life,” his many “defeats, blows, worries, and setbacks.” The masses, however, had failed to recognize these.

I can look back upon a most eventful life. It was not as though this struggle for power in Germany, for the new Movement, had consisted of only victories. You need only read the prophecies of my opponents. Who believed in my carrying the victory? Who believed in the certainty of the outcome of this struggle? It was a question of a great deal of persistence to overcome all these defeats, these blows, to emerge from them only to take power in the end. And in these last years as well—there have been many worries in countless realms. Many setbacks. The mass of the people may well not even have realized all of this, for the leadership has learned to come to terms with these [setbacks].

It is one of the most uplifting tasks of leadership to allow one’s followers to mark only the victory; and to take upon oneself the entire responsibility

at critical moments; to step in front of one's followers to shield them against this responsibility.

And now I ask of you to be aware at every hour that in your hand lies the honor of a great Volk, the honor not only of your generation but that of generations past. At every hour, not only the eyes of millions of your living contemporaries follow you, but also the eyes of those who closed them before us upon this earth. They look upon you through the past and hence through immortality and they will seek to determine whether and to what extent you are fulfilling those duties which other men before us so gloriously fulfilled. They expect of us that posterity should have no more cause to be ashamed of us than we have cause to be ashamed of the great eras of our past. When we hold up this sacred banner of honor and hence of a sense of duty, and when we with faithful hearts follow this flag, then the goal we all pursue can be nothing other than the victory of Greater Germany!

Hitler's conclusion, affirming the certainty of victory for Greater Germany, compelled Göring to pledge himself and the audience once more in an "oath of loyalty" to the Führer. Göring customarily did this at the end of each Reichstag speech. On this day in May 1940, Göring proclaimed: "The force and the strength of the first soldier have now been conferred upon you. May the strength of the Führer uplift you!"

On May 4, at the daily briefing on the progress of the campaign in Norway, Hitler declared himself "outraged that people other than himself interfered with the reporting." He insisted that the OKW was his personal staff, as Jodl recorded.²¹⁹ In fact, Hitler so dominated the daily briefing that he would alter with his own hand the military's report on the events in Norway, not being able to resist the temptation to add superlatives and bombast to the dry formulation the generals preferred.²²⁰

On May 5, Hitler sent a note to the composer Emil Nikolaus von Reznicek to congratulate him on his eightieth birthday. In the letter, Hitler emphasized his appreciation of the musician's contribution to the cause of music in Germany.²²¹

On the same day, Hitler wrote yet another letter addressed to Mussolini, in which he detailed the military aspects of the victory in Norway. He ridiculed "the military capacities of the Allies." He complained "about the excessive rapidity of the victory which has not permitted his involving the English forces more effectively to destroy them completely."²²²

On this May 5, as Jodl noted in his diary, Hitler had "successfully contrived a justification for "Case Yellow."²²³ Public pronouncement of this "justification" was awaited with great curiosity, as Hitler had earlier

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promised that the rationale for the violation of neutral territory presented in 1940 would not be as “idiotic” as that of 1914.

Hitler had planned heading for his new wartime headquarters in the West on May 7. Much to his regret, adverse weather made a renewed postponement necessary. He could not allay the fear that any further delay would bring with it the “danger of treason.”²²⁴ He need not have troubled himself, however. After all, it was impossible that the large-scale concentration of forces in the West and the connected military moves could escape the attention of the neutral states in question. On May 8 already, newspapers abroad carried disquieting reports on German troop concentrations and apparent preparations for a move against the Netherlands. On the same day, the German News Bureau hurriedly issued the following denial:²²⁵

The revelation of British plans for southeast Europe²²⁶ has made so strong an impression on the people concerned that the British warmongers are now resorting to diversions as stupid as they are awkward. In this, they take advantage of American press agencies disseminating information according to which the Netherlands are gravely threatened. It is the old game of “stop the thief” which is being played here. Thus, according to the Associated Press’s information, obtained from “a highly reliable source,” two German armies were moving from Bremen and Düsseldorf in the direction of the Netherlands and doing so at a speed which should allow them to reach the frontier shortly.

According to what we were able to ascertain, the “reliable source” of this military nonsense is none other than the British Ministry of Information. This British Ministry of Information was so disconcerted by the German revelations of the immediately impending British and French plans that, under any circumstances, it had to stage this attempt at diversion.

Only two days later, the libelous nature of this denial was revealed by the Führer’s proclamation to the soldiers of the Western Front.

On May 9, Hitler relayed his congratulations to King Carol on Romania’s national holiday.²²⁷ He also hosted the Italian Ambassador and his spouse at the Reich Chancellery to bid them farewell.²²⁸ Behind the Ambassador’s back, Hitler had agitated for the Italian’s replacement. He faulted Attolico for his “not clearly pro-German stance,” according to Jodl’s records.²²⁹ The truth of the matter was that Attolico knew too much; too many times had Attolico heard Hitler contradict himself.

Also on May 9, Hitler issued the following instructions to the Commanders in Chief of the troops deployed in Norway:²³⁰

Contrary to the will of the German Volk and its Government, King Haakon of Norway and his Cabinet have issued an appeal to wage war on Germany.

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From this struggle the following conclusions are to be drawn: during the war in the East, Poles mostly tortured and massacred, in the most gruesome fashion, German soldiers who had the misfortune of falling into Polish hands either unwounded or wounded. By contrast, one must concede to the Norwegian Army that not one such case of degeneracy in the conduct of war has occurred within its ranks. The Norwegian soldier has shown only disdain for all the cowardly and insidious methods which were resorted to daily by the Poles. He fought openly and honestly. He has treated our wounded and prisoners of war well, to the best of his ability, affording them respect and dignity. The civilian population has behaved in a similar manner. It did not interfere in the combat and has accorded the wounded its care.

Hence, I have determined, in recognition of these circumstances, to grant permission to release all Norwegian soldiers taken prisoner. Only professional soldiers are to be kept incarcerated until the former Norwegian Government retracts its appeal to wage war on Germany, or until each individual officer and soldier has given his word of honor not to continue, under any circumstances, his participation in the action against Germany.

Adolf Hitler

The “kindness” in evidence towards the Norwegians did not by any means reflect a humane strain in Hitler’s character. Rather it mirrored Hitler’s ambition to integrate this “Nordic” people into his community of the “Germanic Reich of the German nation.” This motive was equally in evidence in his lenient treatment of the Dutch, apparent in the later release of prisoners of war taken in the Netherlands. Belgian prisoners were far less fortunate than their Dutch and Norwegian counterparts, although the Belgian soldiers had not behaved in a manner discernibly different from that of the armed forces of the other two nations.

Hitler’s objective of assimilating all “Nordic” peoples into one Reich was of strategic importance to his move against the Netherlands. Occupation of the country brought no decisive strategic advantages, as its possession was not essential to a circumvention of the Maginot Line. Neither were German troops stationed in the Dutch ports instrumental in driving a wedge between France and Britain. Imperial Germany, for instance, had refrained from violating Dutch neutrality on these considerations. In 1914, German troops had limited their transgressions to territories lying in Belgium and Luxembourg. Hitler likewise could have limited his aggression, had not visions of a “Germanic Reich” so clouded his view that he took precautions not to end as William II did, whom he claimed to have “constantly stumbled over threads and dared not step across lines drawn in crayon.”²³¹

On the same day, Hitler composed a “Proclamation to the Soldiers of the Western Front.” It read:²³²

May 10, 1940

Berlin, May 10, 1940

The hour of the most decisive battle for the future of the German nation has come.

For over 300 years it has been the ambition of British and French rulers to prevent a real consolidation of Europe and, in particular, to keep Germany weak and impotent. To this end, France alone has declared war on Germany thirty-one times²³³ in the course of two centuries.

For decades it has also been the ambition of the British rulers of the world to prevent Germany, under all circumstances, from attaining unity while denying the Reich those vital goods necessary to sustain a people of eighty million.²³⁴

England and France have pursued this policy regardless of which regime reigned in Germany at any point in time. Their target was always the German Volk. Men of responsibility in those countries proclaimed this ambition openly.

Germany was to be shattered and dissolved into many small states. Then the Reich would lose its political power and hence its means of securing for the German Volk its vital rights upon this earth. For this reason, all my offers of peace were rejected and war was declared on us on September 3 of last year.

The German Volk harbors neither hatred nor animosity toward either the English or the French people. Today, however, it faces the question whether it desires to live or rather to perish.

Within a few weeks, the valiant troops of our armies have defeated the Polish enemy sent up to the front by Britain and France. Thereby they have eliminated the danger in the East. Consequently, Britain and France determined to assault Germany in the North. Ever since April 9, the Wehrmacht has quelled this attempt from its very beginnings.

Now has come to pass what we have envisioned as a threatening danger throughout the past months. Britain and France aim to push for the Ruhr territory through Holland and Belgium while undertaking a gigantic effort at diversion in southeast Europe.

Soldiers of the Western Front! Your hour has come. The battle beginning on this day will determine the fate of the German nation for the next one thousand years. Now do your duty. The German Volk is with you in its desire for victory.

Adolf Hitler

The hour had struck for the launching of the offensive in the West. If one believed Hitler's words, this campaign was to determine Germany's fate for the "next one thousand years." According to his estimates, one million German soldiers would lay down their lives in the foray.²³⁵ In his mind, this was not a matter of great concern! The enemy stood to lose at least an equivalent number of its men. And since Greater Germany boasted a population of eighty million, a sacrifice of one million seemed of little consequence to the Führer.

At 5:00 p.m. finally, Hitler's special train bore him and his staff to the Felsenest headquarters site.²³⁶ The small railway station of Finkenkrug²³⁷ was ideal for an inconspicuous departure, preparations for which were made with great care as though the success of the military operations depended upon it. Having finished translation of the memorandums to the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, the foreign language section with the Foreign Ministry was put in virtual quarantine.²³⁸ Other than Hitler's military staff, no one aboard the train knew where the journey would take him. As the train initially headed northwest, many speculated they were traveling to a site either in Norway or Denmark.²³⁹ This maneuver was to disguise the fact that the train was actually heading west.

At 9:00 p.m., weather reports indicated favorable conditions for the next day. Now Hitler pronounced the code word "Danzig."²⁴⁰ This signaled the launch of the offensive in the West at 5:30 a.m. on May 10.

It was still dark when Hitler's train finally reached the Euskirchen station that morning.²⁴¹ By 5:30 a.m., Hitler and his staff were at their desks at the new Felsenest headquarters. The towering heights of the Eifel mountains afforded them a superb view nearly up to the Belgian frontier. And precisely at this hour, the Third Reich's troops went on the attack as ordered.

As was his custom, Hitler had left Mussolini completely in the dark. That morning, the German Ambassador in Rome, von Mackensen, carried out his instructions to rouse the Duce at 5:00 a.m. with the "news" of Hitler's foray to the West. Von Mackensen then gave Mussolini a lengthy exposition of the motives behind this move against three small, non-belligerent states. This "large package of papers," with which Mussolini was presented that morning, "certainly could not have arrived by telephone," as Ciano sarcastically remarked. Concealed in this package was "a kind of invitation to Mussolini to make the decisions he considers necessary for the future of his country."²⁴²

In Berlin in the meantime, Ribbentrop presented the diplomatic representatives of Belgium and the Netherlands with the memorandums Hitler had already taken the precaution of signing on May 5. Their contents failed to account, however, for the precise motivation behind the unwarranted aggression against the two states. The two lengthy papers, handed to the Dutch Envoy Haersma de With and to the Belgian Ambassador Viscount Jacques Davignon, were nearly identical in content:²⁴³

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Berlin, May 9, 1940

MEMORANDUM

The Reich Government has for a long time had no doubts as to what was the chief aim of British and French war policy. It consists of the spreading of the war to other countries, and of the misuse of their peoples as auxiliary and mercenary troops for England and France.

The latest attempt of this sort was the plan to occupy Scandinavia with the help of Norway, in order to set up a new front against Germany in this region. It was only Germany's last minute action which upset this project. Germany has furnished documentary evidence of this before the eyes of the world.

Immediately after the British-French action in Scandinavia miscarried, England and France took up their policy of war expansion in another direction. Thus, while the retreat in flight of the British troops from Norway was still going on, the English Prime Minister announced that as a result of the altered situation in Scandinavia England was once more in a position to go ahead with the transfer of the main weight of her Navy to the Mediterranean, and that English and French units were already on the way to Alexandria. The Mediterranean now became the center of English-French war propaganda. This was partly to gloss over the Scandinavian defeat and the great loss of prestige before their own people and before the world, and partly to make it appear that the Balkans had been chosen for the next theater of war against Germany.

In reality, however, this apparent shifting to the Mediterranean of English-French war policy had quite another purpose. It was nothing but a diversionary maneuver on a large scale to deceive Germany as to the direction of the next English-French attack. For, as the Reich Government has long been aware, the true aim of England and France is the carefully prepared and now immediately imminent attack on Germany in the west, so as to advance through Belgian and Netherlands territory to the region of the Ruhr.

Germany has recognized and respected the inviolability of Belgium and the Netherlands, it being of course understood that these two countries in the event of a war of Germany against England and France would maintain the strictest neutrality.

Belgium and the Netherlands have not fulfilled this condition. They have attempted hitherto to maintain the outward appearance of neutrality, but in practice both countries have shown a one-sided partiality for Germany's opponents and have furthered their designs.

On the basis of the evidence before it and particularly of the attached reports from the Ministry of the Interior of March 29, 1940, and from the German High Command of May 4, 1940, the German Government has established the following:

1. Since the outbreak of war the Belgian and the Netherlands press have even surpassed the English and French papers in their hostile expressions of opinion regarding Germany. This attitude, in spite of continuous remonstrances by the Reich, they have not altered up to date. In addition to this, leading personalities in the public life of the two countries have in the last few months

on an ever increasing scale expressed the opinion that the place of Belgium and the Netherlands was at the side of England and France. Many other occurrences in the political and economic life of Belgium and the Netherlands stress this tendency further.

2. The Netherlands in association with the Belgian authorities have in most flagrant violation of the most elementary obligations of neutrality lent themselves to supporting the attempts of the English Secret Intelligence Service to bring about a revolution in Germany. The organization, formed on Belgian and Netherlands soil by the Secret Intelligence Service and enjoying the most widespread support by Netherlands and Belgian quarters even in the highest circles of the civil service and the General Staff, had no other aim than the removal of the Führer and the German Government, by all and every means, and the setting up of a government in Germany willing to bring about the dissolution of the unity of the Reich and to assent to the formation of a powerless federal German state.²⁴

3. The measures taken by the Royal Belgian and the Royal Netherlands Governments in the military sphere speak even more clearly. They give irrefutable proof of the real intentions of Belgian and Netherlands policy. They are, further, in most decided contrast to all declarations made by the Royal Belgian and the Royal Netherlands Governments to the effect that they would with all their strength and on every hand prevent any use being made of their territory, either for the marching through of an army or as a base of operations on land, on the sea, or in the air.

4. Thus, for example, Belgium has fortified exclusively her eastern frontier against Germany, while on her frontier facing France no fortifications have been constructed. Repeated urgent representations made by the German Government were indeed on each occasion replied to by the Royal Belgian Government with a promise that this state of affairs directed only against Germany would be remedied, but in practice nothing happened and all promises in this direction remained unfulfilled. On the contrary Belgium has until quite recently worked exclusively and unabatedly on the completion of her fortifications against Germany, while the western border of Belgium is open to Germany's enemies.

5. A similarly open and exposed invasion gateway for the British air forces is the Netherlands coastal area. The German Government has continually provided the Royal Netherlands Government with evidence of the infringements of Netherlands neutrality by English aircraft. Since the outbreak of the war English airmen have almost daily appeared over German territory coming from the direction of the Netherlands. One hundred and twenty-seven such English flights were identified indisputably in all details, and brought to the attention of the Royal Netherlands Government.

Actually, however, the number is much greater; it amounts to many times over the number of the cases notified. Similarly, in all these further instances of flights there is no doubt that the aircraft were English. The great number of flights, and the fact that no effective countermeasures were taken by the Royal Netherlands Government, clearly show that the English air force systematically used Netherlands territory as a starting point for its operations

against Germany, with the knowledge and indulgence of the Royal Netherlands Government.

6. Still more blatant evidence of the true Belgian and Netherlands attitude, however, are the strategic movements of the entire mobilized Belgian and Netherlands troops directed solely against Germany. Whereas at the beginning of September 1939, the Belgian and Netherlands troops were distributed fairly evenly on their frontiers, a short time afterwards, simultaneously with the increasingly closer cooperation between the Belgian and Netherlands General Staffs, and the General Staffs of England and France, the western frontiers of these countries were completely stripped of troops, and all the Belgian and Netherlands troops were concentrated on the eastern frontiers of both countries, with their fronts toward Germany.

7. This massing of Belgian and Netherlands troops on the German frontier was undertaken at a time when Germany had no troop concentrations whatsoever on her frontiers with Belgium and the Netherlands, but when England and France, on the other hand, were forming a strong, motorized invasion army on the Franco-Belgian border. In other words, Belgium and the Netherlands removed their own troops from these endangered western boundaries to place them on the eastern boundaries, which were entirely free of German troops, at a time when their neutrality seemed increasingly threatened in the west by the attitude of England and France, and by the massing of English and French invasion troops, which would have given them every reason for strengthening their defenses there. Only then did Germany take countermeasures, and then also on her side placed troops on the Belgian and Netherlands borders. The Belgian and Netherlands General Staffs, however, by these sudden measures, contradictory in themselves to every military rule, exposed their true attitude. Their procedure can be understood, however, by the knowledge, that these measures were taken in the closest previous understanding with the English and French General Staffs, and that the Belgian and Netherlands troops never considered themselves to be anything but the vanguard of the English and French invasion army.

8. Evidence in the hands of the German Reich Government shows that English and French preparations on Belgian and Netherlands territory for attack against Germany are already far advanced. Thus for some time now all obstacles on the Belgian border toward France which might hinder the entry of the English and French invasion army have been secretly removed. Airfields in Belgium and the Netherlands have been reconnoitred by English and French officers and extensions effected. Belgium has made transport facilities available at the frontier and recently advance parties of the headquarters personnel and the units of the French and English invasion army have arrived in various parts of Belgium and the Netherlands.

These facts, together with further information which has accumulated in the last few days, furnish conclusive proof that the English and French attack against Germany is imminent, and that this attack will be directed against the Ruhr through Belgium and the Netherlands. The picture of the Belgian and Netherlands attitude, as presented by these indisputable facts, is clear and

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unequivocal. Both countries have from the outbreak of war, contrary to the statements given out by their Governments, secretly placed themselves on the side of England and France, and thus of the Powers which had decided to attack Germany and had declared war on her. Although the situation was pointed out to the Belgian Foreign Minister in all seriousness several times from German quarters, it did not make the slightest difference. On the contrary, the Belgian Defense Minister recently made a public declaration in the Belgian Chamber which unequivocally contained the admission that all steps necessary for joint action against Germany had been agreed upon between the General Staffs of Belgium, France, and England. If, in spite of this, Belgium and the Netherlands continue to proclaim publicly a policy of independence and neutrality, it can, in the light of established facts, only be regarded as an attempt to conceal the real intentions of Belgian and Netherlands policy.

In this situation, the Reich Government can, however, no longer doubt that Belgium and the Netherlands are resolved not only to permit the impending Anglo-French attack, but to favor it in every way and that the agreements of the General Staffs of these two countries with the English and French General Staffs are designed exclusively to serve this object. The argument put forward on the part of Belgium and the Netherlands that this is not their purpose, but that the very fact of their helplessness has forced them to adopt this attitude toward England and France, cannot be recognized as sound. Above all, it does not alter the facts of the situation for Germany.

In this struggle for existence forced upon the German people by England and France, the Reich Government is not disposed to await idly the attack by England and France and to allow them to carry the war by way of Belgium and the Netherlands into German territory. It has therefore now issued the command to German troops to ensure the neutrality of these countries by all the military means at the disposal of the Reich.

The Reich Government adds to this announcement the following:

The German troops do not come as enemies of the Belgian and Netherlands peoples, for the Reich Government has neither desired nor brought about this development. The responsibility for it falls upon England and France, who have prepared in every detail the attack against Germany from Belgian and Netherlands territory, and on the Belgian and Netherlands Government departments who have allowed and favored it.

The Reich Government further declared that Germany has no intention of encroaching by these measures, either now or in the future, on the sovereignty of the Kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands, nor on the European or extra-European possessions of these countries.

The Royal Belgian and the Royal Netherlands Governments, however, today still have it in their power at this last moment to ensure the well-being of their peoples, by seeing to it that no resistance is offered to the German troops. The Reich Government hereby calls upon these two Governments to issue without delay the necessary commands to this effect. Should the German troops meet with resistance in Belgium or the Netherlands, they will use all means to overcome it. The responsibility for the consequences arising

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therefrom and for the bloodshed then unavoidable will have to be borne exclusively by the Royal Belgian and the Royal Netherlands Governments.

In his correspondence to Luxembourg, Hitler refrained from maintaining that this country had occupied a stance hostile to Germany. Instead, he justified his actions by referring to the behavior of Belgium and the Netherlands. The German memorandum read:²⁴⁵

Berlin, May 9, 1940

The Reich Government is reliably informed that England and France, in the course of their policy of spreading the war, have decided to attack Germany in the near future through Belgian and Netherlands territory. Belgium and the Netherlands, who in violation of their neutrality long since secretly took the side of the enemies of Germany, not only do not intend to prevent this attack but favor it. The facts which go to prove this have been stated in detail in a memorandum which is being handed to the Royal Belgian Government and the Royal Government of the Netherlands, a copy of which is enclosed herewith.

In defense against the imminent attack, the German troops have now received the order to safeguard the neutrality of these two countries with all the power at the disposal of the Reich.

The offensive, decided upon by England and France with the consent of Belgium and the Netherlands will also involve the territory of Luxembourg. To repulse the attack the Reich Government has therefore been forced to extend its military operations to Luxembourg territory also.

It has been known to the Grand Ducal Government of Luxembourg that the Reich was prepared to respect the neutrality and integrity of Luxembourg, provided that the other Powers which are neighbors of the Grand Duchy would also take the same attitude. Negotiations for agreements to that effect between the Powers concerned, which seemed to be almost completed in the summer of 1939, were then broken off by France. This breaking off of the negotiations by France is explained by the military decisions now taken by her together with the other enemies of Germany, an explanation which does not need any further illustration.

The Reich Government expects the Grand Ducal Government of Luxembourg to take account of the position created solely by the guilt of Germany's enemies, and to take all the necessary measures to prevent the Luxembourg population causing difficulties for the German military operations in any way. The Reich Government, on its part, gives the assurance to the Grand Ducal Government of Luxembourg that Germany has no intention, now or in the future, of interfering with the territorial integrity or political independence of the Grand Duchy.

In speaking to the generals on November 23, 1939, Hitler had maintained: "We shall not justify the breach of neutrality as idiotically as in 1914."²⁴⁶ He actually cherished the belief that an eloquently

worded rationale justified even the most vile actions, breaches of neutrality, and violations of contract. A good excuse would always render such actions acceptable abroad.

Ever since 1935, Hitler had resorted to this tactic as he perpetrated various breaches of the law, repeatedly violating the Constitution and human rights, even though, time and time again, this strategy had failed him in the end. England had never paid heed to his official proclamations. Instead, it had insisted upon his condemnation by the world community at large. The international public had denounced Germany's transgressions in a number of instances: the 1935 reintroduction of general conscription to Germany; the 1936 military occupation of the Rhineland; the 1939 invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia; the September 1939 assault on Poland; and the 1940 attack upon Norway and Denmark.²⁴⁷

Hitler was blind to all this. He could simply not believe that his carefully contrived argumentation was of no consequence to the international community. He could not conceive of them judging him by his deeds alone and disregarding his words.

In the 1940 case of the Third Reich's aggression against the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, the reaction abroad to this insolent violation of contract by Hitler and his accomplices, especially in view of their repeated solemn assurances and of the obligations entered into, was no different from the international public's reaction to Imperial Germany's invasion of Belgium in 1914. In Hitler's mind, he had sufficiently justified his aggression and had done so not "as idiotically" as Bethmann-Hollweg had.²⁴⁸ The Belgian Ambassador Viscount Davignon did not share this opinion. In speaking to the State Secretary von Weizsäcker, the Viscount stressed that the motives appropriated against Belgium would one day backfire on Germany. Had Hitler joined Bethmann-Hollweg in candidly stating, "necessity acknowledges no conventions,"²⁴⁹ he would have been decidedly more to the point.

With German bombers already flying overhead, the German diplomats in Luxembourg, Brussels, and The Hague presented the respective governments with the various memoranda penned by Hitler. When the German Ambassador Bülow-Schwante made his appearance at Belgium's Foreign Ministry at 8:30 in the morning of May 10, Foreign Minister Paul Henri Spaak cut him short to state: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Ambassador. I will speak first." Then he read the Belgian Government's protest:²⁵⁰

May 10, 1940

The German Army has just attacked our country. This is the second time in twenty-five years that Germany has committed a criminal aggression against a neutral and loyal Belgium. What just had happened is perhaps even more odious than the aggression of 1914. No ultimatum, no note, no protest of any kind has ever been placed before the Belgian Government. It is through the attack itself that Belgium has learnt that Germany has violated the undertakings given by her on October 13th, 1937,²⁵¹ and renewed spontaneously at the beginning of the war. The act of aggression committed by Germany, for which there is no justification whatever, will deeply shock the conscience of the world. The German Reich will be held responsible by history. Belgium is resolved to defend herself. Her cause, which is the cause of Right, cannot be vanquished.

When Bülow-Schwante set out to read to the Foreign Minister Hitler's memorandum, Spaak cut him off once again to remark: "Hand me the document. I wish to spare you so painful a task."

On behalf of the Dutch people, their Foreign Minister meanwhile declared:²⁵²

It is with a sense of indignation that the Dutch Government rejects allegations that it has entered into agreements of a hostile intent of the said nature with any other foreign power against Germany. Based on the unprecedented attack on the Netherlands on the part of Germany, which ensued without prior warning, the Dutch Government regards itself to be at war with Germany.

Even the Government of Luxembourg refused to capitulate in face of the rapidly advancing German troops. The Grand Duchess escaped abroad. Hitler had completely failed in his efforts to force the voluntary surrender of three neutral states. Neither his lengthy memorandums, crude threats, nor military pressure could change this.

To give proper credit to the German diplomats abroad, it ought to be remarked that not one of these involved himself in the preparations for the shameful and treacherous assault on his host country. The list of diplomatic personnel Hitler placed in so painful a situation in the course of the Second World War was indeed a long one: Dr. von Rente-Fink in Denmark; Bräuer in Norway; Karl Alexander Vicco von Bülow-Schwante in Belgium; Count Julius von Zech-Burkersroda in Holland; Otto von Radowitz in Luxembourg; Viktor von Heeren in Yugoslavia; Viktor Prince of Erbach-Schönberg in Greece; and Friedrich Werner Graf von der Schulenburg in the Soviet Union.

On May 10 as well, the High Command of the Wehrmacht informed the German public, and the international community at large, of the change in the situation in the following manner:²⁵³

In view of the enemy's imminent transport of the war onto Belgian and Dutch territory and the danger for the Ruhr territory connected therewith, the German Army in the West launched an attack along a broad front across the frontier in the West at dawn on May 5. At this time, the Luftwaffe attacked enemy airfields with great success and intervened to support the Army fighting on the ground with strong units. To coordinate the total operations of the Wehrmacht, the Führer and Supreme Commander has journeyed to the front.

That Hitler now enjoyed these trips to the "front"—at Münstereifel, about thirty kilometers behind the actual frontier with Belgium—had already been evident in the Polish campaign. What was new in this case was that, right from the start, Hitler stressed that it was he who was in charge of "the total operations of the Wehrmacht."

The Allies took the following steps to counter Hitler's coup in the West:

1. Churchill was appointed Prime Minister and assumed responsibility for national policy and the conduct of war.

2. Britain occupied Iceland on the same day (this country had previously formed part of Denmark).

3. In response to a plea for assistance issued by the Governments of Belgium and the Netherlands on this day, an Anglo-French Expeditionary Force rushed to the aid of these two countries.²⁵⁴

Hitler had anticipated this move by Great Britain and France. Central to his plan for the campaign was the following consideration: to take "fortress Holland" by surprise, i.e. from the air. Luftwaffe squadrons, gliders, and parachutists had to occupy all strategic points on the first day of the campaign and these had to be held until relief arrived in the form of ground forces.

A similar tactic was to secure the cornerstone of the Belgian defense structure—Liège—for German troops. A surprise landing of parachutists on top of the fortress Eben Emael was to break down any resistance offered. Besides this, however, German soldiers were to advance slowly and cautiously through Belgium in an attempt to divert the attention of the Allies to this particular war theater.

The Western military commanders were to be deceived into believing that an encirclement maneuver similar to that of 1914 was taking place on Belgian soil. This was to induce them to concentrate forces here in the North, while Hitler's main charge broke through the Sedan-Charleville area with heavy armored units. The German panzers were to force their way through to the Channel in an effort to cut off the Allied armies now in the North and to deal them a deadly blow.

No doubt, Hitler played the pivotal role in the development of the Western Offensive and was responsible for the extraordinary rapidity of its success. Later attempts, in particular in Germany after 1945, to belittle his achievements as military commander, e.g. by stating that von Manstein had originated the idea of *Sichelschnitt* (Cut of the Sickle), appear inappropriate and hypocritical. There has been much controversy with regard to operation *Sichelschnitt*, the breakthrough at the central section of the Front. In war, it counts not so much whose idea a particular move was, but rather by whom and in what manner the mission was carried through. In any case, it was Hitler who had the plan which decided that the Battle of France be effected and who was responsible as Supreme Commander.²⁵⁵

Also decisive in the very fast success of the Western Offensive was that Germany was fighting on one front only and its adversary stood alone. In this light, the success of 1940 is comparable to the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. In 1940, 42 million Frenchmen were facing a vastly superior Reich with a population of 82 million. Therefore, without speedy assistance from abroad, France's doom would be sealed.

Things did in fact go according to plan. By May 12, German troops controlled all of Holland up to Rotterdam. The fortress Eben Emael was likewise in German hands.

Hitler was elated by these rapid successes. Suffused with self-confidence, he already began to concern himself with post-war problems, such as the signing of a decree providing for restoration projects in the city of Hanover.²⁵⁶

On May 13 at the Felsenstein headquarters, Hitler received officers of the airborne troops who had proved their valor in the conquest of Fort Eben Emael, to award them the Knight's Cross. He granted promotions to two of the commanders of the units involved.²⁵⁷ Afterwards, he allowed his picture to be taken outside with the soldiers standing at his side. In the course of the campaign in the West, similar decorations would be repeatedly distributed to officers at headquarters. At one point, Hitler even permitted his picture to be taken along with that of his entire staff.

On the same day, Hitler dictated a "long and calm account of military events" to his friend Mussolini.²⁵⁸ The Duce was so enthralled by Hitler's account of the events that he immediately imparted to the German Ambassador von Mackensen his intent to join the war effort shortly. As Mussolini put it: "It is now no longer a question of months,

it is a question of weeks and perhaps days.” Mussolini had yet to learn that not he, but Hitler, would give the date for Italy’s entry into the war.

On May 14, German tank units broke through the French lines at the Sedan-Charleville section of the front and turned to the West. Motorized divisions followed in their wake. Infantry units were to secure the breakthrough in the South and to constitute a southern front along the line Aisne-Somme.

On this day, Hitler issued his eleventh directive for the conduct of the war:²⁵⁹

1) The course of the offensive thus far shows that the enemy has failed to recognize in time the basic idea of our operation. He is still bringing up strong forces to the Namur-Antwerp line and seems to be neglecting the sector in front of Army Group A.

2) This situation and the rapid forcing of the Meuse crossings in the Army Group A sector have produced the first prerequisite for achieving a great success on the lines of Directive No. 10²⁶⁰ by a thrust executed in a north-westerly direction north of the Aisne with a concentration of the strongest forces. The troops fighting north of the Liège-Namur line will then have the mission of tying down and diverting as strong an enemy force as possible by an attack with their own forces.

3) On the north flank the power of resistance of the Netherlands Army has proven to be stronger than was anticipated. Political as well as military considerations require that this resistance be broken speedily. It will be the mission of the Army to bring about rapidly the collapse of fortress Holland by means of adequate forces from the south in conjunction with the attack against the eastern front.

4) All available motorized divisions are to be brought into the operational area of Army Group A as quickly as possible.

The armored and motorized divisions of Army Group B must also be released as soon as operational actions are no longer possible there and the situation permits and be brought up to the left attacking wing.

5) The mission of the Luftwaffe will be to concentrate strong offensive and defensive forces for employment in the sector of Army Group A as the point of main effort, in order to prevent the bringing up of additional enemy forces to the offensive front and to support this front directly.

In addition, the rapid conquest of fortress Holland is to be facilitated through a deliberate weakening of the forces hitherto operating before the Sixth Army.

6) The Navy will operate within the framework of the possibilities open to it against sea communications in the Hoofden and in the Channel.

Adolf Hitler

It was evident that Hitler intended to conduct the war in the manner he felt it ought to have been led from 1914 on. This conviction had already been apparent from his words to the generals on May 23, 1939:

May 14, 1940

“Had the Navy been stronger at the beginning of the World War, or had the Army attacked the harbors along the English Channel, the outcome of the war would have been a different one.”²⁶¹ The Second World War afforded Hitler the opportunity to prove his theory. The battles for Flanders and France demonstrated that, although the Wehrmacht prevailed in the taking of the harbors, this changed neither the course of events nor the outcome of the war.

Hitler’s appeal to the Luftwaffe to facilitate “the rapid conquest of fortress Holland” was realized that same day. German pilots flew terror attacks over the inner city of Rotterdam, with the result that the Dutch Army offered to surrender on the evening of May 14. By 11:30 the next morning, the capitulation was signed.²⁶²

On May 15 as well, Hitler issued the following proclamation addressed to the soldiers fighting in Holland:²⁶³

Soldiers of the Dutch Theater of War!

In five days you have attacked a strong, well-prepared army which doggedly defended itself behind apparently invincible barriers and military fortifications. You have eliminated its air force and finally you have forced its surrender. Yours is an accomplishment of truly a unique nature. The future will demonstrate its military significance. This success has been rendered possible only through your exemplary cooperation, through the determination of your leadership, as well as through the valor of the individual soldier. This is true especially of the men of the death-defying parachutist and airborne troops and their heroic mission.

In the name of the German Volk, I convey to you my gratitude and my admiration.

Adolf Hitler

On May 16, Hitler conferred with Göring and Jeschonnek, the Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe. One of the topics discussed in the talk, lasting from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., was the possible reinforcement of the Luftwaffe at Narvik after the swift success encountered in Holland.²⁶⁴

On May 17, Halder noted in his diary: “Führer terribly nervous. Surprised by his own success, he fears going too far; would like to put us on a leash.”²⁶⁵

By May 18, Halder was forced to concede that it was actually not the General Staff, but Hitler himself who determined how to proceed. As Jodl remarked in his notes, it was “a day of tension.”²⁶⁶ Hitler had found out that, contrary to his express orders, infantry divisions were continuing to march westward, instead of “speedily building up a flank to the South.” This latter measure aimed to preclude a re-establishment

of links by the French with the divisions cut off earlier. Brauchitsch and Halder were summoned immediately, so Jodl recorded, “and were instructed in harsh terms to take the necessary steps immediately.”²⁶⁷ Halder saw the matter differently and confided to his diary: “He [Hitler] rages and cries we are ruining the entire campaign for him.”

Also on May 18, Hitler received Dino Alfieri at headquarters. The newly appointed Italian Ambassador presented the German Head of State with his letter of accreditation.²⁶⁸ Hitler placed great hopes on this loyal Fascist party-liner whom he counted on getting along with better than with Attolico. To make the right impression from the start, Hitler even put on his golden sash for the diplomat’s reception, in spite of the war raging about them. In an elated mood, Hitler penned yet another letter to Mussolini after the meeting.²⁶⁹

Moreover, Hitler effected the reintegration of the cities of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet to the Reich on this day. The Belgians had “misbehaved” considerably, since they had not capitulated on request. Consequently, Hitler felt he had to punish them by severing the territories the Treaty of Versailles had accorded Belgium. By contrast, Denmark had “behaved” itself and hence it had been allowed to keep all of northern Schleswig. It was in this fashion that Adolf Hitler sat in judgment over the peoples of this earth.

The decree of May 18, 1940, read:²⁷⁰

Those territories severed from the German Reich through the Diktat of Versailles and integrated into Belgium are once again in German possession. Internally, they have always maintained their bonds to Germany. Hence they are neither to be regarded nor treated, not even temporarily, as occupied enemy country. Therefore I determine as of this date:

1. The areas of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet which were severed from the German Reich through the Diktat of Versailles once more form an integral part of the German Reich.

2. The areas named are appropriated to the Rhine Province (Governmental District of Aix-la-Chapelle).

3. I reserve for myself decision on the implementation of this decree.

On May 18 as well, Hitler appointed Seyss-Inquart Reichskommissar for the occupied Dutch territories.²⁷¹ This procedure was the same Hitler had earlier resorted to in the case of Austria and most recently in the case of Norway: Bürckel, the Palatine, had been transferred to Vienna, while Terboven, who came from the Rhineland, was sent to Oslo. By the same token, the Austrian Seyss-Inquart was now summoned to administer the Netherlands. Under no circumstances

was Hitler willing to appoint a person familiar with the country in question to such a post. The above decree was the same in content as that appointing Terboven to Oslo.²⁷²

On May 20, German tank units reached the Channel coast at Abbéville, thus cutting off the Allied troops fighting in Flanders and Artois. The “greatest offensive operation of all time,” as the OKW report had entitled it, was beginning to bear fruit. Hitler was “beside himself with joy” and had “words of the greatest appreciation for the German Armed Forces and their leadership. Now concerns himself with peace treaty which shall read: return of the territories robbed from Germany for over 400 years and other assets. First negotiations in the Forest of Compiègne as in 1918. English can have special peace at any time after a return of the colonies.”²⁷³

This was precisely how Hitler envisioned the further course of events. In all earnestness he was convinced that, after “attacking the harbors along the Channel,” England and France would accept that the war had been decided and would come to see that a peace settlement with Germany was in their own best interest.

At any rate, Hitler took precautions to continue the war on French soil. It was still May 20 when he issued the following instructions to the Army on how to proceed:²⁷⁴

1st act: Destruction of the enemy north of the Somme and winning of the coast.

2nd act: Advance between Oise and the sea up to the Seine.

3rd act: Main attack on both sides of Reims in a south-westerly direction, the right flank east of Paris accompanied by light forces.

In the intermission of this three-act play, Hitler hoped to receive an Allied offer of capitulation. He quickly abandoned his earlier plan to allow twenty Italian divisions to take part in the action at the section of the Maginot Line running approximately along the upper course of the Rhine.²⁷⁵ As he had made known before, he had no intention of sharing the glory with anyone.²⁷⁶

On May 21, news reached Berlin that measures were being taken to evacuate the British Expeditionary Force from various ports along the Channel.²⁷⁷ Naturally this item caught Hitler’s eye. If the English chose to vacate the Continent voluntarily, then this would eliminate the necessity of driving them “back to the Thames,” as he had promised. This in turn convinced Hitler that nothing stood in the way of a friendly settlement with England any longer. To hurry matters along, he determined to allow the Englishmen’s escape, instead of seeing to their

destruction in Flanders. This gesture would surely persuade them of his good intentions. In eternal gratitude, England would finally accept Germany's hand extended in friendship.

On May 24, Hitler flew to a meeting at the headquarters of Army Group A, then located at Charleville, in the company of Jodl and Schmundt. Once there, he issued the necessary instructions and ordered the tank divisions to halt at the Channel coast. Hitler was in high spirits; a peace settlement appeared to be within grasp. Speaking to the generals gathered at Charleville, he claimed the war would be over in six weeks.²⁷⁸ Now it was imperative to conclude a "reasonable peace with France." This would open the way towards "an understanding with England." According to the recollections of General Blumentritt, Hitler's ill-concealed admiration for the British Empire came as a complete surprise to his audience, since the generals were not familiar with this pro-British orientation of their Führer. To their astonishment, they heard him speak with reverence of "the necessity for its existence and the civilization that England had brought this world."

All he wanted from England, so Hitler continued, was that it should respect Germany's position on the Continent. It was desirable, though not essential, that Germany's colonies be restored.²⁷⁹ It was his goal to conclude a peace with England on this basis, which he could reconcile with his concept of honor.

This idea was not by any means new. Napoleon I and William II, ignorant as well of Great Britain's position and the real power structures in the world, had already propagated the notion that the British Empire, in view of its mastery of the lands overseas, ought to leave the Continent to mainland powers. Despite their differences, Hitler's and Napoleon's shared admiration for the Empire was undermined by the perpetual affronts and provocation of Britain.²⁸⁰ Hitler carried matters a step further yet than the French Emperor by allowing, in a "magnanimous" gesture, for the escape of the British Expeditionary Force, which would otherwise have faced virtually certain destruction.²⁸¹ This move greatly perplexed and angered Hitler's generals. Von Brauchitsch, for example, had already ordered several divisions to join Army Group B in the North, naturally without requesting express permission. Hitler was outraged and made a scene, demanding that Brauchitsch immediately rescind the order.

That evening, Hitler ordered the fast forward units moving towards the Channel to halt on reaching the coast. They were not to venture beyond a line running from Sandez to St. Omer and Gravelines.²⁸² This

was in keeping with Hitler's firm resolve to spare the British as much as possible.

On May 24 as well, Hitler issued "Directive No. 13 for the Conduct of the War."²⁸³

1. The next aim of the operations is the destruction of the French, English and Belgian forces which have been encircled in Artois and in Flanders through a concentric attack by our northern wing and the speedy occupation and securing of the Channel coast there.

It will be the mission of the Luftwaffe to break all resistance by the encircled forces of the enemy, prevent the escape of the English forces across the Channel, and secure the south flank of Army Group A. The fight against the enemy air forces is to be continued at every favorable opportunity.

2. The operation of the Army to destroy the enemy forces in France, which is to follow as quickly as possible, is to be prepared in three phases.

1st Phase: A thrust between the sea and the Oise to the Lower Seine below Paris with the object of accompanying and protecting the later main operation with weak forces on the right flank. If the situation and the available reserves allow, efforts are to be made even before the conclusion of the battle in Artois and in Flanders to take possession of the territory between the Somme and the Oise by a concentric attack in the direction of Montdidier and thereby prepare and facilitate the later thrust to the Lower Seine.

2nd Phase: An attack with the bulk of the Army, including strong armored and motorized forces in a southeasterly direction past Rheims on both sides with the object of defeating the bulk of the French Army in the triangle Paris-Metz-Belfort and of bringing about the collapse of the Maginot Line.

3rd Phase: A supplementing of this main operation at the appropriate time, by a secondary operation with weaker forces which will break through the Maginot Line at its weakest point between St. Avold and Sarreguemines in the direction of Nancy-Lunéville.

In addition, depending on the development of the situation, an attack across the upper Rhine may be planned provided that not more than 8 to 10 divisions are to be committed to it.

3. The mission of the Luftwaffe

(a) Independent of the operations in France, the Luftwaffe—as soon as sufficient forces are at its disposal—will be given complete freedom to carry on the fight against the English homeland. It is to be opened with a devastating attack in reprisal for the English attacks against the Ruhr area.

Targets for attacks will be determined by the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe according to principles contained in Directive No. 9 and the supplements thereto which will be issued by OKW. The date and the proposed plan of operations are to be reported to me.

(b) With the beginning of the main operation of the Army in the direction of Rheims, it will be the task of the Luftwaffe, in addition to maintaining air superiority, to give direct support to the attack, to destroy newly arriving enemy formations, to prevent regrouping, and in particular to secure the west flank of the offensive front.

May 24, 1940

As far as necessary, cooperation is to be given in the break through the Maginot Line.

(c) Further, the High Command of the Luftwaffe will consider by what means the air defense can be strengthened in areas which at present are being most heavily attacked by the enemy, through the use of additional forces from areas which previously have been less endangered.

In so far as the interests of the Navy are affected hereby, the Commander in Chief of the Navy will participate.

4. Missions of the Navy

Previous restricting regulations are rescinded, and the Navy will be given complete operational freedom in the waters around England and off the French coast.

The Commander in Chief of the Navy will submit a proposal for delimiting the sea areas in which the combat measures permitted for the blockade may be applied.

I reserve to myself the decision as to whether and in what form a public announcement of the blockade shall be made.

5. I request the Commanders in Chief to submit to me orally or in writing their plans based upon this directive.

Adolf Hitler

The further course of events proved that only the section of the directive dealing with the subjugation of France was meant seriously. Obviously, the “annihilation of the forces encircled” applied to all enemy forces other than the British, as was manifest in the recent order to arrest tank movement along the coast. Months would pass before Hitler finally launched a determined strike against the British mainland in September, 1940. Despite his newly found resolve, the “Battle of Britain” turned out to be a complete failure.

May 25 was a day of repose. Apparently, the German tanks were to have a “good rest.”²⁸⁴ Hitler used the momentary quiet to pen yet another letter to Mussolini.²⁸⁵

On May 26, Halder described the situation as follows in his diary: “By highest orders, tanks and motorized units stand as though frozen in their tracks.”²⁸⁶ In the evening of this day, Hitler finally allowed “the tank units and infantry divisions to advance from the West in the direction of Tournai, Cassel, and Dunkirk.”²⁸⁷ By this time, the two-day lull in the fighting had permitted the Allied units to organize and to mount their defenses properly.

May 28 brought the capitulation of the Belgian King Leopold, who acted in defiance of the Belgian Government. On this occasion, the Führer Headquarters issued two public pronouncements of “enormous military significance.” They read:²⁸⁸

May 28, 1940

Führer Headquarters, May 28

Under the impression of the destructive power of German arms, the King of Belgium has arrived at the decision to end further senseless resistance and to ask for an armistice. He has complied with the German demands for an unconditional surrender. As of this day, the Belgian Army has laid down its weapons and has thus ceased to exist.

In this hour, we think of our valiant soldiers, whose unequaled fighting spirit relentlessly overran fortifications which belonged to the most mighty structures in the world. With a feeling of profound gratitude and boundless pride, the German Volk looks to the troops who have accomplished such glorious deeds of arms and who forced this surrender.

Führer Headquarters, May 28

The King of Belgium has proclaimed his decision to lay down arms against the wishes of the majority of his ministers, in order to prevent further bloodshed and a completely senseless destruction of his country. These ministers, who largely bear the responsibility for the catastrophe now overwhelming Belgium, appear willing, nonetheless, to do the bidding of their British and French masters, even at this date.

The Führer has issued instructions to behave towards the King of Belgium and his army in that manner to which all valiantly fighting soldiers have a right. Since the King of Belgium has made no special requests for his person, he shall be assigned to a Belgian Castle as his residence until a final residence has been determined.²⁸⁹

The total figure of the Belgian units affected by the capitulation should amount to about half a million men. The German Armies shall now to a heightened degree strive for the destruction of those most responsible.

The surrender of the Belgian Army aggravated the precarious position of the encircled English and French divisions. The British Expeditionary Force stepped up its retreat. Between May 27 and June 3, in a huge effort ("Operation Dynamo"), Great Britain succeeded in evacuating over 330,000 soldiers—i.e. nearly the entire British Expeditionary Force—from the Dunkirk area, as well as 60,000 French troops, all of whom were forced to leave behind most of their equipment. Battleships, motor yachts, private boats, and other makeshift vessels participated in the improvised mass evacuation. A majority of the soldiers were rescued from the beach at the last minute. The Royal Air Force put in an appearance, on a larger scale than anticipated by the Luftwaffe, and successfully repelled the German fighter planes' assaults. In spite of these endeavors, the "miracle of Dunkirk" would never have materialized without Hitler's connivance.

Over the years there have been allegations that this was a decisive error by Hitler, one highly detrimental to Germany. It has been

maintained that, had Hitler not halted the tanks to allow the British Expeditionary Force's escape, the outcome of the war might well have been different.²⁹⁰ On a realistic assessment, however, Dunkirk no more influenced the outcome of World War II than the Battle of the Marne decided World War I. And even had Hitler captured or killed the entire British Expeditionary Force, it is true that this would have meant a loss of 200,000 to 300,000 men, but it would not have decisively weakened British fighting capacities, especially when one considers that British casualties in the Second World War were considerably lower than in the First World War (440,000 as compared to 870,000 for the British Isles and the Commonwealth).

Assuredly, the loss of an entire Expeditionary Force would have been painful for England. The English do not lightheartedly sacrifice even a single soldier. The Third Reich might well have held on a few months longer had the English been dealt a like blow early on. However, Hitler and his Reich were doomed, irrespective of his immediate successes. Even had he succeeded in taking the British Isles, Britain's overseas allies would have undoubtedly continued the struggle. Sooner or later, the Anglo-Saxon powers' invasion would have taken place as inevitably as in 1944 in northern France.

On May 30, the Italian Ambassador called on Hitler at the Felsenest headquarters. Alfieri related Mussolini's intention to enter the war on June 5.²⁹¹ But Hitler no longer judged such a step by Italy opportune. Should no French or English offer of capitulation be forthcoming by this point, the Wehrmacht alone would finally launch its major offensive along the Somme-Aisne section of the front. Should the Italians intervene at this time, Hitler feared this might lead to claims that France's collapse was due to Rome's action along a second front in the Alps. Naturally, he could not stomach any such lessening of the Third Reich's military glory.

These considerations drove Hitler to a frenzied search for an excuse to delay Italy's entry into the war, which he had so eagerly and persistently desired earlier. In his mind, the role played by the Italians was to be a symbolic one. They were not to take action until the war had already been decided by Germany. This recalled his behavior when the Russians entered the war in Poland. On news of the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland, Hitler had simply pronounced the war to be over. Ever since, he referred to the elimination of Poland as a campaign of "eighteen days."²⁹² The untimely offer by the Duce forced Hitler to contrive a new pretext requiring a postponed entry into the

war by Rome. Uncharacteristically, Hitler was at a loss for words at first. He pretended to be “content, even enthusiastic” about Mussolini’s overture before interjecting that he reserved “final revision of opinion on the date chosen for consultations with his generals.” As though Hitler ever consulted anyone—least of all the generals.

On May 31, Hitler sat down to respond to Mussolini’s letter.²⁹³ First, he attempted flattery: if there was anything to reinforce his belief in victory, then it was the assurances given by the Duce. It was necessary for Italy to delay action, however, as he intended to undertake a large-scale attack on French air bases within the next few days. He feared that an earlier intervention by Italy might provoke a redeployment of French planes. This would in turn hinder or even prevent effective Luftwaffe strikes against the targeted airfields. A threadbare pretext indeed, and yet the Duce swallowed it. Italy’s entry into the war was postponed until June 11, to be preceded by a declaration of war on June 10.

On June 1, Hitler once more set out to document his “magnanimity” in decreeing a general amnesty for all Dutch prisoners of war. The release read:²⁹⁴

The German offer to assume the protection of the Netherlands against the proved intent of the Western Powers to use Holland as a marshaling area against the Ruhr territory met with premeditated rejection by the Dutch Government as a consequence of its secret agreement with the Western Powers. They delivered their people and country to the horrors of war while they themselves escaped to safety abroad.

The German Wehrmacht has conducted the fight thereby made necessary against the Dutch Army with all due and possible consideration for the population and the preservation of the land. This attitude on the part of Germany was complemented by the conduct of the Dutch military as well as of the civilian population. It reflected the cultural and moral heights of the Dutch people, who constitute a tribe related to us Germans. Those individuals responsible for the imprisonment of German parachutists, their treatment as criminals, and their handing over to the British, shall face the consequences of their actions.

The Dutch soldier fought openly and honestly everywhere. Our wounded and prisoners of war were correspondingly well treated. The civilian population did not participate in the fighting and has served the humanitarian needs of our wounded.

I have therefore determined, in the case of Holland as well, to grant the release of all Dutch soldiers taken prisoner.

Half of the Dutch Army is to be released immediately. Primarily this means members of the Dutch Armed Services who work in agriculture, in mines, in the food-processing industry, in the construction industry, and in related

June 1, 1940

enterprises. The remaining members of the Dutch Army are to be demobilized gradually, to prevent excessive strain on the economy and employment. These instructions apply equally to those Dutch soldiers who are prisoners of war in Germany. I will determine the fate of the Dutch professional soldiers later.

Adolf Hitler

Cause for this “magnanimity” on his part was the ever-present ambition to integrate the Dutch into his “Germanic Reich of the German nation.” This intention had been apparent in his equally benign treatment of the Norwegians earlier.²⁹⁵ The mainly French-speaking, equally recalcitrant Belgians were less fortunate. Belgian soldiers remained prisoners of war until the Führer died.

On June 2, having transferred his headquarters to Bruly-le-Pêche,²⁹⁶ Hitler visited a series of monuments in the area. First on his list was a memorial at Langemarck, dedicated to the Unknown Soldier.²⁹⁷ He next paid homage to the previous war’s dead at a memorial erected on Mount Vimy for Canadian soldiers and one for the French on Mount Loretto in Artois.

On June 3, Hitler established an oak-leaf category to complement the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.²⁹⁸

Early June witnessed a rapid succession of military advances on Flemish soil. Because of the capitulation of the Belgian Army and the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, the remainder of the French troops fighting in the area surrendered. To Hitler’s chagrin, and contrary to his expectations, Great Britain failed to draw what he considered the only proper conclusions from this “hopeless situation.” Instead, the British proudly proclaimed their intention to fight on, an intention most eloquently expressed by Churchill in a speech before the House of Commons on June 4:²⁹⁹

I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty’s Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation. The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength.

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall fight in France, we shall fight in

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the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the Old.

Churchill's words were as suffused with pathos, pride, and self-confidence as Hitler's. Unlike the German dictator's pronouncements, Churchill's had a concrete base in the might of the British Empire and its ally, the United States of America. Nevertheless, Hitler was not in the least disconcerted by Churchill's determination to fight on, as he held these pronouncements to reflect only the ravings of a "decrepit" and increasingly "senile" British statesman. Britain need not be reckoned with, especially if a major offensive that Hitler's troops were to carry out against the French succeeded in a timely fashion. Moreover, the Führer, as master orator No. 1, believed that he could easily discern whether or not a public pronouncement by someone like Churchill needed to be taken at face value.

In celebrating what he termed the "greatest battle of all time," Hitler issued the following two appeals, one to the German people, another to the soldiers of the Army in the West:³⁰⁰

Führer Headquarters, June 5, 1940

To the German Volk!

Our soldiers have emerged victorious from this greatest battle of all time.

In a few weeks, we have taken over 1.2 million enemies as prisoners of war. Holland and Belgium have capitulated. The British Expeditionary Force has been largely destroyed, the remainder either taken prisoner or driven from the Continent. Three French Armies no longer exist. The danger of enemy penetration into the Ruhr territory has been eliminated for good.

German Volk! Your soldiers have fought bloodily for this most glorious deed in history, at the risk of life and limb and with therefore the greatest of exertions.

I order that flags be posted throughout Germany for eight days. This is to do honor to our soldiers.

I further order, for eight days, the ringing of bells. May their sound be accompanied by the prayers of the German Volk, which shall accompany its sons once more. For on this morning, German divisions and fighter squadrons have once again embarked upon the continuation of the fight for the liberty and future of our Volk.

Adolf Hitler

June 5, 1940

Führer Headquarters, June 5, 1940

Soldiers of the Western Front!

Dunkirk has fallen! 40,000 Frenchmen and Englishmen have been taken prisoner as the remainder of once great armies. Immeasurable amounts of material have been taken. Thus the greatest battle in world history has ended.

Soldiers! My trust in you was a boundless one. You have not disappointed me. The most daring plan in the history of war was realized, thanks to your unequalled valor, your ability to endure the greatest pains, exertions, and efforts.

In a few weeks, you have forced two states to capitulate in a most difficult battle against, in many instances, an enemy of great valor. You have destroyed France's best divisions. You have defeated the British Expeditionary Force, either taking its men prisoner or driving them from the Continent. All units of the Wehrmacht, on land and sea, outdid one another in the most noble competition in the mission for our Volk and the Greater German Reich. The valiant men of our Navy shared in these deeds.

Soldiers! Many of you have sealed their loyalty by giving their lives; others are wounded. The heart of our Volk is filled with profound gratitude, and it is with them and with you.

But the plutocratic rulers of Britain and France, who have conspired to prevent the blossoming of a new, better world with all means at their disposal, wish a continuation of the war. Their wish shall be fulfilled.

Soldiers! As of this day, the Western Front takes its station once again. Countless new divisions shall join you which will meet the enemy for the first time and which will defeat him. The battle for the liberty of our people, for its present and its future, shall be continued until we have destroyed those hostile rulers in London and Paris who still believe they have found in war the best means to realize their plans against other nations. Our victory shall teach them a historic lesson! All of Germany is with you once more in spirit!

Adolf Hitler

Apparently Hitler regarded the attack to be launched along the Somme and Aisne southwards as an opportune occasion to give the Allies, and Churchill in particular, a "historic lesson" of a special kind. The line of defense so laboriously constructed by General Weygand could not hold back the unabated onslaught of the German forces for long. The fast-moving tank columns and motorized units soon forced their way south. An early breakthrough was made in the area of Rethel, and through this gate an avalanche of German troops began to pour into French territory without encountering much resistance.

Despite the easy gains in northern France, Hitler did not forget about Dietl and the plight of his men isolated in northern Norway. On June 5, Hitler issued the supplemental Directive No. 13a, which aimed at the "final settlement of the situation at Narvik" and gave detailed instructions for a renewed German landing north of Narvik.³⁰¹ These

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preparations soon proved superfluous, since the British, under the immediate impression of the Wehrmacht's advances into France, determined to abandon their Norwegian enterprise and to leave Norway to the Germans. King Haakon and his government were taken aboard an English cruiser at Tromsø on June 7. The next day, Dietl's men retook the city of Narvik. Rejoicing, Hitler conferred upon Dietl the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross via radio transmitter.

Also on June 8, Hitler issued Directive No. 14. It included technical details on the further conduct of operations in France: in particular a drive for the Marne River.³⁰² On the same day, Hitler congratulated the Romanian King Carol on the tenth anniversary of his ascent to the throne.³⁰³

On June 9, Hitler airtailed a letter to Mussolini to congratulate him on his decision to enter the war in the near future. He accepted the Duce's "offer of the *Bersaglieri* [Italian light infantry] . . . and, in exchange, [he would send] some regiments of his Alpine troops."³⁰⁴

On June 10, Hitler lent his hand to the formulation of the OKW's final report on Narvik:³⁰⁵

The heroic resistance, which the isolated combat troops of Lieutenant General Dietl mounted for many weeks under the most difficult of circumstances at Narvik in face of overwhelming enemy forces, has today been crowned by complete victory! During two months of persistent fighting, mountain troops from the Ostmark, parts of the Luftwaffe, as well as the crews of our destroyers, have given evidence of the glory of soldiery for all time. Their heroism compelled the allied forces on land, in the air, and at sea, to withdraw from the area around Narvik and Harstad.

Over Narvik the German flag now flies once and for all. The Norwegian Navy ended hostilities during the night of June 9 to June 10. Negotiations for a surrender are presently under way.

On June 10, Italy declared war upon England and France. On the same day, Hitler released the following declaration of the Reich Government:³⁰⁶

Profoundly moved, the Reich Government, and with it the entire German Volk, have just listened to the words of the Duce. In this historic hour, all of Germany echoes with jubilant enthusiasm at the thought of Italy, of its own free accord, siding with Germany in the battle against our common enemies: Britain and France.

German and Italian soldiers will now march side by side and will fight until the rulers of Britain and France are willing to respect the vital rights of our two people.

Only after this victory by young National Socialist Germany and young Fascist Italy will it be possible to secure for our people a prosperous future.

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The boundless strength of the German and Italian peoples and the unalterable friendship of the great leaders Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini will be guarantors of this victory.

Moreover, Hitler addressed the following two telegrams to the Italian King and to the Duce:³⁰⁷

To His Majesty the King of Italy, Emperor of Ethiopia, in Rome

Providence has willed that we should be forced, contrary to our own designs, to defend the liberty and future of our peoples in this battle against England. In this historic hour, in which our armies unite in the true brotherhood of arms, I feel compelled to relay to Your Majesty my heartfelt greetings. I am of the firm conviction that the enormous strength of Italy and Germany will carry the victory over our enemies. The vital rights of our two peoples shall then have been secured for all time.

Adolf Hitler

To His Excellency, the Royal Italian Head of Government, Cav. Benito Mussolini, in Rome

Duce!

The historic decision which you announced today has moved me most profoundly. The whole German Volk is thinking of you and your country at this moment. The German Wehrmacht is glad to be able to stand at the side of its Italian comrades in this battle.

Last September, the rulers of Britain and France declared war on the German Reich without any reason. They turned down every offer of a peaceful settlement. Your proposal for mediation, Duce, was also received at the time with a brusque "No." While we have always been very closely linked ideologically by our two revolutions and politically by treaties, the increasing disregard shown by the rulers in London and Paris for Italy's vital national rights has now finally brought us together in the great struggle for the freedom and future of our peoples.

Duce of Fascist Italy, accept the assurance of the indestructible community of arms between the German and the Italian peoples.

I myself send you as always in loyal comradeship my sincerest greetings.

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

On June 13, Hitler issued the following order of the day to the soldiers serving in Norway:³⁰⁸

Führer Headquarters, June 13, 1940

Soldiers!

The campaign in Norway has ended. The British attempt to take hold of this area of vital interest to Germany has failed, thanks to your death-defying courage, your willingness to sacrifice, and your stubborn persistence. I have had to place this highly demanding task before you. You have fulfilled it to the highest degree.

June 13, 1940

I express to your leadership my appreciation and gratitude: to Infantry General von Falkenhorst for the organization and management of operations on land; to Admiral General Saalwächter, to Admiral Carls, and to Vice Admiral Lütjens, for the preparation and deployment of the Navy; as well as to Admiral Boehm for the expansion of coastal fortifications; to Colonel General Milch and to Lieutenant General Geissler for the deployment and leadership of the Luftwaffe.

I express my gratitude and appreciation to all soldiers of the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe, who through their valor and spirit of sacrifice have preserved the German Reich from a great danger.

I give my thanks especially to all those nameless soldiers whose heroism sadly so often remains concealed from their contemporaries. I transmit this expression of the German Volk's proud admiration to the warriors of Narvik.

All those who stood together in the far North—soldiers of the Ostmark's mountains, crews of our battleships, parachute troops, fighter pilots, and transport pilots—will enter into the annals of history as the best representatives of Germany's highest soldiership.

I express the gratitude of the German Volk to Lieutenant General Dietl for the page of honor he has added to the book of German history.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, the French Premier Reynaud³⁰⁹ sent a “renewed and final appeal for assistance” to the American President. However, at this time, the United States was not yet prepared to enter into a war with Germany on behalf of the French. Hence the French Government resigned itself to the circumstances and declared Paris an “open city.”

On June 14, 1940, German troops rolled into Paris for the first time since the defeat of Napoleon III in 1871. In celebration Hitler ordered church bells to ring throughout Germany and banners to fly for three days straight. The official note read:³¹⁰

On the occasion of the great victory of the German troops in France, crowned today by their entry into Paris, as well as of the victorious conclusion of the heroic struggle in Norway, the Führer orders banners to be hoisted for three days throughout Germany as of today. This is to pay homage to our soldiers. Further, the Führer orders church bells to ring for a quarter of an hour.

4

On June 14, Hitler issued “Directive No. 15 for the Conduct of the War,” which opened on the following note:³¹¹

1) Under the impact of the collapse of his fronts the enemy is evacuating the area around Paris and has also begun the evacuation of the fortified triangle of Épinal-Metz-Verdun behind the Maginot Line. Paris has been declared by means of wall posters to be an open city. A withdrawal of the main forces of the French Army beyond the Loire is not excluded.

2) The relative strength of the forces and the condition of the French Army make it possible from now on to pursue two operational objectives simultaneously:

a) to prevent the enemy forces which are withdrawing from the Paris area or are on the lower Seine from setting up a new front,

b) to destroy the enemy in the area in front of Army Groups A and C and to bring about the collapse of the Maginot Line.

Further, the directive concerned itself with a breakthrough at the Maginot Line later in the day. This signaled the beginning of an offensive along the upper course of the Rhine.

On June 15, Hitler granted the American journalist Karl von Wiegand an interview. This was destined to be the last occasion on which Hitler had the opportunity to explain himself to a representative of the Anglo-Saxon press. In Germany, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following account of the meeting with Wiegand:³¹²

On Germany’s attitude toward America, the Führer declared that Germany is one of the few states which has to the present time refrained from interfering in America’s affairs. “Germany has pursued no territorial or political interests on the American Continent in the past, nor does it at present. Whoever maintains the contrary is lying intentionally, for whatever reasons. Therefore, however the American Continent chooses to fashion its life,” the Führer underlined, “it is of no interest to us. This applies not only to North America, but to South America also.”

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On the Monroe Doctrine, the Führer remarked: "I do not believe that a doctrine such as Monroe proclaimed could or can be interpreted as a unilateral statement of non-intervention. For the aim of the Monroe Doctrine was not to prevent the interference of European States in American affairs—Britain, by the way, continues to involve itself there, as it possesses enormous territorial and political interests in America— but rather that, in turn, America should not involve itself in European matters. The fact that George Washington himself issued a similar warning to the American people affirms the logic and the reasonableness of this interpretation. Therefore I say: America to the Americans, Europe to the Europeans!"

Questioned as to Germany's stance on the armament program announced by President Roosevelt, the Führer replied: "I look to the Monroe Doctrine in answering this question as well. I do not pass judgment on the U.S.A.'s armament program—I am not interested in it. I have been forced to work on the greatest armament program in the world for years now, and thus I can well differentiate fantastic talk from the real opportunities of practical life. There appear to be many fantastic opinions currently in circulation on this point."

To the question of an American intervention by deliveries of planes and war materials, the Führer replied: "An American intervention by mass deliveries of planes and war materials will not change the outcome of the war. There is no need to enumerate reasons. Reality will be the ultimate judge."

The Führer summarized his opinion on the supposed existence of a German Fifth Column, widely propagated in the news and in various reports in America, in the following manner: "I cannot imagine what precisely this so-called Fifth Column is supposed to be, for it appears not to exist other than in the brains of visionaries, or as a bogeyman invented for transparent purposes by an unscrupulous propaganda. When incapable governments first drive their peoples into war and then witness a pitiful collapse, it is only understandable that they should prefer to lay the blame on someone else. The main goal of this slogan is to create nothing other than a catch-all term for the inner opposition which naturally exists in all countries. This opposition has nothing at all to do with Germany. Quite to the contrary! They tend to be radical nationalists, or communists of an internationalist orientation, or pacifists and other opponents of war. Alas, because these politicians seem incapable of dealing with their own opposition in a decent manner, they accuse these elements of high treason. Thus they attempt to hide illegal methods beneath a cloak of patriotic rhetoric and to justify this before the eyes of the world by coining the blood-curdling term 'Fifth Column.'

Our enemies will lose this war not because of some Fifth Column, but because they have corrupt, unscrupulous, and mentally limited politicians. They will lose it because their military organization is bad; their leadership in this war is truly a miserable one. Germany will win this war because the German Volk knows it is fighting for a just cause, because the German military organization and leadership are the better ones, and because we have the best Army and the best equipment.

"It was never my intention or my goal," so the Führer further explained, "to destroy the British Empire. On the contrary, even before the outbreak of

the war which Britain and France have unleashed, I presented proposals to the British Government in which I went so far as to offer Great Britain the Reich's assistance for [the protection of] the existence of the Empire. I asked nothing more of Britain than to regard and treat Germany as an equal, that Britain protect Germany's coast should we become involved in a war, and that the German colonies be returned. And I will get them back! In London, they declared and wrote publicly that National Socialism must be destroyed, that Germany must be divided and completely disarmed and rendered powerless. Never have I expressed similar goals or intentions with regard to Britain.

Once Britain began to lose battle upon battle, the rulers in Britain pleaded with America, tears in their eyes. They declared that Germany was threatening the British Empire, that it was trying to destroy it. There is one thing that will be destroyed in this war, namely, the capitalist clique which has been ready and is ready, motivated by base personal interests, to have millions of men destroyed. But it will be done—of this I am convinced—not by us, but by their own peoples.”

The fashion in which Hitler chose to interpret the Monroe Doctrine on this occasion was a shrewd one. His mistake was only in believing that such *bons mots* would make an impression on the Anglo-Saxon world. His claim to be working on the “greatest armament program in the world” may have aroused considerable mirth.

Hitler apparently aimed to dissuade America from actively assisting the British in the future. The latter were to be made aware that they stood alone in the world. Should they persist to refuse him their acquiescence and fail to arrive at a peace settlement with Germany, they would be left to the mercy of the dreadful German war machine. Moreover, so Hitler argued, the British statesmen faced the distinct possibility that the populace might well rise up against its leadership to protest involvement in a senseless debacle.

In spite of the great number of interviews Hitler granted Anglo-Saxon journalists in the years 1932 to 1940, he never gained any insight into the English mentality, so engrossed was he in his own ideas during these talks.

On June 15, Verdun fell into German hands, the very fortress fought for with such tenacity in the First World War. Two days later, the French Premier Reynaud resigned in favor of Marshal Pétain.³¹³ The French Government had been forced to retreat first from Paris to Tour, then to Bordeaux.

Pétain addressed the French people in a radio broadcast on that June 17. He insisted that it was imperative to end the fighting.³¹⁴ Through an intermediary—the Spanish Ambassador—Hitler was informed officially of the French request for an armistice. Upon receipt

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of the information, Hitler slapped his knee and danced for joy.³¹⁵ Next he issued this decree to the German troops in France:³¹⁶

The newly formed French Government has imparted to the German Reich Government, through the good offices of Spain, its intention to end the hostilities. It has inquired as to the terms of peace. I shall announce my decision after consultations with the Duce of Fascist Italy. The Wehrmacht shall continue operations and forcefully pursue the vanquished enemy. The Armed Forces shall regard themselves honor-bound to quickly occupy old Reich territory up to the line Verdun-Toul-Belfort, as well as the coastal locations Cherbourg and Brest.

Adolf Hitler

The decree provided ample evidence of Hitler's designs for a vanquished France. The "return of the territories robbed from Germany for over 400 years and other assets"³¹⁷ was not actually the issue at hand. As always with Hitler, questions of power took precedence: Cherbourg and Brest were to serve Germany as outlets to the sea.³¹⁸ For "wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain."³¹⁹

The following official statement notified the German public of the French offer of capitulation:³²⁰

Führer Headquarters, June 17, 1940

The Premier of the newly formed French Government, Marshal Pétain, has declared in a radio address to the French people that France must now lay down its arms. He pointed to the steps he had already undertaken to inform the Reich Government of this decision and to obtain knowledge of the conditions under which the German Reich would be willing to meet the wishes of the French.

The Führer will meet with the Royal Italian Minister-President, Benito Mussolini, in order to discuss the attitude of both states in this matter.

News of the French surrender caused elation in Germany—for the first time since the outbreak of the war. And understandably so, as the horrors of the First World War, especially of the seemingly endless trench warfare, were still all-too vivid in the memories of millions of former soldiers. A swift and easy victory over France and its Army, which had been considered to be the greatest power on the Continent since World War I, promised a quick end to the war in the West. Many veterans of the Battle of Verdun burst into tears at news of the fall of this reputedly invincible fortress. Even the former Kaiser William II sent his congratulations to Hitler in the form of a telegram on June 17.³²¹ This notwithstanding, public enthusiasm at the fall of France soon dissipated

as it became increasingly clear that France's defeat was not the same as Britain's.

June 18 witnessed the long awaited meeting between Hitler and Mussolini at Munich. Hitler arrived in the city at noon, aboard his special train. Reich Governor von Epp greeted him at the gate. After the customary welcome, review of the guards of honor, etc., Hitler's car bore him to his apartment at 16 Prinzregentenplatz. Three hours later, the Führer was back at the station gate to greet the Duce, whose train reached the Bavarian capital punctually at 2:58 p.m. Ciano accompanied Mussolini. Nearly the same ceremony that hours earlier had welcomed Hitler, now greeted the Duce. Then the two dictators drove to the Prince Carl Palace, where Hitler took leave of his guest for the time being.³²²

Beneath the main entrance of the Führerbau, Mussolini rejoined his host at 4:00 p.m. for a conference on the first floor of the same building on the Königlicher Platz which had borne witness to the 1938 accords with Chamberlain.

Ciano reported that Hitler spoke "with a reserve and a perspicacity which, after such a victory, are really astonishing." It was almost exclusively Hitler who spoke during the "conference," which lasted several hours.³²³ This was not out of the ordinary by any means. On this particular occasion, however, Hitler did so for a special purpose. By speaking constantly, he wished to rob Mussolini of the opportunity to voice any inopportune questions regarding his manner of procedure. Hitler wished to leave everyone in the dark as to his precise plans for France in the near future, and this included what he held in store for the Duce as well as for the French negotiators. Of course, he admitted that he planned to disarm France and to press it to yield to certain "reasoned," although vague German demands. What was to happen later to France was hidden beneath a shroud of "implementing regulations." In other words, he reserved all further decisions for himself.

After all, Britain was of far greater importance to him than France. In order not to nettle the British needlessly, he decided to avow a lack of interest in French colonial possessions and the French fleet. In his mind, these two measures would suffice to impress upon the English how great his friendship for them was. Hitler astounded those around him at the "conference," and especially the Italians, by speaking with great caution and restraint, and not indulging in undue elation at the recent victory.

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In spite of all of this, Mussolini would have enjoyed getting in a word edgewise. Italy had claims on French possessions such as Tunis, Corsica, Piedmont, and the like. Hitler never even deigned to inform Mussolini where he intended to meet the French delegation. The only concession Mussolini obtained was Hitler's assurance that the armistice agreement would not enter into force until Italian-French negotiations had been concluded successfully.

The following terse communiqué informed the German public of the 1940 "Munich conference":³²⁴

Munich, June 18, 1940

The Führer and the Duce have achieved agreement today, at the conference in Munich, on the stance of both governments in view of the French armistice request.

Having shown themselves to the public from the balcony of the Führerbau, Hitler accompanied the Duce to the main entrance. Shortly after, he was by his side again as Mussolini made his way from the Prince Carl Palace to the central Munich train station. A few minutes after the Duce's departure, Hitler boarded his special train, which returned him to his wartime headquarters. Upon arrival there, he set out to draft the armistice agreement with France. On the night of June 20 to June 21, Hitler himself ventured to check on the progress made in the translation of the document.³²⁵

On June 20, in a different context, Hitler mentioned the possibility of German landings on the British mainland to Raeder, without, however, committing himself.³²⁶

In the meantime, the French Government had named the members of its delegation: General Huntziger; Ambassador Noël; Vice Admiral LeLuc; and Air Force General Bergeret.³²⁷ Hitler had ordered the old parlor car of Marshal Foch³²⁸ to be remounted on the spot of the 1918 negotiations in the Forest of Compiègne. Since then, the *wagon-salon* had been a museum piece in France. Hitler's intention obviously was to humiliate the French delegates by re-enacting the scene of 1918, with, however, the roles reversed. He had stated as much to the generals on May 20.³²⁹

On June 21, Hitler arrived at the historic site in the Forest of Compiègne at 3:15 p.m. The monument recalling the fateful days of 1918 was still here. It bore the engraved inscription: "Here on November 11, 1918, the criminal pride of the German Empire was defeated, vanquished by the free peoples it presumed to enslave."

Another memorial, featuring a lifeless eagle as the symbol of the defeated Germany of 1918, was carefully hidden beneath a cloth embroidered with the Third Reich's swastika flag.

Alighting from his car, together with Göring, Raeder, Brauchitsch, Keitel, Ribbentrop, and Hess, Hitler briefly viewed the first monument and the circular clearing upon which the famed car stood. Together, the men boarded the train and took their seats. As the French delegates entered, the company rose to greet them with a silent nod. Again in silence, the gentlemen were seated. Then Keitel undertook to read the preamble to Hitler's conditions for an armistice:³³⁰

Trusting in the assurances extended to the German Reich by the American President Wilson and affirmed by the Allied Powers, the German Wehrmacht laid down its arms in November 1918. Thereby the war was brought to an end that neither the German Volk nor its Government had desired—a war in which, in spite of an overwhelming numerical superiority, their enemies had not managed to decisively defeat the German Army, Navy, and the German Luftwaffe.

With the very arrival of the German armistice delegation began the breach of the solemnly given promise. Also, on November 11, 1918, a time of suffering for the German Volk began. From here on, what could be done to a people in terms of degradation and humiliation, of human and material suffering, was done. Broken promises and perjury raised their ugly heads against a people who after a four-year-long heroic resistance, had succumbed to just one weakness: believing in the promises of democratic statesmen.

On September 3, 1939—twenty-five years after the outbreak of the World War—Britain and France once more declared war on Germany without reason. Now the weapons have decided. France is vanquished. The French Government has requested the Reich Government to present it with its terms for an armistice.

When the historic Forest of Compiègne was selected for the presentation of these terms, this happened so that this act of atoning justice would erase a memory—once and for all—which composed no page of glory in the history of France and which the German Volk felt to be the greatest disgrace of all time.

France, in spite of heroic resistance, has been vanquished in a series of bloody battles and has collapsed. Germany does not intend, with so valiant an adversary, to lend the characteristics of disparagement to the terms of the armistice or to the armistice negotiations.

The aims of the German demands are:

1. to prevent renewed fighting,
2. to afford Germany the security necessary for the continuation of the war forced upon it by Britain, as well as
3. to create the prerequisites for a new peace, the essential feature of which shall be atonement for the injustice forced on the German Reich.

June 21, 1940

After the reading, which lasted approximately ten minutes, Hitler and his companions left the car. Only Keitel remained behind to explain the further points of the armistice agreement. Outside, Hitler reviewed the guard of honor, against a background of an orchestra thumping out the “Deutschlandlied” and the “Horst-Wessel-Lied.” When everything had gone according to plan, Hitler left the scene. The following announcement informed the German public of the event:³³¹

Forest of Compiègne, June 21

At 3:30 p.m. on June 21, 1940, the Führer and Supreme Commander received the French delegation to accept the armistice conditions in the presence of the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht branches, the Chiefs of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, the Reich Foreign Minister, and the Deputy of the Führer.

The French delegation consisted of: General Huntziger, member of the Supreme French War Council; Air Force General Bergeret; Vice Admiral LeLuc; and Ambassador Noël.

In the Forest of Compiègne, the Führer conducted the state act of the presentation of conditions in the same wagon in which, on November 11, 1918, Marshal Foch dictated the terms of the armistice to the German delegates under the most dishonorable circumstances.

Today’s act in the Forest of Compiègne has erased injustice perpetrated against the German military honor.

The dignity of the behavior toward an honorably defeated adversary stood in striking contrast to the eternal hatred sown by the monuments on this site at which Gallic deceit disparaged the unbeaten German Army.

The sight of these “architectural monuments” had particularly infuriated Hitler. On returning to headquarters, he issued the following order:³³²

Führer Headquarters, June 21, 1940

1. The historic wagon, the memorial stone, and the monument commemorating the Gallic triumph, are to be brought to Berlin.
2. The tracks and stones of both trains are to be destroyed.
3. The monument dedicated to Marshal Foch is to be preserved.

Apparently Hitler had an ingrained respect of anyone who bore the title “Marshal,” regardless of whether his name was Hindenburg, Pilsudski, or Foch.

Germany’s surprisingly swift victory over France had repercussions internationally. Spain thought the moment opportune to seize the international zone around Tangier. The Soviet Union was left ill at ease at these latest developments: after all, now that Hitler had virtually occupied nearly all the Western states on the continent, it was merely

a matter of time before he turned his gaze back to the East. And assuredly, his lust for conquest would flame up once again.

The Soviet Union thought it proper to take steps to counter any such ambitions and so, on June 15 and June 16, Moscow moved to occupy the three Baltic States. In addition, Stalin now began to make claims to the Romanian territories of Bessarabia and northern Bucovina, and on June 28, the Red Army marched into them.³³³

Although in the Boundary and Friendship Treaty of September 28, 1939, Hitler had acknowledged that the Baltic States lay within Moscow's sphere of interest, he was greatly annoyed by Russia's advances. After all, at the time, Hitler had only reluctantly ceded this territory to the Soviet Union from the necessity of conquering Poland. Warsaw no longer figured in the political landscape, and this had naturally transformed Hitler's outlook radically.

He had long cast an eye on the annexation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as a first step toward the conquest of further Lebensraum for the German Volk in the East.³³⁴ Romania figured heavily in these plans as well, especially because of its oil riches. Naturally, Hitler considered the Baltic States and Romania to belong to the "German cultural area," and he was gravely upset by the Russian claims to what he already considered his own. He swore to take revenge on the impudent Soviet Union as soon as he had dealt with France and Britain.

Things were going well as far as France was concerned. On June 22, the French delegates signed the armistice at 6:50 p.m., after futile attempts to moderate its terms. By 7:06 p.m., Keitel reported the happy event to his Führer. Thereupon, the Führer Headquarters issued the following official pronouncement:³³⁵

On June 22, at 6:50 p.m. (German summer time),³³⁶ the German-French armistice agreement was signed in the Forest of Compiègne. Parties to the signing were: on the German side, the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Colonel General Keitel, as the special authorized representative of the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht; and, on the French side, the authorized representative of the French Government, General Huntziger.

A cessation of hostilities is not entailed. They will cease six hours after the Italian Government has informed the German High Command of the Wehrmacht that an Italian-French armistice treaty has been concluded. For the present, the contents of the armistice treaty cannot be revealed.

The terms of the Armistice Treaty, which were not made public in Germany until June 25, read:³³⁷

June 22, 1940

The following Armistice Treaty has been agreed upon by Colonel General Keitel, Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, appointed by the Führer of the German Reich and Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, on the one hand, and the Plenipotentiaries of the French Government who are vested with full powers, General of the Army Huntziger, chairman of the delegation, M. Noël, Ambassador of France, Vice Admiral LeLuc, General Parisot, Corps Commander, and General of the Air Force Bergeret, on the other:

1. The French Government will order the cessation of hostilities against the German Reich in France, in French possessions, colonies, protectorates, and mandated territories, and at sea. It will order French units, already encircled by German troops, to lay down their arms immediately.

2. In order to safeguard the interests of the German Reich, French territory north and west of the line marked on the attached mapsm will be occupied by German troops. Insofar as the parts to be occupied are not yet under the control of German troops, this occupation will be carried out immediately after the conclusion of this Treaty.

3. In the occupied parts of France the German Reich will exercise all the rights of the occupying power. The French Government undertakes to support by every means orders issued in the exercise of those rights and to carry them out with the assistance of the French administration. The French Government will therefore immediately instruct all French authorities and offices in the occupied territory to comply with the orders of the German military commanders and to collaborate with them correctly.

It is the intention of the German Government to reduce to the extent absolutely necessary the occupation of the western coast after the cessation of hostilities with England.

The French Government is free to choose its seat of government in the unoccupied territory, or, if it so desires, to transfer it to Paris. In the latter case, the German Government promises the French Government and its central authorities every necessary facility to enable it to administer the occupied and unoccupied territory from Paris.

4. The French armed forces on land, at sea, and in the air are to be demobilized and disarmed within a period still to be fixed. Excepted from this are only those units which are necessary for the maintenance of internal order. Their strength and armament will be determined by Germany or Italy respectively. Units of the French armed forces in the territory to be occupied by Germany will be speedily withdrawn to the territory not to be occupied and are to be discharged. Before leaving, the troops will lay down their arms and equipment at the places where they happen to be at the time of the entry into force of this Treaty. They will be responsible for orderly delivery to the German troops.

5. As a guarantee that the armistice will be observed, demand can be made for the surrender intact of all guns, tanks, anti-tank weapons, military aircraft, anti-aircraft guns, small arms, transport material and ammunition of those units of the French armed forces which were fighting against Germany and which at the time of entry into force of this agreement happen to be in territory

not to be occupied by Germany. The extent of these surrenders will be determined by the German Armistice Commission.

The surrender of military aircraft can be dispensed with, if all military aircraft still in the possession of the French armed forces are disarmed and placed in safe custody under German supervision.

6. The remaining arms, stocks of ammunition, and war material of all kinds in the unoccupied part of France—except those permitted for the equipment of the authorized French units—are to be stored or placed in safe custody under German or Italian supervision. In this connection the German High Command reserves the right to order all measures necessary to prevent the unauthorized use of these stores. Further manufacture of war material in unoccupied territory is to be stopped immediately.

7. In the territory to be occupied all land and coastal fortifications are to be surrendered intact with their arms, ammunition, equipment, stores, and installations of every kind. Plans of these fortifications, as well as plans of those already captured by the German troops, are to be surrendered. Exact details of explosive charges placed in position, mine fields on land, time fuses, gas barrages, etc., are to be supplied to the German High Command. These obstacles are to be removed by French troops at the request of the German authorities.

8. The French war fleet, with the exception of the part permitted to the French Government for the protection of French interests in its colonial empire, is to be assembled in ports to be specified and is to be demobilized and disarmed under German or Italian supervision. The choice of these ports will be determined by the peacetime stations of the ships. The German Government solemnly declares to the French Government that it does not intend to use for its own purposes in the war the French fleet which is in ports under German supervision, with the exception of those units needed for coastal patrol and for mine sweeping. Furthermore they solemnly and expressly declare that they have no intention of raising any claim to the French war fleet at the time of the conclusion of peace. With the exception of that part of the French war fleet, still to be determined, which is to represent French interests in the colonial empire, all war vessels which are outside French territorial waters are to be recalled to France.

9. The French High Command is to supply the German High Command with detailed information about all mines laid by France, as well as all harbor and coastal barriers and installations for defense and protection.

The clearing of mine fields is to be carried out by French forces to the extent required by the German High Command.

10. The French Government undertakes not to engage in any hostile actions with any part of the armed forces left to it, or in any other way, against the German Reich.

The French Government will also prevent members of the French armed forces from leaving the country and arms and war material of any kind, ships, aircraft, etc., from being moved to England or to any other foreign country.

The French Government will forbid French nationals to fight against the German Reich in the service of states with which Germany is still at war.

June 22, 1940

French nationals who act contrary to this prohibition will be treated by German troops as francs-tireurs (*Freischärler*).

11. French merchant ships of all kinds including coastal and harbor craft in French hands are to be forbidden to put to sea until further notice. The resumption of merchant shipping will be subject to the approval of the German and Italian Governments respectively.

The French Government will recall French merchant ships which are outside French ports or, if this cannot be done, will order them to proceed to neutral ports.

All German merchant ships which have been captured and which are in French ports will be returned intact on demand.

12. All aircraft on French territory will be immediately prohibited from taking off. Any aircraft taking off without German authority will be regarded by the German Luftwaffe as hostile and treated as such.

Airfields and ground installations of the Air Force in unoccupied territory will be under German and/or Italian supervision as the case may be. Demand may be made that they shall be rendered unusable. The French Government is obligated to make available all foreign aircraft which are in unoccupied territory or to prevent them from continuing their flight. They are to be handed over to the German Wehrmacht.

13. The French Government undertakes to ensure that in the territories to be occupied by German troops all installations, equipment, and stores of the armed forces are surrendered intact to the German troops. It will further ensure that ports, industrial plants, and shipyards are left in their present condition and not damaged or destroyed in any way. The same applies to all means and routes of communication, in particular to railways, highways, and inland waterways, to the whole telecommunication service and to installations for marking channels for navigation and the coastal lighthouse service. It also undertakes to carry out all repairs necessary thereon as required by the German High Command.

The French Government will ensure that there are available in occupied territory the necessary technical personnel, the amount of rolling stock and other means of transport as under normal peacetime conditions.

14. All radio transmitting stations in French territory are forthwith forbidden to transmit. The resumption of transmissions from the unoccupied part of France will be subject to special arrangements.

15. The French Government undertakes to effect the transit of goods through the unoccupied territory between the German Reich and Italy to the extent required by the German Government.

16. The French Government, in agreement with the competent German authorities, will arrange for the return of the population to the occupied territory.

17. The French Government undertakes to prevent any removal of economic assets (*Werte*) and stocks (*Vorräte*) from the territory to be occupied by German troops into unoccupied territory or abroad. Such assets and stocks as are in the occupied territory may only be disposed of in agreement with the German Government.

June 22, 1940

In this connection the German Government will take into consideration the vital needs of the population of the unoccupied territories.

18. The costs of maintenance of the German occupation troops on French territory will be borne by the French Government.

19. All German prisoners of war and civilian prisoners in French custody, including detained or convicted persons who have been arrested and sentenced for acts committed in the interests of the German Reich are to be handed over immediately to the German troops.

The French Government undertakes to prevent German prisoners of war or civilian prisoners from being removed from France to French possessions or abroad. Correct lists are to be supplied of prisoners already removed from France as well as of sick and wounded German prisoners of war unfit for travel, with particulars of their whereabouts. The German High Command will take over the care of German sick and wounded prisoners of war.

20. Members of the French armed forces who are prisoners of war in German hands shall remain prisoners of war until the conclusion of peace.

21. The French Government is liable for securing all objects and assets which, according to this Treaty, are to be surrendered intact, or held at German disposal, or the removal of which outside the country is forbidden. The French Government is obligated to make good all the destruction, damage, or removal contrary to this Treaty.

22. The execution of the Armistice Treaty will be regulated and supervised by a German Armistice Commission acting under the instructions of the German High Command. Furthermore the Armistice Commission will be called upon to ensure the necessary conformity between the present Treaty and the Italian-French Armistice Treaty. The French Government will send a delegation to the seat of the German Armistice Commission to represent French wishes and to receive the executive orders of the German Armistice Commission.

23. The present Armistice Treaty will come into force as soon as the French Government has also reached an agreement with the Italian Government on the cessation of hostilities. Hostilities will cease six hours after the Italian Government has notified the Reich Government that this agreement has been reached. The Reich Government will notify the French Government of this time by radio.

24. The Armistice Treaty will remain in force until the conclusion of the peace treaty. It can be renounced by the German Government at any time and with immediate effect, if the French Government does not carry out the obligations assumed by this Treaty:

This Armistice Treaty has been signed in the Forest of Compiègne at 6:50 p.m., German summer time, on June 22, 1940.

Huntziger
Keitel

The third point of the treaty betrayed Hitler's intent to retain the French western coast as a base for the German Navy, even after a conclusion of peace with England. No willingness to cede this territory

again at a later date was apparent in the often proclaimed slogan: "What we once possess we will never again surrender!"³³⁹ This reflected Hitler's mentality as expressed in *Mein Kampf*. He was not a man to cede conquered territories, although he might at times agree to minor revisions of existing borders if these promised a political advantage. The continued occupation of France satisfied a demand Hitler had voiced early on in his political career.³⁴⁰

The political testament of the German nation's actions abroad should and must always convey the general sense of the following: never tolerate the emergence of two continental powers in Europe.

Regard every attempt to organize a second military force along German borders, even if it consists merely in the formation of a state with the potential of becoming a military power, as an act of aggression against Germany. Regard it not as your right, but as your duty, to employ all means at your disposal, including force of arms, in hindering the emergence of such a state or, if such a state has already emerged, in its destruction.

Given this attitude openly proclaimed in *Mein Kampf*, it was not surprising that the thought of giving up the military occupation of France never even entered Hitler's mind. The "magnanimity" of his character had allowed him little more than conceding that only three fifths of France fall under the German yoke—for the time being. Central and southern France were spared such a fate, to continue their existence in the form of a reservation.

Should the Frenchmen in these regions fail to comply with the Third Reich's demands, then they, too, would lose their privileged status. In this case, German soldiers would move swiftly to accord them special protection.³⁴¹

The terms of the armistice agreement made no mention of the fate of the French prisoners of war taken by the Germans. Apparently, pending conclusion of a "final" peace settlement, which the Third Reich never intended to accord France, these were to remain firmly in German hands. They were to share the fate of their Belgian colleagues, who likewise remained in confinement until 1945.

The remainder of the armistice document concerned itself largely with items regarding the technical implementation of its conditions. Only one further point (number 8) was remarkable in that it contained a "solemn declaration," directed more at England than at France.³⁴²

The German Government solemnly declares to the French Government that it does not intend to use for its own purposes in the war the French fleet which is in ports under German supervision . . .

Now, the British Navy need no longer concern itself with the additional naval power at Hitler's command. In the Führer's mind, this renewed gesture of "friendship" was to reinforce the British Government's trust in him and to induce it to finally agree to a peace settlement.

On June 24, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Portuguese State President Carmona on the 800th anniversary of Portugal's independence from Spain.³⁴³ The same day witnessed the signature of the French-Italian armistice agreement at the Villa Incisa outside of Rome.³⁴⁴ The spoils for Italy were meager ones indeed. Italian forces were allowed to continue occupying a small strip of land along the frontier to France which they had conquered in the course of their short-lived involvement in the campaign. Mussolini was kept from a share in the loot in the French heartland and in the French colonies.³⁴⁵ Six hours after the exchange of signatures to the armistice agreement, the guns actually fell silent.

The following official pronouncement from the Führer Headquarters marked the occasion:³⁴⁶

Führer Headquarters, June 24, 1940

Today, on Monday, June 24th, signature of the French-Italian ceasefire accords took place in Rome at 7:15 p.m. The German Reich Government was officially informed thereof at 7:35 p.m. As a consequence, the German-French ceasefire accords have come into force.

The High Command of the Wehrmacht has ordered an end to hostilities against France. Weapons on both sides are to be silenced at 1:35 p.m., German Summer Time, on June 25. With this, the war in the West will end.

Shortly thereafter, Hitler issued a proclamation "to the German Volk," which spoke of the "most glorious victory of all time:"³⁴⁷

German Volk!

Within barely six weeks of heroic struggle, your soldiers have ended the war in the West against a valiant enemy. Their deed will enter into the book of history as the most glorious victory of all time. Fervently, we thank the Lord Almighty for His blessings. I order flags to be hoisted throughout the Reich for ten days, and bells to ring for seven days.

Adolf Hitler

Naturally the "greatest battle of all time" could be succeeded only by the "most glorious victory of all time."³⁴⁸ The German public was puzzled by this announcement. How could Hitler speak of the "most glorious victory of all time" when England had not yet surrendered? Judging by official pronouncements issued in London, the English

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were by no means beaten. As recently as in a speech before the House of Commons on June 18, Churchill had defiantly proclaimed:³⁴⁹

I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made even more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say: "This was their finest hour."

The question was whether Hitler now realized that so unyielding a people had to be beaten on its own soil before it lowered its banners. Hardly. He was still convinced that it sufficed to drive the English "back to the Thames" to induce them to capitulate. He acted as if the war was already over. For instance, at this time, he issued the following order affecting the return of the civilian population evacuated from the front before the opening of hostilities:³⁵⁰

Due to the British-French declaration of war in September 1939, it was necessary to evacuate the German civilian population from parts of the territories bordering on the front in the West. Hundreds of thousands of Volksgenossen were affected by this measure.

The evacuation itself went in accordance with a minutely prepared plan. Nevertheless, it must have brought many hardships with it. All those affected have satisfied the demands of war in an exemplary manner. Now the hour of the return home to native cities and villages has come. Instructions for its smooth implementation will be issued shortly. The same authorities who attended to the evacuation in September and October of last year will carry out the transport home.

Insofar as the localities and residences along the front have suffered from artillery fire or from other wartime action, their reconstruction and restoration shall be undertaken immediately. Damage incurred by the individual during his absence shall be compensated. Offices of Party and State are responsible for attending, within the shortest time possible, to the returning population's requests for the assistance to which it is entitled.

Adolf Hitler

On June 28, Hitler visited Paris. In the early morning, he flew to the Le Bourget Airport to tour the city between 5:00 and 6:00.³⁵¹ Ostensibly,

he was trying to avoid any unpleasant encounters with the civilian population of Paris by choosing to view the city at so early an hour. And, as usual, he may well have been driven to do so by his constant fear of assassination attempts.

If it had been true, as Hitler once claimed,³⁵² that he had the plans of most major European cities in his head at all time, he should have been able to find his way in the French capital without a guide. Naturally, he insisted on making a show of his knowledge. For this purpose, he had ordered his architects, professors Giesler, Speer, and Breker, to accompany him on the sightseeing tour. He wished to impress them with his expertise on architecture and art. Their first stop was the Eiffel Tower, of course. As there was a cool breeze that morning, Hitler wore a gray tunic. Later, as the sun came up, he switched into a light-color trench coat. The Paris Opera House and the Church of St. Madeleine attracted Hitler's special attention. The latter had been built in the form of an ancient Greek temple to commemorate Napoleon's various victories. Its classicist architecture resembled most closely Hitler's own taste in such matters. The visit culminated in a tour of the Dôme des Invalides. Earnestly, Hitler looked down on the marble tomb of Napoleon, surely contemplating how to fashion his own mausoleum one day. By the time the people of Paris sat down at the breakfast table, Hitler was long gone and left them ignorant of who had honored their city with his visit just a few hours before.

On June 29, Hitler wired his condolences to Mussolini on the death of Marshal Balbo:³⁵³

Duce!

News of the pilot's death of your Marshal Italo Balbo has just reached me. For the severe loss you have suffered, and with you the entire Italian people, I wish to offer to you my deeply felt sympathy. The German Volk stands in mourning alongside the Italian people at the bier of the Marshal. Balbo's deeds in the service of the young Roman Empire will remain unforgotten here as well.

By June 29, Hitler had relocated his headquarters to "Tannenberg," situated deep within the Black Forest.³⁵⁴ From there he visited Strasbourg³⁵⁵ on the day which marked the anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Versailles. Leaving the city behind, Hitler passed through Schlettstadt on his way to battlefields in the Vosges Mountains. At Breisach, he toured both French and German bunkers located in the Rhine valley. The foray into France had been launched from here.

Hitler had subordinates explain details of the operation with the help of maps.

On June 30, once again, Hitler set out in his light-color trench coat to visit Mulhouse and the northern Alsace region.³⁵⁶ He viewed remnants of the Maginot Line, especially its tank fortifications, which the German troops had taken. He portrayed himself as a popular leader, stopping to chat with simple, enlisted men. Photographs taken on the occasion show him relaxed and in a happy, confident mood. There could be no talk of Hitler “going through one of his periods of isolation” in times of crises.³⁵⁷

Indeed, there was little for Hitler to be concerned about. Britain had lost the war, or so he thought. It was merely a question of time until the British were ready to admit this publicly and enter into peace negotiations with Germany.

On July 1, at a reception at his headquarters, Hitler imparted to Alfieri that “he could not conceive of anyone in England still seriously believing in victory.”³⁵⁸

On July 2, Hitler decided:³⁵⁹

Given certain prerequisites, the most important one of which is the attainment of air supremacy, a landing in England can be envisioned. For the time being, the exact date remains open. Preparations are to be launched for carrying this out as soon as possible.

On this day, Hitler also edited a voluminous final report on the progress of operations in France from June 5 through June 25, to be issued by the High Command of the Wehrmacht. Hitler added the usual superlatives to the text. He also insisted on providing exact details on the precise number of prisoners of war taken, tonnage of ships sunk, and the like.

By July 3 and July 4, Hitler could no longer indulge himself in contemplating conquest. The “solemn declaration” that he made no claim to the French fleet³⁶⁰ had not had the desired impact in Great Britain. In a speech before the House of Commons, Churchill had already declared on June 25: “Ask half a dozen countries what is the value of such solemn assurances [by the German Government].”³⁶¹

On July 3, the English demonstrated that they were serious in their denunciations of Hitler’s assurances. A contingent of the British fleet appeared in the waters off the coastal city of Oran in Algeria and demanded the immediate release of the French ships held at bay there. When this request was declined, the English ships opened fire. A

number of French battleships were incinerated, others sunk.³⁶² News of this incident propelled the German News Bureau to issue the following statement:³⁶³

As we have been informed, the Führer has permitted the French Government, after the report on the events given by the French delegation to the armistice talks to the German armistice commission,³⁶⁴ to sink its ships in those locations where they cannot escape from the grasp of British naval forces.

On July 6, Hitler returned to Berlin. There he staged a triumphant entry into the city.³⁶⁵ Now that, in his mind, the war had brought Germany the final victory, he no longer shied away from his people. No more did he feel he needed to avoid public exposure, as he had persistently done ever since September 3, 1939.³⁶⁶

Hitler's special train pulled into the Anhalt Station at 3:00 p.m. The program for this event reflected his entries into Vienna and Prague in the previous two years.³⁶⁷ First Göring was commissioned to extend the proper welcome to the returning Führer; then Hitler's car passed through a corridor formed by curious onlookers and bore him to the Reich Chancellery; and finally he stepped out onto the balcony.

On July 7, Hitler returned to his official duties by issuing a decree pertaining to the Wehrmacht's occupation of France. The decree was still dated "Führer Headquarters" and detailed the following on the Armed Forces' role in occupied France:³⁶⁸

After the victorious conclusion of the campaign in France, I expect of the German Wehrmacht that it should rise, in the same impeccable manner, to its mission as an occupation force. I order all members of the Wehrmacht to exercise caution in their dealings with the population in the occupied enemy territories, as befits the German soldier. Excessive use of alcohol is unworthy of a soldier. Often it is the cause of grave disorder or acts of violence. Drunkenness arising through one's own fault will not be considered sufficient cause for a mitigation of sentence. I expect that all members of the Wehrmacht who have committed acts in breach of the law because of drunkenness—also against the population—shall be held fully accountable. In severe cases, this may require a dishonorable death according to the law. I make it the duty of all superiors to maintain the high standard of the discipline of the German man through example and instruction.

Adolf Hitler

At noon, the Italian Foreign Minister arrived from Rome to see Hitler.³⁶⁹ Ciano had drafted a highly detailed list of the spoils Italy felt entitled to, now that the war had supposedly been won: Tunisia, Corsica, Nice, Malta; possessions in the Near East, in Egypt, in the

Sudan, and in Somalia. But Hitler was still preoccupied with the question of how to appease the British by extending to them “generous terms of peace.” Demands of the sort Italy was making merely got in the way of this effort. And if anyone was to annex these territories, it was he and not Mussolini. Speedily Hitler resorted to his gifted oratory and delivered a lengthy monologue to Ciano, explaining the victory in the West. At the end, he threatened “to unleash a storm of wrath and steel upon the English.” Even Ciano remarked that apparently Hitler was not all that serious in making this challenge. In his diary, he noted: “But the final decision has not been reached, and it is for this reason that he is delaying his speech, of which, as he himself puts it, he wants to weigh every word.” Closer to the truth was Hitler’s announcement that he intended, “by means of an adroit appeal to the English people, to isolate the British Government.” After the talk, Hitler dismissed his guest, and sent him off to tour the battlefields in the West for the next two days.

Meanwhile, in the presence of Göring, the Führer hosted a few wounded soldiers from the campaign in the West in the Reich Chancellery.³⁷⁰ In addition, he bestowed the Goethe Medal on Hans Johst, the President of the Reich Chamber of Authors (Reichsschrifttumskammer), on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday.³⁷¹

On July 10, Hitler rejoined Ciano in Munich. In the morning, at the Führerbau, he held a reception for the Hungarian Minister-President, Count Teleki, and his Foreign Minister, Count Csáky.³⁷² Hungary was now making claims on Transylvania (Siebenbürgen), then part of Romania. Hitler was not pleased by the prospect of unrest in yet another area of continental Europe as he was still busily trying to induce the British to enter into a peaceful settlement with Germany. He made it perfectly clear to his two callers that they could count neither on Germany nor on Italy to support them in this venture. Both countries were “preoccupied elsewhere.”

After his guests had departed, Hitler retired to the Obersalzberg where he wished to recuperate from the exertions of the campaign in the West. Moreover, he wanted to carefully prepare his speech before the Reichstag, one in which he intended to “weigh every word.” Other issues demanded attention as well.

On July 11, in the presence of Keitel and Naval Adjutant von Puttkammer, Hitler conferred with Grand Admiral Raeder on the possibility of an invasion of the British Isles.³⁷³ Raeder delivered an account of the situation and of potential developments. Both Hitler and

Raeder agreed that an invasion of England, or rather the threat of an invasion, should be used “only as a last resort to force peace on England.”

One day later, Hitler issued decrees on construction measures for the cities of Königsberg, Oldenburg, Posen, and Saarbrücken. These decrees still bore the heading “Führer Headquarters,” although they were signed at the Berghof.³⁷⁴ Further, Hitler ordered construction work in the vicinity of Wewelsburg³⁷⁵ and placed his signature beneath a law on the establishment of a free harbor at Danzig.³⁷⁶

At noon on July 13, Hitler received Halder. Halder discussed plans for landings on the English mainland.³⁷⁷ Although Hitler ordered preparatory steps to be taken immediately, Halder noted the following reservations the Führer expressed:

Führer wants to bring Spain into the game, to build up front against the enemy in England reaching from the North Cape all the way to Morocco.

Führer obsessed with question why England does not yet want to follow path to peace. As we do, he sees an answer to this question in England placing its hopes on Russia. He hence counts on having to use force to get peace with England. He does not like to do such a thing, however. Reason: if we beat England militarily, the British Empire will fall apart.

This will not benefit Germany. We would be spilling German blood for something from which only America and others can profit.

Obviously, Hitler’s optimism with regard to a swift conclusion of the war was beginning to wane. These “senile” Englishmen were driving him mad. Had he not proved his friendship for them time and time again? Had he not offered them German divisions for the protection of the Empire? Had he not allowed the escape of the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk? Had he not, as a special favor to the British, renounced the French fleet?

As all these attempts had borne no fruit, Hitler felt he had to resort to the threat of an invasion of the British Isles as “a last resort” to force London to finally conclude peace. In a speech scheduled for July 19, he planned to extend yet another “magnanimous” offer to Great Britain, now that he felt he had securely established himself as the undisputed ruler of the European Continent.

On July 14, Hitler forwarded to Rome a draft of a letter to King Carol of Romania on the question of Transylvania.³⁷⁸ The next day, Hitler penned yet another letter to Mussolini. In it, he portrayed the invasion of England as a foregone conclusion. In a polite but determined tone of voice, he rejected the Duce’s offer to contribute an Italian expe-

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ditionary corps to the venture. Hitler claimed that “difficulties” with “reinforcements” for two separate armies would impede progress in the foray.³⁷⁹

On July 16, Hitler issued War Directive No. 16, detailing preparations for an invasion of England. Perhaps he wished to clarify matters for himself prior to delivering his speech before the Reichstag. At any rate, with such a directive behind him, what could go wrong? The English simply had to come to terms. The directive read:³⁸⁰

Since England, despite her militarily hopeless situation, still shows no sign of willingness to come to terms, I have decided to prepare a landing operation against England, and if necessary to carry it out.

The aim of this operation is to eliminate the English homeland as a base for the carrying on of the war against Germany, and if it should become necessary to occupy it completely.

To this end I order the following:

1. The landing must be carried out in the form of a surprise crossing on a broad front approximately from Ramsgate to the area west of the Isle of Wight, in which Luftwaffe units will take on the role of artillery, and units of the Navy the role of the engineers. Whether it is practical before the general landing to undertake subordinate actions, such as the occupation of the Isle of Wight or of County Cornwall, is to be determined from the standpoint of each branch of the Wehrmacht and the result is to be reported to me. I reserve the decision for myself. The preparations for the entire operation must be completed by mid-August.

2. To these preparations also belong the creation of those conditions which make a landing in England possible:

- a. The English Air Force must be so beaten down in its morale and in fact that it can no longer display any appreciable aggressive force in opposition to the German crossing.

- b. Mine-free channels must be created.

- c. By means of a closely concentrated mine-barrier the Straits of Dover must be sealed off on both flanks as well as the western entrance to the Channel at the approximate line Alderney-Portland.

- d. The area off the coast must be dominated and given artillery protection by strong coastal artillery.

- e. It would be desirable shortly before the crossing to tie down the English naval forces in the North Sea as well as in the Mediterranean (by the Italians), in which connection the attempt should now be made to damage the English naval forces which are in the homeland by air and torpedo attacks in strength.

3. Organization of the command and of the preparations.

Under my command and in accordance with my general directives the Commanders in Chief will command the forces to be used from their branches of the Wehrmacht. The operations staffs of the Commander in Chief of the Army, the Commander in Chief of the Navy, and the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe must from August 1 on be located within a radius of at most 50

km from my headquarters (Ziegenberg). Quartering of the restricted operations staffs of the Commanders in Chief of the Army and Navy together at Giessen appears advisable to me.

Hence for the command of the landing armies the Commander in Chief of the Army will have to employ an Army Group headquarters.

The project will bear the code name *Seelöwe* [Sea Lion].

In the preparation and carrying out of the undertaking the following duties will fall to the various branches of the Wehrmacht: [Technical details follow].

Now that he had dictated the directive for “Operation Sea Lion” and had persuaded himself that an invasion of England was quite possible, Hitler felt strong enough to summon the Reichstag to convene on July 19 at 7:00 in the evening at the Kroll Opera. Before the historic session, he staged a theatrical display of the Third Reich’s military might. It seemed as though he wished to remind the world and the people of Berlin just who had claimed the recent victory. With bells ringing in the background, an entire division consisting mostly of troops from Berlin and Brandenburg filed through the Brandenburg Gate on the afternoon of July 18. Carrying flowers, they arrayed themselves at the Paris Square where Goebbels and Artillery General Fromm, the Commander in Chief of the Replacement Army, extended a warm welcome to the victorious soldiers.³⁸¹

A parade of troops then marched down the historic avenue Unter den Linden for two full hours. A similar display of military prowess had not been seen in Berlin since 1871.

Also on July 18, Hitler wired his congratulations to Franco on the Spanish national holiday. He bestowed on him the Golden Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.³⁸² Only Ciano had previously received this distinction.

Ciano was now accorded the additional honor of a personal invitation to attend Hitler’s victory speech in the Reichstag on July 19. Though informed of it only on July 18, he managed to reach Berlin in time.³⁸³ The city’s streets were richly decorated, as was the conference hall in the Reichstag. Laurel wreaths lay on the seats of the six Reichstag delegates who had fallen in the war to date. A large number of the generals were on hand for the celebration and took their seats. The prominent members of the Third Reich’s elite were all elated. The swift victory in the West made peace appear to be within Germany’s grasp. As Hitler had earlier indicated, he intended to extend a “generous peace proposal” in his upcoming speech, and assuredly London would eagerly rush forward to accept it.³⁸⁴

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As President of the Reichstag, Göring opened the session with a tribute to those who had laid down their lives on the battlefield. Then Hitler rose to speak of the “most daring undertaking in the history of German warfare,” of the “most massive sequence of battles in world history,” of the “greatest and most glorious victory of all time,” adding other superlatives to enhance individual aspects of the campaign in the West. It was a lengthy speech he had composed especially for the occasion. Beginning with a scholarly discussion of the Treaty of Versailles and of the Polish Campaign, it led up to a climax consisting of the appointment of no less than twelve Field Marshals. As the press in Germany pointed out without fail, this represented the “most enormous presentation ceremony in the history of Germany.” Hitler concluded his speech on a conciliatory note: an “appeal to reason in England.” Speaking now “as the victor,” he saw “no compelling reason which could force the continuation of war.”

Hitler’s speech of July 19, 1940, had the following content:³⁸⁵

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

In the midst of the mighty struggle for the freedom and future of the German nation, I have called on you to gather for this session today. The grounds for it are: to give our Volk insight into the historic uniqueness of the events we have lived through; to express our thanks to the deserving soldiers; and to direct, once again and for the last time, an appeal to general reason.

Whoever contrasts the factors which triggered this historic conflict with the extent, the greatness, and consequence of the military occurrences, must realize that the events and sacrifices of this struggle stand in no relation to the alleged causes, unless these causes themselves were but pretexts for intentions yet concealed.

The program of the National Socialist Revolution, insofar as it concerned the future development of the Reich’s relations with the surrounding world, was an attempt to obtain a revision of the Treaty of Versailles under all circumstances—and as far as this was possible—by peaceful means.

This revision was by nature a necessity. The untenability of the provisions of Versailles lay not only in the humiliating discrimination, the disarmament of the German Volk secured with the result that they lost their rights, but above all in the resultant material destruction of the present and the intended destruction of the future of one of the greatest civilized peoples in the world, in the completely senseless accumulation of vast terrains under the mastery of a few states, in the depriving of the losers of irreplaceable foundations for life and indispensable vital goods.

The fact that insightful men on the side of the adversary, even while this Diktat was being composed, warned against the conclusive realization of the terms of this work of lunacy, is proof of the persuasion prevalent even in these ranks that it would be impossible to maintain this Diktat in the future. Their

misgivings and their protests were silenced by the assurance that the statutes of the newly created League of Nations secured the possibility of a revision of these provisions, indeed that it was authorized for such a revision. At no time was hope for a revision regarded as something improper, but always as something quite natural. Regrettably, contrary to the will of the men responsible for the Versailles Diktat, the institution in Geneva never regarded itself as an agency for procuring sensible revisions, but rather, from the beginning, as the custodian of the ruthless implementation and maintenance of the provisions of Versailles. All endeavors of democratic Germany failed to obtain, by means of revision, an equality of rights for the German Volk.

It lies in the interest of the victor to portray as universally sanctified those conditions that benefit him, while the essence of the instinct of self-preservation compels the vanquished to strive for a restoration of his general human rights. For him this Diktat penned by an arrogant enemy has even less force of law insofar as the victory of this enemy was a dishonest one. It was a rare misfortune that the German Reich was led exceedingly badly in the years 1914–18. To this, and to the not otherwise instructed trust and faith of the German Volk in the word of democratic statesmen, must our fall be ascribed.

It was thus that the joint British-French endeavor to portray the Versailles Treaty as some type of international or higher justice must have appeared to every honest German as nothing other than an insolent usurpation. The supposition that British or French statesmen of all people were custodians of justice itself, or even of human culture, was a stupid effrontery. It was an affront which is sufficiently elucidated by their own inferior performances in these fields. For rarely has this world been governed with a greater deficit of cleverness, morality, and culture than in that part of it which is presently at the mercy of the fury of certain democratic statesmen.

The National Socialist Movement has, besides its delivery from the Jewish-capitalist shackles imposed by a plutocratic-democratic, dwindling class of exploiters at home, pronounced its resolve to free the Reich from the shackles of the Diktat of Versailles abroad. The German demands for a revision were an absolute necessity, a matter of course for the existence and the honor of any great people. Posterity will some day come to regard them as exceedingly modest.

All these demands had to be carried through, in practice against the will of the British-French potentates. Now more than ever we all see it as a success of the leadership of the Third Reich that the realization of these revisions was possible for years without resort to war. This was not the case—as the British and French demagogues would have it—because we were not then in a position to wage war. When it finally appeared as though, thanks to a gradually awakening common sense, a peaceful resolution of the remaining problems could be reached through international cooperation, the agreement concluded in this spirit on September 29, 1938, at Munich by the four great states predominantly involved, was not welcomed by public opinion in London and Paris, but was condemned as a despicable sign of weakness. The Jewish-capitalist warmongers, their hands covered with blood, saw in the

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possible success of such a peaceful revision the vanishing of plausible grounds for the realization of their insane plans.

Once again that conspiracy of pitiful, corrupt political creatures and greedy financial magnates made its appearance, for whom war is a welcome means to bolster business. The international Jewish poison of the peoples began to agitate against and to corrode healthy minds. Men of letters set out to portray decent men who desired peace as weaklings and traitors, to denounce opposition parties as a "fifth column," in order to eliminate internal resistance to their criminal policy of war. Jews and Freemasons, armament industrialists and war profiteers, international traders and stockjobbers, found political blackguards: desperados and glory seekers who represented war as something to be yearned for and hence wished for.

It is to be ascribed to these criminal elements that the Polish State was incited to assume a posture which stood in no relation to the German demands and even less to the consequences that resulted.

The German Reich, in particular with regard to Poland, has shown restraint ever since the National Socialist rise to power. One of the basest and stupidest provisions of the Versailles Diktat, namely the tearing away of an old German province from the Reich, already cried for a revision in and of itself. But what was it that I demanded at the time?

I must in this context refer to my own person. No other statesman could have afforded to propose a solution to the German nation in the way I did. It comprised merely the return of Danzig—that is to say of an ancient, purely German city—to the Reich as well as the creation of a connection of the Reich to its severed province. And this only pursuant to plebiscites conducted, in turn, under the auspices of an international forum. If Mr. Churchill or any other warmongers had but a fraction of the sense of responsibility I felt toward Europe, they could not have played so perfidious a game. For it need be ascribed solely to these vested interests in war, both within Europe and beyond, that Poland rejected the proposals which neither compromised its existence nor its honor, and instead resorted to terror and arms. And it was truly superhuman restraint, without precedent, which for months led us, in spite of persistent assassination attempts on ethnic Germans—yes, indeed, in spite of the slaughter of tens of thousands of German Volksgenossen, to continue to search for a path toward peaceful understanding. For what was the situation like? One of the creations of the Diktat of Versailles, the most divorced from reality, a boggy inflated militarily and politically, insulted a state for many months, threatening to beat it, to fight battles before Berlin, to smash the German Army to pieces, to transfer the border to the Oder or the Elbe; it went on and on. And this other state, Germany, watches the goings-on patiently for months, although one sweeping gesture would have sufficed to wipe this bubble inflated by stupidity and arrogance off the face of the earth.

On September 2, this struggle could yet have been avoided. Mussolini made a proposal to put an immediate end to the hostilities and to negotiate peacefully. Though Germany saw its armies advancing victoriously, I accepted this nonetheless.³⁸⁶ But the Anglo-French warmongers needed war, not peace.

And they needed a long war, as Mr. Chamberlain put the matter at the time. It was to last for at least three years, since they had in the meantime invested their capital in the armament industry, bought the necessary machinery, and now needed the precondition of time for the thriving of their business and for the amortization of their investments. And besides: what are Poles, Czechs, or other such nationalities to these citizens of the world?

A German soldier found a curious document while rummaging through train wagons at the La Charité station on June 19, 1940.³⁸⁷ He immediately handed over the document—which bore a particular remark—to his superiors at departmental headquarters. From there the paper passed to agencies. It became clear that what had been discovered constituted evidence in a most important investigation. The train station was once more thoroughly searched. And it was thus that the High Command of the Wehrmacht came into possession of a collection of documents of unique historical significance.

What was found were the secret files of the Allied High War Council, including the protocols of all sessions of this illustrious association. And this time it shall not be possible for Mr. Churchill to simply deny or lie about the authenticity of these documents, as he had attempted to do at the time in the case of documents found in Warsaw. For these documents feature handwritten notes in the margins penned by Gamelin, Daladier, Weygand, and so on.³⁸⁸ Hence these gentlemen are free either to admit to these or to disown them at any time. And these documents enlighten us as to the dealings of these gentlemen who have an interest in the war and in its expansion. They will above all demonstrate how these cold-blooded politicians and military men have used all these small peoples as a means to an end; how they tried to subject Finland to their interests; how they determined to make Norway and Sweden the theater of war; how they planned to set fire to the Balkans to procure the assistance of 100 divisions from there; how they prepared to bomb Batum and Baku under the cover of a shrewd as well as unscrupulous reading of the Turkish neutrality in favor of their own interests; how they spun their web around the Netherlands and Belgium, pulling its strings constantly tighter, and finally engaging them in general staff agreements; as well as many other things.

The documents afford us, moreover, a good picture of the entire amateurish method which these policy-making warmongers employed in an attempt to contain the fire they had kindled. These speak of their military pseudo-democracy which is jointly responsible for the gruesome fate which they have inflicted on hundreds of thousands and millions of soldiers of their own countries; of their barbaric lack of conscience which led them to drive their own peoples from their homes in cold blood and deliberately, in a mass evacuation whose military consequences were not necessarily favorable to them, while the general human results were shockingly gruesome. The same criminals are at the same time responsible for whipping up the Poles and inciting them to war. Eighteen days³⁸⁹ later this campaign ended—for all practical purposes.

For a second time in the war, I spoke to the German Volk from this stand on October 6, 1939.³⁹⁰ I was then able to report to it the glorious military defeat

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of the Polish State. I then also directed an appeal to reason to the men responsible in the enemy states and to their peoples. I warned against further pursuit of the war, the consequences of which could only be devastating. I warned the French especially not to start a war which, by necessity, would eat its way inward from the frontier and which, irrespective of its outcome, would have dire consequences.

At this time, I directed an appeal to the rest of the world as well. However, as I said then, I did so with the apprehension that not only might I not be heard, but that thereby I might only elicit the wrath of the warmongers interested. And this is precisely what came to pass.

The responsible elements in England and France smelt a rat, seeing my appeal as a dangerous assault on their lucrative profiteering in the war.

Thus they hurriedly and eagerly declared that any thought of an understanding was a waste of time—yes, that this would even have to be regarded as a crime. The war had to be pursued in the name of culture, humanity, good fortune, progress, civilization, and—Good God!—even in the name of sacred religion, and in subservience to this end Negroes and Bushmen (*Buschmenschen*) had to be mobilized. And then, of course, victory would come about of its own accord, so to speak. It would then be within grasp; one need only reach out for it. And, naturally, so they said, I was very well aware of all this myself, and indeed had known it for a long time, and it was only because of this that I had laid before the world my appeal for peace. For, if I were in a position to believe in victory, I would not have approached England and France with an understanding without any conditions attached. In a few days these agitators succeeded in portraying me as a coward before the eyes of the world.

I was scolded for my peace proposal, even personally insulted. Mr. Chamberlain virtually spat in my face before the world public and declined to even talk of peace, according to the directives of the warmongers and agitators backing him: Churchill, Duff Cooper, Eden, Hore-Belisha,³⁹¹ and so on. Not to mention negotiating a peace.

And it was thus that the big capitalist clique of war profiteers cried for a continuation of the war. And this continuation has now begun.

I have already asserted, and all of you, my Volksgenossen, know this: if I do not speak for some time, or nothing much happens, then this does not mean that I am not doing anything. With us it is not necessary to multiply by a factor of five or twelve every airplane built, and then to proclaim it loudly to the world.

Besides, hens would be ill-advised to cry out to the world every egg just laid. It would be all the more ill-considered of statesmen to announce projects barely beyond the planning stage, in nervous chatter, to the surrounding world, so as to inform it in a timely manner. To the excited garrulousness of two of these great democratic state leaders we owe ever-current information on the plans for an expansion of the war by our adversaries, and especially on the concentration of the war effort in Norway and Sweden.

While the Anglo-French clique of warmongers was on the lookout for new opportunities to expand the war, and trying to trap new victims, I have

labored to bring to a conclusion the organizational buildup of the Wehrmacht, to set up new units, to start up production for the war, to get material to flow, as well as to order training of the entire Wehrmacht for its new missions. Beyond this, however, the bad weather of the late autumn and winter forced a postponement of military operations.

In the course of the month of March, we gained knowledge of British-French ambitions to intervene in the Russo-Finnish conflict; which was less to help the Finns and more to damage Russia, the latter being seen as a power cooperating with Germany. This ambition grew into the determination to intervene actively in Finland itself and, if possible, to gain a base for carrying the war to the Baltic Sea. And, at this time also, suggestions of the Allied High War Council appeared with ever greater insistence either to set afire the Balkans or Asia Minor in an effort to bar the Reich from its Russian and Romanian oil imports, or to gain possession of Swedish iron ore. Landings in Norway were to serve this end with the goal of occupying all ore railroads leading from Narvik across Sweden to the port of Lulea.

The Russo-Finnish peace accords prevented, at the last minute, the carrying out of the already envisioned action in the Nordic States. Yet, merely a few days later, similar ambitions surfaced anew and precipitated a clear decision.

England and France had agreed to move, in one sudden strike, to occupy numerous important locations in Norway under the pretext of preventing further support for the German war effort with Swedish ore.

To secure access completely to the Swedish ore, they intended to march into Sweden themselves and to push aside the few forces Sweden could muster, either, if possible, in a friendly manner or, if necessary, by force.

Of the imminence of this danger we were informed personally by the untameable garrulousness of the First Lord of the British Admiralty.³⁹² Moreover, we received confirmation through a hint made by the French Premier Reynaud in a talk with a foreign diplomat. That the date had been postponed twice before the eighth of April, and that the occupation was scheduled for the eighth, that the eighth, therefore, was the third and final day—of this we gained knowledge only recently. It was conclusively established only with the discovery of the protocols of the High Allied War Council.

I then ordered the Wehrmacht, as soon as the danger of dragging the North into the war was becoming apparent, to take the appropriate measures.

The case of the *Altmark* already demonstrated that the Norwegian Government was not willing to uphold its neutrality. Beyond this, reports of secret agents also revealed that, at least insofar as the leading heads of the Norwegian Government and the Allies were concerned, there was already full agreement. Finally, Norway's reaction to the violation of its territory by British minelayers dispelled all remaining doubts.

The German operation, prepared down to the last detail, was launched.

In fact the situation was a bit different from what we perceived it to be on April 9. While we then believed we had anticipated the British occupation by a few hours, we know today that the landing of the English troops had

been scheduled for the eighth. The embarkation of the British contingents had already begun on the fifth and sixth. However, the moment the first news reached the British Admiralty of the German steps, i.e. that a German fleet had put to sea, this development so impressed Mr. Churchill that he decided to have the contingents already embarked disembark once again, so that the British fleet would first be able to search for and attack German ships. This attempt ended in failure. Only a single English destroyer came into contact with the German naval forces and was shot out of the water. This vessel could not relay any sort of message to the British Admiralty or to the fleet of the English naval combat contingents. And thus, on the ninth, the landing of German forward units was carried out along a coastal front stretching from Oslo north to Narvik. When news of this reached London, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Churchill, had already been on the lookout for many hours—eagerly awaiting first reports of the successes of his fleet.

And this strike, my Deputies, was the most daring undertaking in the history of German warfare. Its successful implementation was possible only thanks to the leadership and the behavior of all German soldiers involved. What our three arms, the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe, have accomplished in the struggle for Norway assures them mention in the records of the highest soldiery.

The Navy conducted its operations, and later handled the troop transports, faced by an enemy who, all in all, possessed an almost tenfold superiority. All units of our young Reich War Navy have covered themselves with eternal glory in this venture. Only after the war will it be appropriate to discuss the difficulties faced especially in this campaign: the numerous unexpected setbacks, losses, and accidents suffered. To have overcome all this in the end goes to the credit of the behavior, the leadership, and the troops.

The Luftwaffe, which often was the only means of transport and communications in so gigantically vast a terrain, outdid itself in all respects. Death-defying attacks on the enemy, on his ships and landing troops, are hardly more impressive than the tenacious heroics of the transport plane pilots, who in spite of unimaginably adverse weather started time and time again on their way to the land of the midnight sun, only to unload soldiers or freight in the midst of a snow storm.

Norway's fjords have become the graveyard of many a British warship. Because of the uninterrupted wild attacks of German bombers and Stukas, the British fleet was forced to retreat from and to evacuate the very arena of which a few weeks earlier an English newspaper had so tastefully stated "that it would be a pleasure for England to oblige the German invitation to do battle there."

The Army. The crossing already constituted a great challenge for the soldiers of the Army. In a few cases, airborne troops had opened up the area where they first set foot. Then division after division flooded the land which, due to its natural characteristics, already possessed considerable defenses, and which—as far as the Norwegian units were concerned—was very valiantly defended. Of the Englishmen who had landed in Norway, one can say that the only remarkable thing was the unscrupulousness with which such

badly trained, insufficiently equipped, and miserably led soldiers had been put ashore as an expeditionary corps. From the beginning, they were certain to lose. By contrast, what our German infantry, the pioneers, what our artillery, our communications and construction units, have achieved in Norway can only be termed the proud heroism of struggle and labor.

The word Narvik will enter our history as glorious evidence of the spirit of the Wehrmacht of the National Socialist Greater German Reich.

The gentlemen Churchill, Chamberlain, Daladier, and so on, have, until recently, been exceedingly ill-informed as to the essence of the Greater German unification process. At the time, I announced that the future would probably teach them better. And I may well assume that in particular the deployment of mountain troops from the Ostmark at this front furthest north in our battle for freedom has enlightened them sufficiently as far as the Greater German Reich and its sons are concerned.

It is lamentable that the grenadiers of Mr. Chamberlain did not pay sufficient and, above all, persistent attention to this conflict, and instead preferred to be satisfied with the first test of the inner disposition of the tribes of our Volk which have newly come to the Reich.

General von Falkenhorst led operations in Norway. Lieutenant General Dietl was the hero of Narvik.

Operations at sea were conducted under the leadership of Admiral General Saalwächter and the Admirals Carls and Boehm, and Vice Admiral Lütjens. Operations of the Luftwaffe were under the leadership of Colonel General Milch and Lieutenant General Geissler. The High Command of the Wehrmacht, Colonel General Keitel, as the Chief of the High Command, and General Jodl, as the Chief of the Wehrmacht leadership staff, were responsible for implementing my directives for the entire undertaking.

Even before the conclusion of the campaign in Norway, news in the West took on an ever more threatening character.

While, in fact, preparations had been made before the war to break through the Maginot Line in the event of a necessary conflict with France or England, an undertaking for which the German troops had been trained and had been equipped with the weaponry required, the course of events in the first months of the war compelled us to contemplate the possibility of moving against Holland and Belgium. While Germany had positioned hardly any units against Belgium or the Netherlands, other than those necessary for security reasons, as well as beginning to expand upon its fortification system, a visible mass of French units began to array itself along the French-Belgian border. In particular, the concentration of tanks and motorized divisions in this sector revealed that it was intended—at any rate it was possible—for these to be hurled at lightning speed through Belgium at the German border. Decisive in this context was the following observation:

While, in the case of a loyal reading of the Belgian-Dutch neutrality, these two countries would have been forced, by the concentration of strong Anglo-French forces at their border, to focus their attention on the West, both began to reduce their troop strengths along this border to the same degree they began to build up the units stationed along the border with Germany. News

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of ongoing talks at the general staff level also shed a peculiar light on [this interpretation of] Belgian-Dutch neutrality. I need not emphasize that these talks, had they been conducted in the spirit of true neutrality, would have had to be held with both sides. Besides this, such an intensification of signs indicating that a move of the Anglo-French troops across Holland and Belgium against the German industrial area was taking place required that we should regard this threat as a serious danger.

Hence I took the German Wehrmacht into my confidence, informing it of the possibility of such a development and entrusting it with the appropriate, detailed directives. In numerous conferences at the High Command of the Wehrmacht with the Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht, the leaders of the Army groups and of the armies, down to the leaders of important, individual undertakings, the tasks facing us were enumerated and thoroughly discussed. Among the troops these were taken up with great understanding, as the basis for a special type of training. Correspondingly, the entire German deployment underwent the necessary adjustments.

The thorough observations which had been conducted everywhere gradually led to the compelling recognition that, from the beginning of May on, an Anglo-French advance had to be expected at any moment.

In the days of May 6 and 7, telephone conversations between London and Paris took place, of which we gained intelligence and which reinforced suspicions that an invasion of the Netherlands and Belgium by the so-called Allies had to be expected at any moment. Thus on the following day, May 8, I ordered an immediate attack for May 10, 5:35 in the morning.

The basic thought behind this operation was to deploy, without worrying about peripheral successes, the entire Wehrmacht—especially the Army and the Luftwaffe—in so decisive a manner that the envisioned operations had to attain the complete annihilation of the Anglo-French forces. In contrast to the Schlieffen Plan of the year 1914, I ordered the main thrust of the operation along the left flank of the breakthrough front, while, however, keeping up appearances of a reversed version. This deception was successful. Conduct of the entire operation was made easy for me by measures our adversaries themselves took. For the concentration of the entire Anglo-French motorized combat forces against Belgium revealed as certain that the High Command of the Allied armies had arrived at the decision to advance most speedily into this area.

We relied on the steadfastness of all German infantry divisions deployed in the thrust against the right flank of the Anglo-French motorized Army Group. Such a drive had to lead to its complete shattering and dissolution—yes, perhaps even to its encirclement.

As a second operation, I had planned the taking of the Seine up to Le Havre, as well as securing bases at the Somme and Aisne for a third assault. This was intended to break through, with strong forces across the plateau at Langres, to the Swiss border. Reaching the coast south of Bordeaux was to conclude operations. Within this framework and in this sequence, operations were in fact carried out.

The success of this mightiest sequence of battles in world history we owe first and foremost to the German soldier himself. He held his own at all places he was deployed to the highest degree. The German tribes all share equally in this glory.

The soldiers of the young, new Reichsgaus, added only since 1938, also fought in an exemplary fashion and took a heavy toll of lives. The heroic risk of life by all Germans in this war will make the emerging National Socialist Greater German Reich eternally sacred and dear not only to the present generation, but to all that follow.

When I undertake to honor all those forces to whose activities we owe this most glorious of victories, then first mention is due to a leadership which, in particular in this campaign, has met the highest of requirements.

The Army. It has performed the tasks imposed upon it, under the leadership of Colonel General von Brauchitsch and his Chief of Staff Halder, in a truly glorious fashion.

If the leadership of the German Army of long ago was regarded as the best in the world, then it is deserving today of at least equal admiration. Yes, since success is decisive for passing judgment, the leadership of the new German Army must be considered even better.

Subdivided into three Army Groups, the Army in the West was placed under the orders of Colonel Generals Ritter von Leeb, von Rundstedt, and von Bock.

The Army Group of General Ritter von Leeb had the initial mission to maintain the left flank of the German front in the West, stretching from the Swiss border up to the Moselle, in a state of highest defensive readiness. It was anticipated that, in the later course of the operation, this front would also actively intervene in the battle of destruction with two armies under the leadership of Colonel General von Witzleben and General Dollmann.

At 5:35 in the morning of May 10, the two Army Groups under Colonel Generals von Rundstedt and von Bock launched the attack. It was their mission, along the entire front from the river Moselle to the North Sea, to break through the enemy lines along the frontier; to occupy the Netherlands; to move against Antwerp and the troops stationed at Dyle; to take Liège; and, above all, to reach the left flank along the river Meuse with massive forces for the attack, to force a crossing between Namur and Carignan with a main thrust of the tank and motorized divisions at Sedan and, in the further course of operations, to assemble all available tank and motorized divisions to push onward, along the system of canals and rivers between the Aisne and the Somme, to the sea.

To Rundstedt's southern Army Group fell also the important task of preventing a repetition of the Miracle of the Marne of 1914. He was to accomplish this task by securing, according to plan, the cover of the left flank in the course of the breakthrough.

This massive operation, which already decided the further course of the war, led, as planned, to the annihilation of the main mass of the French Army as well as of the entire British Expeditionary Force, and already added luster to the German leadership.

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Besides the two leaders of the Army Groups and their Chiefs of Staff, Lieutenant General von Sodenstern and Lieutenant General von Salmuth, the following leaders of the Army are deserving of the highest of distinctions: Colonel General von Kluge as leader of the Fourth Army; Colonel General List as leader of the Twelfth Army; Colonel General von Reichenau as leader of the Sixth Army; General von Küchler as leader of the Eighteenth Army; General Busch as leader of the Sixteenth Army; and the Generals von Kleist, Guderian, Hoth, and Hoepfner as leaders of the tank and motorized troops.

Large additional numbers of generals and officers who distinguished themselves in these operations are known to you already, my Deputies, because of the high distinctions granted them.

The further conduct of the operation in the general direction of the Aisne and the Seine was not intended to conquer Paris primarily, but rather to create, or better secure, a basis for a breakthrough to the Swiss border. This massive offensive action, thanks to the outstanding leadership of all grades, also went according to plan.

A change of personnel in the High Command of the French Army, which had meanwhile taken place, was to revive its resistance and to bring about a change, much desired by the Allies, in the fortunes of the battle so unhappily begun.

Indeed it was possible to get the German armies and their offensive actions going, at several locations, only after overcoming the strongest of resistance. Here, not only the courage, but also the training of the German soldier had the opportunity to hold its own to a high degree. Inspired by the zeal of countless officers and non-commissioned officers, as well as of individual men of valor, the infantry itself, time and time again, was compelled onward even in the most difficult of situations.

Paris fell! The breaking of the enemy's resistance at the Aisne opened the way to a breakthrough to the Swiss border. In one gigantic envelopment the armies stormed to the back of the Maginot Line. Now abandoning its reserve, the Army Group Leeb went on the offensive in two locations west of Saarbrücken and Neubreisach. Under orders from Generals von Witzleben and Dollmann, they achieved the breakthrough. And thus it was possible not only to surround the gigantic front of the French resistance, but to dissolve it into little particles and to force it to the well-known capitulation.

These operations were crowned by the now generally beginning advance of the German armies. At their head moved the incomparable Panzer and motor divisions of the Army with the goal of driving a left flank down the Rhône in the direction of Marseilles, and a right flank across the Loire in the direction of Bordeaux and the Spanish border. This was to destroy the dissolving remains of the French Army, or rather to occupy French territory.

I will report in detail at a later point on the intervention of our allies in this war. When Marshal Pétain offered France's laying down of arms, he was not laying down a weapon he still held. Rather he merely put an end to a situation completely untenable in the eyes of every soldier. Only the bloody dilettantism of a Mr. Churchill either fails to comprehend as much or lies about it in spite of better knowledge.

In the second, third, and last phase of this war, the following Army leaders distinguished themselves as did the earlier mentioned generals: Colonel General von Witzleben; the Generals von Weichs, Dollmann, Strauss. The valiant divisions and standards of the Waffen SS also fought within the framework of these armies.

When I express my gratitude and that of the German Volk to the aforementioned generals, in their capacity as leaders of the Army and Army Groups, this applies at the same time to all other officers, all of whom it is not possible to mention by name, and especially to all the nameless workers of the General Staff.

In this battle, my Deputies, the rank and file of Germany has proved itself to be what it has always been: the best infantry in the world.

And with it all other branches of the Army compete: artillery and pioneers, and, above all, the young units of our tanks and motorized troops. The German Panzer weapon, through this war, has made its entry into world history. The men of the Waffen SS share in the glory. Yet the communications units, the construction units of the pioneers, the railroad construction men, etc., are also worthy, in accordance with their performance, of the highest praise we have to offer. In the wake of the armies followed the commandos of the Todt Organization, of the Reich Labor Service, and of the NSKK, and these also helped to repair roads, bridges, as well as to restore order to traffic.

Within the framework of the Army, this time there also fought parts of the Flak artillery of our Luftwaffe. At the foremost front, they helped to break the enemy's power of resistance and attack. A detailed account of their effectiveness can be rendered only at a later date.

The Luftwaffe itself. At dawn on the morning of May 10, thousands of fighter planes and dive bombers, under the cover of fighters and destroyers, descended on enemy airfields. Within a few days uncontested air superiority was assured. And not for one minute in the further course of the battle was it allowed to slip.

Only where temporarily no German airplanes were sighted, could enemy fighters and bombers make short appearances. Besides this, their activities were restricted to night action. The Field Marshal [Göring] had the Luftwaffe under his orders during this mission in the war.

Its tasks were:

1. to destroy the enemy air forces, i.e. to remove these from the skies;
2. to support directly or indirectly the fighting troops by uninterrupted attacks;
3. to destroy the enemy's means of command and movement;
4. to wear down and break the enemy's morale and will to resist;
5. to land parachute troops as advance units.

The manner of their deployment in the operation in general, as well as their adjustment to the tactical demands of the moment, was exceptional. Without the valor of the Army, the successes attained should never have been possible. Equally true is it that, without the heroic mission of the Luftwaffe, the valor of the Army should have been for naught. Both Army and Luftwaffe are deserving of the greatest glory!

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The deployment of the Luftwaffe in the West took place under the personal command of Field Marshal Göring. His Chief of Staff: Major General Jeschonnek.

Both aerial fleets stood under orders of General der Flieger Sperrle and General der Flieger Kesselring. The Aviation Corps subordinate to them stood under orders of Generals der Flieger Grauert and Keller, Lieutenant General Loerzer, and Lieutenant General Ritter von Greim, as well as of Major General Freiherr von Richthofen. Both Flak Corps stood under orders of Flak Artillery General Weise and Major General Dessloch. The Ninth Aerial Division under Major General Coeler deserves special mention. The Commander of the Parachute Troops, General der Flieger Student, was severely wounded. The further conduct of the battle in the air in Norway was orchestrated by General der Flieger Stumpff.

While millions of German soldiers of the Army, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS took part in these battles, others could not be spared at home as they were needed for the buildup of the local reserve formations. Many of the most capable officers—as bitter as this was for them—were forced to conduct and oversee the training of those soldiers who, as reserve units, or perhaps in new formations, were to go to the front only later. Despite my sympathy for the inner sentiments of those who felt at a disadvantage, the greater common interest, as a matter of principle, was decisive. Party and State, Army, Navy, Luftwaffe, and SS sent every man to the front whom they were able to spare somehow. Yet, without securing a Replacement Army, a reserve air force, reserve SS formations, as well as Party and State in general, the war at the front could not have been waged.

As the organizers of the Replacement Army at home and of the armament and supplies for the Luftwaffe, the following have attained special merit: Artillery General Fromm and General der Flieger Udet.

I cannot conclude the enumeration of all these meritorious generals and admirals without paying tribute to those who are my closest co-workers in the Staff of the High Command of the Wehrmacht: Colonel General Keitel as Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, and Major General Jodl as his Chief of Staff. They have made the greatest of contributions to the realization of my plans and ideas throughout long months of many cares and much work.

An appreciation of the accomplishments of our Navy and its leaders will only be possible, to a full extent, at the end of the war. When I now conclude these purely military reflections on events, truth compels me to state the historic fact that none of this would have been possible without the disposition of the home front—or without, at its fore, the foundation, the work, and the activities of the National Socialist Party.

Already in 1919, in the age of great decline, it proclaimed its program for the establishment of a German People's Army and has stood up for it throughout the decades with a zealous determination. Without its activities, the conditions necessary for both the re-emergence of the German Reich and the creation of a German Wehrmacht would not have existed. Above all, it lent the struggle its ideological (*weltanschaulich*) foundation. To the senseless sacrifice of life of our democratic opponents in the interests of their

plutocracies, it opposes the defense of a Volksgemeinschaft. Its activities have resulted in a solidarity between front and homeland, which regrettably did not exist in the World War. From its ranks, therefore, I should like to name the men, who along with countless others, attained great merit in securing the opportunity to celebrate victory in a new Germany:²⁹³

Party comrade Reich Minister Hess, himself an old soldier of the World War, has been one of the most loyal fighters for the erection of the present state and its Wehrmacht ever since the early days of the foundation of the Movement.

Party comrade Chief of Staff of the SA Lutze has organized the mass of millions of SA men, in the sense of supporting the state to the utmost, and has secured its pre- and post-military training. Party comrade Himmler has organized the entire security of our Reich as well as the units of the Waffen SS. Party comrade Hierl has been the founder and leader of the Reich Labor Service. Party comrade Ley is the guarantor of the behavior of the German worker. Party comrade and Reich Minister Major General Todt is the organizer of the production of armament and ammunition and has gained eternal merit as a master builder in the construction of our massive, strategic [!] road network as well as of the fortified front in the West. Party comrade Minister Goebbels is the leader of a propaganda apparatus whose refinement is best ascertained in comparison with that of the World War.

Among the numerous organizations of the home front, there remain to be mentioned the organization of the Kriegswinterhilfswerk, and of the NS Volkswohlfahrt under the leadership of Party comrade Hilgenfeldt, as well as the German Red Cross, and moreover the Reich Air Defense Association under the leadership of Flak Artillery General von Schroeder.

I cannot conclude this tribute without thanking the one man who, for years, has engaged himself in loyal, untiring, self-devouring work to realize my foreign policy directives. The name of Party comrade von Ribbentrop as Reich Foreign Minister shall remain tied for all eternity to the political rise of the German nation.

My Deputies! I have determined, as Führer and Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, to honor the most meritorious generals before the one forum which in truth represents the entire German Volk. I must place at their forefront a man to whom I have difficulty in expressing sufficient gratitude for the services which tie his name to the Movement, to the State, and, above all, to the German Luftwaffe.

Since the days of the foundation of the SA, Party Comrade Göring has been bound up in the development and rise of the Movement. Since we came to power, his capacity for work and willingness to take responsibility have accomplished deeds in numerous fields for the German Volk and the German Reich which cannot be excluded from the history of our Volk and Reich.

Since the rebuilding of the German Wehrmacht, he has become the creator of the German Luftwaffe. It is granted to only a few mortals to create in the course of their lives a military instrument practically from nothing and to transform it into the mightiest weapon of its kind in the world. Above all, he has lent it his spirit.

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Field Marshal Göring as creator of the German Luftwaffe, and as an individual man, has made the greatest contribution to the rebuilding of the German Wehrmacht. As the leader of the German Luftwaffe he has, in the course of the war up to date, created the prerequisites for victory. His merits are unequaled!

I name him Reichsmarschall³⁹⁴ of the Greater German Reich and award him the Grand Cross of the Iron Cross.

For services rendered to the victory of German weaponry in the struggle for the freedom and future of our Greater German Reich, I hereby promote:³⁹⁵

The Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Rundstedt, Commander in Chief of Army Group A, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General Ritter von Leeb, Commander in Chief of Army Group C, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Bock, Commander in Chief of Army Group B, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General List, Commander in Chief of the Twelfth Army, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Kluge, Commander in Chief of the Fourth Army, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Witzleben, Commander in Chief of the First Army, to the rank of Field Marshal; Colonel General von Reichenau, Commander in Chief of the Sixth Army, to the rank of Field Marshal.³⁹⁶

I promote: General Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the Army, to the rank of Colonel General; General Dollmann, Commander in Chief of the Seventh Army, to the rank of Colonel General; General Freiherr von Weichs, Commander in Chief of the Second Army, to the rank of Colonel General;³⁹⁷ General von Kuchler, Commander in Chief of the Eighteenth Army, to the rank of Colonel General;³⁹⁸ General Busch, Commander in Chief of the Sixteenth Army, to the rank of Colonel General;³⁹⁹ General Strauss, Commander in Chief of the Ninth Army, to the rank of Colonel General; General von Falkenhorst, Military Commander in Norway, to the rank of Colonel General; General von Kleist, Commanding General of the Twenty-Second Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General;⁴⁰⁰ General Ritter von Schobert, Commanding General of the Seventh Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Guderian, Commanding General of the Nineteenth Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Hoth, Commanding General of the Fifteenth Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Haase, Commanding General of the Third Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Hoepfner, Commanding General of the Sixteenth Army Corps, to the rank of Colonel General; General Fromm, Chief of Military Armament and Commander in Chief of the Replacement Army, to the rank of Colonel General. In consideration of unequaled services rendered I promote: Lieutenant General Dietl, Commanding General of the Mountain Corps in Norway, to the rank of Infantry General. As the first officer with the German Wehrmacht, I award him the Oak Leaves of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

Pending a later recognition of all the leaders and officers of the Reich Navy, I promote: Admiral Carls, the Commanding Admiral of the Naval Station Baltic Sea and Commander in Chief of the Naval Troops East, to the rank of Admiral General.

In appreciation of the unequaled accomplishments of the German Luftwaffe, I promote Colonel General Milch to the rank of Field Marshal;⁴⁰¹ General der Flieger Sperrle to the rank of Field Marshal;⁴⁰² General der Flieger Kesselring to the rank of Field Marshal.⁴⁰³ I promote General der Flieger Stumpff to the rank of Colonel General; General der Flieger Grauert to the rank of Colonel General; General der Flieger Keller to the rank of Colonel General; General of the Flak Artillery Weise to the rank of Colonel General; General der Flieger Udet to the rank of Colonel General.

Furthermore, I promote to the rank of General der Flieger: Lieutenant General Geissler; Major General Jeschonnek; Lieutenant General Loerzer; Lieutenant General Ritter von Greim;⁴⁰⁴ and Major General Freiherr von Richthofen.⁴⁰⁵

In my High Command of the Wehrmacht I promote: Colonel General Keitel to the rank of Field Marshal;⁴⁰⁶ Major General Jodl to the rank of Artillery General.

In announcing these promotions on the occasion of the most successful campaign in our history, before this forum and so before the entire nation, I thereby honor the entire Wehrmacht of the National Socialist Greater German Reich.

I cannot conclude my reflections on this battle without thinking of our ally here. Ever since there has been a National Socialist regime, its foreign policy has embraced two goals:

1. bringing about a true understanding and friendship with Italy and,
2. bringing about the same relationship with England.

My Party Comrades, you know that I was as driven by these conceptions twenty years ago as I was later.⁴⁰⁷ I have dealt with and defended these ideas as a journalist and in my speeches countless times, as long as I myself was a mere opposition leader in the democratic republic. I immediately undertook, as soon as the German Volk entrusted me with its leadership, to realize these oldest goals of National Socialist foreign policy in practical terms. It still saddens me today that, in spite of all my endeavors, I have not succeeded in obtaining this friendship with England which, I believe, should have been a blessing for both peoples; and especially because I was not able to do so despite my persistent, sincere efforts.

However, I am all the more happy that at least the first point in this program of my foreign policy was in fact realized. This I owe, above all, to the genius who today stands at the head of the Italian people. For it was possible only owing to his epoch-making activities for the two intellectually related revolutions to find each other, to finally seal in jointly-shed blood the alliance which is destined to procure a new life for Europe. That I myself have the honor to be a friend of this man gladdens me all the more in view of the unique story of his life, which bears evidence of as many similarities to my own as our two revolutions do to each other, and, beyond this, as does the history of the unification and rise of our two nations.

Ever since the resurrection of the German Volk, we have heard many voices of understanding from Italy. On the foundation of this mutual understanding grew a living community of interests. And finally this was set

down in treaties. And when, last year, contrary to my expressed will and desire, this war was forced on the German Reich, a consultation on the further conduct of our two states involved Mussolini and me. The benefit derived for the Reich from the behavior of Italy was extraordinary. Not only economically did we profit from the situation and the stance of Italy, but also militarily. From the beginning, Italy tied down strong forces of our enemies and curtailed above all their freedom of strategic disposition. And when the Duce determined that the time had come to take a stand with the weapon in his fist against the unbearable and persistent violation of Italy, damage done in particular by French and British transgression, and the King issued the declaration of war, then this was done with complete freedom of decision. All the greater must our gratitude be.

The intercession of Italy has sped up and assisted in opening France's eyes to the utter hopelessness of continued resistance.

And ever since, our ally has fought on the peaks and ridges of the Alps and now on the vast plains encompassed in his sphere of interest. Especially his present air attacks and battles at sea are being led with the spirit peculiar to the Fascist Revolution. Here they elicit the spirit which binds National Socialism to Fascist Italy. Italy's pain is Germany's pain, as we have experienced in recent days in view of the death of Balbo.⁴⁰⁸ Its joy is our joy.

And our cooperation in the political and military fields is a complete one. It will erase the injustice done the German and Italian peoples throughout the centuries. For, at the end of everything, stands the shared victory!

And when I now turn to speak of the future, my Deputies, I do so not to boast or brag. This I can well leave up to others who are in greater need of it, as for example Mr. Churchill. What I want to do is to paint a picture of the present situation, bare of exaggeration, as it is and as I see it.

1. The course of events in the ten months of war now lying behind us has proved my assessments correct and those of our adversaries incorrect.

When the British so-called statesmen assure us that their country emerges strengthened from every defeat and failure, then it surely is no arrogance when I inform them that we emerge at least equally strengthened from our successes.

On September 1 of the year now past, I already explained to you that, come what may, neither the force of weapons nor time shall force Germany to the ground. The Reich today stands stronger militarily than ever before. You have seen the losses, individually surely heavy, though as a total relatively low, which the German Wehrmacht has suffered in battle within the past three months. When you consider that, within this time, we erected a front which reaches from the North Cape to the Spanish border, then our losses are extraordinarily low, especially when compared with those of the World War. The cause lies—besides with the, on an average, excellent leadership—with the outstanding tactical training of the individual soldier and of the units, as well as with the cooperation among the branches of the service.

Another cause is to be found with the quality and efficiency of the new weaponry. A third cause lies with the conscious refusal to pursue what is called prestige. I myself have, on principle, labored to avoid any attack or

operation which was not necessary in the context of the actual annihilation of the adversary, but was instead to be carried out for the sake of what was regarded as prestige.

In spite of all of this, naturally, we had anticipated far higher losses in many instances. The manpower saved will benefit us in the further pursuit of the struggle for freedom forced upon us. At present, many of our divisions in France are being withdrawn and reassigned to their bases at home. Many men are able to take leaves of absence. Weaponry and equipment are being either repaired or replaced by new material. All in all, the Wehrmacht today is stronger than ever before.

2. Weaponry. The loss of weaponry in Norway, especially in the campaigns against Holland, Belgium, and France, is void of any significance. It stands in no relation to production. Army and Luftwaffe possess at this moment—as I am speaking to you—equipment more complete and stronger than before we intervened in the West.

3. Ammunition. Provisions for ammunition were so well executed, the stocks are so vast, that in many areas production must now be curtailed or rerouted since the existing depots and warehouses, even given the greatest of efforts, in part are no longer capable of absorbing further deliveries. As in Poland, the consumption of ammunition was unexpectedly low. It stands in no relation to the stockpiles. The total reserves of the Army and the Luftwaffe are higher at present, for all categories of weapons, than before the attack in the West.

4. Raw materials essential to the war effort. Thanks to the Four-Year Plan, Germany was prepared for the greatest of strains in an exemplary fashion. No armed forces in the world, other than Germany's Wehrmacht, have so benefited from a shift away from imported raw materials essential to the war effort to such as can be found within the country.

Thanks to the work of the Reichsmarschall, this transformation of the German economy into a war economy characterized by self-sufficiency was already achieved in peacetime. [!] We possess reserves of the two most important raw materials, coal and iron, in what I may well term an unlimited quantity. Fuel supplies are more than enough for consumption. The capacities of our production are increasing and, within a short time, they will suffice—even should imports cease—to satisfy demand completely.

Our advance metal collections have so increased our metal reserves that we can face a war of no matter what duration. We shall reign supreme no matter what happens. Added to this are the enormous possibilities that come from a yet immeasurable loot and including the development of the territories we have occupied. Germany and Italy possess, within the confines of the area they regulate and control, an economic potential of about 200 million men, of whom only 130 million are soldiers, with seventy million free to be employed exclusively in different economic activities.

I informed you on September 1, my Deputies, that for the further conduct of the war I had ordered the initial implementation of a new Five-Year Plan.⁴⁰⁹ I can now assure you that all measures to this end have been taken. Come what may, I now no longer regard time as a threatening factor, not even in

a general sense. This time, the measures taken in a timely fashion have also secured foodstuffs for a war of no matter how long a duration.

5. The attitude of the German Volk. Thanks to National Socialist education, the German Volk has not approached this war with the superficiality of a "hurrah" patriotism, but with the zealous determination of a race which knows the fate awaiting it should it suffer defeat. The endeavors to subvert this unity, launched by the propaganda of our enemies, are as stupid as they are ineffective. Ten months of war have rendered this zealotry all the more profound. And, in general, it is a great misfortune that the world's opinion is not formed by men who see things as they are, but by men who see them as they want them to be.

In the last days, I have seen through and studied countless documents from the Allied Headquarters' "Ark of the Covenant." Among other things, these contain reports on the atmosphere in Germany, or memoranda on the disposition and inner attitude of the German Volk. The authors of these reports were, in part, also diplomats. Reading through these reports, one cannot help wondering whether their authors were blind, stupid, or simply vile scoundrels. I will admit without further ado that, naturally, here in Germany also there have been, and perhaps still are today, certain individuals who have watched the Third Reich's conquests with a feeling akin to regret. Incurable reactionaries or blind nihilists may well be saddened in their hearts that things came out not as they had willed them. But their numbers are ridiculously small and their significance is smaller yet.

Regrettably, this scum of the nation appears to have been chosen by the outside world as a measuring stick by which to assess the German Volk. And from this, the sick minds of failed statesmen derive the last points of orientation to cling to for new hope. As needed, the British warlords designate a "General Hunger" or an "imminent revolution" as their new allies. There is no nonsense that these people would not dish up for their own nation in order to cling to their positions for yet a few more weeks.

The German Volk has proved, above all, its inner attitude through its sons who are fighting on the battlefield. Within weeks they have beaten Germany's strongest military adversary and have destroyed him. Their spirit was and remains the spirit of the German homeland.

6. The surrounding world. In the eyes of English politicians, their last hopes, besides those resting with the loyal and allied nations, lie with a series of propped-up heads of state without thrones; statesmen without subjects; and generals without armies; as well as on renewed complications they believe they can conjure up thanks to their well-proven deftness in such matters. A true Ahasuerus amongst these hopes is the belief in a possible new estrangement to separate Germany and Russia.

German-Russian relations have been established for good.¹⁰ The reason for this was that England and France, with the support of certain smaller states, incessantly attributed to Germany ambitions to conquer terrain which lay completely outside the sphere of German interests. At one time, Germany was eyeing the occupation of the Ukraine; then again it sought to invade Finland; at another time it was claimed that Romania was threatened; then finally even

Turkey was endangered. Given these circumstances, I held it to be proper to undertake, above all, with Russia, a sober delineation of interests, to once and for all clarify what Germany believes it must regard as its sphere of interest in securing its future, and what in turn Russia holds to be vital to its existence.

Based on this clear delineation of mutual spheres of interest, the Russo-German relationship was revised. It is childish to hope that in the course of this revision tensions might arise anew between Germany and Russia. Germany has not stepped outside its sphere of interest, and neither has Russia.⁴¹¹

England is deceived in its hope of bringing about a new European crisis to relieve its own situation, insofar as the relationship of Germany to Russia is concerned. Though the British statesmen are chronically slow in their comprehension of almost everything, they will surely come to understand this in the course of time.⁴¹²

I fancy I correctly forecast the future development of this war in my speech of October 6. I assure you, my Deputies, that not for a moment could I doubt victory. And, unless one feels the need to see signs and guarantees for the final victory exclusively in defeats, then I believe that the course of events up to this point has proved me right. As I was certain of this course of events, I offered my hand to France and England at the time for an understanding. You still recall the answer I received. My arguments against the nonsense of pursuing this war, on the certainty of gaining nothing, even under the most favorable of circumstances, and of losing much, were mocked and scoffed at, or passed over.

I promptly assured you then that I feared, because of my peace proposal, to be decried as a cockerel who no longer wants to fight because he is no longer able to fight. And this is exactly what happened. I now believe that France—less the guilty statesmen than the people—thinks differently about this October 6 today. What nameless misery has befallen this great country and people since then. I shall not even mention the toll of suffering the war has placed on the soldier. For above this stands the suffering caused by the recklessness of those who drove millions of people from their homes without proper cause, who were compelled by the thought that this might somehow hamper the German war effort. This premise defied comprehension: this evacuation was mostly to the detriment of the Allied war effort and, moreover, it was the most cruel experience for the unfortunate afflicted. The injury the gentlemen Churchill and Reynaud have done millions of people, through their advice and commands—this they can neither justify in this world nor in the next.

All of this—as I said—need not have happened. For peace was all I asked of France and England in October. But the gentlemen war profiteers wanted a continuation of this war at all cost. They have it now.

I myself am too much a soldier not to comprehend the tragedy of such a development. Still all I hear from London are cries—not the cries of the masses, but of the politicians—that this war must now, all the more, be pursued. I do not know if these politicians have an inkling of just how this war is in fact to be pursued. They declare that they will continue this war, and

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should England fall, then they will do so from Canada. I do not believe this means that the English people will all emigrate to Canada, but rather that the gentlemen war profiteers will all retreat to Canada by themselves. I fear the people will have to remain behind in England. And, assuredly, they will see the war with different eyes in London than their so-called leaders in Canada.

Believe me, my Deputies, I feel an inner disgust at this type of unscrupulous parliamentarian annihilators of peoples and states. It is almost painful to me to have been chosen by Providence to give a shove to what these men have brought to the point of falling. It was not my ambition to wage wars, but to build up a new social state of the highest culture.⁴¹³

And every year of war takes me away from my work. And the cause of this robbery is those ludicrous zeroes whom one could at best call nature's political run of the mill,⁴¹⁴ insofar as their corrupted vileness does not brand them as something out of the ordinary.

Mr. Churchill has repeated the declaration that he wants war. About six weeks ago now, he launched this war in an arena in which he apparently believes he is quite strong: namely, in the air war against the civilian population, albeit beneath the deceptive slogan of a so-called war against military objectives. Ever since Freiburg,⁴¹⁵ these objectives have turned out to be open cities, markets, villages, residential housing, hospitals, schools, kindergartens, and whatever else happens to be hit.

Up to now I have given little by way of response. This is not intended to signal, however, that this is the only response possible or that it shall remain this way.

I am fully aware that with our response, which one day will come, will also come the nameless suffering and misfortune of many men. Naturally, this does not apply to Mr. Churchill himself since by then he will surely be secure in Canada, where the money and the children of the most distinguished of war profiteers have already been brought. But there will be great tragedy for millions of other men. And Mr. Churchill should make an exception and place trust in me when as a prophet I now proclaim:

A great world empire will be destroyed. A world empire which I never had the ambition to destroy or as much as harm. Alas, I am fully aware that the continuation of this war will end only in the complete shattering of one of the two warring parties. Mr. Churchill may believe this to be Germany. I know it to be England.⁴¹⁶

In this hour I feel compelled, standing before my conscience, to direct yet another appeal to reason in England. I believe I can do this as I am not asking for something as the vanquished, but rather, as the victor, I am speaking in the name of reason. I see no compelling reason which could force the continuation of this war.

I regret the sacrifices it will demand. I would like to spare my Volk. I know the hearts of millions of men and boys aglow at the thought of finally being allowed to wage battle against an enemy who has, without reasonable cause, declared war on us a second time.

But I also know of the women and mothers at home whose hearts, despite their willingness to sacrifice to the last, hang onto this last with all their might.

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Mr. Churchill may well belittle my declaration again, crying that it was nothing other than a symptom of my fear, or my doubts of the final victory. Still I will have an easy conscience in view of things to come.⁴¹⁷

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag!

In reflecting on the ten months lying behind us, all of us will surely feel overcome by the grace of Providence which allowed us to accomplish so great a task. It has blessed our resolves and stood by us on many a difficult path. I myself am touched in recognition of the calling it imparted to me to restore freedom and honor to my Volk. The disgrace we suffered for twenty-two years and which had its beginnings in the Forest of Compiègne was erased forever at the very same site. Today I have named the men who, before history, enabled me to accomplish this great task. They have done their best, dedicating their talents and their industry to the German Volk.

I now wish to conclude in mentioning all those nameless men who have no less done their duty. Millions of them have risked life and liberty and, as brave German officers and soldiers, have been ready at every hour to make the last sacrifice a man can make. Today many of them rest in the same graves in which their fathers have rested since the Great War. They bear evidence to silent heroism. They stand as a symbol for all those hundreds of thousands of musketeers, anti-tank gunners and tank gunners, pioneers and artillerymen, soldiers of the Navy and the Luftwaffe, men of the Waffen SS, and all those other fighters who stood for the German Wehrmacht in the struggle for the freedom and future of our Volk and for the eternal greatness of the National Socialist Greater German Reich. *Deutschland—Sieg Heil!*

5

Hitler's "generous peace proposal" consisted of an "appeal to reason" which England was to take to heart: an appeal to end the war. In other words, Hitler desired complete and unquestioning subjection to his will. This meant primarily that Great Britain was to allow him a free hand on the Continent. In turn, he would prove his "generosity" by permitting England to remain unscathed; he would touch neither the British homeland nor its colonies—at least for the time being.

During the war as well as in later years, the conviction was voiced repeatedly that events might well have taken a different turn had only Hitler proved even more "conciliatory" on this July 19, 1940, perhaps making small concessions on the occupied territories in Poland and France. This notion is greatly mistaken in underestimating both the determination of Hitler and of Britain.

Once Hitler had conquered certain lands, he no longer accepted anyone's interference in what he considered his own affairs. He firmly believed that the concessions he made in his speech of July 19, 1940 were "generous" simply because he did not castigate the British for their impudent declaration of war and because he demonstrated his willingness to respect the territorial integrity of the British Empire and mother country.

The English, for their part, were determined to fight on. They were not willing to conclude peace with Hitler's regime, no matter how generous an offer it might put forward. Churchill had made things perfectly clear from the start:⁴¹⁸ "It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end."

Peace had been possible between September 1, 1939, and September 3, 1939, at 11:00 in the morning. Between then and Hitler's death at 3:30 p.m. on April 30, 1945, there was no chance of a peace settlement with

Britain, with the possible exception of his voluntary capitulation. But he could and would “never, never” capitulate, as he proclaimed countless times, for capitulation meant to him only one thing: “submission to the will of another!”⁴¹⁹

On that July 19, 1940, Hitler did not have to wait long for a British response to his peace proposal. Barely one hour after the speech, the BBC aired a categorical rejection of the overture. Hitler’s entourage was at a loss at this unexpected turn of events. Heads were hanging low, for this proved the supposedly omniscient Führer to have been greatly mistaken—and this in a crucial instance. Ciano, who was present when the shocking news reached Berlin, recorded the following in his diary: “In fact, late in the evening, when the first cold English reactions to the speech arrive, a sense of ill-concealed disappointment spreads among the Germans.”⁴²⁰

The most depressed among them was undoubtedly Hitler. He was no more prepared for this rejection of his peace offer than he had been for the British declaration of war. In his mind, he had done everything possible to restore the peace. He was at his wits’ end and had no idea what to do. He had never even contemplated actually having to wage war against England. He had worked against the English with bluffs, threats, and indirect methods of warfare: blockades; submarine war; magnetic mines; air battles; and so on. What is more, even later he would not be able to put anything else into the field against them.

In the late summer months of 1940, Hitler’s insecurity was so apparent that even photographs taken during this period reveal him to be greatly disconcerted. When talking to a visitor either at the Reich Chancellery or at the Berghof, he sat on the edge of his chair, anxiously bent forward, hands pressed together, eyes staring straight ahead. The time had come for what Churchill had prophesied on November 12, 1939:⁴²¹

I have the sensation and also the conviction that that evil man over there and his cluster of confederates are not sure of themselves, as we are sure of ourselves; that they are harassed in their guilty souls by the thought and by the fear of an ever-approaching retribution for their crimes, and for the orgy of destruction in which they have plunged us all.

When Ciano called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery on the day after the speech, he felt this impression confirmed. In fact, Hitler found it difficult to conceal his deep disappointment with England’s negative reaction to his proposal:⁴²²

July 20, 1940

He would like an understanding with Great Britain. He knows that war with the English will be hard and bloody, and knows also that people everywhere today are averse to bloodshed.

Also on July 20, Hitler attended to his correspondence with Mussolini. The Duce sent him the following telegram:⁴²³

The wording of your great Reichstag speech went straight to the heart of the Italian people. I thank you, and I repeat to you, that come what may, the Italian people will march alongside yours unto the end, i.e. unto victory.

To this renewed assurance of Mussolini's determination to march at his side until the end,⁴²⁴ Hitler replied:

I thank you, Duce, for your friendly telegram. United in our world views and allied by the force of our weapons, Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany will fight victoriously for the freedom of their peoples!

Moreover, Hitler presented his friend Mussolini with a personal gift to be handed over to the Duce on July 22, just outside of Rome: a train equipped with anti-aircraft guns.⁴²⁵

On July 20, Hitler received Infantry General Dietl at the Reich Chancellery. In front of the cameras, he presented the first officer with the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves.⁴²⁶

On July 21, Hitler apparently still cherished the hope that England was not yet "clear" in its response to his offer, because hitherto only the British press and broadcast had reacted to his speech, while the Cabinet had not yet issued any formal statement. According to Halder's notes, Hitler argued the following in a conference with the generals:⁴²⁷

Führer: Not clear what will develop in England. Preparations for an armed decision must be made as quickly as possible. The Führer does not want the mil. pol. [military and political] initiative to be taken from him. Once clarity, pol. and diplomatic initiatives will be resumed.

Reasons for England continuing the war:

1. Hopes for turn [!] in America: (Roosevelt unsure; industry does not want to invest; England runs into danger [!] of relinquishing position as supreme sea power to America).

2. Hopes on Russia. England's situation hopeless. The war is won by us. Reversal of prospects for success impossible. [—]

Crossing [the Channel] appears too great a risk to the Führer. Crossing only when no other way open of putting an end to England [!].

England perhaps sees the following opportunities: spread unrest in the Balkans through Russia, to take fuel from us and to paralyze our air fleet. Same objective in rallying Russia against us. Air attacks against our hydrogenation plants. [—]

If England wants to continue to wage war, then efforts to recruit politically against England: Spain, Italy, Russia.

By mid-September England must have been dealt with, i.e. when we step up to the attack. [—]

Take up Russian problem. Make mental preparations. [—]

a) Troop concentration needs four to six weeks.

b) Either defeat Russian Army or, at the least, take hold of Russian soil insofar as necessary to preclude enemy air attacks against Berlin and Silesian industrial area. Desired to penetrate so far that the Luftwaffe can be employed to destroy most important areas in Russia.

c) Political goal: Ukrainian Empire, Baltic States Union, Belorussia-Finland, Balkans—thorn in the flesh.

d) Necessary 80 to 100 div. [divisions]; Russia has 50 to 75 good div.

If we attack Russia this autumn, will relieve England in the air. America can then make deliveries to England and Russia.

These statements revealed in just how confused a state of mind Hitler was during those days. On the one hand, he still harbored the hope of “putting an end” to England without having to resort to war. On the other, he was searching for ways to strike at Britain most effectively in the event of war. To this end, he wished to “recruit politically . . . Spain, Italy, Russia,” while he was likewise considering how to deal the Soviet Union a deadly blow in order to checkmate England.

On July 22, Hitler’s hopes for a peaceful understanding were disappointed for good. In an evening radio address, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, rejected the German “peace proposal.” In an official statement, he proclaimed:⁴²⁸

We will see this fight through, even if it takes everything we have. Nobody entertains any doubts that, if Hitler should succeed, this would signal the end of all that makes life worth living.

On July 23, still under the impression of these sobering developments, Hitler attended a performance of Richard Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung* (The Twilight of the Gods) at the Bayreuth Festival—another omen of things to come.⁴²⁹

As much as Hitler hated to admit it, he did realize that his attempt of July 19 had failed. His talented oratory had not opened the way for peace accords with England. Now, to use his own words, it had become imperative to “recruit politically against England,” if possible, “Spain, Italy, Russia.”⁴³⁰

This was easier said than done, of course. For the time being, the Führer had no other choice than to seek the assistance of this “junk

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destined for destruction” from the First World War, those “rotten corpses” of Balkan states,⁴³¹ which he so despised. But beggars can’t be choosers.

And thus it came about that, already on July 26, the Royal Romanian Minister-President, Gigurtu, and his Foreign Minister, Manoilescu, arrived at Salzburg “by invitation by the Reich Government.” Hitler, who had in the meantime returned to the Obersalzberg, received them in the afternoon at the Berghof. There the men entered into a discussion “in the spirit of the existing friendly relations between Germany and Romania.”⁴³²

In early July, Hitler had sent a rather patronizing letter to the Romanian King telling him he “could well cede a little something to Hungary and Bulgaria.”⁴³³ Now, however, Hitler offered not only a more favorable settlement of pending territorial issues, but also an extension of the guarantee to cover the entire state. The only problem with this guarantee was that Hitler’s idea of it did not correspond to that of the Romanians. He desired to use this guarantee to cloak an occupation of Romania by German troops in an effort to gain hold of the vital Romanian oil fields.

On July 27, Hitler received more “junk” politicians from the Balkan states at the Berghof. This time the callers were the Royal Bulgarian Minister-President, Filov, and his Foreign Minister, Popov. Again the meeting took place “in the spirit of the heartfelt, traditional friendship tying Bulgaria and the Reich ever since their days as brothers in arms in the World War.”⁴³⁴ Despite the guarantee extended to Romania the day before, Hitler now whetted the Bulgarians’ appetite for a strip of land located within Romania: the Dobrudja region.

Understandably, Hitler had no time or heart for such tedious responsibilities as giving “culture speeches.” To Rudolf Hess fell the task of speaking at the opening of the “Greater German Art Exhibition” in Munich on July 27. This was the first time Hess served in this capacity, and it was destined to be the last time!

On July 28, the Slovak State President, Tiso, and the Slovak Minister-President, Tuka, visited the Obersalzberg. In their company was Sano Mach, who was awaiting appointment as Slovakia’s next Minister of the Interior and Exterior. This conference was also characterized by “the spirit of heartfelt and friendly agreement.”⁴³⁵ To please the Slovaks, Hitler designated SA Gruppenführer Manfred von Killinger as the new German Envoy in Bratislava.⁴³⁶ This appointment heralded a whole series of similar ones in which SA Gruppenführers

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were named as envoys to a variety of states in the Balkans.⁴³⁷ This was less a sign of appreciation for the SA than of the contempt Hitler felt for these new German satellite states.

On July 29, Hitler hosted another Bulgarian at the Obersalzberg. The German News Bureau reported: "The Generalissimo of the World War, Infantry General Shekov, has heeded the invitation of the Commander in Chief of the Army to tour combat zones and facilities in the West."⁴³⁸

On the same day, Hitler congratulated Mussolini in a telegram on his birthday:⁴³⁹

In comradely attachment, I express to you, Duce, on the occasion of your birthday today my heartfelt best wishes and those of the German Volk. These are for your personal welfare, the success of your state leadership, and the victorious conclusion of the fight we both are leading for the freedom of our peoples.

Adolf Hitler

Also on July 29, Hitler sent out a telegram to the Italian King on the fortieth anniversary of his accession to the throne:⁴⁴⁰

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt best wishes and those of the German Volk on the fortieth anniversary of your accession to the throne. May Your Majesty enjoy, after the victorious conclusion of the fight forced on our two peoples, a long and prosperous reign.

For 11:30 a.m. on July 31, another conference was scheduled at the Berghof with the Third Reich's military leaders. Once more, Halder's notes on the meeting reveal the confusion reigning in Hitler's mind at the time. He grasped at every straw to induce the English to yield. He was still hoping for the submarine and aerial warfare to bear fruits belatedly, only to arrive once more at the idea of attacking Russia. According to his calculations, the British had already felt completely "down" before the idea of turning to Russia had served to uplift them once more. If only Russia were eliminated, the English would go "down" once again and for good. Moreover, Hitler speculated that eliminating the Soviet Union would improve Japan's position in Asia immensely, a fact which would serve to preoccupy and tie down the United States.

Halder's notes on the discussion of a possible landing in England read:⁴⁴¹

Führer: Consider for crossing: a) natural weather conditions, no force possible against (admits to storm flood potential); b) enemy action.

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If enemy action, Army need count only on bad British forces. No advantage has been taken of their combat experience. New formations not possible to date. In 8 to 10 months new formations possible: Equipment for 30 to 35 div [divisions] by spring. On location that means a lot. Perhaps destroy production sites in the war in the air as to hinder new formations. Possibilities for propaganda. This is opposed by possible hopes on Russia and America. Questionable staying power of Italians, namely, East Africa. What can be done in the meantime, besides war in the air? If attack on E. not possible at present, then in May only. How can we bridge gap until May (draw Spain in).

Proposal Army: Support Italians in North Africa. 2 Pz. Div. [Panzer divisions].

Führer: Must investigate these diversions. Repercussions for France? Truly decisive action only through attack on England. [—]

[Here follow details on Raeder's comparison of German-British fleets]

Führer: Hindrance, if things continue. War in the air starts now. It will determine comparative strengths we will get. If result of war in the air unsatisfactory, then halt preparations. If impression that the English are being thrown down and, after some time, effects set in, then attack. Put up with economic difficulties for another ten days. In case of postponement until next year, refurbishing of lighters can continue throughout the winter.

Diplomatic actions: Spain. Question of North Africa being discussed. Führer considering action against enemy harbors. Action against fleet? Stukas against armored decks.

Order: Continue preparations; decision in eight to ten days on actual attack; prepare for date September 15, broad base.

Führer: asks about U-boat action.

[Following Raeder's presentation and departure, Hitler continues:]

Führer: a) Emphasizes skepticism techn. [technical] possibilities]. Even content with accomplishments of the Navy. b) Stresses weather. c) Discusses possibility of enemy action. Our small Navy 15% of enemy; 8% of enemy destroyers; E-boats equal to 10—12% of enemy. Defenses at sea = 0. Remains: mines [not completely reliable]. Coast art. [artillery]—good! Luftwaffe. Decision will take in consideration that we are not risking anything in vain.

d) Exception: England steps down; elimination of hopes which might cause England to anticipate a turn [of events] still. War actually won. France eliminated for British convoy duty; Italy ties down British forces. Submarine warfare and war in the air decisive but will last one to two years.

England's hopes are Russia and America. If hope on Russia is eliminated, then America is eliminated because elimination of Russia will lead to enormous increase in importance of Japan in East Asia. Russia is England's and America's East Asian sword against Japan. Here no smooth sailing for England. Japanese have their own agenda, like the Russians, which is to be carried out before the end of the war.

Russian victory film on Russian war! Russia is factor England counts on the most. Something has happened in London! The English were quite "down" already, now they stand tall again. Tapped conversations. Russia uneasy about swift development of situation in Western Europe.

Russia need not say more to English than that it never again wants to see Germany great, and already the Englishman, like a man drowning, hopes that things will look differently in six to eight months. Once Russia is defeated, then England will be robbed of its last hope. The master of Europe and the Balkans will then be Germany.

Resolve: An end must be put to Russia in the course of this confrontation. Spring 1941. The quicker we defeat Russia the better. Operation makes sense only if we destroy this state in one strike. A certain amount of territorial gains insufficient as such. Standstill in winter dangerous. Hence better to wait though resolve certain to destroy Russia. Necessary also because of situation in Baltic Sea.

Second great power on Baltic Sea troublesome. May '41. Five months time for completion. Preferably this year still. Not possible to ensure synchronized conduct of operation.

Goal: Destruction of vital power of Russia. Subdivide into:

1. Push through Kiev. Follow Dnieper. Luftwaffe destroys crossings Odessa.
2. Push through border states in the direction of Moscow.

Subsequent concentration to the North and South. Later partial operations oil field Baku. Insofar as Finland and Turkey might take interest remains to be seen. Later: Ukraine, Belorussia, Baltic States, for us. Finland up to the White Sea.

7 Div. [divisions] Norway (autarky) Mun.

50 Div. France

3 Div. Holland, Belgium

60 Div.

120 Div. for East

180 Div.

The more contingents we come with, the better. We have 120 plus 20 div. on leave. Formation by pulling out one battalion from every div. After a few months, pull out another div. in three sections from divisions 1/3.

Cover operations: Spain, North Africa, England, new formations in areas with air cover.

New formations: In the East: 40 div. with combat-tested troops. Details on intended settlement Balkans: Intended settlement Hungary/Romania. Then guarantee Romania.

On August 1, another disillusionment awaited Hitler. A project he had earlier launched to sow discord in England and to force London to its knees proved to be wishful thinking on this day as the Duke of Windsor set sail for the Bahamas. The German Envoy in Lisbon, Baron von Hoyningen-Huene, was forced to report that the Duke had not reacted as hoped for to clandestine German overtures. Instead, the Duke of Windsor had accepted a post as governor in Nassau. Ludicrously, Hitler had truly believed he could, given the Duke's cooperation, oust the British Government from office.⁴⁴²

August 1, 1940

In view of these repeated failures, Hitler turned his attention to the Luftwaffe in order “to overcome the English Air Force . . . in the shortest possible time” and “to establish the conditions necessary for the final conquest of England.” On this August 1, Hitler issued Directive No. 17 for the Conduct of Air and Naval Warfare against England:⁴⁴³

In order to establish the conditions necessary for the final conquest of England, I intend to continue the air and naval war against the English homeland more intensively than heretofore.

To this end I issue the following orders:

1. The German air arm is to overcome the English Air Force with all means at its disposal and in the shortest possible time. The attacks are to be directed primarily against the planes themselves, their ground organization, and their supply installations, also against the aircraft industry, including plants producing anti-aircraft material.

2. After gaining temporary or local air superiority, the air war is to be carried on against harbors, especially against establishments connected with food supply, and also against similar establishment in the interior of the country.

Attacks on the harbors of the south coast are to be undertaken on the smallest scale possible, in view of our own intended operations.

3. On the other hand, air attacks on warships and merchantmen of the enemy may be diminished, unless particularly advantageous targets of opportunity offer themselves, unless additional effect would be achieved in connection with actions described in paragraph 2, and unless such attacks are necessary to train crews for future operations.

4. The intensified air war is to be carried out in such a manner that the Luftwaffe can be called upon at any time to support naval operations against advantageous targets of opportunity in sufficient strength. Also, it is to stand by in force for operation *Seelöwe*.

5. I reserve for myself the decision on terror attacks as a means of reprisal.

6. The intensified air war may commence on or after August 5. The exact time is to be selected by the Luftwaffe itself according to the weather, after preparations have been completed.

The Navy is authorized to begin the projected intensified naval warfare at the same time.

Adolf Hitler

The “intensified air war” (*verschärfter Luftkrieg*) that Hitler desired was scheduled to begin on August 5, or a few days later. Special instructions for “terror attacks” he reserved for another time. These measures would find their application only if the Royal Air Force obstinately held on, and no change in the situation became apparent within a few days or weeks.

On August 2, Artillery General Ulex placed a wreath at Hindenburg’s tomb in Hitler’s name.⁴⁴⁴ On the same day, Hitler empowered the

President of the German Reichsbank to appoint permanent representatives.⁴⁴⁵

On August 5, Hitler named “Party Comrade Abetz,” then “Plenipotentiary of the Foreign Ministry with the Military Commander in Chief in France,” Ambassador to that now occupied country.⁴⁴⁶

The next day, Hitler spoke in Berlin-Lichterfelde at an exhibition hosted by the SS Leibstandarte *Adolf Hitler*.⁴⁴⁷

On August 7, Hitler distinguished Dr. Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach as “pioneer of labor” on his seventieth birthday and transmitted to him a document and badge to this effect. The award read:⁴⁴⁸

On the basis of my command regarding the distinction “exemplary National Socialist enterprise” of August 29, 1936, I designated the enterprise Friedrich Krupp AG (Essen) as a “National Socialist Musterbetrieb” on May 1, 1940 in recognition of its outstanding achievements in war and peace. The head of this enterprise, Herr Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, through his personal dedication has the greatest share in this distinction. Therefore, on this day, on a proposal by the Reichsleiter of the German Labor Front, I bestow on Herr Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, as the first German head of enterprise, the distinction “Pionier der Arbeit” and the pertinent medal in gold.

Berlin, August 7, 1940

Adolf Hitler

In the morning of that August 7, at the “Villa Hügel” in Essen, Hitler personally presented Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach with the Party Badge in Gold. Thereafter he toured a number of Krupp factories.⁴⁴⁹

On the same day, Hitler filled a series of administrative posts in Alsace-Lorraine and Luxembourg, which signaled the incorporation of these territories into the Reich. In previous years, Hitler had repeatedly and solemnly renounced Alsace-Lorraine, and declared the Reich’s frontier in the West to be a “final” one. In 1940, however, the French had not been “worthy,” and consequently as a punishment they now had to give up Alsace-Lorraine—just as the Belgians had been compelled to give up Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet. Luxembourg, too, was to vanish from the political map because the Grand Duchess had fled! In installing his “new order” in the West,⁴⁵⁰ Hitler complied with the nationalist slogans of the 1920s.⁴⁵¹ Alsace he entrusted to the Gauleiter of Baden, while he assigned Lorraine to the Gauleiter of the Saarpfalz. Luxembourg fell into the hands of the Gauleiter of Koblenz and Trier.⁴⁵² Bürckel, Hitler’s favorite specialist in questions of annexations, was relieved of his post in Vienna so that he could take care of matters in Lorraine. The previous Reich Youth Leader, Baldur

von Schirach, was assigned the post of Gauleiter and Reich Governor of Vienna. The official statement on these reassignments read:⁴⁵³

In accordance with two decrees issued by the Führer,⁴⁵⁴ the entire administration in the civilian realm in Alsace and Lorraine, as well as Luxembourg, will, in the future, no longer be conducted by military offices, but by the chiefs of the civilian administration, directly under the Führer. The military commands retain jurisdiction in military affairs.

As heads of the civilian administration, the Führer has appointed Reich Governor and Gauleiter Josef Bürckel in Lorraine; the Reich Governor and Gauleiter Robert Wagner in Alsace; and the Gauleiter Gustav Simon in Luxembourg.⁴⁵⁵

By his request, the Führer has relieved Gauleiter Bürckel of his post as Reich Governor and Gauleiter of Vienna with the reservation of determining his further employment as Reich Governor.

The Führer has named the Reichsleiter Baldur von Schirach as Reich Governor and Gauleiter of Vienna. He has relieved him of his offices as Reich Youth Leader of the NSDAP and Youth Leader of the German Reich. Retaining his post as Reichsleiter for Youth Education of the NSDAP, Reichsleiter von Schirach was entrusted by the Führer with the inspection of the entire Hitler Youth, inclusive of the state realm.

As Reich Youth Leader of the NSDAP and Youth Leader of the German Reich, the Führer has named the Obergebietsführer Arthur Axmann.⁴⁵⁶ Stabsführer Hartmann Lauterbacher⁴⁵⁷ has been named deputy Gauleiter.

While this reshuffling of personnel affected solely the outlying reaches of the Reich, it nonetheless provided food for speculation in domestic politics. For one thing, this was the first time a graduate of the Hitler Youth was assigned a position of leadership within the Party. Was Hitler about to build up a ‘Crown Prince’ to eventually succeed him? Schirach’s father-in-law, Hitler’s faithful photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, apparently hoped so and, undoubtedly, Hitler was aware of these conjectures, although he had nothing of the sort in mind when he appointed Schirach to the post in Austria. Actually, by removing him from Berlin, he stemmed the former Hitler Youth Leader’s political ambitions. Any thought of a replacement of his “irreplaceable person”⁴⁵⁸ was inconceivable, dangerously linked to a loss of influence.

On August 8, the “intensified air war” against Britain began as ordered with the intent to “overcome the English Air Force.” It never attained this goal. Instead, the aerial battle considerably drained the Luftwaffe’s forces. All the speculations then current in Germany—that once Göring set up shop in the Lüneburg Heath it would be over for the English—proved false. The Battle of Britain is frequently described as having begun on August 13 or August 15, 1940. This claim is usually

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based on Göring's August 12, 1940 order to launch "Operation Eagle" (*Adlerangriffe*), and upon incomplete data found in the war diary of the Navy's leadership.⁴⁵⁹

On August 10, Hitler addressed the following correspondence to Bürckel and Schirach on the change in the Vienna Gauleiter office:⁴⁶⁰

Dear Party Comrade Bürckel,

The development of the situation in the West of the Reich compels me, Reich Governor Bürckel, to entrust you with a new mission. At this hour in which you leave Vienna to occupy your new post, I wish to express to you my great appreciation and my profound gratitude for the excellent fashion in which you have executed the task assigned to you on March 11, 1938, in the Ostmark of the Reich. Your name shall remain eternally tied to the creation of the Greater German Reich.

I know how dear the Ostmark and in particular the Gau Vienna have become to you in the two and a half years now past. When I must remove you from your previous sphere of activity, I do so precisely in recognition of your exceptional aptitude for the new task now assigned to you.

Please accept once more my sincere gratitude.

In heartfelt solidarity,

Your Adolf Hitler

Dear Party Comrade Schirach,

Reich Governor and Gauleiter Bürckel must leave his present sphere of activity to assume a new mission of supreme importance to the Reich. I have appointed you, Party Comrade Schirach, as Reich Governor and Gauleiter of Vienna. As you requested to be discharged from your regiment only after the conclusion of the battle in the West, you shall take over your new position as of this day. My confidence in the new social and cultural-political mission now assigned to you springs from my appreciation of your unique achievements as creator and leader of the Youth Movement of the German Reich. Your name shall remain tied to this work for all time.

Hence, in the future as well, you shall remain exclusively responsible, in your capacity as Reichsleiter, for the German Youth Movement as before. Please accept once more my sincere gratitude.

In heartfelt solidarity,

Your Adolf Hitler

On August 11, the twenty-eighth German East Fair began. Hitler greeted the organizers in the following wire:⁴⁶¹

In this year also, I wish good success to the German East Fair (*Ostmesse*) which is called on to promote the exchange of goods between the German Reich and the territories in the East.

Adolf Hitler

On the afternoon of August 13, Hitler summoned Raeder for a renewed discussion of the possibility of a landing in England.⁴⁶² Once

again the two men concurred that “the execution of a landing, in view of limited naval transport capabilities, could serve only as a last resort should England not declare herself ready for peace otherwise.” Hitler added to this: “An abortive venture would mean a great gain in prestige for England. One would have to wait and see precisely what effect intensive battles in the air would have on England.” These statements once more revealed that Hitler was not at all serious about a landing in England. He was searching for excuses to cancel the undertaking while still preparing for it.

On August 14, Hitler conferred the marshal’s baton on the newly appointed Field Marshals and on the one Reichsmarschall. For the ceremony, the generals had to journey to the Reich Chancellery where they were made to line up in the courtyard like young recruits. They were lucky that Hitler did not go so far as to have them parade by in front of him as he once forced Blomberg, Fritsch, Göring, and Raeder to do on a similar occasion.⁴⁶³ The German News Bureau published the following communiqué on the event:⁴⁶⁴

In his office at the new Reich Chancellery on Wednesday [August 14], the Führer and Supreme Commander presented the Reichsmarschall and the Field Marshals, promoted by him during the Reichstag session on July 19, with the insignia of their new rank, the marshal’s baton. The Führer prefaced the festive presentation with words of gratitude for the services rendered by the marshals to the victory of German arms. He spoke of the duties toward Volk and Reich which the marshal’s rank entailed. The Field Marshals of the Luftwaffe (Milch, Sperrle, and Kesselring) could not attend the presentation because combat engagement by the Luftwaffe precluded their absence from their respective headquarters.⁴⁶⁵

After the ceremony, Hitler commented on “Operation Sea Lion” in an evasive fashion to the Commander in Chief of the Army, von Brauchitsch.⁴⁶⁶ He was trying to avoid committing himself on the subject. He ordered “preparations for a landing at Lyme Bay” to be abandoned⁴⁶⁷ because of “insufficient means of securing the area.” In addition, he detailed the following:

He would not execute any operation that was too risky. The goal—the defeat of England—was not solely dependent upon a landing. It could be achieved in another way. [!] The threat of an invasion should be maintained at any rate, even if it was no longer to take place. [!]

Hitler was obviously cautious lest he needlessly anger the English whom he still conceived as future allies. A landing on the British Isles or an aggression against the colonies would annoy his future friends,

the English. He thought he would obtain their capitulation “in another way,” i.e. by means such as “intensified air war.”⁴⁶⁸

On August 17, Hitler pronounced a “total blockade of the British Isles,” a measure which served this end also. His intent in so doing was to frighten the British into acquiescence to his demands. The document he penned contained the following passage:⁴⁶⁹

Today the fortress besieged is no longer Germany, but the British Isles. The failed British hunger blockade against German women and children is now opposed by Germany’s total blockade of the British Isles which is herewith announced.

Germany is convinced that the announcement of a total blockade of the British Isles represents a further decisive step towards ending the war and eliminating the British rulers responsible for it. [—]

In the waters off England, the war at sea has now begun in full violence. The entire area is infested with mines. Planes attack every ship. Every neutral ship sailing in these waters in the future takes upon itself the risk of destruction. The Reich Government declines responsibility, in the future, for any damages incurred by ships of any make or by individuals within these waters, and this without exception. [—]

Germany is convinced that the final elimination of present day British piracy will render a service of historic significance not only to Europe, but also to all neutral states throughout the world.

Hitler’s grandiose proclamations stood in striking contrast to the actual military situation. He in no way had the power to implement such a total blockade either by sea or in the air. The Luftwaffe neither controlled the skies over the Channel nor the remaining British coast lines.

It was on August 17 also that Hitler began to extend feelers towards Finland. In contrast to the contempt he had displayed for the Finns in the Winter War of 1939–40,⁴⁷⁰ he was now all the more attentive to their concerns as he sought to “recruit politically against England” and to rally their support for an aggression against Russia. And the Finns fell for Hitler’s siren-song in their desire to regain the territories lost to the Soviet Union that spring.⁴⁷¹

Mussolini had in the meantime launched a renewed “campaign” in East Africa. In one swift strike, Italian forces had occupied Somaliland, a small British colony located at the Gulf of Aden. Fascist propaganda made much of this “conquest,” although the situation was obviously such that Rome would not be in a position to secure this territory for long. To rule a world empire, as Churchill once aptly put it, is not equivalent to having forces of equal strength stationed throughout the

world. Imperative rather is the ability to rally sufficient forces at every corner of the world within a reasonable time. And Britain had the necessary means at its disposal to do, as the further course of events was to show. Soon Mussolini would find himself forced not only to give up the most recent spoils in his dubious series of conquests, but to withdraw from the whole of Italian East Africa as well as from Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, on August 19, Hitler sent the following telegram of congratulation to his friend Mussolini:⁴⁷²

Duce!

May you and your Armed Forces accept my and the entire German Volk's heartfelt congratulations on your great victory in East Africa.

Your Adolf Hitler

Also on August 19, Hitler established the "Shield of Narvik," a distinction reserved for General Dietl's men. He also founded a Knight's Cross category for the War Service Cross award.⁴⁷³

On August 24, Hitler ordered a state funeral for Paul Nipkow. The inventor of modern day television had died at the age of eighty.⁴⁷⁴ The following day, Hitler relayed his greetings to the Leipzig Autumn Fair by telegram on the opening of the annual exhibition.⁴⁷⁵

On August 26, the Führer instructed those of his staff concerned with preparations for "Operation Sea Lion" to bear in mind the transport capacities of the Navy in their planning.⁴⁷⁶

Two days later, Ciano once more was Hitler's guest at the Berghof. The topic discussed was the settlement of territorial disputes between Hungary and Romania. Hitler was under pressure to resolve the situation as he envisioned occupying Romania militarily shortly, the measure cloaked as a territorial guarantee. He declared that "the only thing he has at heart is that peace be preserved there, and that Romanian oil continue to flow into his reservoirs."⁴⁷⁷ Swiftly he turned to summon the Foreign Ministers of the two states to Vienna. Count Csáky was to represent Hungary while Manoilescu would be allowed to voice Romania's concerns.

On August 29, Hitler sent greetings to Reich Youth Leader Axmann on the opening of the Hitler Youth's athletic competitions in Breslau.⁴⁷⁸

On August 30, at Hitler's bidding, Ribbentrop and Ciano jointly undertook to "solve" the problem of the Southeast in a final manner: they pronounced a so-called "Second Viennese Sentence" in the round hall of the Belvedere Castle.⁴⁷⁹ The Romanian Foreign Minister swooned at the sight of his state carved up on the map indicating the

August 30, 1940

cession of half of Transylvania to Hungary. He had barely recovered from the shock when he was made to sign his acquiescence to the ominous guarantee to be extended to Romania by Germany and Italy jointly. Ribbentrop had earlier informed him of the matter in the following correspondence:⁴⁸⁰

In the name and on behalf of the German Government, I have the honor to inform Your Excellency:

Germany and Italy as of this day take on the guarantee of the integrity and inviolability of Romanian state territory.

In addition, Romania had to pledge itself to secure an equality of rights for "members of the ethnic German population in Romania as compared to members of the Romanian population." Romania equally was forced to take upon itself the "fostering of German Volkstum." Without guns ever having spoken, it was as though Romania was accepting the terms of an armistice after a badly lost military engagement.

Hungary was no more pleased with the conditions dictated by Berlin. It had counted on receiving all of Transylvania, and not merely half the territory. Not once did Horthy send a telegram of thanks to Hitler, although the latter had wangled a considerable piece of Romania for Hungary.

The atmosphere in Vienna in those days was anything but pleasant. Nevertheless, Hitler returned Schirach's greetings in the following telegram:⁴⁸¹

I thank you for the greetings relayed to me at the opening of the Autumn Fair. I wish the best success to this fair which is to demonstrate to the world the unabated economic power of Greater Germany.

Adolf Hitler

On September 2, a reception took place at the Reich Chancellery.⁴⁸² Several newly appointed foreign diplomats presented the Reich Chancellor with their credentials: the new Spanish Ambassador, General Eugenio Espinosa de Los Monteros; the new Envoy from Iran, Moussa Noury-Esfandiary;⁴⁸³ and from Portugal, Nobre Guedes.

On September 4, Hitler issued the following appeal for the benefit of the Winterhilfswerk:⁴⁸⁴

For the eighth time, I appeal to the German Volk for voluntary contributions to the Winterhilfswerk. This great social institution is a tangible expression of the German Volksgemeinschaft. May every Volksgenosse at home retain the realization of how small his contribution is in light of the sacrifices our

soldiers have made at the front and will have to continue to make until the conclusive securing of the freedom and future of our Volk. Through its behavior and sense of sacrifice, the homeland has proved in the past year of war that it is worthy of the sacrifices of its sons. I am convinced that it shall once more do its duty in the coming Kriegswinterhilfswerk effort of 1940–41 to reinforce further in our Volk the consciousness of the inseparable bonds of social community.

Berlin, September 4, 1940

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler received the newly appointed Field Marshals serving with the Luftwaffe. The communiqué published on this occasion read:⁴⁸⁵

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, in the presence of the Reichsmarschall, presented on Wednesday [September 4] at his study in the new Reich Chancellery the Luftwaffe Field Marshals: Field Marshal Milch; Field Marshal Sperrle; Field Marshal Kesselring; with the marshal's batons as insignia of the rank of marshal awarded to them on July 19 before the Reichstag. In a short address, the Führer acknowledged the services rendered by the Luftwaffe marshals and gave an exposition of the duties towards Volk and Reich which the marshalcy entailed.

As mentioned earlier, the three Luftwaffe marshals had not been able to attend the prior ceremony "because combat engagement by the Luftwaffe precluded their absence from their respective headquarters." Given the presentation of the marshal's batons to the newly promoted Field Marshals in early September, the casual observer might well have inquired whether this signified an end to the "combat engagement" in the skies above the Channel. Perhaps the Luftwaffe had gained mastery over British airspace? Hardly. According to the official reports issued by the OKW for the period between August 8 and September 3, the Luftwaffe had lost 407 planes in battle. While the Royal Air Force allegedly had over three times as many losses, namely, 1,593 aircraft shot down or destroyed, there could be no talk of German supremacy in the air, irrespective of whether or not these figures were indeed correct. The situation was surely not a good one when the OKW saw itself forced to admit to such a great number of German losses. It was equally clear that the Luftwaffe was not in a position to sustain daily losses of twenty planes, including personnel, for an extended length of time. The Royal Air Force, which during the Western campaign had really only distinguished itself at Dunkirk, appeared now with ever new squadrons over the Channel; not only this, but its airplanes flew by night, completely undisturbed, into the Reich's territory and carried bombs as far as Hanover and Berlin. To Hitler it was clear that this

situation was intolerable. Things could not go on in this way, or the Luftwaffe's severely damaged reputation would suffer further. Hence, on September 4, Hitler finally determined to allow the German Luftwaffe to fly the "terror attacks"⁴⁸⁶ on British population centers for "retribution."⁴⁸⁷

Before resorting to such drastic means, he wanted to launch yet another tirade against Great Britain to weaken its resistance and to rhetorically prepare the German public for the terror attacks the Luftwaffe was to fly on British cities.

On September 4, Hitler staged a "Volk rally" at the Berlin Sportpalast on the opening of the Kriegswinterhilfswerk. He appeared greatly agitated, nervous, and edgy. He was furious with the British who, despite his repeated proclamations to the contrary, were not about to surrender. He taunted the "blabbering" of their leaders Churchill and Eden; Duff Cooper he ridiculed as "*Krampfhenne*" (nervous old hen). He poured scorn on the plutocracies and a "very small clique of capitalists" which he perceived to rule them. He threatened to bring these financiers to their knees by dropping "one million kilograms of bombs every night" and thereby "erasing" most of England's cities from the map. He went as far as to announce his own arrival on the British Isles, i.e. the Third Reich's military occupation of England, by exclaiming: "Calm yourselves: he is coming!"

The speech of September 4, 1940, was the first in a series of similar addresses the warlord would deliver through the coming years. Hitler's diatribe, the raging, the ill-concealed feeling of impotence which only augmented his fury, the false prophecies of pending victories—all these features were characteristic of the later speeches. Shortly before this particular address, news that Roosevelt had leased fifty American destroyers to Great Britain had reached Germany. This was a bad omen indeed. Not surprisingly, it greatly nettled the Third Reich's Chancellor.

Hitler began his address on the following note:⁴⁸⁸

The first year of the war ended in these last days. The second began and with it the new Kriegswinterhilfswerk. The successes of the first year, my Volksgenossen, are unique—so unique in fact that not only our enemies had not envisioned the course of history in this manner, but many in the German Volk were hardly able to comprehend the greatness of the occurrences and the rapidity of events.

We cannot compare the first year of the war to the World War: for in it, despite the greatest of valor, despite the unheard-of, greatest of sacrifices, only partial results were obtained and no one, final solution. This time we need only look at the enormous triangle which is protected by the Wehrmacht

today: in the East the Bug; in the North the North Cape, Kirkenes, and Narvik; in the South the border of Spain. A number of our adversaries have been eliminated. And the English owe it only to their fortuitous geographic position and to the enormous rapidity of their escape that they were spared a similar fate until now.

For matters are not standing as several British politicians attempt to portray the situation: that the British Army, tearing at its reins like a wild horse, is aflame with the desire to finally be unleashed, to hurl itself at the German enemy. It was surely close enough to us to satisfy this "desire" without much ado. It withdrew from our vicinity, and thus it is its lot to portray these pitiful retreats as great victories. And this is what all its "successes" look like!

Besides the vast area already controlled by German troops at this time, our ally Italy has for its part taken the offensive in East Africa, strengthened its position there, and has beaten England back.⁴⁸ Naturally, this is opposed by English "successes." These are successes which defy comprehension by the normal, healthy human brain. We see time and time again how the English propaganda falls from one extreme to the next, from highs to lows, only to return to even greater highs a few days later.

Thus, one day, we read: "The die has been cast in this war. If the Germans fail to reach Paris—and in this they cannot succeed—then they will have lost the war. Should they still reach Paris, then England will still win the war."

England surely has fought through to many a success of this kind since that September 3. The most glorious of these victories was—although a disgraceful fiasco in our eyes—the flight from Dunkirk. Any port in a storm.

We need only read a British war bulletin to know what all these "successes" amount to. For instance, it says: "We were told that . . ." or "one gains the following information from well-informed circles . . ." or "one hears from knowledgeable officials . . ." or "from expert statements one can infer . . ." One bulletin even read: "We believe we have cause to be permitted to believe that . . ."

In this way any defeat can be transformed into a success!

We were just moving into Poland when English propagandists declared that "well-informed circles" had related that the Germans had already suffered a number of grave setbacks: the Poles were victoriously advancing upon Berlin. Only a few days later, these "well-informed circles" assured us that the tide had turned in the East for good.

Then came equally "well-informed experts" who remarked that, even if Germany should have gained a victory, which was not the case, then this victory was actually a defeat—as seen, naturally, from the viewpoint of higher strategic considerations. When we finally stood before Warsaw, they promptly changed their minds: ". . . it would be correct to assume that the Allied attack in the West has achieved its first great victory, a breakthrough." And thus matters went on until there was no more Poland.

And they said: "A great burden has been lifted from our shoulders. This Poland in the East was always a weak point for us. Now we can finally concentrate our efforts on a theater of war where we are superior to the Germans, as they will shortly realize."

Then there was calm for some time. This calm by itself naturally already constituted a consistent success of the British Armed Forces and an equally persistent failure for Germany. While the English worked throughout these months, we apparently slept through them! In this time, the English politicians saw it all, realized it all, and, above all, they grasped everything just in time. In the meanwhile, we missed out on everything.

This was until Norway. When operations began, English war reporters rejoiced at the "colossal mistake" we Germans had supposedly committed. "Finally the Germans have made a mistake, and now they will have to pay for it," so they wrote. And they were happy in England that finally they had been afforded the chance to measure themselves with the Germans.

They could have measured themselves with us at any hour, since in the West we lay but a few hundred meters apart. Still they pretended they could not possibly have seen us. And then, for the first time, good fortune afforded them the opportunity, thanks to our foolishness and in particular my own, to oppose us in armed conflict. And the conflict indeed came. It was truly an irony of fate that England owes perhaps the heaviest blow which it was dealt at the time to its very own propaganda.

Namely, as we had beaten the Norwegians back beyond Hamar and Lillehammer, a simple-minded British brigade marched unsuspectingly along the same road to Hamar. They had no connection with the rear, for this rear had been destroyed by our Stukas and fighters. They listened exclusively to British radio. And from the British radio, the commander of the brigade heard that we were far off still, far in front of Lillehammer, or rather, from his point of view, far behind Lillehammer. And that we had suffered a severe defeat. And thus the British brigade commander marched into Lillehammer at the head of his brigade. There he laid his head to rest, with a chest at his side, filled with documents which read: "Top secret" and "Do not allow to fall into enemy hands." And that very night, our troops rounded him up, along with his precious Ark of the Covenant. That's what you get when you rely on Mr. Churchill the war reporter.

And the story was the same all over: they lied and they lied again. They were thrown back into the sea, and this was a "complete and great victory." When they succeeded in salvaging a bit of rubble from Andalsnes or Namsos, they declared this, before the world, the most mighty success in the modern British history of war. We cannot measure ourselves with something like that, naturally! Still all this is opposed by hard facts: a few weeks later,⁹⁰ there was no more Norway and the British Armed Forces were forced to withdraw from this country also.

Then came the hour of the confrontation in the West. And here, too, we did not come too late. For in particular in this campaign, the Allied coalition suffered nothing other than defeat.

The facts—the historic facts—bear witness to this. In spite of this, the campaign also ended in the obligatory great British victory, namely, the magnificent, the glorious feat of arms at Dunkirk. The traces of this glorious military achievement I have seen with my very eyes—it looked rather confused.

Now France has fallen, too. And what rationale has been contrived this time? When Norway had finally been cleansed of the Allies, they had declared: "This was precisely what we wanted. We only wanted to lure the Germans up here. This was a victory, an unequaled victory for us." After France had been knocked to the ground for good, they had declared: "Now England, for the first time, can concentrate its forces. We are no longer forced to squander our troops and to dissipate our energies. We have now reached the strategic position we have always longed for and hoped for. We are now rid of the burden of France. It only cost us precious British blood. And now we are in a position to confront the Germans quite differently."

Right at the beginning of the war, they had concerned themselves with certain prophecies regarding the length of the war. They had said: "The war will last three years; Britain will prepare itself for three years." And rightly so, for these folk, who are immensely rich owners of war production shares, are clever enough to know that their new acquisitions cannot bear interest or be amortized within half a year, or even a year.

Therefore things had to take a bit longer. But I was equally careful and immediately said to the Reichsmarschall at the time: Göring, let us prepare everything for five years! Not because I believe that the war will last five years, but, come what may, England will break down! In one way or another! And I do not know of any deadline other than this one!

Of course I will prepare everything in a prudent, cautious, and careful manner. You will understand that.

And when people in England today nosily inquire: "Well, why isn't he coming?" Calm yourselves: he is coming! Curiosity killed the cat.

The world will be free! The nonsense that it will be possible for one nation to blockade a continent arbitrarily must be done away with. It must be made impossible in the future that such a pirate state, according to disposition and mood, can undertake from time to time to more or less subject 450 million human beings to poverty and misery. We as Germans, for all time, are fed up with having England tell us if we can perhaps do this or that; in the end, if a German is allowed to drink his coffee or not. If England does not like it, then it simply blockades coffee imports. Personally, I am not affected. I do not drink anything. But I am nettled that others should not be able to drink it.

At any rate, I find it insupportable that a nation of eighty-five million⁴⁹¹ should be at the mercy of another people at any time—whenever it suits the plutocrats in London. So often have I extended my hand for an understanding with the English people. You know it yourselves: it was my foreign policy program. I have recently done so for the very last time.⁴⁹² I now prefer to fight to finally arrive at a clear decision.

This clear decision can consist only in the removal of this regime of pitiful and base warmongers and in a situation being established in which it will be impossible for one nation to tyrannically run all of Europe in the future.

Here Germany and Italy will take care that history does not repeat itself a second time. And here nothing will help England and its allies: no Emperor Haile Sellassie, no Herr Bene —nor anyone else: no King Haakon, no Queen Wilhelmina, and no French General de Gaulle. All these allies will be of no

help. And whatever other designs they may entertain, or whatever else they may envision in the depth of their hearts—we will be on the lookout, we are ready for anything, determined in everything, and willing to take action at any time.

Nothing frightens us. We German National Socialists have graduated from the toughest school conceivable. First we were soldiers in the Great War, and then we were fighters in the resurgence of Germany. What we had to suffer in these years made us hard. Thus we cannot be intimidated by anything and nothing can surprise us.

When the English entered the war one year ago, they said: “We have an ally.” We were curious to see who that might be. They said: “It is a general, this ally, and his name is General Revolution.” Ha-ha! They have not an inkling of the new National Socialist German *Volksstaat*. And now London is waiting for this general to commence activities. On September 6, on September 7, nothing happened, and by September 8, there was great disappointment. For, according to their forecasts, this General Revolution was to rise up within a week’s time. He was nowhere to be found.

Then they said: “We have another allied general; his name is General Hunger.” We had already anticipated that these great friends of humanity would undertake, as in the World War, to starve women and children. And we prepared ourselves. And this general, too, turned out to be a false speculation, a ghost, a jack-o’-lantern in the brain of Mr. Churchill.

Now they have traced a third ally. His name is General Winter. We made his acquaintance once before. And back then he failed, and he will fail and is destined to fail again this time.⁴⁹³

The English should not forget, if they insist on resorting to such obscure, foreign generals, to promote their own most important General to the rank perhaps of a British Field Marshal: namely, General Bluff. He is their only ally who actually merits so high a distinction. However, this general lacks his former bite.⁴⁹⁴ With him you might succeed in deluding the British people, but the German Volk knows England sufficiently well not to be deceived.

The blabbering of a Mr. Churchill or a Mr. Eden—to speak of the old Chamberlain good taste forbids—this blabbering leaves the German Volk cold, and, at best, elicits laughter. In standard German there is no appropriate term for a phenomenon like Duff Cooper. Here you must resort to dialect, and the Bavarian has coined a term which fittingly characterizes the man: *Krampfhenne* (nervous old hen)! The gentlemen ought to calm down as they cannot win the war with such weapons. The means for this, thank God, lie in our hands and will remain in our hands.

For when the bell tolls, we shall replace the Generals Hunger, Revolution, Winter, or Bluff, with General Action—and then we shall see who will hold his own better!

I have already expressed the German Volk’s gratitude to its soldiers before the Reichstag. In these days, we all are moved by gratitude to our Luftwaffe, our valiant heroes, who fly to England day after day, to give our answer there to what the ingenious Mr. Churchill so recently invented. I will speak of this later.

Today I would like to address my thanks to the homeland for the year lying behind us; my thanks to the entire German Volk for the attitude it displayed during the many, not so easy events of this year. For perhaps many do not realize precisely what it means to evacuate, within a few weeks, over 700,000 people. Everything went according to plan. Then, however, everything was well prepared on our side—in contrast to the other side. But what the mass took upon itself in certain instances was often daunting. How it bore up under this truly inspires awe! We are happy that these people can now return to their homeland.

We must also thank those who have taken the most crucial precautions in this homeland, those who were responsible for all of this: the air-raid protection personnel; and, in particular, the colossal organization of the Red Cross, its doctors, its medical personnel, and its nurses. They have accomplished incredible things. Above all, we wish to think of the German woman, of the crowd of millions of German women, German mothers, and also German girls, who had to replace the men working in the cities and in the countryside. They took care of the provision of daily bread and saw to it that the soldier received the necessary weapons and ammunition.

At their side stood the millions of German workers in the ammunition factories, who placed themselves at the disposal of the fighting front, whether young or old, so that it should not be missing any of those items the lack of which led in the end to the breakdown of the year 1918.

It is truly magnificent to see our Volk at war and its total discipline. We realize this all the more in a time when Mr. Churchill is demonstrating to us the use of his invention: the nightly air raid. He does not do this because air raids at night are particularly effective, but because his Air Force cannot penetrate German airspace during the day. While the German pilots, the German planes, fly over English land day by day, no Englishman has yet managed to as much as cross the North Sea by daylight. That is why they come at night and drop their bombs—you know it well—indiscriminately and without plan on civilian residential centers, on farmsteads, and villages. Wherever they see a light, they drop a bomb.

I did not answer for three months because I was of the opinion that they would ultimately stop this nonsense. Mr. Churchill perceived this as a sign of our weakness. You will surely understand that now we are giving our answers night after night, and this at an increasing rate.

And should the Royal Air Force drop two thousand, or three thousand, or four thousand kilograms of bombs, then we will now drop 150,000; 180,000; 230,000; 300,000; 400,000; yes, one million kilograms in a single night.⁴⁹⁵ And should they declare they will greatly increase their attacks on our cities, then we will erase their cities!

We will put these nighttime pirates out of business, God help us! The hour will come that one of us will crack, and it will not be National Socialist Germany! In my life, I have once already waged such a fight unto the last. And then the enemy cracked who now has his seat in England as the last available island in Europe.⁴⁹⁶ It is precisely in view of this battle that it is all the more necessary to comprehend how important the fashioning and formation of our

German Volksgemeinschaft is. We could not have achieved a single thing, if the German soldier had stood at the front, forlorn and on his own, without any connection to kindred souls at home. What makes the German soldier strong at the front is the awareness and knowledge that behind him stands an entire Volk united in iron determination and a fanatical will! And indeed, a Volk in the pursuit of loftier objectives. And these objectives go far beyond the mere winning of this war.

We want to build up a new state! That is why the others hate us so much today. They have often said as much. They said: "Yes, their social experiment is very dangerous! If it takes hold, and our own workers come to see this too, then this will be highly disquieting. It costs billions and does not bring any results. It cannot be expressed in terms of profit, nor of dividends. What is the point?! We are not interested in such a development. We welcome everything which serves the material progress of mankind insofar as this progress translates into economic profit. But social experiments, all they are doing there, this can only lead to the awakening of greed in the masses. Then we will have to descend from our pedestal. They cannot expect this of us."

And we were seen as setting a bad example. Any institution we conceived was rejected, as it served social purposes. They already regarded this as a concession on the way to social legislation and thereby to the type of social development these states loathe. They are, after all, plutocracies in which a tiny clique of capitalists dominate the masses, and this, naturally, in close cooperation with international Jews and Freemasons.

We know these enemies from our inner struggle, our dear old coalition of the *System-Deutschland*, a part of which has saved itself by swimming ashore. They hate us because of our social attitude, and everything which we plan and implement based on this appears threatening. They are of the conviction that this development must be eradicated.

I am convinced, however, that the future belongs to this development, and that those states that do not follow suit will, sooner or later, break apart. If they do not find a reasonable solution, the states with unresolved social problems will, sooner or later, arrive at an insane solution. National Socialism has prevented this in the German Volk. They are now aware of our objectives. They know how persistently and decisively we defend and will reach this goal.

Hence the hatred of all the international plutocrats, the Jewish newspapers, the world stock markets, and hence the sympathy for these democrats in all the countries of a like cast of mind. Because we, however, know that what is at stake in this war is the entire social structure of our Volk, and that this war is being waged against the substance of our life, we must, time and time again in this war of ideals, avow these ideals. And, in this sense, the Winterhilfswerk, this greatest social relief fund there is on this earth, is a mighty demonstration of this spirit.

Any person will judge me quite capable of having gone about the resolution of the financial aspect of this problem in a different manner. We could have generated the income, without much ado, by means of taxation. It would not have been necessary to build up this gigantic organization. We

could have accomplished the same through the good offices of civil servants. But while the result might well have been as financially rewarding—perhaps even greater still—in terms of ideals, nothing comparable to what we possess could have been attained.

Thus, the value of this voluntary association of the German Volksgemeinschaft lies in its practical application: for one, the education of the one who gives, but also the education of the other who now voluntarily does the work. For there are two making sacrifices. The one makes a sacrifice in donating, the other in administering this donation and in doing so voluntarily. They all experience the practical education of the Volksgemeinschaft: every small girl who collects on the streets; and all those professionals who take turns lending their support, all the way up to the representatives of the state, of the economy, of the arts, and so on. And this is what is decisive, my Volksgenossen.

For all of us, in one way or another, are burdened with the heritage of the past, our descent, our social standing, our profession, and so on. We have the choice of making do without millions of men, who are irreplaceable in their national work and economic activities, because they are not yet mature enough for membership in such a community. From the start, National Socialism has maintained that man's behavior is merely a product of education, habit, and heritage; it can thus be relearned. For the child who is reared by our Volk is not born with any prejudices of standing or class; these are instilled in him. Only in the course of his life is this differentiation artificially forced upon him. And to remove this is our mission if we are not willing to renounce the building of a truly organic, sustainable, human community. And this mission we have taken upon ourselves and are beginning to implement in all spheres of life. At the age at which a child formerly was judged old enough to be taught the differences in human existence, we begin with his education towards the community and we do not let go again.

And when this man or another comes to inquire about results—well, my dear friend, we began only a few years ago. First we did so with the Party as the community and then, for nearly eight years now, with the German Volk. This was but a short time, but the results are already overwhelming when you consider how many centuries before sought the opposite. For this, the colossal demonstrations of our community speak. Only twenty years ago this would have been impossible; thirty years ago inconceivable; and forty years ago no one would have wanted this; but today it is a virtual reality. We educate man to a single conception of life, to a single, balanced conception of duty. And we are convinced that, after a certain period of such an education, men will emerge as products of this education who then will, to the same extent, represent the new ideas as today they still embody, in part, the old ones.

It was a laborious process of polishing and educating. But in the Winterhilfswerk already we can see: it is making progress. When the first Winterhilfswerk was called to life, many still went about Germany—you know what I mean, according to Ludwig Schmitz⁴⁹⁷—and said: “Who is

coming along there? A man with a collection tin! About face right or left, march!" Or some other stupid comment.

That the situation has improved is evident already in the growing amount of donations. Persistence here, too, has led to success. And slowly, even the most thickheaded representative of the old order has to acknowledge: first, it is of no use anyway, the collectors come time and time again; and second, it is better to donate something; and third, everything considered, something is truly being achieved. And what is happening?

The wounds we have healed in Germany! In how many instances did we help others out! In how many instances did we give people a leg-up! What gigantic social institutions have we created! Believe me, many people are against such reforms simply because of apathy or mental sluggishness! But once they do finally see results, they say: "Well, naturally one can contribute to this. I did not think, I could not imagine, either something so colossal coming of it, or it having such consequences. These are truly deeds of greatness which are being accomplished here." And when these men then come to reflect upon themselves as representatives of the old stubborn opinions, then they are already on the way towards a new Germany.

By contrast, if thirty years ago we had told someone: "Sir, here take this collection tin. Now go stand at the street corner and ask people to donate something for their Volksgenossen"—then that someone would surely have said: "What for? I myself will give you something. But more you cannot ask of me. I am Mister So and So. Never would I think of doing anything of the kind. And what's more: What will people think of me? What should I do if someone comes up to me and says something stupid?" Well, this man obviously is not all that much more intelligent than the person whom he considers to be stupid. You have to educate people to be considerate to one another. It is good if they see how ill-considered, how stupid some people are. And precisely this great work has shown within a few years' time how open to influence a Volkskörper is; how a great idea can lay hold of people in the end. This is true also of a great work, of a great achievement. And we are in fact laying hold of them from all sides. Everywhere this education is being conducted.

I do not know how often, in former times, people remarked on the Napoleonic phrase that every soldier carries the marshal's baton in his knapsack. This was not meant literally, of course. For then it was simply inconceivable that a regular soldier set out on such a path. All this has changed today, top to bottom.

Whereas once the highest distinction was accorded only to officers, today a valiant non-commissioned officer or private may equally well earn it. The walls of a world of prejudice have been torn down. A world of prejudice is gone and, you may believe me, in the course of the decades it will become ever the more beautiful to live in this state. All the greater will be the tasks to be faced. They will draw our Volk ever closer together, will transform it into a closer community of even greater depths. And if there should still remain some who are not willing, under any circumstances, then we will just have to accord them an honorable funeral. For they are the representatives of a

September 4, 1940

bygone era and, perhaps, of great interest in this respect. But the future belongs to the young nations who will solve this question. And we have undertaken its solution and we shall see to it.

In this context, the Winterhilfswerk constitutes a colossal demonstration of the community of the homeland in view of the colossal demonstrations of the community of our front. As a gigantic organism there fulfills its duty in a well-organized manner, so the homeland does here and is prepared to undertake the same, willing to make any sacrifice this struggle for existence, for our future, will impose upon us. And when I pay tribute here once more to all those who have contributed to the first Kriegswinterhilfswerk or who were otherwise active as helpers, then, at the same time, I ask all of you:

Fulfill anew your mission in this second Kriegswinterhilfswerk. May some of you become voluntary helpers while the others become voluntary contributors. And take care that this project should once more demonstrate to the world our indivisible sense of community, that it should finally recognize all speculations connected to "General Revolution" to be idiotic. Another general has taken the place of this general: the general of a common fulfillment of duty!

It is the spirit of our Volksgemeinschaft which allows us to bear all this and which makes our Volk strong for all confrontations and decisions of the future!

With this the individual contributes to breaking the will of our enemies, to robbing them of their illusions, and thereby does his part in the dissemination of correct information about our Volk. The more the other world sees this great Volk to be a single unit, the more it will recognize the hopelessness of its undertaking.

People who set forth on paths separate from one another could be broken. But eighty-five million men who have one will, one resolve, and who are prepared to act—no power on earth can break them!

6

On September 5, Hitler wired his congratulations to Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia on his birthday. On the same day, a German-Soviet agreement was signed, affecting the resettlement of 115,000 ethnic Germans previously residing in Bessarabia and Bucovina.⁴⁹⁸

The night of September 6 to September 7 marked the launching of Hitler's terror campaign against London and other major English cities. "One million kilograms of bombs" did indeed rain down on the civilian population. Göring personally directed this mission from northern France.⁴⁹⁹ For weeks he remained there without being able to report decisive successes to his Führer. While the English losses were heavy as far as men and material were concerned, their determination to resist the Nazi dictator did not yield in the least.

In Rumania in the meanwhile, a coup had taken place. The Second Viennese Sentence had caused a storm of indignation. The Government of Gigurtu began to totter, and King Carol II was forced to abdicate in favor of his son Michael on September 6.⁵⁰⁰ The main power, however, now lay in the hands of General Antonescu,⁵⁰¹ who formed the new cabinet and soon appropriated the titles "Head of State" and "Marshal."

On September 7, Antonescu subserviently penned this telegram to Hitler:⁵⁰²

Excellency!

On this historic day on which the Rumanian people has regained its health and strength, its first thought is of its duty to express to Your Excellency its loyal faith in the great German Volk and in its great Führer, along with its trust in the securing of its present and hope for its future.

To this, Hitler replied:

I sincerely thank Your Excellency for the friendly message relayed to me on the occasion of taking over the Rumanian Government. I am convinced

that the future of the Rumanian people is assured within the framework of the reorganization of Europe in its close relationship to the Axis Powers Germany and Italy. With sincere sympathy the German Volk and I shall always follow your work of reconstruction in the new Rumania.

Adolf Hitler

For the time being this “new Rumania” would have to cede further lands in compliance with Hitler’s grand design. Already on September 7, Rumania was forced to sign a treaty with Bulgaria at Craiova. As a result, southern Dobruja became a Bulgarian domain. To King Boris, who had wired his thanks, Hitler sent the following reply:⁵⁰³

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for your friendly telegram. With me the entire German Volk welcomes the understanding between Bulgaria and Rumania, attained at Craiova, in the conviction that this will herald the beginning of a new phase of peaceful development in the Danube region.

A further exchange of telegrams on the occasion involved Hitler and the Bulgarian Minister-President Filov.⁵⁰⁴

On September 10, Hitler hosted the Hungarian Envoy, Sztójay,⁵⁰⁵ at the Reich Chancellery. A handwritten note penned by Horthy on the Transylvanian issue had prompted this call at the Wilhelmstrasse.

On that day also, Hitler sent out two telegrams of condolence, both due to the demise of Estigarribias, the State President of Paraguay.⁵⁰⁶ During this time, Hitler repeatedly fawned on the small states of South and Central America in an effort to elicit support for Germany there. On September 14, he was again wiring Latin America to congratulate the State President of El Salvador and his colleague in Guatemala on the anniversary of their respective declarations of independence, and two days later, the President of Mexico.⁵⁰⁷

In the meantime, the terror attacks on London had continued. Hitler placed great stock in their effects on the mental state of the British population. On the afternoon of September 14, he conferred with the Commanders in Chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht.⁵⁰⁸ He seized the opportunity to point out that there was “a chance of conquering Great Britain from the air.” Only four to five days of good weather were necessary to deal a decisive blow to the enemy.

Hitler’s confidence stood in striking contrast to the official reactions of the British Government to the German aerial warfare. Yet Hitler paid little attention to what he considered “babbling”: such statements as the following one by Churchill which the BBC broadcast on September 11:⁵⁰⁹

These cruel, wanton, indiscriminate bombings of London are, of course, a part of Hitler's invasion plans. He hopes, by killing large numbers of civilians, and women and children, that he will terrorize and cow the people of this mighty imperial city, and make them a burden and an anxiety to the Government and thus distract our attention unduly from the ferocious onslaught he is preparing. Little does he know the spirit of the British nation, or the tough fiber of the Londoners, whose forbears played a leading part in the establishment of Parliamentary institutions and who have been bred to value freedom far above their lives. This wicked man, the repository and embodiment of many forms of soul-destroying hatred, this monstrous product of former wrongs and shame, has now resolved to try to break our famous Island race by a process of indiscriminate slaughter and destruction. What he has done is to kindle a fire in British hearts, here and all over the world, which will glow long after all traces of the conflagration he has caused in London have been removed. He has lighted a fire which will burn with a steady and consuming flame until the last vestiges of Nazi tyranny have been burnt out in Europe, and until the Old World—and the New—can join hands to rebuild the temples of man's freedom and man's honor, upon foundations which will not soon or easily be overthrown.

Much has been written about the so-called "Battle of Britain" in August and September 1940.⁵¹⁰ It is a fact that Hitler lost this battle. The Luftwaffe recorded heavy losses and was soon forced to abandon daytime terror strikes against England altogether. Subsequently, the Luftwaffe turned to sorties at night as a means of lowering the costs of this risky enterprise.

The Royal Air Force's pilots were not the only ones to repel the German onslaught; the extraordinarily strong British anti-aircraft defenses also did. In a meeting with his generals in August of the previous year, Hitler had claimed: "At the moment England has only 150 anti-aircraft guns."⁵¹¹ That this boast was simply untrue was proved at the most decisive moment. Instead Britain appeared to have at its command vast numbers of these guns and endless supplies of ammunition. The anti-aircraft units in England affixed a theoretical grid to the skies above. The minute an alarm was sounded and German planes appeared above, anti-aircraft artillery aimed at the square in question and began firing indiscriminately without taking sight. This method was so effective that the OKW was forced to admit to losses of 182 planes for the period between September 4 and September 15. On the latter day, the British downed a record of forty-three fighters. Given the tendency to underestimate real losses in the files of the High Command, one can imagine how high the actual numbers must have been.

These losses were all the more painful as the launch of “Operation Sea Lion” had been scheduled for September 15. By this date, Hitler had counted on a complete collapse of Britain. All measures in preparation for a landing on the British mainland were regarded as a mere “bluff” by the generals themselves.⁵¹²

Hence their lack of effort to keep the matter secret. Along the Channel coast, large signs showed the way to ports of embarkation. Landing maneuvers took place in full view of the public.

It was truly a curious armada Hitler had assembled in the ports of Boulogne, Dunkirk, Ostend, Antwerp, and Rotterdam. About 2,000 flat barges (called *Prähme*) were requisitioned for the crossing of the Channel. Most of these had previously run along such rivers as the Rhine, Oder, or the Elbe. On the High Seas, these vessels were doomed to take in water due to their low draft.⁵¹³ Engineers had cut off the bows and had affixed ramps which had to be folded down in an effort to facilitate landing operations.

It represents one of the most striking parallels in their careers that in the year 1805, Napoleon had likewise halfheartedly resolved to give the British a good fright by assembling a similar fleet poised to cross the Channel to invade England; that the French Emperor had chosen the same kind of ships—flatboats, then called *Prahmen*—and almost precisely the same number of ships;⁵¹⁴ and that, furthermore, Napoleon had chosen the same points of departure for his strange fleet as Hitler did so many years later (Boulogne, Dunkirk, and Ostend).⁵¹⁵

The vessels Napoleon—and Hitler—had requisitioned were built for inland waterways and completely inadequate for an offshore military undertaking. In the years since, many of Napoleon’s contemporaries and historians in general have speculated that Napoleon was not serious about this attempted invasion of England in 1805. Years later, Napoleon still relished the thought of how great a fright he had given the English: “Fear overcame London and all reasonable men acknowledged that England was never so close to the abyss.”⁵¹⁷ And Napoleon was obviously greatly relieved when he found an excuse for abandoning Boulogne and taking the land route to the East. He blamed the less-than-fortunate episode on Admiral Villeneuve who had sailed to Cadiz instead of Brest. The admiral’s failure to perform was largely due, to complement this series of conspicuous parallels, to the vague and nebulous nature of the orders he had received from Napoleon. These led him to infer that his presence in Boulogne was no longer desired.

The Corsican heaved a sigh of relief when the failure of the French Navy allowed him to save face while withdrawing from the battle scene. And Hitler seemed equally relieved when the Luftwaffe's disastrous performance, not to mention the Navy's haphazard undertakings, made it possible for him, on September 17, 1940, first to postpone "Operation Sea Lion" for several days and then indefinitely.⁵¹⁸

Also on September 17, Hitler received the Italian Minister for the Colonies General Terruzzi at the Reich Chancellery.⁵¹⁹

Of greater consequence, however, was the reception of Spain's Minister of the Interior and designated Foreign Minister, Serrano Suñer, on the same day.⁵²⁰ Since neither bluffing nor terror had brought England to its knees, Hitler now adhered to a plan he had earlier announced. It was his intention to "recruit politically against England: Spain, Italy, Russia."⁵²¹ In the meeting of September 17,⁵²² as during a later encounter on September 25, Hitler sought to convince Suñer in a wordy fashion that it was in Spain's own best interest to share in erecting a "front reaching from the North Cape to Morocco."⁵²³ The proud Spaniard, who was also anti-German, failed to comprehend this point and was annoyed that only Hitler was apparently allowed to speak on such occasions. Encountering Mussolini and Ciano a few days later, he would complain how badly he had been treated during his visit in Germany.⁵²⁴

Hitler was none too satisfied with Serrano Suñer's visit either.⁵²⁵ At any rate, he judged it cautious to direct a supplementary correspondence to Franco to clarify his position. The "partly political, partly military" document greatly impressed Ciano with the "convincing logic which the Führer's writings frequently contain."⁵²⁶

On September 20, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the King of Thailand on his birthday.⁵²⁷ On the same day, he took provision to form a military mission to be sent to Rumania. The secret order read:⁵²⁸

The Army and Luftwaffe will send Military Missions to Rumania. To the world their tasks will be to guide friendly Rumania in organizing and instructing her forces. The real tasks—which must not become apparent either to the Rumanians nor to our own troops—will be:

(a) To protect the oil district against seizure by third Powers or destruction.⁵²⁹

(b) To enable the Rumanian forces to fulfil certain tasks according to a systematic plan worked out with special regard to German interests.

(c) To prepare for deployment, from Rumanian bases, of German and Rumanian forces in case a war with Soviet Russia is forced on us.

The phrase, “a war forced on us,” had figured as heavily in German propaganda in 1939 as it had in 1914. It now re-emerged as a theme in the Third Reich’s dealings with the Soviet Union.

On September 21, Hitler sent the telegram below to Luftwaffe Major Mölders:⁵³⁰

In grateful appreciation of your heroic behavior in the struggle for the future of our Volk, I award you as the second officer of the German Wehrmacht, on your fortieth air victory, the Oak Leaf of the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.

Adolf Hitler

On September 22, Hitler received Mölders at the Reich Chancellery to present him with the Oak Leaf distinction and to have his photograph taken with him.⁵³¹

On September 24, Luftwaffe Major Adolf Galland was awarded the same medal on his fortieth air victory, along with a telegram of identical content.⁵³² September 24 marked the day on which British forces, together with the French General de Gaulle, launched a full-scale attack on Dakar. This engagement gave a foretaste of the eventual Allied occupation of all of French West Africa.⁵³³

On September 26, Hitler promoted Dönitz to the rank of Vice Admiral on the fifth anniversary of the creation of the submarine fleet.⁵³⁴ Raeder was Hitler’s guest on this day at the Reich Chancellery. They discussed the political and strategic options still open to Germany in light of the aborted invasion of the British Isles: whether, in addition to Spain, one could also “harness” France and Russia, or whether perhaps one could make an expansion in the direction of Iran and India appetizing to the Russians.⁵³⁵

This topic was merely peripheral to the envisioned new alliance with Japan, an idea Hitler actively pursued in this conversation. Miraculous salvation of the precarious present situation appeared to Hitler to lie in a resurrection of the former Anti-Comintern Pact, spiced with a new military component. To rally the Italians to this cause, he had already sent Ribbentrop to Rome. The German Foreign Minister carried with him precise instructions on how to lure Mussolini with the advantages such an alliance allegedly entailed. This applied both to the Soviet Union, of course, and to America “which, under the threat of the Japanese fleet, will not dare move.”⁵³⁶

Already by September 27, the pertinent document was ready and awaited signature. Summoned, in precisely the same way as for the ratification of the Pact of Steel,⁵³⁷ Ciano explicitly came to Berlin that

day to attend to the matter. Sunk low in an armchair, Hitler listened to the reading of the treaty's text:⁵³⁸

September 27, 1940

Three-Power Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan

The Governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan, considering it as the condition precedent of any lasting peace that all nations of the world be given each its own proper place, have decided to stand by and cooperate with one another in regard to their efforts in Greater East Asia and the regions of Europe respectively wherein it is their prime purpose to establish and maintain a new order of things calculated to promote mutual prosperity and welfare of the peoples concerned.

Furthermore it is the desire of the three Governments to extend cooperation to such nations in other spheres of the world as may be inclined to put forth endeavors along lines similar to our own, in order that their ultimate aspirations for world peace may thus be realized. Accordingly the Governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan have agreed as follows:

Article 1

Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a new order in Europe.

Article 2

Germany and Italy recognize and respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia.

Article 3

Germany, Italy, and Japan agree to cooperate in their efforts on the aforesaid lines. They further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three Contracting Parties is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European War or in the Sino-Japanese Conflict.

Article 4

With a view to implementing the present Pact, Joint Technical Commissions the members of which are to be appointed by the respective Governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan will meet without delay.

Article 5

Germany, Italy, and Japan affirm that the aforesaid terms do not in any way affect the political status which exists at present as between each of the three Contracting Parties and Soviet Russia.

Article 6

The present Pact shall come into effect immediately upon signature and shall remain in force for ten years from the date of its coming into force.

At the proper time before the expiration of the said term the High Contracting Parties shall, at the request of any one of them, enter into negotiations for its renewal.

In faith whereof, the Undersigned, duly authorized by their respective Governments, have signed this Pact and have affixed hereto their Seals.

September 27, 1940

Done in triplicate at Berlin, the 27th day of September 1940—in the XVIIIth year of the Fascist Era—, corresponding to the 27th day of the 9th month of the 15th year of Syowa.

Joachim von Ribbentrop
Ciano
Kurusu

Ribbentrop, Ciano, and Kurusu, the Japanese Ambassador, lent their hands to the solemn signature of the treaty. After the official ceremony, Hitler invited his guests to a state reception. With studied politeness, he paid special attention to the Ambassadors of Italy and Japan.

Ciano was more impressed with the somber atmosphere prevalent in Berlin at the time than with the official ceremonies surrounding the signature of the Pact. The man on the street appeared to Ciano more depressed and resigned than ever before. In his diary, he recorded his impressions of Berlin that September:⁵³⁹

Even the Berlin street crowd, a comparatively small one, composed mostly of school children, cheers with regularity but without conviction. Japan is far away. Its help is doubtful. One thing alone is certain: that the war will be long.

The autumn came to an end, and even the uninitiated comprehended that there would be no landing in England. The English obviously were too much for Hitler. The so-called Tripartite Pact commanded no respect with the Germans even though the *Völkischer Beobachter* celebrated it as “the alliance pact of 250 million.” It was obvious that the latest developments were forcing Hitler to resort to improvisation. The Pact was a sign of weakness rather than of strength. It was all too transparent that this pact would bring Germany into renewed opposition to Russia, if it was not in itself a symptom of an already existing and widening gulf between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. The favor of the Russians was being exchanged for that of the Japanese in an operation that recalled the undertakings of the character Hans in the Brothers Grimm fairy tale *Hans im Glück*.⁵⁴⁰ Even the most anxious of Hitler’s followers in the Party could not comprehend his reasoning that the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Triangle would so frighten the United States as to induce it to abandon England. One element figuring heavily in Hitler’s arguments in favor of the Pact was the belief that the United States would refrain from rushing to the aid of Great Britain by declaring war on Germany in view of the repercussions of a possible conflict with Japan. And what happened in actuality? The Japanese

opened hostilities against the United States in December 1941, and, ironically, it was Hitler who now had to return the passport of the American Chargé d’Affaires in Berlin. Thus, in the end, the agreement backfired on Hitler.

Nonetheless, the Tripartite Pact bore fruit in giving Hitler the opportunity to exchange lengthy and frequent telegrams with his partners. For public relations purposes, he wrote a flood of telegrams, addressed to the Emperor of Japan, the King of Italy, and numerous other Heads of State or Minister-Presidents in satellite states as these became party to the Treaty, one by one. No matter what the occasion—a birthday, an anniversary, a national holiday, or the naming of an unknown minister to a high post—a telegram issued forth from Wilhelmstrasse to convey the appropriate sentiments to the partner state.

On September 27, Hitler mailed the first in a series of such telegrams:⁵⁴¹

To his Majesty the King of Italy and Albania, Emperor of Ethiopia!

I request Your Majesty to accept, at this hour in which Italy, Germany, and Japan have reaffirmed their unity in the conclusion of the Three-Power Pact and have thus lent it world-encompassing expression, my heartfelt best wishes for the welfare of Your Majesty and for the happiness and prosperity of the Italian people.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

At this moment the Three-Power Pact has been signed between Fascist Italy, National Socialist Germany, and heroic Japan. The Pact once again expresses the profound inner unity of our countries and the agreement on their objectives. In this historic moment I think of you, Duce, with most friendly feelings and in most sincere comradeship.

Adolf Hitler

To his Majesty the Emperor of Japan!

The historic significance of the Three-Power Pact just signed between Japan, Germany, and Italy causes my thoughts to turn to Your Majesty and the entire Japanese people in sincere solidarity.

Adolf Hitler

To the Japanese Minister-President Prince Konoye!⁵⁴²

I thank you very much for the friendly greetings related to me by telegraph today on the occasion of the conclusion of the Pact between Japan, Germany, and Italy. In the conviction that this Three-Power Pact frustrates all plans for an expansion of this war and hence warrants the fulfillment of the justified

claims of our peoples, I include my sincere best wishes for a prosperous future for Japan.

Adolf Hitler

On September 28, Ciano called once more at the Reich Chancellery where Hitler had summoned him for a “lengthy discussion.”⁵⁴³ Ciano’s notes on the ensuing conversation read as follows:⁵⁴⁴

He did not speak of the current situation. He spoke rather of Spanish intervention, to which he is opposed because it would cost more than it is worth. He proposed a meeting with the Duce at the Brenner Pass, and I immediately accepted. No more invasion of England. No more blitz destruction of England. From Hitler’s speech now emerges worry about a long war. He wishes to conserve his armed power. He speaks with his usual decision, with less impetuosity, but with as much determination as ever.

On October 1, Hitler hosted the Italian State Minister, Farinacci, at the Chancellery.⁵⁴⁵

The next day, Hitler exhaustively expounded the future treatment of Poland in a conference with Bormann, Frank, and Schirach. The meeting took place in Hitler’s suite at the Reich Chancellery.⁵⁴⁶ First Hitler rendered a detailed account, replete with long citations of numbers, of the productivity of the German laborer in comparison to that of the Pole who was “born for lowly labor.” Towards the end of the conversation, Hitler summed up his convictions in the following revealing manner:

It must absolutely be taken into account that there must be no “Polish masters;” where such masters do exist, they should, as harsh as it may sound, be killed.

Naturally, we must not mix ourselves by blood with the Poles; hence it would only be right if next to the male Polish harvesters, female Polish harvesters came to the Reich. Whatever the Poles then do with one another in the camps is none of our business. No Protestant zealot is to interfere in these things.

Once more the Führer underlined that there must be but one master for the Poles, and this is the German: two masters could not and must not exist next to each other, hence all representatives of the Polish intelligentsia are to be killed. This may sound harsh, but it is the law of life.

The Government General is a reservation for the Poles, one vast Polish labor camp. The Poles also profit for we keep them in good health, take care that they do not starve, and so on. Never must we elevate them to greater heights, or they will simply become anarchists and communists. It is most appropriate therefore if the Poles retain their Catholicism; Polish priests will be fed by us, and in turn they will direct their herd in the direction we desire. The priests will be paid by us, and in turn they will preach what we desire.

If a priest goes against the grain, then he will be dealt with mercilessly. The priests are to keep the Poles mute and stupid; this is essentially in our interest. Once the Poles are elevated to greater heights, then they will no longer serve as the labor source we need. Besides, it will suffice if every Pole in the General-Government possesses a small garden. Extensive farming is not necessary; the money the Pole needs for his livelihood he must earn by working in Germany. After all, we need these cheap laborers: their low costs will benefit every German, even every German worker. In the General-Government, strict German administration is necessary to maintain order in the labor reservation. This labor reservation means for us the maintenance of agricultural enterprises, in particular of our vast estates; moreover it means a reservoir of laborers.

In summary, the Führer wished to underline the following:

1. Even the last German worker and the last German peasant has to be at least ten percent better off economically than any Pole.

2. A method has to be searched for and found so that a Pole living in Germany does not directly receive his earnings, but instead part of these earnings are sent to the families back in the General-Government.

3. I do not want, the Führer stressed, a German worker to work more than eight hours in general once the situation has normalized again; even if the Pole works fourteen hours, he must still earn less than the German worker.

4. The ideal picture is: The Pole may possess only small plots in the General-Government to secure to some degree his own sustenance and that of his family. Whatever additional money he needs for clothes, additional foodstuffs, and so on, he has to earn through work in Germany. The General-Government is a central issuing department for unskilled workers, in particular for agricultural workers. The existence of these workers will be secured, as cheap laborers will always be needed.

On October 3, Hitler congratulated King Boris of Bulgaria on the anniversary of his accession to the throne in a telegram.⁵⁴⁷

October 4 witnessed a "historic" encounter by Hitler and Mussolini at the Brenner Pass. The official communiqué issued on the occasion clearly revealed that few tangible results were obtained:⁵⁴⁸

The Brenner Pass, October 4, 1940

In the framework of regular German-Italian exchanges, the Führer and the Duce met at the Brenner Pass today. All questions pertaining to the interests of both countries were discussed in the course of the three-hour-long conversation which was held in the heartfelt spirit of the Axis Agreement. The talk took place in the absence of both Foreign Ministers, whereas Field Marshal Keitel was present during the later part of the conversation. Talks were continued in a small circle during a breakfast meeting.

According to Schmidt's recollections, it was Hitler who spoke for three hours while an impotent Mussolini was forced to listen in silence

to the endless monologue. The main part of Hitler's harangue focused on how to use France "somehow against England." The issue of Spain had clearly retreated to the background. Ciano summarized the conversation in the following manner:

- (1) There is no longer any talk about a landing in the British Isles and preparations already made remain where they are;
- (2) it is hoped to attract France into the orbit of the anti-British coalition, since it is now realized that the Anglo-Saxon world is still a hard nut to crack;
- (3) greater importance is given to the Mediterranean sector, which is good for us.

Hitler was full of energy and again extremely anti-Bolshevist. "Bolshevism," he said, "is the doctrine of people who are lowest on the scale of civilization."

This was a repeat of Hitler's old primitivism theory.⁵⁴⁹ No wonder that Hitler sought first to deal summarily with the "inferior" Russians instead of focusing his attention on the British. Like a child, Mussolini rejoiced in finally having been made party to the Führer's plans. Soon, however, his joy would give way to sincere disillusionment as German troops overran Rumania. To this secret he had not been made party, though Italy was as much a guarantor of Rumania's territorial integrity as Germany supposedly was.

On October 6, Hitler bestowed the Oak Leaves award on Luftwaffe Captain Wick who had scored his fortieth air victory. Wick received the customary telegram on the occasion.⁵⁵⁰

On October 7, Hitler's adjutant hurried to present the Führer's autographed picture, bearing a special dedication, to Himmler on his fortieth birthday, together with a congratulatory telegram.⁵⁵¹

On the same day, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published a photograph of Göring. Beneath it, a revealing subtitle described Göring as the man who "for four weeks has led the mission against England."⁵⁵²

On October 11, Hitler conveyed his condolences to the widow of Admiral von Trotha. He also ordered a state funeral for the deceased.⁵⁵³

On October 12, Hitler hosted the bearer of the Oak Leaves medal, Luftwaffe Captain Wick, at the Berghof.⁵⁵⁴ On this day also, an official pronouncement informed the German public of the despatch of troops to Rumania. The communiqué read:⁵⁵⁵

In connection with the guarantee extended to Rumania at Vienna, the Reich Government, in accordance with the wishes of the Rumanians, has delegated a German military mission in addition to the necessary training formations to Rumania. At the same time, it has deployed German fighter units for the additional protection of the Rumanian oil fields. The German

Wehrmacht units will assist the Rumanian Armed Forces as training and instruction groups in the rebuilding of the Rumanian Armed Forces undertaken by the Head of the Rumanian Government General Antonescu. After their mission, the German units will return to Germany. Those governments friendly to Germany, which might have a political interest in the deployment of a German military mission in Rumania, have been informed.

The fact that the “governments friendly to Germany” were not informed of the German decision until after the military deployment left Mussolini especially furious. News of the latest of Hitler’s coups of which he once again had no prior warning led him to exclaim defiantly, in Ciano’s presence:⁵⁵⁶

Hitler always faces me with a *fait accompli*. This time I am going to pay him back in his own coin. He will find out from the papers that I have occupied Greece. In this way the equilibrium will be re-established.

Mussolini’s yearning for revenge served him ill. Italy’s disastrous foray into Greece made him even more dependent upon Hitler.

On October 13, Hitler congratulated Tiso on his birthday.⁵⁵⁷ The next day, he hosted the Italian Minister for Trade, Riccardi, at the Reich Chancellery.⁵⁵⁸

In the morning on October 15, Hitler attended the state ceremony at the Unter den Linden memorial, where he placed a wreath in honor of the late Admiral von Trotha.⁵⁵⁹ Later the same day, Hitler hosted an honorary delegation of German farmers at the Ambassadors’ Hall in the new Reich Chancellery.⁵⁶⁰ There he congratulated them on the 1940 wartime harvest. Its successful conclusion led him to deliver a short address, summarized as follows by the *Völkischer Beobachter*:

The Führer thanked the millions of German peasants and land laborers for the outstanding and admirable attainments of the German peasantry to secure the feeding of the German Volk in this war. They have destroyed the criminal plans for blockade by the enemy for the future. In words going to the heart, he expressed his appreciation for the successful, often self-sacrificing and hard work which the German peasantry rendered in spite of the drafting of so many of their husbands and sons. Faced with the miracle of courage and the unique soldierly achievements of the German Volk, the Führer concluded by expressing his absolute certainty of victory. This victory was assured if only every German continued to perform his duty at his post to the height of his capabilities: the peasant in the field, the laborer in his factory, and foremost the soldier at the front!

The next item on Hitler’s list was the joint problem of France and Spain. Before journeying to the South of France to resolve these two

outstanding issues, Hitler retreated to the Obersalzberg to rally his forces. On October 18, he issued orders from the Berghof for Göring to continue the now expiring second Four-Year Plan.⁵⁶¹

As from Berchtesgaden, October 18, 1940

My dear Reichsmarschall,

Four years ago I charged you with the implementation of a plan which I announced at the Party Congress of Honor. Now that you have dedicated yourself to this mission with the vigor peculiar to you and have brought it to great success, it is your task as the commissioner for the second Four-Year Plan to continue the work begun and, in particular, to adapt it to the demands of the war. All powers granted you at the time shall remain at your disposal in the future.

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

On October 19, Hitler awarded Lieutenant Commander Prien the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves on the occasion of the latter's having sunk a total of 200,000 tons of enemy ships.⁵⁶²

Two days later, Hitler boarded his special train for the journey south. Personal encounters with Franco and Pétain were to secure the united front in Europe "from the North Cape to Morocco." Hitler trusted his own powers of persuasion to recruit at least Franco for this undertaking. A few hours should suffice to this end, so Hitler thought. Filled with confidence, he had already sent Himmler to Spain on October 21 to oversee what he considered a ripe new satellite state and to prepare the appropriate measures to be taken later.⁵⁶³

Late in the afternoon of October 22, Hitler's train pulled into the small Montoire station,⁵⁶⁴ located in the occupied section of central France. There Ribbentrop awaited him. In his special train compartment, Hitler received Pierre Laval to discuss the envisioned meeting with Pétain. The following official statement was issued on the encounter:⁵⁶⁵

France, October 22, 1940

During a stay in France, the Führer received the Vice President of the French Ministerial Council, Laval. The Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, was present at the conference.

The curt nature of the report reflected Hitler's disdain for Laval: this vain Frenchman apparently believed in all earnest that he could outmaneuver the Führer of the Greater German Reich with petty deceptions in order to steer what was left of his ship "France" along the cliffs of Hitlerian politics.

On the afternoon of October 23, Hitler alighted from his train at Hendaye, a French railroad station in the vicinity of the Spanish

frontier. With him were: Ribbentrop, Keitel, Brauchitsch, Bormann, Dietrich, Colonel General Dollmann, Lieutenant General Bodenschatz, and Undersecretary of State Gauss.⁵⁶⁶ The Spanish Caudillo, however, made the assembled elite of the Third Reich wait, as he was one hour late for the engagement. This tardiness was undoubtedly deliberate, since Spain was only a few kilometers away, and he could assuredly have managed to arrive on time had he so desired. Hitler used the time spent waiting for Franco to give Ribbentrop some last-minute instructions:

We can no longer make any written commitments to the Spaniards regarding territories in the French colonial possessions. If they get hold of anything written on this delicate matter, then surely, given the garrulous nature of the Latins, the French will get wind of it sooner or later.

In the talks with Pétain, I will try to move the French to participate actively in the war against England. Therefore I cannot burden them with such territorial concessions now. Besides, if such an agreement with the Spaniards became public, then the entire French colonial empire would probably close ranks with de Gaulle.

To get Spain, Italy, and France to bow to one single command—Hitler’s—was indeed not an easy undertaking. The first two parties undoubtedly would not have been averse to joining in the loot of France’s former colonial possessions. And France in turn might not have rejected some of the spoils gathered after the “pending” collapse of the British Empire. Still Hitler was reluctant to go “this far” with the English. After all, he could not possibly “burden them with such territorial concessions now.”

Franco finally arrived around 3:00 p.m. A customary display of mutual respect followed: shaking hands, reviewing guards of honor, and the like. Then Hitler asked his guest inside the special train compartment. There he resorted to his rhetorical gifts and gave a wordy, highly detailed account of his previous military conquests. There were no terms too grandiose to convey to his visitor just how splendid Germany’s present situation was. Victory had already been achieved, the principal opponents stricken down. A series of similar exaggerations climaxed in the following statement: “England has already been beaten for good. It is simply not yet ready to admit this fact.”

Towards the end of the encounter, Hitler challenged Franco to enter the war on the Third Reich’s side in January, 1941. As recompense, Spain could count on a Gibraltar conquered by German troops.

Furthermore there was the prospect, though vaguely formulated, of obtaining "colonial possessions in Africa."

Had Hitler expected the Spaniard to display the same naive enthusiasm Mussolini generally professed, then he was sorely disappointed. His face motionless, Franco had listened to Hitler in silence. As a man at home in a nation that had once been a world and sea power, he knew better than Hitler and Mussolini what this meant. He did not share Hitler's and Mussolini's ignorance in such matters. And the Battle of Britain, the debacle of the Luftwaffe the month before, had sobered him up. The conflict between Germany and England was far from over; this he realized. For him, the challenge of the moment was to dissociate himself from an ill-fated undertaking without losing face. Franco was not about to allow Hitler to embroil Spain in the fall of the Third Reich.

To gain time, Franco first gave a lengthy account of the food shortages plaguing his country. Not unlike Mussolini towards the end of August 1939, he demanded increased deliveries of grain—several thousands of tons—and a great number of additional heavy artillery guns, anti-aircraft guns, and the like. And if anyone was to take Gibraltar, then this was to be Spain. Its national pride precluded acceptance of a fortress conquered by foreign soldiers.

He rejected Hitler's idea of establishing a land bridge from Gibraltar to the North African continent. In his mind, this was to serve predominantly the transfer of tanks to desert battlefields. Franco held heavily armored vehicles to be ill-suited to desert warfare. Slyly referring to the disastrous attempt to take the British Isles, Franco likened the desert to an island which constituted a similarly formidable barrier. Moreover, even if the English lost out in such an engagement, the British Empire could pursue the war from bases in America and Canada if all else failed.

Franco dealt blow upon blow to a prostrate Hitler. Unlike the Spaniard who continued to speak in a soft, monotonous voice, Hitler grew increasingly agitated. Never yet had Hitler been presented with such a bold rebuff to a well-studied speech.

As in his discussion with the Englishman Sir Horace Wilson in September 1938,⁵⁶⁷ Hitler finally could no longer restrain himself. He jumped up to declare that, under these circumstances, there was no sense in pursuing the matter any further. It would be best to discontinue the talks. But he regained his composure, took a seat once again, and persisted in his fruitless efforts to turn the stubborn Spaniard

around. Ultimately, Franco yielded and agreed to enter into an agreement with Germany. However, he attached such powerful strings to this concession, in the form of demands for delivery of foodstuffs and war material, that the envisioned treaty was reduced to, as Schmidt put it, “a mere facade with nothing left behind it.”

There was a break in the talks, and the two Foreign Ministers were left behind to negotiate the particulars. According to the protocol established, the two Heads of State were first to have dinner together in Hitler’s wagon before departing. However, Hitler sought to draw Franco over to his side once again, and so engaged him in conversation that departure was delayed for an additional two hours. In spite of all the rhetoric, Hitler made no decisive advances with the recalcitrant Spaniard. Five days later, Hitler was to comment colorfully to Mussolini that the conversation with Franco was of such a kind that “rather than go through it again [he] would prefer to have three or four teeth taken out.”⁵⁶⁸

In Hitler’s mind, what had come to pass between him and Franco was truly unbelievable. Franco owed everything to him. And now, in his hour of need, Franco refused to heed his summons. In fact, the Spanish dictator’s behavior imperiled the entire concept of a front reaching from the North Cape to Morocco! On the German side, a short, nebulous communiqué reported on the meeting at Hendaye:⁵⁶⁹

On Monday [October 23], the Führer met with the Spanish Generalissimo Franco at the Franco-Spanish frontier. The Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, and the Spanish Foreign Minister, Serrano Suñer, participated in the discussions characterized by a spirit of heartfelt, comradely relations.

Hendaye gave Hitler a foretaste of the numerous further diplomatic defeats he was destined to suffer in the course of the next two to three weeks. His powerful oratory proved of no avail in these instances.

On the late afternoon of October 24, the planned meeting with Pétain took place at Montoire. Ribbentrop rushed to join up with Hitler by plane.⁵⁷⁰ As mentioned before, Hitler had a certain weakness for old Marshals. Despite his perfunctory dealings with men such as Hindenburg, Pilsudski, Foch, he had always shown respect for them. And in Hitler’s mind, it was a tribute that he, the victor, should condescend to come to Montoire and meet with the representative of vanquished France. Hitler even stepped down from the train to greet the Marshal, who was clad in dress uniform on the occasion. A further gesture was the fact that Hitler, after the meeting, accompanied the elderly Frenchman

back to his car. However, this concession was about the only one Pétain was to be accorded by Hitler at this meeting.

This was indeed pitifully little. If Hitler sought to “move the French to participate actively in the war against England,”⁵⁷¹ then he would have to make more substantial concessions, for instance, granting France a peace treaty—or anything else in writing. And this he wished to avoid at all cost.

Moreover, Hitler’s general set of mind proved another hindrance. Given his persuasion that “wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain,”⁵⁷² he could not well release the French prisoners of war already taken, do without the future “German” seaports Brest and Le Havre, or return terrain to prostrate France.

Still, something had to be done, as even Hitler realized. Instead of taking action, he once more resorted to words and enumerated his own successes and achievements in great detail, the generosity of his peace proposals, and so on. Then he spoke of the many mistakes France had made, once more stressing: “England has already been beaten for good. It is simply not yet ready to admit this fact.” In concluding, Hitler appealed to Pétain to array France along the general European front against England. He mentioned the fierce British attacks on Oran and Dakar, two French cities in North Africa.

The aging Marshal, on whom destiny had bestowed the far-from-enviable role of defending his country against Hitler and the Nazi regime, said little on this occasion. The last thing France could afford to do was to take part in an assault on Great Britain, its ally against Germany. The era of Napoleon was gone for good, not to mention the time of Joan of Arc. And even had France been tempted to ally itself with other powers once more against England, it would barely have accepted a German leadership. Pétain fully realized that the British attacks on Oran and Dakar were not directed against France, but against Germany. Should France move closer to Germany, then this would undoubtedly result in even greater ferocity in the assaults on French property.

The issue at Montoire, as far as Pétain was concerned, was to win time, while not provoking Hitler. At the same time, Pétain hoped to secure concessions to ease the plight of the French people under the German yoke. Hence, with the connivance of Laval, he cleverly introduced the question of a peace treaty and the release of approximately two million French prisoners of war. This was to no avail, as Hitler was not inclined to make any political concessions.

Certain token gestures, such as the transfer of the corpse of the Duke von Reichstadt from its resting place at Vienna to Paris, should suffice to heal the wounded pride of the French.⁵⁷³

As Hitler refused to take up the topic introduced by Pétain, the two statesmen likewise did not pursue the subject of a French alliance with Germany against England any further. Nevertheless, it was officially agreed that the Axis Powers and France shared a common interest in the defeat of England “as soon as possible.”⁵⁷⁴ The French Government would do all within its might to promote this cause. Obviously, these were but empty phrases. No concrete results were obtained at Montoire. The following pronouncement informed the public of the meeting:⁵⁷⁵

The talks between the Führer and the French Head of State Marshal Pétain, in the presence of the Vice-President of the French Ministerial Council Laval and the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, took place late Thursday [October 24] afternoon in the special train of the Führer at a small station in the occupied part of France.

Marshal Pétain, whom Ambassador Abetz had been expecting at the line of demarcation, arrived at the place of the talks with Vice-President Laval. An Army battalion paid tribute to the French Marshal by presenting arms. At the entry to the station, the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop greeted him. The Chief of the OKW, Field Marshal Keitel, and the Chief of Protocol, Envoy von Dörnberg, greeted the French statesmen also and led them to the special train where the Führer was awaiting the French Head of State in his compartment. The talks thereupon began in the parlor car of the Führer. After the talks concluded, the Führer accompanied the French Head of State to his car. Military honors were paid Marshal Pétain on departure as well.

October 24 was truly a black Thursday for Hitler. First Franco, then Pétain refused to array their countries alongside Hitler’s Third Reich. Neither had the potential and the willingness to become a reliable satellite state or to play the role Hitler envisioned for him. Further, on this same day, a letter from Rome reached Hitler which did nothing to improve his mood of dejection. Mussolini had not had the courage not to inform the master of his venture into Greece beforehand and—as he had relished—to have Hitler “find out from the papers” that Italy had invaded Greece.⁵⁷⁶

Thus he had revealed his intention to invade Greece in a late letter to Hitler on October 22. Undoubtedly, Mussolini was seeking revenge for Hitler’s unannounced coup in Rumania. This ludicrous reaction was in keeping with his response to Hitler’s invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, which had led the Duce to occupy Albania in 1939.

The two statesmen's attitude veritably resembled sand-table exercises in a kindergarten! Characteristically, Mussolini pursued his *mare nostrum* policy on a small country which he felt was easy prey for the Italian Empire. He did not anticipate encountering any significant resistance in Greece or in public opinion abroad, as reflected in an earlier statement to Ciano: "I shall send in my resignation as an Italian if anyone objects to our fighting the Greeks."⁵⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Mussolini had not informed Hitler of the precise date he wished to launch this undertaking. Undoubtedly, he feared the strict Führer would forbid anything of the kind. And indeed, Hitler was not at all pleased by the Duce's ill-considered step. Hitler summarized his assessment of Italy's prospects in Greece in the following statement, as Ribbentrop later remembered it: "Never will the Italians be able to do much against the Greeks in the Balkans during the autumn rains and the winter snows."⁵⁷⁸ Hitler immediately instructed Ribbentrop to establish a telephone connection with Rome to ask Mussolini to a meeting the following week in northern Italy.⁵⁷⁹ Obviously, Hitler did not consider an invasion a possibility.

On October 25, Hitler's train reached the Belgian border. There news that the Italian invasion of Greece was immediately imminent caught up with Hitler and his entourage. Instantly, Ribbentrop received orders to phone Mussolini to arrange for a meeting at Florence.⁵⁸⁰ Hitler's special train turned south. At 2:00 a.m. on October 28, it passed the Brenner Pass. At 8:00 a.m., nearly three hours north of Florence, en route, news of the Italian invasion of Greece earlier that morning was picked up by the train's crew on Italian radio. Hitler had come too late.⁵⁸¹ Now the invasion of Greece was an accomplished fact. Orders for it could no longer be rescinded. Hitler was furious, but not because of Greece or the Balkans. Rather he was nettled because he had to play Mussolini's game now, or else he would openly have to avow a rift in German-Italian relations, which would have been contrary to his well-known thesis of 1919 as expounded in *Mein Kampf*.⁵⁸²

By the time the special train finally pulled into Florence, at 11:00 p.m., Hitler had had sufficient time to adjust to the changing circumstances. To the great surprise of those close to him,⁵⁸³ he managed to play convincingly the role of a benevolent friend, concerned, but not necessarily upset, by Mussolini's rash action. In a hearty manner, he greeted the Duce and remained most congenial throughout the day. Mussolini heaved a sigh of relief, as fear and guilt

had begun to gnaw at him. The strict master apparently did not wish to reprimand him as severely as expected. To the contrary, he was most obliging and reaffirmed Germany's solidarity with Italy, come what might. Ciano noted that he felt the conference was "of the greatest interest and proves that German solidarity has not failed us."⁵⁸⁴

According to the German News Bureau, the resulting two-hour discussion was conducted in a "warm fashion" and ended in "complete agreement of opinion."⁵⁸⁵ Mussolini was in the best of spirits. A most congenial host on this day, he even accompanied his guest, after a lunch at the Palazzo Medici, to a concert at the Palazzo Pitti. As a favor to Hitler, Mussolini even endured a performance by the municipal orchestra of Florence that day. In general, concerts bored him stiff. When the music ended, Hitler was the first to rise from his seat and enthusiastically applaud the orchestra. To further oblige his caller, Mussolini even deigned to show Hitler the rooms at the Palazzo Vecchio, something he would not have done willingly under different circumstances, as he loathed museums.

The two dictators behaved as though peace reigned throughout the European lands. Together they appeared on the balcony before a crowd assembled in front of the Palazzo. A row of Fascists formed a cordon through which the cars of the two passed on their way to the train station at 6:00 p.m. After warm farewells, Hitler departed.

On October 30, having returned to Berlin, Hitler thanked Mussolini for his hospitality in a telegram which was to prove to the world the bonds of friendship and solidarity still tying Italy to Germany:⁵⁸⁶

On my return to Germany, I express to you once more, Duce, my heartfelt thanks for the reception and hospitality I was accorded in Florence. The stormy jubilation of the citizens of Florence affords proof again that the politics of the Italo-German alliance, the complete agreement which we were able to establish anew in these talks, is anchored deep within the hearts of your people. The weaponry of our armies and the faiths of our peoples will never allow the victory to be taken from us. In comradely solidarity, I greet you, Duce.

Adolf Hitler

On October 31, Hitler personally handed Lieutenant Commander Prien the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves at a reception at the Reich Chancellery.⁵⁸⁷ On November 4, Hitler awarded Captain Kretschmar the same medal, distinguishing him for the sinking of 200,000 tons of enemy ships. Kretschmar received the customary telegram on this occasion.⁵⁸⁸

On November 6, a landslide election secured a third term for Roosevelt as President of the United States. While this re-election had been anticipated, Hitler nevertheless behaved as though the re-election of "Churchill's accomplice"⁵⁸⁹ was due solely to Mussolini and his Greek adventure.⁵⁹⁰ This was symptomatic of Hitler's increased nervousness. Things had not gone his way of late. His worst fears had come true: he had proved incapable of coming to terms with Franco and Pétain; Mussolini had strayed and engaged himself in a costly and useless enterprise; the Tripartite Pact had not intimidated the Americans; Roosevelt had been re-elected.

Hitler's predicament was great. Either he would have to "use" the Russians against England somehow, or barring this, he would have to destroy Russia, as it constituted England's "last hope." Only then would the British resign themselves to his mastery of the Continent.

The second option was all the more appealing to Hitler as it opened the way for the conquest of Lebensraum in the East. In the latter case, Hitler realized he would have to do his utmost to prove that all other alternatives for coming to terms with Russia had been exhausted. To come to a final decision and keep things going in the meantime, he invited the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov to Berlin.

Announcing such news to the public came at a most opportune moment in Hitler's eyes, as he believed it would uplift the generally dampened mood among Germans. Spirits were low especially among his old Party comrades. Propaganda thus quickly publicized the imminent arrival of the Soviet Commissar as the commemorative festivities for the Beer Hall Putsch were scheduled to commence shortly.

After all, it was Hitler's old Party comrades who were the most dissatisfied with his present performance. They had grown increasingly skeptical because of his false prophecies and because of the discrepancy between his words and his deeds. They realized that his decline was inevitable and that it had already begun. They were fully aware of just how tragically mistaken their Führer had been when he proclaimed first that, should the Third Reich invade Poland, the senile British statesmen would never dare declare war on Germany; and even should they do so, then he would drive them "back to the Thames" where they would gladly accept the terms of peace he dictated. Once he had failed on both accounts, he bombastically announced that the destruction of the Royal Air Force would precede the "razing" (*Ausradierung*) of England's cities. No tangible results had yet been

obtained, with the possible exception of Royal Air Force bomb raids on German cities. And though he had threatened to come to the British Isles, he had swiftly abandoned this undertaking once it had become clear that landings there were simply not possible. Not much had been heard of Hitler after his meetings with Franco and Pétain. And now the war, which supposedly had already ended in the “greatest victory of all time” in July, was still dragging on while winter was rapidly approaching. To whip up enthusiasm, especially within the Party, propaganda portrayed the pending visit by Molotov as a positive sign of light at the end of the tunnel. What could it signify other than the Soviet Union’s assent to entering into the war on the side of Germany?

On November 8, the annual commemorative festivities began in the Löwenbräukeller in Munich. The usual site for the celebrations, the Bürgerbräukeller, destroyed in the mysterious explosion of the previous year, had not yet been completely restored. Though not invited to attend the 1940 festivities, the Royal Air Force nonetheless called at Munich to contribute a special fireworks display in the skies above the Bavarian capital.

With Molotov’s visit strengthening his back, Hitler felt he could afford to call Churchill “insane,” and to proclaim the Royal Air Force England’s “weakest weapon.” Once more he announced Britain’s imminent defeat. He boasted: “One day there will be no more Churchill, but more and more German U-boats.” He was certain of victory as he believed he was fighting the same kind of enemies abroad whom he had once vanquished internally: “I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally.”

Hitler’s speech began on the following note:⁵⁹¹

Party Comrades!

We now celebrate once more the 9th of November, and as back then a rally unites us on the eve of this day. For us the year 1923 was a high-point in the struggle for power in Germany. This struggle, and hence the significance of the day which we are celebrating, can be comprehended only by those who reflect on the age in which we found ourselves then and who, above all, bring back before their eyes the historic events leading up to this gigantic struggle.

Having embarked on a lengthy “party narrative,” Hitler now undertook to conjure up these “historic events.” Once more he spoke of the causes for the collapse of 1918 as he understood them. The ensuing tirade climaxed in the following statement:

As a former soldier of the World War and present Supreme Commander of the German Wehrmacht, I can say: they [the Allies] would never have carried the victory over Germany back then, had not their allies broken us internally!

Four years they labored. It was even necessary to summon an American sorcerer-priest⁵⁹² (*Zauberpriester*) who found the formula which made it possible for the German Volk to fall for the word of honor of a foreign president.

Once Hitler felt he had indulged in reminiscences of the past for long enough, he reaffirmed his faith in the following notion: "I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally."

Providence had spared him many a "trial" to allow him "to lead this struggle for the German Volk." He stated:

I took the same stand in our struggle abroad. Any such new intrigue, any new attempt to mobilize states against us through treaties and agreements, only led to my accelerating armament. I was firmly determined to risk it all. Without interruption the struggle went on with the objective of eliminating the Versailles Treaty. For, my Party Comrades, this I had to do if I were not to be a liar. After all, what did we fight for? When we made our first appearances in the years 1920–21 and 1922, our program was the elimination of Versailles. I could not all of a sudden say: forget about it.

I was determined to make Germany free once again. I led this struggle step by step. And, honestly, I had the ambition of maintaining the peace. From a multitude of rallies and publications, you know of the foreign policy conception I embraced at the time: I wished to establish close bonds of friendship with England. I thought the Germanic races had to come together. I wanted the same relationship to Italy. And further I thought of Japan as a power with interests parallel to our own.⁵⁹³ As far as Italy was concerned, this attempt succeeded thanks to the ingenious actions of the man who founded Fascism and who was victorious in the same struggle in his country which we National Socialists were confronted with in Germany. And, in the last instance, we succeeded with Japan also.

However, we met with failure regarding England, in striking contrast to our own desires. It was not our fault. To the contrary, I attempted, up to the last minute, until a few days prior to the outbreak of war, to realize my original foreign policy objective. At the time, I made the British Ambassador the greatest offers. I was willing to cooperate with England. But it was in vain. I had already realized at the time that certain war profiteers had been agitating for years without anyone putting an end to this business. There could be no doubt that one day they would bring the British people to hate and to be furious with Germany. And meanwhile, the German Volk would harbor no hatred for England. And thus, one fine day, Germany would have stumbled into a war without any psychological preparation. I already warned of this in the years 1938 and 1939, and most notably, in my speech at Saarbrücken,⁵⁹⁴

I emphasized that things could not go on in this manner. If England persisted in this campaign of hatred, then I would be forced to put German propaganda to use.

And thus came the day when it was no longer a question whether war could be avoided, but rather whether it could be postponed for one, two, or three years. This would have been possible only through the most severe humiliation of Germany. And one thing you must understand here, my Party Comrades: on the day I realized that England was only stalling for time, that they were determined to wage war under any circumstance, which was openly revealed in the statements of British statesmen, on that day, I had but one desire: if they were determined to declare war on us, then at least, so I hoped, they should do this during my lifetime. For I knew this would be the toughest of all struggles ever forced on the German Volk. Now not only do I imagine myself to be the toughest man the German Volk has possessed for decades, perhaps even centuries, but I also possess the greatest authority. Above all, I believe in my success, and I believe in it without reserve!

I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged internally.

I am convinced that Providence has led me up to this point and has held all trials at a distance, so that I could wage this battle for the German Volk. And finally, I did go through the Great War myself, and I belong to those who were cheated of the victory back then. And therefore it is my unshakeable resolve that this battle shall end differently from the battle back then.

When I spoke to you in the past year, the first phase of this battle lay behind us. In eighteen days,⁵⁹⁵ our Wehrmacht crushed Poland. Others had imagined things would develop quite differently. They had been convinced that the battle would last six, eight, or ten months. They said to themselves: "Wars with decisive results are no longer possible. Under the best of circumstances, trench warfare will ensue. A front will be erected in the East, and this will slowly bleed Germany to death. Meanwhile, the West will arm. Then the summer of 1940 will come, and then one will move up through Belgium and the Netherlands to the Ruhr territory frontier. And, then slowly one will master Germany." That is how they imagined things. And besides this, they believed that only a few weeks later—we have heard as much from all sides—a revolution would break out in Germany. This, moreover, would lead to destitution. They had not an inkling of the extent of our armament and believed that I was bluffing just as they have been trying to bluff us for years. They did not think anyone would really do what he said he would. Therefore they were convinced that this war would be a relatively easy one for them.

A year ago, as I mentioned earlier, Poland was eliminated. And thus we thwarted their plans a first time. I was able to refer to this great success on November 8, 1939. Today, one year later, I have further successes to report! This, first and foremost, only he who himself served as a soldier in the Great War, can appreciate fully as he knows what it means not only to crush the entire West within a few weeks, but also to take possession of Norway up to the North Cape, from where a front is drawn today from Kirkenes down to the Spanish border.

All the hopes of the British warmongers were then torn asunder. For they had intended to wage war on the periphery, to cut off the German vital lines, and slowly strangle us. The reverse has come true! This continent is slowly mobilizing, in reflecting upon itself, against the enemy of the continent. Within a few months, Germany has given actual freedom to this continent. The British attempt to "Balkanize" Europe—and of this the British statesmen should take note—has been thwarted and has ended! England wanted to disorganize Europe. Germany and Italy will organize Europe.

Now in England they may declare that the war is going on, but I am completely indifferent to this. It will go on until we end it! And we will end it, of this they can be sure! And it will end in our victory! That you can believe!⁵⁹⁶ I realize one thing. If I had stepped up as a prophet on January 1 of this year to explain to the English: by the spring of this year, we will have ruined your plan in Norway, and it will not be you in Norway, but Germany; in the summer of this same year you will no longer be in the Netherlands or come to the Netherlands, but we will have occupied it; in the same summer you will not have advanced through Belgium to the German borders, but we will be at yours; and if I had said: by this summer, there will be no more France; then, all would have said: "The man is insane." And so I shall cease from making any further prophecies today.⁵⁹⁷

I would merely like to give a few explanations to the German Volk. The struggle up to now has led to results of an unequalled nature:

1. In terms of personnel. As bitter as it was for the individual family which had to make the sacrifice, it has cost the German Volk practically no sacrifices.⁵⁹⁸ In sum, the sacrifices we made in this war are not as big as those which the War of 1870–71 cost us. Indeed, they are barely half of this number. In terms of personnel our calculations were upset insofar as we did not have to touch the earmarked, gigantic reserve armies, which we had counted on as replacements for losses. Many men with long service records could thus be dismissed. And still, mostly through the younger grades, we were in a position to strengthen the Wehrmacht at the same time. In terms of personnel the German Army looks completely different today from how it looked in the World War. Only a few days ago, I drove through Belgium and France, and as an old soldier of the World War, I must say our Wehrmacht looks magnificent today, irrespective of whether we are talking about the Army, Navy, Luftwaffe, or Waffen SS. All look equally handsome. They cannot be compared to those of the years 1914 or 1915.⁵⁹⁹

2. In material terms, I prepared for this war as no other war has been prepared for. It was well worth it. The material sacrifices of this war are of no consequence. The ammunition we have used up in battle up to now is the equivalent of barely a month's production. The reserves are so enormous, that in many areas I had to halt production because there is no further storage room available. I have redirected production into other areas where I believe it to be important that we be especially strong. You have heard the others' threats of what they all will produce: Australia has six or seven million inhabitants, including Bushmen. And in spite of this, they want to produce eight times as many airplanes as Germany. Canada has nine million inhabi-

tants. Now they want to build twelve times as many airplanes as Germany. As far as American production is concerned, astronomical figures do not suffice to describe it. In this realm, I do not want to enter into the competition. But one thing I can assure you of: we can mobilize all of Europe's forces.

German productive capacities are the highest in the world. And we will not leave matters at that, since we are in a position today to mobilize the forces of nearly all of Europe—and that I am doing this in the industrial sphere you can take for granted! Our material armament therefore is enormous, and it is just beginning to grow. Even though we have prepared this industrial mobilization for years, as you know, the initial push—in terms of greater figures—will only come about in another one to one and a half years. And this is the case now.

And, summing up, I may say one thing: we are better prepared for the future than ever before. We are prepared in terms of material, and we are prepared in terms of personnel. And that the Wehrmacht makes the most of every day, this anyone who himself served as a soldier knows well. Not a day is lost. This foremost military instrument of the world is being attended to and improved without a moment's interruption. And when the hour of large-scale operations comes once again, then I hope we shall achieve exactly the same results we have in the past. We have prepared everything in the most thorough manner in order to act quickly and daringly!

And the hour will come in which those gentlemen, whose mouths have already conquered the world once again, will have to take up arms. And then we will see who has put these months to better use: we or the others!

Germany with its allies, at any rate, is strong enough to face off any combination in the world. There is no coalition of powers which is militarily equal to ours!⁶⁰⁰

Economically speaking, the long preparations of peacetime have proved well worth the effort: the Four-Year Plan, which we recently prolonged for another four years, has created large reserves for us. The Englishmen know this quite well; otherwise they would not have cursed us so vividly because of it. It was to render us invulnerable to attempts at isolation or blockade. Besides this, it remains to be seen who will be blockaded a few months hence: we or the others!

I believe that in some spheres, the English have been dissuaded from lying. Mr. Churchill, who only eight and six months ago declared, "Within one month, we will have destroyed fifty percent of their U-boats," was not able to say as much the next month, i.e. another fifty percent, because then none of them would have been left. So the next month, the hits accounted for only thirty percent. A month later he could not say twenty percent, but had to content himself with ten percent. And now this General Liar of World History (*Generallügner der Weltgeschichte*) is beginning to admit that there appear to be more of our U-boats than there were in the beginning.

He can believe me: there are more now! He has no idea how many more there are! We will yet challenge them, these international, capitalist liars. And we will live to see it: one day there will be no more Churchill, but more and more German U-boats.

And now that he could no longer disclaim the gist of this, this most ingenious strategist ever born has fastened on the war in the air. For this has been quite an ingenious idea of Mr. Churchill's—of all places in a weapons category in which England is the weakest in comparison to us—to launch the war in the air. You know that for years I made proposals to the world to forsake bombing in warfare especially against civilian populations.

England has declined this, perhaps in anticipation of the ensuing development. Be that as it may! In spite of this, I did not allow battles to be waged against civilian populations in this war. In the war with Poland, I did not order nightly raids on Polish cities, since at night you cannot really hit your target with much accuracy. I allowed attacks to be carried out mostly during the day and only against military targets. I did the same in Norway. I did the same in the Netherlands, in Belgium, and in France. And then Mr. Churchill suddenly had the idea, since the Royal Air Force could not penetrate German air space during the day, to terrorize the German civilian population with attacks by night.

You know that I am a patient man, my Party Comrades! I stood by for eight days. They dropped bombs on the civilian population along the Rhine. They dropped bombs on the civilian population in Westphalia. And I stood by for fourteen days and thought to myself: the man is insane! He is introducing a type of warfare here which can lead only to England's destruction. When the war in the West came to an end, I extended my hand once more to England. Once again I was chided in the most despicable fashion and spat on. Mr. Halifax behaved like a man gone mad. Well! They stepped up the bomb attacks. Again I waited. I must say it was becoming increasingly difficult for me. For many came to me who said: "How long do you still intend to wait, Führer? They are not going to stop by themselves."

I waited three months altogether, and then one day I issued the order: alas, I am taking up this battle, and I am taking it up with the determination with which I always step up to do battle. That means: to fight to the last from now on!

They wanted a fight; they shall have a fight! They wanted to destroy Germany in the war in the air. I will show them who shall be destroyed.

The English people, whom I can only pity, can thank the common criminal Churchill for this. Mr. Churchill has produced the greatest military nonsense in this fight for which a statesman or warlord ever was responsible!⁶⁰¹ He fought with the weapon which is his weakest. He fought from a position which has been geographically disadvantageous to England ever since we have held Trondheim and Brest. It was the weakest position which England could possibly maintain. We will persevere in this fight. I regret that it will demand sacrifices on our part as well. But I do know National Socialist Germany. Only Mr. Churchill does not know it. There is a big difference. He believed he could weary the German Volk. He completely forgot that now a different Germany has come into being. This Germany becomes all the more zealous with every bomb that is dropped. Its resolve is merely strengthened. Above all, it knows: this nonsense must be done away with once and for all. And in this, we are determined.

When Mr. Chamberlain was here in Munich in 1938 and hypocritically presented his peace proposals to me, this man had already decided for himself to proclaim immediately after his return: "I have been granted a postponement, and now let us arm until we can attack Germany." We are quite aware that any ceasefire agreement today would be just that: a ceasefire agreement. They would hope that in a few years I would no longer stand at the helm of this Reich and that then the fight could begin anew.

Hence it is my unalterable resolve to see this conflict through to a clear decision. Just as I rejected compromise in my struggle for Germany as a National Socialist,⁶⁰² so I reject compromise here as well.

I extended my hand often—in vain. They wanted this fight; now they shall have it! The German Volk will see this fight through to the end! The danger that it might erupt again within one or two or three years, after a period of heightened tension, must be removed. The German Volk wants to have peace finally. It wants a peace that allows it to work and which does not allow international scoundrels to agitate among other peoples against us. These are the folks who make their fortunes through war.⁶⁰³ I have no reason to wage war for material considerations. For us, it is but a sad enterprise: it robs us, the German Volk and the whole community, of so much time and manpower. I do not possess any stocks in the armament industry; I do not earn anything in this war. I would be happy if we could work again as I used to work for my Volk. But these international war criminals are at the same time the armament industry's greatest black marketeers. They own the factories, they make business. They are the same people we had here in Germany earlier. There can be but one confrontation with these people: one of us must break. And this one will not be, under any circumstances, Germany!⁶⁰⁴

And if this Germany today possesses a different attitude, this is because National Socialism has pulled the German Volk up by its bootstraps again. It has created the mental, psychological, moral, and also material conditions for the enormous victories by the Wehrmacht of our young Reich. Every soldier knows it and must know that the armies which today march beneath our banner are the revolutionary armies of the Third Reich!

They carry in their hearts not only faith in a Germany as it once was, but they carry in their hearts the faith in a Germany as we all imagine it will be in the future, for which we have fought so long, the faith in a better Reich, in which the great goals of our national and social Movement shall be realized.

And that we possess such a Germany today, this we owe to those who marched in the year 1923 and, above all, to those who then, as the first, shed their blood for the Movement. These sixteen dead are more than simply sixteen dead! They became the crown witnesses for a new resurrection of our Volk. Their sacrifice was all the greater, for back then they could yet barely perceive in their faintest fantasies what has come into being since. Then they acted out of a boundless love for Germany. When someone came to join the Movement then, one could only say to him: "You can give up everything else, since you will be laughed at and ridiculed and persecuted. You must be aware that you will be without bread, that they will throw you out of everywhere. You will have nothing of which you can be certain, other than death perhaps.

But you see before you something for which we all fight. It is a new Germany of honor which we will resurrect and which will secure for its sons their daily bread. And it will take a place once more in this world which it deserves, based on the number of its people, its historical past, and our former, present, and future worth."

And all these men came to take their places. Many of them felt this but subconsciously. There were so many common folk in this Movement. We were avoided like the plague by those who held themselves to belong to the intelligentsia or the upper middle classes. We were avoided like the plague by them, so that the greater number of those who joined our ranks were mostly mere common people. Perhaps they had not so clear a vision of what was to come. They only knew: one day things will be better.

Things will be better one day, because we will build up a new Reich. And in this Reich much will be realized that our foes actually yearn for deep inside themselves, without realizing that following along the path on which they have set out, they shall never be able to achieve it.

For this these men stood up, and for this sixteen of them gave their lives back then.

They were sixteen, although they might equally well have been five hundred or five thousand, and not one of them uttered a complaint. Not even the wounded betrayed the cause. To the contrary, the wounded all the more eagerly became Party comrades once again, all the more zealous than before! And in the footsteps of these sixteen many hundred followed, here and beyond the borders of the Reich. They followed along the path of martyrs for years, for nearly a decade. Their numbers were the greatest in the Ostmark and the Sudetenland perhaps—all the stronger was their belief because the battle seemed the most hopeless there. How could all these common folk surmise the course of history as it has now truly come to pass? How could they foresee the miracle which would return them home gloriously to a great Reich one and a half or two decades later? Still they fought, with a faithful heart, without knowing precisely if this would come to pass during their own lives.

And all this took its beginning from this November 8, and November 9, 1923. And so we celebrate the commemoration of these men, all the more profoundly moved today than even then, since all of them bore in their hearts the disgrace of the collapse of the year 1918-19. And this disgrace gnawed at their hearts and upset them. How often did we sit together, aglow with the one thought: this must be repaired in our history: this cannot last and this cannot remain! Otherwise the German Volk would be burdened with this blemish for all time! We will erase this from the book of our history! We will wash it away again! We will resurrect a Germany of might, power, and magnificence. Germany must be resurrected, one way or another! And in this spirit we fought.

In this spirit they fell. In this spirit the battle continued to be waged. And in this spirit we face the outside world today, and we will complete that for which they fell back then. They [the World Powers] believe they are destroying Germany. They will be proved mistaken! Germany will rise from the battle all the more!

The commemorative march customarily held on November 9 was canceled this year as in the previous one. Neither did Hitler attend the placing of wreaths at the Feldherrnhalle and the monuments at the Königlischer Platz. On the same day, Sir Neville Chamberlain died at Heckfield. The victor of Munich was not allowed to witness the end of the Nazi regime he had so longed to see. To that extent, this was a success for Hitler.

On November 10, Hitler congratulated the Emperor of Japan in a telegram on the 2,600-year anniversary of the foundation of the Japanese Empire.⁶⁰⁵

In view of the close bonds between Germany and Japan which have found their global expression in the Three-Power Pact, I ask Your Majesty to accept once more, on the occasion of today's principal celebration of the 2,600-year anniversary of the Japanese Empire, my heartfelt best wishes for Your Majesty, the Imperial House, and the Japanese people.

Adolf Hitler

On November 11, Hitler wired Victor Emmanuel on his birthday.⁶⁰⁶ He also sent his condolences to King Michael of Rumania in a telegram occasioned by an earthquake in the vicinity of Bucharest which had cost several hundreds of lives.⁶⁰⁷

On November 12, Molotov was scheduled to arrive in Berlin. Before entering into negotiations with this "primitive" Russian, Hitler wanted to take the steps he had already determined on. These he set down in yet another directive for the further conduct of the war. The invasion of Russia was a foregone conclusion of the talks, irrespective of their immediate outcome.

Once Hitler made up his mind, he doggedly pursued his objective. In the case of the Soviet Union, Hitler foresaw only two alternative courses of action: either the Russians fell for his ploy or they did not. In the first instance, Russia would launch a drive for British colonial possessions, e.g. in India. This would afford Hitler the choice opportunity of demonstrating his "loyalty" to the English by attacking Russia. In the second case, the Soviets would reject his proposals and thereby prove that they deserved no better than to be thrown back behind the Urals.

So, not surprisingly, the directive dated November 12, 1940, contained this significant passage:

Political discussions have been initiated with the aim of clarifying Russia's attitude for the coming period. Regardless of what results these discussions

will have, all preparations for the East which already have been orally ordered, are to be continued.

The directive further dealt with issues connected with France, Spain, Egypt, and the Balkans. In spite of the fruitless talk with Franco, Hitler could still not accept that Spain could no longer be counted on as a pawn in the Third Reich's foreign policy goals. He still thought it possible to sway the Spaniards and to take Gibraltar from the English. Operation "Felix" was to provide for the latter. France was to be promoted from the status of a "non-belligerent" to a "belligerent" power, once a land bridge linking Gibraltar and North Africa had been set up.

The situation in the Balkans was far from favorable to the Third Reich. The Italians had suffered severe setbacks. The English had gained footholds along the Greek coast and had occupied Crete. Berlin saw itself forced to move into Bulgaria to attempt to restore "order" in the Balkans from this base.

"Directive No. 18 for the Conduct of the War" read:⁶⁰⁸

The measures of the High Commands which are being prepared for the conduct of the war in the near future are to be in accordance with the following guiding principles:

1. Relations with France

The aim of my policy toward France is to cooperate with this country in the most effective way for the future prosecution of the war against England. For the time being France will have the role of a "non-belligerent power" which will have to tolerate German military measures on her territory, in the African colonies especially, and to give support, as far as possible, even by using her own means of defense. The most pressing task of the French is the defensive and offensive protection of their African possessions (West and Equatorial Africa) against England and the de Gaulle movement. From this task the participation of France in the war against England can develop in full force.

Except for the current work of the Armistice Commission, the discussions with France, tied in with my meeting with Marshal Pétain, will initially be conducted exclusively by the Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

More detailed directives will follow after the conclusion of these discussions.

2. Spain and Portugal

Political measures to induce the prompt entry of Spain into the war have been initiated. The aim of German intervention in the Iberian Peninsula (code name Felix) will be to drive the English out of the Western Mediterranean.

For this purpose:

a) Gibraltar should be taken and the Straits closed.

b) The English should be prevented from gaining a foothold at another point of the Iberian Peninsula or of the Atlantic islands.

For the preparation and execution of the undertaking the following is intended:

Section I:

a) Reconnaissance parties (officers in civilian clothes) will conclude the requisite preparations for the operation against Gibraltar and for the taking over of airfields. As regards camouflage and cooperation with the Spaniards they are bound by the security measures of the Chief of the Foreign Intelligence Department.

b) Special units of the Foreign Intelligence Department in disguised cooperation with the Spaniards are to take over the protection of the Gibraltar area against English attempts to extend the outpost area or prematurely to discover and disturb the preparations.

c) The units designated for the action will assemble in readiness far back of the Franco-Spanish border and without premature explanation being given to the troops. A preliminary alert for beginning the operation will be issued 3 weeks before the troops cross the Franco-Spanish border (but only after conclusion of the preparations regarding the Atlantic islands).

In view of the limited capacity of the Spanish railroads the Army will mainly designate motorized units for the operations so that railways remain available for supply.

Section II:

a) Directed by observation near Algeciras, Luftwaffe units at a favorable moment will conduct an aerial attack from French soil against the units of the English fleet lying in the harbor of Gibraltar and after the attack they will land at Spanish airports.

b) Shortly thereafter the units designated for commitment in Spain will cross the Franco-Spanish border by land or by air.

Section III:

a) The attack for the seizure of Gibraltar is to be by German troops.

b) Troops are to be assembled to march into Portugal in case the English should gain a foothold there. The units designated for this will march into Spain immediately after the forces designated for Gibraltar.

Section IV:

Support of the Spaniards in closing the Strait after seizure of the Rock, if necessary, from the Spanish-Moroccan side as well.

The following will apply regarding the strength of the units to be committed for Operation Felix:

Army:

The units designated for Gibraltar must be strong enough to take the Rock even without Spanish help. Along with this a smaller group must be available to support the Spaniards in the unlikely event of an English attempt at a landing on another part of the coast. For the possible march into Portugal mobile units are mainly to be designated.

Luftwaffe:

For the aerial attack on the harbor of Gibraltar forces are to be designated

which will guarantee abundant success. For the subsequent operations against naval objectives and for support of the attack on the Rock mainly dive bomber units are to be transferred to Spain. Sufficient anti-aircraft artillery is to be allocated to the army units including its use against ground targets.

Navy:

U-boats are to be provided to combat the English Gibraltar squadron, and particularly in its evacuation of the harbor which is to be expected after the aerial attack. For support of the Spaniards in closing the Strait the transfer of individual coastal batteries is to be prepared in cooperation with the Army.

Italian participation is not envisaged.

The Atlantic islands (particularly the Canaries and the Cape Verde Islands) will, as a result of the Gibraltar operation, gain increased importance for the English conduct of the war at sea as well as for our own naval operations. The Commanders in Chief of the Navy and of the Luftwaffe are to study how the Spanish defense of the Canaries can be supported and how the Cape Verde Islands can be occupied.

I likewise request examination of the question of occupation of Madeira and of the Azores as well as of the question of the advantages and disadvantages which would ensue for the naval and for the aerial conduct of the war. The results of this examination are to be presented to me as soon as possible.

3. Italian Offensive against Egypt

If at all, the commitment of German forces comes into consideration only when the Italians have reached Mersa Matrúh [port in North Africa]. Even then the commitment initially of German air forces is envisaged only if the Italians make available the requisite air bases. The preparations of the branches of the armed forces for commitment in this or in any other North African theater of war are to be continued within the following framework:

Army:

Holding in readiness of an armored division (composition as previously prepared for) for commitment in North Africa.

Navy:

Fitting out of such German ships lying in Italian ports as are suitable as transports for the transfer of the strongest possible units either to Libya or to North Africa.

Luftwaffe:

Preparations for offensive operations against Alexandria and the Suez Canal in order to close the latter against use by the English High Command.

4. Balkans

The Commander in Chief of the Army will make preparations in order, in case of necessity, to occupy the Greek mainland north of the Aegean Sea, entering from Bulgaria, and thereby make possible the commitment of German air force units against targets in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially against those English air bases which threaten the Rumanian oil area.

In order to be equal to all possible missions and to hold Turkey in check, the commitment of an army group of an approximate strength of 10 divisions is to be the basis for the planning and the calculations for strategic

concentration. It will not be possible to count on the railway leading through Yugoslavia for the strategic concentration of these forces. In order to shorten the time needed for the concentration, a prompt reinforcement of the German Army mission in Rumania is to be prepared on a scale which is to be proposed to me.

The Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe will, in harmony with the intended Army operations, prepare for the employment of German Luftwaffe units in the southeast Balkans and for establishment of an aircraft warning service on the southern border of Bulgaria. The German Luftwaffe mission in Rumania will be reinforced to an extent to be proposed to me.

The wishes of the Bulgarians for equipping their Army (deliveries of weapons and munitions) are to be given favorable treatment.

5. Russia

Political discussions have been initiated with the aim of clarifying Russia's attitude for the coming period. Regardless of what results these discussions will have, all preparations for the East which already have been orally ordered are to be continued. Directives on this will follow as soon as the outline of the Army's plan of operations is submitted to and approved by me.

6. Landing in England

Because, with changes in the over-all situation, the possibility or necessity may arise to return in the spring of 1941 to Operation *Seelöwe*, the three branches of the armed forces must earnestly try in every way to improve the groundwork for such an operation.

7. Reports of the Commanders in Chief

Will be expected by me regarding the measures envisaged in this directive. I shall then issue orders regarding the methods of execution and the synchronization of the individual actions.

In order to guard secrecy, special measures are to be taken for restricting the numbers of the working staffs. This applies particularly for the operations in Spain and for the plans regarding the Atlantic islands.

Adolf Hitler

Molotov had arrived in Berlin on the morning of November 12, where an elaborate ceremonial greeted him. The first official meeting was scheduled for the afternoon of that day at the Reich Chancellery. Hitler had prepared for an impressive rhetorical feat. As usual, it was his ambition to weary this particular guest through a lengthy exposition of his achievements. But in this he failed with the Russian. Molotov maintained a stony countenance during the entire meeting. Instead of being overwhelmed by Hitler's wordy elaboration, Molotov confronted his host with numerous concrete questions of his own. He had brought with him several proposals to be negotiated, the majority of which seemed inopportune to Hitler. Most concerned Finland and the Balkans. The Soviet Union, after all, was not ignorant of Hitler's new "friendship" with the Finns. The Führer had taken advantage of the

prevalent anti-Russian sentiments in Finland to procure permission for the landing of German troops at Finnish ports.

Hitler was aware that his dealings with Finland would serve only to provoke the Soviets. The Balkans were a different story entirely. Hitler could not conceive of any reason why the Russians should have a vested interest in the Balkans, or why for that matter Germany's activities in the Balkans should be of particular concern to the Soviet Union. Hitler was simply ignorant of the long historic ties existing between this region of the world and Moscow. The Balkan peoples regarded first Tsarist Russia, and later the Soviet Union, as successor states to the Byzantine Empire. In centuries past, Russia had functioned as the protector of the Orthodox Church, and had been held in great esteem. It had even been seen as the liberator of the Balkans from Turkish tyranny.

Bulgaria especially retained close ties to the Soviet Union throughout the Second World War. Despite his good personal relations with King Boris, Hitler proved unable to draw Bulgaria into a war against Russia. To his great chagrin, he soon found Bulgaria figuring heavily in his talks with Molotov.⁶⁰⁹

When the state reception for the Russian began at the Reich Chancellery on the afternoon of November 12, Hitler had no inkling of what awaited him. As was his custom, he prefaced the meeting with a flood of words, focusing primarily on Germany's development after his entry into office, its economic interests, and its raw material needs. In one sweeping gesture, he acknowledged Russia's drive to the open sea as legitimate. America and England also figured in his reflections. As soon as the weather improved, "Germany would be poised for the great and final blow against England." The United States was not in a position "in 1945 to threaten the freedom of other nations." This was possible "at the earliest in 1970 or 1980."

Barely had Hitler ended this harangue, when Molotov commented that the Führer's declarations had been of a very general nature. He, however, carried with him precise instructions as to the questions to be discussed. Molotov asked about the Three-Power Pact. What was the meaning of the New Order in Europe and Asia, and what role would the USSR be given in it? These issues must be discussed during the Berlin conversations and during the contemplated visit of the Reich Foreign Minister to Moscow, on which the Russians were definitely counting. Moreover, there were issues to be clarified regarding Russia's Balkan and Black Sea interests, about Bulgaria, Rumania, and Turkey.

It would be easier for the Russian Government to give specific replies to the questions raised by the Führer if it could obtain the explanations just requested. The Soviet Union would be interested in the New Order in Europe, and particularly in the tempo and the form of this New Order. It would also like to have an idea of the boundaries of the so-called Greater East Asian Sphere.

The questions rained down rapidly on Hitler. Schmidt later recalled: "In my presence, no other foreign visitor had ever spoken to him like this." Hitler felt cornered. Searching to avoid having to make direct replies, he muddled pretexts and platitudes:

. . . the Three-Power Pact was intended to regulate conditions in Europe as to the natural interests of the European countries, and consequently Germany was now approaching the Soviet Union in order that she might express herself regarding the areas of interest to her. [—]

Germany's task in this case was that of a mediator. Russia by no means was to be confronted with a *fait accompli*. [—]

It was a matter of opposing any attempt on the part of America to "make money on Europe." The United States had no business in Europe, in Africa, or in Asia.

Molotov quickly retorted that:

. . . the participation of Russia in the Three-Power Pact appeared to him entirely acceptable in principle, provided that Russia was to cooperate as a partner and not be merely an object. In that case he saw no difficulties in the matter of participation of the Soviet Union in the common effort. But the aim and the significance of the Pact must first be more closely defined, particularly with regard to the delimitation of the Greater East Asian Sphere.

In view of the tenacity of his opponent, Hitler could think of nothing better than to excuse himself momentarily with the following remarkable statement: "I believe we must cut short our present discussion, or else we shall be caught in the middle of an air-raid alert."

The nightly alarms and attacks launched by the Royal Air Force added a special pertinence to the talks. The irony of the situation did not escape Molotov as, on the following day, he sat down to negotiate with Hitler and Ribbentrop, who constantly claimed that England had, in fact, been beaten. Turning to Ribbentrop, Molotov inquired: "If that is so, why are we in this shelter, and whose are these bombs which fall?"⁶¹⁰ The air raids on Berlin at this time were not coincidental by any means, as Churchill himself revealed later: ". . . though not invited to join the discussion we did not wish to be entirely left out of the proceedings."⁶¹¹

On the German side, the following communiqué was published on the Hitler-Molotov talks of November 12:⁶¹²

On Tuesday afternoon [November 12], the Führer received the President of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. and People's Foreign Commissar, Herr Molotov, at the new Reich Chancellery in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, for an extended discussion. Herr Molotov was in the company of the Deputy People's Foreign Commissar, Dekanazov.⁶¹³ A delegation of the SS Leibstandarte paid the guests military respects on arrival and departure.

In honor of his guest, Ribbentrop hosted a dinner party at the Kaiserhof Hotel that evening. Hitler was as conspicuously absent on this occasion as he was the following day at a reception Molotov gave at the Russian Embassy.

For the morning of November 13, Göring had invited Molotov to come see him. The Reichsmarschall was assuredly relieved that for this reason he could finally abandon his command post in Normandy. From there he had conducted the "retaliation attacks against England" without success for two months.

On this day, Hitler in the meanwhile received Lieutenant Commander Kretschmar at the Reich Chancellery to award him the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves.⁶¹⁴

At noon, Molotov was Hitler's guest once more. The following communiqué was published on the occasion:⁶¹⁵

The President of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. and People's Foreign Commissar, Herr Molotov, was the guest of the Führer in a small circle on Wednesday afternoon [November 13]. Subsequently the political discussions were continued in the presence of the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the Deputy People's Foreign Commissar Dekanazov.

In the interim, in view of the pending "continuation of political discussions," Hitler had prepared several replies to Molotov's insistent questions. First of all, Hitler attempted to discredit the Soviet Union's charges against Germany's behavior towards Finland. He stressed the Reich's economic interests in the area. Moreover, its actions were due to the persistent threat of a renewed war setting the region afire at British instigation. Such a conflict might well engulf Sweden and pull the United States into the confrontation. According to Schmidt, Molotov was not at all impressed by these claims and retorted: "If relations between Germany and Russia are good, then the Finnish question can be resolved without recourse to war. But in this case,

there should neither be German troops in Finland, nor may there be any political demonstrations against the Soviet Government.”

This led Hitler to claim that German troops in Finland were merely “traversing the land en route to northern Norway.” This should in no way be interpreted as a demonstration against the Soviets. Molotov’s reply to this was a cunning one, as Schmidt noted: “With demonstrations I was actually referring to the sending of Finnish delegations to Germany and the receptions of prominent Finns here in Germany.”

Heated words of a similar nature were exchanged later. For some time it appeared as though relations would be ruptured and the meeting would end before Hitler had a chance to deliver his carefully studied address on the bankruptcy of the British Empire. Finally, Ribbentrop interrupted the disputants to remind them of the purpose of the meeting. This afforded Hitler the opportunity to expound his deluded views on the imminent collapse of Great Britain and the future division of the spoils.⁶¹⁶

After the conquest of England the British Empire would be apportioned as a gigantic worldwide estate in bankruptcy of forty million square kilometers. In this bankrupt estate there would be for Russia access to the ice-free and really open ocean. Thus far a minority of forty-five million Englishmen had ruled six hundred million inhabitants of the British Empire. He was about to crush this minority. Even the United States was actually doing nothing but picking out of this bankrupt estate a few items particularly suitable to the United States.⁶¹⁷ Germany of course would like to avoid any conflict that would divert her from her struggle against the heart of the Empire, the British Isles.

For that reason, he [the Führer] did not like Italy’s war against Greece, as it diverted forces to the periphery instead of concentrating them against England at one point. The same would occur during a Baltic war. The conflict with England would be fought to the last ditch, and he had no doubt that the defeat of the British Isles would lead to the dissolution of the Empire. It was a chimera to believe that the Empire could possibly be ruled and held together from Canada.

Under those circumstances, there arose worldwide perspectives. During the next few weeks they would have to be settled in joint diplomatic negotiations with Russia, and Russia’s participation in the solution of these problems would have to be arranged. All the countries which could possibly be interested in the bankrupt estate would have to stop all controversies among themselves and concern themselves exclusively with the partition of the British Empire. This applied to Germany, France, Italy, Russia, and Japan.

Molotov, however, was not moved by Hitler's rhetoric. Instead, he calmly stated that he had followed the Führer's thoughts with great interest and that he was in agreement with the gist of this exposition. He had little to add as, assuredly, the Führer had given much thought to these problems and had a concrete vision. It was crucial, however, first of all to clarify Soviet-German cooperation, to which then Italy and Japan could be linked. The task was to continue building on the foundations already constructed, not for these to undergo revision.

Hitler immediately took up this line of thought in an effort to dominate the conversation once more.⁶¹⁸

Germany wished to create a world coalition of interested parties, consisting of Spain, France, Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Japan, which would constitute, in a sense, a community of interest stretching from North Africa to East Asia and which would obtain satisfaction from the bankrupt estate of the British. [—]

It was a question of delineating the borders of the activities of peoples and of distributing to nations vast areas in which they could find their field of activity in the next fifty to one hundred years.

His Russian guest was not pleased with the global, yet elusive, vision Hitler was propagating. Objecting that more immediate problems demanded attention, he began to discuss the Soviet Union's point of view. For one, Russia placed great stock on its position at the Black Sea. The guarantee extended by Germany and Italy to Rumania ran contrary to the Soviet Union's interests. Moscow had said as much on two previous occasions, if he was "allowed to put it so bluntly." Addressing the issue even more directly, Molotov inquired: "What would you say if we extended a similar guarantee to Bulgaria as that which you have extended to Rumania and this under the same conditions, namely, the commissioning of a strong military delegation?"

This outrageous comparison infuriated Hitler. It truly took nerve on the part of the Russian to put such a question to him, as Hitler regarded the Balkans as his particular field of interest and activity. Barely a day before, he had decided to occupy Bulgaria.⁶¹⁹ Still, the Führer did not allow his displeasure to show and countered evasively:

If you wish to extend this guarantee under the same conditions under which we extended ours to Rumania, then I must ask you if Bulgaria has requested a like guarantee from you as Rumania has of us?

Molotov said that, no, it had not. Nonetheless, he continued to express his conviction that Russia would ultimately arrive at an

understanding with Bulgaria. Why should Bulgaria deny Russia a request similar to the one Germany had already gotten out of Rumania? Again, Molotov repeated his question regarding a Soviet guarantee. As the People's Commissar was careful to underline, the Soviet Union desired to consult Germany on such issues. Unmistakably, this was a stab at Hitler who had failed to check with Russia before extending the guarantee to Rumania—in blatant defiance of the Reich's contractual obligation to the Soviet Union. Again, Hitler dodged a reply by exclaiming: "I must talk it over with the Duce first."

As if it were not well known that Hitler never consulted with anybody, least of all with Mussolini! Hitler might as well have claimed it would be necessary to put the matter before the generals for final arbitration.⁶²⁰ Having discussed Bulgaria, Molotov brought up the Dardanelles which he described as "historic gate of entry for a British attack upon Russia" in reference to the Crimean War and the events of 1918–19.⁶²¹ Hitler saw the matter differently:

The decisive question was whether Russia conceived of the possibility, through a revision of the Treaty of Montreux,⁶²² to obtain sufficient security for its interests in the Black Sea. He did not expect an immediate answer to this question, since he knew Molotov would first have to discuss this question with Stalin.

To this Molotov replied that it lay in the Soviet Union's immediate interest to secure the straits to preclude an assault on its position in the Black Sea. It sought to resolve this issue in negotiations with Greece. A potential guarantee to Bulgaria would greatly promote its cause. As a power figuring heavily in Black Sea politics, Russia had a right to secure its interests in the region. The Foreign Commissar was confident of arriving at an understanding with Turkey.

Hitler retorted:

... this corresponded approximately to the German train of thought. The Dardanelles were to be traversed freely only by Russian battleships, while the straits were to be closed to other battleships.

Adding to his previous statements, Molotov expressed his country's desire to see a like guarantee realized in practice, not only in theory. At this point, Hitler brought up the subject of the "bankruptcy proceeds" to be anticipated from the dissolution of the British Empire.

He pointed out:

... that, naturally, he was indeed not completely certain whether these plans could be realized. Should this not be possible, then, at any rate, a "great

historic opportunity would have been missed.” All these questions would have to be examined closely anew at Moscow by the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Italy, Japan, and Mr. Molotov, after being prepared in the diplomatic channels.

At this stage in the conversation, Hitler pointed to the late hour and stated that, in view of the possibility of British air raids, it would probably be best to discontinue the talks now, since the main points appeared to have been dealt with sufficiently.

And on this equally disappointing note, the second round of consultations with Molotov ended. Hitler’s gifted oratory had completely failed to impress the sober Russian. The Soviet Union was no closer to intervening against England than it had been before the talks. Rather than negotiate with Molotov once again, Hitler would assuredly have preferred to have even more teeth pulled out than the three or four he had suggested after his abortive negotiations with Franco.

On November 14, Molotov departed for Moscow. From the border station Malkinia, he sent two telegrams to Hitler and Ribbentrop. While they differed in tone, they left little doubt that Molotov felt provoked by Hitler’s conduct of the negotiations. Evidently he had gotten on better with Ribbentrop. This was not surprising, since the Reich Foreign Minister had felt quite at home in Moscow during his last visit, as though among “old Party comrades.”⁶²³ Molotov’s telegrams read, respectively:⁶²⁴

As I am about to leave behind me the German frontier, I ask you, Herr Reich Chancellor, to accept my thanks for the friendly welcome shown to me in Germany.

Molotov

Please accept my sincere thanks, Herr Reich Minister, for the open and warmhearted welcome shown to me and my traveling companions during the memorable days of our stay in Germany.

Molotov

These two telegrams showed more clearly than the German communiqué that the talks had borne no fruit. The official German statement on the occasion read:⁶²⁵

During his presence in Berlin on November 12 and November 13 of this year, the President of the Council of People’s Commissars of the U.S.S.R. and People’s Foreign Commissar, Herr Molotov, conferred with the Führer and the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop. The exchange was conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and led to mutual agreement on all important questions of interest to Germany and the Soviet Union.

7

Before undertaking any further steps against Russia, Hitler longed to avenge himself for the British bombings which had so embarrassingly disrupted his conference with Molotov at Berlin and his November 8 commemorative speech at Munich. Before November 14 had passed, he ordered 500 German bombers to strike the English city of Coventry that night—a “retaliation attack.” As a result of this first “Blitz,” 250 persons were killed and 800 wounded on the night of November 14, according to English reports. Moreover, a large part of the inner city, together with the old Cathedral, was shattered. The German radio propaganda announced other English cities would be “Coventrated” (*coventriert*), too, in the future.

Also on November 14, Hitler hosted 125 laborers of the armament industry at the Reich Chancellery. Participants from all over the Reich had been especially selected for the occasion. Ley and Todt introduced the guests individually to the Führer. The host then delivered an address, which the *Völkischer Beobachter* reproduced as follows:⁶²⁶

In his preliminary statements, the Führer explained the true reasons for the war. He explained to the armament and front laborers why plutocratic, capitalist England, with its antisocial disposition, sounded the battle against the German social state. Not only was this battle being fought by the German soldiers who are the best in the world and who are outdoing themselves. No, as decisive were the struggles of the home front, of the gigantic army of the millions who worked in German factories and for German armament.

“All those workers who have given our soldiers the best weapons in the world; who have delivered the endless [!] amounts of ammunition which are at our disposal; who have erected the West Wall of steel; who made it possible that for every broken machinegun and for every grenade fired there are ten new ones available; who have labored with the result that we possess today in Germany anti-aircraft defenses the likes of which no other state in the world owns⁶²⁷—all of them have decisively contributed to winning these great

successes with so little sacrifice of blood. And for this I would like to thank you today, not only in the name of the German Volk, but also in the name of the German soldier.”

Victory would be attained all the more swiftly, the more united and determined the German Volk was, and the more its opponents realized that thoughts of a Germany like that of 1918 were useless. Today’s German State was erected on the firmest and strongest foundation conceivable: the broad mass of the working Volk. With this united front of labor, Germany would survive the battle. And, after the victory, it would strive all the more to transform this German social state into an exemplary world. The crucial role played by German labor in this battle was building the foundations for an enormous peace project—“our great mission after the victory.” At the conclusion of his address, the Führer asked the laborers assembled to convey his thanks to the millions of their comrades in the factories and in the armament industry, as well as at the front.

On November 15, Hitler’s attention turned to the post-war period once again. He named Ley “Reichskommissar for Social Housing Construction.” This move reflected his weakness for buildings, for one thing. Beyond this, it was intended to raise the general mood and draw attention to the magnificent post-war period that was coming. The first and most important part of the decree read:⁶²⁸

A successful outcome of the war will give the German Reich tasks it shall be able to fulfill only through an increase in its population. It is therefore necessary to close the gaps which the war inflicted on the *Volkskörper* with an increase in the birthrate. Therefore, in the future, the construction of new housing in Germany must satisfy the demands of a healthy life for large families. In order to guarantee the immediate start of a building project in compliance with these principles after the war, preparatory measures are to be taken now. I order:

Article I

Fulfillment of the tasks I set is the mission of the Reich. To carry out this mission, I appoint a Reich Commissar for Social Housing Construction who shall be directly responsible to me.

Article II

(1) Construction of housing shall be conducted in accordance with an annual housing construction plan.

(2) The amount of total units of housing to be constructed in a given year shall be determined by me. [!]

[Technical details follow.]

Now that the most “immediate” domestic problems had been dealt with, Hitler turned to foreign policy once again.

In the wake of the Molotov state visit, Hitler resolved to deal severely with the impertinent Russians.⁶²⁹ In spite of his perfunctory

alliance with the Soviet Union, he had always upheld his earlier conviction that Bolshevism was based on a “cowardly, anxious acquiescence.”⁶³⁰ Striking the Bolsheviks to the ground would assuredly be child’s play. After all, the Russians deserved no better. He had tempted them with the loot of the “bankrupt” estate of the British Empire, and they had imperiously declined his “generous” offer.

The “heroic” Japanese were of a different mettle. He had to do an about-face and make it public knowledge that in the future he would no longer deal with the Russians, but with the Japanese

On November 15, Hitler once again congratulated in a pronouncedly warm manner the Japanese Emperor Hirohito on the anniversary of the establishment of the Japanese Imperial House. Only five days before, he had wired his congratulations to Tokyo. This previous telegram had been considerably cooler. The new telegram was worded as follows:⁶³¹

I extend Germany’s greetings to the friendly Japanese nation on the 2,600-year anniversary of the existence of the Imperial House. With the German Volk, I reflect in admiration on the achievements attained in building up the Japanese Empire over so long a time. With pride the Japanese people may recall that no enemy was ever able to set foot upon the island as its master. And for just this reason the Japanese race remained pure throughout the millennia.

May Japan regard with satisfaction the constant growth of its influence in the East Asian region and of its importance in the world. Today it is the leading power in East Asia and as such may rightly demand to take part, alongside the leading powers of other continents, in the fashioning of a new order, of a better and more just world.

With sincere joy, I convey my best wishes to the allied Japanese people today. Japan, now in the midst of a difficult struggle for its vital rights, in which it stands at the side of the German and Italian peoples, will achieve the goal Fate has assigned it: a fruitful peace in a secure Lebensraum.

Adolf Hitler

And still this unequivocal telegram, sent only a day after Molotov’s departure, did not satisfy Hitler. While it was still November 15, Hitler and a large entourage suddenly appeared at the Japanese Embassy in Berlin at noon. In this curious manner, Hitler obviously sought to affirm his good intentions towards Tokyo. Indeed, his behavior stood in striking contrast to his curt treatment of Molotov. Neither had Hitler gone to Ribbentrop’s dinner party in honor of the Russian guest nor had he attended the official reception at the Soviet Embassy.⁶³²

So that the public might be informed of Hitler’s sudden change of heart, the following communiqué was published:⁶³³

On Friday afternoon [November 15], the Führer attended a reception at the Japanese Embassy organized by the Imperial Japanese Ambassador to Berlin Kurusu in honor of the 2,600-year anniversary of the existence of the Japanese Imperial House.

The reception was also attended by Reich Minister von Ribbentrop; the Deputy of the Führer Rudolf Hess; Grand Admiral Raeder; Field Marshal Milch; the Reich Ministers Dr. Goebbels and Lammers; Reichsorganisationsleiter Dr. Ley; Reichsführer SS Himmler; Reich Press Chief Dr. Dietrich; State Minister Dr. Meissner; the State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry von Weizsäcker; and the Royal Italian Chargé d'Affaires Zamboni.

For those who had decried the lamentable result of the talks with Molotov, this most courteous treatment of the Japanese served as an eye opener. There could no longer be any doubt as to a turn in the tide: Japan was in, Russia out. Carousing with the Bolsheviks was now a thing of the past.

On November 16, Hitler retreated to the Obersalzberg, perhaps to "think more clearly" in the mountain air. The case of Bulgaria haunted him above all. If the Russians, as Molotov had suggested, moved to extend a guarantee to Sofia, this would undoubtedly frustrate German territorial ambitions in the region. Plans for a military occupation of the country would be jeopardized. Steps had to be taken to counter any Russian moves. Immediately, King Boris was summoned by Hitler to the Obersalzberg. The following conspicuously short note made public the meeting with the King: "During a private stay in Germany, King Boris visited the Führer."⁶³⁴

As much as King Boris admired the German Head of State, he was less than thrilled with Hitler's plan to station German troops in Bulgaria, especially if this should happen against the will of Russia. And public opinion in his homeland was decidedly more in favor of the Soviet Union than of the Third Reich. Siding with Germany in a war against Russia was completely out of the question. The King even harbored misgivings about his country's accession to the Tripartite Pact. Much to Hitler's displeasure, it was not until March 1941 that Bulgaria joined the pro-German pact and a German military occupation became permissible.⁶³⁵ For Hitler, the meeting of November 16, 1940 with the Bulgarian King proved another frustration. In a letter to the Duce two days later, Hitler expressed his disillusionment with the King, whom he had considered subservient to the National Socialist cause: "Bulgaria, which has always shown little enthusiasm for joining the Three-Power Pact, is now completely disinclined to even contemplate such a step."⁶³⁶

On the afternoon of November 18, Ciano called on Hitler during one of his increasingly frequent visits to Germany. Nearly every month, the Italian Foreign Minister traveled north once or twice.⁶³⁷

Hitler also received Serrano Suñer on this day.⁶³⁸ He had summoned the Spanish Foreign Minister to emphasize the necessity of taking Gibraltar soon. But this “insidious Jesuit,” as Hitler once titled him,⁶³⁹ was stalling for time and declared that Spain was not ready for such a military feat. Hitler would have to wait. After tea, Suñer took his leave. Hitler once more sent for Ciano, whom he chastised in case he was still unaware of the inopportune consequences of Mussolini’s Greek adventure for the Axis. Indeed, three weeks after the offensive began, the Italians were not in Greece, but the Greeks in Albania; and English troops had landed on Greek soil.

On November 19, Hitler hosted the Belgian King Leopold at his mountain residence.⁶⁴⁰ The meeting had come about by the personal intervention of the Italian Crown Princess.⁶⁴¹ Hitler, who had trouble refusing the requests of charming lady visitors, had finally consented to receive Leopold. For the King had proved to be a “reasonable” man by ordering resistance to the invading German troops to cease after two and a half weeks.

Hitler at first behaved as a most congenial host. He inquired whether the King had any personal wishes. Personal wishes were for Hitler perhaps requests for more money; a more beautiful castle; a radio such as he had generously granted Schuschnigg’s family for its stay in a concentration camp; or maybe a girlfriend, as Mussolini later demanded. However, all the Belgian King asked for was alleviation for his people and not for himself. He requested assurances of a broader independence for Belgium and the prompt release of its prisoners of war.

Well, this little King wanted to influence him in his political decisions and pose shameless questions. Coolly, he addressed the King with a list of the crimes Belgium had supposedly perpetrated, beginning with the alleged repeated violations of its neutrality in the conflict. As a consequence, Belgium would have to follow Germany’s lead politically and militarily in the future. Independence was out of the question. On the topic of the prisoners of war, Hitler could only say: “We need the manpower ourselves. Naturally, the officers will remain prisoners until the end of the war.” And as naturally, Belgium’s enlisted men would share the fate of their officers. His hopes thus frustrated, King Leopold made a last effort to gain something at least for the food

situation in Belgium or for its internal administration. Hitler declined all further requests. The conversation could have ended on this note, but Hitler deigned to employ his oratory at greater length. At tea, he sought to make up for the opportunity missed earlier and began to reiterate his ideas of a new order for Europe, on the role Belgium could play in such a Europe. Should the country follow Germany's lead, then the Third Reich would guarantee full military protection. [!] There would be hardly any need for the Belgians to maintain armed forces of their own. If Belgium acquiesced in complete German control, then it could expand in the North, as far as Calais and Dunkirk. The Balkans' potentates had always risen to the bait of territorial expansion.⁶⁴² But King Leopold did not, which led Hitler to remark with annoyance later: "He is no better than those other kings and princes."

All in all, Hitler's vacation at the Berghof in November 1940 was not a pleasant one: Boris had shown himself to be obstinate, Serrano Suñer twisted like an eel, and Leopold had not accepted his "generous" offer.

At this time, Hitler was not yet willing to blame the Jews for everything, as he would later in the war. Instead, there was Mussolini. The pitiful performance of the Duce's troops afforded Hitler ample opportunity to seek revenge for Mussolini's impertinent letter of January 3, in which the Italian had faulted him for his treatment of Poland and his increasingly close relations to Russia.⁶⁴³

On November 20, Hitler sat down at his desk to write Mussolini a letter, a virtual indictment of the Italian's venture into Greece. This ill-considered move lay at the root of the reversals the Axis had suffered in the weeks past, Hitler claimed. So grave was the Italian's miscalculation, that it had resulted in all the following:

1. The re-election of Roosevelt.
2. British troops gaining a foothold in Greece.
3. Bulgaria's refusal to join the Three-Power Pact.
4. The threat of British air strikes against Rumania's oilfields.
5. Russia's "increased interest in the Balkans."
6. The strengthening of general tendencies, evident with many states, "not to make any premature commitment in the Axis' favor in the conflict but to await further developments."⁶⁴⁴

Hitler lamented how much better the present situation would be if only Italy had listened to him. He declared that Germany would have lent its ally, in a selfless gesture, "a German parachute division and an additional air landing division." These could have secured Crete in "a lightning-like (*blitzartig*) occupation."

After this slap on the ear, Mussolini received from Hitler a list of political and military measures that he had to take. It touched, among other things, on the withdrawal of Italian fighter squadrons then stationed along the Channel coast. These had become a liability after the embarrassing beating the Luftwaffe had taken in the Battle of Britain. Further, Italy was to renounce its territorial ambitions in Yugoslavia. This later demand was connected with Hitler's intention to recruit this state for "positive cooperation" within the Tripartite Pact.

Moreover, the Italian was instructed to immediately give up plans to conquer the Nile delta, while he was further ordered to "gain a position near Mersa Matrûh."⁶⁴⁵ The eastern part of the Mediterranean was to become an exclusively German hunting ground for long range bombers. In this way, "the Mediterranean will in three or four months become the grave of the British fleet." Beyond these bombastic proclamations, Hitler was ready "with all fanaticism to help to overcome the crisis in the shortest time." Naturally, this was impossible before March. Hitler's letter to Mussolini closed on the following note:⁶⁴⁶

The Mediterranean question must be settled this winter, since German forces can also be employed most advantageously during that time, whereas, conversely, any employment of Italian forces in western or northern Europe at this time of the year appears impractical for climatic reasons alone.

In the spring, by the beginning of May at the latest, I should like, however, to get back my German forces, so that this alone indicates the suitable time for our action.

For this collaboration of our air forces in the Mediterranean I should like especially to detail a wing of Ju 88s, as well as the requisite reconnaissance planes, long-range fighters, etc.

I have not yet discussed this question in detail with the Reichsmarschall and would therefore let him make the final decision as to the forces which he considers necessary. There would then, Duce, be mainly two large air-operation areas in the Mediterranean region: the Italian, which would in general dominate the air in the Italian-Albanian-Greek, as well as the Egyptian, area, and a German operational area, which in view of our long-range bombers would include principally the eastern Mediterranean. If we commit our air force properly, the Mediterranean will in three or four months become the grave of the British fleet, and this is the decisive prerequisite for the military operations, which in my opinion cannot set in before the beginning of March, so far as Greece herself is concerned. But I consider this period necessary also because it would not be possible for me before then to concentrate such forces in Rumania as would in all circumstances assure a clear success. The concentration of sufficient Italian forces in Albania also requires at least three months. Only then can a speedy success be expected.

November 20, 1940

The question of Egypt may for the time being be left entirely open, for after mature consideration I have come to the conclusion that an attack on the Nile delta before next autumn is quite impossible. It seems to me that the most important thing now is to gain a position near Mersa Matrúh, or thereabouts, from which the British fleet in Alexandria may be attacked by dive bombers with fighter escort.

But also from the psychological point of view, these are the measures which are likely to relieve pressure and again create a positive attitude toward the Axis.

These, Duce, are the thoughts I wish to convey to you from the passionate heart of a friend, who is willing with all fanaticism to help to overcome this crisis in the shortest time, and from an apparent failure all the more force a final defeat of the enemy.

With the most cordial greetings in faithful comradeship,
Yours,

Adolf Hitler

Mussolini grasped the unpleasant realities disguised in Hitler's wordy exposition immediately. His headmaster had dealt with him severely, as he confided to Ciano: "He really smacked my fingers."⁶⁴⁷ In spite of his rancor, Mussolini had no choice but to do the Führer's bidding.

Later on November 20, Hitler journeyed to Vienna, where he stayed at the Imperial Hotel as was his custom. The reason for his visit was the addition of Hungary to the Tripartite Pact. Though Hitler was not a great friend of the Hungarians, he now had use, personal feelings aside, for any country willing to ally itself with Germany. Spain, France, Russia, and Belgium had scorned the Third Reich. Hitler was now forced to turn to what he had once derided as that "rubbish" left over from the First World War, those "rotten state corpses" of the Balkans.⁶⁴⁸

With mixed feelings, the Hungarian Minister-President, Count Teleki,⁶⁴⁹ and his Foreign Minister, Count Csáky, assented to Hungary's joining the Tripartite Pact. Obviously, a German military occupation of the country and the drawing of Hungary into a war against the Soviet Union would remain the only tangible outcomes of such an agreement.

German propaganda celebrated Hungary's accession to the Pact as a "world-historic" event. Festivities took place in the Belvedere Castle of Prince Eugene.⁶⁵⁰ Hungary was the first in a series of small Balkan states to join Germany, Italy, and Japan. The press in Germany praised each new member, and disproportionately evaluated its contribution to the alliance.

Hitler himself did not take part in the signing by Hungary. Nevertheless, he appeared at the banquet in honor of the event held

in the rooms of the Belvedere Castle. He thought it necessary to stage an even more sentimental scene for the benefit of Ciano. Perhaps the Führer had dealt too harshly with Mussolini in his letter. Surely the subservient Foreign Minister would impress upon Mussolini how true a friend Hitler was. Speaking to Ciano at the dinner, the Führer exclaimed ecstatically:⁶⁵¹

From this city of Vienna, on the day of the Anschluss, I sent Mussolini a telegram⁶⁵² to assure him that I would never forget his help. I confirm this today, and I am at his side with all my strength.

With these words, Hitler almost began to weep. Ciano later recalled, not without astonishment, that he observed “two big tears in his eyes.”

The problem of Yugoslavia already preoccupied Hitler on this day. In speaking to Ciano, he divulged how he sought to use Prince Regent Paul and his “ambitious wife” to bind Yugoslavia to Germany. Perhaps it would be possible to advance the cause of Paul’s ascension to the throne!

Naturally, on November 20, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Horthy:⁶⁵³

I ask Your Highness accept, at this hour in which Hungary has lent renewed expression to its bonding to Germany, Italy, and Japan, through its accession to the Three-Power Pact, my heartfelt best wishes for the personal welfare of Your Highness and a prosperous future for Hungary.

Adolf Hitler

November 22 was a “Rumanian day” in Berlin. At noon, Hitler hosted the new Rumanian Envoy, Constantine Grecianu, at the Reich Chancellery. There Grecianu presented Hitler with his credentials. Later, Hitler also received the Rumanian Envoy on Special Mission Valer Pop.⁶⁵⁴ The day climaxed in a reception for Antonescu in the afternoon.⁶⁵⁵ The Rumanian Head of Government, who of late had taken to styling himself “Conducator,” came to the meeting well-warned not to utter resentment about the Second Viennese Sentence.⁶⁵⁶ Defying these instructions, Antonescu spoke for two hours on the shortcomings of this award. In his lengthy monologue, he gave a detailed overview of Rumanian history, and persistently grumbled about the Hungarians he so loathed. Hitler was “impressed” by Antonescu’s forwardness, as he later put it. This was all the more the case as he liked the Hungarians least of all Balkan nations. In this regard, Hitler’s preferences resembled those of Marshal Foch.⁶⁵⁷

Although Hitler had hailed Hungary's accession to the Tripartite Pact two days earlier, he nevertheless revealed to Antonescu that the last word had not been spoken on the issue of the Second Viennese Sentence. His words implied Rumania could well confidently anticipate a revision of the Transylvanian settlement. At the same time, however, Hitler also pointed to the possibility of a German move against the Soviet Union in the near future. The Third Reich counted on Rumania's support in such an event.

Antonescu eagerly agreed, tempted no doubt by a potential reconquest of Bessarabia. In this instance, Rumania rose to the bait of territorial acquisition just as Finland had earlier.

On November 23, with much pomp and circumstance, Rumania was initiated into the community of states united under the auspices of the Tripartite Pact. The state ceremony was held in the Ambassadors' Hall of the new Reich Chancellery on this occasion. After the official act, Hitler received Antonescu once again.⁶⁵⁸ Naturally Hitler exchanged telegrams with the official Rumanian Head of State, King Michael, on the occasion:⁶⁵⁹

On the occasion of Rumania's accession to the Three-Power Pact, I relay to Your Majesty my best wishes for Your Majesty's personal welfare and a prosperous future for Rumania.

Adolf Hitler

On November 24, the Slovak Minister-President, Tuka, appeared in Berlin to follow in Tiso's footsteps. The same pomp accompanied Slovakia's initiation as that of Rumania. Slovakia followed Hungary and Rumania and bowed to Hitler's will in joining the coalition created by the Tripartite Pact. The Slovak State President, Tiso, promptly received the following correspondence:⁶⁶⁰

I relay to Your Excellency, on the occasion of Slovakia's accession to the Three-Power Pact, my heartfelt wishes for the personal welfare of Your Excellency and a prosperous future for the friendly Slovak nation.

Adolf Hitler

Bulgaria and Yugoslavia did not yet follow the other Balkan states, which now stood united within the Tripartite Pact. Several months would pass before Hitler attained his goal of hegemony in this region.

On November 25, he received the Italian Minister of Justice and President of the Cabinet, Dino Grandi, at the Reich Chancellery.⁶⁶¹

Two days later, Hitler spent time in Munich. Taking advantage of his presence in the Bavarian capital, he called on the Reich Treasurer,

Schwarz, at the latter's apartment. There he congratulated him in person on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁶⁶²

On November 30, an announcement made public that a newly assembled flotilla of destroyers had been christened *Narvik* on the Führer's order.⁶⁶³

December 3 marked the sixtieth birthday of Field Marshal von Bock. Hitler visited the Field Marshal at his flat to congratulate him on the occasion.⁶⁶⁴ On the following day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco, who was celebrating his birthday.⁶⁶⁵ At the same time, the wire below, addressed to the concert singer Heinrich Knote, was made public in the German media:⁶⁶⁶

On your seventieth birthday, Herr Kammersänger, I express to you, in grateful remembrance of your great artistic work, especially in Munich, my heartfelt congratulations.

On December 5, Sven Hedin, who was then on a lecture tour in Germany, called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery.⁶⁶⁷ This time the Swedish explorer was far more content with the course of his conversation with the German Head of State than he had been on his two earlier visits.⁶⁶⁸ Then, Hitler had lamented the ill-considered steps of the "poor Finns" and had mercilessly abandoned them to their fate in the Winter War against Russia. Now that he himself entertained aggressive designs against the Soviet Union, Hitler all of a sudden felt great compassion for the Finnish people.

In spite of improved relations with Finland, Hitler failed to draw Spain closer to Germany. On December 7, Franco spoke the final word on the issue of a potential Spanish involvement in a move on Gibraltar. He summarily declined the tantalizing German offer. And this in spite of the fact that Hitler had sent Admiral Canaris on a special mission to Madrid to proffer the assistance of German troops. These were to have marched into Spain on January 10 to stabilize the situation while Franco's soldiers set out to conquer Gibraltar on that day. While Franco had previously stalled, his rejection of the German proposal was unequivocal. He stated that his confidence in the operation was not complete. Franco feared it might lead to an occupation of islands in the Atlantic by either Britain or America.⁶⁶⁹ Hitler had no recourse other than to cancel "Operation Felix."⁶⁷⁰ Again he was forced to acknowledge defeat.

It was still December 7 when the *Völkischer Beobachter* published the following decree penned by Hitler:⁶⁷¹

December 7, 1940

I decree that the Gau Saarpfalz of the NSDAP carry the name "Gau Westmark of the NSDAP" as of this day.

Berlin, December 7, 1940

Adolf Hitler

This merely served to cloak the incorporation of Lorraine into the former Saarpfalz. Hitler had proceeded in a similar manner two months earlier when he had renamed the Gau Koblenz-Trier the "Moselland" after the incorporation of Luxembourg.⁶⁷²

Franco's opposition notwithstanding, Hitler still held one trump card in his dealings with Spain: the threat of a military occupation of the previously unoccupied section of southern France. He had long toyed with the thought which Directive No. 19 was to deal with in greater detail. The martial code name "Operation Attila" had obviously been chosen in remembrance of the King of the Huns, called the "scourge of God," and his campaign into the land of the Gauls in the year 451. The directive of December 10 provided for the following:⁶⁷³

1. In the event that a secession movement should get under way in the portions of the French colonial empire now dominated by General Weygand,⁶⁷⁴ preparations are to be made for the speedy occupation of the still unoccupied area of metropolitan France (Operation Attila). At the same time it will then be necessary to secure the French home fleet and the portions of the French Air Force that are in home airports, or at least to prevent their defection to the enemy's side.

The preparations are to be camouflaged in order to avoid alarming the French, both in the military and political interest.

2. The entry should, in the given case, take place so that:

a) Strong motorized groups, whose adequate aerial protection is to be assured, push through along the line of the Garonne or the Rhone as speedily as possible to the Mediterranean, take possession as soon as possible of the seaports (above all, the important naval port of Toulon), and seal France off from the sea;

b) The units stationed at the demarcation line move in along the entire front.

The time between the order for execution of the operation and the entry of the troops must be as short as possible. For this reason individual units may even now be brought up closer, but without the purpose of their employment becoming apparent.

It is unlikely that the French armed forces will put up a firm resistance to the invasion. Should resistance be offered locally, it is to be ruthlessly crushed. For this purpose, as well as for use against possible trouble spots, bomber formations (chiefly dive bombers) of the Luftwaffe are to be provided.

3. In the case of every unit of the fleet, the berth, condition, opportunity for seizure, etc., will in the future have to be watched in order to prepare

measures against the French fleet's sailing out and going over to the enemy. The Commander in Chief of the Navy will, in conjunction with the Foreign Intelligence Department [Awls./Abw.], issue appropriate orders, availing himself in this connection of the opportunities offered through the Armistice Commission.

The Commanders in Chief of the Navy and of the Luftwaffe are to examine how, in cooperation with the invading portions of the Army, they can best lay their hands on the French fleet. There enter into consideration particularly:

Blockades of the mouths of the harbors (above all, Toulon);

Airborne operations;

Acts of sabotage;

U-boat and air attacks on the escaping ships.

The Commander in Chief of the Navy is to give an opinion on whether and to what extent the parts of the French fleet are to be withdrawn in return for a liberalization of the terms of the Armistice Treaty.

I reserve a decision concerning the manner of the implementation. Offensive action will be ordered only if the French armed forces offer resistance or parts of the fleet move out in spite of German counterorders.

4. Seizure of the French airports and of the units of the Air Force which are there is to be settled directly between the Luftwaffe and the Army. Other possibilities (for example, airborne landings) are to be exploited.

5. The Commanders in Chief will report to me—in the case of the Army this has already been done—concerning their intentions for Operation Attila (in writing through the High Command of the Wehrmacht). At the same time, the length of time required between the giving of the order and the measures themselves is to be indicated.

6. The preparations for Operation Attila require the utmost secrecy.

The Italians may not receive information of any kind concerning the preparations and intentions.

Adolf Hitler

Frustrated by the setbacks recently suffered and by the blows they had dealt his ego, Hitler rose to vent his spleen in a speech before faithful listeners. He could no longer bear the ill-concealed skepticism of his old Party comrades, the intellectuals' glances full of contempt, and the doubts so evident on the faces of the generals. He sought to dispel these misgivings once more by his powerful oratory. And the most receptive audience for this type of rhetoric remained the German workers, who always had been easily impressed by nationalist slogans and prophecies of Germany's future greatness.

Portraying himself as an unappreciated "have-not," he sought to curry their favor. This afforded him the opportunity to scold, to his heart's content, intellectuals, lawyers, impertinent capitalists, and antisocial reactionaries, who so often had frustrated his ambitions. Time and time again he had to waste his time dealing with these

cliques, now agitating against him abroad, in the form of the English—just as the equally arrogant German Nationalists once had sought to incite the public against him before falling on their knees.

In this spirit, Hitler addressed the workers of a Berlin armament plant at noon on December 10. All German radio stations carried the address. Laborers at all military industrial plants had been ordered to cease working and to assemble to listen “collectively” to the Führer’s words. Hitler began his speech on the following note:⁶⁷⁵

My German Volksgenossen! My German Workers!

It is not often that I speak now because [for one thing] I have little time for speaking and, for another, because I believe that it is more important to act than to speak at the moment.

Why did Hitler speak then?! He did it only for himself, as there was actually no event which could have justified the tirade, lasting for hours, upon which he now embarked.

We find ourselves in the midst of a confrontation in which there is more at stake than simply the victory of this or that country. It is the struggle of two worlds against one another. I will attempt—time permitting [!]—to afford you insight into the underlying causes of this confrontation. I will limit my reflection to the Western European arena.

The peoples concerned are first and foremost eighty-five million Germans, forty-six million Englishmen, forty-five million Italians, and about thirty-seven million Frenchmen—form the core of those states which waged war against one another or are still doing so today. When I compare the foundations for life of these peoples, then the following facts become clear: forty-six million Englishmen rule and govern a total complex of approximately forty million square kilometers on this earth. Thirty-seven million Frenchmen rule and govern a complex of approximately ten million square kilometers. Forty-five million Italians have an area, insofar as this consists of usable land, of barely half a million square kilometers at their disposal. Eighty-five million Germans possess, as a foundation for life, barely 600,000 square kilometers—and this only due to our intervention—on which they must fashion their lives, and forty-six million Englishmen have forty million square kilometers!

Well, my Volksgenossen, neither Providence nor the Good Lord has undertaken this division of the earth. Man himself has undertaken this division, and this essentially within the past 300 years, that is, in a period during which our German Volk, regrettably, was impotent internally and stood divided. After the Thirty Years’ War was concluded with the Treaty of Münster,⁶⁷⁶ our Volk was finally subdivided into hundreds of small states which used up all their strength in struggles against one another. Princes and principalities, kings and clerical dignitaries, upheld the divisiveness within our Volk. And finally when it appeared as though this purely dynastic dissolution of our *Volkskörper* could find an end, then the parties came, then

came the *Weltanschauungen*, to carry on, for their part, what had once been started. In this period the most hardworking people of Western Europe used up its strength exclusively internally, while the outside world was being carved up.

After these preliminary statements, full of figures which Hitler had calculated to impress his audience, he embarked on an extensive "party narrative." In a winding and interminable account, he described his trials and tribulations in the struggle against social injustice, against the Treaty of Versailles, against unemployment, against the gold standard, against the resistance of those people who had not wanted to acknowledge him, and so on. The quintessence of his tirade was this: today he had to fight against the same forces, for the English were the same as his domestic enemies. These are some of the stylistic gems in this first part of the speech:

Throughout my life I have been a have-not. At home I was a have-not, I count myself among the have-nots, and I have always fought for them. For them I stood up, and I stand up to the world as a representative of the have-nots! [—]

It is understandable when an Englishman says: "We do not want our world to perish in any way at all." And rightly so. They know all too well: we are no threat to their empire. But they also say to themselves, and rightly so: "If these ideas which are popular in Germany are not eliminated and eradicated, they will come to our people, and this is most dangerous. This we do not want." And if it did come this way it would do no harm. But they are as narrow-minded as others used to be here with us once. [—]

These English capitalists have the opportunity, to give just one example, to make dividends of seventy-six, eighty, ninety-five, 140, 160 percent. Yes naturally, they say: "If these German methods gain currency or are victorious, this will end." And this is completely correct. This I would not tolerate. I think that six percent suffices, but we must take half of this six percent away again, and from the rest we must have documented proof that it was reinvested in the interest of the Volksgemeinschaft. [—]

I do not believe that one can maintain a situation in which a man toils and works a whole year, only to get a ludicrous salary, and another just sits down in a leather seat and gets enormous sums for it. This is a condition unworthy of man. [—]

After all, there are two worlds which confront each other. And they are right when they say: "We can never reconcile ourselves to the National Socialist world." For how could a narrow-minded capitalist possibly declare his agreement with my principles? It would be easier for the devil to go to church and take holy water. [—]

This is the first state in our German history which, as a matter of principle, eliminated all social prejudice in the assignment of social positions, and this not only in civilian life. I myself am the best proof of that. I am not even an

advocate; just think of what this means! And still I am your Führer! [—] What was it that I asked of the outside world? Nothing but the right of Germans to unite, and second, that what was taken away from them be restored. I asked for nothing which might have implied a loss for another people.

How often have I offered my hand to them? Immediately after my rise to power. For what does armament mean? It gobbles up so much manpower. And especially I who regard work as the decisive factor, I had wished to employ German manpower for other plans.

And, my Volksgenossen, I believe it became common knowledge that I have plans of some substance, beautiful and great plans for my Volk. I have the ambition to make the German Volk rich, the German lands beautiful. I wish the standard of living of the individual to increase. I wish us to develop the most beautiful and best culture. I wish theater to be an enjoyment affordable for the entire Volk and not only for the upper ten-thousand as in England. Beyond this, I wish the entirety of German culture to benefit the Volk. These were enormous plans which we possessed, and for their realization I needed manpower. Armament just takes men away. I made proposals to restrict armament. But all they did was laugh at me. [—]

For it was quite clear: what was I before the World War? An unknown, nameless man. What was I during the War? A small, common soldier. I bore no responsibility for the World War. But who are the folk who lead England once again today? The very same people who were already agitating before the World War. It is the same Churchill, who was already the vilest warmonger in the World War, and the late Chamberlain who agitated just as much then. And the whole audience (*Korona*) that belongs there, and naturally that people which always believes that with the trumpets of Jericho it can destroy the peoples: these are the old specters which have arisen once more!

Before reaching the main part of his exposition, Hitler revealed the actual objective of this speech: he wished to pull himself up again, to regain his own faith by focusing on Germany's "little proles," the only ones among the Germans who had not yet begun to doubt their Führer. Hitler declared:

Back then I derived my entire faith in the German Volk and its future from my knowledge of the German soldier, of the small musketeer. In my eyes, he was a great hero. Naturally, other sections of the Volk did their best also. But still there was a difference. For him who lived at a wealthy home and lived in luxury, for him Germany looked quite beautiful back then. He could take part in everything: culture, the easy life, and so on. He could enjoy German art and so many things more. He could travel through the German lands, tour German cities, and so on. Everything was beautiful to him. That he stood up for it was understandable. But on the other side stood the small musketeer. This little prole, who barely had enough to eat, who slaved away simply to exist, and who, in spite of all of this, fought like a hero out there for four years: on him I stacked my hopes, on him I pulled myself up again. And when all the others in Germany despaired, I looked to this small man and regained my

faith in Germany. I knew: naturally, Germany would not perish, not as long as it has such men.

These words were the main argument in Hitler's speech. If he had the "little proles" on his side, what could the English have on him?

But I also had to experience how these fighters, these soldiers, found themselves at a disadvantage time and time again because the others could simply overwhelm them in terms of material. I was never of the conviction then, even one single time, that the English were superior to us personally. Only a madman can claim I had an inferiority complex about the English. They must be out of their minds! I have never ever had an inferiority complex!

But no matter how loudly Hitler shouted and protested that he had no inferiority complex about the English, he had it all the same. And it was not the last time that he spoke on this theme.⁶⁷⁷

Later on December 10, Hitler summoned all his powers to dispel the public's misgivings and, most important, to intimidate the British. He now used threats rather than entreaties. At one point, he claimed, "a place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!" He also said, "no power on earth can drive us from these conquered territories against our will." Hitler declared:

And now it has come to war. I have done everything within my power here, too, everything a man could possibly do, almost to the point of self-abasement, to avoid it. I made offer upon offer to the English. I consulted with their diplomats here and pleaded with them to be reasonable. But nothing could be done. They wanted war, and they made no effort to disguise it. For seven years, Churchill has been declaring: "I want war." Now he has it!

I regret that these peoples must fight each other, whom I wanted so much to bring together. In my eyes, they could only have wrought good by working with each other. But if these gentlemen have the goal of eliminating the National Socialist State, of dissolving the German Volk, and once more tearing it asunder into its particles, and so on, as their war aims stated and meant, then they shall have a surprise this time. And I believe they are already getting a surprise.⁶⁷⁸

Among you, my Volksgenossen, there are many old soldiers of the World War. And they know well what time and distance mean. Many of you were in the East back then. All those names which you were able to read in the year 1939 were known to you from back then. Perhaps many of you marched in bad weather, or beneath a scorching sun, back then. The roads were endless. And how hard was all this fought for back then. How much it cost in blood to advance kilometer by kilometer! And this time, my Volksgenossen, we took the distance at a run! Eighteen days⁶⁷⁹ and the state, which wanted to hack us to pieces in front of Berlin, was conquered!

And then came the British attack [!] on Norway. Still I had to hear from those Englishmen, who know it all, that we slept through the winter. A great

statesman even assured me that I had missed the bus.⁶⁸⁰ Still we made it just in time to get aboard before the English could.

At any rate, we woke up all of a sudden. And within a few days we secured our position all the way to Kirkenes, and I need not tell you: a place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!

Then they decided to proceed more cleverly and more swiftly in the West, in the Netherlands and Belgium, and this led to the launch of that offensive which many looked on apprehensively, especially among our older men.

I know quite well what many thought back then. They had lived through the World War in the West, its battles in Flanders, in the Artois and for Verdun. And all lived with the thought: today we have a Maginot Line here. How are we to surmount this? How much will it cost, above all, in blood, in sacrifice, and how slowly will it go? And in six weeks this campaign was also brought to an end!

Belgium, the Netherlands, and France were thrown down, the Channel Coast occupied, and our batteries there built up, our bases established, and here also I can say: no power on earth can drive us from these conquered territories against our will!

And now, my Volksgenossen: these sacrifices are hard for the individual; for the wife who lost her husband and with him the dearest thing she possesses; and it is the same for the child who has lost the father. And the mother who sacrificed her child, or the bride or the lover who had to let her own go, never to see him again; all of them have made great sacrifices. But when we add all of these losses up, and compare them to the sacrifices of the World War, as difficult as they may be for the individual—how incomparably low are they!⁶⁸¹

Just think: we did not suffer nearly as many dead as did Germany in the fight against France in 1870–71. And through these sacrifices we have burst the ring around Germany. The number of wounded is likewise an immensely modest one, only a fraction of what was to be expected. And now, my German Armament Workers, we owe this to our magnificent Wehrmacht, suffused by a new spirit in which the spirit of our Volksgemeinschaft has been taken up. Now it knows what it is actually fighting for. And for this we thank our soldiers who have made vast achievements. And the German soldier in turn thanks you, my Armament Workers, for the weapons you have given him! For he has stood up this time, for the first time, not with a feeling of being outnumbered or having the inferior weapon. In all realms, our weapons were the better ones!

This is your achievement! It is the result of your craftsmanship, your diligence, your expertise, and your dedication! And when millions of German families still have their provider today, and will have him in the future, when countless fathers, countless mothers, have their sons, then they owe this to you, my Armament Workers! You have given them the weapons with which they were able to secure such a victory. Weapons which allow them to be so self-confident that every soldier knows: we are not only the best soldiers in the world, we also have the best weapons in the world, and this not only today, but all the more so in the future!

And this is the difference from the World War. But not only this, but above all: the German soldier has his ammunition this time. I do not know, my Volksgenossen, but should someone undertake to balance the accounts after the war, he may well say to me: "Sir, you wasted money. You had ammunition produced which was not used! Everything is still lying around." Yes, my Volksgenossen, I had ammunition made because I experienced this in the World War myself, and because I wished to avoid what then came to pass. And because I said: "Grenades can be replaced, bombs can be replaced, but men never!"⁶⁸²

And thus in this fight the problem with ammunition was not generally a problem, except perhaps when it came to replacement. And when the fight was over, we had in no location even as much as used up a month's supply of our production. Today we are well prepared for any event. England can do as it pleases. With every week, it will be dealt yet more deafening blows, and should it seek to gain a foothold on the Continent, then it will have to make our acquaintance again.

These latter statements came as quite a surprise to the reflective public. As recently as September 4, 1940, Hitler had confidently spoken of his imminent personal arrival on the British Isles.⁶⁸³ Now he had to consider himself fortunate if the British did not undertake landings on the Continent: ". . . and should it [England] seek to gain a foothold on the Continent, then it will have to make our acquaintance again." This was a pitiful declaration. Within the past three months the situation had undergone such drastic change that Hitler could no longer conceal his weakness, not even in a speech.

And I know: we have not forgotten anything! I hope the English have not forgotten anything either.

And the battle in the air: I did not want it, we took it up, we waged it to the end! I did not want it. I always fought against it. During the entire campaign in Poland we did not resort to it. I had no night attacks flown. In London they said: "Yes, because they cannot fly by night."

Well, whether or not we can fly by night, they have probably determined in the meantime. But at night you cannot aim properly. And I wanted to attack objects of military significance only. I wanted to attack at the front, fight only against soldiers, not against women and children. That is why we did not do it. We did not even do it in France. We did not fly any night attacks.

When we attacked Paris, we selected only armament industry sites for the attack. Our pilots aim wonderfully well. Anyone who saw it can attest to this.

Then this great strategist Churchill had the brilliant idea to launch unrestricted warfare in the air. He began with Freiburg-im-Breisgau.⁶⁸⁴ He has kept it up. Not a single armament factory was shattered, but, according to English news, all this here is just a moon landscape.

And not a single armament factory did they put out of commission. However, they did manage to hit many an unfortunate family: women and

children. One of their favorite objectives was hospitals. Why? There seems to be no explanation. You yourselves know it here in Berlin, how often they dropped bombs on our hospitals.

Well! I waited for one month in the conviction that, after the campaign in France, the English would abandon this method of warfare. It was in vain. I waited a second, a third month. Well, now, if there are bombs being thrown around anyway, then I can naturally not answer to the German Volk for my own Volksgenossen perishing while I spare others. Rather, war has to be waged. And it is now being waged, with the determination, the material, the means, and the valor at our disposal. When the hour of the final conflict comes, then this conflict too will come. But one thing I would like to say to the gentlemen: we will determine the hour!¹⁶⁸⁵

And I will be careful. We could well have attacked in the West in the autumn of last year. But I wanted to wait for better weather. And I believe it was well worth it. We are so convinced of the success of our weapons that we can permit ourselves to act like this. The German Volk will unconditionally come through. I believe it will be grateful to me for preferring to wait on occasion, and thereby sparing it many a sacrifice. And this too belongs to the essence of the National Socialist Volk State, that even in war, where it is not absolutely necessary, it saves men and spares them—they are our Volksgenossen, after all.

And thus, already in the Polish campaign, we refrained from launching many an attack, advancing too speedily, because we were convinced that eight or fourteen days later the problem would have solved itself.

We have often scored great successes without having to sacrifice a single man.

And this was so in the West also. And thus it shall remain in the future as well. We do not aim to score successes for the sake of prestige, nor do we launch attacks for the sake of prestige, but rather we wish to be guided solely by somber, military reflections. What must be done, must be done. The rest we wish to avoid. And beyond this, we all cherish the hope that the hour will come someday when reason shall again reign supreme and peace return.¹⁶⁸⁶

And the world should realize one thing: there will not be a defeat of Germany, either militarily, or in terms of time or economy! Whatever will come to pass, Germany will emerge victorious from this battle!

I am not a man to abandon a fight once begun to his own detriment. I have proved this in my life, and I will prove to the gentlemen, who know of my life up to now only through the emigrants' press, that I am still the same in this respect!

At the time I entered political life, I explained to my followers—and it was a tiny assembly of soldiers and workers—that in our dictionary and in mine, one word does not exist and this word is: capitulation!¹⁶⁸⁷ I do not desire to wage war, but if it is forced on me, then I will wage it to my last breath. And I can wage it today because I know the entire German Volk stands behind me.

Today I am the preserver of its coming life, and I act accordingly. I could have led a far more comfortable life. I have been fighting for twenty years.

And I have taken upon myself all these cares and the never-ending work in the realization that this must be done for our German Volk. My own life and my health are of no importance here. I know, above all, that the German Wehrmacht stands behind me in this spirit today, man for man, officer for officer. All these fools who thought there could be rifts among us⁶⁸⁸ have forgotten that the Third Reich is no longer the Second. And united the German Volk stands behind me today.

Here I would like to thank, above all, the German worker and the German peasant. These two have made it feasible for me to prepare for this battle, and in terms of armament have created the prerequisites for holding firm. And these two groups have made it possible for me to wage this war for as long as it may last.

I thank the German woman here especially, all those countless women, who in part had to do the hard work of men, and who have immersed themselves in their new profession with love and zeal, and, in so many places, have come to replace the men. I thank all those, above all, who make sacrifices of a personal kind, who bear up under all the restrictions which are necessary. I thank them in the name of all those who today represent the German Volk and who will be the German Volk in the future.

For this struggle is not one for the present, but first and foremost one for the future! I announced it on September 3 [1], 1939 that time will not conquer us, that no economic difficulties will wear us down, and that still less can weapons conquer us. That is impossible! This realization is guaranteed by the attitude of the German Volk.

And this realization will bear rich fruits for the German Volk in the future, too. Once we have won this war, then it was not won by a few industrialists or millionaires, or a few capitalists, or a few aristocrats, or—I know not what—bourgeois or something like that.

My Workers: you must see in me your guarantor. I have emerged from the Volk. For this German Volk I have fought throughout my life. Once this most difficult struggle of my life has come to an end, it can finally find its conclusion only in renewed work for the German Volk!

We all have great plans, now already, great plans which aim at one thing only: to erect the German Volksstaat all the more and to fashion it all the more; to lead the German Volk further into the great history of our life. And to afford it all those things which make life worth living.

We have now determined to tear down all the constraints which hinder the individual in striving for the fulfillment of his potential, to take the place rightfully his. We have the firm will to erect a social state which must serve, and will serve, as an example for all walks of life.

Therein we conceive our final victory! For we have seen what it leads to with the others. Twenty years ago they secured an apparent victory. And what has come of this victory? Nothing but misery and despair. Unemployment has come of it. They fought their war only for the damned plutocracy, for a few financier dynasties which administer their capital markets, for a few hundred who in the end control these peoples. That should serve as a lesson for all of us!

When this war is over, then Germany will begin a great undertaking: a cry of "Arise" shall echo through the German lands. Then the German Volk will abandon the production of cannons and will begin the labors of peace and a new reconstruction work for the mass of millions! Then we shall show the world all the more clearly what is the master and who is the master: capital or labor! And then from this labor will arise the great German Reich of which a great German poet once dreamt.⁶⁸⁹ It will be a Germany to which every son clings in zealous love because it will be home to even the most wretched. It will open life up to him.

When somebody says to me: "That is a utopia, a hope!"—my Volksgenossen, when I set out on my path in the year 1919, as an unknown, nameless soldier, then I too had to construct for myself a utopia with the greatest of hope. It was realized!

What I am planning and regard as my goal today pales in comparison to what lies behind us in terms of achievement and success. And it will be achieved more quickly and more surely than what has been achieved up to now. The path from the nameless, unknown man to the Führer of the German nation was more difficult than the way from the Führer of the German nation to the designer of a later peace will be!⁶⁹⁰

Once I had to fight and struggle for your confidence for a decade and a half. Today I can fight and struggle for Germany thanks to this confidence.

And one day there will come a time when all of us will join the fight for this Reich with confidence, for this Reich of peace, of work, of welfare, of culture, which we want to erect and which we will erect.

I thank you.

On that same December 10, Lieutenant General Bodenschatz celebrated his fiftieth birthday. Hitler awarded Göring's liaison officer the Golden Party Badge on the occasion.⁶⁹¹

The next day in the Reich Chancellery's Great Hall, Hitler received Todt, the Reich Minister for Armament and Ammunition, and his "co-workers in the economy and Party."⁶⁹² Todt reported on the progress made by his ministry. Then Hitler spoke briefly to thank the armament industrialists, leaders of the economy, and other prominent persons assembled, for their services. He paid tribute in particular to the "talents of inventors, technicians, and chemists." He declared: "German armament has rendered justice to all the tasks placed before it to the highest possible degree." Compared to the praise Hitler had showered on armament workers the day before, his laudation of their superiors was meager indeed. Later on the same day, acting on Hitler's instructions, Todt presented the general directors Borbet, Kessler, and Wirtz with the War Service Medal First Class.⁶⁹³

On December 12, von Rundstedt received the following telegram congratulating him on his sixty-fifth birthday:⁶⁹⁴

December 12, 1940

Accept my sincere and heartfelt congratulations, Herr Feldmarschall, on your birthday today. In wishing you well as you set forth on the path towards your future life, I recall with gratitude the services you rendered the German Army and nation.

Adolf Hitler

On December 13, Hitler focused exclusively on military matters once more. He issued "Directive No. 20 for the Conduct of the War." This heralded the launch of "Operation Marita," the planned military occupation of Bulgaria and the conquest of the Greek mainland. The directive detailed:⁶⁹⁵

1. The outcome of the fighting in Albania cannot yet be foreseen. In view of the threatening situation in Albania, it is doubly important that English attempts to create, under the protection of a Balkan front, an air base which is dangerous chiefly for Italy, but also for the Rumanian oil region, should be frustrated.

2. My intention is, therefore:

a) In the next few months to organize in southern Rumania a force which will gradually be increased;

b) after favorable weather conditions set in—probably in March—to employ this force via Bulgaria for the taking of the northern coast of the Aegean and—should this be necessary—the entire Greek mainland (Operation Marita).

Support from Bulgaria can be counted on.

3. For the assembling of the forces in Rumania:

a) The 16th Armored Division, arriving in December, is assigned to the Army mission, whose duties remain unchanged.

b) Next a force of about 7 divisions (1. concentration echelon) is to be brought to southern Rumania.

Engineer forces for the preparation of the Danube crossing may, to the extent necessary, be incorporated in the transportation of the 16th Armored Division (as an "instruction unit"). Concerning their employment at the Danube, the Commander in Chief of the Army will request my decision at the proper time.

c) Preparations are to be made for the transportation of additional troops up to the maximum allowed (total 24 divisions).

d) For the Luftwaffe, it is a matter of assuring the aerial protection of the assembly, as well as preparing the necessary command post and supply installations on Rumanian soil.

4. Operation Marita itself is to be prepared on the following basis:

a) The first goal of the operation is the seizure of the Aegean coast and the Salonika basin. Continuation of the attack via Larissa and the Isthmus of Corinth may be necessary.

b) Flank protection against Turkey will be assigned to the Bulgarian Army, but it is, in addition, to be strengthened and secured by the placing in readiness of German units.

c) Whether or not Bulgarian units will in addition participate in the attack is uncertain. Likewise the Yugoslav attitude cannot yet be clearly anticipated.

d) It will be the task of the Luftwaffe to give effective support to the advance of the Army in all sectors; to eliminate the enemy's air force and—so far as possible—to take possession of English bases on Greek islands through airborne operations.

e) The question as to how Operation Marita is to be supported by the Italian Armed Forces and how the coordination of the operations is to be effected, remains reserved for later decision.

5. The particularly great political consequences in the Balkans of the military preparations require meticulous direction in the execution of all measures of the High Commands taken in this connection.

The bringing up of transports through Hungary and their arrival in Rumania are to be announced step by step by the High Command of the Wehrmacht and are to be explained for the time being on the grounds that they are necessary for the strengthening of the Wehrmacht mission in Rumania.

Conversations with Rumanians or Bulgarians which hint at our intentions, as well as the informing of the Italians, are subject in the individual case to my approval; so, also, is the sending of reconnaissance units and advance detachments.

6. After Operation Marita is carried out, it is the intention to withdraw the mass of the units employed in it, for further use.⁶⁹⁶

7. I look forward to receiving reports of the Commanders in Chief concerning their intentions—in the case of the Army, this has already been done. Accurate schedules of the projected preparations are to be submitted to me; also of the necessary redrafting of munitions workers (reconstitution of furloughed divisions).

Adolf Hitler

By December 16, Hitler had already busily turned his attention to yet another operation, dubbed "Case Barbarossa."⁶⁹⁷ This was the code name for Directive No. 21, the attack on the Soviet Union. It was true that he had envisioned an assault under different circumstances originally. In his mind, he had conceived of himself, under the cover of England, as taking as many pieces of the pie as he liked. The vast expanses of Russia would surely satisfy his appetite for additional Lebensraum. Circumstances now forced him to proceed on a different premise.

Russia's subjugation had in the meanwhile become a prerequisite, so Hitler thought, for England's friendship. Only if he robbed the English of their "last hope," namely, their former ally Russia, would he be able to force their acquiescence to his expansionist designs in Eastern Europe. The directive for "Case Barbarossa" of December 16 read:

The German Wehrmacht must be prepared to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign (*Fall Barbarossa*) even before the conclusion of the war against England.

For this purpose the Army will have to employ all available units, with the reservation that the occupied territories must be secured against surprises.

For the Luftwaffe it will be a matter of releasing such strong forces for the eastern campaign in support of the Army that a quick completion of the ground operations can be counted on and that damage to eastern German territory by enemy air attacks will be as slight as possible. This concentration of the main effort in the East is limited by the requirement that the entire combat and armament area dominated by us must remain adequately protected against enemy air attacks and that the offensive operations against England, particularly her supply lines, must not be permitted to break down.

The main effort of the Navy will remain unequivocally directed against England even during an eastern campaign.

I shall order the concentration against Soviet Russia possibly 8 weeks before the intended beginning of operations. Preparations requiring more time to get under way are to be started now—if this has not yet been done—and are to be completed by May 15, 1941.⁶⁹⁸

It is of decisive importance, however, that the intention to attack does not become discernible.

The preparations of the High Commands are to be made on the following basis:

I. General Purpose:

The mass of the Russian Army in western Russia is to be destroyed in daring operations, by driving forward deep armored wedges, and the retreat of units capable of combat into the vastness of Russian territory is to be prevented.

In quick pursuit a line is then to be reached from which the Russian Air Force will no longer be able to attack the territory of the German Reich. The ultimate objective of the operation is to establish a cover against Asiatic Russia from the general line Volga-Archangel. Then, in case of necessity, the last industrial area left to Russia in the Urals can be eliminated by the Luftwaffe.

In the course of these operations the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet will quickly lose its bases and thus will no longer be able to fight.

Effective intervention by the Russian Air Force is to be prevented by powerful blows at the very beginning of the operation.

II. Probable Allies and their Tasks:

1. On the wings of our operation the active participation of Rumania and Finland in the war against Soviet Russia is to be expected.

The High Command will in due time arrange and determine in what form the armed forces of the two countries will be placed under German command at the time of their intervention.

2. It will be the task of Rumania to support with selected forces the attack of the German southern wing, at least in its beginnings; to pin the enemy down where German forces are not committed; and otherwise to render auxiliary service in the rear area.

3. Finland will cover the concentration of the German North Group (parts of the XXI Group) withdrawn from Norway and will operate jointly with it. Besides, Finland will be assigned the task of eliminating Hangö.

4. It may be expected that Swedish railroads and highways will be available for the concentration of the German North Group, from the start of operations at the latest.

III. Direction of Operations:

A. Army (hereby approving the plans presented to me):

In the zone of operations divided by the Pripet Marshes into a southern and northern sector, the main effort will be made north of this area. Two Army Groups will be provided here.

The southern group of these two Army Groups—the center of the entire front—will be given the task of annihilating the forces of the enemy in White Russia by advancing from the region around and north of Warsaw with especially strong armored and motorized units. The possibility of switching strong mobile units to the north must thereby be created in order, in cooperation with the Northern Army Group operating from East Prussia in the general direction of Leningrad, to annihilate the enemy forces fighting in the Baltic area. Only after having accomplished this most important task, which must be followed by the occupation of Leningrad and Kronstadt, are the offensive operations aimed at the occupation of the important traffic and armament center of Moscow to be pursued.

Only a surprisingly fast collapse of Russian resistance could justify aiming at both objectives simultaneously.

The most important assignment of the XXI Group, even during the eastern operations, will still be the protection of Norway. The additional forces available are to be employed in the north (mountain corps), first to protect the Petsamo region and its ore mines as well as the Arctic Highway, and then to advance jointly with Finnish forces against the Murmansk railroad and stop the supply of the Murmansk region by land.

Whether such an operation with rather strong German forces (two or three divisions) can be conducted from the area of and south of Rovaniemi depends upon Sweden's willingness to make the railroads available for such a concentration.

The main body of the Finnish Army will be assigned the task, in coordination with the advance of the German northern wing, of pinning down as strong Russian forces as possible by attacking west of or on both sides of Lake Ladoga, and of seizing Hangö.

By converging operations with strong wings, the Army Group committed south of the Pripet Marshes is to aim at the complete destruction west of the Dnieper of the Russian forces standing in the Ukraine. The main effort for this is to be made from the area of Lublin in the general direction of Kiev, while the forces in Rumania, crossing the lower Prut, form a widely separated enveloping arm. The Rumanian Army will have the task of pinning down the Russian forces in between.

Once the battles south and north of the Pripet Marshes have been fought, we should aim to achieve as part of the pursuit operation: in the south, the

prompt seizure of the economically important Donets Basin; in the north, rapid arrival at Moscow.

The capture of this city means a decisive success politically and economically and, beyond that, the elimination of the most important railway center.

B. Luftwaffe:

Its task will be to paralyze and to eliminate as far as possible the intervention of the Russian Air Force and also to support the Army at its main points of effort, particularly those of Army Group Center and, on the main wing, of Army Group South. The Russian railroads, depending on their importance for the operations, will be cut or, as the case may be, their most important near-by installations (river crossings!) seized by the bold employment of parachute and airborne troops.

In order to concentrate all forces against the enemy Air Force and to give direct support to the Army, the armament industry will not be attacked during the main operations. Only after the completion of the mobile operations may such attacks be considered—primarily against the Ural region.

C. Navy:

The Navy's role against Soviet Russia is, while safeguarding our own coast, to prevent an escape of enemy naval units from the Baltic Sea. As the Russian Baltic Sea fleet, once we have reached Leningrad, will be deprived of its last base and will then be in a hopeless situation, any larger naval operations are to be avoided before that time.

After the elimination of the Russian fleet it will be a question of protecting all the traffic in the Baltic Sea, including the supply by sea of the northern wing of the Army (mine clearance!).

IV. All orders to be issued by the Commanders in Chief on the basis of this directive must clearly indicate that they are precautionary measures for the possibility that Russia should change her present attitude toward us. The number of officers to be assigned to the preparatory work at an early date is to be kept as small as possible; additional personnel should be briefed as late as possible and only to the extent required for the activity of each individual. Otherwise, through the discovery of our preparations—the date of their execution has not even been fixed—there is danger that most serious political and military disadvantages may arise.

V. I expect reports from the Commanders in Chief concerning their further plans based on this directive.

The contemplated preparations of all branches of the armed forces, including their progress, are to be reported to me through the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

Thus Hitler conceived of his conquest of Russia! Things turned out differently than planned as early as in the first few weeks of the campaign. Nothing went according to plan, not to mention the problem of England. 1940 would not let Hitler off the hook easily. He was destined to suffer yet another blunt rejection by Pétain of all

people. In a more “generous” mood than usual, Hitler had ordered the remains of Napoleon’s son, the Duke of Reichstadt, to be transferred from Vienna to Paris. The Duke was to be laid to rest beside his father at the Dôme des Invalides in a state ceremony on December 15 which marked the 100th anniversary of Napoleon’s burial there. Pétain declined to make his official appearance at the event as scheduled. Instead, he requested that Admiral Darlan take his place. Apparently, Pétain was reluctant to join in a celebration of Napoleonic France staged by the Germans.

Moreover, the anti-British connotation of such an event seemed inopportune for France at the time. Pétain’s “ungratefulness” infuriated Hitler, especially since he considered himself to have acted “with complete sincerity.”⁶⁹⁹

On December 18, Hitler spoke at the annual rally of young officer cadets at the Berlin Sportpalast.⁷⁰⁰

As was customary in these addresses, Hitler gave as theme no. 1: the inevitability of struggle in life. The principle behind this was, so he claimed: “Beat or be beaten! Kill or be killed!” Naturally, theme no. 2 also had to be dealt with at great length: the relationship between population and Lebensraum. There also recurred Hitler’s idea of the “trophy cup,” which the Earth awards and which again and again is assigned to the most valiant nation. This led Hitler to the exposition of theme no. 3: the Germans as not only the best, but the numerically strongest people.

Before Hitler spoke, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, as Commander in Chief of the Army, prefaced the address to 5,000 officer cadets, who would later serve with the Army, the Luftwaffe, and the Waffen SS:

Offiziersanwärter!

It is a great joy for all of us, a profound happiness, to be able to greet among us on this day the Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. He is and shall remain for us at all time the first soldier; the man whose experiences as an infantryman led him onward to greatness in leadership; the soldier who restored to Germany the belief in itself and built up the Wehrmacht to the proud greatness of today.

The Führer led our Volk to freedom, to strength, and to greatness; his words are listened to carefully not only in Germany, not only in Europe, but throughout the world. On your behalf, my Cadets, I greet our Führer, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. He will speak to you now. I know that your hearts will beat faster and that every one of his words will have a special meaning for you.

The Führer speaks.

Hitler began his speech with the following appeal:

My Young Comrades!

Behind many of you already lie arduous battles. All will have to fight such battles in the future. Those of you who have already emerged from battle know well the strenuous psychological consequences of these hours. At such moments, all phrases, all theories, die. All that remains is the harsh realization: Defend yourself! Beat or be beaten! Kill or be killed! We can emerge victorious from this arduous battle, if only we realize its unchangeable, necessary, and inevitable nature. The individual cannot shrink from it, it is the fate of the entire Volk. Hence, at this hour, I would like to speak to you on the inevitability not only of this [battle], but of struggle as such: of the struggle which takes the life of the individual to give life to the community.

War and politics have always existed interdependently. I need only mention here two historic persons who were not only close to each other in age, but also in ideology. Clausewitz: "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with the admixture of different means." Clemenceau: "For us, peace is the continuation of war." Beyond this, we can say that politics is history in the making, while history can grant us no more than a glimpse at the course of events in the struggle for life of a people. Now, the reason why this struggle of peoples with one another is necessary in the first place has two elements: Providence or nature has placed man on this earth. Man begins to multiply on this earth. This does not take place in a vacuum: his struggle begins as he encounters the other beings who populated this earth before him and who live there besides him. To the degree to which men now begin to associate with one another, to form families, and finally tribes, to this degree the struggle of men amongst themselves begins. For as they begin to occupy a part of this Lebensraum, the fact remains that while the Volk's numbers are variable, the Lebensraum to be occupied remains a given. It will remain the same unless man somehow succeeds in expanding it.

In other words: life naturally makes a Volk multiply, provided it is healthy, while it is not as natural that the necessary Lebensraum also will expand or be enlarged. Sooner or later, there will be a discrepancy between the increase in the Volk's numbers and the available Lebensraum. There are only two ways to overcome this discrepancy. Either the Volk's numbers are adjusted to the available Lebensraum—by repressing or reducing it somehow, depending on the circumstances—or the Lebensraum is adjusted to accommodate the increase in the Volk. This first path has been chosen in the past. Nature by itself advocates this path. Through hunger, it decimates a people whose Lebensraum no longer affords it the means necessary to its existence. At this point, man himself begins to undertake this decimation—i.e. by adjusting his numbers to the available area. Either alone or in groups, he leaves it, insofar as it is possible for him to emigrate. The biological consequences are grave: this takes the most active elements away from a people. The alternative is man restricting his natural fertility—i.e. he adopts a two or one child system. Again, the biological consequences are grave: this undermines the process of natural selection, the breeding of the fittest.

Germany has already followed both paths; it has tried both alternatives. Poverty has decimated the Volk throughout many a century. When the age of emigration set in, German blood opened up foreign continents. And when we today follow certain developments in foreign policy with concern, we should not forget that the majority of these tall men are the descendants, the sons of our own Volk. And we also followed the latter path, namely, that of voluntary self-restriction. This voluntary restriction of our Volk through a reduction in the birthrate has already adversely affected our Volk, though this path has opened up to us only of late. Through it, the Volk loses its natural vitality. Thus, it will no longer be in a position to successfully hold its own; it will not even be able to maintain what earlier generations have secured.

There is another way yet. It stands in opposition to this latter path leading to the adaptation of the Volk's numbers to the Lebensraum. It is the natural way and the one willed by Providence: namely, that man should adjust the Lebensraum to his numbers. In other words: that he should partake in the struggle for this earth. For it is nature which places man on this earth and leaves it to him. Truly, this earth is a trophy cup for the industrious man. And this rightly so, in the service of natural selection. He who does not possess the force to secure his Lebensraum in this world and, if necessary, to enlarge it, does not deserve to possess the necessities of life. He must step aside and allow stronger peoples to pass him by. This was so at all times. The world will not be an empty one because one Volk renounces its life. Rather the Lebensraum will be filled up by other peoples, other beings. There is no vacuum in nature.

Now that we acknowledge that this eternal variable of the Volk's numbers on the one hand, and the constant given of the surface of the earth, which in sum remains the same, constitute the causes for this eternal struggle for life, there arises the question of whether a Volk is willing to take part in this struggle or wishes to step aside, to eliminate itself and thereby to give up its own future in the end. Now that we look at the present strength of the German Volk, we arrive at a figure of around 85 million people—85 million people who have less than 600,000 square kilometers of Lebensraum. The numbers of this Volk are enormous. Most Germans do not even realize this. How often was I forced to listen to the following in my political struggle: "You are striving for the impossible. Do we Germans even have the right to presume that we could achieve accomplishments equal to those of other great nations which, after all, rule world empires?"

This question can only be answered in view of two aspects. First: is this German Volk, in terms of its value, equal to these other nations, to these truly leading peoples of this world, or is this German Volk inferior to them? It is always a sign of bad state leadership if it seeks to excuse its own Volk by devaluating its inner value, that it consciously seeks to breed an inferiority complex out of fear that its own weak and bad politics will otherwise receive the deserved criticism. We all have the right not only to presume that the German Volk is equal to other nations in relation to the first aspect. Rather, the opposite: history shows us that this [German] Volk even today has at its core the best in terms of value on this earth. We must not forget that what we

refer to with the term Anglo-Saxon is nothing other than a branch [!] of our German Volk. Englishmen did not in time past migrate to Germany to cultivate it. Rather a tiny Anglo-Saxon tribe set out from Europe, conquered England, and later helped to develop the American continent. The wealth and the blood of this Volk are still today of equal value. In terms of numbers, there is no world empire which possesses at its core as great, as unified a race as the German Volk and the German Reich.

There are approximately 85 million Germans in Germany. I do not even include in this figure our Low German Volksgenossen. England, the British Empire, has barely 46 million Englishmen at home. The French Empire has barely 37 million Frenchmen at home. Even the American Union, minus Negroes and Jews and Latinos and Germans, has barely 60 million true Anglo-Saxons. Russia has barely 60 million Great Russians. And even today the unified racial core in Germany remains the largest by far; not only in value, in itself highly significant, but also in numbers, it is the greatest. By contrast, if we compare the percentage of Lebensraum occupied by the German Volk to that of the earth as such, then we must remark that our Volk is one of the most disadvantaged peoples of the world. Barely 600,000 square kilometers, in fact about 140 persons per square kilometer. 46 million Englishmen rule, control, and organize about 40 million square kilometers. Barely 60 million Great Russians rule an area of about 19 million square kilometers. About 60 million Anglo-Saxons within the American Union determine life within an area which encompasses about nine and a half million square kilometers. 37 million Frenchmen rule over life in an area of nearly ten million square kilometers. In other words: the German Volk, in terms of the space it occupies, is by far the most modest there is on this earth.

Now Hitler undertook an overview of history. Beginning with the foundation of the Reich, he passed over to feudalism in France; the Thirty Years' War; and the "establishment of Germany's impotence" through the Peace of Westphalia:

How did this situation come about? In the few centuries after our entry into history, we cultivated and civilized the European lands. The English did this and the French . . . rather it is the result of the labor of the old German Reich. So gigantic was the importance of the German state formation then that it rightly claimed the right to succeed the Roman Empire. Throughout the centuries, [the term] "Reich" was a standard expression, and even today we evoke memories of the Germany of back then by simply referring to it as the "Reich"—the "Reich" as such. This Reich had the means and the potential to secure for the German Volk its piece of the pie in the exploitation of this world. We may not doubt the ability not only of German statesmen, but also of German economists, to follow along the path of the Hanseatic League in securing for the German Volk, the German Reich, the position which is rightly that of Volk and Reich.

It was during this time that a most unfortunate development set in. Parallel to the development in France, but diametrically opposed in tendency,

Germany slowly began to disintegrate into individual states, while, in France, the overcoming of feudalism made possible the organization of a centralized kingdom. Then there was the Thirty Years' War. In the course of this unfortunate war, fought for purely fictitious, religious reasons, our Volk and our Reich were torn asunder for good. This led to the establishment of Germany's impotence and hence to the impossibility of taking part in the division of the goods of the world which set in at this time. And during these 300 years, which now lie behind us, the face of the world as we know it was fashioned. And on the face of it, a few well-organized peoples made themselves masters of this earth, while the Volk, the most important in number and value, did not only get too little, but in fact got nothing.

Then the rise of our Volk began. Prussia, at the core of the new Reich, began to strive for unity. As it began to see this unity through, in the process of this unification, it began to encounter a term, in the interim fashioned in Europe, a term called "balance of power in Europe."

What is this "balance of power in Europe?" This "balance of power in Europe" is the order of states in Europe. In it, Germany represents a certain factor of greatness in accordance with the place occupied by Germany throughout the centuries. That means: a place of lesser significance. As I already mentioned in my introduction, there is no such thing as a vacuum. This means: a Volk which falls cannot presume that its former significance will somehow be silently recognized in the future, so that one day it can once more occupy this place. Once a Volk begins to lose its significance, other peoples will take its place. And this is how things came to pass. Germany, which once organized Europe, which once was the strongest power on the Continent, this Germany is now a power among powers. Still others, in particular England, are keen on preventing the European continent's ever again being dominated by one power and thus being organized by it. But it is not this problem alone which has made the rise of Germany difficult. There are others, as well.

For the Germany which suffered the collapse of 1918, it was possible only to secure its resurrection under certain conditions. As I returned home from the World War, I found a picture of divisiveness which had elevated itself from the level of the former dynasties to that of an ideology (*Weltanschauung*). While in former times counts and Länder had meant division for the nation, ideologies and parties had in the meanwhile developed from this. Here the bourgeoisie—there the proletariat; here Nationalism—there Socialism. At the time, both were frames of reference which could no longer be reconciled with each other. Neither of the two, in my opinion, was strong enough to secure final victory even after overcoming the other, since, in the life of a nation, there is no such thing as sentimentality. Once a certain standpoint prevails and reigns victorious in a Volk, then it is of no consequence—it is not even interesting to know—whether it obtained this victory rightly or not. What is decisive is that it manages to obtain unity of will on its own level. If this is possible, then the question of right or wrong is no longer relevant. If this is not possible, then the Volk will fail. For it is self-evident that it is difficult enough for a nation to maintain a position already obtained, but it is even

more difficult to fight for a position which must yet be secured. There is hope for success in such a fight only if it is led with the complete dedication of the entire strength of a Volk.

It makes a difference whether a world empire such as Great Britain seeks to maintain its position, or whether a "Reich" such as Germany must first set out to secure its position in battle.

Next followed the obligatory "party narrative." In the course of this exposition, Hitler claimed that National Socialism attracted a following worldwide, not unlike the French Revolution:

That life was impossible under the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles is something that I need not tell you about. New conditions for life had to be created. This was opposed by a divided nation and two ideologies, which already at the time appeared to be in the process of disintegration, since a large number of parties represented both the bourgeois and the Marxist ideology, which included groups from Social Democracy to the most radical syndicalism, namely, anarchism. It was clear that, in the year 1919, an exclusive, clear victory by one of these two ideas could no longer be expected. Just as Germany had once before disintegrated into countless small dynastic structures, there again was the threat of the German nation disintegrating into countless small ideological or party political groups. There was a time when a maximum of forty-six such "pocket parties" (*Parteichen*) stepped up to compete for the favor and approval of the German Volk. It was utopian to expect a resurrection under these conditions, not to mention bringing about such a resurrection.

No people can project strength abroad which it is unable to free it at home. This means: the more a nation uses up its strength internally, the more it will lack external strength. A people has only one strength. The strength needed within the system of the assertion of life is either applied at home or abroad—one of the two.

When I returned at the time, I realized that, as long as the two definitions of socialism and nationalism remained what they had been, a resurrection of the German nation was inconceivable. On the other hand, I realized that no ideals existed outside the two worlds of socialism and nationalism. They were the only two concepts for which people were ready to die if necessary. At the time, I therefore undertook to form one common world out of these torn nationalist and socialist worlds—founded on a new definition of the two concepts. I did so in the realization that it was no longer a question of preserving what was old, but eliminating the impossible, and creating a new world in which it would be possible to concentrate and redirect the total strength of the nation from the inside to the outside. Of course, this change had to occur not within the state, but within the Volksgemeinschaft. This means: the new state had to begin to form within a new Movement. After about fifteen years, this new Movement had the strength to take over power and realize its ideas in practice. This not only brought about the creation of a new empire in Europe, but also—as we can confidently state—a new world.

It is a world which is naturally more modern than the world of those who need only preserve what they acquired over 300 years.

Today's Germany stands for several ideas which can claim to be truly revolutionary—ideas which managed to mobilize the strength of the Volk for one goal and to concentrate it in the direction of this goal. Other peoples and their state leaders are frightened by the thought of what has formed here. They realize that this state has arrived at a lasting synthesis of nationalism and socialism and that, in the long run, this state will develop a powerful attraction, similar to that of the ideas of the French Revolution at the time. This is also the case today: when they speak of a so-called "fifth column," they are not referring to people who sympathize with Germany politically, but people who have *weltanschaulich* been inspired by us and who now form an opposition in their nations; an opposition based on the realization that the German example is essentially correct and that it should be copied elsewhere. This does not mean that they wish to join Germany or subjugate themselves to it. When this is claimed in the other states, it is a dying world that makes the claim, in the hope of compromising these new movements by portraying them as unpatriotic, conspiring, or sympathizing with the enemy. Actually, it is much better for us if democracy continues to exist there than if movements organize themselves, which are in the final instance similar to those we possess.

Anyhow, all these ideas about race, blood, and soil, the idea of labor as the only creative force, the idea of the social community are the prerequisites for preserving a nation. After all, these ideas are today in the process of attracting more and more people. And this is where the fight against Germany sets in, not only because we are disrupting the European balance of power by our claim to life, but also because we are disrupting the European order by new ideas, which we made public in Europe and which are now gaining in popularity. In addition, there is the realization that suddenly there came about what the others tried to prevent for many centuries, especially by the Peace Treaty of Münster, namely, the mobilization of the strength of a Volk which is the most important race in Europe in terms of number and value. It was a historic formation of strength which took place here, and whose consequences are now being felt in its opposition to the perseverance or apathy of the others.

Before the year 1933, it was already evident in practice how much strength this new ideology lent to Germany. Only a few years earlier, there was a quite pitiful subservience to an outside world, a willingness to renounce everything. Now, suddenly, there was a resurrection of the nation, step by step, a mobilization of incredible strength parallel to an elimination of the internal strife, a building up of the German Wehrmacht as the most powerful expression of the determination to assert the German right to life abroad. This Wehrmacht does not exist in a vacuum, but is instead supported by the fanatical will of the organized community. Behind this Wehrmacht, there is an army of millions of working Germans. They work with dedication each day; the substratum of their discipline is not based on a vacuum, but supported by the realization of this discipline by the entire Volkskörper. The

Wehrmacht no longer stands alone in its belief in authority, but is supported by a shared belief in the political sphere. It is a Wehrmacht, whose principle of authority top to bottom no longer stands in opposition to the democratic idea of the state, but which sees that this principle has become common knowledge. It sees that these democratic principles of authority bottom to top have been eliminated from the organism of the Volk, that they have yielded to the life of the state, that the only possible definition has been arrived at: authority can only be exercised from the top. Authority from the top and accountability from below. This is the reverse of the democratic principle that accountability should come from the top and authority from the bottom, and which regards the voter as the supreme authority.

By these means, the Reich has since 1933 risen anew with surprising speed. Of course, this was conceivable only because the value of the Volk is a given and because, whenever the strength of our Volk is mobilized, we are numerically in a position to claim our rights and successfully see them through.

When war against Germany broke out in 1914, England was the organizer of this war, its driving force, and the actual instigator—the same England which centuries before had undertaken to subjugate the Spanish world power with the help of the Dutch; which had fought the Dutch world power with the help of the French; which then finally had fought the French world power with the help of Germany; and which, in 1914, began to fight against the power of Germany with the help of Europe. Exhausted at the end of the Great War, this England was no longer able to draw the last consequence of the struggle. In its attempt to restore the balance of power in Europe after the war, it was not able to obtain the complete elimination of Germany. Still, it held Germany to be so weakened that this nation could no longer make its claim to life heard successfully. Then suddenly, after '33, this German nation began to organize itself to an extent which allowed us to realize how England immediately undertook once more its policy of encirclement and isolation, and finally of hostile suppression. Ever since the years 1936–37, I slowly became aware that there exists a standpoint in England which precludes reconciliation. To this came our international enemy of the world, international Jewry, which perceived Germany as an element which, by setting a bad example, might open the eyes of other nations.

Finally Hitler did speak of the present war:

The rise of the German Volk began to have its repercussions politically abroad in the year 1938. The Greater German Reich was born. In the autumn of that year, the Sudetenland returned home. As of this moment, it was clear that England had decided to step up against Germany once again at any rate. And now, my young Comrades, you must understand one thing: in the year 1919, I took up a struggle which appeared nearly hopeless at the time. An unknown man who undertook to rid a world of resistance, to tear down walls of prejudice. Prejudice at times is worse than divine force.

A man took a stand against all the bearers of public life back then, against the parties, against their press, against the whole system of capitalist

fabrication of public opinion. I led this struggle until the final seizure of power.

You must understand one thing: that at this moment I could have only one wish, namely, that if this war is indeed inevitable, that it still be fought during my lifetime, because I am the man who possesses the greatest authority with the German Volk. And moreover, because I believe that based on the experiences of my life, I am the most able to strengthen the nation in this battle and to lead it into this battle. Thus, once I became aware that England was determined to fight this battle, I did not capitulate, but in an instant determined to do everything to prepare Germany to hold its own in this most difficult struggle for its existence. And my appeal to the German nation was not in vain. I labored in these years to build up armament for the German Volk. I subordinated everything to the one thought: how can Germany be made strong? How can its armament be made powerful? I was determined to do nothing by half-measures, but to stake everything on one throw. I knew that this struggle would determine whether Germany will be or will not be. It is not a question of a system. It is a question of whether these 85 million people, in their national unity, can carry through on their right to life or not. If yes, then the future of Europe belongs to this Volk. If no, then this Volk shall perish, shall sink back, and it will no longer be worthwhile to live in this Volk.

Faced with this alternative, I was determined to employ all means—down to the last—in this struggle. The nation understood this. Millions of men never spoke of it. Still all thought the same. And throughout this period, nobody ever reproached me for this enormous mobilization of public means for the one goal: national armament. I also wished that, if the hour was to come and come it would, the German soldier should not set out against the enemy as, regrettably, this has been the case far too often in Germany's past. This phrase, "the best weapons for the best soldier in the world," has profound meaning. The best soldier must and will despair once it dawns on him that, in spite of his valor, the effectiveness of his arms does not suffice to force the victory. Therefore, I was determined to do my utmost to secure for us the best arms. And, before German history, I may be faulted on many a thing, but on one topic assuredly not: that I had not done my utmost, what was humanly possible, to prepare the German Volk better for this struggle than, regrettably, it was prepared in the year 1914. In this, I found the support of countless people, men of the state, the Party, and in particular the Wehrmacht. They walked by my side. And thus we were able, in barely seven years, to make the German Wehrmacht once more the world's best. And, for my person, I have always been convinced that for us Germans there are only two possibilities: either we are no soldiers or we are the world's best. There is no in-between.

In fighting, politics employ not only changing means, but also changing methods. It is the task of the political leadership to constantly and carefully reevaluate the situation and make its decisions in accordance with the changing circumstances. And it is the task of the soldier to implement these decisions with lightning speed. It is therefore necessary that the individual be

profoundly suffused by the realization and the conviction that the fight in which he is involved is a fight which will determine the fate of the nation for centuries—perhaps forever. I know that there are hours when it is necessary to hold on to this harsh realization, hours in which the individual is threatened by death, when fear and worry clutch at his heart. Then duty alone must serve as his guide. Then the individual must fight his way through to this realization: “Here I stand so that later generations will be spared this fate. Here I stand so that the regrettable sins of earlier generations will be atoned for. Here I stand so that my Volk can live.”

As difficult as my struggle might be, it cannot be any more difficult than the struggle of the generations before us.

Hitler openly entreated the young officer cadets to be ready to die. This destiny was nothing special, for:

As much as the individual has to suffer in the fighting, he must always keep one thing in mind: In just this way suffered the soldiers of the World War, in just this way suffered the soldiers of the German War of Unification⁷⁰¹ as did the soldiers of the age of Frederick and going back into the past all the way to Herman the Cheruscan. For no one has death been easier. It is hard, but it is the same for everyone. And if a generation no longer wants to bring this sacrifice, then with that generation end a people's chain of destiny. That is hard for the individual, but it must not be avoided.⁷⁰²

Moreover, peace can be enforced only by the sword. Shield and spear—in this world, there exists no other formula for the preservation of peace and for the securing of peace. To date, peace has been possible only when protected by the shield and entrusted to the spear. And it will be no different in the future.

Today, we stand in the midst of the most decisive battle for our Volk. You yourselves are not only future officers in the German Wehrmacht, but also part of this great instrument of leadership and the entire German Volk—this German Volksgemeinschaft. You must completely identify yourselves mentally with the ideas which move this Volk today. Its hopes for the future must be your own. Its present feelings must be met with understanding on your part. The sons whom the Volk will entrust to you for leadership in the future must be led in such a manner that, on returning, they all the more form part of this National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft, just as this Army forms the sword of this community.

In this struggle, the German Wehrmacht yet faces enormous tasks. Still, there can be no doubt that this struggle will end in victory for us, not only, because our weapons are the best, our organization is the best, and we can call the best soldiers and the best leadership our own, but also because behind these soldiers today stands truly the best Volk. It is the best to a degree which surpasses what we possessed in the past, because now millions and millions of laborers of the mind and of the fist stand behind the German soldier, because behind him stands an army of millions of German women, because a German youth is being reared filled with the one thought, because never before in Germany's history have we had such an intense identification

between the will of the political leadership, the thoughts of the Volk, and the Wehrmacht, as we do this time, and because no state on the side of our enemies can point to similar complete unity.

At the close of the speech, Hitler turned to the social tensions that were allegedly disturbing the other, that is, enemy nations, and declared:

They all live with their tensions. For some time, they might be able to deny these tensions or temporarily relieve them by some measures. However, this does not eliminate them. On the contrary! They will resurface worse than before. In this world, you cannot get out of resolving these internal social problems of today. One state uses reason to resolve them, as we do, another state will have them resolved by its lack of reason. In the one case, a buildup will set in; in the other case, nihilistic and anarchical destruction will follow. Nobody can get around these problems. They must be solved. We are presently in the process of resolving these problems in a reasonable manner and, therefore, we already have the most united Volk. Others have up to now rejected this resolution. Therefore, there are tensions in their nations—a profound unrest and the nervousness of an age in transformation is taxing their strength.

Victory can fall to no other nation than ours! Another thing also is decisive: not only must you be strong in your faith in the necessity of this struggle, you must pass this faith on to your men. There is a biblical story in which a city is destroyed because, in the end, no one there deserved that it should any longer exist. One can put it in another way yet: as long as someone keeps the faith, the community is not yet lost. And this applies also to the tiniest entity, not only to large ones. As long as in a regiment, in a battalion, in a company, there is one man who keeps and cherishes the faith and as a leader passes this faith on, no one will falter. And for this long, this body will not break.

If somebody characterizes the morale of a company as bad, then the company leader is responsible for this. If somebody characterizes the morale of a regiment as bad, then the regiment's commander is responsible for this. A leader is always responsible for his followers. He passes his own spirit on to his followers. If he shows signs of weakness, then his followers will also become weak. If he shows signs of resistance and valor, then his followers will resist and will be valiant. If he shows signs of heroism, then his followers will die heroically. If he shows signs of cowardly capitulation, then his followers will capitulate. The leader of any organization is not only the bearer of its shield. He also fashions its character, its valor. And, in turn, in this sense, he is also responsible for its defeatism. You must hence pass on the faith and insights which you possess to your followers. They must believe in you. And you must always and at all times be the banner, the living banner, behind which they march, an example in all things to the soldier. If this idea continues to suffuse the entire Wehrmacht to the extent which we are already witnessing today—to our great joy and pride—then this Wehrmacht will be

invincible. And then this age in which we live will not only be a great age for all of us now, but it will also be regarded as an age of enlightenment by future generations. Just as we think with shame of the years 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, and so on, so posterity will think with pride and joy of the age we are fashioning at present. Then, we will have done our duty. A man cannot expect more from life. Everyone will die sooner or later. Thus, there is only one question: how did he live his life? Did he live decently? Did he live courageously? Did he live faithfully and did he fulfill his duties? Or did he live like a drone among his Volk? Did he live as one of those who go with the flow of lethargy or apathy? That is the question.

And if there is one reason for living, then it is to be able to say in one's old age: "For my part, I did my duty. I always was indifferent to what the others did." When one day you look back to this age, I wish that you will be able to do one thing: to look back with a feeling of pride: "Back then, when the Greater German Reich was fighting for its destiny, I was a soldier. I was an officer back then and I did my duty for this eternal Germany!"

After Hitler had spoken, von Brauchitsch added:

Mein Führer!

You have given us this hour of your life filled with hard work. You have passed on to thousands of cadets the experiences of your life. The thousands of cadets of this class are bound to you in life and in death. What you order, they will execute. And you, my Cadets, now have the duty to step forth. You have to pass on to your units the ideas of which the Führer spoke—the general guidelines, problems and tasks—what each one of you must do. Out there, you are to strengthen the faith, to maintain it, and to carry always in your hearts the belief that what has been ordered must be done for the sake of Germany; that what has been ordered by the Führer will lead to success, just as it has in the past by bringing us to where we are today. And thus old and young soldiers close ranks. And thus everything stands.

On December 19 at the Reich Chancellery, Hitler received the new Russian Ambassador, Vladimir Dekanazov, who presented his credentials.⁷⁰³

December 21 marked Stalin's birthday. Still, in German papers, the reader searched in vain for the customary congratulatory telegram by Hitler. The previous year, Hitler had extended warm words of congratulation to Stalin on this occasion,⁷⁰⁴ under the immediate impression of the signature of the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. This year he had just given the command for preparation of the attack on the Soviet Union, and so spared himself the telegram.

That times had changed was evident in other respects, too. On December 23, General Oshima took over as Japanese Ambassador to

Germany and thereby relieved Kurusu. Oshima had served in Berlin in this function previously, but the Tokyo Government had recalled him after the conclusion of the Soviet-German Pact. This change in personnel meant only one thing: friendship for Japan. Again this new trend was underlined when the Japanese Government sent a military mission to Berlin.

On December 23, Hitler left Berlin for the Western front.⁷⁰⁵ There he intended to visit with soldiers and spread holiday cheer. Since his travel to Saarbrücken the previous year, Hitler had not trod upon French soil. During his visit with combat batteries equipped with long range guns, a joint undertaking of the Army and Navy in the vicinity of Calais, he behaved as the victorious warlord in control of the situation. At a luncheon at the local field kitchen of the Todt Organization, Hitler underlined his unperturbed confidence in victory in the end. At one point in the address, he stated:

Before us lie the freedom and the future of our Volk. Behind us lie bitter experiences. In us lives the unalterable resolve that from this war a better and more beautiful German Reich shall spring forth.

Hitler continued his tour in the afternoon and passed by Boulogne. The naval units stationed there paid their Führer the tribute due.

On December 24, Hitler spent time with two of the Luftwaffe's fighter squadrons. He delivered several short addresses, at one of which he stated: "What you accomplished last year was something even old soldiers barely thought possible." In the afternoon, Hitler passed through Abbéville.

On December 25, Hitler lunched at the cafeteria of a bomber squadron, addressing a few words to the soldiers assembled there. That afternoon, Hitler's special train halted north of Paris. Admiral Darlan, the French Deputy Head of State, was summoned. He had replaced Laval on December 13.⁷⁰⁶ Schmidt, the chief interpreter, was brought from Berlin to France especially for the occasion. For half an hour Hitler scolded Darlan, crying: "Why was Laval dismissed? This is the work of anti-German intrigues among the associates of Marshal Pétain."

With great bitterness, Hitler then complained about Pétain. He was nettled by the Marshal's failure to appear at the ceremony at the Dôme des Invalides. Hitler had heard a rumor that Pétain had refused to attend because he feared the Germans might use the occasion to kidnap him. Hitler exclaimed in outrage: "It is shabby to think me

capable of something of the sort, especially since I made this gesture towards France with complete sincerity.”

Darlan barely had time to respond to this outburst before Hitler abruptly ended the conversation.

On December 26, Hitler spent part of the day with the Leibstandarte as he had done the previous year. His address to the SS men was uncharacteristically gloomy and contained the following passage:

What your fate will be,⁷⁰⁷ my Men of the Leibstandarte, I do not know. But I know one thing: you will be in the front row at every engagement. As long as I have the honor to stand at the fore of the Reich to lead this struggle, you who bear my name shall consider it an honor to stand at the fore of the struggle!

Speaking to a different crowd, namely, to the members of the infantry regiment which had clocked the greatest number of hours engaged and had earned the most distinctions in battle (and probably recorded the heaviest losses), Hitler exclaimed: “You must understand that my heart beats for you and that I am delighted to spend the holidays among soldiers.”

By December 27, Hitler found himself back in Berlin. Visiting his Chief of Staff at his flat, he congratulated Viktor Lutze on his fiftieth birthday.⁷⁰⁸

On this day, Hitler also spoke with Raeder.⁷⁰⁹ The main topic for discussion, as far as Raeder was concerned, was the voicing of “grave concerns about campaign against Russia before defeat of England.” Hitler did not want to hear of it. Cutting Raeder short, Hitler stated that:

In general, given the current political developments (Russia’s inclination to get herself involved in Balkan affairs), it is necessary to eliminate, under all circumstances, the last adversary on the Continent, before he [Hitler] could get together with England. [!] Because of this the Army must maintain the necessary strength. Subsequently one can fully concentrate on the Luftwaffe and Navy.

Hence a spirit of defiance characterized the end of 1940 in the German Reich.

At the same time in the United States, Roosevelt delivered an “Address on National Security” on December 29, in which he stated:⁷¹⁰

... on September 27, 1940, by an agreement signed in Berlin, three powerful nations, two in Europe and one in Asia, joined themselves together in the threat that if the United States interfered with or blocked the expansion program of these three nations—a program aimed at world control—they would unite in ultimate action against the United States.

The Nazi masters of Germany have made it clear that they intend not only to dominate all life and thought in their own country, but also to enslave the whole of Europe, and then to use their resources to dominate the rest of the world. [—]

In view of the nature of this undeniable threat, it can be asserted, properly and categorically, that the United States has no right or reason to encourage talk of peace, until the day shall come when there is a clear intention on the part of the aggressor nations to abandon all thought of dominating or conquering the world. [—]

Does anyone seriously believe that we need to fear attack while a free Britain remains our most powerful naval neighbor in the Atlantic? Does anyone seriously believe, on the other hand, that we could rest easy if the Axis powers were our neighbor there? If Great Britain goes down, the Axis Powers will control the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the high seas—and they will be in a position to bring enormous military and naval resources against this hemisphere. [—]

The history of recent years proves that shootings and chains and concentration camps are not simply the transient tools but the very altars of modern dictatorships. They may talk of a “new order” in the world, but what they have in mind is but a revival of the oldest and the worst tyranny. [—]

The British people are conducting an active war against this unholy alliance. Our own future security is greatly dependent on the outcome of that fight. Our ability to “keep out of war” is going to be affected by that outcome.

Thinking in terms of today and tomorrow, I make the direct statement to the American people that there is far less chance of the United States getting into war, if we do all we can now to support the nations defending themselves against attack by the Axis than if we acquiesce in their defeat, submit tamely to an Axis victory, and wait our turn to be the object of attack in another war later on. [—]

There will be no “bottlenecks” in our determination to aid Great Britain. No dictator, no combination of dictators, will weaken that determination by threats of how they will construe that determination. [—]

In this radio speech—which was also broadcast by long- and short-wave throughout the world in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish—Roosevelt had made unequivocally clear where the United States as a loyal ally stood in the new world war: at the side of Britain, of course.

The year 1940 is generally regarded, even today, as a year of great successes for Hitler both militarily and politically. The notion is a mistaken one, however. 1940 can with equal justification be seen as a year of many defeats.

Admittedly, France fell that year and German troops moved to occupy five small states. Still these measures served the attainment of a goal which completely eluded Hitler: the subjugation or “friendship”

of England. On the contrary, against his original intent, Hitler had had to commit himself to an aerial battle for England, and lost. He had threatened the English with German troops landing on the British Isles, but had not been strong enough to move from words to deeds.

And the debacle in the skies above had its repercussions on foreign policy as well. Spain, France, Belgium, and Russia refused to follow his lead against England. He had suffered one diplomatic defeat after the other, while his prestige within Germany was equally harmed.

Hitler found himself forced to improvise. The Tripartite Pact with Italy and Japan was concluded. The Balkan states' reluctance, however, to join the Pact was sufficient proof of the perceived ever-increasing weakness of the Third Reich.

And, to make matters worse, Italy's entry into the war disappointed Hitler's hopes. The Italian troops required air support by the Luftwaffe. Squadrons had to be transferred to the Mediterranean to rush to the aid of the ally who faced grave difficulties in Greece.

Things were not going well in North Africa either. Spain had refused Hitler's persistent clamoring for a conquest of Gibraltar and the subsequent erection of a "land bridge" to northern Africa. The Italian campaign in Egypt had come to a standstill in the desert sand at Sidi Barani.⁷¹¹ The English had launched a powerful counter-offensive on December 9. Italian troops had to retreat behind the border. The British soldiers stood a good chance of conquering all of Cyrenaica soon.

And this was where matters stood at the end of 1940.

A career with an air of unreality, mystery, and extremity unprecedented in world history had led the casual laborer Adolf Hitler from a hostel for the homeless in Vienna to the top of the German Reich. Immediately before the outbreak of the war, he was completely blunt about the impetus behind his activities: "I have played *Vabanque* all my life."⁷¹² In this context, it was only consequent that Hitler—after the build-up of the Wehrmacht and the creation of Greater Germany—bid for world power. In spite of his conquests on the Continent, Britain did not give way. The offensive against Russia was the last trump card Hitler held in the most dangerous game of chance mankind had ever experienced. Should this maneuver fail, he knew all his efforts were doomed. Then his warped mind would see but one desperate recourse: a gradual massacre of the Jews, his "hostages," as the only means left to bring England to its knees.

Prologue

Notes

1. See above, p. 1258, speech of December 2, 1938.
2. See above, Introduction, p. 54. See also below, speech of November 8, 1940.
3. See *Documents concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939* (London, 1939), no. 9, p. 10 (hereafter referred to as the *British Blue Book*). Cf. also Friedrich Berber, *Deutschland-England 1933-1939* (Essen, 1943), p. 184.
4. *Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges*, II, (edited by the Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, 1939), p. 289. (Hereafter referred to as the *Deutsches Weissbuch*.)
5. See below, statement of March 31, 1939.
6. See below, 1939, note 999.
7. See below, September 3, 1939.
8. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 73. See above, p. 28.
9. For verbatim reproduction of Churchill's radio address of October 1, 1939, see Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6163.
10. See above, speech of March 14, 1936. "I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker."
11. See above, Introduction, p. 70.
12. See below, speech of November 8, 1940.
13. See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
14. See below, speech of November 8, 1941.
15. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.
16. Ibid. In 356 BC, Herostratus set fire to the temple of the Goddess Artemis at Ephesus in order to become famous.
17. Ibid.
18. See below, speech of November 8, 1942.
19. See below, speech of September 30, 1942.
20. Ibid.
21. See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
22. See below, speech of July 19, 1940.
23. See above, pp. 125 f., speech of March 15, 1932; see below, speech of July 19, 1940, and 1940, note 414.
24. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745. See above, p. 57.
25. Subhas Chandra Bose, born 1897 in Cuttack; President of the Congress Party of India from 1938 to 1939. In 1941, he visited Germany to recruit volunteers for an Indian national army among Indian prisoners of war. In 1943, he ventured to Japan with a similar aim.
26. Mohammed Emin el Huseini, born 1895 in Jerusalem; appointed Grand Mufti and President of the High Islamic Council by the English in 1926; deposed by officials of the British Mandate Government there in 1937; appeared 1941 in Germany; took refuge in Egypt in 1946. Cf. Reinhard

Hüber, *Arabische Führergestalten* (1944).

27. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745.
28. See above, Vol. I, Introduction, p. 30; see also p. 388, statement of November 6, 1933: "But for me and for us all, setbacks have never been anything but lashes of the whip driving us onwards all the more."
29. "And if Fate should choose to test us in the future, we hope that such hammer blows of Providence will make us truly hard and strong." See above, p. 686, speech of August 11, 1935.
"There are times when Providence demonstrates the deepest love it has for its creatures in an act of punishment!" Ibid., p. 937, speech of September 13, 1937.
"He [the Lord God] does not abandon decent people for any length of time! While He may sometimes put them to the test or send them trials, in the long run He will always allow His sun to shine upon them and ultimately give them His blessing." Ibid., p. 953, speech of October 3, 1937.
30. Before the Second World War, Eva Braun had made this statement in conversation with an English journalist, then the *Daily Telegraph's* Berlin correspondent. Back in London after the war as commentator for the BBC, he related Eva Braun's remark to his listeners in a broadcast on June 21, 1945. The author's notes. See also below, April 28, 1945.

The Year 1939

Notes

1. See above, instructions issued October 21, 1938 and November 24, 1938.
2. Dr. Josef Tiso, Minister-President of Slovakia in 1938; State President from 1938 to 1945, hanged in Bratislava in 1947; Dr. Adalbert (Béla) Vojtech Tuka, born 1880, Minister-President of Slovakia from 1939 to 1945, leader of the Slovak National Party, hanged 1946 in Bratislava; Alexander (Sano) Mach, Slovak Minister of the Interior from 1939 to 1945; Ferdinand Durcansky, Slovak Foreign Minister from 1939 to 1944.
3. See above, October 14, 1938.
4. Augustin Vološin, born 1874; died 1945 in Galicia (allegedly murdered).
5. Petrovich Skoropadskyi, born 1873; killed 1945 in an air raid at Murnau.
6. As early as their February 12, 1939 meeting in the Chancellery, Hitler had suggested such steps to Béla Tuka. See IMT, Blue Series, Vol. III, p. 172.
7. Dr. Emil Hácha, born 1872 in Schweinitz, Southern Bohemia; President of the Czechoslovak Republic from November 30, 1938 to March 15, 1939; President of the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia 1939–1945; died June 27, 1945 in a Prague prison.
Josef Sivak served as Minister of Education in Tiso's Cabinet. On March 6, 1939, Hácha dismissed the Carpatho-Ukrainian autonomous government in a similar manner, a dismissal that was not recognized in its capital city Chust. See below, March 11, 1939.
8. See above, p. 1265.
9. The units in question were contingents from the Eighth Army and the *SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*.
10. See above, p. 384, interview of October 18, 1933.
11. See above, p. 385, speech of October 24, 1933.
12. See above, p. 387, speech of November 2, 1933.
13. See above, p. 642, speech of February 24, 1935.
14. See above, p. 676, speech of May 21, 1935.
15. See above, p. 801, speech of March 28, 1936.
16. See above, p. 335, speech of May 27, 1933.
17. See above, p. 778, speech of March 7, 1936.
18. See above, p. 676, speech of May 21, 1935.
19. See above, pp. 1187 and 1192, speech of September 26, 1938.
20. See above, p. 1192.
21. Cf. *Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities between Great Britain and Germany* (London, 1939), no. 9, pp. 5 ff. (Hereafter referred to as the *British Blue Book*.) See also Neville Chamberlain, *The Struggle for Peace* (London, 1939), pp. 413 ff.
22. *British Blue Book*, no. 17, pp. 36 ff.. Cf. *Parliamentary Debates, House*

- of *Commons*, Vol. 345, col. 2421, and Chamberlain, pp. 421 ff.
23. See below, speech of September 19, 1939. Cf. statements made by Ribbentrop and Göring in their 1946 defense before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. See also below, August 23, 1939.
24. See above, Introduction, p. 53. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 154.
25. See below, March 31, 1939.
26. “. . . I shall prevent Germany from taking this road to ruin. And I believe that this ruin would come at that point at which the leadership of State decides to stoop to become an ally at the service of such a destructive doctrine. I would see no possibility of conveying in clear terms to the German worker the threatening misfortune of Bolshevik chaos which so deeply troubles me were I myself, as Führer of the nation, to enter into close dealings with this very menace. As a statesman and the Führer of the Volk, I wish to also do myself all those things I expect and demand from each of my Volksgenossen. I do not believe that statesmen can profit from closer contact with a Weltanschauung which is the ruin of any people.” See above, p. 767, speech of March 7, 1936. “I demand from every German worker that he refrain from having any relations or dealings with these international pests, and for his part he will never see me quaffing or carousing with them.” See above, p. 869, speech of January 30, 1937.
27. Hitler ridiculed the British as “my Hugenbergers” in reference to Legation Counselor Hugenberg, the former German Nationalist politician whom he held to epitomize senility. See above, Introduction, p. 55.
28. Alfred von Tirpitz, born 1849 in Küstrin; died 1930 in Ebenhausen near Munich; Grand Admiral in 1911; as Secretary for the Imperial Navy from 1897–1916, he had created the modern German Navy and planned the World War I U-boat campaign; advocate of an active marine policy, but reluctant to engage Navy during the First World War; his only major battle at sea took place in the Skagerrak on the night of May 31 to June 1, 1916 and was inconclusive.
29. See above, broadcast of September 27, 1938.
30. Cf. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6149 f.
31. See above, broadcast of September 27, 1938.
32. RGBl. 1939, II, pp. 968 f.
33. At the beginning of the First World War, Great Britain had declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, three days after the outbreak of hostilities. It was not until March 17, 1939 that Chamberlain reacted to Hitler’s March 15, 1939 entry into Prague.
34. See below, speech of September 3, 1939.
35. For the term *Blitzkrieg* see below, Hitler’s statement in his speech of November 8, 1941; for the principles of blitzkrieg cf. also John Strawson, *Hitler as Military Commander* (London, 1971), pp. 80 ff.
36. See below, September 19, 1939.
37. Cf. Goerdeler’s peace proposal of May 30, 1941, which was to be transmitted to the British Government, printed in Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1954),

- p. 569.
38. See Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI., p. 6163.
 39. See below, speech of November 8, 1939. Hitler declared: "Should . . . [one] . . . Englishman say 'for us the frontier runs along the Rhine' and the next comes up to say 'for us the frontier runs along the Vistula river,' then all I can reply is: Scurry back to the Thames, gentlemen, or else we shall have to help matters along!" Hitler was alluding to statements by Stanley Baldwin, British Prime Minister in the years 1923 to 1929 and 1935 to 1937, who had maintained that the Rhine constituted the first line of defense for Great Britain.
 40. See below, directive of October 9, 1939.
 41. See below, speech of October 10, 1939.
 42. See below, August 22, 1939. Hitler declared: "I shall give a propagandist reason for starting the war, no matter whether plausible or not." Indeed, a staged assault on a German radio station located in Gleiwitz on the border with Poland served Hitler as an excuse for retaliation based on the alleged transgression of the frontier. SS Führer Alfred Naujocks led German soldiers disguised in Polish army uniforms in the August 31, 1939 raid.
 43. See above, p. 458 and 1934, note 92.
 44. The British agents in question were Captain S. Payne Best and Major R. H. Stevens. Walter Schellenberg, a young SS Gruppenführer under cover as a resistance fighter, induced the Englishmen to agree to a meeting in Venlo (small town in the Netherlands near the German border) on November 7. At another meeting the following day, Schellenberg persuaded the English to come to a small café for another meeting on November 9. On entering the café, an SS Kommando in disguise opened fire on them. Once more Alfred Naujocks had been commissioned to carry out this particular operation, reminiscent of the Gleiwitz raid he had also headed. As a result of the new operation, one Dutch Lieutenant was severely injured. The British agents were abducted across the border into Germany. See also below, November 9, 1939 and note 1216.
 45. Original quotation: "*Wie man in den Wald hineinruft, so schallt es auch wieder hinaus.*" Corresponds to the proverb: "As you give, so you receive."
 46. The relative calm along the Western front during the winter months 1939–40 was mockingly referred to as "Phony War." Both armies took up positions opposite each other while little actual fighting occurred, with the exception of sporadic artillery exchanges and occasional skirmishes. See also below, note 1043.
 47. In 1936, Hitler had declared: "I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker." See above, p. 790, address of March 14, 1936.
 48. "National Socialism does not stand at the end of its road, but at the beginning!" See above, p. 1258, speech of December 2, 1938.
 49. Printed in VB, No. 1/2, January 1/2, 1939.

50. Ibid.
51. DNB text, January 2, 1939.
52. DNB text, January 6, 1939.
53. See above, p. 1187, speech of September 26, 1938.
54. Report on the meeting and notes taken by the Envoy Schmidt in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, no. 200, pp. 127 f. See also Schmidt, pp. 433 ff. For Beck's notes see *Polish White Book*, no. 48.
55. In Hitler's eyes, a "reasonable" solution implied the unconditional acceptance of his proposals. As early as January 1939, it was clear that the Memel question would be "resolved in the interest of Germany." The Lithuanian Government eagerly strove to fulfill all of the Memel Germans' wishes in order to appease Hitler. On January 13, it entrusted Willy Bertuleit with the creation of an autonomous government for the Memel Germans called the *Memel Direktorium*. Bertuleit had previously served as deputy to the National Socialist leader of the Memel Germans, Dr. Neumann. On January 23, addressing an assembly of civil servants in his capacity as president of the newly formed directorate, Bertuleit openly avowed that he and his government pledged themselves to the National Socialist Weltanschauung. The middle of January witnessed the establishment of a separate SA unit (called "*Ordnungsdienst*," an organization for the maintenance of public order) made up of 1,800 young Memel Germans supplied with new uniforms. German became the official language and was taught in the schools. While this satisfied the demands of the Memel Germans, it was not enough for Hitler. He insisted on German military sovereignty in the region and occupation by German Armed Forces. On March 22, 1939, the Lithuanian Government also yielded to this last of Hitler's requests.
56. See Beck's October 31, 1938 memorandum to Ambassador Lipski in the *Polish White Book*, 1938, no. 49.
57. Hitler had assured various Polish statesmen of this. For example, he had done so in a meeting with the Polish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Count Szembeck, on August 12, 1936 and in a similar January 14, 1938 meeting with the Polish Foreign Minister Colonel Beck. Hitler had avowed the limited nature of his demands in public as well. In 1938, he had proclaimed that Danzig, "this very spot that presented the greatest threat to European peace, lost its dangerous significance" as a direct result of the German-Polish Alliance of 1934 which had supposedly resolved the differences between the two states. Hitler maintained that "the Polish nation respects the national conditions in this state, and this city and Germany both respect Polish rights. Hence it was possible to pave the way for an understanding which, starting with Danzig, has been capable of completely removing the poison from the relationship between Germany and Poland, transforming it into one of truly friendly cooperation—despite attempts of troublemakers here and there." See above, speech of February 20, 1938.
58. DNB text, January 6, 1939.
59. The previous residence of the Reich Chancellor, the Reichskanzlerpalais

at 78 Wilhelmstrasse, dated back to the 18th century. Originally it had belonged to Count Radziwill from whom Bismarck obtained the mansion in 1871 and furnished it to house the Reich Chancellery. In the days of the Weimar Republic, a more modern, sturdy annex was added onto the building at the corner of Voss Strasse, facing the Wilhelmsplatz. The structure was a simple and sober one, built of shell limestone pleasing to the eye.

Also facing Wilhelmsplatz, the office of the Reich Chancellor was located on the second floor. From the office's window, Hitler had watched the crowds rallying to him on the evening of January 30, 1933. Following the 'successful conclusion' of the Röhm Purge, Hitler posted himself at the office window on July 1, 1934 and accepted the tribute paid to him by the Reichswehr. Later that year, Hitler had a balcony added onto the office and, on special occasions, he would greet the crowds below paying homage to him. In 1939, the building was refurbished with a big entrance way with bronze doors. They allowed for passage directly into the courtyard and from there into the new Reich Chancellery.

On January 11, 1938, Hitler had commissioned the architect Albert Speer to construct a new Chancellery building within a year's time. The 422 meter long structure faced Voss Strasse. It was shaped like a horseshoe with two wings and a main section to the rear. The new Chancellery had three levels and was constructed in the same classicist style to which Hitler had given preference for the new structures built in Munich. The main entrance continued to face the Wilhelmsplatz. Classicist pillars surrounded a courtyard of 26 meters width and 48 meters depth. The interior of the building contained numerous ball rooms and halls. First among these was the 46 meter long "Mosaic Hall" named after the numerous mosaics on the walls there. Another hall had a dome of sixteen meters in height. Moreover, there was the so-called "Long Hall" 12 meters in width and 146 meters in length. Hitler's office was 27 meters by 14.5 meters and its ceiling was ten meters high. Hitler's initials AH were engraved above the office doors. Further, there was a hall for receptions 24.5 meters in length and 16.5 meters in width, and naturally there was also a hall in which the cabinet met. Thousands of workers had labored night and day to raise the structure. The marble for the interior of the new Chancellery came from various regions within Germany. No costs were spared in furnishing and constructing the building. By erecting the most expensive and luxurious of structures in the Reich, Hitler sought to lend visible expression to the power and might he commanded. Moreover, he also strove to impress the public with the thought of the permanence and invincibility of his regime, National Socialism's eternal reign. Nonetheless, his efforts were doomed. A few months after the completion of construction work on the building, Hitler became entangled in a war that spelt ruin not only for the Third Reich and him personally, but also for the new Reich Chancellery that was reduced to ashes and flames due to Allied

bombardment in the closing days of World War II. The bunker beneath the Chancellery became Hitler's last safe haven and also the site where he committed suicide. Russian, American, and British soldiers had their picture taken in front of the remainder of the Führer's marble desk. The Allies recycled the building material used in the construction of the Chancellery to erect their war memorials, as the Russians did for instance in the case of the Russian war memorial in Berlin-Treptow.

60. Excerpts of the speech printed in VB, No. 10, January 10, 1939.
61. Hitler is referring to his Munich apartment at 16 Prinzregentenplatz which he had purchased in 1929. For details on his private quarters see above, 1933, note 80.
62. On the 1939 Day of German Art, the article was published in VB, No. 198, July 17, 1939.
63. Bismarck presided over the so-called "Congress of Berlin" which he convoked on June 13, 1878. Representatives of Germany, Austria, Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey met to discuss the future of statehood in the Balkan region after the Russian-Turkish War. The result of the conference became known as the so-called "Peace of Berlin" or "Berlin Pact" of July 13, 1878. The distribution of territory in the area failed to satisfy the states concerned and aroused their enmity toward Germany.
64. Houthulst was a Flemish village in the province of western Belgium, located nine kilometers to the Southeast of Dixmuiden. A forest south of Houthulst was held for years by German troops in the course of the First World War, despite numerous assault waves by British, French, and Belgian forces. The overpowering nature of the attacks finally forced the German Fourth Army to retreat on September 28, 1918. Hitler's idea of comparing the park near the Reich Chancellery with the blood-drenched Houthulst forest was both inappropriate and tasteless. However, the so-called irony of history would have it that, due to the 1945 bombardment by Allied forces both by air and on land, the Reich Chancellery park indeed strongly resembled the landscape at the Western Front in the First World War with one crater next to the other.
65. See below, April 13, 1939.
66. Looped plaits in either gold or silver which were popularly called *Affenschaukeln* ("monkey's swings").
67. The addresses given at the New Year's reception are published in VB, No. 13, January 13, 1939.
68. Report in VB, No. 14, January 14, 1939.
69. DNB note, January 12, 1939.
70. NSK note, January 15, 1939.
71. Stefan (István) Count Csáky of Körösszegh and Adorjan, born 1894 in Uncsukfalva; Foreign Minister from 1938 to 1941; died 1941 in Ofenpest.
72. "Today, in a very offhand way, he declared that it was his conviction that Hitler is crazy. He based this observation on the look of the Führer's eyes." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 68.

73. Speaking with Ciano in Rome on March 24, 1940, the Hungarian Minister-President Teleki asserted that 95 percent of the Hungarians “detest Germany.” *Ibid.*, p. 226.
Before the Second World War, according to Ciano’s notes, von Horthy, the Regent of Hungary so buttered up by Hitler, called the Germans “buffoons and brigands.” Having accompanied her husband on his 1938 trip to Germany and, in the presence of Hitler, having christened the ironclad *Prinz Eugen*, the Regent’s wife proclaimed that she herself “would take up arms if they had to fight the Germans.” See Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 123.
74. DNB text, January 16/18, 1939.
75. DNB text, January 18, 1939.
76. These gatherings always took place in the Berlin Sportpalast. Hitler issued the last of these appeals in the Breslau (Wrocław) Jahrhunderthalle in 1943.
77. See above, Prologue, note 29.
78. Two days before the reintroduction of general conscription, Hitler issued an ordinance on the SA’s mission as a training ground for athletics and defense. See above, March 14, 1935. This ordinance later gained prominence as the “February 15, 1935 ordinance,” as it was referred to on March 18, 1937 and on January 19, 1939. Either there was a mistake made regarding the date of issue or, Hitler had indeed signed the ordinance four weeks before issuing it.
79. DNB text, January 21, 1939.
80. NSK note, January 29, 1939.
81. This reserve status applied to all men up to the age of 45; during the war, the age restriction was extended to 60 years.
82. Mob.=short for mobilization.
83. See above, 1937, note 1.
84. Hitler’s correspondence addressed to Schacht and Funk was published in VB, No. 21, January 21, 1939.
85. Neither Schacht nor Neurath had the courage to stand up for their ideals, to draw the consequences and to resign from the Cabinet, as Eltz von Rübenach and Hugenberg had. See above, p. 340 (Hugenberg) and Vol. II, pp. 876 f. (Eltz von Rübenach). Schacht and Neurath preferred to retain their posts. On ceremonial occasions, they would make their token appearances. In the name of the entire Cabinet, Schacht welcomed Hitler back to Berlin upon the successful completion of the campaign in France. After the events of July 20, 1944, however, Hitler had Schacht incarcerated in a concentration camp.
86. The stability of prices and earnings was no guarantee of the stability of the currency, of course. For instance, once the relation of production and money circulation is disturbed by the exigencies of a war time economy, a devaluation of the currency is inevitable sooner or later regardless of the artificial stability of prices and earnings. There are not sufficient products available to satisfy demand and the currency loses in value as it no longer serves as a means of exchange.

87. Charles Gates Dawes, born 1865 in Marietta, Ohio; died 1951 in Chicago; Vice President of the United States from 1925 to 1929; presided over the expert commission that dealt with the question of Germany's reparation payments in 1924; devised the payment plan named after him which was accepted at the London Conference. The August 16, 1924 London Agreement established an independent banking system in Germany and converted the Reichsbank into an institution separate from the Reich Government. See above, January 30, 1937.
88. DNB note, January 21, 1939.
89. Hitler signed the "law pertaining to the Reichsbank" in Berchtesgaden on June 15, 1939. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1015 f.
90. See below, January 30, 1939.
91. Hitler had announced this "decision" in his January 30, 1937 speech before the Reichstag. According to his estimates, this dealt a final blow to the alleged pressure from the international high finance. The fact that he reiterated this decision two years later indicates his attempt to find a pretext for the dismissal of Schacht. See above, January 30, 1937.
92. František Chvalkovsky, Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister from October 4, 1938 to March 15, 1939. DNB note, January 22, 1939.
94. RGBl. 1938, II, pp. 909 f.
95. A listing of the thirty thoroughfares was published on January 30. RGBl. 1939, II, p. 19.
96. Demands for an extraterritorial autobahn through the Polish Corridor and for the simultaneous restoration of Danzig to the Reich were broached on October 21, 1938. The issue arose once more during the January 5 meeting of Hitler and Beck. The demands by Germany were voiced again in March. See January 5 and March 21, 1939.
97. Roberto Farinacci, journalist by profession; General Secretary of the Italian Fascist Party; shot in April 1945.
98. Report in VB, No. 26, January 26, 1939.
99. Illustrated DNB reports, January 26, 1939.
100. DNB text, January 27, 1939.
101. Reports on the festivities in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1939.
102. For details on the significance of the National Prize see above, January 30, 1937.
103. Willy Messerschmitt, born 1898 in Frankfurt am Main; aircraft designer. The most famous of Messerschmitt's planes engaged in combat during the Second World War were the 'Me 109' and the 'Me 110.'
Ernst Heinrich Heinkel, born 1888 in Grumbach, Württemberg; aircraft designer. The best known of Heinkel's planes was the two engine long distance bomber 'He 111.'
Dr. h. c. Ferdinand Porsche, born 1875 in Maffersdorf, Bohemia; died 1951 in Stuttgart; engineer and manufacturer of automobiles; designer of the Volkswagen.
Dr. Fritz Todt, born 1891 in Pforzheim; died 1942 in a plane crash near Rastenburg in East Prussia; Inspector General for railroad construction

- in Germany; head of the “Organization Todt” (OT) responsible for the construction of roads and fortifications; Reich Minister for Ammunition and Weaponry from 1940 to 1942.
104. In 1938, Hitler had announced renaming the Volkswagen the “KdF-Wagen” (Strength through Joy car). See above, pp. 1111 f., May 26, 1938.
 105. The famous Wehrmacht’s car open at the side was called “Kübelwagen.”
 106. See above, January 30, 1938.
 107. Hermann Esser, member of Hitler’s Old Guard; State Minister of Bavaria and President of the Landtag in 1933; Vice President of the Reichstag in 1934.
 108. In accordance to Article 23 of the Weimar Constitution, a newly elected Reichstag had to convene within thirty days of its election.
 109. Per 60,000 votes cast one delegate was assigned a seat. 41 additional seats were created in the Reichstag elected on April 10, 1938 as a result of the December 4, 1938 supplementary election in the Sudetenland. It was the last Reichstag to be elected in the Third Reich. This Reichstag was in session eight times. In 1939, it convened on January 30, April 28, September 1, and October 6. In 1940, it was called into session only on July 19. It met twice in 1941, on May 4 and December 11 and convened one last time on April 26, 1942. On August 27, 1939, one unofficial meeting, at which Hitler was also present, took place in the Mosaic Hall of the Chancellery.
 110. Dr. Emil Georg von Stauss, born 1877; banker; Prussian State Counselor.
 111. Published in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1939. See also the Eher pamphlet, *Der Führer vor dem ersten Reichstag Grossdeutschlands—Reichstagsrede vom 30. Januar 1939* (Munich, 1939).
 112. According to Hitler’s own assertions on March 24, 1936, there had been 47 parties and not only 35. See above, March 24, 1936.
 113. See above, pp. 1061 ff., speech of March 18, 1938.
 114. Allusion to the English.
 115. “Reasonable resolutions” in Hitler’s mind always implied solutions that completely satisfied his demands. For instance, the annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, as well as the return of the Memel territory, the demand for Danzig and the Polish Corridor, were “reasonable resolutions” in his eyes.
 116. Hitler loved to employ imagery connected with bananas which is evident already in *Mein Kampf*, p. 157. Probably he did so because of the song “Ausgerechnet Bananen!” which was popular in the Twenties and Thirties.
 117. Alfred Duff Cooper, born 1890 in London; knighted Lord Nordwich in 1952; Secretary of War from 1935 to 1937; First Lord of the Admiralty from 1937 to 1938; Minister of Information from 1939 to 1940; Chancellor of the Duchy Lancaster from 1941 to 1943.
 118. Sir Anthony Eden, 1st Earl of Avon; born 1897 in Windlestone; died 1977; married Clarissa Churchill, niece of Winston Churchill; repeatedly served as Minister in the British Government in various prominent

positions; Lord Privy Seal 1934–35; Foreign Secretary from 1935 to 1938; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs from 1939 to 1940; Secretary of State for War in 1940; Foreign Secretary from 1940 to 1945; Foreign Secretary from 1951 to 1955; Prime Minister from 1955 to 1957.

119. Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, born 1874 at Blenheim Palace (lineage Dukes of Marlborough); died 1965; knighted in 1953; Member of Parliament (House of Commons) since 1900; Under Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs from 1905 to 1908; Minister for Commerce from 1908 to 1910; Minister of the Interior from 1910 to 1911; First Lord of the Admiralty from 1911 to 1915; Secretary for Ammunition from 1917 to 1919; Secretary of War from 1919 to 1921; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs from 1921 to 1922; Finance Minister from 1924 to 1929; First Lord of the Admiralty from 1939 to 1940; Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and Secretary of Defense from 1940 to 1945; served second term as Prime Minister from 1951 to 1955; Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953.

Churchill was Hitler's primary and most challenging adversary. He not only prevailed militarily and politically, but also outdid Hitler with a likewise powerful, but more sophisticated rhetoric. Great Britain afforded Churchill a royal burial at his death in 1965.

120. Harold Le Claire Ickes, born 1874 in Frankstown; died 1952 in Washington; Secretary of the Interior from 1933 to 1946.
121. The United States did not ally itself with Great Britain in both world wars because of "capitalistic motives," as Hitler would have it, but because of a feeling of solidarity prevalent in all English-speaking countries in times of war and strong ties between their respective leaderships and upper classes.
122. Inflation in Germany resulted not from "Jewish agitation and activities," but rather came about as a natural consequence of the First World War.
123. The actual figures were 140,000 dairy cows; 90,000 cows went to France and 50,000 were accorded to Belgium. See Treaty of Versailles, supplement IV, paragraph 6 in RGBL 1919, p. 1033.
124. See above, pp. 689 ff., 703.
125. This was Hitler's personal interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine.
126. Later Hitler would claim that he had voiced this threat on September 1, 1939. He maintained this in two speeches; one speech on January 30, 1941 and the other precisely one year later. Actually this threat dated back to his January 30, 1939 speech while he remained silent on the topic in his September address before the Reichstag. See above, Introduction, p. 41.
127. It is no easy task to differentiate between political activism and religious conviction in authoritarian and totalitarian states. On the one hand, religious congregations and the Church in general cannot always remain silent in face of certain measures by these governments. Silence might be construed as indirect approval. On the other hand, it is only natural that an authoritarian government would survey with great suspicion any religious activities outside the confines of the church

and beyond religious instruction. This was especially true in the case of the creation of youth groups or any other social and charitable undertaking that might conceivably lead to the defiance of the state later in life.

In the days of the Third Reich, no citizen was prohibited from attending church services and as a result no one had to fear any discrimination of his person or in the pursuit of his career. While eager churchgoers might be ridiculed by their contemporaries this was no different from the disdain for those involved in religion that had already existed in the Weimar Republic and even earlier in Imperial Germany.

There was no systematic, brutal, or bloody persecution of the Church during the Third Reich. The members of the hierarchy of church leaders, such as cardinals or bishops, hardly ever were curtailed in exercising the rights of their person. One exception to this rule was Bishop Sproll who was prohibited from visiting his own diocese.

However, some religious orders were treated more severely. In southern Germany, numerous monasteries of the Benedictine order were disbanded especially during the Second World War. Clergy members of lesser standing, whether Catholic or Protestant, who were involved in opposition movements were arrested, incarcerated, and tortured in concentration camps. Several German clergymen died as martyrs in the camps. In reality, however, the percentage of foreign clerics who suffered this fate was far greater than that of the Germans. Polish priests in particular were disproportionately persecuted and died in the camps. Nevertheless, the Church in the Third Reich was not restricted in the exercise of its freedom of instruction, liturgy, and teaching of dogma. Indeed, it seems as though the Church's activities in 19th century Bavaria, for instance, were more significantly curtailed by the kings who intervened in the Catholic Church's affairs far more frequently than Hitler ever did. In return for his generosity, he expected obliging behavior. As the Church was well aware, Hitler could pressure it by withholding tax revenues, if it failed to perform in accordance to his desires.

128. As usual, the figures given are greatly exaggerated and inaccurate. For example, the government is only indirectly rendering a service to the taxpayer by collecting the compulsory church tax. As is well known, Hitler was most generous in distributing funds, and the Church also received its fill. It is no accident that a great number of new churches and monasteries were constructed during the Third Reich period.
129. This turn of phrase was a rhetorical masterpiece by Hitler. It was obvious that the various denominations would oppose any curtailing of their incomes. They would not be pleased if the state's assistance in collecting church taxes were suddenly withdrawn. Undoubtedly the Church was thus prepared for any extreme in accommodating Hitler, accepting him as the "lesser evil." A number of pastors involved in the Protestant *Bekenntniskirche* (Confessional Church) formed one notable exception to this general rule. As a result, they did not obtain any tax-

based income and hence had to rely on donations.

130. Hitler had the nerve to insist the June 30, 1934 murder of numerous SA members had been justified as they all had been homosexuals. In 1934, he had alleged high treason as a reason for the killings and claimed that there had been an assassination plot directed against him. See above, pp. 486 ff., speech of July 13, 1934.
131. Reference to the archbishops Marahrens of Hanover, Meiser of Bavaria, and Wurm of Württemberg.
132. See above, pp. 878 f.; law dated February 18, 1937. RGBl. 1937, I, p. 241.
133. Reference is made to the Pact concluded by Italy and Prussia on April 8, 1866, on the basis of which both assaulted Austria and divided the spoils.
134. Evidently, Hitler still remained convinced that Italy would be bold enough to risk war with the Western Powers because of such trivial issues as Tunis, Corsica, or Nice. He had expressed this conviction on November 5, 1937 in his secret address. See above, p. 970. Whether Hitler truly would have rushed to Italy's rescue is highly questionable, despite all forceful and "cold-blooded" declarations to the contrary. For one thing, Hitler placed little stock in upholding contractual obligations. In *Mein Kampf*, moreover, he had condemned Imperial Germany for supporting Austria's cause simply because of legal obligations. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 155. Furthermore, Hitler would greatly have preferred an alliance with Great Britain in particular if such a friendship entailed carte blanche for Germany's conquest of the East. As he openly declared in August 1939, he would readily have sacrificed friendship with Italy, Japan, or Russia for an understanding with Britain. See below, August 27 and August 28, 1939.
135. The fact that no change in regime influenced the fighting morale of troops to any significant extent was amply proved in the course of the Second World War. The Italians under Mussolini were in no sense superior to those who had fought in the First World War. The fervent opposition encountered by the invading troops as they marched into Bolshevik Russia was no different from that encountered by Charles XII of Sweden or Napoleon I in the course of the invasion of Tsarist Russia. Neither did Hitler inspire the German soldier sufficiently to change his performance on the battlefield.
136. This "truly frightening" threat uttered by Hitler could never have been carried out and most certainly not at that particular point in time. Neither the Foreign Ministry nor the Propaganda Ministry possessed the experts necessary to respond to the radio broadcasts swamping Germany. Neither of the agencies had specialists sufficiently versed in the conditions in the Anglo-Saxon countries to effectively counter the radio shows from abroad. There were hardly any foreign-language radio shows in existence at the time. It was not until late March 1939 that the Reich broadcasting companies in Cologne and Hamburg began airing 45-minute news broadcasts in English. Once war broke out, these stations received additional attention, their shows were

- expanded upon and restructured. It was greatly ironic that this demanded recruiting Englishmen who volunteered their services, supposedly because of their opposition to the British Government. A prominent member of this propaganda team was the son of the British Minister Amery.
137. One such anti-Semitic film was *Jud Süß*, directed by Veit Harlan in 1939. Its anti-Semitic currents were very subdued and most certainly did not fulfill Hitler's expectations. On a side note, the production of anti-Semitic films was not very successful, lacking suitable screen-writers.
 138. Reference to the Polish Marshal Pilsudski.
 139. For the precise nature of this "profound appreciation" see above, January 14, 1939.
 140. Hitler was implying that Germany had no peaceful border to its East. This would have to be changed by means of the conquest of new Lebensraum in the East. Hitler was convinced that the British would ultimately resign themselves to this plan.
 141. As was known, Hitler desired that the smaller states in particular withdraw from the League of Nations and subjugate themselves to his reign.
 142. The new Czechoslovakian Government did its utmost to accomodate Hitler's demands in search for a "path toward inner calm and order." Nonetheless, whenever it pleased him, Hitler would reprimand it for "falling back upon the methods employed by the former State President Beneš."
 143. Hungary and Manchukuo joined the Anti-Comintern Pact on February 24, 1939 officially. RGBL. 1939, II, pp. 745-749.
 144. Hitler would greatly have preferred had the Anglo-Saxon Powers occupied themselves solely with domestic matters.
 145. With this turn of the phrase, Hitler implied that while it was "almost" impossible for one single man to solve the world's problems, this did not apply to a genius such as the Führer.
 146. See above, pp. 274 f.
 147. This law is printed in RGBL. 1939, I, p. 95.
 148. See above, January 30, 1937.
 149. Printed in RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 95 f.
 150. See above, p. 875, January 30, 1939.
 151. Article 23 of the Weimar Constitution read as follows: "The Reichstag shall serve a four-year term. A new election shall be held within 60 days after the expiration of the term of service. The Reichstag shall convene within 30 days of its election." RGBL. 1919, p. 1388.
 152. See above, p. 275.
 153. Before a gathering of Kreisleiters, Hitler had declared on April 29, 1937: "Had I believed that the German Volk was not in complete support of these measures, I would have acted nonetheless—however without conducting a plebiscite. I would have simply said that this was a risk I had to take!" See above, p. 890.

154. See above, pp. 738 ff., January 15, 1936.
155. See above, pp. 486 ff.
156. See above, picture XII.
157. See above, pp. 1244 ff., speech of November 10, 1938 and Introduction, pp. 26 f.
158. See above, June 30 and July 3, 1934.
159. See above, pp. 287 ff., March 23, 1933.
160. Four years earlier, Hitler had declared: "If I lose Germany, I can win it back again." See above, p. 649, March 5, 1935.
161. Bürckel shot himself in September 1944 after the Allies' conquest of the Lorraine forced his premature retreat from Metz. From the author's notes, information obtained from Helmut Heiber, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich. See below, September 29, 1944.
162. Wolf Heinrich Graf von Helldorff, born 1896 in Merseburg; placed Berlin's police forces at the disposal of the new Reich Government prematurely formed after erroneous reports of Hitler's death on July 20, 1944; subsequently arrested, sentenced to death, and hanged.
163. However, the verbatim content of the electoral law was easily accessible since it was printed in RGBL 1939, I, pp. 95 f.
164. On every January 30 in the years 1934, 1937 and 1939, the Reichstag was called in session. In the war years 1940 through 1942, Hitler had Goebbels stage a "Volk's rally" before a carefully selected audience in the Berlin Sportpalast. From 1943 on, Hitler no longer graced these rallies with his presence. Especially the disastrous defeat at Stalingrad kept Hitler from attending in 1943. Instead, he assigned Goebbels the task of reading aloud the Führer's January 30 proclamation. Goebbels also had to speak before the Wehrmacht in Hitler's name. Over the next two years, Hitler would broadcast his address in commemoration of the Enabling Act from the confines of his headquarters.
165. See above, pp. 1093 f., April 23, 1938.
166. DNB text, January 31, 1939.
167. Odilo Globocnik, born 1904; Chief of Staff with the Landesleitung Austria before the Anschluss; Gauleiter of Vienna in 1938.
168. DNB text, January 30, 1939.
169. DNB report, January 31, 1939.
170. For details on the SA Standarte *Feldherrnhalle* see above, p. 1091, and 1938, note 227.
171. DNB report and *Weltbild* report, February 1, 1939.
172. The trophy in question consisted of a silver, galvanized bowl balanced on four cloven feet. The German team secured the trophy on February 4, 1939 as Major Momm and the two cavalry captains Hesse and Brinkmann won the tournament.
173. Report in VB, No. 33, February 2, 1939.
174. Alfred Kesselring, born 1884 in Marktsteft (Lower Franconia) died 1960; Field Marshal in 1940; Commander in Chief of the Western Front in March 1945; sentenced to death in Nuremberg in 1947, commuted to life imprisonment; released in 1952.

175. Helmut Felmy, General der Flieger 1938; played a central role in 1941 in the attempted uprising in Iraq.
176. Hugo Sperrle, born 1885 in Ludwigsburg; died 1953 in Munich; Field Marshal in 1940.
177. Erhard Milch; born 1892 in Wilhelmshaven; Field Marshal in 1940.
178. Hans-Jürgen Stumpff, Colonel General in 1940.
179. Ernst Udet, born 1896 in Frankfurt am Main; suicide in 1941; Colonel General in 1940.
180. This was one of Hitler's favorite expressions, one he used frequently in reference to military measures. See above, February 4, 1938.
181. Adolf Friedrich Graf von Schack, born 1815 in Brüsewitz; died 1894 in Rome; poet and literary historian; lived in Munich from 1855 on and bequeathed his extremely valuable collection of paintings to the Emperor.
182. DNB note, February 9, 1939. The new Schack gallery was to find a permanent home in the exhibition halls at the Königlicher Platz in Munich.
183. DNB text, February 4, 1939.
184. Emperor Pu Yi, born 1906; Emperor of China from 1908 to 1912; crowned as puppet emperor of Manchukuo by the Japanese in 1934; incarcerated by the Russians in 1945.
185. DNB note, February 2, 1939.
186. DNB note, February 9, 1939.
187. Sir Henry Deterding, director of Royal Dutch Shell; advocated a revision of the Treaty of Versailles favorable to Germany.
188. DNB note, February 10, 1939.
189. DNB text, February 10, 1939. Meissner attended a requiem for Pope Pius XI in Berlin's St. Hedwig's Cathedral in Hitler's stead as well.
190. Reports on the February 10, 1939 diplomatic receptions in VB, No. 44, February 13, 1939.
191. Prior to the March 27, 1941 Putsch in Belgrade, Aleksander Cincar-Markovich served as Foreign Minister.
192. DNB report, February 10, 1939. Also printed in VB, No. 42, February 11, 1939.
193. DNB note, February 12, 1939.
194. DNB text, February 12, 1939.
195. Tuka had spent several years in Czechoslovakian jails.
196. For the report on the meeting at which Ribbentrop and Karmasin, head of the ethnic German movement in Slovakia, were also present see IMT, 2790-PS, and IMT, Blue Series, Vol. III, p. 172. Once the meeting had ended, Tuka turned to Hitler and said: "I place the fate of my people in your hands."
197. Hitler's intent was particularly transparent when, at the April launching of the second battleship, he christened it the *Tirpitz* and held a most aggressive speech aimed at Great Britain. In fact, the two battleships had an actual tonnage of 42,900 ton and 41,700 tons, respectively. See below, April 1, 1939.

198. On May 26, 1932, Hitler had already entered the following dedication into the cruiser *Cologne*'s visitor's book: "With the hope of being able to help in rebuilding a fleet worthy of the Reich. Adolf Hitler." See above, p. 135.
199. Despite the accelerated pace of battleship construction from 1935 to 1938, the German Navy had not at all reached a supposed parity of 1:3 with that of Great Britain. Even presupposing the greatest of efforts, it would have taken several additional years to reach such a level of parity.
200. Otto Eduard Leopold Prince von Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg, born 1815 in Schönhausen; died July 30, 1898 in Friedrichsruh where, on his own request, he was interred in a neo-Romanesque mausoleum in a local park; Reich Chancellor from 1871 to 1890.
201. DNB text, February 13, 1939.
202. Otto Christian Archibald Prince von Bismarck, born 1897 in Schönhausen; Deputy Director of the Political Department of the German Foreign Ministry from 1936 to 1940; Counselor with rank of Minister in the German Embassy in Rome from April 1, 1940 on; married to Ann-Marie Tengbom (born 1907 in Stockholm) in 1928.
203. The battleship had an actual tonnage of 42,900 tons; a length of 241 meters; eight 38 cm cannons; twelve 15 cm cannons. During the Second World War, the *Bismarck* sank the British battleship *Hood* in the Atlantic Ocean. Subsequently, the *Bismarck* was made the subject of a pursuit by British battleships and fighter airplanes which disabled it. The British sank the *Bismarck* on May 27, 1941 with the entire crew aboard, numbering well over 2,000 men. For the so-called "pocket battleships" see below, notes 330 and 1276.
204. Printed in VB, No. 46, February 15, 1939.
205. Hitler is referring to the June 21, 1916 self-destruction of the main components of the German High Seas Fleet, confined to the Scapa Flow harbor. Under Admiral von Reuter's command, the crews sank their own ships, namely: five big cruisers, five small cruisers, ten liners, and 46 torpedo boats. Nine sailors were killed and thirty injured due to British machine gun fire.
206. The battleships in question were the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*. Both vessels had a tonnage supposedly not in excess of 26,000 tons. Their actual tonnage was 31,800 tons. While Hitler had attended the launching of the *Scharnhorst* in October of 1936, he had chosen not to speak on the occasion. See above, October 3, 1936.
207. The armored cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* in service with the Imperial Fleet had both been launched in 1906. Each had a tonnage of 11,600 tons. The British sank both ships during an engagement near the Falkland Islands in the great sea battle of December 8, 1914. See also below, note 1276.
208. This statement revealed Hitler's true assessment of Bismarck: he held the Iron Chancellor to have been a high priest of the advent of National Socialism in Germany.

209. Reference is made to the War of 1864 against Denmark, the 1866 battles against Austria and the German states Bavaria, Frankfurt, Hanover, Hesse, Nassau etc., and to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.
210. Dorothee von Loewenfeld, born 1892 in Hanover as Countess von Bismarck; daughter of Bismarck's second son Wilhelm Otto (1852–1901).
211. Hitler's ordinance is printed in RGBl. 1939, I, p. 785. He had already introduced similar emblems to the Wehrmacht, police, fire-department, anti-aircraft units, and the SS Verfügungstruppe.
212. Published in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1939.
213. Adolf von Schell, born 1893 in Magdeburg; Plenipotentiary for Motor Vehicles and Deputy State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Transportation as of November 1, 1938; Major General in 1940; Lieutenant General in 1942; Commander of the Twenty-Fifth Panzer Division in 1943; retired 1944.
214. Due to the onset of war, this was in fact the last automobile exhibition to take place in the Third Reich.
215. On the subject of Hitler 'secret speeches' to workers see above, pp. 685 and 712.
216. DNB report, February 17, 1939.
217. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 263–265.
218. Karl Wahl, born 1892 in Aalen; Gauleiter (1928) and District President (1934) of Swabia; SS Gruppenführer 1935, SS Obergruppenführer 1944; imprisoned 1945–1948.
219. Fritz Wächtler, born 1891; teacher by profession; Gauleiter of the Bavarian Ostmark consisting of Upper Franconia and Upper Palatinate; succeeded Hans Schemm as leader of the NS teachers' association; Bavarian State Minister for Education and Culture from 1935 to 1938. For details on Hans Schemm see above, 1935, note 61.
220. Josef Wagner, born 1899 in Algringen; teacher by profession; Gauleiter and Oberpräsident of Southern Palatinate; of Silesia from 1940 to 1945; murdered 1945 on Hitler's orders.
221. Martin Mutschmann, born 1879 in Hirschberg; industrialist by profession; Gauleiter and Reich Governor of Saxony.
222. Dr. Siegfried Uiberreither, born 1908; attorney by profession; Gauleiter and Reich Governor of Styria.
223. Karl Kaufmann, born 1900 in Krefeld; farmer by profession; Gauleiter and Reich Governor of Hamburg.
224. Dr. Otto Hellmuth, born 1896 in Marktbreit; dentist by profession; Gauleiter and District President of Würzburg (Gau Mainfranken); went underground after the war; arrested and sentenced to death in an American court martial; later pardoned.
225. Nevertheless, Hitler continued issuing decrees also during the war to remodel German cities. See also below, ordinances of July 12, 1940.
226. Hubert Klausner, born 1892; died February 12, 1939 in Vienna; retired Major; NSDAP Landesleiter in Austria before the Anschluss; thereafter Minister in the Seyss-Inquart Cabinet; Gauleiter of Carinthia. See

- above, pp. 1042 and 1122.
227. DNB report, February 18, 1939.
228. Hermann Burte (actual surname: Strübe), born 1879; National Socialist; Alemannic poet and painter; well-known for his two novels *Wiltfeber der ewige Deutsche* and *Katte*.
229. Josef Cerny (pen name: Stolzing), born 1869 in Vienna; National Socialist author.
230. DNB note, February 21, 1939.
231. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Franco quoted from DNB text, February 23, 1939.
232. Report in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1939.
233. National Socialists interpreted the “black-red-gold” coalition in the following manner: The “black” International (consisting of the Catholic Church and the Center Party), the “red” International (constituted by Marxists, Social Democrats, and Communists), both allied with the “golden” International (based on banking circles, capitalists, and plutocrats). In the days of the Weimar Republic, this coalition was allegedly made up of Center Party, SPD, and German State Party (German Democratic Party).
234. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1939.
235. RGBL 1939, I, p. 322.
236. Up to this point, the *Heldengedenkttag* (Heroes’ Memorial Day) had been celebrated on a different Sunday. Before 1934, this national holiday had been entitled *Volksstrauertag* (Day of National Mourning).
237. See the German Ambassador’s report, February 25, 1939. Printed in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 146, p. 95.
238. DNB report, February 28, 1939.
239. Ibid.
240. Sir Nevile Henderson, born 1882 in Sedgwick Park; died 1942 in London; British Ambassador in Berlin from 1937 to 1939; on home leave from October 18, 1938 to February 13, 1939; seriously ill with cancer. See above, May 11, 1937. On his diplomatic activities see Rudi Strauch, *Sir Nevile Henderson* (Bonn, 1959).
241. For an account of Henderson’s meeting with Hitler see DBrFP, IV, no. 163, p. 165. Printed in Strauch, p. 190.
242. Eugenio Pacelli, born 1876 in Rome as son of an Italian aristocrat; died 1958 in Castel Gandolfo; Nuncio in Munich in 1917; Nuncio in Berlin from 1920 to 1929; Cardinal in 1929; Cardinal State Secretary in 1930.
243. On March 5, 1939, Pope Pius XII received Hitler’s congratulations conveyed to him by the German Ambassador von Bergen. DNB report, March 6, 1939.
244. While Pope Pius XI had signed a concordat with Hitler, he nonetheless developed a certain dislike for the Third Reich in the following years. This disenchantment was the result of religious misgivings on the policies espoused by it, and in particular his displeasure with Rosenberg’s and Himmler’s activities directed against the established church. The encyclical entitled *Vigilanti cura* (with grave concern)—which the

Pope published on this account on March 14, 1937—created great consternation in Germany. It reinforced the loyalty of Germany's Catholics and of the clergy in general. The encyclical had little impact on the politics of the Third Reich, however. Hitler did not concern himself with religious matters in general. Questions of power politics had primacy over any other issues and, for this reason, the Concordat binding the Reich and the Vatican was extremely important to him. Had the Vatican indeed sought to curtail Hitler's excesses in foreign policy effectively, it would have had to annul the Concordat and sever diplomatic ties to the Third Reich. Rome could not persuade itself to take this final, decisive step, in particular because of financial considerations.

245. Franz Josef II, Prince of Liechtenstein, born 1906 in Frauenthal, Styria; succeeded his great-uncle Franz de Paula as head of the principality in 1938; ruled until 1989.
246. Report in VB, No. 62, March 3, 1939.
247. DNB report, March 6, 1939.
248. DNB text, March 5, 1939.
249. Report in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1939.
250. Report in VB, No. 69, March 10, 1939.
251. Report in VB, No. 69, March 10, 1939. The principals' telegram had the following content: "The force of the National Socialist Movement has restored German science to the well-springs of its knowledge. By means of this deed, the Movement applied itself once more for the greater good of the German Volk. Everyone active in education and research pledges himself and dedicates his efforts to you loyally, deeply grateful for the great blessing bestowed upon him in allowing him to partake in the pursuit of this mission."
252. DNB report, March 10, 1939.
253. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 12, 1939.
254. See above, 1939, Major Events in Summary. Prague announced the assignment of General Leo Prchala to the post of Minister of the Interior of the Carpatho-Ukrainian Government on March 6, 1939. Vološin refused to recognize this appointment.
255. See above, February 12, 1939.
256. Nikolaus Prucinsky, Slovak Finance Minister from 1939 to 1945.
257. Karol Sidor, Slovak Minister-President from March 12 to March 14, 1939.
258. The events were the following: The swastika flag is pronounced Reich flag along with the former official, black-white-red flag (1933); introduction of the sovereign symbol of the Party to the Reichswehr (1934); reintroduction of general conscription to Germany (1935); military occupation of the Rhineland (1936); Anschluss of Austria (1938).
259. According to the information disseminated, Göring was to remain in San Remo until after Easter 1939, i.e. until April 9. Göring's presence there was to underline Germany's peaceful intent which would be

- crudely disrupted by the Czech “provocations.” Actually Göring was well aware of the situation and merely awaited Hitler’s summons. He made his timely appearance in Berlin on March 14, 1939.
260. DNB text, March 12, 1939.
 261. In retaliation for the bombing of the German armored ship *Deutschland*, the Spanish harbor Almeria was fired upon by German naval units on May 31, 1937. See above, pp. 899 ff.
 262. Franz Graf Conrad von Hötzendorf, born 1852 in Penzing; died 1925 and interred at the Hietzinger cemetery in Vienna; Field Marshal in the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Austrian Chief of Staff 1912–17.
 263. For details on Keppler’s and Bürckel’s activities in the course of the Anschluss see above, March 11, 1938.
 264. Cf. DNB notes, March 12 and March 13, 1939.
 265. DNB text, March 13, 1939.
 266. Cf. Photo report by Hoffmann in *Bild*, March 13, 1939.
 267. For details on the meeting see above, February 12, 1938.
 268. For details on Tiso’s meeting with Hitler on March 3, 1939 see DGFP, D, IV, no. 202, pp. 243 ff.
 269. In all likelihood, Hitler is referring to his meeting with Tuka a month earlier. See above, February 12, 1939.
 270. See above, pp. 1229 and 1265.
 271. See below, March 15, 1939.
 272. Cf. Strauch, p. 196, Bullock, pp. 487 ff. and DGFP, D, IV, no. 202, pp. 243 ff.
 273. See above, pp. 1244 ff., speech of November 10, 1938 and p. 1212, Brauchitsch’s statements of October 1, 1938.
 274. Numerous sources claim that Hácha and his retinue did not arrive until 10:30 p.m., possibly not until 10:40 p.m.; see for example Herbert von Moos, *Das grosse Weltgeschehen*, Vol. I (Bern, 1940), p. 51. However, photographs of the honor guard welcoming Hácha at the Anhalt train station were taken in daylight so that he must have arrived before 7:00 p.m.
 275. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 437 ff. For minutes of Hácha’s meeting with Hitler see DGFP, D, IV, no. 228, pp. 263 ff. and IMT, 2798-PS.
 276. See above, February 12, 1938.
 277. In his own defense at the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, Göring stated that he had never contemplated actually carrying out his threat of bombing Prague and that such a step had not been necessary. This threat was to expedite matters by intimidating the Czechs. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. IX, p. 371.
 278. Dr. Theodor Morell, an obscure *Modearzt* (fashionable doctor) served as Hitler’s private physician from 1938 to 1945. See above, Introduction, p. 32, and note 75.
 279. DGFP, D, IV, no. 229, p. 270.
 280. Cf. Zoller, p. 84.
 281. The SS leveled the Czech village Lidice, located near Prague, in retribution for the June 1942 assassination of SS Obergruppenführer

- Heydrich. He had been Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia and Chief of the Security Police in the area. All male residents of the village older than sixteen years and several female residents were shot on site. The remaining women were incarcerated in the Ravensbrück concentration camp while the children were distributed to various other camps. See below, June 18, 1942.
282. DNB text, March 15, 1939.
 283. Ibid.
 284. Ibid.
 285. The Second Panzer Division in Vienna was placed on alert at 3:00 p.m. on March 13, 1939. Cf. report in *Mainfränkische Zeitung*, March 25, 1939.
 286. See above, p. 1265.
 287. DNB text, March 15, 1939.
 288. Erich Hoepfner, born 1886; hanged August 8, 1944; Commander of the First Light Division in 1938; Colonel General in 1941; Commander in Chief of the Fourth Panzer Division; dismissed from his post; arrested in connection with the July 20, 1944 attempt on Hitler's life.
 289. On the significance of the so-called "Hitler weather" for the Third Reich, see above, 1935, note 50.
 290. Wilhelm List, born 1880 in Oberkirch; Field Marshal in 1940. Johannes Blaskowitz, Infantry General; Commander in Chief of the Third Army Division at Dresden; Colonel General in 1940; committed suicide in a Nuremberg prison in 1946.
 291. Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart, born 1902; State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of the Interior.
 292. Published in DGFP, D, IV, no. 246, pp. 283 ff. Original in RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 485 ff.
 293. Jan Sirovy, born 1888 in Trebitsch; two times Minister-President in 1938 (September–October and October–December); President of the Republic *ad interim* October 5–November 30, 1938; Minister of Defense December 1938–March 1939.
 294. DNB text, March 16, 1939.
 295. DNB text March 20, 1939.
 296. Exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Tiso in VB, No. 76, March 17, 1939.
 297. DNB text, March 16, 1939.
 298. DNB report, March 17, 1939.
 299. Ibid.
 300. Cf. Berndt, *Marsch*, p. 471.
 301. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 549. Hitler's ordinance concerning the administrative position to be occupied by the Reich Protectorate was published on March 22, 1939 and read as follows:

Article I

(1) The Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia shall be the sole representative of the Führer and Reich Chancellor, and of the Reich Government in the Protectorate.

(2) He shall be directly responsible to the Führer and shall accept instructions from the Führer exclusively.

Article II

(1) The central agency responsible for the implementation of the Führer and Reich Chancellor's ordinance pertaining to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia shall be the Reich Ministry of the Interior.

(2) All administrative offices shall secure the central agency's approval of any and all measures concerning the Protectorate, in particular with regard to the promulgation of laws and the implementation of organizational measures.

Article III

(1) The Führer and Reich Chancellor reserves for himself final decision on all regulations pertaining to Article I.

(2) The Reich Ministry of the Interior issues all regulations pertaining to Article II.

Hitler appointed the Sudeten German Karl Hermann Frank as Deputy to the Reich Protector. This appointment revealed once again Hitler's reluctance to appoint natives to crucial positions in the newly acquired territories, as had been equally evident in the case of the Saar, Austria, Danzig, and the Memel territory.

Karl Hermann Frank, born 1898 in Karlsbad; publicly hanged 1945 by the Czechs in Prague; Deputy Gauleiter; State Secretary and Deputy Reich Protector in 1939; State Minister in 1943.

302. RGBL. 1939, II, p. 607.

303. The combine "Hermann-Göring-Werke" was created in the years 1938 and 1939, and consisted of various armament factories located in the Old Reich (e.g. Brunswick, Salzgitter, Wolfenbüttel) and Austria (e.g. Steyr).
304. These consultations led to the March 25, 1939 decree on the remodeling of the city of Linz on the Danube River. RGBL. 1939, I, p. 601.

305. See above, March 18, 1938.

306. DNB text, March 18, 1939.

307. See above, September 27, 1939.

308. See above, pp. 1187 and 1193, speech of September 26, 1938.

309. Cf. Schmidt, *ibid.*, p. 439.

310. Cf. *The Times*, March 16, 1939 and Chamberlain, pp. 405 ff.

311. Cf. Strauch, p. 202.

312. Sir Neville Chamberlain had been born in Birmingham on March 18, 1869. He held the speech the night before his seventieth birthday.

313. Chamberlain, pp. 417 ff. and *British Blue Book*, pp. 5 ff.

314. The United States had recalled its Ambassador in Berlin immediately after the November 1938 Pogrom.

315. DNB text, March 19, 1939.

316. See above, pp. 1043 f., March 11, 1938.

317. See Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 43.

318. *Ibid.*

319. See below, April 7, 1939.
320. See above, October 1, 1938.
321. See above, January 21, 1939.
322. For Ribbentrop's notes see *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 203, pp. 130 f.
323. Ribbentrop's choice of words indicates that he was simply reiterating Hitler's argumentation.
324. See below, March 26, 1939.
325. See above, November 24, 1939.
326. Article 99 of the Treaty of Versailles.
327. See above, pp. 666 ff., May 21, 1935.
328. See above, January 5, 1939.
329. DNB text, March 22, 1939.
330. In compliance with the Treaty of Versailles' stipulations, each of the three *Panzerschiffe* (armed ships) *Deutschland*, *Admiral Graf Spee*, and *Admiral Scheer* had a tonnage restricted to 10,000 tons. However, each had a higher number of guns than customary. Thus circumventing the restrictions imposed by the Treaty, they were also commonly known as "pocket battleships" (*Taschen-Panzerkreuzer*).
331. RGBL. 1939, II, pp. 608 f.
332. See above, March 13, 1938.
333. RGBL. 1939, I, p. 5599
334. Even in the case of a tiny, relatively unimportant region such as the Memel territory, Hitler was not willing to assign a native to a crucial position. Hence, the head of the Memel German Movement, Neumann, was merely assigned to the Reich German Gauleiter Koch as deputy.
335. For details on this "Ordnungsdienst" see above, 1939, note 55.
336. DNB text, March 23, 1939.
337. DNB text, March 24, 1939.
338. Grigore Gafencu, born 1892 in Bucharest; State Secretary to the Minister-President from 1930 to 1938; Rumanian Foreign Minister from 1939 to 1940; dismissed from the Diplomatic Corps by Antonescu in 1941; went into exile in Paris after World War II.
339. Verbatim account printed in RGBL. 1939, II, pp. 779 ff.
340. Originally this law had been issued in late 1936. See above, December 1, 1936. Both ordinances of March 25, 1939 concern the implementation of the law and are printed in RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 709 ff.
341. RGBL. 1939, I, p. 989. In September 1919, a group of engineers, technicians, and temporary workers had organized themselves on a volunteer basis. They founded the "*Technische Nothilfe*" (Technical Emergency Relief Organization) which, in the event of strikes or other calamities, provided the manpower necessary to keep public services running. By the nature of its work, the organization became an indirect support for the government in place. While the association professed no political allegiances, it displayed strong right-wing preferences.
342. RGBL. 1939, I, p. 745.
343. Published in VB, No. 86, March 27, 1939.

344. Mussolini held this speech in the Rome Olympia Stadium.
345. Dr. Gerhard Wagner, born 1887; died March 25, 1939 in Munich; leader of the Reichsärzteschaft (Reich Physicians' Association).
346. Printed in VB, No. 86, March 27, 1939.
347. Printed in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 208, pp. 134 f.
348. Reference is made to Hitler's speech before the Reichstag in late February 1938, in which he declared: "The Polish nation respects the national conditions in this state, and this city and Germany both respect Polish rights." See above, p. 1032, February 20, 1938.
349. Ribbentrop's notes are printed in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 208, p. 133.
350. Hitler used this expression in his speech of April 1, 1939. See below.
351. Report in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1939.
352. DNB text, March 28, 1939.
353. Report in VB, Berlin Edition, March 30, 1939.
354. DNB report, March 30, 1939.
355. RGBL 1939, I, p. 761.
356. DNB notes, March 31, 1939. Captain Freiherr von Moreau had crashed on March 26, 1939. He was a veteran of the Condor Legion deployed in the Spanish Civil War. He was also a veteran pilot who had many record-holding flights to his credit, such as the cross-Atlantic flight from Berlin to New York and a flight linking Berlin and Tokyo. Hitler had a wreath placed at his funeral.
357. Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 17, p. 36 and Chamberlain, p. 423. In a letter soon afterwards, Chamberlain made the following precise distinction: "What we are concerned with is not the boundaries of States but attacks on their independence. And it is we who will judge whether their independence is threatened or not." Cf. H[enry] N[orman] Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, Volume I, *Rearmament Policy* (London, 1976), p. 702 (= *History of the Second World War*; United Kingdom Military Series, edited by J. R. M. Butler).
358. Reference is made to the negotiations conducted by the French and Polish governments.
359. See above, Introduction, p. 53. "For this kind of policy there could be but one ally in Europe: England." *Mein Kampf*, p. 154.
360. Report on the outburst by Admiral Canaris, who witnessed the scene, in Hans Bernd Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende* (Hamburg, 1947), Vol. II, p. 107.
361. Adolf von Trotha, born 1868 in Koblenz; Vice Admiral; Chief of Staff of the High-Seas Fleet in 1916; Chief of the Admiralty in 1919; placed in the reserve in 1920; Prussian Councillor of State in 1933.
362. DNB text, April 1, 1939.
363. Hitler should have referred to the Kaiser instead, since Tirpitz had merely assisted him in the implementation of his plans, and the credit for the Navy's build-up has to be accorded to William II.
364. Reference to Admiral Franz von Hipper, born 1863; died 1932; Raeder had served as Hipper's Chief of Staff during the First World War.

365. Its predecessors had been the *Scharnhorst*, the *Gneisenau*, and the *Bismarck*.
366. Numerous sources insist that Hitler issued the first instructions on “Case White” no earlier than April 3, 1939. Cf. Bullock, p. 499. This is incorrect, however, since Hitler was taking a vacation aboard the KdF ship *Robert Ley* from April 1 through April 4. Only Keitel’s correspondence was dated April 3, 1939.
367. IMT, 120-C.
368. Published in VB, No. 93, April 3, 1939.
369. See above, 1939, Major Events in Summary.
370. See above, Introduction, p. 55.
371. See above, September 29, 1938 (Munich Agreement) and September 30, 1938 (Anglo-German Declaration).
372. According to Hitler, all states newly created by the Western Powers after 1918 were “Satellite States.” The states he generally referred to in such terms were Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Lithuania primarily.
373. On September 12, 1938, Hitler had still claimed that the Czechs were Germany’s “irreconcilable adversary.” See above, p. 1158.
374. Hitler is referring to Pierre Cot who, however, had made this statement many years earlier. See above, p. 1154, speech of September 12, 1938; and p. 1188, speech of September 26, 1938.
375. See above, pp. 513 and 758; see also below, December 18, 1940.
376. See below, April 15, 1939.
377. This would have been March 10 or March 11, 1939, i.e. precisely at the point at which Hitler gave orders to invade the remainder of Czechoslovakia. It seems far more likely that he had come up with this ‘idea’ of naming the Party Congress as quoted in the night of March 31 to April 1, 1939.
378. See below, April 26, 1942.
379. DNB report, April 3, 1939.
380. See above, March 21, 1939.
381. The meeting had the following result, according to the record of encounter published in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. V, no. 16, pp. 47 ff.:

Record of Conversations

Fourth Meeting

At a meeting in the Secretary of State’s room on the evening of the 6th April the following confidential summary of the conclusions of the conversations was drawn up and approved by the Secretary of State and M. Beck. The text was checked and initialled as correct by the Polish Ambassador and Sir A. Cadogan on the following day.

Summary of Conclusions:

1. As a result of the conversations held in London on the 4th–6th April, 1939, between the Polish Foreign Minister on the one side and the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the other, the Polish Government and His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom record the following conclusions:

I.

2. The Polish Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have decided to place their collaboration on a permanent basis by the exchange of reciprocal assurances of assistance. They are accordingly prepared to enter into a formal agreement on the following basis:

(a) If Germany attacks Poland His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will at once come to the help of Poland.

(b) If Germany attempts to undermine the independence of Poland by processes of economic penetration or in any other way, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will support Poland in resistance to such attempts. If Germany then attacks Poland, the provisions of paragraph (a) above will apply. In the event of other action by Germany which clearly threatened Polish independence, and was of such a nature that the Polish Government considered it vital to resist it with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would at once come to the help of Poland.

(c) Reciprocally, Poland gives corresponding assurances to the United Kingdom.

(d) It is understood that the Polish Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will keep each other fully and promptly informed of any developments threatening the independence of either country.

3. As an earnest of their intention to enter into a formal Agreement to render assistance to Poland in the circumstances contemplated above, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have informed the Polish Government, and have stated publicly, that during the period required, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with its national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all the support in their power.

4. The Polish Government, for their part, give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom a reciprocal undertaking to the same effect, which in the same way as the undertaking given by His Majesty's Government, is already in force and will remain in force during the period required for the conclusion of the formal agreement outlined in paragraph 2 above.

II.

5. The following points remain to be settled before the formal agreement can be concluded:

(a) His Majesty's Government desire that the formal agreement should provide that if the United Kingdom and France went to war with Germany to resist German aggression in Western Europe (the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark), Poland would come to their help. (M. Beck appreciated the vital importance of this question for the United Kingdom, and undertook that the Polish Government

would take it into serious consideration.)

(b) The obligations which His Majesty's Government have accepted towards Poland during the period necessary for the conclusion of the formal Agreement have also been accepted by France. It is understood that the obligations to be accepted by His Majesty's Government in the formal Agreement itself should also be accepted by France; the method of arranging this would be a matter for discussion with the French Government.

III.

6. His Majesty's Government wished it to be part of the formal Agreement that Poland should come to the help of Rumania if the latter were the State threatened. The Polish Government, while respecting to the full the obligation of mutual assistance which exist between Poland and Rumania, thought it premature to express a definite opinion as to the desirability of including the case of Rumania in the formal Agreement. They consider that they should treat the matter in the first instance direct with the Rumanian and Hungarian Governments. They will, in the meanwhile, immediately consult with His Majesty's Government should developments in relation to Rumania or Hungary render this desirable.

7. It is understood between the Polish Government and His Majesty's Government that the conclusions recorded above do not preclude either Government from making further agreements with other countries for the purpose of safeguarding their own independence or that of other States.

8. It is the intention of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for their part

(a) To continue the exchanges of views which they have already initiated with the Rumanian Government, with the object of developing collaboration between the United Kingdom, Rumania and other Powers, for the purposes set forth above.

(b) To initiate exchanges of views for a similar purpose with the Governments of the other members of the Balkan Entente.

9. His Majesty's Government, while realizing the difficulties standing in the way of associating the Soviet Government with action such as is contemplated above, are further persuaded of the importance of maintaining the best possible relations with the Soviet Government, whose position in this matter could not be disregarded.

10. The Polish Government for their part declare that, should His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom assume further obligations in Eastern Europe, these obligations would in no way extend the obligations undertaken by Poland.

11. The Polish Government emphasize the importance, in the consideration of any attempt to develop collaboration, of taking into account the position of the Eastern Baltic States.

382. Published in the magazine *Kraft durch Freude*, summer 1939 edition.

383. Ghazi I, King of Iraq, born 1922; died April 4, 1939 of injuries sustained

in a car crash.

384. DNB note, April 5, 1939.
385. *Mein Kampf*, p. 533.
386. See above, pp. 826 f., September 4, 1936.
387. Chamberlain, pp. 432 ff.
388. See also below, August 25, 1939.
389. A verbatim reproduction of the Agreement is published in the *British Blue Book*, no. 19, pp. 37 ff. German text in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 459, p. 294. See also Moos, p. 69.
390. The reference "European power" is very remarkable. This cunning stipulation was to apply to Germany exclusively and to exclude the Soviet Union which was understood as *an Asian as well as* a European power! Hence Great Britain, surprisingly for non-experts, did not declare war on Russia as it invaded Poland in September 1939. On an inquiry placed before the House of Commons on October 19, 1939, the House declared that the Mutual Assistance Pact applied solely to Germany as a potential aggressor. Cf. *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, p. 295, note. As had been foreseeable, the ingenuity of the formulation—which managed to avoid an Anglo-Russian confrontation in favor of a possible future alliance—completely escaped Hitler's mind. In his traditional speech at the Bürgerbräukeller, Hitler wondered why Great Britain had not declared war on the Soviet Union, too, "since Poland was divided approximately in half." See below, November 8, 1939.
391. Reference to the Free City of Danzig.
392. See above, p. 1110.
393. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 31.
394. See above, p. 1261, December 6, 1938.
395. Ibid. See also Mussolini's speech of March 3, 1939, published by *Agenzia Steffani*, March 26, 1939.
396. See above, pp. 939 f., conference of November 5, 1937.
397. Cf. Hitler's talk with the Italian Ambassador in late March 1939 in Schmidt, p. 442.
398. DNB report, April 7, 1939. It was not until April 15, however, that Göring personally conveyed "the Führer's congratulations on the successful resolution of the Albanian question" to Victor Emmanuel III at the Quirinal. Report in VB, No. 127, April 17, 1939.
399. Report in VB, No. 101, April 11, 1939.
Wilhelm Knochenhauer, born 1878 in Meiningen; died 1939 in Hamburg; Cavalry General; from 1935 on Commanding General of the Tenth Army and Commander of the Tenth Recruitment District Hamburg.
Conrad Albrecht, Commander in charge of the Group Command East from 1938 on; previously Chief of the Naval District Baltic Sea; his promotion to Rear Admiral was contingent upon the successful occupation of the Memel territory.
400. Published in DGFP, D, VI, no. 185, pp. 223 ff. Enclosures I and IV are not printed. For the full text cf. IMT, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 382 ff. See also below, June 22–24, and July 27, 1939, for additional directives.

401. This statement reveals Hitler's disdain for the military capabilities mounted by the "primitive" Bolsheviks.
402. Editor's note: The text of the Reich Defense Law is not included in the German Edition of this work or in the DGFP. Even the English Edition of the IMT documents contains only the German text of the law which has now been translated for this work.—The Reich Defense Law of September 4, 1938 was kept secret on Hitler's additional order of the same day (IMT, 2194-PS, pp. 326 f.) which canceled the Military Service Act of May 21, 1935. A decree of October 7, 1938 (IMT, 2194-PS, p. 318) with regard to "Protecting the Secrecy of the *RV-Gesetz* (*Reichsverteidigungsgesetz*) stressed the following: "It shall continue to be forbidden to cite the Reich Defense Law in public or in the context of other laws made public, as well as any reference to the contents of the law in its entirety." On July 17, 1939, the secrecy ban was partially lifted, The main passages of the Reich Defense Law (IMT, 2194-PS, pp. 319 ff) read:

Geheime Kommandosache (Top Secret, Military)
R e i c h D e f e n s e L a w

September 4, 1938

The Reich Government has passed the following law which is hereby promulgated:

I. State of Defense

§ 1

- (1) As holder of the total state power, the Führer and Reich Chancellor can declare a "state of defense" (*"Verteidigungszustand"*) for the Reich territory or parts thereof.
- (2) Should the political situation necessitate this, the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall order a "mobilization." This mobilization can be limited to parts of the Reich or the Wehrmacht.

§ 2

- (1) Once an operations area is determined and a state of defense declared, the Commander in Chief of the Army [*Heer*] and the Commanders in Chief of the armies [*Armeen*] shall be authorized to exercise executive power in this operations area, without any additional order being issued.
- (2) The Commanders in Chief exercising executive power shall be able to issue legal regulations effective for the operations area, set up special courts, and issue directives to the authorities and offices responsible for the operations area, with the exception of the Supreme Reich Authorities, the Supreme Prussian Länder Authorities, and the Reich Leadership of the NSDAP. This authority shall have precedence over directives by other superior offices.
- (3) The Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht shall determine the size of the operations area.
- (4) Special regulations for the event of an unexpected threat to the Reich territory:

Should a part of the Reich territory suddenly be threatened militarily and should it be impossible to await special authorizations to ward off this danger, then the commanders of the threatened defense districts shall have the right to issue directives immediately necessary for the protection of the endangered area to all non-military offices within the area they command. The same rights shall belong to the commanding admirals of the Navy in the event of an unexpected threat to the coastal area and to the air defense commanders of the Gaus (*Luftgaubefehlshaber*) in the event of surprise attacks from the air, within the framework of their duties in the war. The execution of these directives shall take precedence over all other duties and directives by superior offices. The aforementioned commanders shall be able to transfer their authority to issue directives to subordinate troop leaders down to the senior officer at the location.

§ 3

(1) With the declaration of the state of defense, the “General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration,” appointed by the Führer and Reich Chancellor, shall take over the unified leadership of the non-military administration, with the exception of the economic administrations.

His subordinates shall be:

the Reich Minister of the Interior,

the Reich Minister of Justice,

the Reich Minister for Science and Education (*Erziehung und Volksbildung*)

the Reich Minister for Church Affairs

the Reich Office for Regional Planning (*Raumordnung*).

(2) The General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration must comply with the requests of the OKW that are of crucial significance to the Wehrmacht. Should it prove impossible to reconcile these requests with the concerns of the Reich Administration, then the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall decide.

(3) In concurrence with the OKW and the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy, the General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration shall be entitled, within his sphere of duties, to issue legal regulations which differ from existing laws.

§ 4

(1) With the declaration of the state of defense, the “General Plenipotentiary for the Economy,” appointed by the Führer and Reich Chancellor, shall take over the leadership of the economy, with the exception of the armament industry.

(2) It shall be the task of the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy to place all economic powers at the service of the defense of the Reich and to secure economically the life of the German Volk.

His subordinates shall be:

the Reich Minister of Economics,

the Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture,
the Reich Minister of Labor,
the Reich Chief Forester,
the Reichskommissar for Price Control.

He shall further be responsible for the financing of the Reich's defense within the framework of the Reich Ministry of Finance and the Reichsbank.

(3) The General Plenipotentiary for the Economy must comply with the requests of the OKW that are of crucial significance to the Wehrmacht and secure the economic basis for the output of the armament industry directly administered by the OKW in accordance with its requests. Should it prove impossible to reconcile these requests with the concerns of the economy, then the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall decide.

(4) In concurrence with the Wehrmacht High Command and the General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration, the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy shall be able, within his sphere of duties, to issue legal regulations which differ from existing laws. [—]

§ 7

The Deputy of the Führer shall be responsible for the formation of the political will of the Volk. He shall make use of the NSDAP, its formations, and connected associations.

II. State of War

§ 8

(1) Should a fight be forced on the German Volk with the enemy abroad, then the Führer and Reich Chancellor shall declare a state of war.

(2) With the declaration of a state of war, the laws and regulations for war shall enter into force, without any additional order being issued. [—]

§ 12

The OKW shall assure the unity of the preparations for the beginning and course of the mobilization. Regarding the concrete nature of the preparations, the General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration and the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy shall issue orders for their respective sphere. [—]

IV. Final Regulations

§ 15

Penalty Laws

Whoever acts, wilfully or negligently, in contradiction to the regulations of an ordinance based upon this law shall be punished by imprisonment and fine or one of these, insofar as the offense does not carry a heavier penalty in accordance with another regulation.

§ 16

Implementing and Supplementary Regulations

In concurrence with the General Plenipotentiary for the Reich Administration and the General Plenipotentiary for the Economy, the OKW shall issue the legal and administrative regulations necessary to the implementation and supplementation of this law.

§ 17

This law shall immediately enter into force.

Berchtesgaden, September 4, 1938

The Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler

Field Marshal Göring

The Deputy of the Führer, Hess

The Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick

The General Plenipotentiary for the Economy, Funk

The Reich Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop

The Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command, Keitel

The Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers

403. August 22, 1864 Geneva Convention; 1899 The Hague Peace Conference; The Hague Conventional War Convention "laws and customs in ground battle;" the Hague Agreement on "bombardment by naval units in times of war;" and eight additional agreements signed on October 18, 1907. All of these agreements stipulate that a declaration of war must be issued before the onset of armed hostilities.
404. DNB report, April 12, 1939.—Friedrich Haselmayr, born 1879; member of the General Staff; worked with Epp after the First World War; left the Reichswehr in 1928 and joined Hitler's forces.
405. The accident took place on April 11, 1939 and resulted in fifteen deaths. Numerous men sustained injuries. Hitler's telegram is published in VB, No. 105, April 15, 1939.
406. See above, pp. 512, 622, and 856; statements to Ward Price.
407. On April 29, 1937, Hitler stressed the following in reference to his approach to plebiscites: "Had I believed that the German Volk was not in complete support of these measures, I would have acted nonetheless—however, without conducting a plebiscite. I would have simply said that this was a risk I had to take!" See above, p. 890.
408. RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 762 f.
409. According to Article 30 of the Reich Electoral Law of April 27, 1920, every 60,000 votes cast resulted in one delegate being assigned one seat.
410. These regulations concerning the Party were made public in VB, No. 105, April 15, 1939.
411. The order cross in question consisted of curved beams; the sovereign symbol was placed in the center, surrounded by a laurel wreath. Tailed beams emanated from each corner of the cross. It was awarded in several different categories: the bronze cross for ten years; the silver cross for fifteen years; the gold cross for twenty years of active service

with the NSDAP or with other National Socialist societies and associations. The cross was worn on a ribbon, three centimeters wide, the color of which varied according to the category awarded in: a brown strap indicated ten years' service; a blue one fifteen years; and a red one twenty-five years. The ribbon of the cross had two white stripes on either side of the strap and was attached to the band of medals displaying the bearer's distinctions. For female recipients, a special one and a half centimeter ribbon was designed to be worn around the neck. The band of medals women were awarded also featured a reduced *s c a l e*, colored sovereign symbol and laurel wreath.

412. For stipulations on the Cross of Spain, the honorary cross to be borne by survivors of soldiers killed in action in the Spanish Civil War, and the cross for soldiers who sustained injuries in battle in the years 1936 to 1939, see RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 1359 ff.

The cross of Spain was awarded in three categories; bronze, silver, and gold. It had eight points and a circular shield adorned with a swastika placed in its center.

A special version of the distinction, the Cross of Spain with two swords crossed beneath the insignia on the central shield, was awarded exclusively to volunteers of the Condor Legion, and to crew members of the Navy who had witnessed the air raid on Ibiza, the shelling of Almeria's harbor, and the bombing of Palma.

The ordinary Cross of Spain was bestowed upon civil volunteers, couriers, and other Wehrmacht personnel who had served in Spain for more than three months, but who had not been actively involved in the fighting.

The Cross of Spain with crossed swords was given out 1,126 times in gold; 8,304 times in silver; and 8,462 times in bronze. Twenty-eight persons received the Cross of Spain in gold, studded with diamonds. In addition, the Cross of Spain without swords was distributed 327 times in silver and 7,869 times in bronze. These figures indicate roughly how many members of the Wehrmacht were stationed in Spain during the three-year conflict. It appears that their numbers never exceeded 18,000 men. When considering this figure, it is important to bear in mind that turnover of troops was frequent in particular among the Luftwaffe units and that their total number at any time would have been considerably less than the above number.

Based upon the number of times the "Honorary Insignia to Survivors of German Fighters in Spain" was awarded, the death toll for Germans killed in combat was 315. This honorary insignia consisted of a miniature Cross of Spain without swords that was worn on a black band with a white-red-yellow-red rim.

The "Medal for German Volunteers who sustained injuries in the Spanish Fight for Freedom from 1936 to 1939" was awarded 182 times in black and only once in silver. The medal was nearly identical with the one awarded to soldiers injured in the First World War, the only difference being that a swastika balanced on an edge was placed above

the steel helmet in the medal's center. This distinction was to be awarded many times over in the course of the Second World War.

413. See above, February 18, 1937.
414. RGBL 1939, I, p. 777.
415. See above, March 24, 1939.
416. DNB report, April 13, 1939.
417. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745. "At the time, a few semblances of states grown old and impotent were drummed together and the attempt was made, using this junk destined for destruction, to show a bold front to an enterprising world coalition." See above, Introduction, p. 57.
418. Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, born 1919 in Tehran, died 1980 in Cairo; assumed power in Iran on September 16, 1941 after his father's renunciation of the throne; took office in 1956 with US support; deposed in the Islamic revolution of 1979.
419. Report in VB, No. 108, April 18, 1939. Germany's delegation consisted of Graf von der Schulenburg, the German Ambassador to Moscow, and Lieutenant General Grauert. See below, August 25, 1939.
420. Cf. DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. V, no. 180, pp. 212 ff. Also published in DNB text, April 16, 1939.
421. Reference to Roosevelt's telegrams of September 26 and 27, 1938 on the topic of the Sudeten crisis. See above, pp. 1197 ff. and 1938, note 417.
422. Editor's note: The spelling of "Luxemburg" and "Roumania" in the original text was changed for reasons of uniformity with the other sources. Similarly standardized were some different spellings in DGFP, as for example in the case of Romania (spelled as Rumania, Romania, or Roumania).
423. See above, April 1, 1939.
424. DNB note, April 19, 1939.
425. DNB report, April 17, 1939.
426. Cf. DGFP, D, VI, no. 213.
427. The non-aggression pacts with Denmark on the one hand, and Estonia and Latvia on the other were signed on May 5 and on June 7, 1939 respectively. Verbatim reproduction in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, nos. 345–347, pp. 230–233. An official statement on May 19, 1939 revealed the reluctance by Sweden, Norway, and Finland to enter into non-aggression pacts with Germany. Verbatim reproduction *ibid.*, no. 344, p. 230. Later that year, Hitler distanced himself from the Finnish cause once open hostilities broke out between Moscow and Helsinki. Thus he avenged himself for the earlier disinterest by Finland. See below, December 7, 1939.
428. Report in VB, No. 108, April 18, 1939.
429. DNB text, April 18, 1939.
430. See above, April 14, 1939.
431. Mustafa Kemal Pasha Atatürk, the creator of modern Turkey, was by no means as great a friend of Germany as Hitler maintained. In one instance, he even burst out: "Never again war! And if war, then never again on the side of Germany!" Despite von Papen's endeavors, Turkey

- succeeded in concluding a mutual assistance pact with Great Britain in May 1939. The thrust of this agreement was plainly directed against German and Italian expansionist designs.
432. Published in VB, No. 109, April 19, 1939.
433. Turkey declared war on Germany on March 1, 1945.
434. Ewald von Massow, born 1869 in Belgard, Pomerania. As President of the "Nationalist Club 1919," he had known Hitler since 1929 when Hitler had frequented the club then located at Bellevuestrasse. Massow was also president of the German-Bulgarian Association.
435. Published in VB, No. 108, April 18, 1939.
436. Report on the meeting in Grigore Gafencu, *Les derniers jours de l'Europe* (Zurich, 1946), pp. 75 f. Foreign Ministry report published in DGFP, D, VI, pp. 290 ff.
437. Reference here is made primarily to the Germans of Transylvania, a region that had passed from Hungarian into Rumanian hands after the First World War. Contrary to Hitler's judgments expressed here, Rumania had to cede a large section of Transylvania to Hungary in accordance with the Second Viennese Sentence of 1940. This greatly antagonized not only Rumanians and Hungarians, but also the German population of Transylvania. Once more, Hitler revealed himself as a pure opportunist who took advantage of the situation in complete disregard of principles and promises given earlier. See below, August 30, 1940.
438. Gafencu's own account of his April 19 meeting with Hitler is a near verbatim reproduction of Hitler's April 28 speech before the Reichstag. It is equally possible that Gafencu possessed an extraordinary memory or he made use of the speech in recounting his conversation with Hitler, or that Hitler, who never greatly differentiated between remarks made privately or in public, in fact said exactly the same on both occasions. See below, April 28, 1939.
439. Ibid.
440. Hitler made the same mistakes the governments of Austria and Germany had made at the beginning of the First World War. He invaded Poland in 1939 just as Austria had invaded Serbia in 1914. Moreover, Hitler also disregarded all British warnings and thus, once more, the subsequent British declaration of war caught Germany's leadership by complete surprise. Despite earlier pledges to the contrary, Germany again violated Belgian neutrality just as it had done in 1914.
441. Whenever Hitler referred to "colonies" he had in mind the new areas he intended to conquer in Eastern Europe and Russia. He voiced claims to formerly German overseas colonies, e.g. in Africa, only if he wished to rattle the British. As early as in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had expressed his disdain for Imperial Germany's colonial politics: "For it is not in colonial conquest that we see the solution of this question. Rather we hold this solution to lie exclusively in the acquisition of new lands for settlement to augment the size of the mother country, to uphold the

innermost bonding between new settlers and their native land, and to secure, to the benefit of the entire country, those advantages that lie in the aggregate grandeur of the land." *Mein Kampf*, p. 741.

In an interview on August 5, 1934, Hitler declared: "I would not demand the life of a single German in order to gain any colony in the world. We know that the former German colonies in Africa are an expensive luxury for England." See above, p. 511.

442. The British had never claimed that a war against Germany would be an easy one; nevertheless, the British were certain they would prevail in the end.

443. Hitler is alluding to negotiations then underway on the question of a possible collective security pact between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union against Germany. The British allegedly had insisted that they could spare no more than two divisions for this effort. However, this restriction applied to peacetime conditions only, as soon was to become evident, not to mention their allies.

444. It was amply proved in the course of World War II that neither the "genius" of German engineers, technicians, and chemists, nor any mysterious great invention, could augment military potential.

445. William II had already proposed a division of the world into spheres of influence for Germany and Great Britain to King Edward VII and Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. In 1910, the heir to the German throne, Crown Prince William had approached the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, on the same subject. The crown prince remarked the following on the proposal he presented to Grey: "In my opinion, it would be only reasonable if Germany and Great Britain, the two great Germanic powers, allied themselves; one being the leading military power on the Continent, the other reigning supreme on the High Seas. By the same token, we could also divide amongst ourselves the remainder of the world (if we should do this at all)." Cf. Karl Rosner, *Erinnerungen des Kronprinzen Wilhelm* (Stuttgart/Berlin, 1922), p. 116. It is worthy of note that Hitler not only advocated the same ideas from 1919 on, but also used similar wording.

446. Reports on the birthday festivities in VB, Nos. 111/112, April 21/22, 1939.

447. See above, pp. 391 f.

448. In the early years of World War II, Hitler's addresses before the officer cadets were also attended by the Untersturmführers of the Waffen SS. Because of their great numbers, Hitler desisted from personally accepting their oath of loyalty on the eve of his fiftieth birthday.

449. Published in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1939.

450. See above, p. 455.

451. Cf. Gafencu, p. 93.

452. DNB text, April 20, 1939.

453. Published in VB, No. 112, April 22, 1939.

454. DNB text, April 22, 1939.

455. Hitler's decree on this addition to the statutes of the "Order of Merit of the German Eagle" was made public in *RGBl.* 1939, I, p. 853. He had established the other award categories of the original order two years earlier. See above, May 1, 1937.
456. DNB report, April 22, 1939.
457. DNB report, April 26, 1939.
458. Report in VB, No. 117, April 27, 1939.
459. Report in VB, No. 118, April 28, 1939.
460. The British Ambassador, Sir Nevile Henderson, returned to Berlin on April 23, 1939. Cf. Strauch, p. 211. He supposedly was to inform the German Government of the reintroduction of general conscription to Great Britain. In all likelihood, Henderson's timely return was due to the anticipated importance of Hitler's speech before he Reichstag. On April 26, 1939, the French Ambassador Coulondre also returned to Berlin early. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
461. Published in VB, No. 119, April 29, 1939.
462. Here Hitler made it plain that he held the Reichstag to be the only legislative body in the Third Reich that could effectively oppose him and his reign. At the time, in view of his past successes, he remained convinced that the Reichstag would continue to unconditionally second his undertakings. As the war dragged on and victories became increasingly rare, he no longer could be certain of its support. See below, April 26, 1942 and 1943, Major Events in Summary.
463. In this speech, Hitler did his utmost to flatter the Czechs whom he had called the "irreconcilable adversary" of Germany barely a year earlier. See above, p. 1158, speech of September 12, 1938.
464. *Ibid.*, p. 1154.
465. The speech referred to actually took place two days earlier. *Ibid.*, pp. 1020 ff. Hitler repeatedly misquoted the date of this particular speech. *Ibid.*, p. 1174.
466. See above, 1938, note 7.
467. Hitler remained silent on the fact that he himself had encouraged this approach by the Hungarians and Slovaks. See above, October 14, 1938.
468. Reference is made to King Carol of Rumania who had called on Hitler privately after the Munich Agreement. See above, November 24, 1938.
469. Always when Hitler insisted that time would tell whether his decisions had been correct or not, these proved to be wrong. In November 1942, Hitler maintained: "Let us wait and see if it was a strategic mistake to go to Stalingrad!" See below, November 8, 1942. After the Allies' landing in the Normandy, Hitler challenged: "Let us wait and see if they manage to conquer France!" See below, July 4, 1944.
470. See above, pp. 1210 f., September 30, 1938.
471. See above, p. 1187, speech of September 26, 1938.
472. See above, 1938, note 495.
473. See below, November 8, 1940.
474. As usual, the figures cited by Hitler are greatly exaggerated. A great number of armed conflicts then were the result of the collapse of the

Tsarist Empire and of the Central Powers (consisting of Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bulgaria, and Turkey). Armed conflicts in the period between 1918 and 1938 which were termed “wars” are enumerated below: the Polish-Russian War of 1920–21; the Greek-Turkish War from 1920 to 1922; the Chinese Civil War from 1922 to 1928; the war between Bolivia and Paraguay from 1932 to 1935; the Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935–36; the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939; the Japanese-Chinese War of 1932 and its resurgence in 1937. Further military clashes took place at the following locations and dates: the Russo-Finnish border disputes of 1918; the Polish-Lithuanian border disputes of 1920; the struggle of the Red Army with the White Russian Army in 1920; the uprisings in Morocco led by Abdel Krim in 1923–26; the Corfu conflict of 1923; the Mossul conflict of 1924; the Austrian Social Democrats’ attempt at revolt in February 1934; and the revolt in Crete in 1935.

475. The American military interventions of which Hitler is speaking actually began much earlier, even before 1918. The victorious United States forced Mexico to cede Texas after the Mexican War of 1846–48. In the 1860s, Washington strongly opposed the imposition of Archduke Maximilian as Emperor of Mexico. In the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States secured Cuba, the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico for itself in the Treaty of Paris. In 1903, the United States achieved the separation of Panama from Columbia. In 1912, it established a protectorate in Nicaragua. American troops did not begin withdrawing from this country until 1925. In 1915, the United States occupied Haiti and maintained occupation forces there until 1934. In 1916, a foray into the Dominican Republic ensued and American soldiers remained stationed there until 1924. Two renewed military interventions in Cuba, from 1906 to 1909 and from 1917 to 1919 respectively, brought American troops back to the island which had been occupied until 1902 as a result of the Spanish-American War. The 1920s and 1930s witnessed a general tendency to withdraw American troops from occupied territories. President Roosevelt initiated the “Good Neighbor” policy in 1933, promoting “Good Feeling” between all states on the American continent.
476. This claim on Hitler’s part is unfounded. Apparently, he summarily included all armed conflicts during these years in his calculations, irrespective of their cause. At the time, hostilities arose primarily because of the collapse of Tsarist Russia, its strained relations with the newly created neighbor states (e.g. Poland and Finland) and the unrest due to the agitation of the White Russian army. Furthermore, Hitler assumed that all conflicts in which communists played a part in one way or another were perpetrated by the Soviet Union. He greatly suspected Moscow’s hand in the Spanish Civil War, the Chinese Civil War, the government of Béla Kun in Hungary, the soviet government established in the city of Munich (*Räterepublik*), and in the case of the uprising in Saxony led by Max Hölz.

477. Allusion to Orson Welles' broadcast which had produced panic reactions in the American public as it portrayed the alleged landing of Martians in a highly realistic fashion. See above, 1938, note 495.
478. Reference to Roosevelt's telegrams of September 26/27, 1938 on the topic of the Sudeten crisis. See above, pp. 1197 f. and 1938, note 417.
479. Hitler was generally irritated by the manner in which the British media reported on developments in Germany. Whenever an Englishman called on him, Hitler felt compelled to voice his displeasure.
480. Reference to the recall of the American Ambassador in November 1938 and to the recall of the British and French Ambassadors in March 1939.
481. Reference to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Albania, and Abyssinia.
482. Editor's note: Italicized expressions were made in English in the original text.
483. Hitler had spoken of peace for many years, using the topic as a means to an end. In a 'secret speech' before members of the German press, he stated in November 10, 1938: "For decades, circumstances caused me to speak almost exclusively of peace." See above, p. 1243. Moreover, whenever he spoke in the Sudetenland in October 1938, Hitler maintained that initially he had stood prepared to proceed by the use of force.
484. The reason for war—namely, the conquest of new Lebensraum in the East—he had made unmistakably clear in *Mein Kampf*. See above, Introduction, p. 50.
485. See above, note 121.
486. In truth, the League of Nations resolved numerous international disputes and did so quite successfully. Hitler himself had been forced to grudgingly recognize this as the Saarland was returned to the Reich without any major disturbances. See above, March 1, 1935.
487. Hitler had little to boast about. The fact that no blood had yet been shed in any of his ventures was not of his doing. He would assuredly have had no qualms about either annexing Austria by force in March 1938 or starting a war against Czechoslovakia on October 2, 1938. See above, pp. 1039 f. and 1230. Only a few months after the April 28 speech before the Reichstag, he launched the war against Poland.
488. While this is undoubtedly an exaggeration, there is some truth to this. Nevertheless, Germany was accorded a peace treaty that allowed for the continued existence of the Reich. Once Hitler took possession of a territory conquered, he ruled arbitrarily and failed to grant the conquered people the benefit of re-establishing law and order by means of a peace treaty.
489. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 473, states that Hitler purposely failed to mention Poland here: ". . . he [Hitler] slyly left out Poland." However, this is erroneous. Hitler was not so unintelligent as to reveal his intentions by simply not including Poland in this list.
490. Reference is made to Egypt and Palestine where British troops were still stationed at the time.
491. See above, March 16, 1935 and May 21, 1935.

492. Germany had not been completely disarmed by the exigencies of the Treaty of Versailles. It still maintained an army of 100,000 men, a navy of 15,000 men, and a police force of several hundred thousand men well after 1919. Furthermore, it was Hitler who disarmed the countries vanquished in a far more thorough manner.
493. Savings in Germany were not “extorted” by the Allies, but rather fell victim to the inflation that sets in after every war.
494. The correct figure was nearly six thousand unemployed.
495. Hitler’s claim that he had “returned to the Reich the provinces robbed in 1919” had no foundation whatsoever since neither Austria nor the Sudetenland had belonged to the Reich proper in 1919. The Memel territory was the only region he did in truth “restore” to the Reich. The remaining “lost provinces” belonged to the Reich no more in April 1939 than they had twenty years earlier. These provinces were: West Prussia, Poznan, parts of Upper Silesia, Alsace-Lorraine, the area Eupen-Malmédy-Moresnet, and North Schleswig.
496. If things had gone in accordance to Hitler’s initial design, blood might well have been shed as early as October 1938, as revealed in several of his public speeches. See above, pp. 1215 ff. And as further events would prove, Hitler’s ventures would cause more than enough blood to be spilled in any event.
497. Verbatim content of the memorandum published in VB, No. 119, April 29, 1939.
498. Eisenstein’s film, which contained also passages of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, was not shown in the USSR from 1939 to 1941, because of the treaties with Germany.
499. DNB note, April 29, 1939.
500. On the establishment of National Socialist “exemplary enterprises” see above, April 30, 1937.
501. DNB report, May 1, 1939.
502. Report in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1939.
503. In a speech on January 25, 1936, Hitler referred to the people of Germany as the “stubborn German Volk.” See above, p. 744.
504. See below, campaign speech of May 1, 1939.
505. Published in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1939.
506. Ibid.
507. See Mephisto’s lamentation in Goethe’s *Faust*:
“*Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft,
Des Menschen allerhöchste Kraft,
Lass nur in Blend- und Zauberwerken
Dich von dem Lügengeist bestärken,
So hab ich dich schon unbedingt!*”
(Reason and Knowledge only thou despise,
The highest strength in Man that lies!
Let but the Lying Spirit bind thee
With magic works and shows that blind thee,
And I shall have thee fast and sure!)

- Goethe, *Faust*, Part I, Scene IV (English quotation taken from the London, 1866 edition).
508. Parody of the Lauretanian litany chant: “*Du Sitz der Weisheit—Du vortreffliches Gefäß der Andacht*” (You seat of wisdom—you most excellent receptacle of piety).
509. DNB note, May 1, 1939.
510. RGBL 1939, I, p. 949. The medal consisted of a cross of beams, equal in length, white enamel, encased in gold. The sovereign symbol adorned its center. It was to be worn on a red band with a white border.
511. RGBL 1939, I, p. 861. The statutes issued on the same day stipulated that the medal was to be worn on a green-white-red band on the left chest. The medal’s face bore two male figures replete with swastika and sovereign symbol. On the rear, the medal bore the inscription: “In Commemoration of the Return of the Memel territory—March 22, 1939.” RGBL 1939, I, p. 863.
512. Ibid., p. 862.
513. This description is easily misconstrued. Actually the bronze and square clasp was to be attached to the Sudeten medal. It bore a relief reproduction of the Prague fortress on its face. Once war with Poland had broken out, Hitler re-established the Iron Cross distinction, a similar clasp to be worn next to the World War I Iron Cross Second Class. See below, September 1, 1939.
514. DNB report, April 3, 1939.
515. Illustrated report on Hitler’s visit in Nuremberg printed in VB, No. 125, May 5, 1939.
516. Report in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1939.
517. Cf. details on the relations between the Red Army and the Reichswehr in Edward Hallett Carr, *German-Soviet Relations between the two World Wars 1919–39* (Baltimore, 1951).
518. Cf. details on the negotiations between Berlin and Moscow, conducted with varying intensity, in the period April to August 1939 in DGFP, D, VI, nos. 215 ff., pp. 266 ff.
519. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 78.
520. IMT, 120-C, Appendix II.
521. Reports on Hitler’s tour (from May 14 until May 19/20, 1939) of the fortifications in the West in VB, Nos. 135–142, May 15–22, 1939.
522. The fortifications in question were located at Bildchen and Köpfchen. See above, October 9, 1938.
523. DNB text, May 18, 1939.
524. DNB text, May 19, 1939.
525. Printed in VB, No. 140, May 20, 1939.
526. DNB text, May 19, 1939.
527. Report in VB, No. 142, May 22, 1939.
528. RGBL 1938, I, pp. 1923 ff. On December 16, 1938, Hitler had established the “Cross in Honor of the German Mother.” It was an oblong cross in blue enamel on a white band. The horizontal beam was slightly curved. Around the central white, round plaque a medal rim

- bore the inscription “*Der Deutschen Mutter*” (to the German mother). The award was distributed in three categories: bronze (four or five children), silver (six or seven children), gold (eight or more children).
529. Frau Goebbels also entertained Ciano during his visit. Ciano later recalled and wrote down her frank remarks on the nightly get-togethers with Hitler: “It is always Hitler who talks! He can be the Führer as much as he likes, but he always repeats himself and bores his guests.” Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 85.
 530. Ibid., pp. 84 f. and DNB report, May 21, 1939.
 531. Published in DGFP, D, VI, no. 426, pp. 561 ff. Original text in RGBL 1939, II, pp. 826 ff.
 532. For details on the award see above, 1937, note 193 and April 20, 1939.
 533. Published in VB, No. 143, May 23, 1939.
 534. In celebration of the signing of the accord, Ciano presented Ribbentrop, in the name of King Victor Emmanuel, with the highest Italian order, the *Ordine dell’ Annunziata*. In theory, this made Ribbentrop a “cousin” of the Italian King. Göring was greatly put out that he did not receive a similar distinction. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 86.
 535. See above, January 12, 1939.
 536. DNB report, May 22, 1939.
 537. See above, speech of March 28, 1936.
 538. See below, September 27, 1940.
 539. See above, Mussolini’s speech of September 28, 1937.
 540. See above, pp. 1044 f. (telephone conversation with Prince Philip of Hesse, March 11, 1938).
 541. DNB report, May 23, 1939. Friedrich Graf von der Schulenburg had been Chief of Staff of the Guard Corps when war broke out in 1914, and served in the same capacity from 1916 to 1918 with the Army Group *Deutscher Kronprinz*. He joined Hitler’s forces as early as 1930.
 542. See above, pp. 129 f.
 543. As a favor to Hitler, Mackensen had withdrawn his honorary membership in the Stahlhelm and hence paved the ground for the dissolution of this association. In recognition of his effort, Hitler had awarded him the ancestral estate Prüssow, which was state property, on October 22, 1935. See above, p. 718.
 544. Published in DGFP, D, VI, no. 433, pp. 574 ff. IMT, 079-L. The protocol is also printed in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 92 ff.
 545. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 582. Final entry—December 23, 1943.
 546. Since neither Mussolini nor Hitler were too keen on the August 4 date for the meeting, it was cancelled. There was only one other meeting later with Ciano in Berchtesgaden. See below, August 12 and August 13, 1939.
 547. DNB report, May 24, 1939.
 548. DNB text, May 30, 1939.
 549. RGBL 1939, II, pp. 856 f.
 550. See below, April 9, 1940.

551. DNB note, May 31, 1939.
552. Paul Prince of Yugoslavia, born 1893 in St. Petersburg; presided over the Regent's Advisory Council for King Peter II who was then still a minor; married to Princess Olga of Greece and Denmark, born 1903 at Tatoi Castle. Details on the official visit by Prince Paul in VB, Nos. 153 to 157, June 2 to 6, 1939.
553. This visit took place in January of 1938. See above, pp. 1001 f., January 15, 1938.
554. DNB report, June 1, 1939.
555. Published in VB, No. 153, June 2, 1939.
556. Hitler's cynicism is quite evident in this instance. Indeed, it took great nerve to trace the development of German-Yugoslav friendship back to the days of the First World War. After all, Serbia had been the war's first victim. On August 12, 1939, no solemn past assurances of friendship for the peoples of Yugoslavia would keep Hitler from advising Italy "to give Yugoslavia a *coup de grâce* as soon as possible." Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 118.
557. For Hitler there was no such thing as "pacified frontiers drawn for all time." In 1941, he was to take advantage of the military situation and move the German-Yugoslav frontier considerably to the South. See below, April 13, 1941.
558. Report in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1939.
559. DNB report, June 3, 1939.
560. He was to expound this revised view of world history during both Henderson's and Carl Jakob Burckhardt's visits. Professor Burckhardt served as the League of Nations' High Commissioner in Danzig.
561. Published in VB, June 5, 1939.
562. "Corporal" Hitler proved none the smarter than "Captain" Bethmann-Hollweg. Both provoked a British declaration of war in the same manner and in complete ignorance of the true power structures in the world. See below, September 3, 1939 and Vol. IV, Appendix.
563. DNB report, June 5, 1939.
564. German volunteers fighting in the Spanish Civil War, known as the Condor Legion, had already arrived in Hamburg on May 31, 1939. They had returned to Germany aboard the KdF ships *Robert Ley*, *Wilhelm Gustloff*, *Stuttgart*, *Der Deutsche*, *Sierra Cordoba*, and *Hamburg*. The ships had proved themselves worthy of their actual mission, namely: the transport of troops. The pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spree* and the Sixth Torpedo Fleet entered the Hamburg port at the same time. Göring welcomed the men who then set up a tent city on the Döberitz maneuver field. There the volunteers listened to various speeches by Brauchitsch, Raeder, and Göring. On May 4, 1939, in a most timely fashion, a grotesque announcement was printed in the Reich Law Gazette (RGBl. 1939, I, p. 907):
"Effective as of today, the following laws are no longer in force:
1. The law on the prevention of participation in the Spanish Civil War of February 18, 1937. RGBl. 1937, I, p. 241.

2. The law regulating the traffic between German and Spanish seaports of April 7, 1937. RGBL. 1937, II, p. 127."
565. Wolfram Freiherr von Richthofen, born 1895 in Barzdorf, Silesia; died 1945 in Ischl, Austria; Commander of the Condor Legion from November 1, 1938 on; Field Marshal in 1943. Richthofen's predecessors in command of the Condor Legion were Generals Sperrle and Volkmann. Hugo Sperrle, born 1885 in Ludwigsburg; died 1953 in Munich; Field Marshal in 1940; Commander of the Condor Legion from November 6, 1936 to July 31, 1937. Hellmuth Volkmann, General der Flieger; later Commander of the Luftkriegsakademie; Commander of the Condor Legion from November 1, 1937 to October 31, 1938.
566. Published in VB, Nos. 158/159, June 7/8, 1939.
567. DNB report, June 6, 1939.
568. RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 987 f. and 1923.
569. Verbatim reproduction of both pacts in RGBL. 1939, II, pp. 945 f. and 947 f.
570. DNB report, June 7, 1939.
571. DNB report, June 8, 1939. The "unexpected" nature of Hitler's visit as emphasized by the news bureau was intended to allay his constant fear of attempts on his life.
572. Spain had acceded to the Anti-Comintern Pact on March 27, 1939. Cf. RGBL. 1939, II, p. 741.
573. DNB report, June 12, 1939.
574. Report in VB, No. 162, June 11, 1939.
575. Reports on Hitler's visit to Vienna in VB, Nos. 162-164, June 11-13, 1939.
576. RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 1015 ff.
577. See above, January 30, 1939.
578. Reports in VB, No. 167, June 16, 1939.
579. Report in VB, No. 168, June 17, 1939. The units in question were the Artillery Unit "*Imker*" (bee-keeper), made up of both German and Spanish troops, and the Panzer Unit "*Drohne*" (drone). Both contingents were primarily responsible for training Spanish Nationalist soldiers in the handling of heavy artillery guns and of armored motor vehicles.
580. Report in VB, No. 170, June 19, 1939.
581. Ibid.
582. DNB note, June 20, 1939.
583. In a speech of October 30, 1936, Hitler had referred to Goebbels as his "shield bearer." See above, p. 847.
584. DNB text, June 18, 1939.
585. Reports in VB, No. 171, June 20, 1939. The medal was awarded on both recipients' eightieth birthday.—Dr. Heinrich Schrey, born 1859, nationalist author; Dr. Heinrich Sohnrey, born 1859 in Jühnde, Southern Hanover; author of stories about village life and essays on folklore. The

- dedication on the medal read: "*Dem Hüter und Pfleger eines gesunden Bauerntums*" (to the protector and preserver of a healthy peasantry).
586. Report in VB, No. 172, June 21, 1939. The 1940 Olympic Games that were to take place in Garmisch-Partenkirchen had to be cancelled because of the outbreak of World War II.
587. IMT, 120-C.
588. Ibid and DGFP, D, VI, p. 277, note 5. The bridges in question were railway and highway connections close to Dirschau (i.e. located in the area between Danzig and the Polish Corridor), which the Polish Army blew up, nevertheless, on September 1, 1939.
589. See below, July 27, 1939.
590. Published in Berber, pp. 200 ff.
591. Published in VB, No. 177, June 26, 1939.
592. DNB note, June 28, 1939. Count Ciano, born 1876, died 1943, served as the first president of the Fascist Cabinet. He had made a name for himself as an Admiral in World War I.
593. DNB report, June 29, 1939. Knochenhauer had celebrated his fortieth service anniversary on April 10. On May 20, Knochenhauer had still accompanied Hitler on his inspection of the Waffen SS in Munsterlager.
594. DNB note, June 29, 1939.
595. Report in VB, No. 184, July 3, 1939.
596. Report in VB, No. 185, July 4, 1939.
597. Report in VB, No. 186, July 5, 1939.
598. Reports on the callers and their visits in VB, No. 187, July 6, 1939.
599. Georgi Kiosseivanov, born 1884; Bulgarian Minister-President from 1935 to 1939.
600. DNB report, July 6, 1939.
601. Report in VB, No. 189, July 8, 1939. The 'Grenzmark' flew Ribbentrop to Moscow for his historic visit on August 22, 1939.
601. DNB report, July 7, 1939. This unusual procedure was the consequence of Albrecht's marriage in defiance of the officers' code of conduct. Raeder had insisted on Albrecht's immediate dismissal from the Navy. In such peripheral matters, admirals and generals apparently were able to influence and pressure Hitler to a certain extent.
603. From 1915 to 1918, Friedrich Wiedemann had been the adjutant in command of the Bavarian Infantry Regiment 16 (List) in the First Company of which Hitler had served in the First World War. Cf. Solleder, p. 370.
604. DNB text, July 10, 1939. As early as in his speech in Wilhelmshaven, Hitler had announced that the slogan for the next Party congress would be "Reich Party Congress of Peace." See above, April 1, 1939.
605. DNB report, July 11, 1939.
606. Report on the "Day of German Art 1939" in VB, Nos. 196 to 198, July 15 to 17, 1939.
607. Dino Alfieri was appointed Italian Ambassador to Berlin in 1940.
608. Previously, the square had borne the name *Reichskanzlerplatz*.
609. Published in VB, No. 198, July 17, 1939.

610. Report in VB, No. 199, July 18, 1939.
611. DNB text, July 18, 1939.
612. DNB report, July 21, 1939.
613. DNB reports, July 24, 1939.
614. DNB report, July 25, 1939.
615. Reports in VB, Nos. 207/208, July 26/27, 1939.
616. Report in VB, No. 209, July 28, 1939.
617. This instruction formed part of a secret directive received by the Commander in Chief of the Navy from the General Officer commanding the Naval Air Force on July 27, 1939; cf. DGFP, D, VI, p. 227, note 6; IMT, 30-C; and Bullock, p. 512. The precise date for "Day Y" had yet to be inserted by Hitler.
618. Published in VB, No. 211, July 30, 1939.
619. DNB report, July 30, 1939.
620. Report in VB, No. 212, July 31, 1939.
621. Report in VB, No. 214, August 2, 1939.
622. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 1335 f.
623. DNB report, August 2, 1939.
624. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 1365 f. On the front of the bronze medal in question a bunker was depicted above which there was a cross formed by a sword and a spade. The inscription on the back of the medal read: "*Für Arbeit zum Schutze Deutschlands*" (for labor in defense of Germany). The medal was worn on a brown band with a white rim. In October 1944, this distinction was bestowed upon various recipients once more. See below, October 18, 1944.
625. DNB report, August 3, 1939.
626. DNB report, August 4, 1939.
627. See above, September 2, 1938.
628. DNB report, August 10, 1939. Hitler was greatly taken by Lloyd George, although this "friendship" was not a mutual one as would become increasingly evident in the course of 1939. See above, pp. 826 f.
629. Protocol of Hitler's conversation with Csáky in DGFP, D, VI, no. 784, pp. 1093 ff.
630. Hungary assented to the Anti-Comintern Pact on February 24, 1939. RGBL 1939, II, p. 749. On November 4, 1939, Hungary declared its withdrawal from the League of Nations. Teleki's letters had not made a favorable impression on either Hitler or Mussolini. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 112.
631. DNB report, August 10, 1939.
632. Cf. *Nautisches Jahrbuch 1939* (Berlin, 1938), p. 112.
633. Initially Hitler had held the General Staff to resemble a "blood hound" ready to tear to pieces any adversary in sight. See above, November 5, 1937. In the course of the Second World War, however, Hitler complained bitterly that he constantly had to urge the generals to take action before any engagement. See below, September 24, 1941.
634. Report on the talk with Henderson, undated, cited in accord with a letter by Halder addressed to Dr. Helmut Krausnick, Institut für

- Zeitgeschichte, Munich. From the author's notes.
635. Cf. Weizsäcker, pp. 235 ff.
636. Printed in Strauch, p. 235.
637. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6151.
638. The May 31, 1941 draft of Goerdeler's "peace proposal" consisted of demands identical with those voiced by Hitler after the campaigns in Poland and France. On the issue of colonies, Goerdeler's demands were even greater than those Hitler had made. Cf. Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1955), pp. 569 ff.
639. Details on Dahlerus' undertakings in Birger Dahlerus, *The Last Attempt* (London, 1947). The following review of public opinion in Britain was given to Göring at the meeting arranged by Dahlerus:
1. This memorandum is intended to give, to the best of our knowledge, as true a picture of public opinion in Great Britain. Beyond this, however, it is also intended to show the effect and significance of this public opinion.
 2. From 1918 until recently, feeling in Great Britain was rather pro-German. The British people regarded the Germans as a people closely related to themselves in race and temperament. The guilt for the World War was attributed here far more to the ambition of the German Kaiser and his advisers, than to a hostile attitude of the two peoples to each other. The German people's magnificent efforts in their economic and political reconstruction were followed here with admiration and appreciation.
 3. It was, of course, regretted in this country that the parliamentary system in Germany failed in the task of securing a lasting orderly regime; but in general the British public is not prone, where other nations are concerned, to give preference to one form of government over another. Our people have learned from long political experience that different kinds of living conditions and political circumstances also demand different kinds of public institutions. In brief, the British people do not care about the form of government which another nation regards as proper. They maintain that a government is there to serve the people and that any government can remain in power only as long as it is, by and large, sure of the consent of its people.
 4. The British people have little understanding for abstract ideas, if anything they treat high-sounding rhetorical pronouncements with the deepest distrust. The Englishman is wont to judge a government by its actions and not by the principles it proclaims. The harsh, and, from the British point of view, arbitrary treatment which the Reich Government have meted out to others holding different political views has undoubtedly angered large sections of the British public. Here they have not overlooked that at times unusual problems or unusual difficulties might also require unusual methods.
 5. After the Munich Conference in September 1938, the majority of the British people stood behind the Government of Mr. Chamberlain, who

was credited with the initiative and success of the Conference. The British people were at that time convinced that the Führer of the German people was determined to solve international questions, not by force, but by negotiation. They believed that the declarations signed at Munich, which denounced war as a means of solving international questions, were sincere and, moreover, really meant what they said. The implacable speech in Saarbrücken [see above, speech of October 9, 1938, pp. 1221 ff.] did indeed deal this opinion a hard blow and subsequent events still further strengthened the opinion in this country that the Reich Government did, in fact, prefer the method of force to that of negotiation.

6. This feeling was further increased by the tone of the German press which sought to represent the Munich Conference as the result of British fear of German rearmament. When, furthermore, the German Government, in contrast to previous statements to the contrary, openly admitted that they had taken a decisive part in the Spanish Civil War, this further increased the doubts of the British public as to the sincerity of German assurances, and certain political groups in England did not hesitate to make capital out of this general feeling.

7. Public opinion in England never changes by leaps and bounds. Propaganda has little effect on the British people, except perhaps for certain districts in London and South Wales. Rational, moderate words will more readily receive a favorable hearing than flamboyant accusations; the Englishman regards cautious moderation as a sign of prudence and not of weakness. Only in this light can Lord Halifax's most recent speech be correctly understood as an objective assessment of the thoughtful but resolute mood of our people in this grave hour. It was the announcement of a carefully considered policy, based on the determination of our people to translate such policy into action.

8. At present public opinion in Great Britain is undoubtedly anti-German. The Englishman regards the great achievements of the German nation, not with anxiety or disfavor, but with the feeling that the arbitrary use of military power must be limited at some point. This feeling, and only this feeling, is the real root of the present anti-German attitude in England. The continual attacks in the German press upon British statesmen, who are represented as weaklings, are naturally not calculated to allay this feeling. On the contrary, such attacks strengthen the feeling of the British people that they must not give in to the pressure of the Axis Powers. Nothing expresses this feeling more clearly than the speed and extent of the response evoked amongst the British people by the call for voluntary military service. This feeling of the British people shows itself also in the decision of the Government to devote all its powers to rearmament. The striking progress of this rearmament leaves no doubt regarding the earnestness of this decision. If it is true that this concentration on rearmament places an unavoidable strain on the economic and private life of the Englishman which, for this quiet and comfort-loving people, is doubly disturbing, it should

not be concealed that this strain on the British people is causing a growing impatience, an impatience which expresses itself in the feeling that if war is already unavoidable then at least let it come soon.

9. It is understandable that a nation in this frame of mind regards the Danzig question as one of principle, even as a symbolic problem. An attack on Danzig or forcible incorporation of the Free City in the Greater German Reich would not be regarded here merely as a threat to the economic and political existence of Poland. Such an act would, in addition, be taken as obvious proof that the German Reich is determined to fulfil all its political desires by armed force.

10. An accompanying symptom of this anti-German feeling among the British people is a deep and growing mistrust of German assurances and declarations. A really concrete contribution by Germany to the cause of peace would, in the circumstances, be an invaluable contribution to the re-establishment of confidence between the two great nations. Chamberlain by his "appeasement" policy endeavored to secure peace because doubtless he visualized the horror and misery which would be the consequences of a general war. The aim of his policy is to solve international problems by free and open discussion. Discussion presumes, however, in advance, participants who are prepared to deliberate with one another and to abide by the result of their discussions.

11. Some people here think that the German Government perhaps have doubts as to the permanence of an agreement between the German Government and the Government of Mr. Chamberlain. It is said here sometimes that perhaps the Reich Chancellor fears that an agreement between him and Mr. Chamberlain would be upset by another British Government with more anti-German views.

12. If such a fear actually exists in Germany it is based on a fundamental misconception. The vast majority of the British people desire nothing more than a secure peace. Every step for the security of peace would in consequence meet amongst all classes of people with such resounding enthusiasm that it is not conceivable that any party in a Government could prefer a war policy to a peace policy.

13. In addition, the strength of the Government of Mr. Chamberlain is frequently underestimated. The Government parties have 430 of the 615 seats in the House of Commons and a majority of 246 votes against any other possible combination of parties. Of the Opposition parties, the Labour Party has 154 seats, Sir Archibald Sinclair's Liberal Party numbers 17, Lloyd George's Independent Liberals have in all four seats, which, by the way, are held by himself, his son, his daughter, and a close friend of the family.

14. In the political life of Great Britain the Opposition is there to oppose. It is the traditional point of view of every British Parliamentary Opposition that the Government are never right and that it would be best for the country if the Government were defeated. In order to fulfil this purpose the Opposition has full freedom to criticize. This right

publicly to discuss and criticize any measure of a Government does not appear to the British public as a parliamentary farce, but as an important security against unjust or careless misuse of the power of the Government.

15. Many of the comments which are made in the House of Commons and many speeches of politicians who do not belong to the Government must be regarded in this light. They are very often meant rather as demonstrations of political opposition than as serious criticisms of Government measures. On the other hand we do not doubt that many of those violent anti-British attacks in the German press which cause so much annoyance here are mainly intended for home consumption.

16. The weight and the importance of political statements depend naturally on the circumstances in which they are made. The most important circumstance to be which must be considered here is the legal freedom which permits of political demonstrations and comments. Otherwise, unfortunate and serious misunderstandings could arise. In judging political statements it must never be forgotten that an official propaganda machine, on the lines of the totalitarian States, does not exist in Great Britain. The most important sources of information and comments here are the daily press and wireless.

17. The British radio is, on principle, forbidden ever to take up a one-sided attitude to foreign affairs. In broadcasting news it must, in general, confine itself to giving facts and avoid comments. Comments are only permissible as quotations of statements made by persons who substantiate the statements with their full name. Statements for or against the policy of the British Government are equally permissible.

18. Further misunderstanding might arise abroad from the attitude of the British press. It must always be remembered that in Britain all newspapers are completely private concerns. A "Government press," in the sense as understood on the Continent, does not exist in Great Britain. This independence of the press in Britain is in no way a sign of weakness or lack of influence of British Governments. It is far more a proof of their strength and security. On all questions of domestic and foreign politics the press of this country is given the greatest possible freedom. Apart from the laws to protect State secrets and personal honor, as well as against incitement to violent breaches of the peace, no bounds are set to the press in Great Britain.

19. The British daily newspapers can be divided into two large groups: the provincial press, and the great newspapers which are distributed throughout the country. Each of these groups, as well as each single newspaper, has its own character, its own political opinion and its typical style of writing. This must be given due consideration if one wishes to judge correctly certain statements made in the British press. Nor is there any central organization whatsoever in Great Britain which could influence the news service or the attitude of the press, or wishes to do so. An occasional unanimity in British newspapers on certain questions is, therefore, never artificially created. It is, on the contrary,

- a true reflection of the real and genuine unanimity of the British people on this question.
Published in DGFP, D, VI, no. 783, pp. 1088 ff.
640. See above, Introduction, pp. 88 ff.
 641. For a report on the encounter see Carl Jakob Burckhardt's account of March 19, 1940 delivered to the League of Nations in Geneva. Printed in *Documents on International Affairs 1939-46*, Vol. I, p. 346.
 642. Reports on the August 12 and 13, 1939 meeting of Hitler and Ciano in Schmidt, pp. 447 f.; DGFP, D, VII, no. 43, pp. 39 ff. and no. 47, pp. 53 ff.; and in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 119 f.
 643. Ciano was not pleased by this remark since Mussolini was nearly sixty years old at the time. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 119.
 644. See above, March 1, 1935 and September 30, 1938.
 645. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 120.
 646. Ciano returned to Berlin early and consulted with Hitler for several hours. See below, October 1, 1939.
 647. DNB note, August 12, 1939.
 648. Massimo Magistrati, Ciano's brother-in-law who had married his sister Maria; Italian diplomat serving first in Berlin, then in Bern and Bucharest.
 649. Hans Georg von Mackensen, son of the Field Marshal; German Ambassador in Rome from 1938 to 1943.
 650. DNB text, August 13, 1939.
 651. DNB note, August 13, 1939. Ambassador Attolico protested against this report which perpetrated Italian and German agreement on the Danzig question. Cf. *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Series 8, Vol. XXVIII.
 652. See above, March 31, 1939.
 653. Examples of such pacts were the Stargard Agreement (1762), the Treaty of St. Petersburg (1762), the Tauroggen Convention (1812), the Reassurance Treaty (1887), the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918), the Treaty of Rapallo (1922). For Russia's steps to the pact with Hitler see Louis Fischer, *Russia's Road from Peace to War* (New York, Evanston, and London, 1969) pp. 303 ff.
 654. First partition of Poland on August 5, 1772. Parties involved: Austria, Prussia, Russia.
Second partition of Poland on January 4, 1793. Parties involved: Prussia and Russia.
Third partition of Poland on October 24, 1795. Parties involved: Austria, Prussia, and Russia.
 655. Cf. Ribbentrop's August 14, 1939 telegram to Graf von der Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, DGFP, D, VII, no. 56, pp. 62 ff.
 656. Cf. Franz Halder, *Kriegstagebuch 1939-42*; on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; also published in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, ed., *Generaloberst Halders Kriegstagebuch*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1962-63). Excerpts (August 14, 1939 to September 3, 1939) in DGFP, D, VII, pp. 551 ff. Quoted from the entry of August 14, 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 551 ff.
 657. Reference to Chamberlain and Daladier.

658. Apparently Hitler was convinced that, in a worst case scenario, the Western Powers would react to the outbreak of a German-Polish war by imposing economic sanctions on Germany. This was based on his experiences in the case of the 1936 Italian conquest of Abyssinia, where highly vocal protest by the Western Powers had merely entailed trade restrictions,
659. DNB report, August 15, 1939.
660. For details on the history of the unit and on Hitler's military service in the First World War see Fridolin Solleder, *Vier Jahre Westfront* (Munich 1932).
661. See above, November 8, 1933.
662. Reports on the festivities at Munich and the Obersalzberg on the occasion of Hitler's "service anniversary" in VB, Nos. 229 and 230, August 17 and 18, 1939.
663. See above, p. 488.
664. Report on the events in Danzig in VB, No. 233, August 21, 1939. Illustrated reports in *Kölnische Illustrierte Zeitung*, August 31, 1939. Also illustrated reports in *Illustrierter Beobachter*, special edition, September 1939. Light and heavy artillery units moved to Danzig to reinforce SS troops already stationed there. In June 1939, the Wehrmacht High Command provided for another 168 officers to travel to Danzig in civilian clothes. On August 28, the *Schleswig-Holstein* liner docked at the Danzig shipyards thus adding to the fighting capacity of the troops in the Free City. Cf. DGFP, D, VI, nos. 547 and 670.
665. DNB text, August 21, 1939.
666. DGFP, D, VII, no. 132, pp. 142 f.
667. See above, statement of August 13, 1939 to Ciano ("late August"); and statement of April 1, 1939 on the *Scharnhorst* ("September 1").
668. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 142, pp. 156 f. The telegram was drawn up at 4:35 p.m. and sent out at 6:45 p.m. The German Ambassador in Moscow received it at 0:45 a.m. on August 21, 1939. He promptly forwarded the message to Molotov who, in turn, submitted it to Stalin.
669. Cf. Papen, p. 311. Papen is mistaken on the date.
670. DNB text, August 21, 1939.
671. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 159, p. 168. The telegram left Moscow at 7:45 p.m. and arrived in Germany at 9:45 p.m. Allegations that, in a secret address on August 19, 1939 Stalin had referred to the potential outcome of a war of attrition between Germany and the Western Powers as beneficial for the Soviet Union and had hence agreed to Hitler's proposals conveyed in the telegram, have been disproved. Cf. Eberhard Jäckel, "Über eine angebliche Rede Stalins vom 19. August 1939," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 6 (1959), pp. 380 ff.
672. DNB text, August 21, 1939.
673. See above, speech of March 15, 1932.
674. Precisely in which direction Hitler wished to maneuver his opponents he made brutally clear in an April 29, 1937 address to Kreisleiters at the Vogelsang fortress: "It is not as though I wanted to force my adversary

- to fight. After all, I do not say yes to the fight because I want to fight him, but because I want to destroy him. And now come to my aid, ingenuity, so that I may maneuver him into a corner so that he cannot strike me while I can strike straight at his heart!" Citation from record of the speech on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, EW G7 207.
675. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 192, pp. 200 ff. Cf. IMT, 798-PS. Protocols exist of both of Hitler's speeches before the generals on August 22, 1939. American soldiers found the papers in Saalfelden, Tirol, at the end of the war (IMT, 798-PS and IMT, 1014-PS). Neither copy bore a signature and hence the defense at the Nuremberg War Criminal Trials questioned the authenticity of the documents. However, the court ruled that the papers could be submitted as evidence since it appeared beyond reasonable doubt that they were indeed genuine, since two further records confirmed them: The Chief of the High-Seas Fleet, Admiral Hermann Böhm, took notes at the meetings, cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XLI, pp. 16 ff. and Colonel General Halder recapitulated them in his War Diary, cf. DGFP, D, VII, pp. 557 ff. There is also another document which, however, the International Military Tribunal did not admit as evidence; its authenticity was compromised also by the unusual and vulgar language employed in the text (IMT, L-3). This last account is reproduced in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 314, (enclosure), pp. 258 ff. and had the following verbatim content:

Decision to attack Poland was arrived at in spring. Originally there was fear that because of the political constellation we would have to strike at the same time against England, Russia and Poland. This risk too we should have had to take. Göring had demonstrated to us that his Four-Year Plan is a failure and that we are at the end of our strength, if we do not achieve victory in a coming war.

Since the autumn of 1938, and since I have realized that Japan will not go with us unconditionally and that Mussolini is endangered by that nitwit of a King and the treacherous scoundrel of a Crown Prince, I decided to go with Stalin. After all there are only three great statesmen in the world, Stalin, I and Mussolini. Mussolini is the weakest, for he has been able to break the power neither of the crown nor of the Church. Stalin and I are the only ones who visualize the future. So in a few weeks hence I shall stretch out my hand to Stalin at the common German-Russian frontier and with him undertake to re-distribute the world.

Our strength lies in our quickness and in our brutality; Genghis Khan has sent millions of women and children into death knowingly and with a light heart. History sees in him only the great founder of States. As to what the weak Western European civilization asserts about me, that is of no account. I have given the command and I shall shoot everyone who utters one word of criticism, for the goal to be obtained in the war is not that of reaching certain lines but of physically demolishing the opponent. And so for the present only in the East I have put my death-head formations in place with the command

relentlessly and without compassion to send into death many women and children of Polish origin and language. Only thus we can gain the living space we need. Who after all is today speaking about the destruction of the Armenians?

Colonel General von Brauchitsch has promised me to bring the war against Poland to a close within a few weeks. Had he reported to me that he needs two years or even only one year, I should not have given the command to march and should have allied myself temporarily with England instead of Russia for we cannot conduct a long war. To be sure a new situation has arisen. I experienced those poor worms Daladier and Chamberlain in Munich. They will be too cowardly to attack. They won't go beyond a blockade. Against that we have our autarky and Russian raw materials.

Poland will be depopulated and settled with Germans. My pact with the Poles was merely conceived of as a gaining of time. As for the rest, gentlemen, the fate of Russia will be exactly the same as I am now going through with in the case of Poland. After Stalin's death—he is a very sick man—we will break the Soviet Union. Then there will begin the dawn of German rule of the earth.

The little States cannot scare me. After Kemal's death Turkey is governed by *'cretins'* and half idiots. Carol of Rumania is through and through the corrupt slave of his sexual instincts. The King of Belgium and the Nordic kings are soft jumping jacks who are dependent on the good digestions of their over-eating and tired peoples.

We shall have to take into the bargain the defection of Japan. I gave Japan a full year's time. The Emperor is a counterpart to the last Tsar—weak, cowardly, undecided. May he become a victim of the revolution. My going together with Japan never was popular. We shall continue to create disturbances in the Far East and in Arabia. Let us think as *'gentlemen'* and let us see in these peoples at best lacquered half maniacs who are anxious to experience the whip.

The opportunity is as favorable as never before. I have but one worry, namely that Chamberlain or some other such pig of a fellow (*"Saukerl"*) will come at the last moment with proposals or with ratting (*"Umfall"*). He will fly down the stairs, even if I shall personally have to trample on his belly in the eyes of the photographers.

No, it is too late for this. The attack upon and the destruction of Poland begins Saturday early. I shall let a few companies in Polish uniforms attack in Upper Silesia or in the Protectorate. Whether the world believes it is quite indifferent (*"scheissegal"*). The world believes only in success.

For you, gentlemen, fame and honor are beginning as they have not since centuries. Be hard, without mercy, act more quickly and brutally than the others. The citizens of Western Europe must tremble with horror. That is the most human way of conducting a war. For it scares the others off.

The new method of conducting war corresponds to the new drawing

of the frontiers. A war extending from Reval, Lublin, Kaschau to the mouth of the Danube. The rest will be given to the Russians. Ribbentrop has orders to make every offer and to accept every demand. In the West I reserve myself the right to determine the strategically best line. Here one will be able to work with Protectorate regions, such as Holland, Belgium and French Lorraine.

And now, on to the enemy, in Warsaw we will celebrate our reunion.

Editor's note: The author of this work chose the first, above mentioned, documents found in Austria for reproduction. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 192, pp. 200 ff. and no. 193, pp. 203 f. They are more concise than either Böhm's notes or Halder's recollections. Halder's entry in his War Diary is reproduced below, note 678.

676. Translation according to other quotations in this work.

677. DGFP, D, VII, no. 193, pp. 203 f. See also IMT, 1014-PS and DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 314 (enclosure).

678. The verbatim content of Halder's entry in his War Diary is reproduced below:

22 August 1939. Führer Conference (Obersalzberg, 12:00)

Present: the Army Group and Army Commanders of the three Armed Forces.

I. *Exposition of the situation, and decision* (Morning)

1. *Development of the decision* to settle Eastern question: theoretically desirable to settle with West first, but as has become increasingly clear that Poland would fall on us from behind in any difficult situation the Eastern question must be disposed of before the problems in the West are tackled.

2. Germany's present position favorable for settlement of Eastern question. A number of factors are in our favor now which would not exist a few years hence.

(a) *Personal considerations*:

On our side: the personality of the Führer.—The personality of Mussolini as the sole champion of the imperial idea. Proved his strength in Abyssinian conflict. The personality of Franco, the champion of unified progressive leadership and of friendship for Germany in Spain.

On the enemy's side: there are no men of the necessary calibre to carry through, firmly and heroically, the very difficult decisions which must be taken, especially on the English side. The enemy has much to lose [whereas we] only stand to gain.

(b) *Political advantages*:

England is contained: in the *Mediterranean*, by tension with Italy; in the Far East, by tension with Japan; in the Near East, by tension with the Mohammedan peoples.

England did not win the last war. In entering a new war the Empire must reckon with changes in its structure.

France's position has also deteriorated. Decline in birth rate.

Balance of forces in *Balkans* since Albania, Yugoslavia tied down.

Rumania vulnerable and dependent on the tension between the other Powers. Turkey has no leadership.

"A showdown, which it would not be safe to put off for four to five years, had better take place now.

"Use of military weapons necessary, before final great showdown with West; test the [military] machine.

"A general settlement of accounts is not desirable, but rather disposing of specific issues; this is not only politically but also militarily the right way."

(c) *Poland:*

Polish-German relations unbearable. Proposals concerning Danzig and communication through Corridor (Currency question) were turned down at England's instigation. Settlement of Polish tension must not be left to solution by third powers. Time for solution now ripe, therefore strike! Political risk involved cannot be avoided. No great decision without risk.

3) *Reasons leading to [this] decision*

Only two States (England and France) can feel any obligation to assist Poland, England primarily, France towed in England's wake.

England's rearmament has not yet altered the situation substantially in England's favor. Improvement of Navy will not be noticeable until 41/42; on land it will also take considerable time for effects to be felt; only air force improved. Today England's vulnerability in the air is still great. Therefore England desires armed conflict only in three to four years' time.

France's armament partially outdated, but not bad. Population dwindling, France cannot afford long war.

In the West there remain only two possibilities:

Blockade: Unpromising, as we can utilize Danube basin.

Attack in West:

(a) Attack on West Wall psychologically impossible, also militarily very difficult.

(b) Violation of neutral States. These countries really wish to remain neutral. Besides, England also needs their neutrality.

Therefore we expect that England and France will not violate neutrality. Military intervention therefore without prospects. "Long war" not attractive. Germany can be expected to do better in a long war now than in 1914.

Russia will never be so senseless as to fight for France and England.

Developments: Dismissal of Litvinov: sign of ending of policy of intervention; commercial treaty. Even before that, conversations, on Russia's initiative, on non-aggression pact, intervention in Russo-Japanese conflict, Baltic States.

Russians have informed [us] that they are prepared to conclude pact. Personal contact Stalin-Führer. "With this I have knocked the weapons out of the hands of these gentry (*Herrschaften*). Poland has been maneuvered into the position that we need for military success."

Ultimate effect cannot yet be foreseen: new course! Stalin writes that he expects a great deal for both sides. Tremendous revolution in the whole European political situation.

II. *The Führer's demands on his military chiefs*

1) *Ruthless determination*: Anglo-French counter moves will come. We must stand fast. Build-up in the West will go forward (*W-Aufmarsch wird gefahren*). "Iron steadfastness of all in authority."

2) *Aim: Annihilation of Poland*—elimination of its vital forces. It is not a matter of gaining a specific line or a new frontier, but rather of the annihilation of an enemy, which must be constantly attempted by new ways.

3) *Solution*: Means immaterial. The victor is never called upon to vindicate his actions. We are not concerned with having justice on our side, but solely with victory.

4) *Execution*: Harsh and remorseless. Be steeled against all signs of compassion!

Speed: Faith in the German soldier, even if reverses occur!

Of paramount importance are the wedges [which must be driven] from south-east into the Vistula, and from the north to the Narev and Vistula. Promptness in meeting new situations; new means must be devised to deal with them quickly.

5) *New frontiers*: New Reich territory? Outlying protectorate territory. Military operations must not be affected by regard for future frontiers.

III. *Details*

1) Probable start: Saturday morning.

2) Slovakia (List): Instruct Barckhausen to strengthen Slovak frontier defense. Elements of 7th Air Force Division to Zipser-Neudorf. Slovak airmen to be grounded. We guarantee Slovakia against Hungarians taking action.

3) Dirschau: Attack at dawn on Y-day by dive-bomber groups on western end of bridge and town (barracks, power plant, etc.). Simultaneously freight train (*Bahnzug*) from Marienburg, followed by armored train and remainder of [group] Medem.

4) Gdynia: Air attack simultaneously with Dirschau; simultaneous blockade of harbor.

5) Operation of Army Reichenau. No comment.

6) Review of position of enemy in sector of Army Groups North. Published in DGFP, D, VII, pp. 557 ff.

679. Hitler repeatedly chose a Saturday to launch various of his undertakings: Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations on October 14, 1933; the reintroduction of general conscription on March 16, 1935; the military occupation of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936; and the invasion of Austria on March 12, 1938

680. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 191, p. 200.

681. Hoffmann was not only Hitler's court photographer, he also served as storyteller. Whenever he spoke with the Führer, he would address him simply as "Herr Hitler" just as he had in earlier days. Hoffmann enjoyed

great privileges in the Hitlerian household. For example, he was exempt from the sycophantic court ceremonial to which even men of such standing as Göring, Goebbels, and Hess were subjected. Hoffmann also was very frank in expressing his opinion to the Führer, a bluntness that greatly impressed Hitler.

682. Cf. *Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen*, No. 6, in *Münchener Illustrierte*, 48 (1954).

683. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 249: "His facial expression froze and he paled."

684. Baron Kiichiro Hiranuma, born 1867; died 1952 in a Tokyo prison.

685. See above, pp. 767 f., speech of March 7, 1936.

686. See above, pp. 689 f., speech of January 1, 1937.

687. Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of February 9 and March 3, 1918.

688. DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 137, p. 122

689. *Ibid.*, no. 140, p. 124.

690. English texts of the letters exchanged are taken from *Documents Concerning the Last Phase of the German-Polish Crisis* (New York, 1939), nos. 6 f., pp. 15 ff. (Hereafter referred to as the *German White Book*.) Cf. also DGFP, D, VII, no. 200, enclosure, pp. 215 f. and no. 201, pp. 216 ff.

Initially, the August 22/23, 1939 correspondence between Hitler and Chamberlain was not published in the German media. By contrast, Hitler's later correspondence with Daladier was made public. See below, August 26/27, 1939. After the war had begun, Hitler's correspondence with Chamberlain was belatedly published in the *Deutsches Weissbuch*, II, of September 5, 1939. Every bookstore in the Reich carried this book and thus the contents of the letter were easily accessible to the general public. (See *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, nos. 454 to 456, pp. 290 to 292). The correspondence is also published in Berber, pp. 208 ff.

691. Chamberlain's injection proves that he himself paid no heed to this hypothesis. As a matter of fact, Great Britain had issued warnings to both Germany and Austria in 1914, cautioning them to consider the possible consequences a move against either Belgium or Serbia might entail.

692. Cf. Strauch, pp. 261 f.

693. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 251.

694. Werner Hewel, Legation Counselor; later Ambassador, functioned as intermediary between Hitler and Ribbentrop; chief of Ribbentrop's personal staff; presumed dead in 1945 Berlin.

695. Cf. Strauch, pp. 265 f.

696. See above, September 15 and September 22, 1938.

697. Cf. Henderson, p. 247.

698. Quoted according to DGFP, D, VII, no. 200, pp. 210 ff. German text published in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 455, pp. 290 f. However, the latter rendition is incomplete as certain passages on Russia, Poland, and Great Britain were omitted in this particular account of the interview. Cf. also DBrFP, VII, no. 200, pp. 161 ff.

699. Reference to Sir Edmund William Ironside, Chief of the General Staff of Great Britain's Overseas Forces from 1939 to 1940; Field Marshal in 1940.
700. The claim that England had issued a "blank check" to Poland by entering into an alliance with Warsaw is completely unfounded. The guarantee prescribed mutual assistance only in the event of either armed aggression against Poland on the part of Germany, or an official German declaration of war on Poland. This agreement would not have applied had Poland initiated hostilities by attacking Danzig and Germany.
701. Hitler was obviously bluffing when he threatened to order general mobilization. Troops had been called up far in advance. By this time, the soldiers were already at their battle stations and stood ready to move against Poland. Hitler never issued a mobilization order, not even after the September 3, 1939 official declaration of war by Great Britain and France.
702. Reference to the January 5 conference in Berchtesgaden. See above, January 5, 1939.
703. In retrospect, it is quite ironic that Hitler's "long treaty" lasted barely two years. He himself terminated the agreement by launching his ill-fated campaign against the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.
704. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 203.
705. See above, pp. 1028 f. and 1034.
706. Published in the DGFP, D, VII, no. 201, pp. 216 ff. The German original is published in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 456, p. 292.
707. Editor's note: The sentence given in italics in DGFP was underlined in the German original. Cf. notice in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 232, p. 191.
708. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 200, pp. 214 f. The *Deutsches Weissbuch* does not contain the afternoon conversation between Hitler and Henderson.
 This second talk moreover resembles a similar conversation between Napoleon I and the British Envoy Lord Withworth. They met in the Tuileries on March 13, 1803. Napoleon demanded of the diplomat: "So you are determined to go to war?—If you wish to take up weapons, then I shall do so, too. If you wish to do battle, I shall do battle, too. You may kill France, but you shall never intimidate her."
 When the Envoy replied that he desired nothing of the kind, the French Emperor retorted: "Well, then you have to honor the contracts. Woe to him who does not honor contracts"! (Based on Lord Withworth's report to the British Foreign Secretary Lord Hawkesbury).
 Napoleon's claim that he was innocent of breach of contract was not true. After all, it had been France that had defied the provisions of the Treaty of Amiens of 1801. In complete disregard of this accord, Napoleon had upset the status quo by subjugating Italy, violating Swiss neutrality, and exerting increasing pressure upon the German States. In May 1803, Great Britain demanded guarantees that France entertained

no further expansionist designs. After the expiration of a seven day ultimatum set by Prime Minister Addington, Great Britain declared war on France.

709. Reference to Sir Leslie Hore-Belisha, a Jew born 1895 in Mogador, Morocco; Minister of War from 1937 to 1940.
710. On this particular claim of Hitler's see above, Introduction, p. 34.
711. In full view of the public, Hitler had repeatedly stated his determination to launch a war as early as October 2, 1938. In a speech at Znaim on October 26, 1938 he maintained: "We would have marched in here on October 2 at 8:00 a.m., one way or another." See above, p. 1230. In a speech before the Reichstag on January 1939, he further detailed that preparations hereto dated back to the spring of 1938: "On May 28, I issued orders for the preparation of a military intervention against this state on October 2." See above, p. 1113 and January 30, 1939.
712. Hitler is alluding to his "peace proposals" of 1936. See above, March 7, 1936 and April 1, 1936.
713. Reference to the German Ambassador in London.
714. DNB text, August 23, 1939.
715. The *Würzburger Generalanzeiger's* correspondent reported the following news from Berlin: "The official communiqué on the cabinet meeting yesterday confirms that England intends to blindly fulfill all of its contractual obligations to Poland. [—] Instead of teaching Poland some common sense, England supports Polish cries for war and encourages Poland's delusions of grandeur. How it was possible that, given these circumstances, Chamberlain had the audacity to send the Führer a message remains one of the unresolved mysteries of the increasingly confused state of British politics."
716. Entry in Halder's War Diary, DGFP, D, VII, p. 559.
717. Cf. telegram of August 20, 1939 in *ibid.*, no. 138, p. 154.
718. Arthur Greiser, born 1897 in Schroda in the Province of Posen (Poznan); hanged 1946 in Poznan; President of the Danzig Senate from 1934 to 1939; Gauleiter of the Reichsgau Wartheland (former Province of Poznan).
719. Cf. Ribbentrop's telegram of August 23, 1939, wired from Moscow at 8:05 p.m. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 205, p. 220.
720. Contents of the telegram published *ibid.*, no. 210, p. 223.
721. On Hitler's alliance policy see above, p. 414.
722. DNB report, August 24, 1939.
723. DGFP, D, VII, no. 228, pp. 245 ff. DNB text, August 24, 1939. Also published in RGBL. 1939, II, pp. 968 f.
724. DGFP, D, VII, no. 205, pp. 246 f.
725. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 253.
726. Even had there been a change in the composition of the Cabinet, this would not have changed the general direction of British policy.
727. As reported by Weizsäcker, p. 254.
728. *Ibid.*
729. Cf. *Heinrich Hoffmanns Erzählungen*, No. 6, in *Münchener Illustrierte*,

- 48 (1954).
730. In 1812, angered by Caulaincourt's objective reporting from the Russian Court, Napoleon I had declared: "Tsar Alexander thinks he can make politics with polite phrases. He made a Russian out of Caulaincourt." Cf. Armand Caulaincourt, *Mit Napoleon in Russland* (Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1938), p. 29.
731. In *Mein Kampf*, p. 705, Hitler had stated: "Germany has only two potential allies in Europe in the near future: England and Italy." Further, Hitler maintained: "If one's goal were more land in Europe, this could only be accomplished, broadly speaking, at Russia's expense, meaning that the new Reich [of 1871] would once again join the march on the road of the Teutonic Knights of old, to gain by the German sword sod for the German plough and daily bread for the nation. For this kind of policy there could be but one ally in Europe: England." *Mein Kampf*, p. 154. See also above, Introduction, p. 53.
732. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 266, pp. 281 ff. Italics according to the source (spacing out in the German original).
733. Maxim Maximovich Litvinov (original Jewish name: Meir Moisejevich Wallach), born 1876 in Bialystok; died 1951 in Moscow; People's Foreign Commissar from 1930 to 1939; replaced by Molotov on May 4, 1939.
734. Cf. report in Schmidt, p. 458. The texts of these statements are also published in the *British Blue Book*, nos. 64 f.
735. Cf. Henderson's August 25 report to Halifax which arrived in London at 7:00 p.m. Published in the *British Blue Book*, no. 68, p. 120.
736. Published in German in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 69, pp. 152 f. Quotation according to the translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 265, pp. 279 ff. Cf. the translation in the *German White Book*, no. 8, pp. 19 ff. See also below, August 27, 1939, note 784 and Dahlerus, pp. 65 ff.
737. Cf. Henderson's telegraphic report to Lord Halifax in the *British Blue Book*, no. 69, p. 123.
738. Schmidt, p. 459. Hitler's proposal for an alliance is published in the *British Blue Book*, no. 68, pp. 120 ff. It reflects the proposals put forth in the "six points" which Dahlerus took with him on his flight to London. See below, August 27, 1939.
739. Cf. Bullock, pp. 535 f.
740. Report on this conversation in Schmidt, p. 459. Attolico used this pretense only to calm Hitler. Since the German Ambassador in Rome did not convey the contents of Hitler's letter to Mussolini until 3:20 p.m., Attolico could not possibly have known of a reply at this hour.
741. No record of this particular encounter was found in the German archives. The rendition reproduced above is based upon the account given in Schmidt, pp. 460 f. and on the August 25 report Coulondre sent to the French Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet, published in the *French Yellow Book*, no. 242. This report is also published in Walther Hofer, *Die Entfesselung des zweiten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt am Main/Hamburg, 1960), pp. 218 ff.

742. See above, p. 1204, September 28, 1938.
743. See above, October 14, 1933.
744. See above, April 6, 1939.
745. It is not entirely clear whether news of the imminent ratification of the treaty reached Hitler before or after Coulondre's visit. Schmidt, p. 459, maintained that Hitler indeed had got the message before. Thus it is likely that Hitler had prior word of the imminent ratification, but not of the accomplished fact, since the treaty was not ratified until 5:35 p.m. that day.
746. Henderson's wire containing his report on the conversation with Hitler and the friendship offer of the latter arrived in London at 7:00 p.m. Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 69, p. 122. Hence the Anglo-Polish Assistance Pact had already been concluded as it was ratified earlier—at 5:35 p.m. Nevertheless, it seems highly probable that Henderson informed his superiors of the result of his talk with Hitler by telephone immediately after emerging from the conference room at 3:00 p.m.
747. In jest, Hitler had referred to the English as "my Hugenbergers," implying that they had no more stamina than the former German Nationalist Legation Counselor Hugenberg. Hence, he argued, they deserved similar treatment. See above, Introduction, p. 55.
748. See above, p. 1232. Hitler had mocked Chamberlain in a rather transparent manner in this speech of November 6, 1938, calling him a bourgeois "umbrella carrying prototype."
749. Original Italian text published in *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Series 8, Vol. XIII, no. 250. Editor's note: The official translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 271, pp. 285 f. ("If Poland attacks and her allies open a counter attack against Germany" etc.) has been changed according to the Italian Original.
750. Cf. Schmidt, p. 462.
751. Cf. Halder's War Diary, DGFP, D, VII, p. 561.
752. Evidence given by Keitel at the Nuremberg Trials on April 4, 1946, the attack was initially postponed to August 31, 1939. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X, p. 578.
753. Testimony by Göring at the Nuremberg Trials on August 28, 1945. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. III, p. 280.
754. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 277, p. 289.
755. Cf. also Bullock, p. 362.
756. See above, Introduction, p. 51 and *Mein Kampf*, p. 705.
757. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, p. 73: "A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung as such because he has recognized it to be false only then acts decently if, upon realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final consequence. In such a case, he must, at the very least, forego the public exercise of any further political activities. Because he was once mistaken in his basic beliefs, it is possible that this could happen a second time." See above, Introduction, p. 28.
758. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 50 f.

759. DNB, August 26, 1939. These public announcements were initially aired and only subsequently printed—in part still in the evening edition of that Saturday's papers (August 26, 1939). The remainder was published the following Monday, August 28, 1939. The Reich Law Gazette carried an item entitled "Ordinance to secure vital supplies for the German Volk" on August 27, 1939. Its stipulations in the interest of a wartime economy concerned matters such as the rationing of coal consumption, soap, textiles, shoes, agrarian products, etc. in private households. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1495 ff.
760. This official statement omitted the fact that Hitler had cynically chosen the title "Reich Party Congress of Peace" for this particular rally. See above, speech of April 1, 1939.
761. The *Schleswig-Holstein* had been selected to play a crucial role in the launching of the attack on Poland (cf. operational order for the ship of the line *Schlewig Holstein* of August, 21, 1939 in IMT, 126–C). Initially, the smaller cruiser *Königsberg* had been chosen for the task of opening fire on Danzig, but given its restricted fire power and the might of the Polish fortifications, preference had been given to the *Schleswig-Holstein*. The armored ship had a tonnage of 13,200 tons, had been launched in 1906, and had not been scrapped after the First World War. It was equipped with four 28 cm cannons and fourteen 17 cm cannons and therefore had far greater firing power than the small *Königsberg*.
762. Italian original printed in *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, no. 301, pp. 258 f. English translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 301, pp. 309 f.
763. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 129.
764. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 307, pp. 313 f.
765. Cf. Mackensen's August 26 report to Ribbentrop printed in DGFP, D, VII, no. 320, pp. 324 ff.
766. Italian original in *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, no. 317, p. 276. English translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 317, p. 323.
767. At 2:50 p.m. on August 26, Coulondre was handed the text of the letter in Paris. French original in *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik*, no. 324, p. 276. English translation in the *German White Book*, no. 9, pp. 21 f. See also DGFP, D, VII, pp. 330 f. No records of the August 26, 1939 conversation between Hitler and Coulondre have been found.
768. DGFP, D, VII, no. 324, pp. 330 f. Original text in the *French Yellow Book*, no. 253. Initially, the correspondence between Hitler and Daladier had been intended to remain confidential. On August 28, 1939, the German News Bureau published its contents nevertheless with the following explanation: "In a statement given before members of the French press in Paris on Sunday evening [August 27, 1939], the French Premier Daladier spoke in reference to past correspondence with the Führer. In presenting his arguments, Daladier briefly referred to the contents of said correspondence and drew conclusions from them, however, without presenting the letters themselves to the media. In order to provide the public with more complete information, the DNB has decided to publish the verbatim contents of the letters

- exchanged.—Author's note: Daladier had merely stated that Hitler had rejected his appeal. See also *Neue Basler Zeitung*, August 28, 1939.
769. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 326, p. 332.
770. For reproduction of Roosevelt's telegrams to Hitler and the Polish State President Moscicki cf. *British Blue Book*, nos. 124, 125 and 127, pp. 182 ff. Roosevelt also addressed a note to King Victor Emmanuel. *Ibid.*, no. 122, pp. 181 f.
771. Three years later, Hitler used the same term to belittle Roosevelt. See below, November 8, 1942.
772. Cf. Weizsäcker's memorandum in DGFP, D, VII, no. 328, p. 334.
773. Cf. reports on these assurances of neutrality as conveyed by Germany's missions abroad in DGFP, D, VII, no. 304, p. 312 (Switzerland); no. 313, pp. 319 f. (Netherlands); no. 315, p. 321 (Belgium); no. 321, pp. 326 f. (Luxembourg); and no. 333, pp. 339 f. (Memorandum by the Legal Department).
774. DNB text, August 27, 1939.
775. The telegram was sent at 12:10 a.m. on August 27, 1939. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 341, pp. 346 f.
776. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 58 ff.
777. *Ibid.*
778. See below, Hitler's letter of August 27, 1939 to the French Premier.
779. Reference to the conversation between Hitler and Henderson. See above, August 25, 1939.
780. Editor's note: Hitler's phrases—partly in German in Dahlerus' English Edition—were completed both in German and in English in brackets.
781. On Hitler's obsession with numbers, his need to impress his listeners by reiterating technical details memorized in advance, see above, Introduction, p. 19.
782. This rhetorical question is a parody of Jesus Christ's challenge: "Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?" John 8, 46.
783. Already evident in the manner Hitler dealt with Czechoslovakia was his penchant for determining the fates of lands and peoples at a whim, as described by Dahlerus here. Cf. Schmidt, p. 430.
784. Editor's note: In comparison with his report, Dahlerus, pp. 65 ff., printed several translations of the conversation Hitler-Henderson as published in the *British Blue Book*, nos. 68, 74, and 98. (See also above, August 25, 1939 and notes 735 f.)
785. This particular item was not contained in the proposal Henderson received later.
786. The text is cited in accordance with the English rendition of the letter published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 354, pp. 356 ff. Cf. also the translation in the *German White Book*, no. 10, pp. 22 ff. German text in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 461, pp. 297 f. The contents of two additional versions (DNB text, August 28, 1939 and the reproduction based on Ribbentrop's carbon copy in DGFP, D, VII, no. 354) deviate slightly from the *Deutsches Weissbuch's* account, but not to any significant

- extent. Initially, the letter was to be taken to Paris by special plane, but at 4:00 p.m. it was transmitted by wire. Hitler apparently was convinced Daladier would be duly impressed receiving correspondence from “an old front-line soldier to another.” In 1938 Hitler had told Mussolini: “I get on quite well with Daladier. He was a front-line soldier, too, just as we were, and hence you can talk sensibly with him.” Schmidt, p. 422.
787. Report in DGFP, D, VII, no. 376, pp. 374 f.
788. The *Neue Basler Zeitung* reported that loudspeakers for the Reichstag address had been mounted on August 27. Cf. *Neue Basler Zeitung*, No. 210, August 29, 1939.
789. A popular joke at the time claimed that, after obediently listening to Hitler’s oratorical outpourings, the only real task facing the 900 Reichstag deputies was to sing the “Deutschlandlied” (*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*) and the “Horst-Wessel-Lied” (*Die Fahne hoch*) together with Hitler.
790. On Hitler’s persistent unease concerning the potential powers of the Reichstag see above, January 30, 1939 and April 26, 1942.
791. DNB text, August 28, 1939.
792. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 132.
793. Cf. excerpts from Halder’s War Diary in DGFP, D, VII, p. 563.
794. The “several Party notables” mentioned by Halder were also deputies of the Reichstag.
795. Italian original in *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, D, VII, no. 350, p. 295. English translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 350, pp. 353 f.
796. “Here I wish, above all, to thank Italy which lent us support during this entire time. You will understand that we do not wish to appeal to a foreign power for assistance in this battle. This is our task and we shall carry it out ourselves.” See below, speech of September 1, 1939.
797. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 1553 f. DNB report, August 28, 1939.
798. Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1938 to 1946.
799. Churchill noted the following on the topic at a speech at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester on May 9, 1938:
 Never before has the choice of blessings or curses been so plainly, vividly, even brutally offered to mankind. The choice is open. The dreadful balance trembles. It may be that our Island and all the Commonwealths it has gathered around it may if we are worthy play an important, perhaps even a decisive part in turning the scales of human fortune from bad to good, from fear to confidence, from miseries and crime immeasurable to blessings and gains abounding.
 We make ourselves the servants of this cause, but it is no use espousing a cause without having also a method and a plan by which that cause may be made to win. I would not affront you with generalities. There must be a vision. There must be a plan, and there must be action following upon it.
 We express our immediate plan and policy in a single sentence: “Arm and stand by the Covenant.” In this alone lies the assurance of safety,

the defense of freedom, and the hope of peace. [—]

This is no question of resisting Dictators because they are Dictators but only if they attack other people. Have we not an ideology—if we must use this ugly word—of our own in freedom, in a liberal constitution, in democratic and Parliamentary government, in Magna Carta and the Petition of Right? Ought we not to be ready to make as many sacrifices and exertions for our own broad central theme and cause as the fanatics of either of these new creeds? Ought we not to produce in defense of Right, champions as bold, missionaries as eager, and if need be, swords as sharp as are at the disposal of the leaders of totalitarian states?

Finally, there must be a moral basis for British foreign policy. People in this country, after all we have gone through, do not mean to be drawn into another terrible war in the name of old-world alliances or diplomatic combinations. If deep causes of division are to be removed from our midst, if all our energies are to be concentrated upon the essential task of increasing our strength and security, it can only be because of lofty and unselfish ideals which command the allegiance of all classes here at home, which rouse their echoes in the breasts even of the Dictator-ridden peoples themselves, and stir the pulses of the English-speaking race in every quarter of the globe. [—]

If we could, therefore, get as far as this, believe me the war danger would be removed from use perhaps for our lifetime. And across the Atlantic Ocean the United States would signal her encouragement and sympathy. I shall be told, "But this is the encirclement of Germany," I say, No, this is the encirclement of an aggressor." Nations who are bound by the Covenant can never, however powerful they may be, menace the peace and independence of any other state. That is the essence of the conditions which bring them together. To form a war combination against a single state would be a crime. To form a combination for mutual defense against a probable aggressor is not only no crime, but the highest moral duty and virtue. [—] Undoubtedly our Government could make an agreement with Germany. All they have to do is to give her back her former colonies and such others as she may desire; to muzzle the British press and platform by a law of censorship, and to give Herr Hitler a free hand to spread the Nazi system and dominance far and wide through Central Europe. [—]

It is no small or local cause we plead tonight. We must march in the good company of nations and we march under the standards of Law, of Justice and of Freedom. We must gather together round the joint strength of Britain and France and under the authority of the League all countries prepared to resist, and if possible to prevent acts of violent aggression. There is the path to safety. There are the only guarantees of Freedom. There, on the rock of the Covenant of the League of Nations alone, can we build high and enduring the temple and the towers of Peace.

Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 5955 ff.

800. This ambition is evident in several of Churchill's public statements, as well as in those of Henderson. For instance, Henderson stated the following in a September 3, 1939 conversation with Davignon, the Belgian Ambassador to Berlin: "Do you believe my country would fight if public opinion were not convinced that, up to the very last minute, everything possible had been undertaken to keep this horrid trial from descending upon the world? For the trial that awaits us will be a terrible one and, above all, it will be a long one!" Cf. Jacques Vicomte Davignon, *Berlin 1936–40. Souvenirs d'une mission* (Paris-Brussels, 1951). In an address to the City Carlton Club in London, Churchill stated on June 28, 1939:
We are an old nation. It is nearly a thousand years since we were conquered. We have built up our state and way of life slowly and gradually, across the centuries. Therefore we can afford to make exertions for peace which would not be easy in a race less sure of itself and of its duty. There are two supreme obligations which rest upon a British government. They are of equal importance. One is to strive to prevent war, and the other is to be ready if war should come.
Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6142.
801. Dahlerus placed two telephone calls from the Foreign Office to Göring who then related Hitler's consent. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 74 ff.
802. Ibid.
803. At one point, Göring confessed to Schacht: "I often resolve to tell him something, but then, when I stand in front of him, I lose heart." Cf. Hjalmar Schacht, *Abrechnung mit Hitler* (Hamburg, 1948), p. 32.
804. Published in VB, No. 214, August 29, 1939. A broadcast commemoration speech by Brauchitsch in honor of Tannenberg had been scheduled for the evening of August 26, 1939, but then had cancelled suddenly.
805. Published in RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1531 ff. on August 29, 1939.
806. In the days of the Third Reich, ingenious euphemisms, the so-called *Sprachschöpfungen* (linguistic innovations or "coining of phrases"), were employed to veil unpleasant realities. (See also below, note 1034.) For example, *besonderer Einsatz* (special deployment) stood for war; *Versehrte* (disabled) referred to soldiers wounded in battle; *Absetzbewegungen* (moves for disengagement) and *Frontverkürzungen* (reductions in the length of the front) signaled an ignominious retreat. The terms often included a complete distortion of sense: *Verteidigung* (defense) meant attack, etc. Hitler's *Sprachschöpfungen* inspired above all George Orwell's "Newspeak" in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), but also many science fiction authors such as Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953); the method itself survives until today, as many new technical terms give proof.
807. Published in RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 1535 ff. on August 30, 1939.
808. Verbatim reproduction in DGFP, D, VII, no. 384 and enclosure, pp. 381 ff. See also *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 463, pp. 299 f. and Berber, pp. 218 ff.

809. See above, Chamberlain's letter of August 22, 1939.
810. This conversation between Hitler and Henderson is cited in accordance to a memorandum drawn up by the Envoy Schmidt in DGFP, D, VII, no. 384, pp. 381 ff. Cf. Strauch, p. 287.
811. As is evident from the conversation above, Hitler was firmly convinced that the British would respond to the situation in Poland in the same manner they had reacted to the developments concerning Czechoslovakia a year earlier. Either Great Britain would once more acquiesce to a cession of the territories claimed by Germany, or London would completely fail to respond to an armed German aggression against Poland. The reality was a different one, however. In the earlier case, there had been no contractual obligation for Great Britain to intervene on behalf of Czechoslovakia. In 1939, by contrast, a mutual assistance pact between Britain and Poland had been drawn up on April 6, 1939 and had been ratified on August 25, 1939 with the obvious intent to serve as an unequivocal warning to Germany.
812. The "others" Hitler was referring to in this instance apparently were the Italians, Japanese, and Russians.
813. Cf. Schmidt, p. 464.
814. Verbatim account in *Neue Basler Zeitung*, August 29, 1939. The German media published a shorter version.
815. Cf. Otto Meissner, *Staatssekretär unter Ebert-Hindenburg-Hitler* (Hamburg, 1950), pp. 502 f.
816. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, nos. 351 (pp. 354 f.); 376–378 (pp. 374 ff.); 418 (p. 411).
817. Herbert von Dirksen, born 1882 in Berlin; German Ambassador to Moscow from 1928 to 1933; German Ambassador to Tokyo from 1933 to 1938; German Ambassador to London from 1938 to 1939. Cf. Herbert von Dirksen, *Moskau-Tokio-London, Erinnerungen und Betrachtungen zu 20 Jahren deutscher Aussenpolitik 1919–39* (Stuttgart, 1949).
818. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, nos. 58 (p. 65); 115 (pp. 123 f.); 130 (pp. 138 ff.).
819. Hitler was fond of ridiculing Germany's diplomats, their "miserable reports" and "lacking sense of reality". Cf. Picker, pp. 60 f., 97 f. and 106.
820. Dahlerus, p. 84.
821. Weizsäcker, p. 258.
822. Before his Commanders in Chief, Hitler had already announced the further development with this notable sentence. See above, August 14, 1939.
823. For Hitler's quote see above, note 674.
824. See above, September 30, 1938. At the time, Hitler had given the Czechs a 48-hour ultimatum with an initial expiration date of September 28 which was subsequently extended to September 30, 1938. He let the next day pass without taking any action. It was his intention to strike at 8:00 a.m. on the morning of October 2 and to assault Czechoslovakia from three sides.
His plans for the attack on Poland were similar. Halder noted in his War

Diary: "Poles directed by English to go to Berlin, as required by the Germans. Führer wants them to come tomorrow. Basic principles: Raise a barrage of demographic and democratic demands. Plebiscite within six months, under international supervision. Those opting for Germany must remain German citizens; the same holds good for the Poles. Poles will not want Germans in their territory. 30.8.: Poles in Berlin. 31.8.: Blow up (*Zerplatzen*). 1.9.: Use of force (*Gewaltanwendung*)." Cf. DGFP, D, VII, p. 567.

825. The *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, asserts that the visit took place at 6:45 p.m., while Henderson maintains he called on Hitler at 7:45 p.m. Shirer states that Henderson arrived at the Chancellery at 7:15 p.m. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 577.
826. Verbatim account in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 464, pp. 300 f. and in DGFP, D, VII, no. 421, pp. 413 ff.
827. Report on the meeting in Schmidt, p. 465. Further see three reports by Henderson to Lord Halifax on August 29–30, published in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, nos. 493, 508, and 565.
In a telegram, Henderson reported the following on the German response to Viscount Halifax in the early morning hours of August 30:

Berlin, August 30, 1939. 2:30 a.m.

German reply gave me impression that it had been drafted by Herr Hitler himself. I felt this immediately when I read it and I must admit it seemed to me a very disappointing answer to dignified, passive, and reasoned note of His Majesty's Government.

Ibid., no. 508, p. 393.

828. Hitler intended to deliver an ultimatum the next day, in the unlikely event that a Polish intermediary should indeed arrive.
829. Published in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 508, p. 393.
830. *Ibid.*, no. 565, pp. 427.
831. Verbatim content of the letter and protocol of the oral message in DGFP, D, VII, nos. 417 and 418, pp. 410 f.
832. Cf. Schmidt, p. 465.
833. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 98 f.
834. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, no. 427, pp. 421 f.
835. See above, August 23, 1939.
836. See below, September 1, 1939.
837. Published in RGBl. 1939, I, p. 1539. See below, August 31, 1939.
838. Reference to the imminent war.
839. A "Council on the Defense of the Reich" had not existed officially before. All impressively sounding cabinet formations (e.g. "Privy Cabinet Council," "Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich," or the "Council on the Defense of the Reich" mentioned in this particular ordinance) were a guise for an inner circle that comprised virtually the same men every time: Göring, Keitel, Frick, and Ribbentrop, all obedient servants of their master. It was Hitler who determined the Reich's policy in all questions of import.

840. This was Frick who served as Reich Minister of the Interior at this point. He would be succeeded by Himmler in 1943.
841. Walter Funk, then Reich Minister of Economics.
842. Hitler was mistaken on this point. The provisions of this decree were not rescinded by him, but rather by the military commanders of the four Allied Powers at the end of the war.
843. In the early years of the war, Hitler customarily signed ordinance with “Der Führer” and decrees as either “Der Führer” or “Der Führer und Reichskanzler.” At times, there is no discernible reason for a change in usage by Hitler. For instance, while placing his signature as “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” beneath a January 16, 1942 decree on construction regulations in the city of Salzburg (RGBl. 1942, I, p. 26), Hitler signed a similar decree on redesigning Munich as the capital city of the Movement (RGBl. 1942, I, pp. 45 f.) that very day simply as “Der Führer.” A like August 18, 1942 decree on construction work in the Reichsgau Vienna (RGBl. 1942, I, p. 535) bore the signature “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” once more. Then again Hitler signed as “Der Führer” a decree on remodeling the city of Breslau on November 22, 1942 (RGBl. 1942, I, p. 659). Hitler styled himself “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” one last time when he signed into law an amendment to the Reich Remuneration and Travel Reimbursement Law of March 30, 1943 (RGBl. 1943, I, pp. 189 ff.). From August 15, 1943 on (RGBl. 1943, I, pp. 489 ff.), Hitler signed laws exclusively as “Der Führer.” For Hitler’s habits before the war see above, 1934, note 204.

Given Hitler’s set of mind, it is not surprising that only he was permitted to sign decrees into law and not Göring, for example, who after all was the “President of the Ministerial Council.”

In the course of the war, Hitler deprived the Reichstag of all its legislative powers. With the sole exception of a September 1, 1939 law on the reunification of the Free City of Danzig with the Reich, the Reichstag refrained from exercising its powers. Even the Reichstag’s transfer of extraordinary executive and judiciary powers to Hitler on April 26, 1942 (RGBl. 1942, I, p. 247) was not classified as a constitutional law, but declared a “resolution by the Greater German Reichstag.” The decree was termed an “affirmation of the rights claimed by the Führer in his speech.” When the provisions of the Enabling Act expired on May 10, 1943, Hitler himself prolonged it in a “decree on governmental legislation” (RGBl. 1943, I, p. 295). He was sufficiently concerned not to let the Reichstag convene for this purpose and hence reserved for himself prerogative to secure an “approval of the Reich Government’s powers through the Greater German Reichstag.”

Of course, this never came about in spite of the fact that Hitler continued to govern for an additional two years. See below, 1943, Major Events in Summary.

844. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 458, pp. 447 ff.
845. See above, note 824.
846. Leopold Graf Berchtold von und zu Ungarschitz, born 1863 in Vienna;

died 1942 in Perznye (Ödenburg); Foreign Minister of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Imperial Court from 1912 to 1915. While the ultimatum the Count issued to Serbia contained demands apparently justified by the assassination in Sarajevo, it granted Serbia a reprieve of only 48 hours. Despite the fact that Serbia assented to nearly all demands by July 25, 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire severed ties to Serbia the same day and opened hostilities. The official declaration of war followed on July 28, 1914.

847. Cf. Schmidt, p. 469.

848. For a summary of these statements and other like utterances by Hitler see above, Introduction, p. 35.

849. See above, p. 1187, speech of September 26, 1938.

850. Dahlerus, p. 99.

851. Cf. telegram sent by Halifax to Henderson at 2:00 a.m. on August 30, 1939. Published in the *British Blue Book*, no. 81. In a further telegram later that day (6:50 p.m.), Halifax instructed Henderson to admonish the German Government to follow standard procedures in the dealings with the Polish Government and, hence, to forward its proposals directly to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin. The British Government felt itself not in a position to advise Warsaw to submit to the completely incomprehensible German request of dispatching an extraordinary plenipotentiary to Berlin. Nevertheless, Great Britain would "do their best to facilitate negotiations." Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 88.

852. Adrian Holman, the First Secretary of the British Embassy in Berlin, transmitted Chamberlain's message at 5:30 p.m. on August 30, 1939:
The British Ambassador in Germany to the Reich Foreign Minister
August 30, 1939, British Embassy, Berlin

My dear Reichsminister!

I am directed by His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to convey to Your Excellency the following message from the Prime Minister for His Excellency, the Reich Chancellor:

"We are considering the German note with all urgency and shall send an official reply later in the afternoon. We are representing at Warsaw how vital it is to reinforce all instructions for the avoidance of frontier incidents and I would beg you to confirm similar instruction on the German side. I welcome the evidence in the exchanges of views which are taking place of that desire for Anglo-German understanding of which I spoke in Parliament yesterday."

I should be grateful if the above message could be delivered to His Excellency as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Neville Henderson

DGFP, D, VII, no. 450, p. 441.

853. Cf. telegram of the Foreign Ministry to the German Embassy in Moscow, *ibid.*, no. 56, pp. 62 ff. The telegram detailed six proposals on improving German-Soviet relations. Ribbentrop instructed the German Ambassador: "I request that you do not give M. Molotov these

- instructions in writing, but that you read them to him verbatim.”
854. Report on this conversation in Schmidt, p. 466. For the official protocol of the meeting see DGFP, D, VII, no. 461, pp. 451 f.:

Berlin, August 31, 1939

Record of the conversation between the Reich Foreign Minister and the British Ambassador, Henderson, at midnight on August 30, 1939.

Henderson first handed over the written communication enclosed. He then added two oral communications. He said that complete restraint on the part of the Polish Government could only be expected if the German Government adopted the same attitude on their side of the frontier, and if there were no acts of provocation by the German minority in Poland. Reports were circulating to the effect that the Germans in Poland were committing acts of sabotage which would justify the strongest counter measures on the part of the Polish Government.

The Foreign Minister most emphatically contradicted this last remark by the British Ambassador. Germany knew only of Polish acts of provocation, but Polish propaganda had evidently not failed in its effect on the British Government. The most outrageous acts of sabotage were being committed by the Poles. In the German records there were 200 cases alone of murders committed by the Poles. He (the Reich Foreign Minister) refused to discuss this subject at all with the British Government. Henderson's third communication referred to the German Government's reply of the previous day, in which the German Government had stated their willingness to enter into direct contact with Poland if the Polish Government would send a plenipotentiary at once. The British Government were not in a position to advise the Polish Government to comply with this procedure. They proposed to the German Government that matters should be set in motion through normal diplomatic channels, i.e., by handing the proposals to the Polish Ambassador, so that he, in consultation with his Government, might be enabled to make preparations for direct German-Polish negotiations. If the German Government would also communicate these proposals to the British Government, and if the latter thought that the proposals formed a reasonable basis for a settlement of the problems at issue, they would bring influence to bear on Warsaw towards achieving a solution. Henderson, referring to the last paragraph of the German reply of the previous day, asked if the German proposals had already been formulated and whether these proposals could be handed to him.

The Foreign Minister replied that (1) so far British mediation had produced only one definite result, namely, Polish general mobilization. (2) Germany had expected a Polish representative to arrive today. This had not been an ultimatum, as the British Ambassador had wrongly supposed, but, as the Führer had already explained the day before, a practical proposal dictated by the requirements of the present circumstances. Up to midnight, Germany had heard nothing from the

Poles. The question of possible proposals therefore no longer arose. But in order to show what proposals Germany had intended to make if the Polish representative had arrived, the Reich Foreign Minister read out the German proposals contained in the enclosure.

Henderson replied that the Foreign Minister's statement that the non-arrival of the Polish representative by midnight on Wednesday nullified the proposals which Germany had originally intended to make, seemed to confirm his interpretation that the proposal was an ultimatum.

The Foreign Minister again vehemently contradicted this view and referred to the Führer's statement of the previous day that speed was required owing to the fact that two mobilized armies were facing each other within firing range and an incident might at any moment start a serious conflict.

In conclusion Henderson proposed that the Foreign Minister should summon the Polish Ambassador and hand him the German proposals.

The Foreign Minister refused to do this himself and closed the conversation, having reserved all decisions for the Führer.

Submitted herewith to the Foreign Minister, according to instructions.

Schmidt, Minister

855. Cf. original memorandum published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 461 (enclosure), pp. 453 f.:

Berlin, August, 30, 1939

His Majesty's Government appreciate the friendly reference in the declaration contained in the reply of the German Government to the latter's desire for an Anglo-German understanding and to their statement of the influence which this consideration has exercised upon their policy.

2. His Majesty's Government repeat that they reciprocate the German Government's desire for an improvement in relations, but it will be recognized that they could not sacrifice the interests of friends in order to obtain that improvement. They fully understand that the German Government cannot sacrifice Germany's vital interests, but the Polish Government are in the same position, and His Majesty's Government believe that the vital interests of the two countries are not incompatible.

3. His Majesty's Government note that the German Government accept the British proposal and are prepared to enter into direct discussions with the Polish Government.

4. His Majesty's Government understand that the German Government accept in principle the condition that any settlement should be made subject to an international guarantee. The question of who shall participate in this guarantee will have to be discussed further, and His Majesty's Government hope that to avoid loss of time the German Government will take immediate steps to obtain the assent of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics whose participation in the guarantee His Majesty's government have always assumed.

5. His Majesty's Government also note that the German Government

accept the position of the British Government as to Poland's vital interests and independence.

6. His Majesty's Government must make an express reservation in regard to the statement of particular demands put forward by the German Government in an earlier passage in their reply. They understand that the German Government are drawing up proposals for a solution. No doubt these proposals will be fully examined during discussions. It can then be determined how far they are compatible with the essential conditions which His Majesty's Government have stated and which the German Government have expressed their willingness to accept.

7. His Majesty's Government are at once informing the Polish Government of the German Government's reply. The method of contact and the arrangements for discussion must obviously be agreed with all urgency between the German Government and the Polish Government, but in His Majesty's Government's view it would be impracticable to establish contact so early as today.

8. His Majesty's Government fully recognize the need for speed in the initiation of discussions and they share the apprehensions of the Chancellor arising from the proximity of two mobilized armies standing face to face. They would accordingly most strongly urge that both parties should undertake that during negotiations no aggressive military movements take place. His Majesty's Government feel confident that they could obtain such an undertaking from the Polish Government, if the German Government would give similar assurances.

9. Further His Majesty's Government would suggest that a temporary *modus vivendi* might be arranged for Danzig, which might prevent the occurrence of incidents tending to render German-Polish relations more difficult.

- 856. Schmidt, p. 467. According to Henderson's report to Halifax, Ribbentrop said: "His Majesty's Government's advice had had cursed (*verflucht*) little effect." DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 571, p. 430.
- 857. At 3:00 p.m. on August 30, 1939, the Polish Government resolved to order general mobilization. Placards announcing the mobilization were posted throughout Warsaw at 4:30 p.m. the following day. One hour later, the German Embassy reported the call-up to Berlin in a short message. Published in DGFP, D, VIII., no. 451, p. 442.
- 858. Cf. Henderson's report to Halifax in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 574, pp. 432 f.
- 859. Ibid. Statement before the International Military Tribunal on March 29, 1946. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X, p. 311.
- 860. See below, speech of September 19, 1939.
- 861. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 100 f.
- 862. Ibid., p. 102. Göring dictated the terms of the sixteen-point proposal to Dahlerus once more on the morning of August 31, 1939.
- 863. Broadcast in Germany at 9:00 p.m. on August 31, 1939.
- 864. Standing before the Nuremberg court on March 19, 1946, Göring

- declared that in so doing he had taken “an enormous risk, since the Führer had forbidden this information being made public. [—] Only I could take that risk.” Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. IX.
865. Earlier that year, Hitler had stated regarding the English: “They will not wear me out!” See above, speech of April 1, 1939.
866. Expression used by Hitler and recorded by Schacht: “Chamberlain, that bastard (*dieser Kerl*), has ruined my entry into Prague.” See above, 1938, note 7.
867. “I am only afraid that at the last moment some swine (*Schweinehund*) or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation.” See above, speech of August 22, 1939.
868. Ibid.
869. For Lloyd George’s visit to the Berghof on September 4, 1936 see above, pp. 826 f.
870. See above, April 4, 1939.
871. For the Duke of Windsor’s visit on October 22, 1937, see above, pp. 956 f.
872. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 485, p. 472. While the Duke’s initial correspondence to Hitler was not found after the war, his statements apparently did not deviate, judging by Hitler’s reply, from the official position espoused by the British Government. Hitler’s assumption that the Duke of Windsor, in the case of need and as his “personal friend,” would opt to support him instead of the British Government was no more realistic than his other theories on England and his English “friends.” See also Schmidt, p. 383.
873. DGFP, D, VII, no. 493, pp. 477 ff. and IMT, 126-C. See also reproduction of the document in Hofer, *Entfesselung*, pp. 303 f. The remarks in italics above were made to stand out in the original as well. The order for the attack was given at 4:00 p.m. Cf. Helmut Greiner, *Die Oberste Wehrmachtsführung 1939–43* (Wiesbaden, 1951), pp. 50 f. See also Halder’s War Diary in DGFP, D, VII, pp. 569 f. The fact that the initially planned evacuation of civilians along the French-German border was not carried out, prompted Halder to the following revealing remark on Hitler’s assessment of the situation: “Decision against evacuation shows that he expects France and England will not take action.”
874. The time for the attack, as scheduled in the order issued August 25, 1939, was deferred another 15 minutes because of the seasonal change in the interim. The attack was to begin at dawn (4:30 a.m.) about 45 minutes before daybreak. On August 25, sunrise had been at 5:23 a.m. (CET at longitude 15), while the sun would not come up until 5:31 a.m. on September 1, 1939. The fact that the sun along Germany’s eastern border rose ten to twenty minutes earlier than at CET time also figured in these calculations.
875. Churchill stated in an October 1, 1939 radio broadcast: “It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end.” Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6163.

876. Hitler had declared: "There is hardly anyone who will question that the borders of 1914 can be re-established if blood is shed. [—] For those of us who hold that the future of Germany demands our greatest sacrifices, in one way or another, then, aside from all consideration of what is politically beneficial, we must create and defend a goal worthy of such a sacrifice." *Mein Kampf*, p. 738.
877. See above, Introduction, p. 28.
878. As early as on October 19, 1932, Hitler had compared the German Government to a train—"the train of government" as he called it—at the helm of which he himself stood. See above, p. 170 and Introduction, pp. 58 f.
879. In late 1941, Hitler stated: "In the days when I was not yet Reich Chancellor, I always thought of the General Staff as a bloodhound whose collar I had to grip tightly lest he attack everybody." See below, statement of September 24, 1941 in Borisov.
880. Halder evidently would not have been surprised had the entire attack on Poland been cancelled completely. On August 30, 1939, he noted in his War Diary: "Führer: either 1 or 2 [Sept.]; all off after 2 [Sept.]." Cf. DGFP, D, VII, p. 569.
881. See above, March 24, 1936.
882. Hitler made various such statements to Ciano, Dahlerus, and Henderson in the month of August. See above, August 23, 1939.
883. See below, speech of July 4, 1944.
884. Cf. Keith Feeling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London, 1947), p. 415. For extracts from Chamberlain's speech see also below, September 1, 1939.
885. Cf. Ward Price, p. 148: "We have a choice of evils. There is little human probability of war being permanently avoided. Such vast preparations can hardly fail to have their natural sequel. The last time the Teuto-Slav conflict broke out, Britain was dragged into it. On that occasion Russia was backing Serbia against Austria. She is now backing Czechoslovakia against Germany.
If this ancient feud flames up again, it would be well to deflect it into those regions where it can do least harm. Humanity and common sense alike suggest that the broad steppes of Little Russia are a more suitable locality than the densely populated centers of civilization in Western Europe."
886. Cf. Dahlerus, p. 60.
887. On the various diplomatic attempts in this cause, cf. DGFP, D, VI, no. 466; no. 475; no. 476. See also *Polish White Book*, nos. 108, 110, 112; and *British Blue Book*, no. 90. Further see Dahlerus, pp. 103 ff. and Strauch, pp. 306 ff.
888. Entry in Halder's War Diary for August 31, 1939, 4:20 p.m.: "ObdH [Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, Commander in Chief of the Army]: Orders to go out. (Führer refuses to receive Lipski.)" DGFP, D, VII, p. 569.
889. Lipski had requested to be received at 1:00 p.m. He repeated his

- request at 3:15 p.m. as recorded in the German files at 4:00 p.m. Following this delaying tactic, Ribbentrop finally received Lipski at 6:30 p.m. Ibid., no. 475, p. 462 and no. 476, p. 463.
890. Ibid., no. 473, p. 461.
891. For report on this conference see Dahlerus, pp. 113 ff.
892. See above, March 15, 1939.
893. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, no. 474, p. 462.
894. Report on the meeting *ibid.*, no. 476, p. 463.
895. Published *ibid.*, no. 478, p. 465.
896. Reference to Mussolini's message. See above, August 28, 1939.
897. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, no. 478, p. 465. Due to pressure on the German side, the treaty was ratified speedily on August 31, 1939. Ratification had initially scheduled at a later date, but Molotov had decided to give his speech before the Supreme Soviet at an earlier date than that anticipated.
898. An SS Kommando disguised in Polish army uniforms carried out the staged assault under the guidance of Alfred Naujocks. Amongst the perpetrators of the attack, there was one criminal whom they shot after the attack and left to die at the entrance to the station. Once inside the radio station, they aired a three to four minute long proclamation in both Polish and German. Then, after an exchange of fire, they disappeared into the night. Cf. Naujocks's testimony of November 19, 1945 given before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, IMT, 2751-PS. Published in Hofer, *Entfesselung*, pp. 327 f. See also Jürgen Runzheimer, "Der Überfall auf den Sender Gleiwitz," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 10 (1962), pp. 408 ff.
899. See above, speech of August 22, 1939.
900. For the statements made in meeting with Henderson and in letter to Mussolini see above, August 25, 1939. The *Deutsches Weissbuch* provided an overview of forty-two border incidents perpetrated in the period from August 26 to August 31, 1939. Cf. *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 470, pp. 307 ff. For the day of August 31, there were a further ten alleged transgressions cited, in addition to the Gleiwitz attack. Hence Hitler had a wide selection of events to choose from for the "provocative act for propaganda use" (*propagandistischer Anlass*) he sought as a pretext for opening hostilities. In his Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939, Hitler claimed that "fourteen additional violations of the border" were recorded the previous night, "amongst them three of a most serious nature."
It is always unwise to start a war because of so-called border incidents which by their very nature are most difficult to verify. Germany's August 14, 1914 declaration of war on France which consisted of the official note of recall of the German Ambassador to Paris, for instance, was based upon the allegation that "French bombers penetrated into Baden, Bavaria, and the Rhine Province" in order to disturb railway traffic there. Later it became evident that these allegations were unfounded.
901. The murder of Röhm and other SA leaders are further examples of

unnecessary measures taken by Hitler, given the fact that he could have achieved his goal irrespective of these killings. Another case in point is the "Law concerning the Head of State of the German Reich." See above, August 1, 1934.

902. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 482 (enclosure), pp. 468 ff. German text published in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 468, p. 306.
903. See above, August 30, 1939.
904. For the talk between Henderson and Weizsäcker cf. Strauch, p. 313.
905. Cf. the State Secretary's memorandum of August 31, 1939, published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 482, p. 468.
906. The Westerplatte was located at the entrance to the harbor of Danzig and had initially served as a sea-side resort. After the creation of the Free City of Danzig, it became a munitions depot and was fortified in order to safeguard Polish rights on access to the port.
907. Published in the *Polish White Book*, no. 118.
908. Even in the Dark Ages, it had been common practice to open hostilities only after a formal announcement. Neither of the states Hitler attacked received any such warning. This was the case not only for Poland, but also for Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Greece, and the Soviet Union. For one, this was the result of Hitler's penchant for taking advantage of the element of surprise in his military ventures. However, there was also a second factor involved, namely, an absurd but widespread belief in Germany that the country had been held solely responsible for the outbreak of World War I because it had issued formal declarations of war upon France and Russia in 1914. In the years subsequent, a popular sentiment took hold in Germany that the party who declares war first would be held guilty by the other belligerents.
909. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
910. Cf. text of September 1, 1939 instructions sent out by wire at 8:35 p.m. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 512, p. 491.
911. See above, August 23, 1939.
912. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
913. See above, March 13, 1938.
914. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
915. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, p. 569.
916. Cf. Dahlerus, p. 119 on his September 1 meeting with Hitler (see below, *ibid.*).
917. See above, speech of September 26, 1938.
918. See above, September 27, 1938.
919. On September 2, 1939, German newspapers, as for example the *Würzburger Generalanzeiger*, reported on the Wehrmacht's advance into Poland under the heading: "Punishment (*Züchtigung*) of the Violator of the Peace."
920. See above, September 26, 1938 and 1938, note 410.
921. IMT, 360-PS.
922. For the telegram sent out at 9:40 a.m. on September 1, 1939 see DGFP,

- D, VII, no. 500, p. 483.
923. Cf. Dahlerus, p. 117.
924. Cf. the correspondent's telegram in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, evening edition, September 1, 1939.
925. Should read: "for the first time since World War I or 1920, respectively." See above, p. 1182 and below, note 938.
926. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
927. See below, September 1, 1939 and note 966.
928. See below, speeches of January 1, 1941 and of January 1, 1942.
929. See above, January 30, 1939.
930. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
931. Reference to the Reichstag address in April. See above, April 4, 1939.
932. The claim that he and his "Government . . . sat and waited . . . for two whole days" was untrue. Actually, Hitler had mostly been waiting alone during the two days in question (August 30 and 31, 1939), while Göring or Ribbentrop had kept him company on occasion.
933. On April 9, 1940, both Denmark and Norway would find out precisely how "deadly serious" Hitler was in making these assertions. The assault upon Poland merely set the stage for surprise attacks on non-belligerents which had explicitly declared their neutrality. On May 10, 1940, German troops moved toward France and in the process violated the neutrality of three states: Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. On April 6, 1941, Yugoslavia and Greece became Hitler's next victims, and the Soviet Union followed suit on June 22, 1941.
934. This future "for all time" ended prematurely on June 22, 1941.
935. The attack was launched at 4:45 a.m. according to plan and not at 5:45 a.m. as Hitler erroneously stated.
936. This in fact meant that nearly 14 billion Reichsmarks were allocated for rearmament every fiscal year. In light of this, there apparently was little truth to Hitler's 1932 claim that the final repayment of the three billion Reichsmarks outstanding in reparations would spell the ruin of Germany. In his 1939 statement, Hitler once more greatly exaggerated the sum spent on rearmament. According to research by Heinrich Stübel the figure more accurately had to be placed around 63 billion instead of the 90 billion Hitler cited. Cf. Heinrich Stübel, "Die Finanzierung der Aufrüstung im Dritten Reich," in *Europa-Archiv*, 6 (1951), pp. 4128 ff.
937. Further developments revealed that Hitler had no intention of placing his own life in danger or suffering the same privations the German people did because of the policies he espoused.
938. The tunic Hitler sported that day had little in common with the jacket he had worn during World War I; only the color was the same. Aside from this, cut and quality of the material had markedly improved: it was no longer the tunic of a mere corporal, but rather it was to clothe the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. The tunic was replete with golden buttons and an eagle in gold on the left sleeve. The tunic made plain that Hitler occupied a higher rank than an ordinary Wehrmacht

general whose golden insignia was placed on the right chest. Moreover, the Supreme Commander naturally was in a position superior to that of a Waffen SS general whose insignia, while embroidered on the left sleeve as well, was in silver only.

939. As Hitler felt his position in power threatened by like bodies, this senate was never actually in session. Six years earlier, Hitler had also announced the creation of a senate whose members one day would convene to elect a new Führer. Needless to say, this senate never met either. See above, p. 349, speech of August 6, 1933.

940. For Hitler, capitulation meant “submission to the will of another.” For himself, this was out of the question. He made this unmistakably clear in a speech in late April 1941: “As a National Socialist, there was one word I refused to acknowledge in the struggle for power: Capitulation! I never knew this word and I shall never know this word as the Führer of the German Volk and as your Supreme Commander. Once more, this one word is ‘capitulation’ and all it means is submission to the will of another—never, never!” See below, April 29, 1941.

941. Here once again Hitler’s “Fridericus Complex” surfaced, a delusion many Germans suffered from as well. It was based upon the premise that, despite serious setbacks and an international coalition sworn against him, the Prussian King Frederick II the Great (Fridericus Rex) had reigned victorious at the end of the Seven Years’ War because of his steadfastness.

The truth of the matter was, however, that Frederick’s role in this war was a peripheral one as the hostilities between Prussia and Austria were not at the center of the conflict. The rivalry between England and France determined the war’s outcome; had Frederick the Great been allied with France, instead of with victorious England, neither his steadfastness nor any other virtue would have saved him from a fate no different from that of defeated Austria in 1763. Austria had fought on the French side as France’s chief ally in the conflict.

942. Hitler was not in the least disposed to risk his life for the cause; rather he was very careful as far as his personal well-being was concerned.

943. This statement is a characteristic one for Hitler. Already at the beginning of the war, he made certain that his cohorts knew they were to report good news exclusively: victories, successful campaigns, and great enthusiasm amongst the common folk.

944. According to Hitler, it was the main mission in the life of Germany’s youth to die a hero’s death; however, that they were to do so with a “radiant heart” was indeed a new turn of the phrase.

945. See above, August 27, 1939.

946. See above, p. 1053.

947. Text of the telegram published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 504, pp. 485 f. At 11:15 a.m., Germany’s Ambassador to Rome, von Mackensen, informed Mussolini of the imminent receipt of a telegram. Berlin transmitted the text to Mackensen per telephone at 12:40 p.m. He held on to the telegram until 3:00 p.m. when he finally presented it to Mussolini. This

- delay may have been caused by Mackensen's awaiting of final instructions from Berlin, in the unlikely event that the English should decide in Hitler's favor.
948. Shortly thereafter, it would become clear how much Hitler was determined to "take away" from the Poles, namely, everything.
949. Cf. Dahlerus, p. 119.
950. DNB text, September 1, 1939.
951. The history of the Iron Cross dates back to the times of the Teutonic Knights. On March 10, 1813, the Prussian King Frederick William III officially established the award as recognition for bravery in the Napoleonic Wars. On the anniversary of the death of Queen Louise on July 19, 1870, the future Kaiser William I renewed the award of the "Iron Cross" to Prussian soldiers who had fought in the Franco-Prussian War. The Prussian King extended the scope of the award by bestowing it on participants from the various German states and not limiting it to Prussian service men, as had been the case previously. After the onset of World War I, the German Kaiser and King of Prussia, William II, brought the award to life once more on August 5, 1914. As a soldier, Hitler received both the Iron Cross, Second Class, and the Iron Cross, First Class, for meritorious service. See above, p. 552, note 16.
952. In the course of the Second World War, Hitler established a multitude of new award categories. Soldiers received not only Iron Crosses (second and first class) and the Grand Cross as in previous wars, but also the newly introduced *Ritterkreuz* (Knight's Cross) and various subdivisions thereof, for example: the *Ritterkreuz* of the Iron Cross with laurel wreath; the *Ritterkreuz* of the Iron Cross with laurel wreath and swords; the *Ritterkreuz* of the Iron Cross with laurel wreath, swords, and diamonds; the *Ritterkreuz* of the Iron Cross with golden laurel wreath, swords, and diamonds. Hitler established this latter category on December 29, 1944 and limited the number of its recipients to twelve.
953. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 1573 f.
954. This particular form of the award was new. It was to replace the highly coveted "Pour le mérite" and like this medal was to be worn around the neck. Frederick the Great had established a first "Pour le mérite" award in 1740 which was also bestowed upon civilians. The military distinction "Pour le mérite" dated back to a 1810 decree by Frederick William III. It was restricted to officers who had distinguished themselves in battle. Hitler's *Ritterkreuz* further served as a replacement for awards for bravery in the previously separate German lands, e.g. the Bavarian military award "*Max-Josephs-Orden*," the Saxon military award "*Sankt-Heinrichs-Orden*," and numerous other awards of this nature.
955. The Grand Cross was reserved for distribution to army leaders exclusively. It consisted of a medal to be worn around the neck. Only Blücher in 1815 and Hindenburg in 1918 received the award's special category, a pin-on cross surrounded by golden rays.
956. In the First World War, there were five recipients of the Grand Cross:

William II, Hindenburg, Mackensen, Prince Leopold of Bavaria, and Infantry General Ludendorff. On Christmas 1918, seven additional crosses were to be bestowed upon members of the Royal Family, heirs to the throne, etc., but the end to the war prevented distribution. In the Second World War, Göring was the only man to be distinguished by receipt of the Grand Cross on July 19, 1940. Göring had “his” Grand Cross manufactured in platinum and onyx according to personal specifications.

957. The Iron Cross awarded in 1813 had a smooth surface on its front side. On its back there was a reproduction of the Royal Prussian Crown, three laurel garlands, and the year “1813” engraved in the center. This design on the Iron Cross’s reverse side remained the same on subsequent versions of the award, even on those distributed by Hitler. In 1870 and 1914, however, the face of the medal was altered, bearing a Prussian crown above a “W” at the cross’s center (initial of William I or William II, respectively) and beneath it either the year “1870” or “1914.”
958. The central stripe on this band was red in contrast to earlier versions of the award. There the central part had been black on the ribbons awarded to combatants, and white on those granted to non-combatants (in accordance to Prussia’s national colors: black and white).
959. A similar decree had been issued in 1915 for recipients of the Iron Cross, who had received this distinction for service in the War of 1870–71, and who then actively participated in the First World War. In 1895, they had already received a laurel wreath emblem bearing the number “25” as a reminder of their wartime heroism a quarter of a century earlier. In 1915, they received a silver needle upon which a miniature Iron Cross was engraved and which was to be worn above the laurel wreath emblem. Cf. Waldemar Hesse Edler von Hesselthal and Georg Schreiber, *Die tragbaren Ehrenabzeichen des Deutschen Reiches* (Berlin, 1941).
960. RGBL. 1939, I, pp. 1577 f. Hitler had received the “black medal for injuries sustained in battle” (*Verwundetenabzeichen in Schwarz*) during the First World War. He wore the badge beneath his Iron Cross First Class on his uniform.
961. See above, April 14, 1939 and note 412.
962. The text of the message is published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 530, p. 506. Hitler’s reply is published *ibid.*, no. 531, pp. 507 f.
963. Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 105, pp. 157 ff. German translation published in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Sunday edition, September 3, 1939.
964. Henderson should present this note to Ribbentrop at 9.00 in the evening of that September 1. See the text below and note 971.
965. Here Chamberlain was alluding to the superiority of the Royal Navy in comparison to the German Fleet. No doubt, he had also in mind the improvements in the Royal Air Force that proved itself more than a match for the German Luftwaffe in the course of the war. The prefix “Royal” in both the title of the Air Force and the Navy signified their

- elite status within the three branches of the British Armed Forces.
966. From Switzerland, Thyssen fled to France only to be apprehended by the Gestapo in the wake of the Wehrmacht's advances in the east in 1940. Thyssen then spent several years incarcerated in the psychiatric ward of the Sanatorium Babelsberg. Subsequently, he was transferred to a series of concentration camps in Germany. Thyssen was initially held at Oranienburg from where he was moved to Buchenwald, and then on to Dachau where American soldiers finally liberated him in 1945.
967. See above, p. 148.
968. "If we do one day achieve power, we will hold onto it, so help us God. We will not allow them to take it away from us again." See above, p. 170, speech of October 17, 1932.
"When I once enter the Government, I do not intend to leave it." See above, *ibid.*, speech of October 19, 1932.
969. Statements by then Reich Minister of Justice, Dr. Gürtner. See above, July 3, 1934.
970. Cf. notes of Privy Councillor Erich Kordt, published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 509 and no. 510, p. 490.
971. Published *ibid.*, no. 513, p. 492. The text of the communication was in English in the Original. Henderson presented both the original note and an unofficial written translation into German to the Reich Foreign Minister. For the published German text and the Envoy Schmidt's notes on the encounter Henderson-Ribbentrop—see *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 472, p. 315. Cf. also Henderson's report to Halifax in DBrFP, Third Series, no. 682, p. 493. Records of the ensuing conversation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 513, p. 493.
972. Cf. Strauch, p. 318.
973. On August 4, 1914, two telegraphic notes by the then British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, reached the British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir E. Goschen, who subsequently presented them to the German Government. The first note—of 9:30 a.m.—read:

The King of the Belgians has made an appeal to His Majesty the King for diplomatic intervention on behalf of Belgium in the following terms:

"Remembering the numerous proofs of your Majesty's friendship and that of your predecessor, and the friendly attitude of England in 1870 and the proof of friendship you have just given us again, I make a supreme appeal to the diplomatic intervention of your Majesty's Government to safeguard the integrity of Belgium."

His Majesty's Government are also informed that the German Government has delivered to the Belgian Government a note proposing friendly neutrality entailing free passage through Belgian territory, and promising to maintain the independence and integrity of the kingdom and its possessions at the conclusion of peace, threatening in case of refusal to treat Belgium as an enemy. An answer was requested within twelve hours.

We also understand that Belgium has categorically refused this as a flagrant violation of the law of nations.

His Majesty's Government are bound to protest against this violation of a treaty to which Germany is a party in common with themselves, and must request an assurance that the demand made upon Belgium will not be proceeded with and that her neutrality will be respected by Germany. You should ask for an immediate reply.

Published in *Correspondence Respecting the European Crisis* (London, 1914), no. 153, pp. 75 f. Hereafter referred to as the *British White Book* (1914). Cf. further *British Documents on the Origin of the War, 1898-1914*, Vol. XI (London, 1926), no. 573, p. 306 (hereafter referred to as *British Documents (WWI)*). See also below, note 1000.

974. Cf. notes taken by the Envoy Schmidt and the verbatim reproduction of the note in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 473, p. 316. English translation according to the *German White Book*, no. 19, p. 43.
975. Cf. protocol of the meeting in DGFP, D, VII, no. 535 (enclosure), pp. 509 f.
976. In the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis, hostilities ceased, despite the fact that the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt had already begun.
977. See above, p. 1072, speech of March 25, 1938.
978. See above, p. 1977, speech of March 29, 1938.
979. See above, p. 1084, speech of April 6, 1938.
980. See above, p. 1219, speech of November 6, 1938.
981. See above, August 22, 1939.
982. See below, September 3, 1939.
983. Cf. notes on the meeting taken by the Envoy Schmidt published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 539, pp. 512 f.
984. For a report on the conversation see Schmidt's notes, *ibid.*, no. 541, p. 514. Cf. also Schmidt, p. 471.
985. Notes taken on the conversation by Legation Counselor Brücklmeier published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 554, pp. 524 f.
986. Excerpts published in the *German White Book*, no. 22, p. 44. A German translation is published, also in excerpts, in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 476, p. 317.
987. Verbatim text in the *British Blue Book*, no. 116, pp. 172 ff. Cf. also the following report of the speech as published in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 732, p. 521.

Foreign Office. September 2, 1939. 8:00 p.m.

Following passage occurs in statement which Prime Minister is making to House of Commons at 7:30 this evening.

Begins.

1. No reply has yet been received from the German Government to the warning message delivered by Sir N. Henderson which was read to the House yesterday. It is possible that the delay is caused by consideration of a proposal which has meanwhile been forward by Italian Government that hostilities should cease and there should then imme-

diately be a conference between the Five Powers—Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany, and Italy.

2. While appreciating the efforts of the Italian Government, His Majesty's Government for their part would find it impossible to take part in a conference whilst Poland is being subjected to invasion, her towns are under bombardment, and Danzig has been made the subject of a unilateral settlement by force.

3. His Majesty's Government will, as was stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory. They are in communication with the French Government as to the limit of the French Government to know whether the German Government were prepared to effect such withdrawal.

4. If the German Government should agree to withdraw their forces, then His Majesty's Government would be willing to regard the position as being the same as it was before the German forces crossed the Polish frontier, that is to say, the way would be open to discussion between the German and Polish Government of the matters at issue between them, on the understanding that the settlement arrived at was one that safeguarded the vital interests of Poland and was secured by an international guarantee.

5. If the German and Polish Governments wished that other Powers should be associated with them in the discussion, His Majesty's Government for their part would be willing to agree.

Ends.

988. As reported by the Berlin correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, both Henderson and Coulondre inquired about a reply to the joint Anglo-French Declaration at the Foreign Ministry in the evening hours of September 2. The staff there informed them that such a response was still in the process of being prepared. Cf. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, morning edition, September 4, 1939.
989. Cf. Dahlerus, pp. 120 ff.
990. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 558, pp. 527 f. Apparently, the telegram was sent around midnight and arrived in Berlin at 2:00 a.m. in the morning of September 3, 1939.
991. Text of the telegram arrived at 3:00 on the morning of September 3, 1939 is published *ibid.*, no. 547, pp. 520 f.
992. See above, note 819.
993. See above, 1938, note 57.
994. Cf. Schmidt, p. 472.
995. For Henderson's statements see *ibid.*
996. Quotation according to the telegraphic order by Lord Halifax to Henderson at 5:00 in the morning of September 3 as printed in DBRFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 757, p. 535. Also published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 560, p. 529 and in the *British Blue Book*, no. 118, p. 175. German text in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, 1939, II, no. 477, p. 317. On the British Declaration of War see Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler. British Politics and British Policy 1933–1940* (London, 1975), pp. 313 ff.

Halifax had included the following instructions for Henderson:

If the assurance referred to in that communication is received, you should inform me by any means at your disposal before 11.0 a.m. today, September 3. If no such assurance is received here by 11.0 a.m., we shall inform the German Representative that a state of war exists as from that hour. [—]

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Washington, Rome, Angora, Athens, Bucharest, Cairo, Bagdad and Lisbon.

DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 756, p. 534.

997. British summer time was the same as Central European Time at this point.
998. See Schmidt, pp. 473 f. and Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 613. Cf. Schmidt's testimony at Nuremberg on March 28, 1946. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. X.
999. On August 3, 1914, the German Crown Prince had voiced similar reservations regarding the stance of the English to then Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg who had replied: "England on the other side? That is completely out of the question. England will surely remain neutral!" Cf. Karl Rosner, ed., *Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preussen, Erinnerungen* (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1922), p. 137.
1000. It was the second note of that August 4, 1914 (for the first document, see above, note 973) which was telegraphically transmitted at 2:00 p.m. by Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen, Berlin, to be conveyed to the German Government. It read:

We hear that Germany has addressed note to Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs stating that German Government will be compelled to carry out, if necessary, by force of arms, the measures considered indispensable. We are also informed that Belgian territory has been violated at Gemmenich.

In these circumstances, and in view of the fact that Germany declined to give the same assurance respecting Belgium as France gave last week in reply to our request made simultaneously at Berlin and Paris, we must repeat that request, and ask that a satisfactory reply to it and to my telegram of this morning be received here by 12 o'clock to-night. If not, you are instructed to ask for your passports, and to say that His Majesty's Government feel bound to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany is as much a party as ourselves.

Published in the *British White Book* (1914), no. 159, p. 77. Cf. also *British Documents (WWI)*, Vol. XI, no. 594, p. 314. For the "coincidentally" equal course of events see below, Vol. IV, Appendix.

1001. Hitler had completely excluded Goebbels from all preparations for war and had not consulted with him in any form. Goebbels had not been asked to participate in any of the secret conferences. Only in Danzig, Hitler had permitted him to give an insignificant speech on June 18, 1939.

As mentioned earlier (see above, Introduction, p. 66) there is a

tendency, here in Germany as well as abroad, to greatly overestimate the role Goebbels played both before and after the seizure of power. In the period from 1933 to 1939, Hitler debated issues with Röhm in the beginning and later with either Göring or Ribbentrop. The one person Hitler shunned as an audience was Goebbels. The claim that Goebbels had “conquered Berlin” for Hitler, and thus had made Hitler’s rise possible in the first place, cannot be maintained as such. Goebbels’ performance as Gauleiter of Berlin was in no way different from that of other Gauleiters in similar positions. By no means did Berlin constitute a stronghold for National Socialism in the years before 1933. The percentage of votes cast for National Socialists was lower than in many other cities. And by no means did Goebbels mobilize the man on the street, lead him to take possession of government buildings and thus pave the way for Hitler to the Chancellery. It was not Goebbels but Hindenburg and his advisors who were instrumental in Hitler’s rise to power in 1933. While Goebbels no doubt was a gifted propagandist, he needed to be constantly inspired by his master. When he was on his own, for example as a witness in the Reichstag fire trial, he was a complete failure. He wished to be nothing other than Hitler’s faithful servant, his “shield bearer” as Hitler had called him see above, October 30, 1936. And loyal he was indeed; he was the only one amongst Hitler’s cronies to share the Führer’s fate in the bunker beneath the Chancellery in 1945.

1002. *Mein Kampf*, p. 154. See above, Introduction, p. 53.
1003. See above, August 13, 1939.
1004. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 71 ff. See above, Introduction, p. 28.
1005. Within the next few months, the German media as well as public held on to the delusion that a “war-like situation” did not mean that the country was indeed “at war.” For example, see Halder’s War Diary entry for August 29, 1939: “Führer would not take it amiss if England were to wage a sham war.” Published in DGFP, D, VII, p. 564.
1006. The allegation that England had given Poland “full powers for all actions against Germany” cannot be substantiated. Great Britain had agreed to assist Poland only in the event that aggression were to be initiated by Germany and this guarantee would not have applied had Poland attacked Germany.
1007. Editor’s note: Quoted with few corrections according to the translation cabled to London by the American Embassy in Berlin on September 4, 1939. Printed in DBrFP, Third Series, Vol. VII, no. 766, pp. 539 ff. Cf. also the—insignificantly differing—later translation in DGFP, D, VII, no. 561, pp. 529 ff. The German text is reproduced in *Deutsches Weissbuch*, II, 1939, no. 479, pp. 318 f. See also identical DNB text, September 3, 1939.
1008. This had not been the case. Hitler himself had labored to delay the German policy statement in order not to have to second Mussolini’s motion. See above, September 2, 1939.

1009. Stephen King-Hall, Commander, retired from Navy in 1929; British publicist, broadcaster, and commentator on military and public affairs, whose statements had no official character.
1010. DNB text, September 3, 1939. Aleksander A. Shkvartsev was thirty-nine years old at the time and was known to be sympathetic to Germany. Together with General Maxim Purkayev and three other Russian officers, he had flown from Stockholm to Berlin in a military carrier that morning. In order to place the Soviet-German military alliance in full view of the world public, Germany had insisted a military mission be sent to Berlin. The Russians to the contrary wished as little public exposure as possible and had reluctantly bowed to German pressure. Cf. DGFP, D, VII, no. 534, p. 509.
1011. Roosevelt's radio address is published in *American Foreign Relations*, Vol. II (Boston, 1940), pp. 3 ff. (hereafter referred to as AFR). See also below, Roosevelt's radio address of December 29, 1940. Only six days after the proclamation of American neutrality (*ibid.*, pp. 629 ff.), Roosevelt invited Winston S. Churchill, recently appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, to enter into direct correspondence with him. In his personal letter, Roosevelt also referred to certain resemblances with World War I:

September 11, 1939

My dear Churchill:

It is because you and I occupied similar positions in the World War that I want you to know how glad I am that you are back again in the Admiralty. Your problems are, I realize, complicated by new factors but the essential is not very different.

What I want you and the Prime Minister to know is that I shall at all times welcome it if you will keep me in touch personally with anything you want me to know about. [—]

Published in *Roosevelt and Churchill. Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, edited by Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas (London, 1975), p. 89.—Roosevelt served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy from 1913 to 1920, Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty from 1911 to 1915.

1012. The following proclamations are reproduced in accordance with the DNB texts, September 3, 1939.
1013. The Kaiser's appeal of August 6, 1914 read as follows:

To the German Volk!

In the forty-three years since the foundation of the Reich, it has been my forefathers' and my own greatest ambition to preserve peace in the world to the benefit of our own powerful advancement. But our adversaries envy the fruits of our labor.

Up to now, conscious of our power and responsibilities, we have stood the open and secret animosity of our enemies both east and west, as well as overseas. Now, however, they seek to humble us. They demand of us to stand by silently as they arm for a most

treacherous attack. They seek to forbid us to stand by our ally in loyalty, an ally that is fighting to retain its reputation as a world power, an ally whose humiliation would also cause us to lose our honor and might. [—] Now the sword must force a decision. The enemy attacked in the midst of peace. Hence, rise! To the weapons! Any indecision or hesitancy constitute high treason to the Fatherland.

It is a question of to be or not to be for this Reich our fathers once again created. A question of to be or not to be for German greatness and for German being. We shall fight back unto the last breath drawn by man and steed. In a world full of enemies, we shall prevail. Never yet was Germany vanquished when it stood united.

Onward in the name of God who will stand by us just as he stood by our fathers!

William II

Published in *Der Krieg in amtlichen Depeschen 1914/1915* (Dessau, 1915), pp. 17 f.

1014. Hitler is alluding to a statement allegedly made by Clemenceau but correctly attributed to the Prussian General von Liebert: "There are twenty million Germans too many." Cf. Ernst Meier, "20 Millionen Deutsche zuviel!" in *Publizistik*, 3 (1958).
1015. Hitler's belittlement of Bethmann-Hollweg is hardly justified, as he himself performed no differently from his predecessor, rather even worse.
1016. See above, speech of October 9, 1938.
1017. See above, speech of April 1, 1939.
1018. This figure is incorrect. Even if it comprised not only the Germans living in the Reich proper, but also those living in Danzig and in Poland, there were by no means 90 million Germans alive at the time. Even if the Czechs were included in the count, there would still have been no more than 88 million.
1019. In particular to the northern German listener expressions such as this (*Dieser Entschluss 'ist ein unerbittlicher'* instead of *'ist unerbittlich'*) sounded alien as they formed part of a peculiar idiom which was spoken in southern Germany and Austria on a small scale. Hence, what is conspicuous, Bavarians felt Hitler's language and tone to be Austrian, and vice-versa. And in this context, it is also more than remarkable to note that Empress Augusta Victoria, the Kaiser's wife, used this same curious idiomatic expression in her "Appeal to Germany's women" of August 6, 1914: "*Der Kampf aber wird ein ungeheurer sein*" (The struggle, however, will be a tremendous one). Printed in *Der Krieg in amtlichen Depeschen*, p. 18. For the phenomenon of such 'coincidences' see below, Vol. IV, Appendix.—Augusta Victoria, born 1858 in Dolzig (District Sorau, East Brandenburg); Princess of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg (Northern Germany), from 1881 married with the later Emperor William II of Prussia; died 1921 in Doorn (Netherlands), the Kaiser's exile.

As mentioned earlier (Introduction, pp. 64 f.), Hitler's voice and rhetoric often became 'unnatural,' when he spoke of subjects such as war, weaponry, and the like. Nevertheless, there is no substance to the allegation, especially popular abroad, that Hitler's command of the German language was flawed and poor. His countless speeches, proclamations, letters, decrees, laws, interviews, etc., as published in this work, give impressive evidence to the contrary.

1020. Once more Hitler attempted to rally Germans in support of the old unity theory. After the outbreak of the First World War, William II also appealed to this sentiment in August 1914: "Never yet was Germany vanquished when it stood united." See above, note 1013.
1021. Excerpts in *Feeling*, pp. 415 f. German text in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, September 4, 1939, morning edition. The newspaper also reproduced the speeches held in the House of Commons.
1022. Cf. *British Blue Book*, no. 120, pp. 173 f.
1023. Rome secured the victory in all three Punic Wars for itself. The wars were the result of the struggle for hegemony in the Mediterranean between Rome as a world power and the nascent power of Carthage in northern Africa. The First Punic War began in 264 BC and ended with Rome's victory in 241 BC. The Second Punic War lasted from 218 BC to 201 BC. Having crossed the Alps with fifty-seven elephants in 218 BC, the conqueror Hannibal was victorious at Trasimene and Cannae, but failed to take Rome. The Third Punic War launched in 149 BC ended with the complete destruction of the city of Carthage in 146 BC.
1024. See above, speech of November 8, 1939.
1025. The further course of events proved Chamberlain right. The Führer's role in the conflict could be well compared with that of the challenger Hannibal, while Churchill played the role of a Scipio Africanus by securing victory for Britain—as Scipio had done at Zama in 202 BC thus deciding the Second Punic War in favor of the Roman World Empire. Comparing the printed speeches of the two antagonists, Churchill was clearly the better orator and superior stylist. One must, however, bear in mind that Hitler did not carefully prepare his speeches in written form or read them out. Mostly to the chagrin of his listeners, he was able to speak for several hours while reciting countless 'facts' from memory.
1026. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6152 f. German text reproduced in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, September 4, 1939.
1027. Reuters report, September 3, 1939.
1028. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 576, pp. 548 f.
1029. See above, directive of August 31, 1939.
1030. That very evening, September 3, 1939, the British liner *Athenia* became the first victim of the directive: "offensive operations are permitted." Two hundred miles to the west of the Hebrides, a German submarine sank the ship with 1,400 passengers aboard. One hundred of these died in the attack, among them twenty-eight American

citizens. The indignation worldwide at this attack bore strong resemblance to the outcry provoked by the 1915 sinking of the *Lusitania*, also torpedoed by a German submarine. The Reich Government at first denied any responsibility for the attack on the *Athenia* and then glossed over the incident. On October 23, 1939, Hitler had Goebbels declare in a radio broadcast that Churchill was responsible for the ship's fate. The broadcast alleged that Churchill had a time bomb placed aboard and planned, after the disaster, to incriminate Germany.

Cf. testimony by Raeder, Weizsäcker, and Fritzsche in IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XIV, pp. 78 and 279 f. and Vol. XVII, pp. 191 and 234 f.

1031. Published in DGFP, D, VII, no. 574, p. 546.
1032. Published *ibid.*, no. 565, pp. 538 f.
1033. There is much truth in Hitler's statement. Had he indeed been granted Danzig and the Polish Corridor in 1939, this would not have prevented him from invading the remainder of Poland "for more than six months or, shall we say, a year." The case of Czechoslovakia provided ample proof of that. An invasion of Poland at a later date would still have provoked war with the Western Powers, just as it did in September 1939.
1034. For the remainder of the war, "according to plan" became one of Hitler's favorite slogans. He cherished the illusion that all the Wehrmacht's offensive operations proceeded "according to plan." Later in the war, all its retreats or so-called *Frontverkürzungen* ("reductions in the length of the front," i.e. disengagements) were claimed to have been planned beforehand. Everything developed "according to plan," from the disastrous "Battle of Britain" in 1940 to the last pitiful days in Berlin of 1945.
1035. As Hitler only spoke of France as an adversary here, he apparently wished not to consider England, the German 'brotherland,' as an enemy.
1036. After the ignominious defeat at Stalingrad, Hitler had Göring speak in his stead before the Reichstag, too. See below, speech of January 30, 1943.
1037. Göring's speech before laborers at the Rheinmetall-Borsig-Werke was broadcast later that month. See below, September 9, 1939.
1038. Reuters note, September 4, 1939.
1039. DNB note, September 4, 1939. Cf. also below Göring's speech of September 9, 1939. The conclusions that Strauch, p. 326, draws in his analysis of this air raid are incorrect as he mistakenly cites September 5 as the date of the attack which took place a day earlier.
1040. DNB report, September 5, 1939.
1041. DNB report, September 6, 1939.
1042. DNB report, September 7, 1939.
1043. The slow pace of events along the Franco-German border that autumn led people to refer to it as "drôle de guerre" or "*Sitzkrieg*" ("Phony War"). The German term *Sitzkrieg* was based on the

assumption that the opponents “sat” across from each other without anything happening. This was only true, however, of troops stationed on the left and right bank of the Rhine. In the border region between the Rhine and the Saar rivers, frequent exchanges of artillery fire and numerous forays characterized the situation in particular in the months of September and October. Entire French regiments advanced into the Hornbach area and took several German villages. German troops later forced their retreat and, close to Saarbrücken, the Wehrmacht pursued them a few miles into French territory. These “preliminary hostilities” in the region between Saar and Rhine cost the lives of several hundred German soldiers.

1044. Cf. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 101, p. 101.
1045. Cf. Halder’s entry in his War Diary on September 7, 1939, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
1046. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 31, pp. 30 f.
1047. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 43, p. 41. See also Walther Hubatsch, *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung 1939–45* (Frankfurt, 1962), pp. 27 f.
1048. “Deutsche Bucht” in the original.
1049. See above, September 3, 1939.
1050. DNB text, September 9, 1939.
1051. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 619. Chamberlain made this and other statements before the House of Commons in a speech at 12:06 p.m. on September 3, 1939:
“This is a sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do: that is, to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have sacrificed so much . . . I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established.”
During the Second World War, the German public had access to statements by foreign statesmen, such as Chamberlain’s plea cited above, only through third parties (the BBC in this instance as detailed by Shirer). Listening to “enemy” radio stations was strictly forbidden and punished by imprisonment. In addition, the foreign radio stations had to struggle with interference from the “*Störsender*” (jamming transmitters) which strove to make foreign broadcasts unintelligible by increasing static interference.
With few notable exceptions, German newspapers were restricted to reporting on positive developments. One exception was the weekly *Das Reich* published exclusively for high ranking officials. Its readers were occasionally informed on developments abroad not accessible to the general public. This was true to a certain extent also for the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, although the latter was forced to close down in 1943.
1052. Reference to the early September British air raid on the coastal cities

- of Cuxhaven and Wilhelmshaven. See above, September 4, 1939.
1053. As the Second World War raged all around them, the German Volk would indeed remember all these flamboyant assurances by Göring. The Royal Air Force dropped bombs and not “propaganda flyers” on Germany’s cities, while the German Air Force was able to do only little “in retribution.” During the war as well as subsequently, rumors circulated that Göring had proclaimed that should “a single enemy plane penetrate German air space,” he would change his name to “Herr Meier.” As the war progressed, the man on the street contemptuously referred to Göring as “Herr Meier.” However, there is no official record of any such statement by Göring.
1054. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 1753 f. Hitler pardoned members of the Wehrmacht in a similar manner. On October 21, 1939, civil servants were granted a like pardon. RGBL 1939, I, pp. 2103 f. Pardons like these were customarily granted after the outbreak of war in order to allow those detained to join the armed forces.
1055. DNB report, September 11, 1939. Report also in VB, No. 255, September 12, 1939. See also below, note 1142.
1056. DNB text, September 11, 1939.
1057. DNB reports, September 12, 1939.
1058. Report in VB, No. 256, September 13, 1939.
1059. RGBL 1939, I, p. 1751. This law on the capture of enemy ships served as a supplement to the earlier *Prisenordnung* (Decree on Prizes) as issued on August 28, 1939. RGBL 1939, I, p. 1585. Similar steps had been taken in 1914.
1060. Report in VB, No. 257, September 14, 1939.
1061. Ibid., No. 258, September 15, 1939.
1062. DNB report, September 15, 1939.
1063. Ibid., September 17, 1939.
1064. One month later, Hitler revealed himself as the author of the leaflet. See below, speech of October 6, 1939.
1065. In November, Hitler was sufficiently annoyed to state: “The case of Poland proves that England is not interested in the existence of such states else it would have had to declare war on the Soviet Union as well.” See below, speech of November 8, 1939.
1066. George Nathaniel Curzon, 1st Marquess Curzon of Kedleston; born 1859; died 1926; English conservative politician; Foreign Secretary from 1919 to 1924. In 1919, Curzon proposed drawing the border between Russia and Poland along ethnographic lines. In 1920, Poland launched a war against Russia and, in defiance of the Curzon line, conquered territories located in the Ukraine and Belorussia, incorporating these into the Polish state.
1067. DNB report, September 19, 1939.
1068. DNB text, September 20, 1939.
1069. Later Heitz was promoted to the rank of Colonel General; taken prisoner at Stalingrad in 1943.
1070. In such instances, Hitler was reluctant to make genuine appearances

before the public, after e.g. seizing the office of Reich President and in the aftermath of the Röhm Purge.

1071. Warsaw capitulated on September 27, 1939. The fortress Modlin held out another day before bowing to the superiority of the German war machinery. Forces on the Hela peninsula withstood the German assault until October 1. The last remaining Polish resistance at Kock (to the east of Deblin) collapsed on October 16, 1939.
1072. DNB text, September 19, 1939.
1073. Hitler was not speaking the truth when he made the rhetorical claim to be standing on this soil for the first time. As a matter of fact, he had been to Danzig about seven years earlier and had even reviewed a SA parade at the city's airport on April 5, 1932. A delegation of Danzig police officers had welcomed him on the occasion. See above, p. 128.
1074. In his appeal to the German Volk earlier that month, Hitler had spoken of 90 million. See above, September 3, 1939.
1075. Hitler had already used the slogan of the *Nationalitätenstaat* (nationalities state) while moving against Czechoslovakia. Evidently, he intended to apply this concept to any state he chose for annexation to the Reich.
1076. Hitler liked to marvel at his own "modesty" and his great "leniency." In a letter to Daladier, dated August 27, 1939, he wrote: "I made an offer to the Polish Government, which startled the German people." In his speech before the Reichstag in September, he declared: ". . . and I must repeat here that there is nothing more modest or loyal than these proposals [to the Polish Government]." See above, September 1, 1939. In another correspondence addressed to Sven Hedin on October 30, 1942, Hitler once more reflected on his proposals to Poland: "It now appears so unreal to me that I almost blame myself for having gone too far in my proposals!" But Hitler had entertained similar doubts regarding what he considered an exceedingly lenient behavior on his part. In his Sportpalast speech on September 26, 1938, he explained: "Leniency has reached its limits, any further leniency would have been construed as a most fatal weakness. I would not have the right to appear in the annals of German history had I nonchalantly abandoned these ten million [Germans living in Austria and Czechoslovakia] to their fate . . . I had brought [enough] sacrifices." See above, p. 1186.
1077. Reference to Edward Smigly-Rydz, Marshal of Poland, Inspector General of the Polish Army 1936–39.
1078. See above, note 700.
1079. See above, events of September 2, 1939.
1080. Quotation from a martial song dating back to 1812. See above, 1938, note 212.
1081. Hitler's facile pronouncement that "for every bomb on a German city five or ten will fall back" upon the adversary's cities proved impossible to carry out in practice. On the contrary, in the course of World War

- II, it was the Allied forces who avenged themselves for German air raids upon their territories by dropping one hundred times as many bombs on Germany's cities.
1082. Threats of this nature did not benefit him in the least. Such grandiose proclamations on Hitler's part merely forced him to follow through on these announcements, for fear of losing credibility, instead of making the English more eager for peace.
 1083. As he moved against Russia in 1941, Hitler would reveal precisely how "limited" these interests were indeed. The new Lebensraum in the east encompassed not only the Ukraine, but also of Russia as well.
 1084. Hitler's mistaken notion on the parallel nature of domestic and foreign policy is evident in these statements once more. Even if one assumed there was some truth to this idea, one has to take into consideration: domestically, Hitler had prevailed without the use of force; in his foreign policy he resorted to brute force to achieve his goals, a different way which he could not victoriously end in the long run.
 1085. Nickname for the French soldier.
 1086. Hitler is alluding to the use of magnetized mines which both German submarines and planes dropped in British coastal waters. Since the majority of British ships were made of iron, the magnetic field of the new German mines attracted them to the ship's hull. This posed a danger to vessels passing in its proximity. However, the British soon caught on and devised a procedure for demagnetizing and thus protecting their ships from the mines. Hence, this particular one of "Hitler's secret weapons" lost its effectiveness quickly.
 1087. This appeal to the "Lord Almighty" was at the same time an appeal of great urgency to the English to end the "senseless" war.
 1088. See above, note 1073.
 1089. Legation Counselor Knoll drew up the protocol on the meeting between Hitler and the Japanese officers delegation. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 132, pp. 131 ff.
 1090. DNB reports, September 21, 1939.
 1091. Report in VB, No. 266, September 23, 1939.
 1092. The circumstances of Fritsch's death were peculiar. According to Foertsch, p. 134, he committed suicide.
 1093. Cf. Baur, p. 180.
 1094. For Jodl's report and Hitler's reaction to it, cf. Graf Kielmannsegg, *Der Fritschprozess 1939* (Hamburg, 1949), p. 146.—Alfred Jodl, born 1890 in Würzburg; Colonel General in 1944; hanged 1946 in Nuremberg.
 1095. HVBL, 1939, Part C, p. 333 (September 26, 1939).
 1096. DNB report, September 23, 1939.
 1097. Hitler himself did not attend the September 26 state funeral. The ceremony took place at the Unter den Linden Memorial where Göring placed a wreath for Fritsch. Brauchitsch was instructed to give the commemorative speech, and the aged Field Marshal von Mackensen made a token appearance.

Hitler ordered numerous state funerals during the Second World War, and in many instances the cause of death of the person thus honored was far from clear. The term “state funeral” thus acquired an ominous meaning. The man in the street began to refer to those who had provoked Hitler’s displeasure as men who would no doubt soon receive a “state funeral.” Rommel’s death was one poignant example; see below, note 1103 and October 12, 1944.

- 1098. DNB report, September 25, 1939.
- 1099. Report in VB, No. 269, September 26, 1939.
- 1100. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 135, pp. 135 f.
- 1101. DNB text, September 25, 1939.
- 1102. See below, October 21, 1939.
- 1103. Erwin Rommel, born 1891 in Heidenheim; Field Marshal in 1942; Hitler forced him to commit suicide in 1944 in the region between Herrlingen and Ulm.
- 1104. Notes by the Envoy Schmidt on this conversation published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 138, pp. 140 ff.
- 1105. This remark was unmistakably aimed at Finland, Belorussia, and the Baltic States. For the time being, Hitler intended to leave these to Russia in the hope of thereby making the situation all the more difficult for the Western Powers. Moreover, he believed that once sufficiently frightened by the Bolsheviks, they would be easy prey for him.
- 1106. “Should a fourth Englishman say: ‘For us the frontier runs along the Rhine,’ and the next comes up to say: ‘For us the frontier runs along the Vistula river,’ then all I can reply is: Scurry back to the Thames, gentlemen, or else we shall have to assist you in the process!” See below, speech of November 8, 1939.
- 1107. Cf. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XX, p. 573.
- 1108. Cf. report in VB, No. 271, September 28, 1939.
- 1109. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 146, p. 151.
- 1110. Reference to the cooperation of Germany and Turkey in the First World War.
- 1111. DNB note, September 28, 1939. Already in the course of the first month of the war, German submarines had been successful in many battle engagements. For instance, one German submarine had sunk the British *Courageous*, an aircraft carrier of 22,500 tons, on September 18. However, further developments proved that submarine-warfare was not an effective tool, in the long run, against the Royal Navy and the British Merchant Marine.
- 1112. Ribbentrop’s wired report to Hitler is published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 152, pp. 159 ff. No record of Hitler’s assent exits.
- 1113. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 157, pp. 164 f. German text in RGBl. 1940, II, p. 3. The DNB also published the text of the agreement in its September 29, 1939 issue.
- 1114. A copy of the map is published in DGFP, D, VIII, Appendix VI, according to the Political Treaties file of the German Foreign Ministry

- (644/254451–56). The map with the new borders had been signed by both Stalin and Ribbentrop.
1115. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, nos. 158–160; pp. 165 f.
 1116. “Agents of the Government of the Reich” immediately began the process of resettlement of German inhabitants of the Baltic States and of those living in the formerly Polish areas subsequently placed under Soviet sovereignty. Cf. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 153, p. 162. Further see DNB reports of September and October 1939. Popularly the Germans evacuated from these territories, awaiting resettlement in temporary camps in the Reich, were referred to as “*Beute-Deutsche*.”
 1117. After the attack on the Soviet Union, Hitler would deny knowledge of any such agreement. He maintained that the USSR had appropriated Lithuania in complete disregard of its contractual obligations. See below, June 22, 1941.
 1118. See above, secret additional protocol of August 23, 1939.
 1119. This boundary correction was never carried through, since Hitler had already determined to annex Lithuania to the Reich in the near future. Nevertheless, Lithuania received the previously Polish area around Vilnius. Poland had conquered the territory in the 1920 War against Lithuania.
 1120. Cf. DNB texts, September 29, 1939. The full contents of Ribbentrop’s letters are published in DGFP, D, VIII, nos. 162 and 163, pp. 167 f.
 1121. Ibid., no. 161, p. 167. DNB text, September 29, 1939.
 1122. Report in VB, No. 273, September 30, 1939.
 1123. Ibid.
 1124. Report in VB, No. 275, October 2, 1939. The Iron Cross recipients in question were Göring, Raeder, von Brauchitsch; the Colonel Generals von Rundstedt, von Kluge, List, Milch; Admiral General Albrecht; Generals Blaskowitz, von Kuchler, Kesselring, Löhner; and Rear Admiral Schniewind.
 1125. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 170, pp. 176 f. See also Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 29 f.
 1126. DNB report, October 1, 1939.
 1127. DNB note, October 2, 1939.
 1128. See above, August 13, 1939 and Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 120.
 1129. The official German protocol by the Envoy Schmidt is published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 176, pp. 184 ff.
 1130. Report in Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 154.
 1131. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 480 f.
 1132. DNB report, October 2, 1939.
 1133. DNB note, October 2, 1939.
 1134. Cf. DNB report, October 5, 1939. The report was on Hitler’s visit to Warsaw.
 1135. DNB text, October 5, 1939.
 1136. See above, Major Events in Summary and note 37.
 1137. See Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6163.
 1138. In a speech the following month, Hitler proclaimed: “This time

another Germany faces the England of the World War [—] and it can only laugh at the antics (*Blödeleien*) of British phrasemongers.” See below, speech of November 8, 1939.

1139. DNB text, October 6, 1939.
1140. Reference to the defense of Alcázar by Franco’s troops in the Spanish Civil War.
1141. At this early stage of the war, Hitler could still play the cynic and proclaim such grandiose victories publicly. He remained silent when from 1943 onward, hundreds of thousands of German prisoners of war had to set out on their “march to Moscow.”
1142. Voivod(e) (*hist.*): army commander and eligible prince in Poland, Moldavia, and Walachia. Since 1919: leader of a Polish province.
1143. This “lasting cooperation” ended on June 22, 1941.
1144. The accusation that Hitler had failed to “keep his word” was not based upon a “revision” of the Treaty of Versailles Germany had sought. Hitler was guilty of breach of contract based on the Munich Agreement.
1145. It was a well-known fact that Hitler immensely disliked all forms of international bodies and conferences. He had been greatly irked by the fact that in both the cases of the Saarland and the Sudeten German territories, he had to accept these terrains from the hands of similar “international consortia” which he considered “inappropriate.”
1146. Hitler neglected to mention Finland’s refusal to enter into a non-aggression pact with Germany. See above, note 427.
1147. Indeed, the methods were highly “beneficial,” however, they were “beneficial” to Hitler exclusively. Further into the war, the methods he employed would backfire on him.
1148. The only person whose “welfare” Hitler evidently felt “obliged to safeguard” was his very own.
1149. When Hitler spoke of “strength,” he usually meant using “brute force” to achieve his ends.
1150. Cf. Napoleon’s January 2, 1805 message to the King of England:
My dear Sir and Brother!
Called upon by Providence [!], the voice of the Senate, of the People and of the Army to occupy the French Throne, the desire for peace is foremost in my mind. France and England are endangering their own welfare. They can do battle for centuries [!]. But shall their governments in this manner fulfill the most sacred of their missions? And shall not the torrents of blood shed needlessly weigh heavily upon their consciences? I do not feel it dishonorable to take a first step. I think I have proven to the world many times over that I do not fear war. I do not know why I should fear war. My heart desires peace, even though war has yet to be to the detriment of my fame. [—]
I plead with Your Majesty not to forsake the glory of bestowing peace upon the world. [—] What can Your Majesty hope to achieve by war? To enter into a coalition with some mighty powers? [—] To renew the disquiet of his heart? Times have changed. Does he wish to ruin our

financial power? Financial power based upon a healthy agriculture can never be completely destroyed. To wrench France's colonies from it? For France, these colonies have only secondary significance. And does Your Majesty not already possess more than he can administer?

If Your Majesty would kindly reflect upon this himself for once, He will come to see that in this war there is neither sense nor victory to be found. It is all too sad to lead people to battle only that they should do battle. This world is big enough for both our nations to exist within it. Reason is mighty enough to allow us to find ways to settle our differences if both sides truly desire to do so.

Published in Paul and Gertrude Aretz, *Napoleon I—Mein Leben und Werk* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1936), pp. 278 f.

1151. Apparently, Hitler was referring mainly to Churchill whom, in a speech in January 1942, he derided as “one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals (*Herostratennaturen*) in world history.” See below, January 30, 1942.
1152. The further course of events proved that England was still impenetrable from the Continent as, despite modern weaponry, it remained an island most difficult to assail for a land power. While the German Luftwaffe could do damage there, it was not capable of bringing about decision. Only a naval power of sufficient might would have been able to pose a real danger to Great Britain. And neither Napoleon nor Hitler had such a force.
1153. This proposal was not the last to be made by Hitler. Already on July 19, 1940, he would put forth yet another “most generous” offer to England. See below, July 19, 1940.
1154. Cf. IMT, 686-PS.
1155. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 224, pp. 248 ff. Cf. also IMT, 62-C. Instructions also published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 32 f. and in Jacobsen, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 113.
1156. Marginal note, handwritten by Raeder: *Nicht* (no).
1157. IMT, 52-L.
1158. While nearly one million men had died in the fighting surrounding the city of Verdun, the battle brought about no decisive turn in the war. The senseless slaughter along the Western Front in the years 1915 through 1916 later became symbolic for the murderous nature of positional warfare.
1159. DNB text, October 10, 1939.
1160. George Bernard Shaw, born 1856 in Dublin, died 1950 in Ayot St. Lawrence (Hertfordshire), was an early member of the socialist Fabian Society (founded in London in 1894; influenced the Labour Party and the social welfare legislation in Great Britain); Shaw's plays combine irony with political, philosophical, and polemic aspects; they include *Arms and the Man*; *Devil's Disciple*; *Man and Superman*; *Saint Joan*; he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. The Republic of Ireland remained neutral in World War II.

1161. Parliamentary Debates, 5th series, House of Commons, Vol. 352, pp. 563 ff.
1162. According to DNB text, October 13, 1939.
1163. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 259, p. 289.
1164. Cf. Hitler's remark to Dahlerus. See above, September 26, 1939.
1165. Address of November 12, 1939; Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6172.
1166. RGBl. 1939, I, pp. 2077 f.
1167. For the above cited statements see Helmut Krausnick, "Hitler und die Morde in Polen," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 11, (1963), pp. 196 ff. Cf. Zoller, p. 195. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. VII, pp. 516 f. On this topic see also Martin Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939 bis 1945* (Stuttgart, 1961), and below, October 2, 1940.
1168. Sven Anders Hedin (1865–1952), Swedish archaeologist, geographer, and explorer in Central Asia and China; explored routes across the Himalaya and produced the first maps of Tibet; published books as *My Life as Explorer* (1925) and *Across the Gobi Desert* (1928).
1169. Memorandum by Legation Counselor Hewel. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 263, pp. 293 ff.
1170. Ibid., p. 294. There was much truth to Hitler's suspicion that the Scandinavian states preferred to orientate themselves along the lines of British foreign policy and distanced themselves from the policy pursued by Germany. None of these countries desired to witness yet another "Copenhagen of 1807." For Hitler's article on "Germany and the Finnish Question" see below, December 7, 1939.
1171. DNB note, October 17, 1939. Karl Dönitz, born 1891 in Berlin-Grünau, died 1980 in Aumühle (near Hamburg); Grand Admiral in 1943; appointed 1945 by Hitler as his successor in defiance of the constitution; sentenced 1946 to ten years imprisonment in the Spandau military prison; released 1956.
1172. DNB text, October 18, 1939.
1173. Reference to Admiral Ludwig von Reuters, born 1869; died 1943.
1174. Hitler did not sign "Directive No. 7 for the Conduct of the War." It bore merely the signature "by order: Keitel." Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 276, pp. 316 f.
1175. RGBl. 1939, I, p. 2069. The cross in question had eight points; in its center, a laurel wreath surrounded a swastika. On the reverse side of the second class award, the year "1939" was engraved. The design was similar to that of the 1933 "Front-Line Soldier" and World War I veterans' medal. Depending on whether the recipient had been a soldier on active duty or a civilian, this distinction was awarded with or without swords. The second class version in bronze was worn on a black-white-red band, the black central stripe of which dominated. The first class medal in silver consisted of a pin which was to be worn on the left chest like the Iron Cross. After the establishment of the Knight's Cross, there was also a version to be worn on a band around the neck. See below, August 19, 1940.
1176. DNB note, October 19, 1939. RGBl. 1940, II, p. 3.

- 1177. Cf. Ribbentrop's telegram to the German Embassy in Moscow on October 15, 1939. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 258, p. 280.
- 1178. Report in VB, No. 293, October 20, 1939.
- 1179. DNB text, October 19, 1939. Cf. notes taken by Legation Counselor Hewel on the conversation between Hitler and Cernak in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 286, pp. 326 ff.
- 1180. Reference to the Olsa region which, in accordance with the provisions of the Munich Agreement, Polish troops had occupied on October 1, 1938.
- 1181. The treaty was signed on November 21, 1939. It is reproduced verbatim in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 381, pp. 436 f.
- 1182. Report in VB, No. 299, October 26, 1939. See also below, 1940, note 12.
- 1183. DNB report, October 25, 1939.
- 1184. Report in VB, No. 300, October 27, 1939.
- 1185. DNB report, October 27, 1939. Recipients of the Knight's Cross were: Colonel General Keitel, Chief of the OKW; Generals Halder, Guderian, Strauss, and Hoepfner; Lieutenant Generals Olbricht, von Briesen, and Reinhardt; General Majors Jeschonnek and Kübler; Colonel Schmidt; Lieutenants Steinhardt and Stolz.
- 1186. See below, speech of November 23, 1939.
- 1187. Cf. Schlabrendorff, pp. 45 f. See also Hans Rothfels, *Die deutsche Opposition gegen Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main, 1958), p. 90.
- 1188. Cf. entries in Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
- 1189. DNB note, November 6, 1939.
- 1190. The telegram by King Leopold and Queen Wilhelmina is published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 332 (enclosure), p. 384.

Telegram of the King of the Belgians and the Queen of the Netherlands to the German Chancellor

The Hague, November 7, 1939

In an hour which is of ominous import for the entire world, before the war in Western Europe begins in full violence, it is our conviction that it is our duty once more to raise our voices.

Some time ago, the belligerent parties declared that they were not averse to examining honest and secure bases for a just peace. It is our impression that they find it difficult in the present circumstances to establish contact for a more complete exposition and coordination of their positions.

As the Sovereigns of two neutral states which have good relations with all their neighbors, we are prepared to offer them our good offices. If agreeable to them, we are willing to place ourselves at their disposal as they may see fit and, with all resources at our command and in the spirit of friendly sympathy, facilitate the transmission of proposals for the attainment of an understanding.

This is in our judgement the mission which we have to carry out for the sake of the well-being of our nations and in the interest of the

entire world. We hope that our offer will be accepted and that with it the first step will be taken toward the restoration of a lasting peace.

Wilhelmina

Leopold

1191. IMT, 72-C.
1192. Cf. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 346, pp. 397 f.
1193. DNB text, November 15, 1939.
1194. Cf. NSK announcements, November 6 to November 9, 1939.
1195. DNB text, November 8, 1939.
1196. The DNB text contains an error, reading “sterilization” instead of “stabilization.” Author’s notes.
1197. Reference to Chamberlain who, after Hitler’s breach of contract regarding the Munich Agreement, had correctly identified Hitler as a man not to be trusted in future dealings.
1198. At the end of the First World War, the last site for the German war headquarters had been located in the resort town of Spa. William II had left Spa in 1918, headed for exile in Holland.
1199. Hitler’s insistence on associating economic hardship with the number of suicides committed at a particular time was based upon false premises. Interestingly enough, research has shown that in Germany the number of suicides was usually higher in times of prosperity than in times of economic recession. See above, p. 311.
1200. Hitler was mistaken in his belief that Britain was split into two halves. Particularly in times of war, the British population displayed marked unity, and government and people stood united.
1201. Here, Hitler is ridiculing Halifax by a mixture with the German expressions *Faxen* (tricks, fooling around) or *Faxenmacher* (buffoon).
1202. While in 1940, Hitler once more held out “his hand,” but England and France rejected it again. See below, July 19, 1940.
1203. See above, note 390.
1204. Had Hitler refrained from going to war, he might well have lived to see the day on which the British Empire granted “full liberties” to its former colonies.
1205. Hitler revealed the true nature of the “arms reductions” he had supposedly carried out when he stated that his Government had spent 90 billion Reichsmarks on the Armed Forces in a six year period. See above, speech of September 1, 1939.
1206. Hitler nevertheless did them this favor on June 22, 1941.
1207. The German Volk did not share Hitler’s enthusiasm for war and was not pleased by his statement: “The war can last as long as it wants to.” Hitler displayed more sensibility in the DNB reproduction of the speech in which the phrase was edited to read: “It does not matter how long it [the war] will take—Germany will never capitulate.” Original quotation taken from the author’s notes.
1208. Contrary to the First World War when the rationing of foodstuffs and raw materials essential to the war effort was not implemented until one year into the war in 1915, rationing in the Second World War began before the war proper had been launched, namely, on August

- 26, 1939. While the situation with foodstuffs was far better in the course of World War II than it had been in 1914–18, this was only due to the exploitation of the territories occupied.
1209. Churchill was sixty-five years old at the time and he would prove to Hitler many times over that he was not as senile and decrepit as his ‘young’ opponent apparently assumed.
1210. The train in question, the ‘D-Zug No. 71,’ left Munich on schedule at 10:00 p.m.
1211. Cf. Baur, p. 183.
1212. Cf. Zoller, p. 181.
1213. After his escape from the assassination attempt of 1944, Hitler and many others would be reinforced in the belief that something mysterious was happening. It was remarkable that external factors—and not a “sixth sense” of the Führer—played an important role for the outcome of both events. See below, July 20, 1944.
1214. DNB text, November 9, 1939.
1215. The death of yet another victim brought the casualty figure to eight men.
1216. Cf. DNB report, November 21, 1939. See also *Johann Georg Elser, Autobiographie eines Attentäters*, ed. by Lothar Gruchmann (Stuttgart, 1979), including the Gestapo protocols. Johann Georg Elser was born 1903 in Hermaringen and murdered 1945 at the Dachau concentration camp. According to the official German statements, Elser had operated for the British Secret Service or Otto Strasser, the brother of Gregor Strasser (see above, 1932, note 169). In 1939–40, the public waited in vain for additional news on a trial supposedly awaiting Elser. Several years later, an official police report dated April 16, 1945 announced that Elser had become the victim of an Allied bomb raid. While interned at the concentration camp Dachau, Elser confided to the pastor and later President of the World Council of Churches Martin Niemöller that the Gestapo had forced him to lay the bomb. At the concentration camp Sachsenhausen, Elser made similar statements to Captain Payne Best, one of the Secret Service officers kidnapped at Venlo on November 9. Cf. S. Payne Best, *The Venlo Incident* (London, 1950), pp. 128 ff.
1217. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 167.
1218. See also above, note 44. On November 21, 1939, a report on the incident entitled “Resolution of the Munich Attempt” was published along with an official statement: “On November 9, 1939, the heads of the British Intelligence Service in Europe, Mister Best and Captain Stevens, attempted to transgress the Dutch border to Germany at Venlo. They were apprehended by the German officers observing them and were handed over to the State Police. At present [i.e. November 21, 1939], an investigation is underway to determine whether or not these men were taken prisoner on Dutch or German territory.” Cf. also Walter Schellenberg, *Memoiren* (Cologne, 1959) and Payne Best, op. cit.

As a result of the incident, the Dutch officer Klop who had accompanied the two Englishman was seriously injured. Both he and the Dutch driver were also brought across the border into Germany. For the attempts by the Dutch consulate to obtain their release and, after the death of the officer, to secure at least the release of his remains see DGFP, D, VIII, no. 344, pp. 395 f.

1219. See above, August 31, 1939.
1220. See below, speech of November 23, 1939.
1221. DNB report, November 9, 1939.
1222. DNB report, November 10, 1939.
1223. Ibid.
1224. Ibid.
1225. Reports on Hitler's visit to Munich on November 11, 1939 in VB, No. 316, November 12, 1939.
1226. DNB reports, November 11, 1939.
1227. DNB text, November 11, 1939.
1228. Report in VB, No. 317, November 13, 1939.
1229. See below, note 1238.
1230. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6174.
1231. On May 30, 1942, Hitler declared: "Had I realized the extent of the danger, had I known what awaited us, then I would still have—despite misgivings—ordered the attack on the West in the year 1939 and I would have already attacked the East in 1940." Record on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (Le 7 EW 68 970).
1232. DNB text, November 18, 1939.
1233. Hitler had used this phrase on the battle or war "forced upon us" in his September 3, 1939 appeal to the NSDAP. See above, *ibid.*
1234. See above, September 30, 1938.
1235. RGrBl. 1939, I, p. 2235.
1236. Report in VB, No. 324, November 20, 1939. Aurelio Mosquero Narváez had been State President since 1938.
1237. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 377, pp. 430 ff. The code names "Rhein" and "Elbe" in the initial text of the Directive were changed to "Danzig" and "Augsburg." The instructions signed by Keitel are reproduced verbatim in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 37 f. A supplement dated December 11, 1939 on sealing-off Belgian and Dutch ports is published there, too.
1238. Hitler repeatedly ordered maneuvers, alerts, and exercises during the winter months. On January 1, 1940, the Belgians accidentally obtained information on battle formations as a result of a military airplane having to make an emergency landing at Mechelen-sur-Meuse while en route from Münster to Bonn. No action was taken nonetheless. Despite unusually cold temperatures that winter, Hitler paid no attention to the facts that the Armed Forces barely managed to start their engines in the cold of the Eifel and Hunsrück mountains, and the Rhine was frozen over. In the end, he reached his goal of confusing his opponents on the other side of the Rhine. Indeed, his attack on May 10, 1940 came as somewhat of a surprise to the Allies.

- Details on the preparation for the offensive to the West in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Westfeldzuges 1939–40* (Göttingen, 1956).
1239. DNB report, November 23, 1939. For the medal, see above, note 624.
 1240. DNB text, November 23, 1939.
 1241. There had been no such meeting the previous year. It is possible that Hitler had in mind expositions of his intents such as the November 1937 ‘secret speech’ before the Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht and Neurath. See above, November 5, 1937.
 1242. See above, May 23, August 14, and August 22, 1939.
 1243. Aretz, op. cit.
 1244. IMT, 789-PS. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 384, pp. 439 ff.
 1245. Hitler never was a man to make “thorough observation,” rather he assessed every issue by his own biased standards.
 1246. This “history” dated back no longer than 1914 and was fated to end in 1941 when Hitler arbitrarily caused yet another two-front war by attacking the Soviet Union.
 1247. This reference is inappropriate. For one, the Reassurance Pact was not terminated by Russia, but by the Reich, then under Chancellor Leo von Caprivi (1890–94), successor to Bismarck. Secondly, while Bismarck had concluded the Reassurance Pact in 1887 as a mutual guarantee of neutrality between Russia and Germany, he had no part in the subsequent breach of contract by the Reich.
 1248. Allusion to the explosion in the Bürgerbräukeller on November 8, 1939.
 1249. Hitler meant “1918.”
 1250. This was a thinly veiled reference to Brauchitsch’s objections to Hitler’s policies in the November 5, 1937 debate.
 1251. This reference is to the Venlo incident. See above, note 1216.
 1252. This “decisive advantage” to be gained by deploying these new mines was soon lost as the British developed a procedure to protect their ships from the magnetized mines. See above, note 1086.
 1253. Despite Hitler’s fervent belief to the contrary, neither magnetized mines, submarine warfare, air raids, nor rocket fire would “bring England to its knees.” Nevertheless, Hitler could not persuade himself to proceed more forcefully against them since he still entertained the hope of bringing them over to his side.
 1254. Cf. in this context the item “Hitler’s decisions” in the index.
 1255. Hitler was referring to the strained nerves of Hellmuth von Moltke who had served as Chief of the General Staff from 1906 until September 1914.
 1256. IMT, Blue Series, Vol. XX, p. 628. For further details on Hitler’s chastisement of the generals, in particular his 1939 statement that he intended to “suppress by brute force” any opposition by the general staff, see Halder’s War Diary, entry of November 23, 1939, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
 1257. Reports in VB, No. 331, November 27, 1939.

1258. RGL. 1939, I, p. 2341.
1259. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 399, pp. 463 ff. See also Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 40 ff.
1260. Reference to the anticipated successful conduct of the Western Offensive, the first phase of which consisted of the occupation of the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and of all northern France's ports situated on the Channel.
1261. DNB note, December 4, 1939.
1262. Report in VB, No. 339, December 5, 1939.
1263. Reference to a "Resolution by the Greater German Reichstag" in April 1942. See below, *ibid*.
1264. DNB text, December 6, 1939.
1265. Mackensen lived long enough to see the end of the war and bore witness to the complete collapse of the Third Reich. He died on November 8, 1945 in Burghorn, a town near Celle.
1266. On December 4, 1939, Molotov had already sent a telegram to Geneva, declaring that the Soviet Union would not take part in the League of Nations' sessions. The Soviet Union denied the constitutionality of the council session and the full assembly convened. On December 11, 1939, the assembly created a committee to investigate the issues at hand. That same evening, it determined that the Soviet Union was to cease hostilities against Finland within 24 hours. Two days later, Soviet radio broadcasts announced that the Soviet Union was incapable of complying with this sentence. On December 15, 1939, the League of Nations' Council arrived at the conclusion that the Soviet Union's aggression against Finland had severed its ties to the League. As a repercussion, the Soviet Union no longer held membership in the League.
1267. See above, note 427.
1268. The article was dated "Berlin, December 7" and the DNB published it later, too.
1269. Published in VB, No. 343, December 8, 1939.
1270. The originally quoted German proverb corresponds to the proverb: "As you give, so you receive."
1271. DNB note, December 9, 1939. The "Adolf Hitler Channel" had a length of 41 kilometers and connected the Upper Silesian industrial region with the Oder river.
1272. IMT, 064-C. A report on the conference is also published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 443, pp. 519 ff.
1273. The popular German ocean-going passenger-steamship *Bremen*, former recipient of the "Blue Band" distinction, had sought refuge in the harbor of Murmansk after the outbreak of war. With the connivance of the Soviet Union, it managed to return to Germany at a later date.
1274. Vidkun Quisling, born 1887; shot on October 24, 1945; former Norwegian Minister of War; Minister-President from 1942 to 1945 under the German Reichskommissar Terboven.

1275. Illustrated report in VB, No. 352, December 18, 1939.
1276. DNB note, December 14, 1939. The Panzerschiff *Admiral Graf Spee* belonged to a class of so-called *Taschen-Panzerkreuzer* ("pocket battleships") which owed their classification to their armored hull and relatively high number of cannons aboard as compared to their tonnage. In compliance with the Treaty of Versailles regulations, this tonnage was officially limited to a maximum of 10,000 tons. Other ships in this category were: the *Deutschland* with an actual tonnage of 11,700 tons, launched in 1931; the *Admiral Scheer* with an actual tonnage of 12,100 tons, launched in 1933; the *Admiral Graf Spee* with the same tonnage, launched in 1934. Cf. Erich Gröner, *Die Schiffe der deutschen Kriegsmarine und Luftwaffe 1939–45 und ihr Verbleib* (Munich, 1954). For the actions off the River Plate and Montevideo, cf. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. I, pp. 465 ff. In 1956, the British film *The Battle of the River Plate* was based upon the last activities of the *Admiral Graf Spee*.

Within this context, the Editor supplements the following: The pocket battleship was named after Admiral Maximilian Reichsgraf von Spee, born 1861 in Kopenhagen, killed in action on December 8, 1914 in the South Atlantic. While the German Admiral was victorious over the British in the Battle of Coronel (Chile) on November 1, 1914, he was vanquished afterwards in the Battle of the Falkland Islands on December 8, 1914. (See also above, note 207.)

The fact that the pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee*, exactly twenty-five years later at the beginning of another World War, was confronted with the same course of events and experienced the same fate as its patron in the same part of the world, is another one of those already mentioned strange "coincidences." See below, Vol. IV, Appendix.

1277. Hans Langsdorff, born 1894 in Bergen (Rügen island); joined the Navy in 1912 as cadet; took part in the 1915 Battle of the Skagerrak aboard the battleship *Grosser Kurfürst*; later became Commander of torpedo-boat flotillas; naval staff officer.
1278. Verbatim contents of telegrams in DGFP, D, VIII, nos. 461 and 463, pp. 542 f.
1279. DNB text, December 18, 1939. The following is known concerning the fate of the two remaining pocket battleships, the *Deutschland* and the *Admiral Scheer*: Having played a role in the Spanish Civil War, the *Deutschland* operated predominantly in the Atlantic in 1939. When war broke out, it fled to a temporary safe haven in Soviet territorial waters. Subsequently, the ship returned to Germany to be renamed the *Lützow* in an effort not to compromise Germany in the event that the ship should be sunk. In addition, the new name was to conceal the fact that the actual *Lützow* (a newly built heavy armored ship of 14,800 tons, launched in 1939) had been sold to the Soviet Union. The precaution measure of renaming the *Deutschland* proved of great value as, in 1945, the ship came under heavy enemy fire in an air raid on the Swinemünde harbor. Having sustained several hits on April 16,

the *Lützow* foundered and its crew was forced to blow it up. Several days previously, on April 9, the *Admiral Scheer* had also sustained great damage in an air raid on the docks of the Deutsche Werke in Kiel. This vessel sank and was buried under the debris. Cf. Gröner, *Kriegsmarine*, op. cit.

- 1280. Cf. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 669.
- 1281. Ibid., p. 678 and Bullock, p. 576.
- 1282. DNB text, December 19, 1939. Notes on the conference Ribbentrop–Kurusu published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 448, p. 524.
- 1283. DNB text, December 21, 1939. Hitler's telegram congratulating Stalin was published on the first page of every major German daily paper. The media also carried Stalin's reply in a similarly grandiose manner: "Please accept this expression of my appreciation of the congratulations expressed to my person and to the congratulations extended to the peoples of the Soviet Union. J. Stalin." DNB text, December 26, 1939.
- 1284. Reports on Hitler's holiday visits with the troops from December 23 to December 25 in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1939. Further see DNB report, December 26, 1939 and the illustrated report by Heinrich Hoffmann.
- 1285. The "List Regiment" was the wartime formation of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment, Hitler's regiment in World War I.
- 1286. Report in VB, No. 361, December 27, 1939.
- 1287. Report in VB, Nos. 364 and 365, December 30 and 31, 1939. The emblems were to be worn on the left chest and mirrored Hitler's fancy for pins.

The Year 1940

Notes

1. See above, November 29, 1939.
2. See above, speech of November 11, 1939.
3. "Directive No. 9 for the Conduct of the War against the Enemy's Economy" in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 399, pp. 463 ff. See above, November 29, 1939.
4. Statement by Chamberlain on April 5, 1940. See also below, speech of December 10, 1940.
5. See above, speech of September 26, 1938.
6. See above, appeal of September 3, 1939. The number was exaggerated; see above, 1939, note 1018.
7. The Polish State had a population of 35 million in 1939. Of these, however, only 25 million were ethnic Poles.
8. In 1944–45, German troops became active in northern Norway exclusively while defending themselves not against the Allies but against the Russian units penetrating Finland.
9. The Battle of Sedan began on September 1, 1870 and ended a day later with the capture of Napoleon III.
10. The Battle of the Marne from September 5 to September 9, 1914, constituted a major turning-point in the First World War. Five German armies encountered strong and determined resistance by the Entente forces. With both sides stalemated, a long and exhausting trench warfare ensued. After the First World War, there was much debate in Germany as to who was to blame for the disastrous battle. One popular version purported that Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch had inspected the armies in the west on September 8. On returning to Headquarters, Hentsch had reported on the situation in a most "pessimistic" manner. The generals in charge of the campaign became "very depressed" as a result, especially the two generals Kluck and Kuhl, who then ordered a retreat. Notes taken by Hentsch on September 15, 1914 on his travels do not substantiate this theory in the least. A partial facsimile of this report is reproduced in Erich Otto Volkmann, *Der grosse Krieg 1914–1918* (Berlin, 1938). Another version of the Hentsch hypothesis implies that Hentsch had probably been a Freemason and, hence, it was no surprise that he had given such a negative account of the situation to discourage the generals. In German schools in the 1920s and later, this image of Hentsch was conjured up for the pupils as an example of the "horrendous" consequences that defeatism and pessimism of even a low level government employee could have in times of war. According to this rationalization, Hentsch's assessment of the situation was to blame for the downfall of Imperial Germany. Against this background, it is easily understood why, from the onset of hostilities, Hitler insisted on receiving only good news from his generals at the front and forbade any reports to the contrary.

11. Churchill declared in a 1939 radio broadcast: "If we are conquered, all will be enslaved, and the United States will be left single-handed to guard the rights of man." Cf. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6174. See above, November 12, 1939.
12. "The greatest battle of all time," "the greatest battle in world history," and "the greatest victory of all time" became Hitler's favorite expressions in particular in the years before 1942. See below, June 5, 1940 and Vol. IV, Index of Subjects ("Time").
13. Bidding farewell to the former Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, General Oshima, in October of the previous year, Hitler had stated that he would not "care to share the victory with anyone." According to Senior Counselor Hewel's record of the conversation, Hitler claimed that "he [Hitler] had also made this clear to Mussolini and had told him, moreover, that he did not need Italy's military assistance." Report in DGFP, D, VIII, pp. 333 f. See also above, November 24, 1939.
14. In October 1939, Hitler proclaimed: "I am making this declaration because, as is only natural, I wish to spare my Volk suffering. Should, however, the attitudes of Herr Churchill and his entourage prevail, then today's declaration will have been my last one." See above, speech of October 6, 1939.
15. See below, speech of January 30, 1942. See also above, 1939, note 1151.
16. In 1805, Napoleon I made all necessary preparations for a landing and made many a grandiose statement of his intentions. For example, in a letter dated August 3, 1805, Napoleon announced to Admiral Decres: "The English do not realize what is hanging above their heads. England will be a 'has been' once those twelve hours of crossing the Channel lie behind us." Despite this, Napoleon never dared to cross the Channel with his armies. Later he would claim that this was the fault of Admiral Villeneuve who had not come to Toulouse in time and who had instead sailed on to Cadiz. That this was merely an attempt to find a scapegoat for his own personal failure is proved in the instruction he himself had issued to Villeneuve. See below, September 15, 1940.
17. "And when people in England today nosily inquire: 'Well, why isn't he coming?' Calm yourselves: he is coming!" See below, speech of September 4, 1940.
18. Cf. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6275 ff. Broadcast of September 11, 1940, on the night bombing of London.
19. The Anti-Comintern Pact had initially been concluded by Germany and Japan. See above, November 25, 1936. A year later, Italy also joined the Pact. See above, November 6, 1937.
20. See below, October 23, 1940.
21. See below, June 22, 1941; see further Vol. IV, Appendix, for the phenomenon of these and other strange "coincidences."
22. "For this kind of policy [the conquest of Lebensraum at the expense of the Russians] there could be but one ally in Europe: England." *Mein Kampf*, p. 154. See also above, Introduction, p. 53.
23. DNB text, January 1, 1940.

24. See above, September 19, 1939.
25. At the end of nearly every New Year's proclamation during the War, Hitler prophesied that the New Year was certain to herald final victory for Germany. In pronouncing this vision, Hitler preferred nebulous wording which, given the questionable nature of these assurances, implied only that victory would be gained in the coming year without stating so outright. In 1940, Hitler announced that the Reich was "entering into the most decisive year in German history." The next year, the Führer proclaimed that "the year 1941 will bring us the conclusive and greatest victory in our history." The next New Year's Proclamation was more humble in nature: "Let us implore the Lord that the year 1942 shall bring about a conclusive decision in the salvation of our Volk and of those nations allied with us." In 1943, the New Year's Proclamation had strikingly general wording: "At one point in this struggle, one of the powers shall be the first to experience a downfall. And we know that this power shall not be Germany." The following year, there was even more caution to be detected in Hitler's choice of words: "The year 1944 will be one of many trials and tribulations for all Germans. The tremendous developments in the war will be coming to a head this year. Confidence that we shall emerge from it victoriously suffuses all of us." In 1945, Hitler resorted to a plea to the Almighty that He might bestow on the German people a more prosperous New Year: "As the speaker for Greater Germany before the Almighty, I pledge that we shall loyally and unshakeably proceed with our duties in the New Year, firmly convinced that the hour of final victory shall come soon for the most deserving among the belligerents: the Greater German Reich."
While Hitler never lacked new inspiration for yet more grandiose proclamations, the continuous change of tone in his New Year's proclamations nonetheless betrayed the slow but steady decline of his regime.
26. Allusion to the explosion in Munich's Bürgerbräukeller. See above, November 8, 1939, and note 1216.
27. Reference to the "peace proposal" of October 6, 1939. See above, *ibid.*
28. DNB text, January 1, 1940.
29. *Ibid.*
30. DNB texts, January 2, 1940.
31. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 504, pp. 604 ff.
32. Hitler avenged himself for Mussolini's bold letter after Italy's ill-fated campaign in Greece which, in addition to the perilous situation in northern Africa, got the Duce into considerable trouble. See below, November 20, 1940.
33. DNB note, January 7, 1940. As the situation deteriorated further, Hitler was to change this assessment of the role of art in times of war. From September 1944 on, all theatres and concert-halls were forced to close their doors as the Wehrmacht requisitioned all creative and performing artists for what had in the meantime become a "total war." See below, decree of July 25, 1944.

34. DNB note, January 8, 1940.
35. For details on this incident that let top secret documents—on a planned offensive to the West—fall into the Belgians' hands, see above, 1939, note 1238.
36. Cf. Hitler's conversation with Kurt Lüdecke: "I have an old principle," he told Lüdecke, "only to say what must be said to him who must know it, and only when he must know it." Bullock, p. 381. Cf. also Kurt Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler* (London, 1938).
37. Published in Heeres-Dienstvorschrift, No. 19, August 1, 1943 (Verschluss-Sachen-Vorschrift). A supplementary order was issued July 12, 1942 on the "transmission of operational directives and extraordinary orders to the front."
38. DNB note, January 12, 1940.
39. DNB note, January 17, 1940. This personal nature of the congratulations conveyed to Attolico was not merely a question of marked politeness regarding the Ambassador, but also served to slight Mussolini. While the "obedient" Attolico was distinguished by receipt of a handwritten note of congratulations, Hitler chose to ignore the Duce and failed to acknowledge receipt of Mussolini's "insolent" letter of January 3, 1940.
40. See above, pp. 1145 ff., speech of September 6, 1938.
41. IMT, 136-PS.
42. Frederick II, King of Prussia; born January 12, 1712 in Berlin; died August 17, 1786 at Sanssouci Castle in Potsdam.
43. See above, speech of January 18, 1939; for the detailed content of these addresses see below, May 3 and December 18, 1940.
44. The last inspection of officers took place on November 28, 1943 in Breslau (Wrocław). The majority of Hitler's speeches on these occasions have been preserved in the form of silver-coated copper records, found after the War. The Bertelsmann publishing house and the Ariola record company repaired the disks, donating them to the Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Additional records were found in 1964. For the contents of these appeals see also below, May 3, 1940 and December 18, 1940.
45. See above, speech of November 23, 1939.
46. See above, p. 1254.
47. DNB text, January 24, 1940.
48. Later, Navy officer cadets attended these roll calls.
49. Göring's opening remarks and the first part of Hitler's speech were preserved on a record, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (L2/EW 65 881-65 886).
50. Hitler himself took care that Germany became entangled in a war on all its frontiers ("*nach allen Seiten der Himmelsrose*") by attacking neutral states, invading the Soviet Union, and declaring war on the United States. Hitler committed a slip of the tongue as he sought to employ the idiomatic phrase "Himmelsrose" instead of the proper term "Windrose."
51. See above, September 19, 1939.
52. Hitler evidently made this remark to confuse the Western Powers as to

- the time of the attack by issuing alerts repeatedly and without apparent reason. See above, November 20, 1939 and note 1238.
53. DNB text, January 25, 1940. The armored ship returned with great difficulty and only managed to do so thanks to Russian support. It was clear that Hitler ordered the change of name of the ship for psychological reasons; if the ship were later destroyed, it would not be taken to have a symbolic meaning for all of *Deutschland*. In addition, the re-naming was to conceal the fact that the actual *Lützow* had been sold to Russia earlier.
 54. There was no indication here that the renaming was to be carried out by the Soviet Union.
 55. IMT, 063-C.
 56. Cf. Walter Hubatsch, "*Weserübung*"—*Die deutsche Besetzung von Dänemark und Norwegen 1940* (2nd ed. Göttingen, 1960) and the *German White Book*, 4, 1940.
 57. See above, December 12, 1939.
 58. IMT, 166-C.
 59. *The Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs* (London, 1948), pp. 13 f.
 60. The attitude of the military that inactivity demoralized the troops greatly facilitated winning over the generals to Hitler's plans. In spite of grave misgivings, the generals yielded to Hitler in both the winter campaign in late 1939 and in late 1940. While not at all enthusiastic about Hitler's plans for an offensive in the West and an invasion of Russia, the generals finally held these to be the lesser evil of the two choices the military faced (inactivity or action) in consideration of the morale of the standing troops. On the other hand, the activities German soldiers became involved in as they entered the Soviet Union were not to the liking of the generals either.
 61. During the First World War, the command of the German High Seas Fleet had kept the majority of its vessels in harbor. This had been the result of sober calculations, and not of cowardice and lack of a sense of duty. The few battles in which the German High Seas Fleet was involved (e.g. Falkland Islands; Skagerrak) demonstrated how vulnerable it was to the superior Royal Navy. The Imperial Fleet would have risked complete destruction in any serious engagement with the British naval forces.
The sailors' mutiny in November 1918 was the result of the Navy command's decision to undertake a last desperate, suicidal foray along the English coast, before the final capitulation by Germany's Armed Forces. Once the "soldiers' soviets" began their short rule in Germany, they were joined by Navy personnel whose blue attire, in a sea of field gray uniforms, naturally struck the eye of the onlooker. This created the impression and the widely-accepted belief that the 1918 revolt had been spearheaded by a rebellious Navy.
 62. Diary entry by Raeder on September 3, 1939: "In addition, the High Seas Fleet is so inferior to the British Fleet in numbers and strength that all its men can do is to show that they know how to die valiantly." *The*

Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs, pp. 13 f.

63. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 810.
64. Hitler made similar claims after the 1923 Putsch; see above, pp. 541 f. and 723 f. After the 1934 Röhm Purge, he searched for similar excuses; see above, pp. 496 ff.
65. "The German nation has been given its Germanic Empire after all." See above, p. 943, speech of September 13, 1937.
66. RGBL. 1940, I, p. 240.
67. DNB text, January 1, 1940.
68. This sarcasm on the part of Hitler was completely inappropriate since, on many occasions, Hitler grandly proclaimed a Reich of honor, peace, and social justice. At a banquet on February 24, 1892, William II had proclaimed: "I will lead you still to magnificent days!" See above, 1933, p. 406 and note 350.
69. See above, 1939, note 1014.
70. Reference to Thomas Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States 1913–21.
71. The 1648 Peace of Westphalia neither "disintegrated" Germany nor "tore it to pieces." Quite the contrary, the Treaty made possible the continued existence of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation for another century and a half.
72. At its inception in 1871, Imperial Germany had a population of 41 million, not of 80 million as Hitler insisted.
73. Despite its obvious shortcomings, the Weimar Republic most certainly did not embrace a nihilistic philosophy. Actually, the motto ("We want only to destroy! What we cannot possess shall be destroyed!") rather befits Hitler's reign, as should become obvious.
74. There is some truth to Hitler's statement here. Indeed, the "Party, Labor Service, SA, SS, all other organizations, Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe, Army, and Navy" were nothing other than "means to an end," namely: Hitler's claims on power.
75. See above, September 19, 1939.
76. This figure was divorced from reality.
77. This was an exaggeration, too.
78. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 203.
79. RGBL. 1940, I, p. 399.
80. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 204 ff.
81. Cf. entries into Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
82. DNB note, February 2, 1940.
83. Cf. Jodl's diary, IMT, 1809-PS.
84. DNB note, February 16, 1940.
85. DNB text, February 16, 1940.
86. See above, May 22, 1938.
87. Cf. reports on the incident by the German Captain Dau, the German Naval Attaché Schreiber, and the German Envoy Dr. Bräuer; DNB reports, February 17 and February 18, 1940; and DGFP, D, VIII, no. 618, pp. 779 ff.

88. Chamberlain and Halifax rejected the Norwegian Government's formal protests against what Norway claimed was a transgression of its neutrality. Moreover, Chamberlain and Halifax accused Norway of conniving at Germany's transgression of its neutrality by allowing for the transport of British prisoners of war through Norwegian territorial waters. On February 23, 1940, Churchill stated:
"To the glorious tale of the action off the Plate there has recently been added an epilogue—the rescue last week by the *Cossack* and her flotilla, under the nose of the enemy and amid the tangles of one-sided neutrality, of the British captives taken from the sunken German raider. Their rescue at the very moment when these unhappy men were about to be delivered over to German bondage proves that the long arm of British sea power can be stretched out, not only for foes but also for faithful friends." Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6193.
89. For details on the mood in Norway after the *Altmark*-*Cossack* incident see DGFP, D, VIII, no. 626, pp. 791 ff. On February 19, 1940 in Rome, Ciano recalled a conversation with the British Ambassador, Sir Percy Loraine, the successor of Lord Perth: "The British attack on the German steamer *Altmark*, which was sailing in Norwegian territorial waters with English prisoners, has made a deep impression. I speak of it with Percy Loraine, and to his surprise I declare that the English action is justified and reminiscent of the boldest traditions of the Navy at the time of Francis Drake." Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 209.
90. DNB note, February 20, 1940.
91. IMT, 1809-PS.
92. DNB report, February 19, 1940.
93. Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, then Commanding General of an Army Corps stationed in Koblenz; later Colonel General; subsequently Commander of the forces deployed in Norway.
94. IMT, 1809-PS.
95. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 815. Cf. IMT, 1809-PS supplement, pp. 1534 ff.
96. Report in VB, Nos. 55 and 56, February 24 and 25, 1940.
97. Published in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1940.
98. DNB text, February 24, 1940.
99. Despite this remark, Hitler rejoiced at any praise the English chose to bestow on him and failed to realize the irony it concealed.
100. In November 1938, Hitler had declared: "For decades, circumstances caused me to speak almost exclusively of peace. Only by constantly emphasizing the German Volk's desire for peace and peaceful intentions was I able to gain the German Volk's freedom step by step and thus to give it the armament necessary as a prerequisite for accomplishing the next step." See above, p. 1245, speech of November 10, 1938.
101. Hitler's derisive remarks on the Imperial Army and the potential of its armament were inappropriate. The fact that the production of the military industrial complex greatly increased in the years after 1914 does not validate the claim that, had productive capacity reached this level before the outbreak of war, Germany would have beaten its

adversaries. On the other hand, it is only natural that the productive capacity of the armament industry would rise in times of war, and Germany's weaponry industry also greatly expanded after 1939. However, this increase did not benefit the war effort, since the Allies' productive capacity increased, too, and did so at a much faster pace.

102. See above, September 3, 1939 and note 1000.
103. Citation from Martin Luther's song "*Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*" (Our God is a strong fortress).
104. DNB report, February 28, 1940.
105. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 351, entry of May 13, 1941.
106. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 673, pp. 817 f.
107. HVBL, 1940, Part C, No. 278, p. 89.
108. "*Siegreich woll'n wir Frankreich schlagen*" (Victorious we'll beat France) was the chorus line of the martial song "*Musketier seins [sind] lust'ge Brüder*" (Musketeers are jolly fellows), third verse. In the years 1933 to 1939, this song had been banned in order not to offend France.
109. Report in VB, Nos. 62 and 63, March 2 and 3, 1940.
110. Ibid. This precedent led to the rough estimate that a Knight's Cross was awarded for 100,000 tons of the adversary's ships sunk. For 200,000 tons, the Knight's Cross with laurels was received, etc.
111. Published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 644, pp. 831 ff.
112. Protocol drafted by the Envoy Schmidt in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 649, pp. 838 ff.
113. See above, February 29, 1940.
114. The 1932 Ottawa Conference had been the economic summit of the Commonwealth States that year.
115. This phrase revealed Hitler's mistaken belief that Sumner Welles would be able, though with great difficulty, to persuade the English to be lenient and to agree to a peace with Germany.
116. Published in VB, No. 64, March 3, 1940.
117. Protocol by the Envoy Schmidt in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 654, pp. 862 ff.
118. The Finnish people are not of "Nordic-Germanic" origin. Like the Hungarians, the Finns originally came from Asia; their language is quite distinct from those of Slavic or other European peoples.
119. DNB note, March 5, 1940.
120. Cf. Jodl's diary in IMT, 1809-C.
121. Report in VB, No. 67, March 7, 1940.
122. Verbatim reproduction of this letter published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 663, pp. 871 ff.
123. IMT, 1809-C.
124. Oscar, Prince of Prussia and son of Emperor William II; born 1888 in the Marble Palace at Potsdam; retired Major General; died 1958 in Munich.
125. "Believe me, in the end it will be revealed that the actual perpetrator was the Crown Prince [William]!" Cf. Zoller, p. 186. For Hitler's reaction see below, July 20, 1944.
126. DNB text, March 10, 1940.

127. IMT, 1809-C.
128. Reports in VB, No. 71, March 11, 1940.
129. Cf. Schmidt's notes on this reception, published in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 665, pp. 882 ff.
130. DGFP, D, VIII, no. 668, pp. 896 ff. Ciano made the following remark on the German Foreign Minister's visit to Rome in his diary: "With respect to Ribbentrop's visit to the Pope, I judge it to be a gesture as phony as it is futile." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 218.
131. Ribbentrop refrained from expanding on this "entirely new form of political and national life." All it amounted to, in fact, was a reorientation of life along the lines of Hitler's ideas.
132. Cf. Alberto Giovanetti, *Il Vaticano e la Guerra* (Rome, 1960).
133. Protocol of this meeting drawn up by the Envoy Schmidt in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 669, p. 908. Cf. Schmidt, p. 487.
134. Sumner Welles noted this change in Mussolini's disposition on his second Rome visit with the Duce in mid March. Cf. Sumner Welles, *The Time of Decision* (New York, 1944), p. 138.
135. Cf. Jodl's diary, entry of March 11, 1940. IMT, 1809-PS.
136. Report in VB, No. 72, March 12, 1940.
137. Report in VB, No. 73, March 13, 1940.
138. Notes on the meeting taken by Hewel in DGFP, D, VIII, no. 671, pp. 910 ff.
139. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT 1809-PS.
140. Verbatim reproduction of the Russo-Finnish Peace Accords in Herbert von Moos, *Das grosse Weltgeschehen* (Bern, 1940), Vol. I, pp. 158 ff. For an overview of the course of the Russo-Finnish War in the years 1939 and 1940 see *ibid.*, pp. 129-160.
141. Remark by Hitler to Sven Hedin. See above, March 4, 1940.
142. A look at the history of Russia's military reveals that such elite troops were generally not deployed until much later in the war.
143. DNB report, March 13, 1940.
144. Report in VB, No. 74, March 14, 1940.
145. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
146. Report in VB, No. 75, March 15, 1940.
147. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 539. Hitler had empowered Bürckel to divide Austria into six autonomous Reichsgaus. See above, April 23, 1938.
148. DNB texts, March 15, 1940.
149. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 513. According to Jodl's entry in his diary, Hitler did not sign the decree until March 20, 1940. IMT, 1809-PS.
150. Cf. Schmidt, p. 489.
151. See above, speech of May 23, 1939.
152. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 223.
153. DNB text, March 18, 1940.
154. Report in VB, No. 79, March 19, 1940. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS. The England song "*Heute wollen wir ein Liedlein singen*" (Let us sing a little song today) dated back to the First World War. The well-known folk poet Hermann Löns had written its text before becoming one of that

war's casualties himself. Its chorus line "*Denn wir fahren gegen Engelland*" (For we are going against England) was immensely popular. On a side note: the poetic though inaccurate spelling "*Engelland*" literally means "angels' land." The composer of march music and master musician of the Labor Service, Herms Niel (actual name: Hermann Nielebock), composed the score at the beginning of the Second World War.

155. DNB note, March 20, 1940. Gunnar Gunnarsson was born 1889 in Valpöfssalur.
156. DNB text, March 22, 1940.
157. DNB note, March 29, 1940. Dragisha Cvetkovich, born 1892; Minister-President from 1939 to 1941.
158. Report in VB, Nos. 90 and 91; March 30 and 31, 1940.
159. DNB text, April 1, 1940.
160. IMT, 1809-PS.
161. Ibid.
162. Ibid.
163. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Volume I, *The Gathering Storm* (London, 1948), p. 522.
164. IMT, 1809-PS.
165. Report in VB, No. 96, April 5, 1940.
166. DNB note, April 8, 1940. Hitler also attended the official ceremony on April 12, 1940. It took place in front of the Technical School in Berlin. DNB report, April 12, 1940.
167. Cf. *Hitler e Mussolini, Lettere e Documenti* (Milan, 1946) and *Les lettres secrètes échangées par Hitler et Mussolini* (Paris, 1946). Cf. summary of the letters' contents in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 233 ff.
168. DNB text, April 9, 1940.
169. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 53, pp. 88 ff.
170. See above, May 31, 1939.
171. Published in Hans-Günther Seraphim, *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs* (Göttingen, 1956), pp. 104 f. Cf. also Hans-Dietrich Looock, "Zur 'grossgermanischen Politik' des Dritten Reiches," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 8 (1960), pp. 57 ff.
172. Cf. Air Force General von Kaupisch's report on the occupation of Denmark on April 9 and 10, 1940 in *Dänische Parlamentsberichte*, XII, (Copenhagen, 1945).
173. As recently as March 30, 1940, the German officer Erfurth had taken the ferry from Warnemünde to Gjedser and, as a civilian, checked out the situation in Denmark. On April 4, Major Glein flew to Denmark on the regular, scheduled flight to Copenhagen and inspected the harbor. The next day, he gave thorough attention to the citadel there and its fortifications. Earlier in Germany, Glein had been placed in command of the battalion that was to attack Copenhagen from the sea and was to take both the citadel and the harbor. Major General Himer, chief of staff with von Kaupisch, surveyed the citadel and the harbor once more on April 8, having come to Denmark on board a regular flight to

- Copenhagen. Cf. reports *ibid*.
174. Cf. research by the Dutch historian Louis de Jong, *Die deutsche fünfte Kolonne im zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1959), pp. 60 ff. and 155 ff.
175. The cession of the territory in northern Schleswig had been carried out in accordance with Section XII, Articles 109 through 114 of the Treaty of Versailles. RGBl. 1919, pp. 879 ff. In a similar manner, after the occupation of Belgium, Hitler ordered the reintegration of the region Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet in the Reich. See below, decree of May 18, 1940 (Section 1).
176. Cf. Walter Hubatsch, *Die deutsche Besetzung von Dänemark und Norwegen 1940* (Göttingen, 1952). Further see de Jong, pp. 63 ff. and 163 ff.
177. The Continental Hotel served as the German divisional headquarters in Oslo. When Quisling appeared in the hotel in the afternoon hours of April 9, 1940, and introduced himself as the new Minister-President, the German General Engelbrecht nearly had him arrested.
178. The heavy cruiser *Blücher* with a tonnage of 13,900 tons had been launched in 1937. On April 9, 1940, it sank off shore at Drobak in the Oslo Fjord. Hence the *Blücher* shared the fate of its predecessor, the armored cruiser *Blücher*, built in 1908 and sunk in the Battle of the Doggerbank as one of the ships of Admiral Hipper's naval unit.
179. Off Kristiansand the British submarine *Truant* and the torpedo-boat *Greif* sank the 6,650 ton cruiser *Karlsruhe*. The German vessel had been launched in 1927.
180. The 6,650 ton cruiser *Königsberg* sustained several direct strikes by bombs and went under on April 10, 1940, close to Bergen. The wreckage was salvaged in 1943.
181. Cf. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 704 f. Cf. Bräuer's report to the Foreign Ministry, reproduced in the report of the investigation committee of the Norwegian Parliament (Oslo, 1945), Vol. I, pp. 319 f.
182. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 235.
183. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6202.
184. Eduard Dietl, born 1890 in Aibling, died 1944; soldier by profession since 1909; teacher at the Infantry Academy in Munich where he established first contacts with Hitler after the First World War; took command of a mountain ranger (*Gebirgsjäger*) regiment in 1935; head of mountain ranger division stationed at Graz from 1938 on. Dietl remained in northern Norway in the years 1940 and 1941. After the outbreak of war, Dietl assumed command of a section of the front in northern Finland known as the "Murmansk Front." He was able to achieve little in this function and died suddenly in 1944, supposedly a victim of a plane crash.
185. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
186. Published in VB, No. 109, April 18, 1940.
187. RGBl. 1940, I, pp. 657 f.
188. Josef Terboven, born 1898 in Essen; committed suicide on May 11, 1945 in Oslo; bank employee by profession; NSDAP Gauleiter of

Essen; member of the Reichstag from 1930 on; appointed president of the Rhine Province in 1935; Reichskommissar of Norway in the years 1940 to 1945.

189. IMT, 1809-PS. See below, decree of April 24, 1940.
190. See above, p. 468.
191. See below, decree of April 24, 1940.
192. DNB text, April 20, 1940.
193. Ibid.
194. A rather pitiful array of further congratulatory notes supplemented this list on April 22, 1940, mostly sent by political figures from the Balkans. The following statesmen conveyed their personal and their government's best wishes to Hitler on his birthday: the King of Bulgaria; the Minister-Presidents of Hungary, Count Teleki; of Yugoslavia, Dragisha Cvetkovich; and of Slovakia, Dr. Vojtech Tuka; further the Yugoslavian Foreign Minister, Cincar-Markovich; the Italian Ministers Farinacci and Perrone; the Government of Thailand; and the former [!] Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, General Oshima.
195. Both telegrams were published in VB, No. 113, April 22, 1940. Before this, Hitler had once more described the current military situation in rosy terms in a letter addressed to the Duce. In Rome, Prince Philip of Hesse commented to Ciano on the planned offensive in the West and declared that Hitler "blamed the bad weather for his not being able to celebrate his birthday in Paris." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 236.
196. DNB notes, April 20, 1940.
197. Published in VB, No. 114, April 23, 1940.
198. DNB text, May 6, 1940. Also published in VB, No. 128, May 7, 1940.
199. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
200. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 162, pp. 230 f.
201. Johann Nygaardsvold, born 1879; died 1952; Norwegian Prime Minister from 1935 to 1940.
202. The Administrative Advisory Committee in the occupied territories had been established on April 15, 1940. Its membership consisted of six prominent Norwegians, among them Bishop Eivind Berggrav and the President of the Supreme Court, Paal Berg.
203. Report in VB, No. 118, April 27, 1940.
204. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 240 f.
205. DNB report, April 30, 1940. The Duke was then on a world tour, travelling as the president of the German Red Cross, and had arrived in Japan after visiting the United States.
206. Ibid.
207. Ibid.
208. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
209. The Allies indeed withdrew from the bridgeheads established at Andalsnes and Namsos in the days between April 30 and May 2, 1940. Before this, however, they had taken the King of Norway and the Norwegian Government aboard and had helped them escape to Tromsø north of Narvik.

210. Published in VB, No. 124, May 3, 1940.
211. IMT, 1809-PS.
212. Ibid. Lieutenant General Student, Commander of the parachute units, and Graf Sponek, in charge of the airlift division, attended the conference.
213. DNB note, May 3, 1940.
214. Editor's note: The speech, which has not been published to date, is preserved on disc records at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (Le 3 EW 65 847-65 861) and on tape records at the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, DRA, Frankfurt am Main, No. 52.8881. Complete transcription and translation for this work according to the records of the DRA.
215. *Mein Kampf*, p. 726.
216. Hitler's exuberance was later punished by ever-increasing casualty figures reported by the Wehrmacht in the course of the war.
217. For Hitler, his own life was of far greater importance than the welfare of the German Volk. He undertook everything possible to avoid placing his own "irreplaceable" person in danger. To the end, he hung on to power with grim determination, willing to let the whole German Volk perish rather than to give up his position.
218. See above, p. 196, speech of December 5, 1932.
219. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
220. See below, OKW report of June 10, 1940. Hitler edited the text himself and greatly praised Dietl's "heroic resistance" in the Narvik venture.
221. DNB report, May 4, 1940.
222. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 243.
223. IMT, 1809-PS.—"*Fall Gelb*" was the code name for the occupation of Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and northern France, i.e. the first phase of the war in the West.
224. Ibid.
225. DNB text, May 8, 1940.
226. Allusion to alleged plans by England to intervene in Rumania.
227. DNB note, May 9, 1940.
228. Ibid. Dr. Bernardo Attolico, born 1880 in Cannebo (Bari); Italian Ambassador to Berlin from 1935 to 1940; Italian Ambassador to the Vatican State from 1940 to 1942.
229. Based on information in Jodl's diary entry of April 26, 1940. IMT, 1809-PS. In Ciano's diary there is a passage, dated April 24, 1940, in which Ciano noted a remark on Attolico by the newly arrived German Ambassador to Rome, von Mackensen. Ciano wrote: "I invite him to talk, and then he says that in Berlin they would now welcome his recall. That is natural. He is an Italian and a gentleman. As his successor, Hitler is thinking of Farinacci and Alfieri." Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 338 f.
230. DNB text, May 9, 1940. See also below, decree of June 1, 1940.
231. See above, speech of May 3, 1940.
232. DNB text, May 10, 1940.
233. This figure is devoid of any basis in reality. In the "two centuries" from 1740 to 1940, France and Germany clashed eleven times:

1. Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763. Belligerents: alliance between England and Prussia against a triple alliance by Austria, France, and Russia. France declared war on Prussia in 1757.
2. 1792–94. Belligerents: reactionary regimes in Europe against the French revolutionary regime. Germany declared war on France.
3. "Revolutionary Wars" in the period 1795 to 1797. Belligerents: French revolutionary armies against the Reich (Prussia remained neutral). France initiated hostilities.
4. So-called "War of the Coalitions" from 1799 to 1801. Belligerents: coalition of forces by Austria, Great Britain, and Russia versus France. France declared war.
5. "War of 1805." Belligerents: revolutionary France under Napoleon and Austria (Prussia once more remained neutral). Austria declared war.
6. "Napoleonic Wars" from 1806 to 1807. Prussia declared war on France.
7. "War of 1809." Austria declared war on France.
8. "Wars of Liberation" from 1813 to 1815. Prussia and Austria declared war on France.
9. Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. Belligerents: France against Prussia and its allies. France declared war.
10. First World War. Germany declared war on France in 1914.
11. Second World War. France declared war on Germany in 1939.

In summary, France declared war five times while Germany or the German States respectively initiated hostilities six times.

234. On September 3, 1939, Hitler had claimed the German Volk numbered 90 million. See above, speech of September 3, 1939.
235. Weizsäcker witnessed the following remark by Hitler in December 1939: "The offensive to the West will cost me a million men, but it will cost our adversaries the same and they cannot sustain such losses." Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 271. Hitler had resorted to the old "blood-letting" theory, popular with the German General Staff in the years 1914 to 1916. The French General Nivelle—who was generally known to be extraordinarily "blood-thirsty"—also propagated this theory.
236. Two potential headquarters for the Führer had been constructed before the offensive in the West: "Ziegenberg" in the Taunus Mountains and "Felsenest" in the Eifel Mountains. Hitler gave preference to the latter in a decision of February 22, 1940 (see IMT, 1809-PS). Hitler claimed that Ziegenberg was too comfortable for him. (Cf. Baur, pp. 187 f.). It is also highly likely that Hitler preferred the Felsenest because it was closer to the area of operations. For many months, it had been rebuilt and expanded to accommodate several guard units providing housing and bunkers, a switchboard, briefing hall, map room, anti-aircraft positions, etc. To the north of Münstereifel, the new Führer Headquarters stood on a rise outside of the village of Rodertwas, located about one kilometer to the South of a route connecting Münstereifel and Altenahr. The working staff of the Supreme Commander

of the Wehrmacht was to be housed in what formerly had been a local forester's home, located at Hüllach a few kilometers to the East. Hitler secluded himself in his remote, forested headquarters until early June. If he felt that visits to the rear sections of the front were called for, he went to the Odendorf airfield east of Euskirchen by motorcar, which allowed him to return to the headquarters that same day. The specially designed three-axle cross-country vehicle, which he had already used in 1938 on the occasion of the Anschluss, served for such small excursions. As the war in the West flared up once again in 1944–45, Hitler no longer set up quarters at the Felsenest. Only guard units remained behind. Allied bombers nonetheless targeted the structures throughout January 1945. While many of the surrounding buildings were destroyed in the air raids, the central facilities remained intact until the guard units, acting on orders, blew up the bunkers because of the enemy's advance.

- 237. Resort in the vicinity of Berlin, located along the railroad connecting Nauen to the Lehrte station.
- 238. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 492 ff.
- 239. Cf. Baur, p. 189.
- 240. IMT, 1809-PS.
- 241. Provincial town 40 km to the south of Cologne, situated along the railroad connecting Cologne to Trieste.
- 242. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 246.
- 243. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 214, pp. 301 ff.
- 244. Allusion to the Venlo incident. See above, November 9, 1940.
- 245. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 215, pp. 306 f.
- 246. See above, November 23, 1939.
- 247. See above, March 16, 1935; August 26, 1936; March 19, 1939; September 1, 1939; and April 11, 1940.
- 248. The German ultimatum to Belgium on August 2, 1914 had strikingly similar contents:

The Imperial Government is in possession of reliable information on preparations for an anticipated concentration of French armed forces along the line of the river Meuse between Givet and Namur. This has eliminated any remaining doubts on the intent of France to violate Belgian territorial integrity in order to penetrate into Germany.

The Imperial Government cannot cast off severe misgivings on the ability of Belgium, despite best intentions, to ward off a French advance of so immense a nature and with all prospects of success, without external assistance. Therein the Imperial Government perceives a grave threat to the security of Germany. The German Government would greatly regret, should the actions of its adversaries force Germany to enter Belgian territory also, if the Belgian Government were to interpret this as an act of aggression directed against Belgium.

Desiring to forestall potential misinterpretation of its endeavors, the Imperial German Government declares the following:

1. Germany entertains no hostile intentions vis-à-vis Belgium. Should

Belgium be willing to embrace a stance of benign neutrality toward Germany in the pending conflict, Germany shall pledge itself to guarantee the full extent of Belgium's present territorial possessions and, after a peace settlement, to restore the complete independence of the Kingdom.

2. Under the circumstances enumerated above, Germany shall pledge itself to withdraw from the Kingdom's territory after the negotiation of precise terms of the peace.

3. Should Belgium demonstrate friendly intentions toward Germany, Germany shall willingly remunerate in cash any supplies requisitioned and shall coordinate this effort with the Royal Belgian Administration. It shall also provide compensation for any potential material damage incurred by its armed forces.

However, in the event that Belgium were to assume a hostile comportment toward German troops, especially should it hinder their advances by mounting resistance along the river Meuse line of fortifications or by destroying crucial components of the local infrastructure (railroad, streets, tunnels, etc.), then Germany shall be forced, to its great regret, to regard the Kingdom as a belligerent. Should this indeed be the case, Germany shall be incapable of assuming any type of responsibilities toward the Kingdom. Germany shall then leave the conduct of any future relations between both states to be determined on the battleground.

The Imperial Government cherishes the hope that this shall not occur, and that the Royal Belgian Government shall take timely and appropriate steps to prevent the realization of the considerations enunciated above. Should this be the case, the friendly relations between the neighboring states shall prosper and permanently be strengthened hereby.

Additional note to the Imperial Ambassador von Below in Brussels:

May it please your Highness to relay this message in strict confidence to the Royal Belgian Government at 8:00 tonight and to demand a clear response within twelve hours, i.e. before 8:00 tomorrow morning.

German text in *Der Krieg in amtlichen Dokumenten* (Berlin, 1914), Vol. I, pp. 11 ff. Comparison of the Imperial Government's August 2, 1914 ultimatum to that penned by Hitler on May 10, 1940 reveals the nearly identical nature of their texts. Although Hitler in all likelihood was not aware of the earlier ultimatum's verbatim contents, he may well have remembered Bethmann-Hollweg's speech before the Reichstag on August 4, 1914. See below, note 249.

249. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 288. In a speech before the Reichstag on August 4, 1914, Bethmann-Hollweg had declared: "It is in self-defense we are acting now. And necessity acknowledges no conventions."
250. Published in *Belgium—The Official Account of What Happened 1939–1940*. Published by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (New York, 1941), p. 28.—Paul Henri Spaak, born 1899; Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs September 1936–1946; Prime Minister after the Second World

- War; later also presided over the Council of Europe and European Economic Union (Montanunion).
251. Reference to the German Government's declaration of October 13, 1937 on the inviolate nature of Belgian neutrality.
 252. Published in Moos, Vol. I, p. 203.
 253. DNB text, May 10, 1940.
 254. Cf. verbatim reproduction of the notes in Moos, Vol. I, pp. 203 f.
 255. On the military aspects of the campaign cf. e.g. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Generaloberst Halders Kriegstagebuch* (Stuttgart, 1962); *Dokumente zum Westfeldzug 1940*; and *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, op. cit.; Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, pp. 47 ff.; John Strawson, *Hitler as Military Commander* (London, 1971), pp. 97 ff.; etc. On the British stance toward France see Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, Volume I (London, 1970) pp. 251 ff.
 256. RGBL 1940, I, p. 757.
 257. DNB note, May 13, 1940.
 258. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 249 f.
 259. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 246, pp. 343 f.
 260. This directive is not preserved. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 46
 261. See above, May 23, 1939.
 262. The rapid seizure of the Netherlands led to speculations on activities of a German "fifth column" in the country which supposedly sabotaged the efforts of the Dutch military. This formation was alleged to have caused confusion among the Dutch troops by distributing falsified orders and by encouraging high treason and desertion by individual soldiers. This was no more true in the case of Holland than similar speculations had been in the case of Norway. The Institut für Zeitgeschichte published the Dutch historian Louis de Jong's extensive research on this topic, op. cit. The crucial element in the fast pace of the conquest of the Netherlands had actually been the swift deployment of parachutists in coordination with their speedy reinforcement by ground troops.
 263. DNB text, May 15, 1940.
 264. IMT, 1809-PS.
 265. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. See also reproduction in Jacobsen, *Halders Kriegstagebuch*.
 266. IMT, 1809-PS.
 267. Apparently, this is a reference to Directive No. 9, the contents of which were not found after the War. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 52 f.
 268. DNB report, May 18, 1940. Alfieri was a member of the Fascist Council.
 269. Cf. DGFP, D, IX.
 270. RGBL 1940, I, p. 777. These territories had been ceded to Belgium in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, Articles 32 to 34.
 271. RGBL 1940, I, p. 778.
 272. See above, April 24, 1940.

273. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
274. Ibid.
275. In all likelihood, such a project would have ended in a fiasco. In the First World War, even German troops had proved neither capable of making any advances in the Vosges Mountains nor of breaking through to the Langres Plateau. Mussolini's troops would never have managed to take the Maginot Line, which ran along the upper Rhine, by themselves. In June 1940, the Italians failed to gain any significant successes along their own Alpine frontier to France.
276. Statement by Hitler to the former Japanese Ambassador to Berlin, General Oshima, in October of the previous year that he would not "care to share the victory with anyone." In addition, Hitler further informed Oshima that "he [Hitler] had also made this clear to Mussolini and had told him, moreover, that he did not need Italy's military assistance." DGFP, D, VIII, pp. 333 f. See also above, note 13.
277. Cf. special report out of Belgrade on England's assistance in the evacuation process in VB, No. 143. May 22, 1940.
278. Testimony by General Günther Blumentritt from Rundstedt's Staff, published in B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Other side of the Hill. Germany's Generals. Their Rise and Fall, with their Own Account of Military Events 1939-1945* (3rd ed. London, 1951) pp. 144 ff. Blumentritt admitted that the generals "had never expected such a sweeping success as was achieved" in the West. "Hitler alone believed that a decisive victory was possible." Ibid.
279. Napoleon had also been willing to exchange colonial possessions for peace with England. In a letter dated January 2, 1805, Napoleon wrote to the British King: "For France, these colonies are of secondary importance only. And does Your Majesty not already possess more than he can administer? [—] If Your Majesty would kindly reflect upon this himself for once, He will come to see that in this war there is neither sense nor victory to be found." Aretz, pp. 278 f. See also above, 1939, note 1150.
280. Napoleon persisted in being torn between love and hate for the English people even after the ignominious downfall of his regime in 1815. On July 13 of that year from his place of exile on the island of Aix, Napoleon conveyed the following note to the British Prince Regent: "I come like Themistocles to sit and warm myself at the hearth of the British people. I request protection under its laws which I implore Your Royal Highness to extend to me as the mightiest, most persevering and most noble of my adversaries." Ibid.
281. After the War, von Rundstedt made the following statement: "To me, Dunkirk was one of the turning points of the war. If I had had my way the English would not have got off so lightly at Dunkirk. But my hands were tied by direct orders from Hitler himself. While the English were clambering in the ships off the beaches, I was kept useless outside the port unable to move." Milton Shulman, *Defeat in the West* (rev. ed. New York, 1986), p. 52.

282. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
283. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 312, pp. 427 ff.
284. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
285. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 255.
286. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
287. Cf. Jodl's diary. IMT, 1809-PS.
288. DNB texts, May 28, 1940.
289. Reference to the Laeken Castle in the Brabant province.
290. In various, voluminous memoirs written after the Second World War, numerous German generals sought to create the impression that the disastrous defeat of the Third Reich's military was largely to be blamed on Hitler's "ill-fated intervention" in questions of strategy. Obviously, the military men endeavored to delude themselves that Germany would have indeed won the war had the real experts been allowed to pursue their objectives without Hitler's annoying interference. However, this theory is simply absurd.
291. DNB report, May 30, 1940. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 257.
292. See above, speech of September 19, 1939.
293. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 258 f.
294. DNB text, June 1, 1940.
295. See above, May 9, 1940. In 1943, Hitler once more had the released Dutchmen again apprehended and incarcerated.
296. Bruly-le-Pêche was a small village located in the Belgian Province Namur near Philippeville and was converted into a mobile headquarters of sorts.
297. Langhemarq (German transcription: Langemarck) was a town located in the Belgian province of West Flanders. In the ill-fated Battle at the Yser, a small unit of German student volunteers had, as part of the "Fuchs Division," to sacrifice themselves in a most senseless way: Singing the "Deutschlandlied," they marched straight into the line of fire of English machine guns and sustained horrendous losses. Reports on Hitler's visits to First World War battle sites in VB, No. 162, June 10, 1940, and in *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*, 24 (1940).
298. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 849.
299. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 885. See also Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6230 f.
300. DNB texts, June 5, 1940.
301. Published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 56 f.
302. Ibid., pp. 58 f.
303. DNB note, June 8, 1940.
304. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 263.
305. DNB text, June 10, 1940. A facsimile of the typed draft with corrections in Hitler's handwriting, mostly additions of superlatives, is reproduced in Walter Görlitz and Herbert A. Quint, *Hitler—Eine Biographie* (Stuttgart, 1952), p. 557.
306. DNB text, June 10, 1940.
307. Ibid.

308. DNB text, June 13, 1940.
309. Paul Reynaud, born 1878 in Barcelonnette; lawyer by profession; replaced Daladier as Premier on March 21, 1940; stepped down on June 17, 1940; tried by the Vichy Government in 1940; incarcerated in Germany in 1944; liberated in 1945.
310. DNB text, June 13, 1940.
311. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 433, p. 567.
312. Published in VB, No. 168, June 16, 1940.
313. Philippe Pétain, born 1856 in Chaucy-*l*-la-Tour; French Marshal; defender of Verdun in the First World War; Minister of War in 1934; French Ambassador to Spain from 1939 to 1940; named Vice Premier in May 1940; President of the Republic from 1940 to 1944; taken into German protective custody in Sigmaringen in 1944; condemned to death by a French court in 1945; pardoned and sent to the Island of Yeu for life imprisonment; died there in 1951.
314. Published in Moos, Vol. I, p. 286.
315. Cf. photo No. XLI.
316. Source: Domarus Archives.
317. See above, statement of May 20, 1940.
318. This purpose was not only evident in the demarcation lines drawn by Hitler, but also was circulated within the Party as the more or less evident German demands for a potential peace treaty.
319. See above, speech of March 29, 1938.
320. DNB text, June 17, 1940.
321. William II had hitherto refrained from making any type of compromising statements from his place of exile, in striking contrast to Napoleon who talked all through his exile. Now, on June 17, 1940, the former Kaiser sent from Doorn, in occupied Holland, the following exuberant telegram to Hitler:
Under the deeply moving impression of the capitulation of France I congratulate you and the whole German Wehrmacht on the mighty victory granted by God, in the words of Emperor William the Great in 1870: "What a turn of events brought about by divine dispensation." In all German hearts there echoes the Leuthen chorale sung by the victors of Leuthen, the soldiers of the Great King: "Now thank we all our Lord!"
Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 469, p. 598.
Hitler was less than pleased by this telegram. The German media were not allowed to publish anything on the message. While Hitler drafted a highly reserved response to the telegram, he never sent the reply to William II. Immediately before the anticipated German offensive to the West, the British Government offered William II to exchange his exile in Holland for an exile in England. However, William II refused this offer. After the German conquest of Holland, Hitler suggested that William II might return to Germany, but once more the former Kaiser declined, choosing instead to remain at the Doorn Castle. While the Netherlands were occupied by Germany, numerous Wehrmacht officers

- called on William II and, reportedly, he toasted the health of Hitler as the “greatest of Germans.” He was fortunate not to live long enough to witness how this “greatest of Germans” plunged Germany into a two-front war by attacking Russia. William II died in June 1941 in his home.
322. Report in VB, No. 171, June 19, 1940.
323. Ciano further remarked: “I cannot be accused of excessive tenderness toward him, but today I truly admire him.” Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 266. Reports on the meeting also in Schmidt, pp. 494 f.
324. DNB text, June 18, 1940.
325. The interpreters were forced to work by candlelight in a little village church. Cf. Schmidt, p. 496.
326. War diary entry kept by the Navy, cf. Karl Klee, *Das Unternehmen “Seelöwe”* (Göttingen, 1958), p. 58.
327. While General of the Army Charles Huntziger had been Commander of the Second Army at Sedan, Léon Noël had served as Ambassador to Warsaw.
328. This had formerly been dining-car No. 2419 D.
329. See above, May 20, 1940.
330. DNB text, June 21, 1940.
331. Ibid.
332. Ibid. Masons from Munich would blow up the “locations and stones” cited in August 1940. Cf. report in VB, No. 240, August 27, 1940.
333. On July 21, 1940, Moscow forced the integration of the three Baltic States as “Republics of the Soviet Union.” Like these states, Bessarabia had formed part of the Soviet Union before 1920. Russia had conquered the Bucovina in 1769 and had lost the area to Austria in 1774. The Bucovina remained part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918.
334. Once the war against the Soviet Union had begun, Halder forged the three Baltic States into the administrative body of the “Reichskommissariat Ostland.” See below, November 17, 1941.
335. DNB text, June 22, 1940.
336. In both world wars, the “daylight saving time” concept was introduced to Germany. It was identical with the “summer time” in Eastern Europe, i.e. one hour behind Central European Standard Time. It was to save energy by taking advantage of daylight hours; general introduction in West Germany in 1980 as in most other European countries before this date.
337. Published in DGFP, D, IX, no. 523, pp. 671 ff.
338. The territory in question spanned northern France; at its southernmost extension was the Loire river; it encompassed the entire Atlantic coast of France up to the Pyrenees.
339. See above, speech of March 25, 1938.
340. *Mein Kampf*, p. 754.
341. Hitler issued Directive No. 19 b on “Operation Attila” in an effort to attain the “rapid occupation of the unoccupied territories in the remainder of the French heartland as of this date.” See below,

- December 10, 1940. On November 11, 1942, Hitler ordered his troops to take possession of the previously unoccupied territories in southern France. See below, November 11, 1942.
342. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 893. Cf. DGFP, D, IX, pp. 671 ff.
343. Report in VB, no. 177, June 25, 1940. Antonio Oscar Fragozo Carmona, born 1869; State President from 1926 until his death in 1951.
344. Count Manzoni's mansion was located eight kilometers south of Rome.
345. For a verbatim reproduction of the major part of the armistice agreement see Moos, Vol. I, pp. 296 ff.
346. DNB text, June 24, 1940.
347. Ibid.
348. Hitler used this term in reference to the Battle for Flanders and the fighting in the Artois on June 5, 1940. See above, June 5, 1940.
349. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6238.
350. A hasty evacuation of the civilian population living in the Saarpfalz, including the cities of Saarbrücken, Zweibrücken, Pirmasens, etc., was carried out on September 3, 1939. These men and women had to seek shelter in other Gaus, mostly in Hesse and Lower Franconia. In 1944, a similar evacuation took place as the Allies moved dangerously close to the border area.
351. Cf. Baur, p. 192. Further reports in VB, No. 182, June 30, 1940. Additional reports in *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*, 28 (1940) and in Berlin's *Illustrierte Zeitung* 28 (1940).
352. Ward Price, p. 19, remarks: "In works on travel, the maps and plans get most of his attention. He says if he ever went to London or Paris he would immediately be able to find his way about, and he claims that there is hardly a famous building in the world which he could not draw from memory."
353. DNB text, June 29, 1940.
354. Tannenberg is located in the Black Forest west of Freudenstadt.
355. DNB report, June 29, 1940.
356. Ibid., June 30, 1940.
357. In a telephone conversation on June 30, 1940, Alfieri informed Ciano that Hitler once more was "seeking seclusion," a state of mind which usually preceded the announcement of some great decision on his part. For this reason he had not yet responded to the Duce's inquiry whether Italian naval and infantry units could participate in the pending attack on England. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 271.
358. Published in DGFP, D, X, no. 73, p. 82.
359. Directive by the High Command of the Wehrmacht, reproduced in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Bildern und Dokumenten*, p. 129.
360. See above, June 22, 1940.
361. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6241.
362. DNB report, July 4, 1940. The vessels in question were the battleships *Dunkerque*, *Provence*, and *Bretagne*. A fourth battleship, the *Strasbourg*, escaped to the Mediterranean.
363. DNB text, July 4, 1940.

364. Presided over by General von Stülpnagel, the joint Franco-German commission on details of the Cease-Fire Agreement convened in the Nassauer Hof Hotel in Wiesbaden for many months.
365. DNB report, July 6, 1940.
366. See above, speech of September 3, 1939.
367. See above, April 10, 1938. See also above, March 19, 1939.
368. Source: Domarus Archives.
369. Report on this conversation in Schmidt, pp. 502 f. Also reproduced in Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 274. Cf. also DGFP, D, X, no. 129, pp. 147 ff.
370. Report in VB, No. 191, July 9, 1940.
371. DNB note, July 8, 1940.
372. Report in VB, No. 193, July 11, 1940. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 274 f.
373. Report on this meeting on July 11, 1940, according to notes in the war diary reproduced in Klee, p. 66.
374. RGBl. 1940, I, pp. 989 ff.
375. The fortress is located outside of the town of Wewelsburg in the District of Büren. Cf. Karl Hüser, *Wewelsburg 1933–1945. Kult- und Terrorstätte der SS. Eine Dokumentation* (Paderborn, 1982). The Wewelsburg served Himmler as a meeting place for the inner circle of his SS Order, which was modeled after the Teutonic Order and the legendary Round Table. Himmler not only saw himself as a reincarnation of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry I the Fowler, he also followed in King Arthur's footsteps with regard to the quest for the Holy Grail.
376. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 992.
377. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; and Klee, pp. 71 f.
378. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 276. In a letter, King Carol had placed himself under Hitler's protection. In turn, Hitler's reply detailed that the King might wish to cede territories to Hungary and Bulgaria, for example strips of land in Siebenbürgen and the Dobrudja region. Cf. July 13, 1940 entry in Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
379. Ibid. By the time he moved against Russia, Hitler no longer had any second thoughts about accepting Italy's help and he was no longer in a position to worry about problems with troop reinforcements.
380. Published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 61 ff.
381. DNB reports, July 18, 1940. Friedrich Fromm, born 1888; Commander of the Ersatzheer (Replacement Army) from 1939 to 1944; arrested in connection with the events of July 20, 1944; executed in 1945.
382. DNB note, July 18, 1940.
383. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 277.
384. Cf. Schmidt, p. 503.
385. DNB text, July 19, 1940.
386. Hitler had not accepted Mussolini's proposal. See above, speech of September 3, 1939.
387. These documents were, in part, published by the German Government in the form of a White Book. Cf. *Auswärtiges Amt 1940*, No. 5 (Berlin, 1940). In general, the discussions reproduced contained only expositions

by the General Staff and instructions for the troops in the event of a German invasion.

388. Maurice Gustave Gamelin, born 1872 in Paris; Chief of the French General Staff from 1931 on; Commander in Chief and Vice President of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre of the Allied Forces from 1939 to 1940.—Maxime Weygand, born 1867; Chief of Staff with Marshal Foch; Commander in Chief in 1940; Minister of Defense of the Vichy Government from 1940 to 1941.
389. See above, September 19, 1939.
390. See above, Reichstag speech of October 6, 1939.
391. Sir Leslie Hore-Belisha, born 1895 in Mogador (Morocco); of Jewish origin; British Minister of War from 1937 to 1940.
392. Reference to Winston S. Churchill.
393. In contrast to the generals, Hitler treated men from the Party's leadership, e.g. Goebbels and Ribbentrop, with a marked lack of respect. On this particular occasion, they ranked at the bottom of his list.
394. A military rank of "Reichsmarschall" had not existed previously. Hitler instituted this rank so that Göring, his "best man" after all, could remain the highest-ranking officer in the Armed Forces. The new rank recalled the title "Maréchal de France;" however, the ranks in the German and French armies were not comparable. The Grand Cross was awarded only this one time in the course of the Second World War. Göring had his Grand Cross manufactured according to personal specifications. See above, 1939, note 956.
395. In the subsequent biographic sketches, dates are given for the Field Marshals appointed at this time or on next occasions. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 1093, states that Hitler interrupted his speech in order to distribute personally the marshal's baton to twelve newly appointed Field Marshals. Distribution of the batons, however, was carried out in separate receptions at the Chancellery in the months of August and September 1940. See below, August 14 and September 4, 1940.
396. Walter von Brauchitsch, born 1881 in Berlin, died 1948 in Hamburg; Commander in Chief of the Army from 1938 to 1941; Gerd von Rundstedt, born 1875 in Aschersleben, died 1953 in Hanover; Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, born 1876 in Passau, died 1956 in Hohenschwangau; Fedor von Bock, born 1880 in Küstrin, died in combat on May 3, 1945 in Schleswig-Holstein; Wilhelm List, born 1880 in Oberkirch; Wolfgang von Kluge, born 1892 in Stettin, retired in 1944; Erwin von Witzleben, born 1881 in Berlin, hanged on August 9, 1944 in Berlin in retribution for his involvement in the events of July 20, 1944; Walter von Reichenau, born 1884 in Karlsruhe, died on January 17, 1942, while being "transported to his homeland."
397. Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs, born 1881 in Dessau, died 1954 at the Rösberg Fortress near Cologne; Field Marshal in 1943.
398. Georg von Küchler, born 1881 at Philippsruh Castle; Field Marshal in 1942.

399. Ernst Busch, born 1885 in Essen-Steele, died 1945 in England; Field Marshal in 1943.
400. Ewald von Kleist, born 1881 in Braunsfeld, died 1954 in Russia; Field Marshal in 1943; taken prisoner of war by the English in 1945; extradited to Yugoslavia in 1946; extradited to the Soviet Union in 1948.
401. Erhard Milch, born 1892 in Wilhelmshaven.
402. Hugo Sperrle, born 1885 in Ludwigsburg, died 1953 in Munich.
403. Albert Kesselring, born 1885 in Marktstett, died 1960 in Bad Nauheim.
404. Robert Ritter von Greim, born 1892 in Bayreuth; committed suicide in Salzburg in 1945; appointed Field Marshal and, as Göring's successor, Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe on April 26, 1945.
405. Wolfram von Richthofen, born 1895 in Barzdorf, died 1945 in Bad Ischl; appointed Field Marshal in 1943.
406. Wilhelm Keitel, born 1882 in Helmscherode near Gandersheim, hanged 1946 in Nuremberg; Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht from 1938 to 1945.
407. Cf. Hitler's ideas on a foreign policy oriented along the lines of friendship with Italy and Great Britain as expounded in *Mein Kampf*. See above, Introduction, p. 51.
408. Reference to the Italian Air Force Marshal Italo Balbo. See above, June 29, 1940.
409. Hitler had not noted anything of the kind in his speech of September 1 of the previous year. See above, September 1, 1939. There had been no mention of a "Five-Year Plan;" instead, Hitler spoke repeatedly of a "Four-Year Plan" that had commenced in 1937. In a speech on September 19, 1939, he stated: "Should it [the war] indeed last three years, the chapter will no more close with the word 'capitulation' than it would at the end of a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, or a seventh year." See above, speech of September 19, 1939. On a similar topic, Hitler spoke of "a war of three, four, or eight years" in a speech in October 1939. See above, October 6, 1939.
410. This "final delineation" was to last until the attack of June 22, 1941.
411. This statement that "Russia had not taken any steps outside of its sphere of interest" is worthy of note. By June 26, 1941, Hitler had apparently changed positions and claimed, despite knowing better, that Soviet claims to Lithuania, Bessarabia, and the Bucovina constituted "renewed breaches of contract and simple blackmail." See below, June 22, 1941.
412. Hitler was mistaken in his conviction that Britain's statesmen would comprehend "as time went by" that he alone was to determine the fate of Europe.
413. Napoleon, too, had insisted that he had been forced to do battle despite his great longing for peace. In the spring of 1821, he noted: "I was forced to control Europe with the sword. I have instilled new ideas into France and Europe; ideas that shall never die." Aretz, pp. 509 f.
414. In words remarkably similar, Hitler had mocked his domestic opponents in keeping with his concept of the identical nature of foreign and

domestic policy. In a speech of March 15, 1932, he stated: "Generally speaking, it is no great honor to behold these illustrious opponents with which fate has unfortunately blessed us. It would be better if one were faced with worthy fighters and not this stuff, this nature's run of the mill." See above, p. 125.

415. Allusion to a May 10, 1940 air raid on Freiburg-im-Breisgau allegedly carried out by the Allies, but actually perpetrated by the Luftwaffe. See below, note 487.
416. Like so many of his other "prophecies," this statement would later backfire on Hitler.
417. Napoleon made many similar statements. One example is his February 26, 1807 letter addressed to the King of Prussia. "I even add that, should Russia and England truly so desire, I would be delighted to arrive at a settlement with them. I should despise myself at the thought that I caused such enormous bloodshed. But what can I do if England holds this bloodshed to benefit her plans and her monopoly position?" Cf. Aretz, p. 330.
418. See above, October 1, 1939.
419. Speaking before a gathering of officer cadets in the spring of 1941, Hitler proclaimed: "As a National Socialist, there was one word I refused to acknowledge in the struggle for power: Capitulation! I never knew this word and I shall never know this word as the Führer of the German Volk and as your Supreme Commander. Once more, this one word is 'capitulation' and all it means is submission to the will of another—never, never!" See below, speech of April 29, 1941.
420. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 277.
421. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6174.
422. DNB texts, July 20, 1940.
423. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 277.
424. While visiting Berlin three years earlier, Mussolini had expressed his motto in the following terms: "And when you have a friend, to march alongside him till the end!" See above, p. 950, speech of September 28, 1937.
425. DNB report, July 22, 1940.
426. Report in VB, No. 204, July 23, 1940.
427. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
428. Reuters note, July 22, 1940.
429. DNB note, July 23, 1940. Less than five years later, the German broadcast accompanied the news of Hitler's demise with *Siegfried's Funeral Music* from the *Götterdämmerung*.
430. See above, July 21, 1940.
431. "At that time, a few semblances of states grown old and impotent were drummed together and the attempt was made, using this junk destined for destruction, to show a bold front to an enterprising world coalition." See above, Introduction, p. 57 and *Mein Kampf*, p. 745.
"The greatest power on earth [England] and a youthful nation state [Germany] would bring other qualities to the battle in Europe than

- those of the rotten corpses of states with whom Germany allied itself in the last war." *Mein Kampf*, p. 756.
432. DNB report, July 26, 1940. Ion Gigurtu, Rumanian Minister-President from July 4 to September 4, 1940.
 433. See above, note 378.
 434. DNB report, July 27, 1940. Bogdan Filov, born 1883; executed in 1945; Bulgarian Minister-President from 1940 to 1942.
 435. DNB report, July 28, 1940.
 436. Manfred Freiherr von Killinger, born 1886; SA Obergruppenführer; Minister-President of Saxony from 1933 to 1934; German Consul General in San Francisco in 1938. Killinger's mission in Bratislava was of a short duration; afterwards he was named German Envoy to Rumania.
 437. Other SA Führers who served as envoys to states of the Balkans were: Adolf Heinz Beckerle, born 1902 in Frankfurt (Main); SA Obergruppenführer and President of the Police in Frankfurt; German Envoy to Bulgaria.—Dietrich von Jagow, born 1892 in Frankfurt (Oder); SA Obergruppenführer; German Envoy to Hungary.—Siegfried Kasche, born 1903 in Strausberg; SA Obergruppenführer; German Envoy to Croatia.—Hanns Ludin, born 1905 in Freiburg; SA Obergruppenführer; German Envoy to Slovakia.
 438. DNB note, July 29, 1940. In an interview with the VB, Shekov stated that the topic discussed had been "an enduring peace for the peoples of the Balkans." Cf. VB, No. 217, August 4, 1940.
 439. DNB text, July 29, 1940.
 440. Ibid.
 441. Cf. Halder's War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
 442. On Hitler's various attempts to either influence the Duke or have SS Führer Walter Schellenberg kidnap him, cf. DGFP, D, X, nos. 235 ff., pp. 317 ff. Walter Schellenberg, *Memoiren* (Cologne, 1946), pp. 108 ff.
 443. DGFP, D, X, no. 270, pp. 390 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 65 f.
 444. Report in VB, No. 216, August 3, 1940.
 445. RGBl. 1940, I, p. 139.
 446. Report in VB, No. 220, August 7, 1940. Otto Abetz, born 1903 in Schwetzingen; teacher by profession. His wife being French, he became active early on in promoting improved relations between Germany and France. In pursuit of this goal, he initially worked for the Reichsjugendführung (Reich Youth Leadership) as its French expert and later served in a similar capacity for the Dienststelle Ribbentrop. In Paris in 1949, he was condemned to twenty years of hard labor, but was subsequently pardoned.
 447. IMT, 665-D.
 448. Published in VB, No. 221, August 8, 1940. The honorary badge bestowed on a "pioneer of labor" consisted of a gold eagle which held the swastika wheel of the German Labor Front in its talons.
 449. DNB report, August 7, 1940.
 450. Apparently the remaining territories occupied in the West—the

Netherlands, Belgium, northern France, and Burgundy—were to be integrated into the “Germanic Reich of the German Nation” as “Reichskommissariats.” This procedure was implemented later in the Baltic States and the Ukraine.

451. After the First World War, nationalist circles in Germany discussed whether it would not have been better had Imperial Germany annexed the Alsace region to Baden and the Lorraine region to the Palatine. The argument claimed that had these two areas been integrated in the Reich in such a manner, they would not have been as easily severed from the remainder of Imperial Germany after 1918.
452. Hitler proceeded in a similar manner in the case of Austria and the Burgenland, an area Hungary had been forced to cede to Austria in 1920. Fearing potential Hungarian claims to the territory, Hitler divided the Burgenland into a department for “Lower Austria” and another separate area for Styria.
453. DNB text, August 7, 1940.
454. Understandably, Hitler refrained from publishing these “decrees” in the Reich Law Gazette as he sought to prevent word of the true intent of his measures becoming known abroad, in particular in France and Luxembourg.
455. Robert Wagner, born 1895 in Lindach; executed in 1946; initially entered into a career as a teacher and later became an active officer; dismissed by the administration for his involvement in the 1923 Putsch; Gauleiter in Baden.—Gustav Simon, born 1900 in Saarbrücken; teacher of economics by profession; Gauleiter of the Gau Koblenz-Trier.
456. Arthur Axmann, Reich Youth Leader until 1945.
457. Hartmann Lauterbacher, born 1909; Gauleiter of the Gau Southern Hanover-Brunswick and Oberpräsident of Hanover.
458. Speaking before officers in late 1939, Hitler put the matter as follows: “As the last factor I must in all modesty describe my own person: Irreplaceable. Neither a military man nor a civilian could replace me.” See above, speech of November 23, 1939.
459. Cf. Klee, p. 182, and others. Casualty numbers cited in the RAF reports and in the OKW reports reveal that the first hostilities had already broken out on July 10, 1940 (cf. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, pp. 283 and 299), upgrading from August 8, 1940. According to the OKW, the following numbers of enemy planes downed and own planes lost were registered: 34 enemy planes, 3 Luftwaffe planes (August 8); 49 enemy planes, 12 Luftwaffe planes (August 9); 2 enemy planes, 2 Luftwaffe planes (August 10); 90 enemy planes, 21 Luftwaffe planes (August 11); 92 enemy planes, 24 Luftwaffe planes (August 12); 132 enemy planes, 28 Luftwaffe planes (August 13); 30 enemy planes, 4 Luftwaffe planes (August 14); etc.
460. Published in the *Chemnitzer Tagblatt*, No. 221, August 12, 1940. Schirach had been speedily instructed in military affairs, hastily promoted to Lieutenant, had participated in the war on the Western Front and had received the Iron Cross, Second Class.

461. DNB text, August 11, 1940.
462. Cf. Klee, p. 105.
463. In 1936, Hitler had Blomberg and the other Commanders in Chief of the Wehrmacht parade by in front of him at the Nuremberg Party Congress. See above, September 16, 1935 and picture No. XIX.
464. DNB text, August 14, 1940. See also above, July 19, 1940.
465. Respectively, they commanded the Second, Third, and Fifth Air Fleets fighting in Holland, Belgium, France, and Norway. Hitler presented the marshal's baton to each one on September 4, 1940, although the "Luftwaffe's combat engagement" in the Battle of Britain was far from over.
466. Cf. Klee, pp. 105 ff.
467. The bay was located in southwestern England between the towns of Weymouth and Torquay. Implementing Hitler's orders, the High Command of the Wehrmacht issued the appropriate directive on August 16, 1940. Ibid., p. 107.
468. On August 15, 1940, Hitler instructed the Luftwaffe not to disrupt, but to continue the air offensive, given the favorable weather. Ibid., p. 183.
469. DNB text, August 17, 1940. The blockade as formulated by Hitler on August 17, 1940 strongly resembled the blockade imposed by Napoleon on the continent. Neither the Frenchman's blockade launched on November 21, 1806, nor Hitler's measure a century later succeeded in attaining its purpose.
470. See above, October 16, 1939, meeting with Sven Hedin; Hitler's article on the Finnish question, December 8, 1939; renewed meeting with Sven Hedin, March 4, 1940; end of open hostilities between Russia and Finland, March 12, 1940.
471. Germany and Finland concluded an agreement on transit rights on September 22, 1940. Moreover, Germany readily agreed to supplying the Finns with war weaponry. Cf. Karl Gustav von Mannerheim, *Erinnerungen* (Freiburg/Zurich, 1952), pp. 425 ff.
472. DNB text, August 19, 1940.
473. RGBl. 1940, I, pp. 1177 ff. The "Narvik" shield consisted of a silver and golden (gold was the Navy's color) coat of arms. Engraved on it were an Edelweiss, anchor, propeller, and the inscription "Narvik 1940" beneath the ensign. The shield was to be worn on the left upper arm. While Hitler generally preferred medals to be worn as pins on the award recipient's chest, there were far too many of this kind either already in existence or to be introduced shortly. Hence, the sleeve of the recipient's tunic had to accommodate the "Narvik" shield. The silver edition of the Knight's Cross for combat service was worn on a wide b a n d across the neck. See above, 1939, note 1175.
474. DNB note, August 29, 1940. The official ceremony took place in the courtyard of Berlin's Friedrich Wilhelm University on August 30, 1940.
475. DNB note, August 25, 1940.
476. Cf. Klee, p. 112 and p. 123.
477. Reports on the reception in Schmidt, p. 508. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 288.

478. Report in VB, No. 243, August 30, 1940.
479. DNB report, August 30, 1940. Cf. also Schmidt, pp. 506 f. Hitler had exerted great influence on the First Sentence pronounced in Vienna on November 2, 1938, which had effected the cession of Czechoslovak territory to Hungary. See above, November 2, 1938.
480. DNB texts, August 30, 1940.
481. DNB text, September 1, 1940.
482. DNB report, September 2, 1940.
483. The new Iranian Envoy Moussa Noury-Esfandiary was the father of the later Empress Soraya.
484. DNB text, September 4, 1940.
485. DNB text, September 5, 1940.
486. In point 5 of the Directive No. 17, Hitler cautioned: "I reserve for myself final decision on terror attacks in retribution." See above, August 1, 1940.
487. The term "retribution" played a role of importance both during and after the Second World War. In contrast to war at sea and on land, there were no internationally accepted rules that regulated war in the air. Hence both parties proceeded cautiously in the matter and chose to await action by the other belligerents. Only then did they feel justified in doing even greater damage "in retribution." In a speech in early September of the previous year, Göring had warned: "However, woe to him [the English pilot] who should mistake a bomb for a propaganda flyer. He shall not have to wait long for retribution!"

After a British air raid on a small train station in Schleswig-Holstein, the DNB carried the following item in its April 12, 1940 edition: "This constitutes the first instance of enemy planes attacking a German traffic installation in the present conflict. Should subsequent assaults affirm the premeditated character of this attempt, this will completely change, for Germany, the nature of the current air battle against England. The consequences shall be drawn immediately."

In the case of the air raid on Freiburg-im-Breisgau on May 10, 1940, supposedly perpetrated by three enemy planes, but actually carried out by Luftwaffe forces, the DNB published the following statement: "In retribution for this act in violation of international law, the German Luftwaffe will reply in kind. From this day onward, any further premeditated attack by an enemy plane sent to bombard civilian targets in Germany shall result in a response by five times as many German planes that will drop bombs on English or French cities." This did not happen in the case of Freiburg, however, because the matter was considered "too delicate" in this particular instance.

Different motives were involved in the Luftwaffe's destructive air raid on Rotterdam on May 14, 1940. This savage assault was to speed up the capitulation of the Dutch Armed Forces. After the beginning of the German Offensive to the West, British bombers flew over Germany nearly every night and occasionally dropped bombs on cities in western and northern Germany. Berlin was bombed for the first time

on August 26, 1940. These air raids remained within the confines of bombing carried out in the last days of the First World War. As in 1918, population centers in western Germany (such as Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Karlsruhe) were primary targets for the attacks.

There is no doubt that Hitler initiated systematic bombardment of certain target population centers. It was his belief that such “terror attacks” would force the capitulation of his opponents. Examples were both the air assault on Holland (May 1940) and the bombing of English towns (September 1940). His lack of success in the latter case was because he faced an equal or superior adversary that proved more than a match for the Luftwaffe. The Royal Air Force’s “retaliation” accelerated at so swift a pace that the Luftwaffe could not keep up. In this context, Churchill’s October 8, 1940, speech in the House of Commons contains remarkable observations:

“The question of reprisals is being discussed in some quarters as if it were a moral issue. What are reprisals? What we are doing now is to batter continuously, with forces which steadily increase in power, each one of those points in Germany which we believe will do the Germans most injury and will most speedily lessen their power to strike at us. Is that a reprisal? It seems to me very like one. At any rate, it is all we have time for now. [—] Do not let us get into a sterile controversy as to what are and what are not reprisals. Our object must be to inflict the maximum harm on her war-making capacity. That is the only object that we shall pursue. [—] No one must look forward to any relief merely from the winter weather. We have, however, been thinking about the subject for some time, and it may be that new methods will be devised to make the wholesale bombing of the civilian population by night and in fog more exciting to the enemy than it is at present. The House will not expect me to indicate or foreshadow any of these methods. It would be much better for us to allow our visitors to find them out for themselves in due course by practical experience.”

Published in Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6287. See also Domarus, *Untergang*, p. 59.

- 488. DNB text, September 4, 1940.
- 489. Allusion to the Italian occupation of British Somalia. See above, August 17, 1940.
- 490. At this point the words “seen militarily” were inserted in the published account of this speech (the author’s notes). Hitler evidently feared that without this addition, the planned total annexation of the territories would become too transparent. After all, moments earlier he had stated that “there was no more Poland.”
- 491. Up to this point, Hitler had always spoken of a Volk of “82 million.” The additional three million apparently consisted of the population of the newly conquered territories in Alsace-Lorraine and Luxembourg.
- 492. Reference to his “final, last” offer for peace on July 19, 1940. It had been predated by an earlier “last” proposal Hitler had made in October of the previous year. See above, October 6, 1939.

493. Hitler would have to struggle mightily against “General Winter” in late 1941 and early 1942.
494. Nevertheless, Hitler frequently summoned “General Bluff” to his aid against the British.
495. In the official version of the test, Hitler had the figure “one million kilograms” replaced with “and many more kilograms” (the author’s notes). Evidently, even Hitler held “one million kilograms” to be a bit unrealistic. Later in the War, however, the Allies’ Air Forces dropped from 40 to 50 million kilograms of bombs on Germany in one day.
496. Hitler’s choice of words in this particular instance reveals once more that he equated the English opponent with his former domestic adversaries.
497. The phrase “well, you know, according to Ludwig Schmitz . . .” was deleted from the published account of the speech (original quotation according to the author’s notes.) Ludwig Schmitz was a popular actor and comedian from the Rhineland. During the Second World War, he played in many short propaganda films which either were shown during news broadcasts or after the “Wochenschau” in Germany’s cinemas. Schmitz’s popularity was based on his humorous portrayal of the narrow minded, though good-natured Philistine.
498. Report in VB, Nos. 250. and 251, September 6 and 7, 1940.
499. OKW report of September 8, 1940.
500. King Carol II, born 1893 at Pelesch Castle; died 1953 in Lisbon-Estrol; renounced his claim as next heir to the throne in 1925; proclaimed King of Rumania in 1930.
King Michael I, born 1921 at Foischor Castle; took the place of his father as minor regent from 1927 to 1930; Crown Prince from 1930 to 1940; King of Rumania from 1940 to 1947; renounced the Throne on December 30, 1947.
501. Ion Antonescu, born 1882; executed in 1946; General; Minister-President and Leader of the State in 1940; dismissed by King Michael I in 1944.
502. DNB text, September 7, 1940.
503. Published in VB, No. 256, September 12, 1940.
504. DNB note, September 11, 1940.
505. Report in VB, No. 255, September 11, 1940. Döme Sztójay, Hungarian Minister-President in 1944; executed in 1946 in Ofenpest.
506. Ibid.
507. Reports in VB, Nos. 259 and 261, September 15 and 19, 1940.
508. Cf. Klee, p. 177.
509. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6276 f.
510. The topics “Operation Sea Lion” and “Battle of Britain” have been the subject of many studies, for example: Georg W. Feuchter, *Geschichte des Luftkrieges* (Bonn, 1954); Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (New York, 1952); Adolf Galland, *The First and the Last. The Rise and Fall of the Luftwaffe Fighter Forces, 1938–45* (New York, 1954); T. Weber, “Die Luftschlacht um England in historischer Sicht” in *Flugwehr*

- und Technik*, 16 (1954); Denis Richards, *Royal Air Force 1939–1945*, Vol. I (London, 1953); Peter Fleming, *Operation Sea Lion* (New York, 1957); Ronald Wheatley, *Operation Sea Lion* (New York, 1958); Edward Bishop, *The Battle of Britain* (London, 1960); J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy*, Volume II (London, 1957), pp. 267–294 (= *History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series*); and Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Volume II, *Their Finest Hour* (London, 1949), pp. 266–300.
511. In August of the previous year, Hitler had reassured the generals of the Luftwaffe's numerical superiority.
“At the moment England has only 150 anti-aircraft guns. The new anti-aircraft gun has been ordered. It will take a long time before sufficient numbers have been produced. [—] At the moment the English Air Force has only 130,000 men.” See above, speech of August 22, 1939.
512. Liddell Hart, the well-known English writer on military affairs after the War, stated the following with regard to an interview with former General Blumentritt: “This reflection about Hitler's deeper motive was reinforced by his strangely dilatory attitude over the subsequent plans for the invasion of England. ‘He showed little interest in the plans,’ Blumentritt said, ‘and made no effort to speed up the preparations. That was utterly different from his usual behavior.’ Before the invasion of Poland, of France, and later of Russia, he repeatedly spurred them on. But on this occasion he sat back.” Cf. Liddell Hart, p. 201.
513. According to figures by the transportation office of the High Command of the Navy, the following vessels were ready for deployment on September 4, 1940: 1,910 barges; 168 supply steamers; 419 lighters (including fishing boats); 1,600 motor boats. Cf. Klee, p. 116.
Of these vessels, the Royal Air Force had, by September 21, 1940, either sunk or severely damaged the following: 214 barges, 21 steamers, and five lighters. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
514. Napoleon concentrated a force of 2,283 barges and other supply vessels in these locations. Cf. Napoleon's own figures in Aretz, p. 292.
515. Editor's note: This phenomenal duplication of events can barely be regarded as a mere “coincidence.” Mysterious facts like these seem to have escaped traditional scientific research. Hitler would also choose the same date—June 22—for his invasion of Russia as Napoleon did in 1812. See below, June 22, 1941, and Vol. IV, Appendix.
516. In a letter to Admiral Decres, Napoleon wrote on August 3, 1805: “The English do not realize what is hanging above their heads. England will be a ‘has been’ once those twelve hours of crossing the Channel lie behind us.” See above, note 16.
517. Cf. Aretz, p. 289.
518. The OKW wired instructions on September 17, 1940: “Issuing of the order regarding OKW/WFST . . . (date of landing in England) has been postponed until further notice.” Cf. Klee, p. 205. New directives were issued on October 12, 1941: “The Führer has determined that, from now on until spring, preparations for a landing in England shall be

maintained only as a means of exerting pressure politically and militarily. Should a landing be envisioned once more in the spring or early summer 1941, the necessary alert will be issued in a timely manner. Until then, the military preconditions for such a landing shall continue to be improved.” OKW/WFST/Abt. L (I) No. 33318/40. Published in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 149. In reality, a subsequent landing was no longer a viable alternative for Hitler, and his statement on the possibility of a landing in 1941 was as ludicrous a lip-service to his cause as Napoleon’s assurances in a letter addressed to Talleyrand in 1805: “I shall have beaten the Russians and Austrians before they shall have had time to unite their forces. Once the continent has been pacified, I shall focus on the Ocean to once more promote peace at sea.”

519. Report in VB, No. 262, September 18, 1940. Attilio Teruzzi was a leading Italian fascist.
520. Ibid. Romano Serrano Suñer was Franco’s brother-in-law and served as Spain’s Foreign Minister from October 1940 to 1942.
521. See above, Hitler’s statement of July 21, 1940.
522. Report in VB, No. 270, September 26, 1940.
523. Hitler attempted to sell this idea to Franco and Pétain. See above, entry of July 13, 1940 in Halder’s War Diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
524. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 297.
525. According to Schmidt, Hitler had called Suñer an “insidious Jesuit.” Cf. Schmidt, p. 508.
526. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 294.
527. Report in VB, No. 265, September 21, 1940.
528. Published in Bullock, p. 611. Cf. also IMT, 053-C.
529. This purpose was openly proclaimed in the public announcement on the German invasion of Rumania. See below, October 12, 1940.
530. DNB text, September 21, 1940. Born 1913 in Gelsenkirchen, Werner Mölders was a famed fighter pilot who gained his experience as a member of the Condor Legion in Spain.
531. DNB report, September 22, 1940.
532. DNB report, September 24, 1940. Adolf Galland, born 1912 in Westerholt near Recklinghausen.
533. Ibid. See also Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 295. In the years 1941 and 1942, the Western Powers were to construct a transport route across northern Africa, leading from Dakar to Egypt. This greatly facilitated their operations against the Axis and was crucial to their success.
534. DNB report, September 26, 1940.
535. Cf. Klee, p. 207.
536. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 293.
537. Ibid., p. 274.
538. RGBL. 1940, II, pp. 280 ff. Editor’s note: The German expression *Dreimächtepakt* is in the official sources either translated as “Three Powers Pact” and “Three Power Pact” (cf. DGFP), or “Three-Power

- Pact.” For textual consistency, the agreement is hereafter referred to as “Three-Power Pact” in the sources, in the commentary as “Tripartite Pact,” as the pact was called abroad and in the literature.
539. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 296.
540. In the fairytale, Hans found a gold treasure which he kept exchanging for something supposedly greater and bigger until, in the end, he was left with nothing.
541. DNB texts, September 27 and 28, 1940. Telegram to the Duce also published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 122, p. 208.
542. Prince Fumimaro Konoye, born 1891; committed suicide in 1945; Japanese Minister-President from 1937 to 1939 and once more from 1940 to 1941.
543. DNB report, September 28, 1940.
544. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 296.
545. DNB report, October 1, 1940. Roberto Farinacci, shot in 1945; General Secretary of the Fascist Party and Chief of its propaganda section.
546. Bormann took notes on Hitler’s exposition at the conference. Published in IMT, Blue Series, VII, pp. 252 ff. (USSR-172).
547. Report in VB, No. 277, October 4, 1940.
548. DNB text, October 4, 1940. Reports on the conference in Schmidt, p. 509. Cf. also Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 298 f.
549. See above, Introduction, p. 46.
550. Report in VB, No. 281, October 7, 1940.
551. Report in VB, No. 283, October 9, 1940.
552. Photograph published in VB, No. 281, October 7, 1940.
553. Report in VB, No. 286, October 12, 1940. Adolf von Trotha, born 1868 in Koblenz; Chief of Staff with the High Command of the Navy in 1916; Chief of the Navy Cabinet in 1918; Chief of the Admiralty from 1919 to 1920; Prussian State Counselor in 1933.
554. Photographic report in VB, No. 288, October 14, 1940.
555. DNB text, October 12, 1940.
556. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 300.
557. Report in VB, No. 288, October 14, 1940.
558. Report in VB, No. 289, October 15, 1940. Raffaello Ricardi served as Italian Minister of Trade and International Payments.
559. Report in VB, No. 290, October 16, 1940.
560. Ibid.
561. DNB text, October 18, 1940.
562. Published in VB, No. 295, October 21, 1940.
563. From October 19 to October 23, 1940, Himmler visited Franco and Count Mayalde, Chief of the Spanish Police. He also toured the cities of Irun, Madrid, Toledo, and Barcelona.
564. Montoire-sur-le-Loir was a small town located in the Department Loir-et-Cher between the cities of Tours and Vendôme. At the time, it had approximately 4,000 inhabitants.
565. DNB text, October 22, 1940.
566. DNB report, October 23, 1940. Cf. report on Hitler’s exposition in

- Hendaye in Schmidt, pp. 510 ff.
567. See above, September 15, 1938.
568. At the conference in Florence on October 28, 1940. Cf. *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, p. 402.
569. DNB text, October 24, 1940.
570. DNB report, October 24, 1940. Cf. report on the conference in Schmidt, pp. 514 ff. See further William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York, 1943), pp. 93 ff.
571. See above, statement of October 23, 1940.
572. See above, speech of March 29, 1938.
573. The Duke of Reichstadt was the son of Napoleon I and his second wife, the Austrian Grand Duchess Marie-Louise. The Duke died on July 22, 1832 in Vienna at the age of 22. In December 1940, Hitler ordered the transfer of his coffin from the Viennese Kapuzinergruft to the Dôme des Invalides in Paris. See above, December 15, 1940.
574. Cf. text of the Montoire Agreement in Langer, pp. 94 f.
575. DNB text, October 24, 1940.
576. See above, October 12, 1940.
577. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 300.
578. Cf. Schmidt, p. 517.
579. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 304.
580. Ibid.
581. On November 20, 1940, Hitler wrote Mussolini a letter from which the following excerpt is taken: "When I asked you to receive me in Florence, I began my trip in the hope that I might be able to present my views to you before the beginning of the threatening conflict with Greece, concerning which I had been informed only in a general way. I wanted to ask you in the first place to postpone the action a while longer, if possible until a more favorable season of the year, but in any event until after the American presidential election." DGFP, D, XI, no. 369, p. 639.
582. *Mein Kampf*, p. 705. See also above, Introduction, p. 51.
583. Cf. Schmidt, p. 517.
584. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 305 and *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, pp. 399 ff.
585. DNB report, October 28, 1940.
586. Published in VB, No. 305, October 31, 1940.
587. Report in VB, No. 306, November 1, 1940.
588. DNB report, November 4, 1940.
589. Hitler called Roosevelt "Churchill's accomplice in the White House" in early 1942. See below, January 30, 1942. See also above, 1939, Major Events in Summary.
590. See below, letter of November 20, 1940.
591. DNB text, November 8, 1940.
592. Reference to Thomas Woodrow Wilson.
593. In keeping with this exposition in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had never considered Japan in this manner, but had thought of England and Italy exclusively.

- 594. Reference to the speech of October 9, 1938. See above, *ibid*.
- 595. See above, speech of September 19, 1939.
- 596. This particular one of Hitler's prophecies also did not come true. Evidently, Hitler was attempting to outdo Churchill, who had declared in a speech before the House of Commons that Britain would no doubt emerge victorious from this battle. See above, October 1, 1939.
- 597. Hitler could not resist making one false prophecy after another.
- 598. The callous nature of Hitler's remark was truly unbelievable. Even official reports by the administration admitted to at least 60,000 soldiers either missing or dead as a result of the campaign in Poland and the Offensive to the West. In addition to these figures, the total number of casualties also had to take into account those who had given their lives in the early stages of the defense of the West Wall, or as members of the Luftwaffe and the Navy. These figures meant little to a Hitler or a Napoleon. After the bloody Battle of Borodino on September 7, 1812, where tens of thousands lay fallen, Napoleon stated nonchalantly that "a single night in Paris will make up for this!" As the War continued, German casualties increased at such a pace that even Hitler no longer boasted.
- 599. This remark was aimed primarily at the generals who dared to voice misgivings in 1939 when Hitler had insisted on beginning the campaign in November 1939. See above, October 27, 1939.
- 600. The Allies soon proved to Hitler that indeed it was possible to create coalitions not only to match his, but also to overpower him and his alliance partners.
- 601. During the ensuing campaigns, it became increasingly evident who had produced the "greatest military nonsense."
- 602. Before seizing power, Hitler made many a "compromise," using this as a means for later catching his domestic opponents by surprise. Knowing Hitler, the Western Powers would not agree to any of the proposed "compromises." It did little good for Hitler to belatedly profess that it had been he who had supposedly refused to enter into these compromises.
- 603. This military complex conspiracy theory was a very popular thesis in Germany. It held that the military industrial complex had furthered its interests by instigating the War. However, this did not correspond to the reality as revealed by the Nuremberg Trials and proved by economic documents on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. War brought good tidings to the armament industrialists no more than it did to the general population.
- 604. Further developments proved that this "under [all] circumstances" had to be Germany.
- 605. DNB text, November 10, 1940. This telegram was remarkable in that, after the failure of talks with Molotov, Hitler was to send Hirohito another telegram that was triple the length of the earlier one and was to underline German-Japanese solidarity in the two countries' stance against the Soviet Union. See below, November 15, 1940.

606. Report in VB, No. 316, November 11, 1940.
607. DNB note, November 11, 1940.
608. Published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 323, pp. 527 ff. Cf. IMT, 444-PS. For the supplementary Directive No. 18a of the OKW and the draft of a Directive No. 19 on "Operation Felix" see Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 72 ff. Their relevance is restricted by the fact that "Operation Felix" was called off on December 12, 1940. See below, 1940, note 670.
609. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, pp. 512 ff. Cf. reports on the talks between Hitler and Molotov in Schmidt, pp. 530 ff. and notes taken by the Envoy Schmidt, published in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 157 ff.; for Hitler's recapitulation in his proclamation to the German Volk see below, June 22, 1941.
610. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, p. 518.
611. *Ibid.*, p. 516.
612. DNB text, November 12, 1940.
613. Vladimir Georgievich Dekanazov, Soviet Deputy Peoples' Commissar for Foreign Affairs; appointed Soviet Ambassador to Berlin, presented his credentials to Hitler on December 19, 1940. On June 22, 1941, Ribbentrop informed the unsuspecting diplomat of Germany's attack on Russia.
614. Report in VB, No. 320, November 15, 1940.
615. DNB text, November 13, 1940.
616. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. II, pp. 515 f.
617. Allusion to military cooperation of the United States and Great Britain in some British colonies. In September 1940, a lend-lease agreement had provided fifty American destroyers to Great Britain.
618. See Schmidt's report in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 157 ff.
619. Cf. Hitler's Directive No. 18 of November 12, 1940. See below, *ibid.*
620. When, on May 30, 1940, Mussolini had revealed his intention of attacking France on June 6 1940, the Führer had blocked the Duce's move by insisting that he must discuss the matter with the generals first. Hitler delayed action, using this obvious pretext, because he considered the date of the planned Italian assault premature. See above, May 31, 1940.
621. British Armed Forces had landed on the peninsula in the course of the Crimean War of 1854. After the collapse of the Russian military in 1918, England had also carried out landings on the Crimean Peninsula in an effort to lend support to the White Russian troops.
622. On July 7, 1936, the Montreux Treaty regulating passage through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus was signed by the following states: Great Britain, France, Japan, the Soviet Union, Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, and Yugoslavia. Italy acceded to the agreement in 1938.
623. See above, August 24, 1939.
624. DNB texts, November 11, 1940.
625. DNB text, November 13, 1940.

626. Published in VB, No. 230, November 15, 1940.
627. In September 1940, the British anti-aircraft units had proved to be more than a match for the German ones.
628. RGL. 1940, I, pp. 1495 ff.
629. Hitler had not even responded to a Soviet overture of November 25, 1940 on acceding to the Tripartite Pact. The Soviet Union set the following conditions for such a move on its part: immediate withdrawal of German troops from Finland; conclusion of an agreement between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria on the use of facilities on land and at sea along the shores of the Black Sea; Turkish assent to the establishment of a Soviet naval base on the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles; Japan's renunciation of its rights to coal and oil fields located in northern Sakhalin. Cf. Bullock, pp. 621 f.

On November 9, 1940, Moscow had drawn up a draft of the proposed agreement which read:

The Governments of the states of the Three-Power Pact, Germany, Italy, and Japan, on the one side, and the Government of the USSR, on the other side, motivated by the desire to establish in their natural spheres of influence in Europe, Asia, and Africa a new order serving the welfare of all peoples concerned and to create a firm and enduring foundation for their common labors toward this goal, have agreed upon the following:

Article I

In the Three-Power Pact of Berlin, of September 27, 1940, Germany, Italy, and Japan agreed to oppose with all possible means the extension of the war into a world conflict and to collaborate toward an early restoration of world peace. They expressed their willingness to extend this collaboration to nations in other parts of the world which are inclined to direct their efforts along the same course as theirs. The Soviet Union declares that it concurs in these aims of the Three-Power Pact and is on its part determined to cooperate politically in this course with the three Powers.

Article II

Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union undertake to respect each other's natural spheres of influence. Insofar as these spheres of interest come into contact with each other, they will constantly consult each other in an amicable way with regard to the problems arising therefrom. Germany, Italy, and Japan declare on their part that they recognize the present extent of the possessions of the Soviet Union and will respect it.

Article III

Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union undertake to join no combination of powers which is directed against one of the four Powers.

The four Powers will assist each other in economic matters in every way and will supplement and extend the agreements existing among themselves.

Article IV

This agreement shall take effect upon signature and shall continue for a period of ten years. The Governments of the four Powers shall consult each other in due time, before the expiration of that period, regarding the extension of the agreement.

Done in four originals, in the German, Italian, Japanese, and Russian languages.

Draft

Secret Protocol No. 1

Upon the signing today of the Agreement concluded among the Representatives of Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union they declare as follows:

1) Germany declares that, apart from the territorial revisions in Europe to be carried out at the conclusion of peace, her territorial aspirations center in the territories of Central Africa.

2) Italy declares that, apart from the territorial revisions in Europe to be carried out at the conclusion of peace, her territorial aspirations center in the territories of Northern and Northeastern Africa.

3) Japan declares that her territorial aspirations center in the area of Eastern Asia to the south of the Island Empire of Japan.

4) The Soviet Union declares that its territorial aspirations center south of the national territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean.

The four Powers declare that, reserving the settlement of specific questions, they will mutually respect these territorial aspirations and will not oppose their achievement.

Draft

Secret Protocol No. 2 to be concluded among Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union

On the occasion of the signing today of the Agreement among Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union, the Representatives of Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union declare as follows:

1) Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union agree in the view that it is in their common interest to detach Turkey from her existing international commitments and progressively to win her over to political collaboration with themselves. They declare that they will pursue this aim in close consultation, in accordance with a common line of action which is still to be determined.

2) Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union declare their agreement to conclude, at a given time, a joint agreement with Turkey, wherein the three Powers would recognize the extent of Turkey's possessions.

3) Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union will work in common toward the replacement of the Montreux Straits Convention now in force by another convention. By this convention the Soviet Union would be granted the right of unrestricted passage of her Navy through the Straits at any time, whereas all other Powers except the other Black Sea

- countries, but including Germany and Italy, would in principle renounce the right of passage through the Straits for their naval vessels. The passage of commercial vessels through the Straits would, of course, have to remain free in principle.
Published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 309, pp. 508 ff.
630. On September 20, 1933, Hitler had stated the following on Communism as a philosophy: "It is an ideology founded on a fear of one's neighbor, in a dread of somehow standing out, and is based on a spiteful, envious cast of mind. This code of regression to the primitive state leads to cowardly, anxious acquiescence . . ." See above, p. 359.
631. Published in VB, No. 322, November 17, 1940. See above, telegram of November 10, 1940.
632. See above, November 12, 1940.
633. DNB text, November 15, 1940.
634. Published in VB, No. 325, November 20, 1940.
635. See below, March 1, 1941.
636. See below, letter of November 20, 1940 and 1940, note 646.
637. Ribbentrop had invited Ciano to a hunt in the Sudetenland on November 2 and 3, 1940. In a short address before his guests, Ribbentrop had declared that the war had already been won. At this, a German Major said to Ciano: "This phrase was given to us in 1914, in 1915, in 1916, and in 1917. I believed it. In 1918, I wished I were dead." Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 306 f.
638. Cf. Ciano, p. 312. Reports on these talks also in Schmidt, p. 288.
639. See above, note 525.
640. Report on this conversation in Schmidt, pp. 518 ff.
641. Maria Josepha, born 1906 in Ostend; Princess of Belgium and sister of King Leopold; wife of the Italian Crown Prince, later King Umberto.
642. While Hitler had promised Slovakia a strip of territory in Poland, he had offered to Hungary lands in Slovakia and Rumania. Moreover, he had proposed a parcel of land located in Russia to Rumania in addition to regaining territory Rumania had earlier lost to Hungary. By the same token, Hitler had approached Bulgaria with an offer of a strip of land stretching from Rumania into Greece to be appropriated to Bulgaria. To Yugoslavia finally he had promised a small area in Greece also, along with the port city of Salonica.
643. See above, January 3, 1939.
644. In 1945, Hitler was to rage that Mussolini's ill-fated venture into Greece had furthermore caused the defeat of Germany in Russia. See below, February 28, 1945.
645. Port situated on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt at a distance of approximately 150 kilometers from the border with Libya.
646. Published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 369, pp. 639 ff. Cf. also Peter de Mendelssohn, *Die Nürnberger Dokumente* (Hamburg, 1947), pp. 211 ff.
647. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 314.
648. See above, note 431.
649. Pál Count Teleki von Szék, born 1879 in Ofenpest; committed suicide

- in Ofenpest in 1941; served repeatedly as Hungarian Minister-President.
650. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia acceded to the Pact in March 1941 there. After the Second World War, the four victorious Allied Powers signed the contract establishing Austria as an autonomous state on May 15, 1955 at the same castle.
651. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 313.
652. Reference to the telegram of March 13, 1938; see above, *ibid.* The telegram had been posted in Linz, not in Vienna.
653. DNB text, November 20, 1940.
654. DNB report, November 22, 1940.
655. Report on this reception in Schmidt, p. 523. Cf. Antonescu's testimony in IMT, Blue Series, Vol. VII, pp. 338 f.
656. Sentence on the partition of the Sudeten German region and the cession of its western part to Hungary; see above, August 30, 1940.
657. The Marshal of France, Foch, declared in December 1928: "The Hungarian is the eternally dissatisfied; he is the incorrigible man of opposition." Cf. Recouly, p. 264.
658. DNB reports, November 23, 1940.
659. DNB text, November 23, 1940.
660. *Ibid.*, November 24, 1940.
661. Report in VB, No. 331, November 26, 1940. Born 1895 in Mordana, Count Grandi was anything but an admirer of Hitler. He was to play a central role in the ousting of Mussolini in July 1943.
662. Report in VB, No. 334, November 29, 1940.
663. Report in VB, No. 336, December 1, 1940.
664. Report in VB, No. 339, December 4, 1940.
665. DNB report, December 4, 1940.
666. DNB text, December 12, 1940.
667. Report in VB, No. 341, December 6, 1940.
668. See above, October 16, 1939 and March 4, 1940.
669. Cf. Bullock, pp. 607 f.
670. On December 11, 1940, Keitel issued the following top-secret order: "Operation Felix will not be carried out as the political requirements for it no longer exist. The investigations conducted at present have been concluded. All further actions in this matter are to be stopped at once; preparations currently underway are to cease. The Batteries intended for the reinforcement of the Spanish Isles and the Spanish coast are not to be delivered." Published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 78.
671. Published in VB, No. 344, December 9, 1940.
672. See below, Hitler's decree of February 7, 1941.
673. Published in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 79 f.
674. General Weygand held the post of Minister of War with the Vichy Government. He had earlier served as Chief of Staff under Marshal Foch before becoming Commander in Chief himself.
675. DNB text, December 10, 1940.
676. Without this treaty, however, it is highly likely that the Empire would

- have fallen apart in 1648 and that it would not have endured until 1806. See above, 1938, note 367.
677. In his traditional January 30 address in 1941, Hitler proclaimed: "... are these Englishmen truly so conceited as to believe that I have any sort of inferiority complex regarding England?" See below, speech of January 30, 1941.
678. It is possible that the English were surprised by Hitler only in that he did not even attempt a landing on the British mainland.
679. See above, September 19, 1939.
680. Allusion to a phrase pronounced by Chamberlain on April 5, 1940, claiming that Hitler had obviously "missed the bus." DNB report of April 6, 1940.
681. These "comparatively small losses" by Germany were to greatly increase in the course of the war. See below, March 21, 1943.
682. Despite Hitler's grandiose proclamations, he could not change the fact that the Allies still had additional resources and ammunition in far greater quantities than Germany.
683. See above, September 4, 1940.
684. German Luftwaffe forces had carried out this air raid on May 10, 1940. See above, note 487.
685. This was yet another attempt to ridicule Churchill's declaration that the Allies would be the ones to determine the end of the war. See above, October 1, 1939.
686. If all that Hitler could muster was hope that "the hour of peace will come someday," this bore bad tidings to those yearning for a swift end to the senseless slaughter.
687. In a speech in April 1941, Hitler proclaimed: "... 'capitulation' and all it means is submission to the will of another." See below, April 29, 1941 and note 429. See also above, 1939, note 940.
688. The events of July 20, 1944 would prove to the world the depth of these "rifts."
689. It is not clear what poet Hitler is referring to in this instance, nor whether he was talking in a more general manner.
690. While Hitler had concrete plans for the "peace" he desired to fashion "later," and realized that he had to bring the war to an end first, he revealed to none precisely how he planned to go about it.
691. DNB note, December 12, 1940. Born 1890 in Rehau, Karl Heinrich Bodenschatz had already served as Göring's adjutant in the First World War. Both men had formed part of Manfred von Richthofen's Squadron. In 1933, Bodenschatz was promoted to Göring's chief adjutant, chief of the Ministry, and liaison officer to Hitler.
692. Report in VB, No. 347, December 12, 1940.
693. Ibid.
694. DNB text, December 12, 1940.
695. Published in DGFP, D, XI, no. 511, pp. 867 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 81 ff. The code name "Operation Marita" was apparently derived from the river Maritza, the border between Bulgaria and Greece.

696. This no doubt meant deployment of these units in an assault on Russia.
697. DGFP, D, XI, no. 532, pp. 899 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 84 ff. Evidently Hitler had chosen the code name "Barbarossa," since he intended, like the German Emperor Frederick I in the 12th century, to launch a "crusade" to the East, though this time against the "red plague." Frederick's nickname "Barbarossa" literally meant "red beard."
698. On February 28, 1945, Hitler would blame Mussolini's Greek adventure for the failure of the Russian campaign. This had forced Hitler to deploy troops to Greece and allegedly led to the belated launching of the attack on Russia on June 22, 1941. The assault had been initially scheduled for late May 1941. However, in reality, the Italian campaign into Greece played no role in the rescheduling of the attack on Russia. See below, April 30, 1941.
699. Cf. talks between Hitler and Darlan, see below, December 26, 1940. Jean François Darlan, born 1881 in Nerac, murdered December 24, 1942 in Algiers; the Admiral served repeatedly as either French Premier or Foreign Minister in the years 1940 to 1942.
700. DNB report, December 18, 1940. Editor's note: Phonographic records of nearly the entire speech, which has not been published to date, have been preserved on disc records at the Bundesarchiv, BA, Koblenz (Le 4 EW 65 862-65 879; record no. 65 874 is missing) and on tape records at the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, DRA, Frankfurt am Main, No. 52.8884. Translation according to the records of the BA and the German transcription by the DRA. The editor thanks Dr. Hans-Dieter Kreikamp, BA, Dr. Rainer Hofmann, BA/Tonarchiv, and Walter Roller, DRA, for their help.
701. Reference to the wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870-71.
702. One man tried to "avoid" this end with unequalled tenacity: Hitler who hung on to his own life to the last minute.
703. DNB report, December 19, 1940.
704. See above, December 21, 1939 and note 1283.
705. Reports on the speeches and tours from December 23 to 26, 1940, in VB, No. 362, December 27, 1940. Cf. also DNB special report, December 26, 1940.
706. Report on the talk in Schmidt, p. 524.
707. According to a remarkable error in the *Völkischer Beobachter's* rendition, Hitler began this speech with "What my fate shall be . . ." and not with "What your fate shall be . . ." Original quotation from the author's notes.
708. Report in VB, No. 363, December 28, 1940.
709. Verbatim account of the speech in IMT, 170-C.
710. Published in AFR, Vol. III, pp. 17 ff.
711. Sidi Barani is a town on the Egyptian coast at a distance of approximately 60 kilometers from the Libyan border.
712. See above, August 29, 1939 and Weizsäcker p. 258.

HITLER

Speeches and Proclamations

VOLUME IV

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Volume I 1932-1934
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MAX DOMARUS

HITLER

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1932–1945

and

Commentary by a Contemporary

THE CHRONICLE OF A DICTATORSHIP

VOLUME FOUR
The Years 1941 to 1945



BOLCHAZY-CARDUCCI PUBLISHERS

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1932-1945

AND COMMENTARY BY A CONTEMPORARY
VOLUME IV: THE YEARS 1941-1945

GENERAL EDITOR
LADISLAUS J. BOLCHAZY

in collaboration with
WOLFGANG DOMARUS
JAMES T. McDONOUGH, JR.
ZAIDA MIKELADZE
ALBERT M. DEVINE
PATRICK ROMANE
GABBY HUEBNER

TPOGRAPHY BY
DOMINIC ROBERTI

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Abbreviations

A	= Archiv
AFR	= American Foreign Relations (Documents 1939-1945)
BA	= Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
BDM	= Bund Deutscher Mädel
BVP	= Bayerische Volkspartei (Bavarian People's Party)
DAF	= Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front)
DBrFP	= Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1918-1939
DGFP	= Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945
DLV	= Deutscher Luftsportverband (German Air Sports Association)
DNB	= Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (German News Bureau)
DNVP	= Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party)
DVP	= Deutsche Volkspartei (German People's Party) Emergency Relief Organization)
FHQu	= Führer Hauptquartier (Führer Headquarters)
G.Kdos.	= Geheime Kommandosache (Top Secret, Military)
Gestapo	= Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
H	= Heft (issue, of serial publication)
HJ	= Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
HKL	= Hauptkampflinie (Main Front Line)
Hqu	= Hauptquartier (headquarters)
HStA	= Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich (Head State Archive, Munich)
HVBL	= Heeresverordnungsblatt (Army Decree Gazette)
IMT	= International Military Tribunal, 1945-1949
KdF	= Kraft durch Freude ("Strength through joy")
KPD	= Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
NRK	= Neue Reichskanzlei (New Reich Chancellery)

Abbreviations

NS	= Nationalsozialistisch (National Socialist)
NSBO	= Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation (National Socialist Factory Cell Organization)
NSD	= Nationalsozialistische(r) Deutsche(r) (German National Socialist)
NSDAP	= Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Worker's Party)
NSDFB	= Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpferbund, Stahlhelm (National Socialist German Front-Line Soldiers' Association)
NSFK	= Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps (National Socialist Air Corps)
NSK	= Nationalsozialistische Parteikorrespondenz (National Socialist Party News Agency)
NSKK	= Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (National Socialist Motorized Corps)
NSV	= Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare Organization)
OKH	= Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKL	= Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (High Command of the Luftwaffe)
OKM	= Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine (High Command of the War Navy)
OKW	= Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
Pg	= Parteigenosse (Party comrade)
PL	= Politischer Leiter (Political leader)
PO	= Politische Organisation (Political organization)
RAD	= Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labor Service)
RGBI	= Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette)
RK	= Reichskanzlei (Reich Chancellery)
RM	= Reichsmark
RSHA	= Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Central Security Office)
SA	= Sturmabteilung (Nazi storm troops; brown shirts)
SD	= Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service, the SS intelligence agency)
SPD	= Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SS	= Schutzstaffel (Nazi elite guard; black shirts)
STA	= Staatsarchiv (State Archive)
TN	= Technische Nothilfe (Technical
TU	= Telegraphenunion (Telegraph Union)
VB	= <i>Völkischer Beobachter</i> (Nationalist Observer)
WHW	= Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Organization)
WTB	= Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro (Wolff's Telegraph Bureau)

THE YEAR 1941

Major Events in Summary

"The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history," declared Hitler in his New Year's order to the Wehrmacht.¹ Twelve months ago, on the occasion of the New Year, he had said: "May 1940 be decisive!"² What were the German Wehrmacht and the German people supposed to understand as the completion "of the greatest victory"? Earlier, "the greatest victory" was the defeat of France. At any rate, on June 24, 1940, Hitler announced "the most glorious victory of all times."³

If the greatest victory was still to be completed, it should have implied the defeat of England. But Hitler implied something different; in particular, the defeat of Russia! In this way, England would have automatically become ready for peace and friendship. Hitler remained almost alone with this theory. There was not a single more or less sensible person to be found in the whole country that would, in that situation in Germany and in the middle of the war against England, have wished to have any military disagreements with the Soviet Union, and would have supported it or at least considered it a necessary evil. Even the members of the party, who had been fed for years with anti-Bolshevik and anti-Russian slogans, knew that a war against Russia would by no means improve Germany's prospects for victory, but would most probably make them worse as a result of opening a new front. They considered Hitler's German-Russian settlement of 1939 as a deed of genius, and they based their new plans for victory on it. On September 9, 1939, Göring had confirmed them in these convictions.⁴ It is known that military men had been dreaming of German-Russian cooperation since World War I. There were close and friendly relationships between the Army of the Reich and the Red Army. Many German high-ranking officers had acquired their knowledge of modern weapons in Russian military schools and training grounds.

If Hitler's generals fulfilled Hitler's orders and without any special objections prepared the plans of the Russian campaign, they weren't doing it sincerely; on the contrary, they hoped that it would be another

of Hitler's tricks, like the operations *Sealion* and *Felix*, with the aim of undertaking a distracting maneuver to disguise other plans. Of all the reasons that Hitler set forth in favor of war against Russia, the generals accepted only one argument: something must be done to engage the German army, because an army that has nothing to do is subject to demoralization, as happened to the "Blue Jackets" in 1918.⁵

As has already been mentioned, on December 27, 1940, Raeder expressed "quite great doubts" concerning the campaign against Russia before the defeat of England.⁶ On another occasion, Göring had tried in vain to talk Hitler out of that undertaking, basing himself on Hitler's own words "the second front."⁷ Ribbentrop, who had been imbued with sympathy toward the Russians after his visit to Moscow, met them like "old party comrades" and might have wished anything but war against Russia. Hess, who had known Hitler for decades and was able better than anyone else to trace the tendency of his decline, was determined to disappear from Germany before the campaign against Russia started.

Halder, Chief of Hitler's General Headquarters, who was to work out the plan of hostilities against Russia, said after World War II that he had considered that project insanity.

Wherever one glanced in Germany, Hitler's idea of the campaign against Russia was faced disconcertedly and coldly by everyone, except one, and only one, man: Herr von Papen! Hitler's statements about Bolshevik dangers impressed him as much as they had in 1933.

Von Papen, for his part, tried to support Hitler in his attitude against Russia, presenting as dangerous every concession in the Bulgaria-Turkey case, and told him in the middle of November 1940:

"After all, didn't we determine on January 30, 1933, to protect Germany and thus the whole of Europe from Bolshevism?"⁸

These words certainly served Hitler's purpose. They confirmed the effectiveness of his old trick about the Bolshevik danger. If it was still possible to impress that idea upon von Papen, a representative of the rigid, conservative, aristocratic stratum of Germany, then it should certainly impress similarly rigid Englishmen. They too would start worshipping him if he attacked Bolshevik Russia, as once did von Papen, Hindenburg, Hugenberg, and others, when he exterminated the German Communists. The savior and master of Germany will rise to become the Savior and Master of the whole of Europe and the whole world!

Von Papen fully shared Hitler's idea that war against Russia was the best means of achieving peace and friendship with England. When on June

22, 1941, the German army launched hostilities against Russia, von Papen made an attempt, through intermediaries, to influence the British ambassador in Ankara, proposing “to bury the European discords and to confront jointly the power whose program is the extermination of the West.”⁹

Von Papen, just like Hitler, could hardly realize that the English were absolutely immune to the horrors of Bolshevism, and that on June 22, 1941, Churchill would declare: “We have but one aim and one single, irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi régime. From this nothing will turn us—nothing.”

Such was the situation in which Hitler found himself after September 3, 1939, at 11 o’clock, and which wouldn’t change a bit up to his death on April 30, 1945, even if he had used every possible evasion.

It is therefore out of place to ask whether Hitler’s fate might have taken a different turn if he hadn’t attacked Russia, if he had defeated her, or if he had induced Russia to join in Germany’s campaign against England.

In each of these three cases, Hitler’s fate would have been exactly the same, though—at any rate, the war would certainly have lasted longer. But Hitler would never have managed to resist for long the joint pressure of the Anglo-American world, even if he had been able to rely not only on Russia’s friendly assistance, but also on her active military support. His end had been predestined since September 3, 1939, and he could but slow it down or speed it up. And he obviously speeded it up when he decided to attack Russia.

His decision can be considered as incomprehensible, taking into account all the historically well-known defeats suffered by Charles XII and Napoleon I, taking into account the war that had become fateful for Germany on its two fronts in World War I, a policy which was willfully renewed by Hitler. That decision of his is explained by Germany’s centuries-old urge to push east for conquest and expansion. One may point out that Hitler, like Napoleon, also failed to deal with the British Navy, that, throughout the whole war-history of Germany, the Germans had hardly ever prepared for and even more rarely risked an attempt at any naval operations, and, finally, that the campaign, against Russia seemed both to Napoleon and to Hitler, with their purely Continental, one-sided military thinking, to be an easy undertaking, a

convenient plundering raid that would free them from the obligation to admit their weakness in respect to England.

All those factors doubtlessly played a certain role in generating Hitler's Russian adventures. But one shouldn't forget one absolutely decisive circumstance: Hitler had become a prisoner of his own thesis of 1919, which declared: Conquest of new territories in the east—that means war against Russia, and, with that purpose, friendship with England and Italy, Germany's alleged allies in her push to the east.

Hitler managed to arrange and maintain friendship with Italy, in spite of some difficulties. However, he failed to become friendly with England. What else could he do, except to implement his third thesis, war against Russia, in order to realize miraculously, as a sort of reward, the second thesis, friendship with England?

Indeed, Hitler felt rather uneasy about his Russian campaign. All the doubts expressed by his subordinates—two fronts, the unsolved problem of England, the United States, Napoleon's fate, a vast territory that would be hard to keep under control even in case of success—all these questions worried him as well, and after the war against Russia had begun, he said: "Every such step opens a door behind which a mystery lies hidden, and only posterity knows exactly how it came about and what happened."¹⁰

During a long and hard winter, Hitler was almost constantly engaged in preparation for Operation Barbarossa, in measures that couldn't remain hidden from the German public. There were not only the great transfer of the troops to East Prussia, to the provinces of Poland and Slovakia, the constant training of reservists, and so on, but also the formation of numerous motorized columns that moved all over Germany and turned even small towns and villages into garrisons and sources of supply. What was the destination of these columns that were being equipped with the help of all the automobile repair-shops of Germany? Clearly not England! The action was conducted under the abbreviations STI (probably, the letters stood for SOWJETUNION, Soviet Union). This action, STI, worried the population more than any other rumors, and the party functionaries themselves did not know what they were to say. Was it possible that Hitler was planning such a mad undertaking as an invasion of Russia? Finally an explanation was found which, later on, nevertheless turned out to be false. The letters STI must have stood for "Syria, Turkey, Iraq," so it meant a relatively

harmless, bloodless action of eliminating English influence in the Near East!

The party leaders took ever further steps to calm down not only the people, but also themselves. They would declare quite seriously that Russia was going soon, of her own good will, to cede the Ukraine to Germany. Realizing that Russia had too much land and Germany had too little, Russia, as a token of German-Russian friendship, proclaimed herself ready for that step, which might be compensated later and elsewhere from British colonial properties. These ideas may seem funny or unbelievable today, but at that time they were expressed with a confident tone and showed the confusion reigning in party circles. Little Switzerland might just as well have demanded from the great Reich to cede, for instance, Allgäu.

Before Hitler could start his Operation Barbarossa,¹¹ he had to clean up the Balkans and liquidate his friend Mussolini's Greek adventures. At the end of February he made King Boris give his consent to German entry into Bulgaria, and on March 1 Boris managed to join the Tripartite Pact.

On March 25, in Vienna, the Pact was signed by representatives of the Yugoslav government. But Hitler wasn't destined to rejoice for long over it. On March 27, the Zvetkovitch government was overthrown. Prince Regent Paul was replaced by the young King Peter.

Hitler understood at once what that revolt meant and decided instantly to crush Yugoslavia. On April 6, German troops attacked Yugoslavia and Greece without warning; German aircraft bombarded Belgrade.

This campaign in the Balkans lasted only a few weeks. On May 4, Hitler could once more declare victory in front of the Reichstag. On May 10, Hess secretly fled to England and Hitler made a controversial announcement about that embarrassing incident.

On May 20, Hitler launched an exceedingly pointless attack on the island of Crete with the help of airborne divisions. The operation lasted until June 1 and resulted in disproportionately heavy losses.

On May 27, the English sank the German battleship *Bismarck*, which had ventured to attack British naval forces in the Atlantic Ocean.

Early in June, a revolt in Iraq supported by Germany collapsed, and once again the English became masters of the situation more than ever. In the meantime, American troops occupied Greenland.

Everything began on June 22: a powerful attack extending from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea began. It was the same date on which Napoleon had attacked Russia, but Hitler had not the slightest idea of that. He chose the day because it was Sunday, and the attack could advance with particular suddenness.

A few weeks later, it already became clear that Hitler's prognoses about the nature and duration of the war had been wrong. In spite of the brutality of the combat operations, the armies failed to deal with the "primitive" Russians. Even though hundreds of thousands of prisoners were taken and vast territories were captured, it didn't help achieve the cherished goal—to conquer Leningrad or Moscow. In the Ukraine and the Crimea, they also advanced more slowly than had been envisaged. August came, then September, yet no capitulation of Russia presented itself. Gradually, Hitler found himself in the situation he had had with England, and, in the end, he had to insist that the war against Russia was won, although the facts clearly proclaimed the opposite.

On October 3, in a speech in Berlin, he said: "I am saying this today because I can say today that the enemy is already broken and shall never rise again."¹² A day before, in spite of the onset of a cold spell, Hitler had given orders to start a new offensive toward Moscow, "the last, great blow" which was to destroy the enemy before winter set in.¹³

But November came, then December, and the German troops hadn't yet conquered Moscow. On the contrary, the Russians started an offensive from Moscow and threw the exhausted and frozen Germans back to the west. On the Black Sea, too, the Russian troops started an offensive towards Taganrog.

On the night of December 8, Hitler sat worried in his armchair when he received the news of the Japanese air raid upon Pearl Harbor. He jumped up as if electrified and decided that it was a turning point of destiny. He urgently convened a meeting of the Reichstag, and, on December 11, passports were handed to the American envoy "in accordance with the terms of the Tripartite Pact." It was the only formal declaration of war by Hitler, and it was meant particularly for the United States of America.

So ended the year 1941—which, according to Hitler's words, was to bring "the completion of the greatest victory in German history"—with a catastrophic situation in the political and military spheres. Germany found herself in a state of war against nearly everyone, at least against

the most powerful states of the world. Her military forces were dispersed and scattered over a vast territory.

Of course, now it was necessary to find a scapegoat on whom to blame all Hitler's failures, and it was the commander in chief of the army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. Hitler dismissed him on December 19 on the ground of a "heart condition," and took up the duties of commander in chief of the army himself. As during every other crisis of the past—the Pfeffer-“Osaf” crisis of 1930, the Strasser crisis of 1932, the Blomberg crisis of 1938—Hitler used this opportunity to strengthen his full power. At last, he could be in command of his troops alone. He had been angry with von Brauchitsch when the latter, in the course of the western campaigns, gave orders to some divisions that differed from what the Supreme Commander in Chief had wished.¹⁴ He didn't want any advisers or critics: nobody who would understand things better than he! It wasn't by chance that he had said:

“I have no experts! My own head is always quite enough for me! I don't need any brain trust to support me!”¹⁵

January 1, 1941

Report and Commentary

1

Hitler issued the following order of the day (*Tagesbefehl*) to the Wehrmacht at the beginning of 1941:¹⁶

Berlin, January 1, 1941

Soldiers!

In the war year 1940, the National Socialist Wehrmacht of the Greater German Reich has secured glorious victories of unique greatness. With unprecedented daring, it has defeated the enemy on land, at sea, and in the air. All tasks which I was forced to place before you, you fulfilled with your heroism and your soldierly expertise. The power of your arms secured the victory over the fighting forces of our enemy. Your proud attitude and exemplary discipline demoralized the occupied territories excellently.

And so, thanks to your soldiership, after a few months of struggle with an impact of world-historic importance, success was bestowed retrospectively on the futile heroic struggle of the German Wehrmacht in the World War, and, finally, the shame of defeat back then in the forest of Compiègne has been eliminated.

As your supreme commander, I thank you, soldiers of the army, navy, and Luftwaffe, for your unrivaled accomplishments.

I also thank you in the name of the entire German Volk.

We honor our comrades who had to give their lives in this struggle for the future of our Volk. We likewise honor the valiant soldiers of our ally, Fascist Italy.

It is the will of the democratic warmongers and their Jewish-capitalist masterminds that this war should go on. The representatives of a crumbling world believe they can achieve in the year 1941 what they failed to obtain in the past. We are ready. Armed as never before, we stand on the threshold of the new year. I know every single one of you will do his duty.

The Lord God will not abandon those who, with a valiant heart, are determined to help themselves in view of the threats of the whole world. Soldiers of the National Socialist Wehrmacht of the Greater German Reich!

The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history.

Adolf Hitler

January 1, 1941

The New Year's Proclamation began with the following words:¹⁷

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

A momentous year in German history has come to an end. The enormous uniqueness of the events and their revolutionary significance for the future development of mankind will be fully acknowledged only by later generations. We who live the history of this time cannot but help feel that the workings of Providence are stronger than the intentions and the will of individuals. The gods not only strike him with blindness whom they wish to destroy, but they also help him whom Providence calls upon to strive for goals far from his original desire.

This New Year's Proclamation was extraordinarily lengthy. Hitler reiterated the history of the period leading up to the war, then spoke of the conquest of Poland, once more underlining that it had taken only "eighteen days." Finally, he turned to the events of 1940: the victories in Norway, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and France. He emphasized: "The year 1940 has brought about decisions on a scale and at a pace unknown to the history of nations."

Subsequently, he scoffed at the British troops, declaring the following:

When British propagandists try to make the situation look as though France needlessly stopped fighting, then all one can say to this claim is that the first units which stopped fighting were British divisions. From the moment we attacked in the west, the British army had just one thought: to evacuate the continent speedily and to assure the necessary cover by the Dutch, the Belgians, and the French. Just as they regarded the Norwegian army as a colonial force for their retreat a few weeks before, so now with their allies in France and Belgium. When the French government asked for peace, there were no more French troops, and, above all, there had not been English ones for a long time.

Once Hitler had described how, after the campaign in the west, he had again approached England with the request to end this "senseless war," he threatened the English rulers with ultimate destruction. He would destroy them just as he had destroyed "certain circles" at home. He would take them severely to task—this was his "relentless decision."

Thus, the war will be continued until the destruction of the responsible elements! The German Wehrmacht has proved that it is good enough. That it will be better yet in the coming months is our resolve. This resolve will be realized with zealous thoroughness and untiring diligence.

The year 1941 will see the German army, the German navy and Luftwaffe step up enormously reinforced and with improved equipment. The last of the

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war criminals will collapse under its blows, and thus the prerequisites for a true understanding among nations will be created.

National Socialists! You know the history of our struggle at home. Here, too, certain circles had to be destroyed first, before true cooperation among the people in our country could begin. Regrettably, it is no different abroad. The war profiteers must be eliminated, they who for decades have introduced restlessness into this world and have plunged nations into crisis after crisis.

It is our relentless decision (*unerbittlicher Entschluss*) to sit in judgment upon them, so that Europe can find its peace of mind again. Whatever may happen, Germany will take the necessary steps to reach this goal with bold determination. Any power which dines with these democrats will die of doing so. If Mr. Churchill and his international democratic comrades today declare that they are defending their world, and that their world cannot coexist with ours, then this is their own bad luck. The German world, as well as the Italian world, has overcome the age of the privileges of a few plutocratic capitalists and has replaced it with the age of the people. If Mr. Churchill and his appendage now declare that they cannot live in such a world, then they will not destroy the German world as a result, but instead, sooner or later, their own leaders will fall and thus give the people their freedom.

In the struggle of plutocratic privilege against the National Socialist people's rights (*Volksrechte*), the latter will succeed! With this belief, we enter the year 1941.

Since early June of this [*sic*] year, Fascist Italy stands at our side. It is now as determined as we are to take up the struggle and to see it through, the struggle which an obtuse democratic upper class has taken care to explain, especially to the Italian people. Their struggle is our struggle, their hopes are ours. The belief of the warmongers that they can change the outcome of this struggle through individual action is childish. Mr. Churchill has already secured a great number of so-called victories which proved to be failures in the end. After all, Mr. Churchill was the man who invented unrestricted air warfare as the great secret weapon of British victory.

For three-and-a-half months, this criminal had German cities bombed in nightly raids, had firebombs dropped on country villages, and—as the inhabitants of the capital of the Reich know—had singled out hospitals as targets. That the German Wehrmacht did not reply to this provocation reinforced the belief in the brain of this man that he had finally discovered a method in which Germany was inferior, and to which the Wehrmacht had nothing to give by way of answer. I watched this human cruelty, which militarily made no sense, for three months. However, I warned time and time again that one day there would be retribution.

While the preceding months had made clear that the Luftwaffe was incapable of defeating the Royal Air Force or realizing the threat of “retribution,” Hitler still maintained that for every British bomb “ten or, if necessary, a hundred” German bombs would be dropped in return.

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The democratic arsonists had only their familiar laughter left for these warnings. They spoke of a "lovely war," which made one "cheerful," and on which one "could only be congratulated." In detail, they described the effect of their bombs on the German population, on the German economy, and so forth. Now, the only effect of these attacks was the increasing embitterment of the German Volk; the hope that one day there would be retribution; the decision of the leadership to break with this unilateral conduct of the war. In the month of May, England started its attacks on the city of Freiburg.¹⁸ In the months since, British warmongers have scoffed at Germany's inability to do something similar. Since mid-September, [however,] they have probably realized that it was on humanitarian grounds that we refrained for so long from replying to this crime à la Churchill (*Churchillschen Verbrechen*). Now, however, this war will be pursued to the bitter end: that is, until the criminals responsible for it have been eliminated.

And this is not just empty talk—we are deadly serious when we say that for every bomb ten or, if necessary, a hundred will be dropped in return. Today, temporarily, they may still talk of "a reversal in the fortunes of war" for reasons of propaganda, as they have done so many times before. However, they should not forget one thing: fortune will not win the battle in this war; ultimately, justice will win.

And justice is on the side of those nations that fight for their threatened existence. And this struggle for existence will spur these nations on to the most tremendous accomplishments in world history. If profit is the driving force for production in the democracies—a profit that industrialists, bankers, and corrupt politicians pocket—then the driving force in National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy is the realization by millions of laborers that, in this war, it is *they* who are being fought against. They realize that the democracies, if they should ever win, would rage with the full capitalist cruelty, that cruelty of which only those are capable whose only god is gold, who know no human sentiments other than their obsession with profit, and who are ready to sacrifice all noble thought to this profit instinct without hesitation.

National Socialist Germany, Fascist Italy, and allied Japan know that what is at stake in this war is not a form of government. It is not a question of some type of international structure for the future, but it is a question of whether this world belongs only to certain people and not also to others.

An American politician coined the clever saying that, basically, this struggle is nothing other than an attempt by the have-nots to obtain something. That's all right with us. While the outside world is setting about to steal from the have-nots the little that they possess, we confront the world of ownership with the decision to fight for the human rights of the have-nots and to secure for them that share in life to which these rights entitle them.

This struggle is not an attack on the rights of other nations, but on the arrogance and avarice of a narrow capitalist upper class, one which refuses to acknowledge that the days are over when gold ruled the world, and that, by contrast, a future is dawning when the people will be the determining force in the life of a nation.

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It was this realization that lent wings to the National Socialist armies last year. And it will also help them triumph in the coming year. By fighting for the happiness of all people, we believe we most deserve the blessings of Providence. Until now, the Lord God has approved our struggle. If we perform our duties loyally and bravely, then He will not forsake us in the future either!

Adolf Hitler

This last sentence was not without qualification: should the Lord God no longer accord His blessings to the struggle, then this would be because the Germans had not “loyally and bravely” performed their duties!

Due to the war, the New Year’s reception of the diplomatic corps was canceled. Hitler sent the following telegram to his friend Mussolini:¹⁹

As we begin this new year, I think of you, Duce, in heartfelt solidarity. The coming year will see National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy fight to the final defeat of the enemy with unshakable faith and iron determination. In this spirit, I send you my greetings, Duce.

Adolf Hitler

It was further made public that a “heartfelt” exchange of telegrams between Hitler and King Victor Emmanuel III had taken place.²⁰

At the beginning of the new year, Hitler also wrote a long letter to the Duce, giving a general overview of the situation.²¹ Ciano summarized the letter in the following words:

The Führer is confident about the future prospects of the war, but he thinks that many decisions are still necessary and he enumerates them with his usual precision.

On January 7, Hitler sent Gauleiter Wächtler a telegram from the Obersalzberg, congratulating him on his fiftieth birthday.²² Wächtler also received the Führer’s picture in a silver frame.

On January 8 and 9, there were conferences at the Berghof, which Raeder, Keitel, Jodl, and other officers attended.²³ Once again, Hitler tried to whet their appetite for the campaign in Russia. Among other things, he declared the following:

Russia’s position in the event of Germany’s forthcoming entry into Bulgaria is not yet clear. Russia needs Bulgaria as access to the Bosphorus. England is supported by hope in the United States and Russia.

If the United States and Russia enter the war, [it will create] a very great burden for our military. So, any possibility of such a threat must be precluded from the start. Having eliminated the threat from Russia, we will be able to

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continue the war against England under quite acceptable conditions. The break-up of Russia would be a great relief for the United States.

Hitler appeared extraordinarily optimistic, as Raeder noted the following:

The Führer is absolutely convinced that the situation in Europe can no longer take an unfavorable turn for Germany, even if we should lose the whole of North Africa.

The English can win the war only if they strike us on the Continent. The Führer considers that absolutely impossible.

This was also the tenor of the talks on January 9. In the course of an afternoon meeting, Hitler gave the following assessment of the situation:

[He says that] a landing in England would be possible only if we have achieved full supremacy in the air, and in England a certain paralysis would set in. The purpose of the English war is, in the long run, to crush Germany on the Continent. But their own forces are insufficient. The British Navy is weaker than ever as a result of engaging in battles in two theaters of war operations located at a great distance from each other; its strengthening to the extent needed is impossible. For the British Air Force, the existing shortage of its supply of raw materials, especially aluminum, owing to canceled imports, and the effect of the German air and naval war on English industry have become painfully obvious; the aircraft industry itself has been so damaged that the number of airplanes produced has not been increased, but reduced. This damage must be continued by the German Air Force even more regularly than up to now. As far as the British troops are concerned, it is absolutely out of the question to consider them as an invading army. The only thing that supports England is her hope in the United States and Soviet Russia,²⁴ because in time the extermination of the English motherland is inevitable. However, England hopes to hang on until a great Continental bloc is brought down upon Germany. The diplomatic preparations for this are clearly recognizable.

[He says that] Stalin, the master of Russia, has a shrewd head. He doesn't take an open stand against Germany; however, one should expect that he would increasingly create troubles in a difficult situation for Germany. He is willing to inherit an impoverished Europe; he has all the necessary prerequisites for that, and he is full of enthusiasm to push to the west. He is well aware of the fact that after Germany's absolute victory, the Soviet Union's position will become extremely difficult.

[He says that] the possibility of Russian intervention in the war bolsters the English. They will give up this contest only when their Continental hope dies out.

He doesn't believe that the English will be "recklessly brave"; if they see that there is no possibility of victory, they will stop. So, if they lose the war,

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they will have no power left to keep their empire together. Should they persist and succeed in deploying forty to fifty divisions, and if the United States and Russia help them, then a very serious situation would arise for Germany. It must not happen.

So far, he would always act on the principle of smashing the most important positions of the enemy in order to take the next step. Therefore, Russia must be crushed. Then either the English would surrender, or Germany would continue the struggle in favorable conditions for Germany. Besides, the smashing of Russia would enable Japan to turn itself with all its strength against the United States. This would prevent the latter from joining in the war.

On January 10, a further German-Russian economic agreement was signed. The Russians did their utmost to satisfy the German demands for the delivery of goods.

On the Obersalzberg the next day, Hitler signed Directive No. 22:²⁵

The situation in the Mediterranean area, where England is engaging her superior forces in battle against our allies, requires strategic, political, and psychological support from Germany.

Tripolitania must be secured; the danger of a collapse of the Albanian front will be eliminated. In addition, Army Group Cavallero²⁶ must be enabled to go on the offensive from Albania in connection with further operations of the Twelfth Army.

Hence, I order the following: [technical details follow]

On January 20, the two operations received the code names "Sunflower" (*Sonnenblume*), on account of the hot climate in North Africa, and "Alpine Violet" (*Alpenveilchen*), since a division of mountain troops was involved in the taking of mountainous Albania.²⁷

On January 12, Hitler, who remained at the Führer headquarters, which was now located at the Berghof, sent an honorific diploma to the Bavarian general, Theodor von Bomhard, on his hundredth birthday. Colonel General Halder personally presented the document to the general in Prien. It read as follows:²⁸

Führer Headquarters, January 12, 1941

In the name of the German Volk: I award the right to wear the uniform of Artillery Regiment 7 with the insignia of the rank of general to the designated Artillery General von Bomhard, who last served as commander of the Fourth Bavarian Infantry Division.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

January 20, 1941

On the same day, Göring received a congratulatory telegram from Hitler on his forty-eighth birthday, the contents of which were not made public.²⁹

In Tokyo, the German ambassador, Ott, presented the Japanese foreign minister Matsuoka with the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.³⁰

On January 13, Hitler received King Boris of Bulgaria at the Berghof.³¹

On January 16, Hitler ordered a wreath to be placed on the coffin of an old party comrade, Emil Gansser, in Berlin-Wilmersdorf.³²

On January 19, a two-day meeting between Hitler and Mussolini began in Salzburg at the Berghof. Several diplomatic maneuvers had been necessary to induce Mussolini to appear before Hitler, as he feared Hitler's reaction to the Italian defeats in Albania and North Africa.³³

As the Italian's train reached the small station Puch near Salzburg on January 19, Hitler appeared most congenial and extended a warm welcome to the Duce. He neither reproached his "friend" for the miserable situation in which he found himself, nor did he express any sympathy for him. The first consultations began immediately after Mussolini's arrival. As the Duce told Ciano that day:³⁴

. . . he [Mussolini] found a very anti-Russian Hitler, loyal to us, and not too definite on what he intends to do in the future against Great Britain. In any case, it is no longer a question of landing in England. Hitler said that the undertaking would be extremely difficult and that if it failed the first time it could not be attempted again. Added to this there is the fact that while England now fears the loaded pistol of invasion, after a failure she would know that Germany holds only an empty pistol.

At the talks, Mussolini confessed to having encountered certain political difficulties at home. He spoke of the opposition stance whose leading advocate was Marshal Badoglio.³⁵ Hitler consoled him by saying that this was comparable to the Fritsch case in Germany.³⁶

Mussolini was content with the results of the various consultations, Ciano less so. However, Ciano also was very impressed by Hitler, as evident in his report on a conference with military experts on the afternoon of January 20:³⁷

Hitler talked for about two hours on his coming intervention in Greece; he dealt with the question primarily from a technical point of view, placing it in the general political context. I must admit that he does this with unusual mastery. Our military men are impressed.

January 28, 1941

In this “impressive” speech, Hitler ventured the following insights:³⁸

Russian response to our buildup in Romania has taken shape and will be dealt with as required. Russians always get impudent in times when nothing can be done to stop them (winter). I see no great danger coming from America, even if she enters the war. The greater [danger] is the massive giant Russia. While we have very favorable political and economic agreements with Russia, I place more reliance on my military force. As long as Stalin lives, there will presumably be no danger; he is intelligent and cautious. But once he dies, the Jews, who are now in the second and third tiers, will move back up to the first. Previously Russia would have been no danger at all, since on land they cannot threaten us. Now that we are in the age of air power, operations based in Russia and in the Mediterranean can transform the oil region of Romania into a field of smoking rubble. What is necessary is a mighty and very well supplied antiaircraft force, for a time may come in which the war can be pursued only with air force and navy.

The following communiqué was published on the German-Italian talks:³⁹

The Führer and the Duce engaged in an exhaustive exchange of views on the situation during a meeting in the presence of the foreign ministers of the Axis. The meeting took place in the spirit of the heartfelt friendship between the two heads of government and the close solidarity in battle of the German and Italian people. It resulted in complete agreement of both parties on all questions.

On January 22, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Schacht on his sixty-fourth birthday.⁴⁰

On January 27, the Hungarian foreign minister, Count Csáky, died in a hospital in Budapest. Hitler sent the following telegrams to his widow and to Horthy:⁴¹

On the death of your husband, whom I held in great esteem, I ask you, dear Countess, to accept my heartfelt sympathy.

Adolf Hitler

I ask Your Highness to accept my sincere sympathy on the death of His Excellency the royal Hungarian foreign minister Count Csáky.

Adolf Hitler

On January 28, Hitler decreed the partition of the Gau Silesia. The official explanation read that Gauleiter Joseph Wagner (Gau Southern Westphalia) was allegedly “overworked,” since he also had administered the Silesia region after the dismissal of its Gauleiter Brückner.⁴²

January 29, 1941

Hitler's decree read the following:⁴³

I

I decree the partition of the present Gau Silesia of the NSDAP into the Gau Upper Silesia (*Oberschlesien*) and the Gau Lower Silesia (*Unterschlesien*).

II

The Gau Upper Silesia spans the administrative districts Oppeln and Kattowitz (Katowice). The Gau Lower Silesia spans the administrative districts Breslau and Liegnitz (Legnica).

III

I appoint party comrade Karl Hanke Gauleiter for the Gau Lower Silesia and party comrade Fritz Bracht Gauleiter of Upper Silesia.

IV

The administration of the Gau Upper Silesia has its seat in Kattowitz. The administration of the Gau Lower Silesia has its seat in Breslau.

V

This decree comes into force immediately. The Reichsorganisationsleiter will decree implementing organizational regulations subject to the approval of my deputy.

Adolf Hitler

On the night of January 29, the Reich minister of justice, Dr. Franz Gürtner, died of a heart attack, following a short illness. Hitler sent his condolences to the widow in a handwritten note and ordered a state funeral.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, Gürtner's death meant a great loss for Hitler. This bourgeois jurist had shown particular aptitude at covering for Hitler's most outrageous violations of law and the constitution, declaring them lawful.⁴⁵ As a result, it took Hitler over a year and a half to appoint a successor,⁴⁶ although many National Socialist lawyers were eager to assume this office. However, Hitler could stand the lawyers in the party even less than the moderate bourgeois legal experts, because they always insisted on upholding the laws of the Third Reich, a course of action which he did not feel obliged to do. He felt that Reich minister and Reichsleiter of the so-called National Socialist-Rechtswahrerbund, Frank, was not a good choice for the job either. While Frank had few qualms about carrying out Hitler's extermination orders as governor general of Poland, he had angered Hitler by stating, at a jurists' conference in Munich, that mercy was a legal remedy. The servile, though pedantic, Roland Freisler⁴⁷ was likewise not considered. Instead,

January 30, 1941

Hitler accepted the bourgeois state secretary Schlegelberger⁴⁸ as interim administrator in the Reich ministry of justice.

On January 29, in the presence of Keitel, Hitler received the royal Hungarian minister Karl von Bartha.⁴⁹

On January 30, Hitler congratulated King Boris of Bulgaria on his forty-seventh birthday in a telegram.

He also wired his congratulations to Colonel von Stockhausen, who served as commander of the Infantry Regiment *Grossdeutschland*, on his fiftieth birthday.

In the customary telegram of the same day, Hitler awarded the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross⁵⁰ to the lieutenant colonel of the general staff of the Luftwaffe Harlinghausen.

On the anniversary of his taking power, Hitler received congratulatory telegrams from King Victor Emmanuel III, Mussolini, Franco, Antonescu, and Tiso. He sent the following telegrams in reply:⁵¹

With all my heart, I thank Your Majesty for the friendly congratulations on the eighth anniversary of the seizure of power. I join with these thanks my sincere best wishes for the future of Italy and for the well-being of Your Majesty.

Adolf Hitler

I thank you, Duce, for the friendly telegram which you sent me on the anniversary of the German uprising. Shoulder to shoulder with the friendly and allied Italian people, National Socialist Germany fights for a new Europe with firm determination and in the secure knowledge of ultimate victory.

In comradely solidarity,

Adolf Hitler

With all my heart, I thank Your Excellency for the congratulations you sent on the eighth anniversary of the seizure of power. I sincerely reciprocate with my best wishes for the prosperity of Spain.

Adolf Hitler

With all my heart, I thank Your Excellency for the telegram which I have just received and for the expressed willingness of the new Romania to cooperate in the establishment of a new order in Europe. I am convinced that the victory of the Axis powers will also bring peace and a new future to your country.

Adolf Hitler

I thank Your Excellency for the friendly telegram which you sent me on the anniversary of the seizure of power. I reciprocate your congratulations with my sincere best wishes for a happy future of the Slovak people.

Adolf Hitler

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The main attraction of the celebrations on the eighth anniversary of the seizure of power was Hitler's speech at the Sportpalast in Berlin. It began early, at 4:30 p.m., because of the already present danger of British air raids.

Hitler opened his speech with the following words:⁵²

My German Volksgenossen!

Changes of government occur frequently in history. There have been many such changes in the history of our own Volk. Surely, however, there has never been a change of government with such profound consequences as the one eight years ago. The situation of the Reich was desperate back then.

This was followed by a long "party narrative."⁵³ In describing his struggle against domestic opposition and against the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler strongly attacked England. He once again repeated his theory, known by now ad nauseam, on the identity of the British with the antisocial, narrow-minded capitalists and reactionaries whom he had been forced to fight in Germany. Actually, the British were responsible for the political methods he used: they had invented breach of contract and concentration camps. Hitler declared the following:

Concentration camps were not invented in Germany. The English invented them. They use these institutions to break the backbone of other peoples slowly, to wear their national resistance down and to dissolve it, in order to make them accept the British yoke (*britisches Joch*) of democracy.⁵⁴

The World War, which shook Europe from 1914 to 1918, was the willful product of British statesmanship. And, although the whole world was then mobilized against Germany, Germany was never actually vanquished. We can calmly state this today. I should not wish to criticize the past unless I have myself done a better job. Today, however, as a man who has done a better job, I can critically appraise the past and judge it. And I can only say: the success [*sic*] of the year 1918 is the exclusive result of a rare accumulation of personal incompetence in the leadership of our Volk, a unique accumulation which never before happened in history, nor will it repeat itself in the future—believe me!

And if the English today come and think that it is enough to insert the old propaganda player rolls of the year 1917–1918 in the phonograph, then all I can say is: they have forgotten nothing and, to their misfortune, they have not learned anything either! And that is how they differ from the German Volk. The German Volk has learned something since then and it has not forgotten anything either! We do not wish to be petty here. Promises have been broken before in history, but what happened in the years 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921 was no longer a broken promise, it was one broken promise after another!

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It [the struggle for power] was the greatest inner struggle ever in our history!

We had the same opponents, those who always confronted us abroad: a mixture of all internationalistically feeling, thinking, and acting persons from all countries. My Volksgenossen, you know the coalitions which faced us then, and I can say today: in this mental struggle, we have emerged as masters everywhere; since, after I was finally called to power, I came to power legally, under the Reich presidency of Field Marshal von Hindenburg, because of the strength of the movement which stood behind me.

That means the so-called National Socialist revolution vanquished democracy in a democracy with democracy!

As everywhere, I followed the path of instruction, education, and slow adaptation. For it was my pride to have brought about this revolution in Germany without a single glass pane shattering, a revolution which led to the greatest upheaval ever seen on earth. It did not destroy even the least of values, but, instead, slowly set things straight, set the course, until finally the great community has found its new form. That was our goal.

And it was the same in foreign policy. I stated my platform: elimination of Versailles. One should not be silly in the outside world today, should not pretend that I had only discovered this platform in the years 1933, 1935, or 1937. Instead of listening to the foolish talk of the emigrants (*Emigrantengeschwafel*), the gentlemen would have done well to read what I wrote; what I wrote over a thousand times. No man ever declared and wrote down more often what he wanted than I did. And, time and time again, I wrote: elimination of Versailles.

And when I came to power, I did not then say to myself as democratic politicians do: Never expect gratitude once you've served your purpose. Instead, I made the solemn resolve: I thank you, Lord God, for bringing me to where I can finally realize my platform.

And here, too, I did not want to realize this platform by force. Instead, I spoke, I spoke as much as a man can. My speeches before the Reichstag are evidence of this. No democratic statesman can swindle history from them. The offers which I made them [the English]! How often did I ask them to be reasonable and not to take from a great Volk the foundations of its life and existence! How often did I prove to them that this was not to their advantage, that it was senseless, and, yes, that it was to their detriment! The things I did over the years to ease the way to an understanding for them! Never would it have been necessary to enter into this arms race had the others not wanted it! I placed many proposals before them. However, every proposal which came from me sufficed to agitate a certain Jewish-internationalist, capitalist clique immediately, just as had been the case in Germany, my Volksgenossen, where any reasoned proposal from us National Socialists was rejected primarily because we had made it.

However, we had no reason to bow to this outside world; or do these English truly believe that I have some sort of inferiority complex about England . . . [the following words were drowned in applause]. They betrayed us

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with their swindle and a lie back then! But the British soldiers did not defeat us! And it does not look today as though things have changed.

It was clear to me that, if nothing could be achieved by means of voluntary discussion and negotiation in Geneva, we had to leave Geneva. Never in my life have I imposed on anyone. Whoever does not want to speak to me does not have to. I don't care!

We are eighty-five million Germans, and these Germans do not need that; they have a mighty historic past. They already had an empire when England was only a small island. And that for more than three hundred years.

After Hitler had vented his anger about his supposed feelings of inferiority to England, he went on to rail against "these small, plutocratic profiteers" and "old usurers" who refused to return the German colonies. He declared as follows:

For England these colonies are useless. It has forty million square kilometers [this forty-million figure consists mostly of the colonies]. What is it doing with them? Nothing at all. It is the avarice of old usurers, who do not want to give away what they possess. They are sick creatures. If they see that their neighbor has nothing to eat, they would still rather throw what they possess into the sea than give it away, even if they cannot use it themselves. They get ill at the thought that they could lose something. And I did not even ask for anything that belonged to the English. I asked only for what they robbed us of and stole from us in the years 1918 and 1919! Robbery and theft contrary to the solemn assurances of the American president Wilson! We did not ask anything of them, we did not make any demands. Again and again, I stretched my hand out to them, and, still, everything was in vain. The reasons are clear to us: for one, it is German unification as such. They hate this, our state, irrespective of what it looks like, whether it is imperial or National Socialist, democratic or authoritarian. That makes no difference to them. And second: above all, they hate the rise of this Reich.

And here lust for power abroad and base egoism at home join forces. When they say, "We can never come to an understanding with this world," then this world is the world of the awakening social conscience, with which they cannot come to an understanding. I can make only one response to these gentlemen on both sides of the ocean: the socialist world will be the victorious one in the end! The social conscience of all people will be roused. They can wage wars for their capitalist interests, but these wars themselves will ultimately pave the way for social upheaval among their people.

Now Hitler had reached a point at which he could try to make his audience, and himself, believe that a social revolt would take place in England, and thus that the war would come to an end by itself. He continued as follows:

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It is not possible in the long run to gear hundreds of millions of people to the interests of a few individuals. The common interest of mankind will gain the victory over the interests of these small, plutocratic profiteers!

Just a short while ago, they conclusively proved to us that our officers and generals are worthless because they are young and infected with National Socialist thinking, that is, they have some contact with the broad masses. Now events have shown where the better generals are, over there or here!

If this war lasts any longer, then this will be a great misfortune for England. They will get to see real action. And, one day, perhaps the English will send a commission over here in order to adopt our platform!

Well, if the English intended to “send a commission” anyway, why prepare a landing in England, or take Gibraltar, Malta, and Egypt? It was not really worth it, as the English would collapse on their own. They would come to beg Hitler to take power, as von Papen and von Hindenburg had done.

These rosy prospects spurred Hitler on. Mocking the English, he offered, in the event of an offensive, to evacuate the territory in question beforehand, so as to spare them the difficulties of a landing:

National Socialism will determine the coming millennia in German history, which would be unthinkable without it. It will fade away only when its political planks have become self-evident.

In looking back, I may say one thing: already the year that now lies behind us and the latter part of the previous year have practically decided the war.

I have read several times now that the English intend to launch a big offensive somewhere. I would like to ask that they tell me beforehand. I then would like to have the area evacuated. I would like to spare them the difficulties of a landing. And then we could introduce ourselves once again and discuss matters—and this in the only language they understand!

Now, they have their hopes and they must have their hopes. But what do they expect? We stand here on this continent, and no one can make us move away from where we stand!

We have established certain bases for ourselves and, when the hour comes, we are getting ready for the finishing blow. These gentlemen will note that we have made the best use of our time in the history of this year.

Hitler meant the attack on Russia when he spoke of “the finishing blow.” And he was not afraid of America either, boasting as follows:

What is it they are hoping for? Somebody else’s help? America’s?⁵⁵ I can only say one thing: we have provided for every eventuality from the start.

That the German Volk holds nothing against the American people is clear to everyone who is not purposefully engaged in distorting the truth. With the possible exception of Germans fighting for the freedom of the continent, Germany has never pursued any interests on the American continent!

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If the states of this continent now attempt to interfere in the European conflict, this will change the objective ever the more rapidly. Then Europe will defend itself!

One should not delude oneself on this topic. Whoever believes that he can help England should know one thing in any event: any ship, with or without escort, that comes in front of our torpedo tubes will be torpedoed!

We are in a war that we did not want. On the contrary! It is impossible to stretch out your hand more often than I did! If, however, they want this fight and aim to wipe out the German nation, they will get the surprise of their lives! They will not meet with the spent Germany of the World War; instead, they will find a Germany mobilized to the highest degree, fit for action, and determined to fight.

If others entertain different hopes, then I can only say that I do not understand them. They say Italy will defect. The gentlemen should not go about inventing revolts in Milan; instead, they should take care that none break out in their own countries! These states see the relationship between Germany and Italy in the light of their own relations with their friends. If one of those democracies helps another, it always asks for something in return: a base or something of the sort, and so forth, and then it occupies it. As an Italian squadron was moved to the Atlantic coast, English papers spoke of the Italians now meddling in our conduct of the war and claimed that, in the future, they would ask for a base on the Atlantic coast. Now that there are German squadrons on the coast of Sicily, they say that Germany will probably confiscate Sicily. May the gentlemen rest assured: these antics impress nobody in Germany and Italy. They merely show the pathological lack of wit of those people who dish up this stuff in England. And, above all, it shows that they have not understood the meaning of this war. It is this: where we can beat England, we will beat England!⁵⁶ And if they already regard the several failures of our partners as proof of their victory, then I just do not understand the English. Until now, they have always regarded their own failures as proof of their victory.

And the gentlemen may rest assured of this: the bill we will present will be for the total, and it will have to be paid at the end of the war; point for point, square kilometer for square kilometer.

And may these gentlemen also rest assured of one fact: the Duce and I, the two of us, are neither Jews, nor are we profiteers. When we shake hands, this is the handshake of two men of honor! And, I hope, this will dawn on these gentlemen and become clear to them in the course of this year.⁵⁷

Perhaps their hopes rest on the Balkans. I would not attach great importance to this either, because one thing is sure: where England makes an appearance, we will attack it, and we are strong enough for it! Perhaps they trust in other states whom they still hope to draw in. I do not know, but I can assure you of one thing, my party comrades, who know me as a caring man who always looks ahead: we have carefully and soberly considered every conceivable possibility and taken it into account. In the end, however, the victory will be ours!

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Perhaps they have still another hope—not a very strong one any more—namely, hunger. We have organized our life. We knew beforehand that you cannot live in luxury during war. But never will the German Volk starve!—Never! Rather the English! The gentlemen may rest assured of that. Lack of raw materials? We also made provisions for this. That’s why we have the Four-Year Plan! Perhaps some of the English have realized this by now.

Subsequently, Hitler mocked the English lords, these “blockheads,” who suffered from a “softening of the brain.” Their propaganda was “just as stupid as it was here then.”

That means only one thing; namely, that they truly believe they can once more begot the German Volk with their lies and their empty talk. I can only say to this: they should not have slept so long. They should have paid more attention to the inner development of the German Volk. With the same stupidity, they undertook to estrange the Italian people from the Duce: a British lord stood up to appeal to the Italian people to follow his lordship instead of the Duce! What a blockhead! And then another lord stood up and urged the German Volk to follow his lordship and to turn away from me. I can only tell these men that “better men than you have tried that.” That’s the idea these people have of the German Volk, of the National Socialist state, of our community, of the army, of our marching masses! That’s the idea they have of propaganda!

And because they themselves did not seem to be too convinced of the effectiveness of their ideas, they borrowed a few men from Germany. But those were the men who were the losers here: the emigrants. They are their advisers! We can see that, just from looking at their pamphlets! We know exactly: he wrote this, the other one wrote that—it is just as stupid now as it was here at the time. Only the masthead back then read *Vossische Zeitung*. Now it reads *Times* or something of the sort. And these people really think such an old, ancient trick, which did not work anymore at the *Vossische Zeitung*, would suddenly work again if only they used the company name *Times* or *Daily Telegraph*. Truly, softening of the brain seems to have broken out among these democrats! They may calm themselves: the German Volk will do everything necessary in its own interest. It will follow its leadership, because it knows that this leadership has only one goal. It knows that at the head of this Reich today there is a man who does not carry a portfolio of stocks in his pocket and who does not pursue any other private interests.

This German Volk is sworn to me—I know this, and I am so proud of it—and it will go through thick and thin with me.

A spirit has come to life again in this Volk, a spirit which accompanied it during long periods of the past: this fanatic willingness to take everything upon ourselves! For every blow we receive, we will return with interest and compound interest! Whatever they may mobilize against us . . . and if the world were full of devils, we would still succeed!⁵⁸ And when they say, as one last thing, “but the mistakes they are making.” God, who does not make mistakes!

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I read this morning that an English minister—I do not know who he was—calculated by some process that I have made seven mistakes in the past year, that is, in the year 1940. Seven mistakes! The man is wrong. I did not make seven mistakes, I made seven hundred twenty-four. And I continued counting: my opponents made four million three hundred eighty-five thousand mistakes! He can trust me on this one! I went over the figures carefully. We will move on, even with our mistakes. And if we make as many mistakes this year as we did last year, then I will thank my Lord God on my knees at the end of the year. And if our opponents do as many clever things as they did last year, then I can likewise be content.

And so we enter the new year with a Wehrmacht armed as never before in German history. On land, the number of our divisions has enormously increased. Their pay has been improved, the immense, unique battle experience of leaders and men has been utilized and analyzed. Work has been done and continues to be done without letup. The equipment has been improved, and our opponents will see how much it has been improved.

At sea, submarine warfare will begin in the spring. And there, too, they will notice that we have not been sleeping! And the Luftwaffe will also properly introduce itself to them! Our whole Wehrmacht will force a decision, one way or another! In addition, there has been an enormous increase in all aspects of our production. What others plan, we have already realized. The German Volk stands composed behind its leadership, trusting in its Wehrmacht, and prepared to bear what Providence asks of it, since that is the way it is.

I am convinced that the year 1941 will be a historic year in the great reorganization of Europe! The platform can be none other than that of making the world accessible to all, breaking the privileges of individuals, breaking the tyranny of certain people and their financial rulers.

And, finally, this year will help to secure the foundations for true international understanding and thus for a reconciliation of nations.

When Hitler spoke of “a reconciliation of nations,” he meant a reconciliation of Germany and England. He believed that he could bring this reconciliation about by destroying Russia. Still, he was not quite sure whether this maneuver would work. In case it did not, he wished to indicate in no uncertain terms that there was a last resort in trying to force peace on the English: the massacre of the Jews.

Did he not move the western powers to take a moderate stand toward Germany by ordering the first boycott of the Jews on April 1, 1933? And did he not make the swastika respected abroad by issuing the Nuremberg Laws in the year 1935? Did he not exert pressure on the secret Jewish world government with the pogrom of November 1938?

If he now threatened the Jews with extermination, would not the secret Jewish world government put the same pressure on the English

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government, which was dependent on it, to make peace with Germany in order to save the European Jews he held as hostages? In this conviction, Hitler declared in his speech of January 30, 1941, the following:

I would not like to forget to repeat the advice that I gave before the German Reichstag on September 1, 1939:⁵⁹ namely, the advice that should the outside world allow itself to be plunged into a general war by Jewry, then all of Jewry will be finished in Europe!

They may still laugh about this today, just as they earlier laughed about my prophesies. The coming months and years will show that I have foreseen things correctly this time also. Now already, our racial idea takes hold of one people after another. And I hope that those who are at enmity with us today will one day recognize their internal enemies and form one front with us: a front against international Jewish exploitation and corruption of people!

The year that lies behind us as of January 30 was a year of great successes, but also of great sacrifices. Even if the total number of dead and wounded is small in comparison with those of former wars, the sacrifice is difficult for all those who are individually concerned. Our affection, our love, and our solicitude belong to those who had to make these sacrifices. They suffered what generations before us suffered in terms of sacrifice, but every German made his sacrifice. The nation worked in all spheres, and, above all, the German woman worked to replace the man!

It is the wonderful idea of the community that rules our Volk! That this idea may be preserved in its full force will be our wish today! That we may work for this community will be our pledge! That we may gain the victory in the service of this community will be our faith and our confidence! And that the Lord God may not abandon us in this struggle in the coming year will be our prayer! *Deutschland—Sieg Heil!*

On January 31, Hitler received Robert Ley at the Reich Chancellery and presented him with the War Service Cross.⁶⁰ On this day, a delegation of Japanese officers, headed by General Yamashita, called on Hitler at the Reich Chancellery.⁶¹

On February 1, Hitler attended a state ceremony in honor of Dr. Gürtner, which took place in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery at noon. After speeches by Frick and Schlegelberger, he placed a large wreath at the coffin.⁶²

On February 3, Hitler received the recalled Japanese ambassador Kurusu to say goodbye to him.⁶³

On the same day, there was another major military conference regarding Operations Barbarossa and Sunflower, which lasted from

February 4, 1941

noon until 6:00 p.m. Hitler imparted several “flashes of inspiration” to the generals, the record of which read as follows:⁶⁴

The Führer mentioned in this regard that Turkey would not move when the die is cast.

The Führer explains at this point that he assumes that Sweden will participate for the price of the cession of the Åland Islands. A Swedish-Finnish union will not be considered, because it does not fit into the new order of Europe.

Norway has to be protected against English attacks; no setbacks can be permitted there.

“When Barbarossa gets underway, the world will hold its breath and keep still.”⁶⁵

The Führer discusses the situation of Italy in the Mediterranean. He states that the loss of North Africa would be bearable militarily, but psychological repercussions would be severe. It must therefore be our ambition to prevent this. Italy must be supported.

We are already doing so through Marita.⁶⁶ However, we also must try to help effectively in North Africa.

If we go to North Africa, then we must go immediately—before the Italians do.

Summary. Operation Barbarossa:

a) The Führer agrees in principle with the plan for operations. When working out details, keep in mind that the main objective is to get hold of the Baltic area and Leningrad.

b) The Führer requires a map of operations and a map of the distribution of forces along march routes as soon as possible.

c) Agreements with participating states should be initiated only after camouflage proves impossible. An exception is Romania, that is, reinforcement of the Moldau.

d) Attila⁶⁷ must remain possible at all time (expedient).

e) Concentration Barbarossa will be disguised as Sea Lion⁶⁸ and incidental measure Marita.

2) Sunflower:

a) The Luftwaffe must intervene as soon as possible with forces like Stukas [dive-bombers] and destroyers. [Items b and c deal with technical details.]

d) The army is to be reinforced by tanks immediately. Deployment of one panzer division (Marita Second Stage) is to be prepared.

On February 4, Hitler awarded the Eagle’s Shield of the German Reich to the retired governor general Dr. Heinrich Schnee on his seventieth birthday. The medal bore the inscription: “To the German Colonial Pioneer.”⁶⁹

On February 4, Hitler also apparently remembered the citizens of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet. By decree, he accorded them

February 6, 1941

representation in the Greater German Reichstag. To determine the number of deputies from this area, he resorted to the old formula of dividing the population over twenty years of age by sixty thousand. He then went on to name the corresponding number of deputies.⁷⁰

On February 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the emperor of Manchukuo on his birthday.⁷¹

On the same day, Hitler issued Directive No. 23 from Berlin. It concerned "guiding principles for the conduct of the war against the English war economy."⁷²

Hitler began by giving a rather confused account of the air war against Britain, its successes and failures. Primarily, however, he was concerned with maintaining a certain amount of action by the Luftwaffe, although he would soon have to withdraw substantial forces from the Channel coast for Operation Barbarossa. He thought it was possible to make the English believe that a German attack on the British Isles was pending by keeping up pretenses. The directive read as follows:

1. The effect of our warfare against England to date:

a. In contrast to our earlier conceptions, the greatest success in the struggle against the English war economy was the heavy loss of merchant ships through naval and aerial warfare. This has been further reinforced by the destruction of port installations and of large stocks, as well as by the lessened utilization of the ships when required to sail in convoy.

A further significant increase, through the wider employment of submarines in the course of this year, is expected and can thereby lead to the collapse of English resistance within a reasonable time.

b. The effect of air attacks carried out directly against the English armament industry is more difficult to estimate. As a result of the destruction of numerous factories and the ensuing disorganization of the armament industry a sharp drop in production may certainly be expected.

c. The effect upon the morale and the capacity of the English people to resist is so far least discernible from the outside.

2. Inferences for our conduct of battle:

In the course of the coming months, the effect of naval warfare against enemy merchant shipping by greater employment of submarines and surface craft will probably increase still further. On the other hand, the extent of our air attacks cannot be maintained because the missions in other theaters of war compel the withdrawal of increasingly large units of the Luftwaffe from operational use against the British Isles.

It will therefore be necessary in the future to concentrate air attacks even more precisely and to launch them primarily against targets which coincide with those of naval warfare. Only in this manner is a decisive result with respect to the war to be expected within a reasonable time.

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3. The object of further military operations against the English homeland must therefore be the concentration of all naval and aerial means of warfare in combating the enemy imports, and also in holding down the English production of airplane matériel and, wherever possible, inflicting further damage upon this industry.

This will require the following:

a. Destroying the principal British ports of entry, especially their port installations and any ships in port or in the process of construction.

b. Harassing with all means the movement of ships, especially inbound ships.

c. Systematically destroying the key centers of military-aircraft production, including the anti-aircraft industry, as well as key centers of the production of power and of explosives.

These tasks must be carried on with those forces remaining for operations against England if during the course of the year large parts of the Luftwaffe and lesser naval elements should be redeployed to other theaters of war.

4. For the execution of these tasks the following apply:

a. The sinking of merchant tonnage is more important than combating enemy warships.

This applies also to the use of aerial torpedoes.

The reduction of enemy tonnage not only intensifies the blockade which is decisive for the war, but at the same time renders more difficult any enemy operation in Europe or Africa.

b. Even where attacks on port cities or aircraft factories yield manifestly good results, such attacks must be constantly repeated.

c. The insecurity and losses of the enemy are to be increased by constant mining operations.

d. After striking the great ports of entry, the conduct of battle must follow any English shift to unloading at the smaller ports, so far as the range of our aircraft permits.

e. Only when weather or other operational conditions prevent operating against the targets mentioned in paragraph 3 above will attacks be justified against other factories of the armament industry and against cities of particular importance for the war economy, and also against stockpiles in the interior of the country and transport installations.

On the other hand, no strategically decisive success is to be expected from systematic terror attacks on residential areas or attacks on fortifications along the coasts.

5. Until the beginning of deployment for Barbarossa, we should strive to step up aerial and naval operations progressively, not only to inflict the greatest possible damage on England, but also to simulate the appearance of an attack on the British Isles impending this year.

February 14, 1941

6. Regulations for overwater reconnaissance necessary for the coordination of naval and aerial warfare will be issued separately.

7. Directive No. 9 of November 29, 1939, the Supplement to Directive No. 9 of May 26, 1940, and Directive No. 17 of August 1, 1940, are rescinded.

Adolf Hitler

On February 6, Hitler attempted one last time to “recruit” Franco against England. In view of a meeting between Mussolini and Franco, scheduled for February 11 at Bordighera, Hitler wrote to the Caudillo as follows:⁷³

Spain will never have friends other than those represented by present-day Germany and Italy, unless, of course, a different Spain should come into existence. Such a different Spain, however, would be a Spain of decay and ultimate collapse. For this reason alone, I believe, Caudillo, that we three men, the Duce, you, and I, are linked to one another by the most implacable force of history, and that we should, therefore, in this historic conflict, obey the supreme commandment to realize that—in grave times such as these—nations can be saved by stout hearts rather than by seemingly prudent caution.

His imploring words once more failed to persuade Franco. The meeting at Bordighera ended no differently from that at Hendaye. While Franco assured Hitler of his loyalty there and stressed his solidarity with him in a letter, he stopped short of any active engagement. A distressed Hitler wrote to Mussolini: “I am afraid that Franco is about to make the biggest mistake of his life.”

However, as events proved, the restraint demonstrated by the Spanish dictator was not his biggest mistake, but his cleverest maneuver. He was the only dictator in Europe who was not ruined by Hitler’s fall.

On February 7, Hitler ordered the Gau Koblenz-Trier renamed “Gau Moselland.”⁷⁴

On February 12, Hitler had his picture, inscribed with a heartfelt dedication, presented to the oldest member of the SA in Germany, the ninety-five-year-old Obersturmführer, Andreas Hofmann, in Presseck near Bayreuth.⁷⁵

On February 14, Hitler received the Yugoslav prime minister Cvetkovich, along with his foreign minister, Cincar-Markovich, at the Berghof. As mentioned previously, he had resolved to make Yugoslavia completely dependent on Germany by means of the Tripartite Pact. He was confident that talking persuasively for several hours would make an impression on them, just as it had on the former Yugoslav prime minister Stojadinovic. And he was right, as the incontestable success of

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his rhetoric with politicians from the Balkans had proved through the years.

The following communiqué was published on the talks:⁷⁶

Salzburg, February 14, 1941

The Führer today received at the Berghof the royal Yugoslav prime minister, Dr. Cvetkovich, and the royal Yugoslav foreign minister, Cincar-Markovich, in the presence of the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop.

The consultations on questions of common interest took place in the spirit of the traditionally friendly relations between the two nations.

By February 17, Hitler's thoughts had turned back once again to Barbarossa. He was already contemplating how to proceed in Afghanistan and India after the defeat of Russia. Given his insatiable lust for conquest, there could be no end to the military actions and campaigns! This is shown by an entry into the war diary of the operations staff of the Wehrmacht, dated February 17, 1941:⁷⁷

The Führer requires work on a study regarding a concentration in Afghanistan against India, subsequent to Operation Barbarossa.

On February 17, Hermann Kriebel, ambassador in the foreign ministry, died in Munich.⁷⁸ In his honor, Hitler ordered a state funeral for February 20. It took place in front of the Feldherrnhalle in Munich. Hitler himself attended the ceremony, dressed in a gray leather coat.⁷⁹ Rudolf Hess delivered the eulogy. Then Hitler stepped up to the catafalque, where he placed a wreath, and saluted with an outstretched arm. Afterwards, he disappeared into the Residenz.

On February 24, Hitler gave the customary speech on the foundation of the party in the festival hall of the Munich Hofbräuhaus.⁸⁰ Naturally, he dished up a "party narrative" for his old party comrades, in which he went to bat for the Fascist Party and his friendship with Mussolini.

And this, too, our opponents do not understand: if I regard a man as my friend, then I stand by this man and I make no commercial transactions with this attitude.⁸¹

Because I am not a democrat, and, therefore, not a black-marketeer. I am also no war profiteer, but I am a man who wishes that, after I too am dead, I will be done justice in the recognition that my whole struggle for existence served only one great ideal. Because of this, I should not like to show weakness in this sphere either. Therefore, there is no doubt that the union between the two revolutions and, particularly, the bond that ties us two men together is

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indissoluble, and that if one day the one should be better off and the other worse, or the other way around, then the one will always stand by the other.

Then Hitler announced a new submarine offensive in grandiose terms. While submarine warfare had already proved ineffective against the British in the First World War, he was going to give it another try. He declared the following:

I already said recently: our struggle at sea can begin only now. The reason for this is first of all that we wanted to train the new crews for the new U-boats, which will now arrive. That they will start coming should not be doubted. Just two hours ago, I received word from the commander in chief of the navy that reports have been received from the surface naval forces and the U-boats that they have sunk two hundred fifteen thousand GRT (gross registered tons), of which the U-boats alone sank a hundred ninety thousand GRT, a hundred twenty-five thousand GRT being destroyed yesterday in a single convoy.

The gentlemen should prepare for a difference from March or April on.⁸² They will see whether we slept through the winter or whether we made use of the time. In the long months when we had to fight with only a few boats, Italy tied down substantial enemy forces. It does not matter to us whether our Stukas hit English ships in the North Sea or in the Mediterranean. It is the same in either case.

One thing is clear: wherever Britain touches the continent, we will immediately oppose it, and wherever British ships appear, our U-boats and airplanes will be deployed against them until the hour of decision comes.

Hitler now turned his attention to the “false prophets” who had once foretold his fall at home and who were now saying the same of the war effort. He described his struggle against the gold standard, and so forth, and finally declared himself to be “an expert and a specialist in questions of armament.” That the English were also arming was “a tall tale.” Hitler announced the following:

The moment I realized that, in England, a certain clique was inciting war and agitating for it—led by Jewry, which stands like a pair of bellows behind everything—I made preparations to arm our nation. And, my old party comrades, you also know that it is not empty talk when I say something like this, but that I also act accordingly. We worked like giants! The armament we forged in these years is truly the proudest the world has ever seen! And if the outside world now says, “We are doing this now, too,” then all I can say is: Do it, I have already done it! Don’t tell me any fairy tales! I am an expert and a specialist in questions of armament. I know quite well what can be made of steel and what of aluminum. I know how much work you can get out of people and how much you cannot. Your tall tales do not impress me!

For our armament, I employed the force of the German nation in timely fashion and I am determined, if necessary, to employ half of Europe for this,

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and I will do it. I am prepared for any confrontation that might come, and I await it calmly. May the others await it with equal calm!

In this, I rely on the best armed forces in the world, the best which the German nation has ever possessed. It is numerically strong, armed to the highest degree, and its leadership is in better shape than ever before. We have a young corps of leaders, many of whom are not only experienced in battle, but, and I may say this, have also covered themselves with glory. Wherever we look, we see a generation of chosen men in whose hands the German soldier is placed. And these men in turn lead soldiers who are the best trained in the world, who have the best weapons on earth at this time. And behind these soldiers and their leaders stands the German nation, the whole German Volk. And in the midst of this Volk, at its core, is the National Socialist movement, which started from this hall twenty-one years ago. This movement is by itself one of the best organizations, of a type the democratic states do not possess, and has its only counterpart in Fascism.

Once he felt his boasts had made the English sufficiently afraid of the Wehrmacht, he claimed that the German Volk was immune to revolution, to "General Winter," and to hunger. He declared as follows:

Volk and Wehrmacht, party and state—today they form an indissoluble union. No power in the world can wear out this structure. And only fools can imagine that the year 1918, for example, can repeat itself. We once experienced this with our democracies at home. They also always had hope; they hoped for our fragmentation.

Today, it is the same again. They say, "In six weeks, there will be a revolution in Germany." They do not know who will see to this revolution. There are no revolutionaries here; "revolutionaries" like Thomas Mann and other such people are in England. Some have already left England for America, because England is too close to the coming theater of operations of their "revolution." And so, they move their headquarters far away from the battlefield. But still, they maintain that the revolution will come. I do not know who will see to this revolution, nor do I know how it will be carried out. I know only one thing: that there may be a few fools in Germany who contemplate a revolution, but they are all behind bars.

Then, they say, "General Winter will come and defeat Germany." Oh, the German Volk is pretty winterproof.⁸³ In German history we survived, I do not know how many, perhaps a hundred thousand winters. We will survive this winter as well! Then, they declare, "There will be hunger," but we made preparations. We know the humanitarian feelings of our English opponents. We took care. I believe that there will be hunger there before there will be hunger here.

And then again, they say, "Time as such is effective." Time only helps the man who works. And nobody works harder than we do. I can assure these folk of this. And all these vague hopes that they are assembling are ridiculous and childish.

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On principle, I would like to say one thing: the German Volk has developed over thousands of years. There has been a German Reich for over a thousand years, and it has been an empire which truly consists only of Germans. During this time, our Volk survived unheard-of reverses of fortune. And it will survive whatever the present or the future will bring. Yes, perhaps it will be easier to do so, because, I think, while there has always been a German Volk, never before has there been German unity, never before have we possessed what we possess today: a unified organization of our Volk. Not always has there been a leadership like the one which the German Volk possesses today.

Afterwards, Hitler again pointed out that he would defeat his opponents abroad, as he had his “democratic opponents” at home. As spring was coming, he felt he was in a mood to do whatever he had to do. Feeling “refreshed,” he announced the following:

In all modesty, I can tell my old party comrades one more thing: I have taken on many democratic opponents and, until now, I have always emerged victorious from such struggle. I believe that this struggle, too, is not being fought under different circumstances: that is, the circumstances and the dimensions are the same as before. In any event, I am grateful to Providence that, since this struggle was inevitable, it is taking place in my lifetime, at a time when I still feel young and fit. And, just now, I feel so refreshed again! Now, spring is coming, a spring which we all welcome. A time is coming when we can try our strength again, and I know that, despite the hardships of battle, millions of German soldiers think the same.

A year of unimaginable success lies behind us, one of difficult sacrifices, even if not seen as a whole, nonetheless so in every individual instance. We also know that these successes were not given to us as a gift, but that, with great bravery, countless German men first had to risk their lives at the front and they continue constantly to risk their lives. What so many men do in our regiments, in our tanks, in our airplanes, on our surface ships and U-boats, on all our ships everywhere, in our units, is something unique.

Never have there been better and more valiant soldiers!

In concluding, Hitler again spoke of the “Lord God,” who wished to test the Germans, and declared the following:

At that time, we were already convinced that the hour would come when the Lord God would declare our trials over, if only our Volk found itself again, became industrious and honorable, if every German once again regarded first his Volk and only then himself, if he placed the interests of the community above his own, and if this whole Volk once more pursued a great ideal and was willing to persevere.

If Providence has once more called us to the battlefield, then its blessings will be with those who—in decade-long, hard work—made themselves

February 28, 1941

deserving of these blessings. And this I can say: if, before history, I look at myself and my opponents, then I do not fear a comparison of our characters. After all, who are they—these egoists! Every single one of them stands up only for the interests of his class. Behind all of them stands either a Jew or their own moneybag. They are nothing other than profiteers; they live from the profits of this war; no good will follow it. I confront these folk as nothing other than the simple fighter for my German Volk that I am. And I am convinced that, just as this struggle has been blessed by Providence up to now, so it will also be blessed in the future. When I stepped before you in this hall for the first time, twenty-one years ago, I was unknown, nameless, and I had nothing other than my own faith.

In these twenty-one years, a new world was created! The way from the present to the future will be easier than the one from February 24, 1920, leading to this day and to this place. With zealous confidence I look to the future. The whole nation has stepped up, and I know that the moment there is the command to “fall into step,” Germany will march!

On February 26, Hitler sent the former King Ferdinand of Bulgaria a congratulatory telegram on his eightieth birthday, which was celebrated in Coburg.⁸⁴

On February 28, Hitler received the Japanese ambassador, General Hiroshi Oshima, who had just been reappointed to his post in Berlin, to accept his credentials. Military attaché Banzai and naval attaché Yokoi accompanied Oshima.⁸⁵

On March 1, the usual festivities followed Bulgaria’s accession to the Tripartite Pact. Having greeted wounded soldiers at the entrance to the Belvedere Palace, Hitler gave a state reception in the palace after the signing of the treaty. The Bulgarian prime minister Filov⁸⁶, the state secretary in the Bulgarian foreign ministry, Shishmanov, Count Ciano, and Ambassador Oshima attended.

At the Hotel Imperial in the afternoon, Hitler received the Italian foreign minister, Count Ciano, for a “long and heartfelt exchange of views.”⁸⁷

Another exchange of telegrams appeared to Hitler to be called for. This time, he honored King Boris with the following telegram:⁸⁸

I ask Your Majesty in this hour, in which Bulgaria has once more lent expression to its solidarity with Germany, Italy, and Japan by its accession to the Tripartite Pact, to accept my heartfelt best wishes for Your Majesty’s welfare and for the prosperous future of Bulgaria.

Adolf Hitler

March 4, 1941

On March 2, Hitler sent the following telegram on the opening of the Leipzig Fair:

I want the Leipzig Spring Fair of 1941, which opens its gates today, to bear testimony to our economic power, just as the Leipzig Reich Fair of last year did, and to facilitate the exchange of goods among the participating nations in order to promote our foreign trade during the war as well.

Adolf Hitler

More important than all these telegrams was the following official announcement which was made public on the evening of March 2:⁸⁹

For protection against British measures in southeastern Europe that have become known, and with the consent of the royal Bulgarian government, units of the German Wehrmacht began marching into Bulgaria on March 2. The entering troops were welcomed by the Bulgarian people in a lively manner.

Finally, Hitler had made it: his troops occupied Bulgaria. And again, he had pulled off his coup on a weekend.⁹⁰ The question now was how the Soviet Union would react to this blatant affront. After all, Molotov had told Hitler in Berlin at the time, that, in view of the German occupation of Romania, the Soviet Union was contemplating moving into Bulgaria. Hitler's latest move, which, like the action in Romania, had taken place without prior consultation of Russia and in defiance of its plans, had to appear an outright challenge to the Russians.

The Soviet Union, however, decided to swallow this bitter pill for the sake of peace. It merely published an official denial of the claim that it had consented to the action.

The occupation of Bulgaria was the cause of great disquiet in Turkey. Not without reason, it feared it could be the next country to be accorded Hitler's "protection."

In this delicate situation, Hitler again successfully turned to von Papen, who transmitted a reassuring note to the Turkish president İsmet İnönü on March 4. The following communiqué was published:⁹¹

According to Radio Ankara, the president of the Turkish republic received the German ambassador von Papen at his palace in Tschankay (Çankırı). Von Papen delivered a personal message from the Führer, Adolf Hitler. The president of the Turkish republic listened to the message very attentively and asked Ambassador von Papen to communicate his thanks for this act of courtesy. The Turkish foreign minister, Sükrü Saracoglu, was also present at the conference.

March 5, 1941

The “act of courtesy” for which Ismet İnönü was grateful was the assurance that German troops in Bulgaria “would keep at least thirty kilometers from the Turkish border.”⁹² While the last years had shown that such assurances by Hitler were not worth much, this one did enable Turkey to remain neutral for the time being.

On March 4 and 5, Hitler entertained the Yugoslav prince regent Paul at the Berghof.⁹³ He hoped to encourage him to follow the Bulgarians’ example and to accede to the Tripartite Pact. In addition to his usual persuasiveness, Hitler made all sorts of solemn pledges. If Yugoslavia was “reasonable,” then it might not even be necessary to occupy it militarily.⁹⁴ He promised Yugoslavia an outlet to the Aegean Sea, along with the Greek port of Salonika. As mentioned before, Hitler was most generous in distributing foreign territory. He not only used those countries that were already in his sphere of influence, but also states that he had not yet occupied, as in this instance. He thought this so much a matter of course that he was not in the least embarrassed to speak of it publicly.⁹⁵

Once Hitler had inclined Turkey and Yugoslavia in his favor, he concerned himself with the Japanese. He would have greatly preferred them to play a more “active” role as quickly as possible and to attack British possessions in the Far East. Then, he could conceivably offer his assistance to England against Japan⁹⁶ and thereby finally win England’s friendship, not only as the savior from “the Communist menace,” but also from “the yellow peril.”

Since Hitler himself could do little about the Japanese, he turned to the Wehrmacht for the time being. On March 5, he issued Directive No. 24 on cooperation with Japan. It read as follows:⁹⁷

1) The aim of cooperation initiated by the Tripartite Pact must be to bring Japan into active operations in the Far East as soon as possible. This will tie down strong English forces, and the focus of the interests of the United States of America will be diverted to the Pacific.

In view of the still undeveloped military preparedness of her foes, Japan’s prospects of success will be better the sooner the intervention occurs. Operation Barbarossa creates especially favorable political and military conditions for this.

2) For the preparation of the cooperation, it is necessary to strengthen Japanese military power by every means.

To that end, the commanders in chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht will extensively and liberally comply with Japanese requests for the communication of German war and battle experience, and for aid in the fields

March 12, 1941

of war economy and of technology. Reciprocity is desirable, but must not impede the negotiations. This naturally concerns mainly such Japanese requests as could have an effect on military operations within a short time.

With respect to special cases, the Führer reserves his decision.

3) The coordination of plans of operations on both sides pertains to the high command of the navy.

The following principles apply:

a) The quick defeat of England is to be designated the common aim in the conduct of the war, thereby keeping the United States of America out of the war. Otherwise, Germany has neither political, nor military, nor economic interests in the Far East which give occasion to reservations respecting Japanese intentions.

b) The great successes which Germany has achieved in the war against merchant shipping make it appear particularly appropriate that strong Japanese forces be directed to the same purpose. In addition, every possibility of assistance in Germany's war against merchant shipping is to be exploited.

c) The situation of the [Tripartite] Pact powers with respect to raw materials requires that Japan take over those territories which it needs to continue the war, especially if the United States intervenes. Rubber deliveries must take place even after Japan's entry into the war, since they are vital to Germany.

d) The seizure of Singapore, England's key position in the Far East, would signify a decisive success for the combined warfare of the three powers.

Moreover, attacks directed against other bases of the English sea-power system—against those of American sea power, only if America's entry into the war cannot be prevented—are likely to weaken the power system of the enemy and, just as in the case of attack on his sea communications, to tie down essential forces of all kinds (Australia).

A date for the beginning of operational discussions cannot yet be fixed.

4) In the military commissions to be set up under the Tripartite Pact, only those subjects should be discussed which concern the three powers in the same fashion. This will primarily include problems of economic warfare.

Dealing with them in detail is the task of the main commission in concert with the high command of the Wehrmacht.

5) No hint of Operation Barbarossa must be given to the Japanese.

Of course, nothing about Operation Barbarossa should be breathed to allies Japan and Italy, in accordance with the maxim: "I have an old principle, to say only what must be said to him who must know it, and only when he must know it."⁹⁸

On March 8, Hitler received Lieutenant Colonel Harlinghausen at the Obersalzberg and awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.⁹⁹

March 16, 1941

The next day, Hitler visited Keitel in Berchtesgaden to congratulate him on his fortieth service anniversary and to present him with Hitler's picture, which bore a "heartfelt dedication."¹⁰⁰

On March 12, Hitler appeared in Linz to speak on the third anniversary of the Anschluss. The speech was scheduled for 9:00 p.m. in the festival hall of the Südbahnhof.¹⁰¹ After an extensive discussion of the events of three years earlier, he declared that the new Greater German Reich now had to prove itself.

Today we face the crucial test of what we began back then because, just like the first unification in 1870–1871, it has aroused the ill will of the outside world. Today, also the second great unification of the German Volk, the formation of the Greater German Reich, must prevail not only over the hatred, the envy, the jealousy, the avarice, but also over the lethargy of other people and other states. I see this as a historic reference which makes us not only proud but also confident. At that time, the struggle ended in a mighty, historic success. Today's struggle will end not a bit differently; it will lead to the same success!

On March 14, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the shah of Iran on his birthday.¹⁰² On the same day, he congratulated Tiso in a telegram on the Slovak national holiday.¹⁰³

On March 15, on the anniversary of the establishment of the Reich protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Reich Protector Neurath and State President Hácha.¹⁰⁴

On March 16, customary celebrations marked Heroes' Memorial Day in Berlin.¹⁰⁵ Hitler arrived at the Zeughaus at noon. At the entrance, he was greeted by von Böhm-Ermolli, an Austrian field marshal of the First World War.¹⁰⁶

In his speech, Hitler first gave a general overview of the history leading up to the war, the campaign of "eighteen days" in Poland, the struggle in the west, and he once more granted his listeners a general absolution:

The German Volk has atoned for all it once abandoned and lost in crazed blindness.

In spite of all the hyperbole, the tone of this speech was subdued. Hitler admitted the following:

The homeland must also make more difficult sacrifices in this war than ever before. Its heroism also contributes to making this most decisive struggle in German history a success. And here it is not only the man who is proving his powers of resistance, but also and above all the woman.

March 16, 1941

This was an obvious admission that the available forces were beginning to dwindle, and that German women would be deployed more frequently. It was a prelude to Hitler's appeal on May 4, in which he gave even greater emphasis to his call for women to be brought into action.¹⁰⁷

In concluding his speech, Hitler maintained that the air war would "not destroy Germany, but would destroy Britain itself," while also alluding to imminent active support of Italy by German troops.

The nation today has become a fighting unit, not because it was looking for this fight, but because this fight was forced on it. The minute England and France declared war, England began war against civilian life. To the blockade of the World War, the war against women and children, this time, it added air war and fire war (*Brandkrieg*) against peaceful villages and cities. Alas, England will be defeated on both accounts. The crime committed by Churchill—the air war—it will not destroy Germany, but Britain itself. And the blockade also will not hit Germany, but its authors.

If the onset of winter limited fighting on land, then the battles in the air and at sea have continued in its stead. To the heroism of the crews of our submarines and surface craft is added the heroism of our pilots.

We could not conclude Heroes' Memorial Day in a more worthy manner than by renewing our pledge to transform the battle for our destruction, instigated by our international opponents, into the ultimate German victory. Behind us lies a winter of hard work. What could be improved in our training was improved. The German Wehrmacht now has risen to become the strongest military implement of our history. During the winter months, though our ally has had to bear the full force of the British attacks, the German Wehrmacht will assume its share of the burden from now on. No power and no support in the world will change the outcome of this battle. England will fall.

Eternal Providence does not allow those to be victorious who are willing to spill the blood of man simply for the rule of their gold. Germany has asked nothing of England and France. All its renunciations, its proposals for disarmament and peace, were in vain. International plutocracy wants to wage this war to the end. Thus, the end of this war must and will be its destruction. May Providence let us find the correct path to lead those people to a better order, those people who have rid themselves of their shackles.

Cool and determined, we set out in the year 1941 to finish what was begun last year. Irrespective of where German soldiers are fighting, on what soil, on what sea, and in whose airspace, they will know that this struggle will decide the fate, the freedom, and the future of our Volk for all time. It is by ending this fight victoriously that we thank the heroes of our past in the most worthy manner, because we will rescue what they once died for: Deutschland, our Volk, and its Greater German Reich.

March 20, 1941

After the address, Hitler viewed a special exhibition in the Zeughaus displaying trophies from the campaign in the west. This was followed by the laying of wreaths at the war memorial, greeting the wounded, and a parade of the honor battalion.

On March 16, Hitler also took advantage of Heroes' Memorial Day to sign a decree on the appointment of a senior government building officer who would be responsible for the design of veterans cemeteries. It read as follows:¹⁰⁸

Berlin, March 16, 1941

The construction of cemeteries worthy of veterans for the interment of the fallen will be prepared. I commission the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht to see to its execution. I appoint a senior government building officer for work on the artistic tasks connected with the design of the German memorial cemeteries. The chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht shall decree implementing regulations.

Adolf Hitler

On March 19, Hitler received General of the Mountain Troops Dietl at the Reich Chancellery and presented him with the "Shield of Narvik."¹⁰⁹

On March 20, the new Romanian envoy, Raoul Bossy, presented his credentials at the Reich Chancellery.¹¹⁰

In addition, the Turkish ambassador Gerede brought a reply from the Turkish state president to Hitler's message of March 4. The following official statement was published on this topic:¹¹¹

Berlin, March 20, 1941

The Turkish ambassador Gerede presented to the Führer a handwritten letter from the Turkish state president Ismet İnönü. The Führer asked the Turkish ambassador to convey to the Turkish state president his thanks for the message.

March 20 saw the first official mention of the formation of an Africa Corps. On this day, Hitler received the commanding general of the Africa Corps, Lieutenant General Rommel, at the Reich Chancellery and awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.¹¹²

During the next days, German newspapers published photographs of the Africa Corps troops who were already in Libya.¹¹³

Also on March 20, Hitler sent another telegram to the Iranian shah, this time to congratulate him on the Nauruz festival.¹¹⁴

March 22, 1941

On the following day, the new Hungarian foreign minister, von Bardossy, joined Hitler for a conference in the Führerbau at the Königlicher Platz in Munich. The official communiqué noted the following:¹¹⁵

The conference took place in the spirit of the traditional and heartfelt bonds of friendship which unite Germany and Hungary.

On March 22, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to Field Marshals von Witzleben and von Kluge on their fortieth service anniversary. Both were presented with his picture, which bore the customary “heartfelt dedication.”¹¹⁶

March 26, 1941

2

On March 25, Hitler arrived in Vienna, where another theater performance was scheduled to take place in the Belvedere Palace that day, Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact.¹¹⁷ The necessary actors had already assembled: Prime Minister Cvetkovich, Foreign Minister Cincar-Markovich, Count Ciano, Ambassador Oshima, and, of course, von Ribbentrop.

The signing went according to program and, afterwards, Hitler gave another reception in the halls of the palace.

In the afternoon, Hitler received the Yugoslav ministers for a talk. The communiqué read as usual:¹¹⁸

The conference took place in the spirit of the traditional friendly relations between Germany and Yugoslavia.

Hitler also received Ciano for an "extensive talk in the spirit of the old friendship between Germany and Italy."¹¹⁹

This Viennese play "Tripartite Pact" was to be the last of its kind, and its epilogue was far less to Hitler's liking. Nothing was published on the exchange of telegrams customary on such occasions. Only Cvetkovich sent telegrams to Hitler and von Ribbentrop before arriving in Belgrade at 9:00 a.m. on March 26.¹²⁰ Hitler had, in the meantime, returned to Berlin, where, standing on the balcony of the Reich Chancellery, he showed himself to the public at noon on March 26.¹²¹

At 6:00 p.m. on the same day, the Japanese foreign minister Matsuoka arrived in Berlin. He was escorted from the Anhalt station to Bellevue Palace, the government's guesthouse.

The visit of this Japanese politician was the last diplomatic event of significance to take place in the Third Reich. Aside from a journey to Rome, Matsuoka stayed for nearly two weeks.

March 26, 1941

On the night of March 26, there was a military putsch in Belgrade. Within a few hours of his return from Vienna, Cvetkovich was overthrown and replaced by General Simovitch. Prince Regent Paul left the country "at his own request," while the young King Peter assumed royal power by proclamation. Anti-German demonstrations in Belgrade had followed the signing of the Tripartite Pact. Despite the strong emphasis he had placed on the "traditional friendship between Germany and Yugoslavia," Hitler had suffered a grave diplomatic defeat. More than once, he had boasted of his influence in Yugoslavia in talks with Mussolini and Ciano.¹²² Now it became clear that his rhetoric had been to no avail.

Yugoslavia was the only country in the Balkans which Hitler had never managed to bring completely under his control, despite several partial successes. And it would remain so in the military sphere until 1945.

News of the putsch in Belgrade hit Berlin like a bomb. Of all times, it was during the visit of the Japanese foreign minister that the nervousness of the members of the German government was most apparent. Hitler immediately realized that he would have to use force to regain control over this Balkan state. He quickly scheduled a conference in the Reich Chancellery for the same day. Besides Göring, Keitel, Brauchitsch, Jodl, and von Ribbentrop, several other high-ranking officers attended the meeting. In a forceful address, Hitler sought to balance the embarrassing impression that once more he had been greatly mistaken.

He no longer spoke of the "traditional friendship between Germany and Yugoslavia," which had proven itself in the Anschluss, the occupation of Czechoslovakia, the war against Poland, and the occupation of Romania and Bulgaria. Instead, he portrayed the Yugoslavs as his greatest enemies. They had dared not to bow completely to his will. He would punish them for it with "inexorable severity." After all, he was a well-known master in raping smaller countries.

The protocol of Hitler's address read as follows:¹²³

The Führer describes Yugoslavia's situation after the coup d'état. He states that Yugoslavia was an uncertain factor with respect to the coming Marita action and even more so in regard to the Barbarossa operation later on. Serbs and Slovenes have never been pro-German. The governments never sit securely in the saddle because of the nationality problem and the officers' camarilla,

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which is always inclined toward a coup d'état. In recent times, the country had only one strong man, namely Stojadinovic, whom Prince Regent Paul, to his own disadvantage, had overthrown.

The moment for realizing the real situation in the country and its attitude toward us is favorable to us both for political as well as military reasons. If the overthrow of the government had taken place during the Barbarossa action, the consequences for us would have been much more serious.

The Führer is determined, without waiting for possible loyalty declarations by the new government, to make all preparations in order to destroy Yugoslavia militarily and as a state. No inquiries regarding foreign policy will be made or ultimatums presented. Assurances of the Yugoslav government, which cannot be trusted anyhow, will not be taken note of in the future. The attack will begin as soon as the means and troops suitable for it are ready.

It is important that action be taken as soon as possible. We will try to get the neighboring states to participate in a suitable way. Actual military support against Yugoslavia is to be asked of Italy, Hungary, and in certain respects of Bulgaria, too. Romania's main task is to provide cover against Russia. The Hungarian and Bulgarian ministers have already been notified. Within the course of the day, a message will be addressed to the Duce.

Politically, it is especially important that the blow against Yugoslavia be delivered with inexorable severity and that the military destruction be carried out in a lightning operation. In this way, Turkey will presumably be sufficiently deterred and the subsequent campaign against Greece will be influenced favorably. It is to be expected that the Croats will take our side when we attack. They will be assured of political treatment (autonomy later on) in accordance with this. The war against Yugoslavia will probably be very popular in Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria, as these states are to be promised territorial acquisitions; the Adriatic coast for Italy, the Banat for Hungary, and Macedonia for Bulgaria.

This plan presupposes that we speed up the schedule of all preparations and employ such strong forces that the Yugoslav collapse will take place within the shortest time.

Because of this, the beginning of Operation Barbarossa will have to be postponed for up to four weeks.¹²⁴ [Technical details follow.]

Also on March 27, Hitler issued Directive No. 25:¹²⁵

1. The military putsch in Yugoslavia has changed the political situation in the Balkans. Even if Yugoslavia should at first give declarations of loyalty, she must be considered as a foe and therefore must be destroyed as quickly as possible.

2. It is my intention to break into Yugoslavia in the general direction of Belgrade and southward by a concentric operation from the area of Rijeka-Graz on the one side and from the area around Sofia on the other, and to give the Yugoslav armed forces an annihilating blow. Furthermore, I intend to cut off

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the extreme southern part of Yugoslavia from the rest of the country and seize it as a base to continue the German-Italian offensive against Greece.

The early opening up of the Danube traffic and occupation of the copper mines of Bor are important for reasons of the war economy.

The attempt will be made to win over Hungary and Bulgaria for participation in the operations through the prospect of winning back the Banat and Macedonia.

The domestic political tension in Yugoslavia will be intensified by political assurances to the Croatsians.

3. In detail, I order the following:

a) As soon as sufficient forces stand ready and the weather permits, the ground organization of the Yugoslav Air Force and Belgrade are to be destroyed by continuous day and night attacks of the Luftwaffe.

b) Operation Marita is to begin as close to the scheduled time as possible but in no case earlier. For the time being, it should have the limited aim of occupying the basin of Salonika in order to get a foothold on the high ground of Edessa. For this purpose the 18th Army Corps can deploy from Yugoslav territory.

Favorable opportunities are to be exploited for preventing the systematic formation of a front between Olympus and the high ground of Edessa.

c) All the forces still available in Bulgaria and Romania may be enlisted in the attacks which are to be conducted from the area around Sofia in a northwesterly direction and from the area Kyustendi-Gora-Dzumaja in a westerly direction, with the stipulation that forces of about one division in strength, along with air-defense forces, must remain in the Romanian oil region for the protection of the latter.

The defense along the Turkish frontier is provisionally to be left to the Bulgarians. A German formation, an armored division if possible, is to be assembled behind them for support.

d) The thrust from the general direction of Graz aimed toward the southeast is to be made as soon as the forces necessary for it are assembled. It is left to the army whether or not they should lunge across Hungarian territory in order to open up the frontier.

The defense along the Yugoslav frontier is to be reinforced immediately.

Just as on the Bulgarian border, important objects can be occupied simultaneously with the aerial attack on Belgrade, even before the general attack.

e) The Luftwaffe is to support the operations of the Twelfth Army with two attack groups and those of the new assault group which is to be formed in the area around Graz. It will make the main effort in this connection, depending on the time needed for the progress of the operations of the army. The Hungarian ground formations can be used for the deployment and engagement.

It is to be examined whether the 10th Air Corps is to be committed from Italian territory. Nevertheless, the convoy protection of the transport to Africa must remain assured.

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The preparations for the seizure of the island of Lemnos are to be continued, but I reserve to myself the decision as to the execution.

Provision is to be made for sufficient antiaircraft protection of Graz, Klagenfurt, Villach, and Loeben, and for Vienna as well.

4. The basic agreements with Italy will first of all be made by the OKW.

Staff liaison with the Italian Second Army and with the Hungarians is to be provided by the army.

As regards the delimitation of aerial operational areas respecting the Italian and Hungarian flying personnel, the Luftwaffe is authorized to reach agreements at this time with the high commands of the states concerned. The supply of the Hungarian ground formations can begin immediately.

5. The commanders in chief are to report to me through the OKW regarding the intended conduct of the operations and related questions.

Adolf Hitler

The speeches and directives necessitated by the putsch in Belgrade preoccupied Hitler so much that he was forced at the last minute to postpone a talk with the Japanese foreign minister. That he even called von Ribbentrop out of a meeting with Matsuoka amply demonstrated to the Japanese politician the extent of the confusion caused by the events in Belgrade.

At four in the afternoon, Hitler finally felt able to receive Matsuoka at the Reich Chancellery.¹²⁶ He struck a pose in order to impress his caller, as Schmidt aptly put it, with "brilliant rhetorical fireworks." He went far back, describing his struggle and his life. He spoke of the successes of German U-boats and the superiority of the Luftwaffe. He juggled figures, appearing to be familiar with even the most minute detail of armament and strategy. According to the record of the conversation, Hitler told Matsuoka:

In the air, Germany had absolute supremacy, despite all the claims of the English to success. Matsuoka could test this assertion if he looked about in Berlin and compared present-day Berlin with present-day London.

The Führer then spoke of his conviction that England had already lost the war. It was only a matter of having the intelligence to admit it. Then the individuals and the government which had been responsible for the insane policy of England would collapse.

In its present critical situation, England was looking for any straw to grasp. It was relying principally on two hopes:

First, on American help. Germany, however, had taken such help into its calculations in advance. It could appear in tangible form only in the year 1942 at the earliest, but even then the extent of such help would bear no relation to the increased productive capacity of Germany.

The second hope of England was Russia.

March 27, 1941

Obviously, Hitler endeavored to convince Matsuoka that relations between Germany and the Soviet Union were strained in order to keep him from continuing work on an improvement of relations between Japan and Russia.¹²⁷ Further, Hitler remarked that he thought it advantageous to keep America out of the war. Evidently, this was a concern near to his heart since he repeated this point several times in the conversation. One of the means best suited to this purpose was a determined assault on English possessions, that is, a surprise attack on Singapore by Japan. Such an opportunity would not come about again soon. Japan should strike swiftly.

Seldom in history, however, had a risk been smaller than at present: While war was being fought in Europe and England was occupied there, and while America was only in the initial stages of her own rearmament, Japan was the strongest power in the East Asian area and Russia could not intervene, since a hundred fifty German divisions stood on its western border. Such a moment would never return. It was unique in history.

In other words, Hitler was attempting to “recruit” Japan for his struggle against England, now that he had failed to procure the active assistance of Spain, France, and Russia. However, his rhetorical efforts in front of this messenger from the Far East were no more successful. The Japanese were not about to go to war against England just because Hitler felt that they should. And they knew quite well that England and America formed one entity, and that Hitler’s idea of preventing America’s entry into the war by attacking English possessions was more than ridiculous.¹²⁸

With an immobile face, Matsuoka sat and listened to Hitler’s flood of words. He then calmly and cautiously replied that, while he himself was persuaded by the German arguments, “at the present moment he could in these circumstances make no pledge on behalf of the Japanese Empire that it would take action.”

This was like pouring cold water on Hitler’s enthusiasm, and he had trouble hiding his disappointment at the Japanese reaction to his rhetorical efforts. Things got worse, however!

Matsuoka then took up the subject of a Japanese attack on Singapore. He explained that the Japanese military had carefully considered this possibility with the result that it had determined that it would take three months to carry out such an operation. As a cautious man, the foreign minister himself estimated about six months. And so

March 28, 1941

Matsuoka paid Hitler back for his juggling with figures. Hitler was deeply disappointed at this Asiatic conception of time.

The Japanese foreign minister dealt Hitler a third blow: just as Hitler had done, he began a lengthy review of the difficulty of his political struggle and of the resistance to him by his political opponents in Japan. He was a representative of forceful, aggressive politics, but the Japanese intellectuals made his life difficult. They had been educated in England and America, and their pure tradition had been corrupted by contact with the Western world. The leaders of the economy and court circles had conspired against him to cause him trouble. For once, Hitler was confronted with an opponent who paid him back in his own coin for his long-winded, tiring expositions.

After two-and-a-half hours of fruitless discussion, this first and decisive meeting between Hitler and Matsuoka ended without any concrete results. Despite this, and in order to save face, Hitler again joined Matsuoka at 6:00 p.m. to step out on the balcony of the Reich Chancellery and to show themselves to the Volk together. A Japanese battle song was broadcast over loudspeakers.¹²⁹

On March 28, Matsuoka was Hitler's guest at an official lunch.¹³⁰

In the course of his stay in Berlin, Matsuoka had several conferences with Göring, von Ribbentrop, Funk, and others. From them he heard only summaries of Hitler's arguments that the Führer had impressed on his Unterführers.

While Matsuoka was polite and reserved, at times he allowed his conviction that he was confronted by madmen to surface. Even if he actually told Schmidt that feeling only in reference to Göring,¹³¹ it was obvious that he also meant Hitler. At the end of his visit, he informed von Weizsäcker that the most important man he had met in Europe had been Pope Pius XII (!)¹³²

On March 28, Hitler summoned envoys from Hungary and Bulgaria to the Reich Chancellery and demanded that they urge their governments to participate in the planned war against Yugoslavia.

Afterwards, Hitler claimed in a letter addressed to Mussolini that, contrary to previous assertions, "from the beginning I have regarded Yugoslavia as the most dangerous factor." Sent by telegram, the letter read as follows:¹³³

March 28, 1941

Duce!

Events compel me, Duce, to communicate to you via telegram, the most direct way, my views on the situation and the decisions resulting therefrom.

1. From the beginning, I have regarded Yugoslavia as the most dangerous factor in the conflict with Greece. From the purely military standpoint, German intervention against Thrace could indeed hardly have been justified at all as long as Yugoslavia's attitude was equivocal and she thus could menace the left flank of the advancing columns on our enormous front.

2. For this reason, I did everything and honestly tried to include Yugoslavia in our community of interests. These efforts were unfortunately to no avail, and they were also begun too late to assure success. Today's reports leave no more doubt about the impending reversal of Yugoslavia's foreign policy.

3. Now I do not regard this situation as disastrous, to be sure, but nevertheless as one which is so difficult that we, for our part, must avoid making any mistakes if we do not want ultimately to imperil our entire position.

4. I have therefore already taken all the necessary measures in order to be able to meet any developing crisis with the necessary military means. Instructions to change our marching orders in Bulgaria, too, have already gone out.

I now urgently request you, Duce, not to carry out any further operations in Albania for the next few days. I consider it necessary that you undertake to cover and protect the most important passes from Yugoslavia to Albania with all available forces. It is not a question of measures which need to remain in effect for a long time, but of emergency measures meant to prevent the development of a crisis in the next two to three weeks.

I also consider it necessary, Duce, that you strengthen your forces on the Italo-Yugoslav front with all the means at your command and as speedily as possible.

5. I further consider it necessary, Duce, that absolute secrecy be maintained regarding everything that we do now and order to be done, and that only those persons should be informed who absolutely have to know something about it. Divulging our preventive measures would necessarily render them completely worthless.

6. Today I summoned the Bulgarian and the Hungarian ministers and acquainted them in broad outline with my misgivings about the situation, endeavoring to arouse their interest through a description of the negative and positive results that might arise for them in the event of military complications. For, Duce, without the assistance of Hungary and Bulgaria, it would surely be impossible to conduct operations with the swiftness which the events might make necessary in some circumstances.

I shall inform you about this, Duce, in greater detail some time tomorrow, if possible.

7. General von Rintelen, provided he can take the plane, will accordingly report to you tomorrow, Duce, and communicate to you the detailed military measures taken by us, which are being completed during the night.

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If secrecy is maintained regarding these measures of ours, Duce, I do not doubt that, in the event that we have to act, the two of us will go forward to a success that will not be less than that in Norway a year ago.

This is my unshakable conviction.

Please accept my warmest comradely greetings.

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

Despite these solemn assurances, Hitler did not intend “the two of us,” that is, the Führer and the Duce, to share the success. Because of this, he wanted Italian troops, at this point engaged in a successful offensive against Greece, to stop in their tracks, on his orders, and to turn around to defend the border between Yugoslavia and Albania. Supposedly, this was an urgent task.

On March 29, Hitler ordered Colonel General Hoth to place a wreath at the grave of Lieutenant General Cranz.¹³⁴

By March 30, the pending campaign in the Balkans had ceased to be foremost in Hitler’s mind. He dedicated himself completely to Operation Barbarossa. At 11:00 a.m., he assembled his generals and commanders in chief at the Reich Chancellery to give a two-and-a-half hour talk on the development of the situation from June 1940 on. He first spoke of England’s mistake in rejecting the German peace proposals. In this context, he spoke of Russia and once again played the man who knew everything, whose awareness of the military potential of Russia was complete, and who knew every single Russian tank!

At this time, he hinted that the rules of engagement in Russia would be different: severity would “be mildness,” and everything was a question of annihilating the Bolshevik commissars and the Communist intelligentsia.

The record of Hitler’s speech in Halder’s diary read as follows:¹³⁵

11:00 a.m. meeting at the Führer’s; almost a two-and-a-half hour address:

Situation after June 30 (1940). English mistake to reject possibility of peace. Description of further events. Sharp criticism of Italian conduct of the war and policy. England’s situation benefits because of Italy’s failures.

England places its hopes on America and Russia. Maximum effectiveness only in four years; Russian problems with transportation. Role and possibilities. Reasons for the necessity of clearing up Russian situation. We will only be able to master, within two years, our missions in the air and on the ocean in terms of matériel and personnel if we resolve the questions on land for good and thoroughly. Our mission against Russia: smash the armed forces, dissolve state. Comments on Russian tanks (respectable): 4.7 cm—good, heavy model, mass old. In terms of the number of tanks, the Russians are the strongest

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in the world. But they have only a small number of the new giant models (*Riesentypen*) with long 10 cm K (giant colossus, *Riesenkolosse*, 42-14 t).

Air force has large numbers, but very many old models, only a small number of modern models.

Problem of Russian terrain: the infinite vastness of the terrain makes concentration on decisive points necessary. Massive deployment of Luftwaffe and tanks at decisive location. Luftwaffe cannot cover this gigantic terrain at one time. At the start of the war, it can control only parts of this gigantic front. Its deployment must therefore be closely linked to land operations. The Russians will break down when confronted with the massive deployment of tanks and planes.

No illusions about allies: Finns will fight bravely, but they are weak in number and have not recovered. Romanians are completely hopeless. Perhaps, they will do all right in providing security behind a strong barrier (river), as long as they are not attacked. Antonescu expanded his army, instead of making it smaller and improving it. The fate of large German units should not depend on the steadfastness of the Romanian units.

The Pripet Marshes: security, defense, mines.

Question of Russian evasive movements: Not likely, because tied to Baltic Sea and Ukraine. If the Russians want to avoid contact with the enemy, they would have to do this very early on; otherwise they will not escape unscathed. After solving the problems in the east, fifty to sixty (tank) divisions will suffice. It will be possible to release a part of the infantry forces in order to produce armaments for the Luftwaffe or the navy; another part will be needed for other tasks, for example, in Spain. (Halder's marginal note: colonial tasks).

Struggle of two ideologies. Scathing condemnation of Bolshevism: equals social criminality; Communism immense danger to the future. We must distance ourselves from the idea of soldierly good fellowship. A communist is not a comrade, neither before nor afterwards. It is a matter of a struggle of annihilation. If we do not see it this way, then we will still defeat the enemy, but the Communist enemy will confront us again in thirty years. We are not waging war in order to preserve the enemy.

Future states: northern Russia will belong to Finland. Protectorates: Baltic countries, Ukraine, and Belorussia.

Fighting against Russia: annihilation of Bolshevik commissars and Communist intelligentsia. The new states must be socialist states, but without their own intelligentsia. The formation of a new intelligentsia must be prevented. A primitive socialist intelligentsia will suffice here. The poison of demoralization must be fought. This is not a case for court-martial. The commanders of the troops must know what it is all about. They must exercise leadership in combat. The troops must defend themselves by all means if they are attacked. Commissars and GPU people are criminals and must be treated accordingly. Still, the reins of leadership must not slip out of the commander's hands. The commander must issue his orders in consideration of the troops' sentiments. Fighting will be very different from fighting in the west. In the east,

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severity will be mildness in the future. The commanders must demand of themselves the sacrifice of overcoming their scruples.

In order to rationalize the brutality of his actions against the Russians, Hitler argued that the Soviet Union was not a “party” to the Hague Convention.¹³⁶ This was an obvious lie, since Russia acknowledged as binding the regulations of the Geneva Convention and the stipulations of the Hague Convention on war on land and at sea.¹³⁷

And even if Russia had not signed the Geneva Convention and the international agreement at The Hague, this would still not have justified the Germans in declaring the Russians outlaws on the outbreak of war or shooting them at random while taking them prisoner or at a later time. After all, the signatories to these agreements, Germany included, had pledged themselves to respect the rules that were agreed upon in any circumstance, even if they were waging war against a power not party to the conventions. On questions of international law, the German generals were not well informed in any event, as the Geneva Convention and treatment of the wounded were not subjects taught at military academies.

Even if they had been better informed, the situation on March 30, 1941, would have been no different. Ever since 1934, whatever Adolf Hitler said, did, or ordered, served as the norm in Germany, even if it violated constitutional, penal, or international law. As president of the Reichstag, Göring had once solemnly proclaimed: “We will always approve of everything our Führer does.”¹³⁸ And even the Reich minister of justice, the bourgeois jurist Gürtner, had declared on July 3, 1934, in connection with the Röhm purge, that all measures taken by Hitler, including the shooting of defenseless prisoners without prior trial, were not only “justified,” but a “statesmanlike duty.”¹³⁹

These statements were made in the year 1934, in the midst of peace, at a time when there could be no talk of a total dictatorship. Given this set of mind, it is not surprising that, in the war year 1941, the generals had no qualms about executing Hitler’s orders to liquidate defenseless Russian prisoners of war without prior trial and thought such measures justified.¹⁴⁰ Still, they were glad that this macabre task was left to the SS and not to the Wehrmacht.

The Commissar Order (*Kommissarbefehl*) was put into writing on March 31. Twice amended, it finally read on May 12 as follows:¹⁴¹

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Memorandum Subject:

Treatment of captured Russian political and military functionaries

I. OKW presented draft "guidelines" concerning the treatment of political officials, etc., for the concerted accomplishment of the assignment, which had already been given on March 31, 1941, and which is enclosed as enclosure no.

1. This draft provides for:

1. The elimination of political officials and leaders (commissars).
2. If they are captured by the troops, an officer with disciplinary powers must decide whether the person in question is to be eliminated. In this context, the establishment of this person's identity as a political official suffices.
3. Political leaders captured among the enemy troops will not be recognized as prisoners of war and will be dealt with at the *Dulags*¹⁴² at the latest. No sending them off to the rear.
4. Expert leaders of economic and technical enterprises are to be arrested only if they rebel against the German Wehrmacht.
5. The carrying out of operations may not be disturbed by these measures. Planned search and mopping-up operations will not take place.
6. In rear operational areas of the army, officials and commissars, with the exception of political leaders captured among the enemy troops, will be handed over to the special squad of the security police.

II. By contrast, memorandum no. 3 by Reichsleiter Rosenberg¹⁴³ provides that only with officials of the highest ranks be eliminated, since functionaries in the governments, communes, and the economy are irreplaceable in the administration of the occupied territories.

III. Therefore, a decision by the Führer is necessary concerning what principles should apply here. Proposal L for case II:

1. Functionaries who operate outside their units, as is to be expected from the radical element, fall under the "decree on the exercise of trial by court-martial in the Barbarossa area." They will be dealt with as volunteer irregulars. The same treatment is provided for by the "guidelines on the conduct of the troops in Russia" (appendix no. 2).

2. Functionaries who are innocent of hostile actions will at first not be molested. However, the troops cannot be expected to be able to differentiate between the various functionaries of the individual sectors. Only further penetration into the country will enable us to decide whether the remaining functionaries can be left in these locations or whether they are to be handed over to special commandos, if they are in a position to carry out the investigation.

3. Functionaries captured with their troops will be treated in accordance with the proposal by the OKW. They will not be recognized as prisoners of war; they will be dealt with at the transit camps at the latest, and under no circumstance will they be sent to the rear.

Everything Hitler did in the spring of 1941 was in some way connected to the assault on Russia. The war in Africa played a role of lesser importance. That was only natural, as Hitler was convinced that

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he could obtain the desired friendship with England by attacking the Soviet Union. Why should he engage in major operations in North Africa? Under no circumstances was he willing to attack Egypt at this point. This would only needlessly provoke the English and lessen their readiness for peace.¹⁴⁴

While the German and Italian troops under Rommel's command were allowed to repel the British invasion of Cyrenaica in early April, they were forced to halt at Sollum, the first fortress on Egyptian soil. The port of Tobruk in Cyrenaica remained a British fortress throughout the year, as Rommel was unable to conquer it.

In East Africa the war ended at this time. Ever since January, British, South African, Belgian, and French troops (de Gaulle) had converged on the Italian possessions. In late February, Italian Somaliland was lost; in late March, British Somaliland was reconquered by the English. By early April, Eritrea and nearly all of Abyssinia¹⁴⁵ were in the hands of the Allies.

Less than one year after Mussolini had entered the war on Hitler's side, the Italian "empire," so laboriously erected in 1936, had ceased to exist.

On April 1, an intensive campaign against the "anti-German" Serbs was launched in the German press, similar to the previous ones directed against the Czechs and the Poles.

On April 3, Hitler received the head of a Japanese naval delegation, Vice Admiral Nomura, at the Reich Chancellery.¹⁴⁶

On the same day, the Hungarian prime minister Count Teleki committed suicide. Hitler sent telegrams of condolence to his widow and to Horthy.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, he dispatched Grand Admiral Raeder to Budapest. At the funeral ceremony on April 7, Raeder laid a "wreath from the Führer."¹⁴⁸

In the meantime, Hitler had procured a positive answer from Hungary regarding its participation in the projected war against Yugoslavia. As a result, he proceeded to issue Directive No. 26 on April 3, entitled "Cooperation with our allies in the Balkans." It determined the following:¹⁴⁹

1. The military tasks for the southeastern European states in the campaign against Yugoslavia result from the political objectives:

Hungary, to which the Banat will fall, will be mainly concerned with occupying that area, but in addition has declared itself ready to cooperate in the destruction of the enemy.

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Bulgaria will recover Macedonia and is therefore principally to be involved in an attack in this direction, but without particular pressure being exerted from the German side. Furthermore, the Bulgarians, supported by a German armored unit, will provide the rear guard against Turkey. For that purpose, Bulgaria will also employ the three divisions stationed on the Greek border.

Romania, in its own as well as in the German interest, will have to limit its mission to protecting its frontiers against Yugoslavia and against Russia. Through the chief of the Wehrmacht mission, we should seek to achieve an increase in Romania's defensive preparedness against Russia.

At the very least, two-way communications across the Romanian-Hungarian frontier must proceed without hindrance between Hungarian and German liaison headquarters.

2) The following guiding principles will apply for the military cooperation and the organization of command in the coming operations:

I reserve to myself the unified command of this campaign insofar as the operational objectives of the Italian and Hungarian forces within the framework of the whole operation are concerned. It must be carried out in a way that takes into account the sensibilities of our allies and leaves to the chiefs of state of Italy and Hungary the possibility of appearing to their people and armed forces as sovereign military leaders.

I shall therefore pass on the military requirements for the coordination of operations which are to be transmitted to me by the commander in chief of the army and the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe as proposals and wishes in the form of personal letters to the Duce and to Regent Horthy.

The same procedure is to be followed by the commander in chief of the Twelfth Army toward the Bulgarian governmental and military authorities.

If individual Bulgarian divisions participate in the operations against Yugoslavia, they must be subordinate to the German commanding officers of the given areas.

3) In Hungary, a headquarters named "The German General with the High Command of the Hungarian Armed Forces" will be set up, to the staff of which a liaison staff of the Luftwaffe will also be attached.

This headquarters will serve both as my liaison with the regent and as the liaison of the Wehrmacht branches with the Hungarian high command.

All details of the cooperation with the Italian and Hungarian forces are to be settled by the Wehrmacht branches and by the liaison staffs to be exchanged between adjoining armies and air fleets.

4) The air-defense forces of Romania and Bulgaria remain integrated in the German air defense of these countries insofar as they are not employed in the operational areas of their own armies. Hungary will defend its territory itself, provided that German units operating there and the buildings essential to them are protected by the German Wehrmacht.

5) Apart from the new arrangement regarding the unified command, the agreements with Hungary remain in effect. The Second Italian Army will gain freedom of movement only after the attack of the German Second Army and the motorized group of the 46th Army Corps begins to take place.

April 5, 1941

To this end, it may become necessary that the Italian effort first be made in a southern rather than a southeastern direction. Limitation of the Italian Air Force to the protection of the flank and rear of the front in Albania, to attacks on the Mostar airfield and coastal airports, and to cooperation along the front of the Second Italian Army, as soon as it advances to the attack, will be arranged by the OKW.

6) I shall later regulate the tasks in the occupation devolving upon the various countries after the campaign. In the manner of the cooperation with the allies, even during the operations, the brotherhood in arms for the achievement of a common political goal must be stressed in every possible way.

Adolf Hitler

On the morning of April 4, Hitler received Private First Class Hubert Brinkforth at the Reich Chancellery. He was the first enlisted man to be awarded the Knight's Cross.¹⁵⁰

In the afternoon, Hitler again met with the Japanese foreign minister Matsuoka, who had returned from Rome.¹⁵¹

He again tried to stimulate Matsuoka's appetite for an attack on Singapore. During their meeting on March 27,¹⁵² Hitler had implied that, because of the strength of the Germans, Japan did not have to fear Russia. Now, he took things a step further and claimed there was no reason to fear America because, in the event of conflict, Germany would "intervene immediately." Finally, he declared the following:

When you return to Japan, you cannot report to the emperor that a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union is out of the question.

Matsuoka was not moved by Hitler's assertion. However, he took precautions of a nature which the German Chancellor certainly did not expect. He interrupted his return journey to stop over in Moscow for as long as was necessary to sign a Japanese-Russian Treaty of Nonaggression. To him, this appeared the best way to keep Japan out of the risky game Hitler was playing—at least for the time being.¹⁵³

On April 5, 1941, the Russian government and the new Yugoslav government under Simovitch entered into a Treaty of Friendship and Nonaggression. This was the only "unfriendly" act the Soviet Union might have been accused of in its relations with Germany.

In view of the persistent provocations by German troops moving into Finland, Romania, and Bulgaria, and the German measures against Russia, Molotov felt that the time had come to teach Hitler a lesson. It was meant as a warning to Hitler to abstain from the use of force in the future. However, before he undertook anything, Molotov informed the

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German ambassador in Moscow of his intentions,¹⁵⁴ in contrast to Hitler, who usually proceeded without informing anyone. Molotov's move did not sway Hitler in his intentions for war; instead, it enabled him to point his finger at the "bad" Russians, who were supposedly responsible for the turn of events in Belgrade.¹⁵⁵ Once Stalin had made himself chairman of the council of people's commissars, that is, of the Soviet government, in early May, he tried to reverse Molotov's step on May 12 by expelling the Yugoslav envoy from the Soviet Union and ordering the envoys of Norway, Belgium, and Greece, who had remained in Moscow, to leave.

Stalin was ready to do anything to please Hitler. When Matsuoka left Moscow, Stalin had demonstratively thrown his arms first around the German ambassador, Count von der Schulenburg, and then around the German deputy military attaché, Colonel Krebs, while declaring: "We will remain friends with you—in any event (*auf jeden Fall*)!"¹⁵⁶ All this was to no avail: Hitler would start the war against the Soviet Union as planned.

Before he could do so, however, he had to deal with Yugoslavia. He would do this with the same "inexorable severity" which he had used against Poland.¹⁵⁷

Initially, Hitler had intended to conquer Greece from Bulgaria in a venture called "Operation Marita."¹⁵⁸ Now, Yugoslavia also had to be destroyed. This could be done all in one. Hitler later boasted that the deployment of the Wehrmacht had taken place "literally with a flick of the wrist."¹⁵⁹

On April 6, Hitler invaded Yugoslavia and Greece without prior declaration of war and, naturally, on a Sunday. The unsuspecting citizens of Belgrade were still asleep in the early morning hours when squadrons of the German Luftwaffe began to bomb the city until it was no more than a smoking heap of rubble. In his proclamation to the German Volk on the same day, Hitler called this "getting even with the Serb clique of criminals in Belgrade." Again, he rehashed the events of 1914 and claimed that the assassination in Sarajevo had been staged by the same "creatures," financed by the British Secret Service, who were now responsible for the change in government in Belgrade.

Hitler's proclamation read as follows:¹⁶⁰

April 6, 1941

Berlin, April 6, 1941

To the German Volk!

Ever since British imperialism set out to conquer the world, it strove to involve Europe and its people in ever new internal wars in order to weaken them. Only too often did England find statesmen and leaders of the people, in part blinded, in part corrupt, who offered their countries to the service of British world rule. For centuries, Jewish high finance has benefited most from these wars of conquest instigated by England. With the slogan "democracy," this conspiracy of imperialism and capitalism has led to countless complications worldwide, and especially in Europe.

In the year 1914, these forces managed to assault Germany and to force it into battle. The goal was the destruction of German economic life, the looting of Germany's economic resources, and, to this end, rendering the nation defenseless. The battle then was waged not against the National Socialist Third Reich, but against the constitutional-democratic federal state.

Barely had we managed to uplift the German Volk and to lead it to a new ascent—after the disintegration of the German economy and German life had lasted over one-and-a-half decades—through the power of the National Socialist movement before the same forces once more proclaimed their old objective: the independent Germany, recovering by itself, had to be destroyed again! And, as before, they once more believed that hired hands were most suited to bringing about the conflict.

Poland was chosen to pick a fight with Germany for no good reason and to answer with force all efforts to secure a reasonable settlement in peaceful cooperation. Confronted with the might of the new German Wehrmacht of the Third Reich, which had been set up in the meantime, this attempt failed within a few weeks. Now Great Britain attempted by way of Norway to penetrate the German right flank. With a few hours' warning, it was possible to parry the attack. In weeks of heroic struggle, it also was made to fail. German soldiers stood firm from Kirkenes to the Bight of Helgoland, and thus secured the entire German Lebensraum.

These defeats forced Churchill to search for new ways. Thus, he came to the decision to move through Belgium and Holland, which were allied with England, to strike at the heart of the German economy, the Ruhr. This time, France was chosen to bear the main burden of the battle. In a historic, unique triumphant march, the German Wehrmacht frustrated this attempt also and cleansed western Europe of the English.

Rejecting my new peace proposals, Churchill now determined to throw the weight of the British empire against Italy and, above all, to seize the North African coast with the help of troops from New Zealand and Australia. Today, this attempt also may be regarded as having failed thanks to the cooperation of German and Italian forces.

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Since the beginning of the war, England has persistently striven to win the Balkans as a theater of war. Indeed, British diplomats have succeeded in first trapping Greece by offering a guarantee, following the example of the World War, and finally by abusing it for their own purposes. The documents published today give us insight into the practice of a procedure which tries time and time again to get others to fight and bleed to death for English interests in accordance with the most ancient British recipes. In contrast to this, I have repeatedly emphasized the following:

1. that the German Volk is not in opposition to the Greek people, and
2. we will never tolerate that, as happened during the World War, a power gains a foothold on Greek territory aiming to penetrate the German Lebensraum from there when the time is ripe. We swept the northern flank clean of the British. We are determined not to tolerate a like threat in the south either.

In the service of a true consolidation of Europe, I endeavored from the day I seized power to establish friendly relations above all with Yugoslavia. Consciously, I forgot about everything that had happened between Germany and Serbia. Not only did I offer the Serbs the hand of the German Volk, but I also labored, as an honest broker, to assist in a review of the difficulties in the relations between Serbia and individual nations allied to Germany.

Indeed, it appeared as though a relaxation of tensions was slowly but successfully replacing an unbearable atmosphere and paving the way for fruitful cooperation, not only of a political but also and above all of an economic nature. And what other goal could Germany have been pursuing in an area where it defended neither territorial nor political claims or interests?

In order to eliminate the feeling in Yugoslavia that the German policy would either at present or in the future change to its detriment, I tried to integrate the Yugoslav state into that group of powers which are determined to build up the European continent in the future, in accordance with the principle of respect for the justified interests of all in a common work in peace and quiet. I believed this was best suited to counteract Yugoslav fears that this objective as regards Yugoslavia was or could possibly become different from the perspective of Germany and Italy or Germany and Hungary.

I did this, although the leadership of the Yugoslav and the Greek states were supporting the interests of the warmongers from the western democracies in a most irresponsible manner, as we know from the French documents.

On March 25, 1941, in Vienna, Yugoslavia solemnly acceded to the Tripartite Pact. I and the entire German Volk were happy about this because it seemed to preclude an expansion of the war to the Balkans. Perhaps even the faint hope was justified finally to resolve the existing conflict through a reasonable settlement.

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However, barely had the ministers who had signed the treaty returned to Belgrade before elements hired by the English, a military clique forever organizing coups d'état, struck back. The government which sought peace with Germany was toppled. An official statement was published according to which this had become necessary precisely because of its policy toward Germany. Besides this, scenes took place which are a disgrace in international life, and which the German Volk as a great power is not willing to tolerate patiently. The German envoy was insulted; the German military attaché was attacked; one of his assistants, an officer, was injured; numerous officials, representatives of companies, and so on, were publicly maltreated. German exhibition halls, businesses, offices, and firms were demolished and devastated. Countless women and men were beaten up, especially our Volksdeutsche, their businesses and apartments partially plundered, and a number of ethnic Germans were murdered in the process.

These events were staged by the same creatures who, in the year 1914, had already plunged the world into nameless misfortune with the assassination at Sarajevo. And, just as at that time, the British Secret Service financed and incited this military clique of criminals. And even if the events are the same, one thing has changed:

Now, the attacked state is not the erstwhile Austria but the present German Reich! The new Serb government has ordered a general mobilization. It has admitted to doing so secretly for days. Thus, it has revealed that it believes it to be able to have force replace peaceful relations with Germany. The force that it has summoned will now destroy it! The German Volk does not hate the Serb people! The German Volk sees no reason, above all, to fight Croats and Slovenes. It does not want anything from them!

The German Volk will get even with the Serb clique of criminals in Belgrade which believes it can place itself a second time at the disposal of the British assassination attempt on peace in Europe.

Now that I have had to witness once again how, over a period of eight years, we labored in vain to build up a friendship, I determined to restore tolerable relations and an order which does justice to ethnic principles in this part of Europe, in collaboration with my ally, to entrust the further representation of German interests to that power which alone—once again—seems capable of protecting law and reason.

Since this morning, the German Reich is fighting the usurpers of Belgrade and those units which Great Britain is again attempting to lead from the Balkans into battle against peace in Europe.

The German Wehrmacht will not lay down its arms in this area until it has overthrown this circle of conspirators in Belgrade for good, and the last British man has left this part of the continent as well. May the unhappy, blinded

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people realize that they owe all this to the worst “friend” this continent has had in the last three hundred years and continues to have: England.

The German Volk has entered this fight in the knowledge that its leadership has done everything humanly possible to spare it this confrontation. All we now ask of Providence is that it continue to protect and bless the paths of our soldiers, as it has done up to now!

Adolf Hitler

Hitler issued the following order of the day to the soldiers at the southeastern front:¹⁶¹

Berlin, April 6, 1941

Soldiers of the Southeastern Front!

Loyal to the principle of letting others do the fighting for it, England chose Poland to start the war in the year 1939, intending ultimately to defeat Germany in a new war, and, if possible, to destroy the German Wehrmacht. Within a few days, German soldiers on the eastern front destroyed and eliminated this instrument of British warmongers.

Then, one year ago, on April 9, England undertook to reach its goal by striking at the northern flank of Germany. Also, within a few weeks, in an unforgettable struggle, German soldiers repulsed this attack in the campaign in Norway. What the world had not thought possible came true. The Wehrmacht of the German Reich secured our northern front up to Kirkenes.

A few weeks later, Mr. Churchill believed the time had come for England and France to strike at the Ruhr through their allies, Belgium and Holland. The historic hour for the soldiers of our western front began. In the most glorious battle in the history of war, the armies of the capitalist west were defeated and finally destroyed. After forty-five days, this campaign was decided.

Now, Mr. Churchill brought the power of the British Empire to bear on our allies in North Africa. There, too, we met this threat through the cooperation of German and Italian units.

The new aim of the British organizers of this war is now to carry out a plan which they had already formed before the war and the realization of which was postponed time and time again by the gigantic German victories. In commemoration of the landing of British troops at Salonika in the World War, they trapped Greece with a guarantee and finally made it subservient to English ends.

Time and time again, I warned of a projected landing by British troops which would threaten the Reich in southeastern Europe. Regrettably, these warnings were in vain. I further tried, with the same persistent patience, to persuade the Yugoslav statesmen of the necessity of cooperation between the nations interested in the restoration of peace in these areas. Once the foundation for a like cooperation had been secured by the accession of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact, without Yugoslavia's demanding more than participation in the restoration of a reasonably organized Europe in which Yugoslavia and its people would have their share, those same criminal elements

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seized power in Belgrade, criminals who continue to be in England's pay and who unleashed the World War in the year 1914. Just as in Poland, the wild instincts of inferior subjects were mobilized against the German Reich. Under the circumstances, I immediately had to recall the German colony from Yugoslavia. Members and officers of the German mission, civil servants at our consulates were violently attacked; our diplomatic missions were destroyed; German schools—just as in Poland—were devastated; countless ethnic Germans were deported, abused, or killed. Beyond this, Yugoslavia, which for weeks had secretly called up reservists, now ordered a general mobilization.

This is the answer to my eight-year-long, ever patient efforts to establish close and friendly relations with this state.

While British divisions are again landing in Greece, as during the World War, in Serbia they think they have enough time to prepare for a new assassination attempt on Germany and its allies—just as in the World War.

Soldiers of the southeastern front! Your hour has come! You will now protect the interests of the Reich in southeastern Europe, just as your comrades did in Norway and in the west one year ago. In so doing, you will be no less brave than the men of the German divisions who victoriously fought in the autumn of 1915 in those areas in which you are now deploying!

You will act humanely if the enemy treats you humanely. There where he shows the brutality peculiar to him, you will force him down harshly and mercilessly!

The struggle on Greek soil is not a struggle against Greece, but against that enemy who, just as one year ago far up north, now attempts far down south to turn the tide of war in his favor. Therefore, we will fight there, along with our allies, for as long as it takes for even the last Englishman to find his "Dunkirk" in Greece! Whoever among the Greeks supports this enemy of the world will fall with him.

Now that the German soldier has proved that he can beat the British in the snow and ice of the extreme north, he will likewise be able to do his duty in the heat of the south, now that this has become necessary. We all pursue only one goal: to secure for our Volk its freedom and, thus, for the German man, his means of livelihood in the future. The thoughts, the love, and the prayers of all Germans are once again with you, my soldiers.

Adolf Hitler

Of course, Hitler wished to take command himself of the campaign in the Balkans. Therefore, he went directly to the front, that is, to Styria. His special train served as "the Führer headquarters" for the period from April 10 to 25. The train stood ready at Mönchskirchen on a single-track line approximately twenty-five kilometers south of Vienna. The locomotive was kept constantly under steam so that, in

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case of impending danger, it could escape to the safety of a nearby tunnel.

The attack took the Yugoslav army completely by surprise. In contrast with the First World War, it did not have time to rally its forces and move south to avoid contact with the enemy. German troops converged on it from three sides, joined by Hungarian and Bulgarian formations. Together, they swiftly tore the Yugoslav formations apart and surrounded them.

On April 11, the advancing German troops met up with the Italians, whom Hitler had ordered for ill-concealed reasons to discontinue their attack on Greece, turn around, and march from Albania into Yugoslavia.

On this occasion, Hitler sent his friend Mussolini the following telegram:¹⁶²

Duce!

At the moment when German and Italian formations shake hands for the first time in the Yugoslav theater of war, I send you my heartfelt greetings.

In loyal comradeship,

Adolf Hitler

On April 13, Hitler issued Directive No. 27, which contained technical details “regarding further operations in the Balkans.”¹⁶³

At this time, he also decreed the reintegration of the formerly Austrian parts of Slovenia around Maribor (Marburg), into the German Reich. While he had repeatedly declared that Germany’s borders to the southeast were completely pacified, he thought of the Yugoslavs as bad boys who, like the Belgians and the French (but unlike the good Danes!), therefore, had to return the territories gained in the years 1918 and 1920.

The Axis powers, at the behest of the Führer, took Croatia under their wings as an “independent” state. As early as April 11, the Croatian general Kvaternik proclaimed Croatia’s independence. On April 14, Ante Pavelich took over the government in Zagreb as “state leader” (*Poglavnik*). The head of the Ustasha movement¹⁶⁴ had previously lived in Italy. He sent telegrams to Hitler and Mussolini, assuring them of his loyalty. Hitler replied on April 15 as follows:¹⁶⁵

I thank you for your telegram and for the telegram from General Kvaternik, in which you announced the proclamation of the independent state

April 19, 1941

of Croatia in accordance with the will of the Croatian people, and in which you requested recognition by the German Reich of independent Croatia.

It is my great joy and satisfaction that I am able to announce recognition of the independent Croatian state at this hour in which the Croatian people have regained their yearned-for freedom due to the victorious advance of the troops of the Axis powers. The German government will be happy to negotiate the borders of the new state in a free exchange of views with the nationalist Croatian government. My best wishes for you and the future of the Croatian people.

Adolf Hitler

On April 13, German and Hungarian troops had marched into Belgrade; by March 17, the Yugoslav army at Sarajevo had capitulated.

On April 18, Hitler issued the following appeal for the Second *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* of the Red Cross, which was headed "Berlin," from his headquarters. It read as follows:¹⁶⁶

Berlin, April 18, 1941

German men and women!

A difficult year of fighting lies ahead of us. It will be recorded in history as a great and memorable event in the greatest struggle of the German Volk for its freedom and, thus, for its economic future and survival. Historic decisions of unique proportions will be made. The German homeland will once more look to its sons with proud confidence and gratitude. In our great age, at the heroic risk of their own lives, they are securing life for coming generations of Germans. Just as the immeasurable must be demanded of the men of our Volk, who are fighting as soldiers, so the German homeland must be no less willing to make sacrifices. There is no better way to thank our soldiers for their mission than to help the healing of their wounds.

The second *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* of the Red Cross should therefore unite all Germans, even more than the first one did, in the joyous readiness to help our fighting heroes. Thus, I renew my appeal to the German Volk to make voluntary donations to the second *Kriegswinterhilfswerk* of the Red Cross in order to give the wounded and sick, who as the best soldiers in the world are sacrificing themselves for their Volk, the best care as a gift from the homeland.

Adolf Hitler

On April 19, Hitler received King Boris of Bulgaria on his special train.¹⁶⁷ The discussion concerned Bulgaria's future share in the conquest of Yugoslavia and Greece. Similar topics figured in the talks between Hitler and Ciano the next day.

A birthday reception in front of Hitler's special train marked his birthday.¹⁶⁸ In a speech on this occasion, Göring referred to the Führer

April 20, 1941

as a “strategic genius.” Afterwards, Hitler shook hands with him, Raeder, Brauchitsch, and Keitel. An open-air concert concluded the festivities at the Führer headquarters. Rudolf Hess had chosen not to appear before Hitler in person. Instead, he congratulated him in a radio broadcast.

Hitler received congratulatory telegrams from King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini. He replied as follows:¹⁶⁹

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for the friendly good wishes transmitted to me on my birthday.

Adolf Hitler

My heartfelt thanks, Duce, for the comradely good wishes on my birthday. In these days, I feel more and more certain, as you do, that Germany and Italy, closely allied in their political ideologies and in the force of their weapons, will secure the victory and a new future for Europe.

With comradely greetings,

Adolf Hitler

The Führer had the following general thank-you message published on his birthday:¹⁷⁰

From all Gaus of the Greater German Reich and from abroad, I received such a great number of best wishes and other tokens of appreciation on my fifty-second birthday, that I herewith express my sincere thanks to all those who thought of me on this day.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler also thanked Viktor Lutze, the SA chief of staff, for the best wishes on his birthday and the reports on the deployment of the SA in a telegram of a heartfelt nature.¹⁷¹

Also on April 20, Hitler appointed Rosenberg his agent for “questions connected to the east European area.” Undoubtedly, he was not trying to do this “muddlehead” a favor; he disliked Rosenberg’s cultist ideas,¹⁷² but he needed someone whom he could later blame, if necessary, for his wild campaign of extermination in the Soviet Union. The decree read as follows:¹⁷³

Führer Headquarters, April 20, 1941

I appoint Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg as my agent for the management of questions connected to the east European area.

Reichsleiter Rosenberg will have at his disposal an agency for the management of questions connected to the east European area, to be established in accordance with his instructions, for the purpose of fulfilling the tasks assigned to him.

April 25, 1941

The requisite funding for this agency will be met in one lump sum from the budget of the Reich Chancellery.

Adolf Hitler

On April 24, Hitler sent Raeder from his headquarters a handwritten letter on Raeder's sixty-fifth birthday along with his picture. His naval adjutant presented both to Raeder.¹⁷⁴ On the same day, Hitler received Horthy at the Führer headquarters.¹⁷⁵ They discussed what part of Yugoslavia Hungary should receive. In the meantime, the war in Greece was nearing its end. It had been initiated by German troops on the morning of April 6 without prior declaration of war. Already on April 9, they had taken Salonika. On April 23, the Greek Army of Epirus capitulated. Thermopylae fell on the same day. British troops were evacuated. On April 27 German troops moved into Athens, and by April 29 the Peloponnesus and all Greek islands, with the exception of Crete, were in either German or Italian hands.

On April 25, Hitler considered the conquest of Crete. He issued Directive No. 28 as follows:¹⁷⁶

Operation Mercury (Merkur)

1. The occupation of the island of Crete (Operation Mercury) is to be prepared in order to have a base for conducting the air war against England in the eastern Mediterranean.

The assumption is that the entire Greek mainland, including the Peloponnesus, is in the hands of the Axis powers.

2. I assign command of the operation to the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, who will principally draw upon the Airborne Corps and the Luftwaffe units that are employed in the Mediterranean.

The army, subject to agreement with the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, has the task of making suitable reinforcements ready in Greece for the Airborne Corps, including a mixed tank battalion which can be transferred to Crete by sea.

The navy will make the preparations for the communications by sea, which must be secured by the beginning of the occupation of the island. For the protection of the communications and, as far as necessary, for the supply of transport space, the commander in chief of the navy will make the requisite agreements with the Italian navy.

3. All means are to be utilized to bring up the Airborne Corps together with the 22nd Division, which has again been placed under command of the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, into the assembly area to be designated by the latter. The necessary trucking space is to be made available to the Wehrmacht transportation chief by the high commands of the army and Luftwaffe. The transport movements must not lead to any delay in the strategic concentration for Barbarossa.

April 28, 1941

4. For antiaircraft protection in Greece and in Crete the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe may draw upon the antiaircraft units of the Twelfth Army. The commanders in chief of the Luftwaffe and of the army will make the necessary arrangements for their relief or replacement.

5. After occupation of the island, the Airborne Corps in whole or in part will have to be made ready for further employment. Its early replacement by forces of the army is therefore to be provided for.

For construction of the coastal defense by the commander in chief of the navy, guns captured by the army may utilized if necessary.

6. I require the commanders in chief to report to me on the measures planned, and I require the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe to report also on the projected date for the completion of preparations. I myself will issue the order for execution of the operation.

Adolf Hitler

For Hitler, the campaign in the Balkans ended on April 26. On this day, he went on an excursion to Graz and, wearing a leather coat, inspected a national, political reform school. Afterwards, he visited "liberated" southern Styria and the city of Maribor on the Drau River.¹⁷⁷

On April 27, Hitler appeared in Klagenfurt and "spent a moment" in front of the monument dedicated to the mountain troops of the First World War.¹⁷⁸

On April 28, Hitler was back in Berlin. He received Graf von der Schulenburg, who had returned from Moscow, at the Reich Chancellery.¹⁷⁹

The ambassador labored to convince Hitler of the peaceful intent of the Soviet Union. Of course, this did not work. Angered by the Russian-Yugoslav Nonaggression Pact of April 5,¹⁸⁰ according to Schulenburg's record, "the Führer then said that it was not yet clear who had pulled the strings in the overthrow of the Yugoslav government, England or Russia." Hitler maintained that "he had been forewarned by events in Serbia. What had happened there was to him an example of the political unreliability of a state."

Finally, the ambassador pointed to the enormous deliveries the Russians had made. But Hitler was not in a mood to hear good things about Russians. He claimed that "Russian deliveries were limited by transportation conditions" and ended the discussion. After all, why should he talk with a "miserable, unworldly German diplomat"¹⁸¹ about Russia? It was time to issue concrete instructions for Operation Barbarossa. He permitted the necessary discussions with Finland to take place.¹⁸²

April 29, 1941

On April 29, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese Emperor Hirohito on his fortieth birthday.¹⁸³

At noon on the same day, Hitler spoke at the Sportpalast in Berlin before “nearly nine thousand officer candidates of the army, navy, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS.”¹⁸⁴

Hitler first greeted Raeder, Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Himmler, who had lined up in front of him. In his speech, he discussed the standard three themes: the inevitability of struggle in life, the relationship between population and Lebensraum, and the Germans as not only the best but also the numerically strongest people. He juggled all sorts of figures and followed them up with nearly endless “party narratives.”¹⁸⁵ He spoke about the “inner theater of war” after 1918, about nationalism and socialism, about the seizure of power, and so forth.

Finally, he addressed the present situation and maintained that it was different from that in 1914.

Today the German nation is united as never before. Today the Reich rules a large economic area. Today the German Wehrmacht is doubtlessly the most gigantic instrument of war of all time that there ever was on this earth.

He was not able to say anything concrete about the end of the war, however. Instead, he declared that he would never capitulate, that is, submit to the “will of another.”

And when you ask me, “Führer, how long will the war last?” then I can only tell you: until we have won! No matter what the circumstances! There was one word which I, as a National Socialist, refused to acknowledge in the struggle for power: Capitulation! I never knew this word and I shall never know this word as the Führer of the German Volk and as your supreme commander. Once more, this one word is “capitulation,” and all it means is submission to the will of another—never, never! And you have to think exactly the same way.

The Führer spoke the truth here. “Submission to the will of another” was undoubtedly the worst thing he could imagine.

Afterwards, Hitler hinted that he might be forced to make decisions which “the individual might not understand.” In all likelihood, he was referring to the campaign against Russia, since, until then, only von Papen had been enthusiastic about this idea.

If the leadership, if I, make decisions which the individual might not understand—where would we be now if we had waited only eight days in the south?¹⁸⁶

May 1, 1941

In concluding, Hitler imparted a few sayings to the young officers, among them the following:

Pain is the eternal companion of man. Wherever a German officer stands, German soldiers will always rally about him.

Since Göring was not present, Raeder, as the senior officer, spoke the final words. He affirmed that the young officers would “die heroically.” Then he cheered his supreme commander with three cries of *Sieg Heil!*

On April 30, Hitler visited von Ribbentrop at his apartment in Berlin-Dahlem and congratulated him on his forty-eighth birthday.¹⁸⁷

On the same day, conferences on the future conduct of military operations took place at the Reich Chancellery. The defeat of Yugoslavia and Greece had been so swift that hardly more time was needed than Hitler had allocated for Operation Marita (against Greece from bases in Bulgaria).

Hitler now regarded the campaign in the Balkans in 1941 as a parallel to the campaign in Norway in 1940.¹⁸⁸ He was convinced that he could afford such operations on the periphery without endangering his main operations (the campaign in France in 1940, and the campaign in Russia in 1941). Therefore, it was unreasonable to blame the failure of the campaign in Russia, as he later did, on its delayed beginning, or on the putsch in Belgrade, or on Mussolini’s adventure in Greece.¹⁸⁹

Had Hitler truly wished to attack Russia earlier than he did, he could have set the date for this on April 30, 1941, for late May or early June, even in due consideration of concentration and transportation taking four weeks. However, he chose Sunday, June 22,¹⁹⁰ instead. Perhaps he hoped the terrain would be in better condition by then,¹⁹¹ perhaps because he first wished to see through Operation Mercury, the conquest of Crete. The English should see that “nothing was impossible” and that he was capable of taking even a large island from the air. Then they would undoubtedly come to appreciate his point of view, as soon as Barbarossa began. If they tried to interfere with his plans by landing in Portugal, for instance, he would counter with Operation Isabella¹⁹² and destroy their plans.

Hitler’s thoughts on April 30 were taken down in three secret orders from the Führer headquarters, dated May 1 and 9. They read as follows:¹⁹³

May 1, 1941

Führer Headquarters, May 1, 1941

Conference with Chief L on April 30, 1941

1. Timetable Barbarossa: The Führer has decided: beginning Barbarossa: June 22, from May 23 on, planning for maximum performance. At beginning of operations, OKH reserves will not have arrived in designated areas.

2. Relative power in Operation Barbarossa: Sector North: German and Russian forces about the same. Sector Center: strong German superiority. Sector South: Russian superiority.

3. Russian assembly: further strong troop movement to the German-Russian border.

4. Assessment of development Barbarossa by commander in chief of the army: expected hard frontier battles, duration up to four weeks. In the longer term, only weak resistance has to be expected. Assessment of Russian soldiers: wherever placed, the Russian will give battle to the end.

5. Talks with Finland. Talks approved by the Führer in accordance with OKW./WFSt./Abt. LIOP. 44 594/41 g. K. Chefs. of April 28, 1941.

6. Talks with Hungary only possible in last third of the month of May. Führer thinks Hungarians willing to take defensive measures along border with Russia, but will not permit German forces into Hungary.

7. Talks with Romania will be possible only later.

8. Disguise talks with friendly countries: German attack planned in the west, need to cover front in the east. Participation of friendly countries as purely defensive measures.

9. Iberian Peninsula: Führer expects English landing in Portugal, an enlargement of approaches to Gibraltar, and possible establishment of aerial bases in Morocco.

10. Distribution of forces: [technical details follow].

Führer Headquarters, May 1, 1941

Re: Spain and Portugal. The Führer expressed the following ideas:

1. Increasingly frequent references in the English press and propaganda to German preparations for an attack on the Iberian Peninsula and on Gibraltar especially.

It is possible that the English themselves are looking for a pretext for landing in Spain or Portugal at an appropriate time (Barbarossa). Simultaneous attacks to expand approaches to Gibraltar are possible; attempt of intervention in Morocco cannot be ruled out either.

In view of the forces and means of transportation at the disposal of the enemy a simultaneous landing in France can be excluded in the event he carries out his supposed intentions on the Iberian Peninsula.

Führer Headquarters, May 9, 1941

1. The operation has the code name "Isabella." The commander in chief west is charged with its preparation and implementation.

May 4, 1941

This year also, Hitler did not find the time to say a few words on "Labor Day," May 1. He was busy preparing a victory speech for the Reichstag on the campaign in the Balkans. And so, on May 1, he had his deputy speak.

Rudolf Hess chose to give the talk at the Messerschmidt Works in Augsburg.¹⁹⁴ He presented the Pioneer of Labor award in gold to Reichsleiter Max Amann, Reich Minister Ohnesorge, and the aircraft designer Willy Messerschmidt. Hess spoke at great length, mentioning his personal interest in the Messerschmidt Works. Ten days later, it became apparent just where this "personal interest" had led him!

At 6:00 p.m. on May 4, Hitler spoke before the Reichstag, reporting triumphantly on the campaign in the Balkans.

He began his speech in the following manner:¹⁹⁵

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

At a time when deeds are everything and words count for little, it is not my intention to step before you as the elected representatives of the German Volk more often than absolutely necessary.

While he claimed that words "count for little," he nevertheless gave a wordy account of the campaigns in Poland, Norway, Belgium, and France, as well as of his repeated "peace offers."

Once he had reached the topic of the air war, he again threatened to strike back "a hundred times" and called Churchill a "fool," a "drunk," and a "madman."

He [Churchill] has now got this war. My promise to pay him back for every bomb a hundred times from a certain point on, if necessary, has not even once moved this man to think about the criminal nature of his actions. He declared that this did not weigh on his conscience. Yes, he even assured us that, after such bomb attacks, the British people looked up to him all the more with radiant cheerfulness, so that every time he returned to London he did so with his strength renewed! Perhaps Mr. Churchill's belief, fixed as it was, that he could continue to wage war in this manner was given new strength. However, we are no less determined to strike back a hundred times in the future for every bomb, if necessary, and to do so until the British people have rid themselves of this criminal and his methods.

And if Mr. Churchill from time to time thinks that he needs to lend force and emphasis to his war through propaganda, then we are likewise willing to begin the war in this way. The appeal of this fool and his satellites to the German Volk to leave me on May 1 of all days can only be explained by either a paralytic disease or the delusion of a drunk. In this abnormal mental state also lies the cause of the decision to transform the Balkans into a theater of war. For five years, this man has been running like a madman through Europe, looking

May 4, 1941

for something to burn. Regrettably, there are always hirelings to be found who will open the gateway to their countries for this international incendiary.

Since, in the course of the winter, he had managed to force the view on the British people, clouded in claims and swindle, that the German Reich—exhausted by the campaign last year—was at the end of its tether, he now felt obliged to start a new fire in Europe in order to prevent an awakening. He returned to the project which he had already had in mind in the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940.

My deputies, men of the Reichstag, you will recall the published documents of *La Charité*,¹⁹⁶ which revealed an attempt to transform the Balkans into a European theater of war as early as the winter 1939-1940. The men responsible for arranging this undertaking were Mr. Churchill, Halifax, Daladier, Paul Reynaud, General Weygand, and General Gamelin. As the documents make clear, they counted on the possibility, in the event that this assassination attempt on the peace in southeastern Europe succeeded, of mobilizing around a hundred divisions in the interest of England. The sudden collapse in May and June of last year caused these plans to be given up for the time being. However, already last autumn, Mr. Churchill again began to consider this problem. If it had become more difficult in the meantime, then this was due to a development in the Balkans; a change in Romania which once and for all excluded this state as a possible ally for England. The new Romania under the leadership of General Antonescu advocated an exclusively Romanian policy, irrespective of the hopes of the British war profiteers. In addition to this, there is the attitude of Germany itself.

My deputies, before I speak about this question today, I want to give an overview of the goals of German policy in the Balkans as I have them in mind, and how we will go about reaching them.

1. As before, the German Reich has no territorial or selfish political interests in the Balkans. This means that the German Reich is not interested in the territorial problems of these states, or their domestic situation, for whatever selfish reasons.

2. However, the German Reich has labored to establish close economic ties with these states and to consolidate them. This was not only in the interest of the Reich, but also in the interest of the countries themselves, for, if ever the emergency economies of two trading partners rationally complemented each other, then this was the case with the Balkan states and Germany. Germany is an industrial state and needs foodstuffs and raw materials. The Balkan states are agrarian; they produce raw materials and need industrial products. This inevitably resulted in the possibility of a very fruitful expansion of mutual trade. If English or American circles regard this as an unjustified penetration of the Balkans by Germany, then this is a stupid as well as a brazen presumption, because every state will conduct its economic policy in accordance with the interests of its people and not in accordance with the interests of foreign, rootless, Jewish-democratic capitalists. Besides, England as well as America could work in these areas only as sellers, never as buyers. It takes the entire macroeconomic stupidity of capitalist democracies to imagine that states can

May 4, 1941

exist in the long run if they are obliged to buy from you, but you do not want to and cannot buy anything from them. Not only has Germany sold to the Balkan states, but it has also been the biggest buyer there, a consistent and solid buyer. It has paid for the products of the farmer in the Balkans with the labor of the German industrial worker, and not with the swindle of monies and currency which have suffered from chronic inflation for years.

Therefore, it was not surprising that Germany became the most important trading partner of the Balkan states. This was not only in the interest of the Germans, but also as much in the interest of the people of the Balkans themselves. Only the purely capitalist-oriented brains of our Jewish democracies could claim that if one state delivers machines to another, it thereby dominates this state. In truth, a like domination could only be a mutual one. Actually, it is easier to make do without machines than without foodstuffs or raw materials. Thus, the partner who receives grain or raw materials for his machines is perhaps more tied down than the recipient of industrial products. No! There were neither victor nor vanquished in this business, only partners. And it is the great ambition of the German Reich of the National Socialist Revolution to be a decent partner, paying with decent, solid ware and not with democratic, fraudulent paper (*demokratische Schwindelpapire*).

3. If one wishes to speak of political interests in this matter, then the German Reich has had only one interest in view of this, namely, to see its trading partner internally healthy and strong. The German Reich has done everything to contribute help to these countries with its influence, assistance, advice, and deeds, in order to consolidate their existence and their domestic order, irrespective of their forms of government. Indeed, adherence to this approach has led to the increasing prosperity of these countries and the slow emergence of mutual trust. All the greater were the efforts of the incendiary of the world (*Weltbrandstifter*), Churchill, to disrupt this peaceful development and, through completely worthless British promises of assistance, British guarantees, and so on, to force on this pacified area in Europe an element of disquiet, insecurity, distrust, and, finally, conflict. In this, he had the support of all those dark phenomena who, influenced by the British in economic and ideological questions, are willing to sacrifice the interests of their own people for the benefit of their material and spiritual patrons.

With like "guarantees," they first trapped the Romanian state and then, above all, the Greek. That there was no power behind these guarantees to give real assistance, that it was only a question of luring states to go off the rails in the interest of British policy has been amply proven in the meantime. Romania has had hell to pay for this guarantee, which was intended to estrange it from the Axis powers.

Greece, which least needed a like guarantee, was likewise ready to heed the English birdcall and to tie its fate to the financial patronage of its royal lord. Even today, I believe that I owe it to historical truth to differentiate between the Greek people and their narrow, corrupt class of leaders. Inspired by a king enslaved to England, it had its eye not on fulfilling the tasks of the Greek government, but on appropriating the goals of the British war policy. I

May 4, 1941

sincerely regretted this. For me, as a German whose education as a youth as well as in later life was imbued with a profound admiration for the civilization and art of the country from which the first light of human beauty and dignity emerged, it was very hard and bitter to watch this development without being able to do anything against it. Through the documents of La Charité, we had gained insight into the activities of the forces which, sooner or later, were bound to bring terrible disaster upon the Greek state.

In late summer of last year, Mr. Churchill had managed to substantiate the Platonic guarantees to Greece in the heads of certain elements to such an extent that the result was a persistent series of violations of neutrality. Primarily, this concerned Italy. Thus, already in October of 1940, it was felt necessary to approach the Greek government with proposals and to demand guarantees of a nature suited to end this situation which had become unbearable for Italy. Given the influence of the British warmongers, this request was brusquely rejected, and the peace in the Balkans ended. The beginning of bad weather, snow, storms, and rain, in combination with the truly valiant resistance of the Greek soldiers—I must do justice to history here—left the government in Athens enough time to rethink its unfortunate decision and to search for a reasonable solution to the situation.

Germany, with the faint hope of somehow contributing to a clarification of the question, did not sever relations with Greece. However, it was my duty to point out to the world that Germany would not stand by and watch a reenactment of the Salonika idea of the World War without taking action. Regrettably, my warning that if the English tried to gain a foothold in Europe we were determined immediately to force them back out to sea was not taken seriously enough. And so we looked on all winter, as the English increasingly tried to establish bases for a new Salonika army. They began to lay out airports, attended to organization on the ground, convinced that this would allow the deployment to be conducted more speedily. Finally, there was the continuous transport of matériel, carrying equipment for an army, which—in the opinion and insight of Mr. Churchill—was to be brought to Greece within a few weeks. As mentioned earlier, my deputies, this did not remain hidden from us. We carefully watched these peculiar activities for many months, though with restraint.

The setback which the Italian army suffered in North Africa, due to the technical inferiority of its antitank defenses and of its tanks, finally convinced Mr. Churchill that the time had come to move the theater of war from Libya to Greece. He withdrew the remaining tanks, as well as the infantry divisions made up mainly of Australians and New Zealanders. He was convinced that he was pulling off a coup which would set the Balkans on fire at once. And so Mr. Churchill made one of the biggest mistakes in this war. Once there was no doubt left that the English intended to gain a foothold on the Balkans, I took the necessary steps to bring the appropriate forces to this area of vital importance for Germany, step by step, in order to be able to counter immediately any potential nonsense by this gentleman.

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I must stress here that all this was not directed against Greece. The Duce himself never asked me to place at his disposal even one German division in a like case. He was convinced that, once the warm season began, the fight against Greece would end quickly and victoriously, in one way or another. I shared this opinion. The concentration of German troops was not a question of helping Italy against Greece. Instead, it was a preventive measure in view of the British attempt to sneak secretly into the Balkans, under cover of the fracas of the Italian-Greek war, in order to bring about a decision there, recalling the example of the Salonika army of the World War, and, above all, to draw other forces into the whirlpool of the war. Among other things, this hope rested on two states: Turkey and Yugoslavia. However, in the years since the seizure of power, I labored especially to bring about close cooperation with these two states, based on economic expedience.

Yugoslavia, as far as its Serbian core was concerned, had been our enemy in the World War. Yes, the World War began in Belgrade. In spite of this, the German Volk, which is not resentful by nature, did not harbor any hatred. Turkey was our ally in the World War. The unfortunate outcome of this struggle weighed Turkey down as much as it did us. The great, ingenious creator of young Turkey¹⁹⁷ was the first to set a wonderful example for the uplifting of those allies who had been forsaken by fortune and had suffered a terrible fate. While Turkey maintained independence in its decision-making, thanks to the realistic attitude of its state leadership, Yugoslavia became the victim of British intrigues.

My deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

Most of you know—above all, my old party comrades—how hard I tried to establish sincere relations, understanding, and even friendship between Germany and Yugoslavia. I worked on this for years. I believed I was supported in this by individual representatives of this country who thought close cooperation between our two states would be beneficial, as I did. Once the Balkans threatened to be drawn into this war, sooner or later, by the British intrigues, I labored to do everything in my power to keep Yugoslavia out of so dangerous an involvement. In this spirit, our foreign minister, party comrade von Ribbentrop, undertook in numerous meetings and talks to point out, with the patience which is characteristic of him, and with ingenious persistence, the expedience, yes, the necessity, of keeping at least this part of Europe out of this wretched war. In this spirit, he approached the Yugoslav government with proposals of a nature so excellent and loyal that, even in the former Yugoslav state, voices in favor of close cooperation were heard with increasing frequency. In this sense, it is perfectly correct when Mr. Halifax¹⁹⁸ today declares that it was not Germany's intention to bring about a war in the Balkans. Yes, it is right that we sincerely labored to open up an avenue, by initiating close cooperation with Yugoslavia, for ending the conflict with Greece while allowing for the justified ambitions of Italy.

The Duce not only approved of our efforts to bring Yugoslavia into a community of interests as regards our desire for peace but also supported them with all his power. So finally it became possible to move Yugoslavia to accede

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to the Tripartite Pact, which asked nothing of Yugoslavia, but held only advantages for it. I owe it to historical truth to state today that this pact and the supplemental agreement did not oblige Yugoslavia to render assistance. Quite the contrary! Yugoslavia received solemn assurances from the parties of the Tripartite Pact that it would not be approached with requests for assistance, and also that we were willing to refrain from the start from transporting war matériel across its territory. Beyond this, in response to a substantiated claim by its government, Yugoslavia received the assurance that, in the event of territorial readjustments in the Balkans, it would be granted sovereign access to the Aegean Sea, which, among other things, would include the city of Salonika. And thus, on March 25 of this year, a pact was signed in Vienna which held out the prospect of a great future for the Yugoslav state and might secure peace in the Balkans.

My deputies, you will understand that I left this beautiful city on the Danube River that day with a feeling of true happiness. Not only did my work in foreign policy over eight years appear to bear fruit, but I also thought that perhaps, at the last minute, I had rendered a German intervention in the Balkans superfluous.

Two days later, all of us were shaken by the news of the coup of a handful of hired putschists. Their deed brought the jubilant cry of the British prime minister, who proclaimed that he finally had something good to report. My deputies, you will further understand that now I immediately ordered the attack. One cannot treat the German Reich in this way. You cannot plead for friendship for years, you cannot conclude a treaty which only benefits the other party and then see how, overnight, not only this treaty is broken, but also the representatives of the German government are insulted in response, the military attaché is threatened, his assistant is injured, countless other Germans are ill-treated; offices, schools, and exhibition halls, and so on, are demolished; the apartments of Reich Germans are destroyed; and ethnic Germans are hunted down and killed, as though they were fair game.

God knows I wanted peace.

If Mr. Halifax jeers that this was well known and that is why they had to force us to fight, as though this meant the triumph of British statesmanship, then all I can do, confronted with such baseness, is to protect the interests of the Reich with the means, which, thank God, are at our disposal. I was able to make this decision all the more calmly as I knew it to be in agreement with the following realities:

1. the unchanging loyal sentiment and attitude of Bulgaria toward the German Reich, and

2. the now likewise justly outraged public opinion in Hungary.

Both our old allies had to regard such an act as a provocation, especially since it was committed by a state which once before had set Europe aflame and on whose conscience, as a result, rested the enormous suffering of Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

The general instructions for the conduct of operations, issued by me through the high command of the Wehrmacht on March 27, set the army and

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the Luftwaffe a difficult task. Literally with a flick of the wrist, an additional great assembly had to be initiated; units which had already arrived had to be moved again; supplies had to be secured; the Luftwaffe had to take up position in numerous improvised operational bases which were, in part, flooded at first. Without the understanding assistance of Hungary, as well as the very loyal attitude of Romania, it would hardly have been possible to carry out the instructions as ordered in the little time available. I chose April 6 as the date for the attack. On this day, Group South, deployed in Bulgaria, was ready for the attack. The deployment of further armies would follow immediately once they were ready. The dates fixed were April 8, or 10 and 11, respectively.

The idea of the operations was the following:

1. To advance with one army out of Bulgaria toward Greek Thrace in the direction of the Aegean Sea. The point of main effort was on the right wing, where deployment of one mountain division and one tank division was to force a breakthrough to Salonika,

2. To push a second army through in the direction of Skopje with the objective of establishing in the speediest manner possible a connection with the Italian forces in Albania. These two operations were to start on April 6.

3. Another operation, which started on the eighth, provided for a breakthrough of one army out of Bulgaria in the general direction of Nish, with the objective of reaching the area around Belgrade. In cooperation with a German corps, the Banat was to be occupied on the tenth, and, from there, Belgrade was to be attacked from the north.

4. On the eleventh, an army assembling in Carinthia-Styria and western Hungary was to begin an offensive in the general direction of Zagreb-Sarajevo and Belgrade.

In this connection, we entered into voluntary agreements with our allies Italy and Hungary. The Italian armed forces were intended to advance along the coast, from their Julian front in the general direction of Albania, and from Albania across Scutari to join hands with the units there, as well as to break through the Yugoslav frontier positions across from Skopje to join up with the German army advancing in this section, and finally to break through the Greek front in Albania and, if possible, to push it back to the sea. At the same time, the Dalmatian and Ionian Islands were to be occupied, and all other bases taken. Between the two air forces as well, there had been agreements on cooperation.

The command of the German armies deployed against Macedonia and Greece was in the hands of Field Marshal von List, who had proved exceedingly successful in previous campaigns. This time also, under the most difficult circumstances, he fulfilled this mission in a superior manner. The forces advancing from the southwest and from Albania against Yugoslavia were under the command of Colonel General von Weichs. He, too, along with the units subordinate to him, reached his objectives in the shortest time possible. The army and Waffen SS, operating under the high command of Field Marshal von Brauchitsch and the chief of the general staff, Colonel General Halder, forced the Greek Thracian army to capitulate after only five days, effected a union with the Italian forces advancing from Albania, brought Salonika into German

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hands, forced Serbia to capitulate after twelve days, and thereby created the conditions for the difficult as well as glorious breakthrough from Larissa to Athens. This operation was crowned by the occupation of the Peloponnesus and numerous Greek islands. The high command of the Wehrmacht will undertake a detailed appraisal of these truly historic accomplishments. Its chief, Field Marshal Keitel, and General Jodl proved as outstanding as always in these operations.

The Luftwaffe, under the personal high command of the Reichsmarschall and his chief of the general staff, General Jeschonnek, was deployed in two groups under the command of Colonel General Löhner and General von Richthofen. Its tasks were the following:

1. To beat the enemy air force, to destroy its ground organization,
2. To attack all militarily significant targets in the center of the conspiracy, Belgrade, and thus to eliminate them from the start, and
3. To help the engaged German troops, through the active deployment of planes and antiaircraft defenses, to break down the resistance of the enemy, to make his escape difficult, to preclude his embarkation, if possible, and to give crucial help to the tasks of the army through the deployment of airborne troops and parachutists.

After this report on operations, Hitler felt the moment had come to say a word of consequence: "Nothing is impossible for the German soldier!" He declared as follows:

My Deputies!

The German Wehrmacht has outdone itself in this campaign! The deployment alone presented many difficulties. The attack on the moderately fortified positions, especially along the Thracian front, belongs among the most difficult tasks for an army. During this campaign, tanks fought on terrain which previously had been thought impassable for tanks. Motorized units attained achievements to the credit of the man, his expertise, his courage, his endurance, as well as the quality of the matériel. Infantry, tank, and mountain divisions, as well as the units of the Waffen SS, competed with one another in an untiring deployment of valor and dedication, endurance and tenacity, to reach the command objectives. The work of the general staff was again truly outstanding. The Luftwaffe has added to its historic glory a new, special one: with self-sacrifice and daring which only the man who knows the difficulties of the terrain can appreciate, it flew sorties for days, often in terrible climatic conditions which, only a short time ago, had been thought completely impossible. As always, antiaircraft guns accompanied the infantry and tank divisions on roads, which could barely be described as such.

Only one sentence can be written about this campaign: nothing is impossible for the German soldier!

In this theater of war, the drivers of the combat vehicles, as well as those of the columns, the drivers of the supply convoys, of the tractors of the artillery and antiaircraft artillery deserve special mention. In the struggle against

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fortified positions, in the construction of bridges and roads, our engineers deserve a special page of glory. The signal corps deserves our highest praise. Across bottomless roads, dynamited streets, talus and scree material, narrow paths through the rocks, torrential streams, broken bridges, sky-high passes, bare cliffs, the triumphant march advanced and extinguished the war in two states within three weeks.

We realize how great a share our allies had in these successes. Especially the six-month-long struggle of Italy in Greece, under the most difficult circumstances and exacting sacrifices, not only tied down the main Greek force but also weakened it so considerably that its collapse became inevitable. The Hungarian army also rendered proof of its old glory. It occupied the Batshka and, along with its motorized units it marched forward across the Sava River. To do justice to history, I am obliged to state that, of the enemies confronting us, the Greek soldier fought with death-defying valor. He surrendered only after further resistance had become impossible and senseless.

However, I am now forced to speak about that adversary who occasioned this struggle and was the reason for it. As a German and as a soldier, I hold it to be beneath me ever to disparage a valiant enemy. It appears to me to be necessary, however, to protect the truth from the lies of a man who as a soldier is a miserable politician, and as a politician is likewise a miserable soldier. Mr. Churchill, who began this fight, is searching for something to say which, sooner or later, as in the case of Norway or Dunkirk, can be transformed by lies into a success. I find this dishonorable, but understandable with this man. If ever someone else, as a politician, suffered so many defeats and, as a soldier, witnessed so many catastrophes, he would not have remained in office six weeks, unless he possessed the one ability which distinguishes Mr. Churchill, namely, to lie with a pious face for as long as it takes to distort the truth to such an extent that the most terrible defeat is transformed into a glorious victory. Mr. Churchill can befog his countrymen with this, but he cannot eliminate the consequences of his defeats.

A British army of sixty to seventy thousand men landed in Greece. Before the catastrophe, the same man maintained it had been two hundred forty thousand men. The objective of this army was to attack Germany from the south, to deal it a defeat, and to bring about a turn in the fortunes of war from here, as in 1918. Barely two weeks after the start of operations, the ally driven into the disaster by Mr. Churchill once again, namely, Yugoslavia, was defeated. Three weeks later, the British troops in Greece had been either killed, wounded, taken prisoner, drowned, or chased away. Those are the facts! The prophecy I made during my last Reichstag speech, namely, that wherever the British set foot on the continent, they would be attacked by us and driven back to sea, proved to be more correct than that of Mr. Churchill!

Now he has the nerve to claim that this war cost us seventy-five thousand dead, more than double the campaign in the west. He takes things a step further: through one of his hirelings, he has informed his exceptionally intelligent Englishmen that the British, having slain enormous masses of Germans, finally turned away, disgusted with the slaughter, and, so to speak,

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retreated because of this. And so the Australians and New Zealanders would still be in Greece, had not the English slain so many Germans, with their mixture of the courage of a lion and the softheartedness of a child, that they finally turned away from their own heroic deeds in disgust and horror, climbed aboard their ships, and sailed away. This was probably the reason why we found mostly Australians and New Zealanders among the dead and prisoners of war. Something like that you can tell your audience in a democracy. I will now tell you the results of this campaign in a few short figures.

Hitler once again indulged his arithmomania in the account that followed. Time and again, he stressed the relatively few German losses. This was the last time, however, that he dared to present so frivolous a balance sheet.

In the course of operations against Yugoslavia, excluding soldiers of German ethnicity and Macedonians, who were for the most part released immediately, purely Serb prisoners captured were: six thousand two hundred ninety-eight officers, three hundred thirty-seven thousand eight hundred sixty-four men. These figures are not yet final, they are merely the result of counts up to now. The figure for the Greek prisoners (eight thousand officers, two hundred ten thousand men) cannot be compared with those or taken at face value because, as far as the Greek army of Macedonia and Epirus is concerned, they were surrounded and forced to surrender in the course of common German and Italian operations. In view of the generally valiant behavior of the Greek soldiers, these prisoners were and are being released immediately.

The number of captured English, New Zealand, and Australian officers and men stands at nine thousand. The booty cannot yet be estimated. Our share, due to the effectiveness of German weapons, already amounts to more than half a million rifles, over a thousand guns, thousands of machine guns, antiaircraft guns, mortars, numerous vehicles, and great amounts of ammunition and equipment.

I would like to add to this the amount of enemy tonnage sunk by the Luftwaffe. Seventy-five ships with a tonnage of four hundred thousand tons were destroyed. A hundred forty-seven ships with a tonnage of seven hundred thousand tons were damaged. The deployment of the following German forces led to these results:

1. Thirty-one full divisions and two half-divisions were assigned to operations in the southeast. The initial deployment of these forces took seven days.

2. Of these, eleven infantry and mountain divisions, six tank divisions, three fully motorized and two half-motorized divisions of the army and the Waffen SS actually saw action.

3. Of these divisions, eleven were engaged for more than six days of fighting, and ten for less than six days of fighting.

4. Eleven divisions were not deployed at all.

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5. Already prior to the conclusion of operations in Greece, three divisions could be withdrawn. Eight more divisions were not brought up because they were no longer needed. Two divisions were stopped at the jumping-off points for the same reason.

6. Only five divisions made contact with the English enemy. Of the three panzer divisions included in these, only two were engaged. The third was stopped in the course of operations and, as it was no longer needed, it was likewise withdrawn.

Therefore, I have established that only six panzer divisions, one mountain division, and the *Leibstandarte* actually fought the English, New Zealanders, and Australians.

The losses of the German army and of the German Luftwaffe, as well as of the Waffen SS, have been fewer in this campaign than in any other to date. In the war against Yugoslavia, Greece, that is, Great Britain in Greece, the Wehrmacht recorded the following losses: for the army and Waffen SS: fifty-seven officers and a thousand forty-two noncommissioned officers and men dead; a hundred eighty-one officers and three thousand five hundred seventy-one noncommissioned officers and men wounded; thirteen officers and three hundred seventy-two noncommissioned officers and men missing in action. The Luftwaffe: ten officers and forty-two noncommissioned officers and men dead; thirty-six officers and a hundred four noncommissioned officers and men missing in action.

My deputies! I can only repeat that we feel the difficulty of the sacrifice for the individual families, that the entire German Volk thanks them with all its heart. In sum, the losses were so few that they represent the greatest justification; first, for the approach and timetable of this campaign; second, for the conduct of operations; third, for their implementation.

It is the training of our corps of leaders, which is beyond comparison, the great expertise of our soldiers, the superiority of our equipment, the quality of our ammunition, as well as the ice-cold valor of the individual man which allowed us to secure this historic and truly decisive success with so little sacrifice, and this at the same time as the two allied Axis powers were also able to destroy the so-called success of the British forces in just a few weeks. For we cannot separate the activities of the German Africa Corps, connected with the name of General Rommel, and of the Italian forces in the struggle for Cyrenaica, from the operations on the Balkans. One of the most amateurish (*stümperhaft*) of strategists¹⁹⁹ has lost two theaters of war in one blow. That this man, whom any other people would have court-martialed, arouses new admiration as prime minister in his country is not a sign of that greatness demonstrated by Roman senators in antiquity toward their defeated military commanders, but instead it is evidence of the eternal blindness with which the gods strike those whom they wish to destroy.

The consequences of this campaign are extraordinary. In view of the possibility, proved by the events, that a small clique of conspirators in Belgrade can start a fire against Germany time and again in the service of extra-continental interests, the elimination of this danger means a relaxation of

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tensions in all of Europe. The Danube, an important traffic route, has been secured for all time against further acts of sabotage. Traffic has been fully restored.

The German Reich has no special territorial interests in these areas, aside from a modest correction of its borders which were violated by the World War. Politically, we are only interested in securing the peace in this region; economically, in the establishing of an order which promotes the production of goods and begins anew the exchange of goods for the benefit of all.

It is in the service of a higher justice that those interests also will be considered that are based on ethnographic, historic, and economic conditions. Germany is only an interested observer of this development. We welcome the fact that our allies are now able to satisfy their justified national and political aspirations. We are happy about the establishment of an independent Croatian state, with which we hope to cooperate in the future in friendship and confidence. Especially in the sphere of economics, this can only be to the benefit of both parties. That the Hungarian people are taking a further step to revise the unjust peace treaty which once was imposed on them fills us with heartfelt sympathy. That the injustice done to Bulgaria is being atoned for moves us especially, since we feel that the German Volk has paid a historic debt of gratitude to its comrades in arms of the Great War in rendering this revision possible through the force of its arms. Our ally Italy receives increased political and territorial influence in the Lebensraum which befits it alone. It has earned this through the exceedingly great sacrifice of blood which it has had to make for the future of the Axis since October of last year.

We feel sincere sympathy for the defeated, unfortunate people of Greece. It has become the victim of its king and of a small, blinded group of leaders. However, it has fought so valiantly that its enemies cannot deny it the proper respect. Perhaps the Serb people will draw the only proper conclusion from this, its catastrophe: the officers of the putsch are a misfortune for the country. This time, those concerned will not so quickly forget the "noble" manner in which the state and its leaders, for whom they had the honor to sacrifice themselves, abandoned them, in accordance with the principle: never expect gratitude once you've served your purpose.

Rarely has greater cynicism been employed in honoring the sacrifice of little people than in this case. For, to drive nations as helpmates into a war and then to declare that one did not really believe in success from the start, that one only did this in order to force someone to fight who did not want to fight in this theater of war, must be the most disgraceful thing which world history has to offer. Only an age in which capitalist greed and political hypocrisy unite, as they do in the democracies today, is capable of regarding such a procedure as so little dishonorable that its responsible masterminds are able to boast of it publicly.

My deputies! Men of the Reichstag!

As we review this last campaign, we once again realize the significance of the best training of the soldiers, as well as of the best equipment. So much blood was saved by what cost so much sweat beforehand. What was taught to our

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soldiers in terms of expertise during their relentless, laborious training proved very advantageous, particularly in this operation. Thanks to this training, thanks to the expertise of the German soldiers and their leaders, a minimum of blood achieved a maximum result. Alas, this minimum sacrifice necessitated maximum weaponry, the quality of this weaponry, maximum ammunition, and the quality of this ammunition. I do not belong to those men who see war as a purely material problem, for matter is dead, and only man gives it life. Alas, even the best soldier must fail if he is handed a bad or otherwise unsatisfactory weapon. The lives of many of our sons therefore lie in the hands of the homeland. Its sweat can spare the blood of our soldiers. Thus, with a view to our fighting front, it is the highest duty of the German Volk to do everything in its power to give the front the weapons it needs. After all, aside from all the other reasons, it was the lack of a new weapon for the offensive strong enough to decide the war and of a corresponding weapon for the defensive which ultimately caused the defeat in the World War.

What our soldiers are capable of achieving, they have proved in this campaign. The sum of the efforts of the individual and of the whole can never be fully appreciated by the homeland. Whatever it places at the disposal of the nation in its fateful struggle, in terms of working power, this stands in no relation to the work millions of our men did at the front, must do, and will do. And I do not want this performance ever to be outdone by any other state. Yes, not only that. We all are obliged to see to it that this advantage we possess does not diminish any further; instead, it should become greater all the time. This is not a problem of capital, it is a problem of labor and, therefore, of our will and our abilities.

Hitler subsequently intimated the increasing need for women to be employed in the war and armament industry. This clearly indicated that Germany's reserves of soldiers and armament workers were beginning to run low. And the man-devouring campaign in Russia had not even started! Hitler declared as follows:

I believe that, above all, the German girl and the German woman are capable of making an even greater contribution. Millions of German women in the countryside are out in the fields replacing the men through hard work. Millions of German women and girls work in factories, workshops, and offices, and do a man's job there. It is not unjust when we demand that many hundreds of thousands of others take these millions of working German Volksgenossen as an example. For, if today we are in a position to mobilize the work of half of Europe in this struggle, still our own Volk stands at the fore of this working process as its most valuable element. If today the democratic agitators of a country—whom the German Volk has not done anything to, and whose claim that it intends to do something to them is an absurd lie—if they threaten to suffocate the inconvenient National Socialist people's state with the might of their capitalist system, their material production, then there is only one answer to this: the German Volk will never again see a second year 1918, but instead it

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will rise up to even greater achievements in all spheres of national resistance. It will all the more fanatically avow the oath that neither the force of arms nor time will ever bend or break us!²⁰⁰

It will hence maintain the superiority of its armament and not allow its advantage to be lessened. Even if the German soldier now already possesses the best weapons in the world, he will receive still better ones this year and the next year. And if, in contrast to the World War, the matériel side of this war today does not represent a burden to him, then this situation will all the more not deteriorate but will improve in the future. We thus are obliged to integrate the working power of the entire nation in this most gigantic armament process of world history. The necessary steps will be taken with National Socialist determination and thoroughness.

My deputies, men of the Reichstag! Beyond this, I can assure you that, calmly and with the greatest confidence, I look to the future. The German Reich and its allies represent a military, economic, and, above all, moral power which is superior to any conceivable coalition in the world. The German Wehrmacht will always intervene whenever and wherever necessary. The confidence of the German Volk will accompany the soldiers on their way. It knows that the war of this world is the result only of the greed of a few international warmongers and the Jewish democracies behind them. These criminals have rejected the German willingness for peace because it is contrary to their capitalist interests. Who, in such a satanic undertaking, dares use the name "God," commits blasphemy against Providence and, according to our profound conviction, his reward can only be destruction. So, beyond this, today we fight not only for our own existence, but to free the world of a conspiracy which knows no scruples in subordinating the happiness of nations and man to its base egotism. After a struggle of fifteen years, the National Socialist movement once defeated these enemies at home; the National Socialist state will know how to defend itself abroad, too.

The year 1941 shall enter history as the greatest year of our rising up! In this spirit, the German Wehrmacht, army, navy, and Luftwaffe will do their duty.

At this point, let me express my gratitude to the German soldier here, who again performed so many outstanding actions in this campaign, and my gratitude to the German Volk in the cities and in the countryside, whose diligence created the conditions for these successes. I would especially like to thank those Volksgenossen who fell as the victims of this war or who are wounded, and those who, as family members, mourn these victims. When, in all this, we look to the almighty ruler of all destinies, then we must be grateful especially for His allowing us to obtain these great successes with the expenditure of so little blood. We can only ask Him not to abandon our Volk in the future either. Whatever we can do to defend ourselves against our enemies shall be done.

A spirit has come to life in this country, the like of which the world has never encountered before! A believing feeling of community has taken hold of our Volk! No power on earth can ever again tear from us what we secured, after

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having followed the wrong track full of inner struggle, and what makes us proud before other people. In the age of the Jewish-capitalist craze for gold, position, and class, the National Socialist people's state stands like a monument of social justice and lucid reason. It will not only outlast this war, but the coming millennium!

Once Hitler had ended, he returned to his seat next to Rudolf Hess. He did not know that this was the last time that he would ever be this close to his "deputy." One week later, the two were worlds apart, and not only the Channel lay between them. . . .

In his closing address, Göring joined the campaign against the British prime minister and declared: "If Churchill thinks that he can do away with the terrible destruction of the city of Plymouth by declaring that he returned from this city feeling refreshed, then we can assure him that we can provide him with enough of such refreshments."

3

Fully satisfied with this Reichstag speech, Hitler returned to the Obersalzberg. On May 7, he sent a congratulatory telegram to First Lieutenant of the Luftwaffe Müncheberg on his fortieth air victory. On May 10, he sent a handwritten letter to Jakob Werlin, the director of the Munich branch of the Daimler-Benz Works, in which he congratulated Werlin on his fifty-fifth birthday. He also sent a congratulatory telegram to the King of Romania on the country's national holiday.²⁰¹

Flying out of Augsburg on the same day, after three earlier attempts which had all failed,²⁰² Rudolf Hess finally managed to escape to England aboard a remodeled "Me110."²⁰³

Since April 27, 1933, Rudolf Hess had been the "Deputy Führer" of the party. On December 1, 1933, he had been appointed Reich minister without portfolio, along with Röhm. Officially, he took part in the codification of domestic laws. In Hitler's Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939, Hess had been designated the Führer's second successor after Göring. Still, it would be an exaggeration to say that Hess played a role of importance in the Third Reich. Aside from social duties, his main task recently had been solemnly to initiate newly-appointed party functionaries into office. When Hess climbed aboard his plane on May 10, it was not so much as the "Deputy Führer" that he did so, but rather as a representative of the old guard of the NSDAP.

These old party comrades had known Hitler throughout the years of domestic struggle and triumph. They were in a position to judge how rapidly things had gone downhill after 1939. They felt the inner insecurity revealed in the decisions of this man. Time and again, they had witnessed how his prophecies had failed to come true and how seriously mistaken he had been in assessing his own potential and that of his opponents abroad. One after the other, the members of the "Old Guard" realized where Hitler's conduct of the affairs of the state was

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leading Germany, the party, and themselves. They knew that the end would be a terrible one, but what could they do about it?

Up to now, only a few old party comrades had more and more come to the obvious conclusion.²⁰⁴ But the longer the war lasted, more of Hitler's old followers began thinking about how they could escape the imminent catastrophe. However, only a few came up with a solution.²⁰⁵

Undoubtedly, the man who was in the best position to assess Hitler's catastrophic policies and their consequences was Rudolf Hess. Hearing of Hitler's decision in the summer of 1940 to attack Russia in order to procure England's friendship probably did it for him.²⁰⁶ Hess was very attached to his family, his wife and three-year-old son, who lived in Munich-Harlaching.²⁰⁷ It was not difficult for him to figure out that, as the "Deputy Führer," he stood to lose his head if the war was lost. And so he decided to distance himself from the Führer before "the frenzy of a cornered maniac would drive Hitler into the worst of all his crimes."²⁰⁸

No matter what opinion one has about Hess's escape to England, one has to admire the circumspection and energy with which he set about mastering this virtually impossible task. He faced the following problems:

He had to escape to a country where Hitler's henchmen could not get at him. Where could he go? Sweden, Russia, Turkey, Spain, and unoccupied France²⁰⁹ were out of the question. The Gestapo would catch him there in no time.

The British Isles were really the only choice he had, since Hitler's grasp did not extend there. However, one needed either a submarine or a plane to get there. To use a submarine was too difficult. A plane, on the other hand, held greater promise. Having been a pilot in the First World War, Hess could hope to obtain a plane somehow, if he went about things cleverly.

The second problem was no less difficult to solve: Hess had somehow to keep Hitler from taking revenge on his wife and son. Whether he liked it or not, he had to leave his loved ones behind in Hitler's Germany.

Hess solved this problem exceedingly well. He beat Hitler at his own game by writing him a letter in which he told Hitler that he would leave in order to realize Hitler's theory of 1919—the *idée fixe* of a friendship with England—in person. After all, Hitler had been unable to

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gain this friendship “in spite of all efforts.” If the Führer didn’t like this idea, he could simply declare Hess insane.

The third problem was not as difficult: Hess wished to avoid being seen as a spy or an agent in England, and as a traitor at home. He decided to wear the uniform of the Luftwaffe during the flight, while, upon arrival in England, he would reiterate the same arguments for peace and friendship which he planned to use in his letter to Hitler. If necessary, he could always feign amnesia or a nervous disorder.

To carry out his venture, Hess had attempted to procure a plane from the man in charge of the airplanes, General Udet, by requesting one for “practice flights” in the summer of 1940. Udet refused, as Hess could not provide him with a special permission from the Führer. To obtain such a permit, naturally, was completely impossible.²¹⁰

Hess had better luck with Professor Messerschmidt in Augsburg. Who was Messerschmidt to refuse a request by the Deputy Führer to make “test flights”? All the more, since in the subsequent months Hess proved an experienced, clever pilot who even advised Messerschmidt on how to make technical improvements on the ‘Me110,’ for example, suggesting the installation of special reserve tanks under the wings, tanks which enabled the pilot to fly longer and further.

At home, Hess was not idle either. Since the autumn of 1940, weather reports from Norway reached him daily by telephone. He acquainted himself with the Kalundborg station in order to use it as a bearing transmitter. At night, he pinned a drawing of the flight path to his bedroom wall and learned the particulars of the route by heart, paying particular attention to the area in Scotland where he wished either to land or to parachute. As a precautionary measure, he marked the “North Sea” as the “Baltic Sea” on his map.

Around 6:00 p.m. on May 10, 1941, Hess finally took off from the airport of the Messerschmidt Works at Augsburg-Haunstetten. In accordance with Hitler’s methods,²¹¹ he chose a Saturday for his coup, because he believed that going on a weekend would attract less attention on both sides of the Channel, and because he anticipated that it would take Hitler until Sunday or Monday to react. He ordered his adjutant Pintsch to wait a few hours before driving to Berchtesgaden and handing his letter to Hitler.

Unnoticed by the Luftwaffe, Hess managed to leave German airspace and fly across the North Sea.²¹² Through a nose dive, he escaped a Spitfire,²¹³ which had given pursuit. He reached the eastern coast of

May 11, 1941

Scotland around 10:00 p.m. (German time), south of Holy Island. Flying low, he passed over Scotland, and shortly prior to 11:00 p.m. he arrived at his destination, Dungavel, the country estate of the Duke of Hamilton.²¹⁴

Hess encountered great difficulties in trying to get out of the plane because of the aerodynamic drag. He lost consciousness and only at the last minute, just before the airplane crashed, did he manage to bail out.

Arriving on the ground,²¹⁵ Hess gave his name as Captain Alfred Horn²¹⁶ and demanded to speak to the Duke of Hamilton. He revealed his true identity to Hamilton and to other interviewers.²¹⁷ He told them that he had come for the sake of peace between Germany and England. The Führer had always desired this peace. A continuation of the struggle would inevitably lead to England's defeat; this would not be in the interest of mankind, and one should try to prevent it. Churchill would have to step down. As foolish as Hess's insistence was, Hitler had often voiced similar views at all sorts of opportune and inopportune occasions after 1939. Since Hess was not on an official mission to England, the British treated him as a prisoner of war.²¹⁸ After the war, he stood trial at Nuremberg.²¹⁹

When Churchill received news of the arrival of this unexpected caller, he remarked: "There are signs that things are beginning to fall apart [in the Third Reich]." ²²⁰

This aptly summed up the Hess case; the Deputy Führer's escape was symptomatic of the change of heart which many old party comrades had undergone in their attitude toward Hitler. Undoubtedly, in the further course of events, many hundreds and thousands would have loved to follow Hess, if only they could have.²²¹

For the time being, the English kept Hess's presence secret. They were waiting for a German reaction. This led Hitler to issue premature news releases, which only made matters worse.

Hitler was still in bed when Hess's adjutant, Pintsch, arrived at the Berghof at 9:30 a.m. on May 11.²²² His manservant Linge knocked at the door and told Hitler that there was a letter from Rudolf Hess for him.

Hitler never dressed as quickly as he did on this morning! A letter from Hess? That was bad news. He had explicitly told his old party comrades not to approach him in writing,²²³ as Hess knew very well. There had to be some devilry behind this!

In uniform, Hitler stood in the great hall on the first floor five minutes later. He opened the letter and read it. Then, he asked Pintsch,

May 12, 1941

who had been summoned: "Do you know the contents of this letter?" And this simpleminded man actually said yes. Hitler immediately had him arrested by a criminal-bureau detective. Now the Berghof was buzzing with life, even though it was a Sunday. There was one agitated conference after another. Göring, Udet,²²⁴ Bormann, and von Ribbentrop were called in. The interpreter Schmidt overheard the Führer saying: "I hope he crashes into the sea!"²²⁵

Hitler wished to hush up the entire affair. A scandal was certain if the public found out that a Reich minister, the "Deputy Führer," and his possible successor, had fled. The possibility that Hess had crashed before reaching his destination was Hitler's only hope. And this hope grew as the hours passed and there were no reports of a landing in the London broadcasts.

By Monday, May 12, Hitler believed he had won. He sent Ribbentrop to Rome to calm the Duce. Hitler himself elaborated a statement which was broadcast throughout Greater Germany:²²⁶

According to official party sources, party comrade Hess, who, because of a progressive disease existing for several years, had been prohibited by the Führer from continuing to fly, recently succeeded, contrary to the order in question, in gaining possession of an airplane.

Around 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 10, party comrade Hess took off from Augsburg on a flight from which he has not returned to date. The confusion of a letter left behind regrettably shows traces of mental derangement, so that there is the danger that party comrade Hess has become the victim of hallucinations.

The Führer immediately ordered the adjutants of party comrade Hess arrested as they had knowledge of these flights and, contrary to the orders of the Führer of which they were aware, had failed to prevent or immediately report them.

Under the circumstances, the National Socialist movement regrettably has to fear that party comrade Hess crashed somewhere on his flight or has been killed in an accident.

While in the course of time people had become used to the lies Hitler would disseminate, especially where questions of domestic or party politics were concerned,²²⁷ this was indeed a bit too much. Hess suffering from "mental derangement" and a "victim of hallucinations"? Only eight days before, he had sat next to Hitler in the Reichstag, and, on May 1, he had delivered an important address in Augsburg!

May 12, 1941

Of course, there were madmen among the leaders of the Third Reich. It was only a question of *who* they were! In any event, it was highly suspicious that Hitler was suddenly calling others “mad.”

It was even more remarkable that, according to Hitler’s statement, Hess had “gained possession of an airplane,” contrary to the will of the Führer, and had left on a flight from which he had not returned. Obviously, he did not wish to return (!), and the Führer had had arrests made.

Even the most innocent people in Germany noticed that there was something wrong with Hitler’s communiqué; something very wrong. Only the Italian ambassador Alfieri was naive enough to express his sympathies to Hitler in a telegram on “the loss of his dearest staff member.”²²⁸

Meanwhile, Hitler had everybody who was somehow connected with the flight arrested and questioned: Hess’ adjutants, secretaries, and mechanics, as well as well-known astrologers, practitioners in magnetotherapy, and so on. Among the persons questioned was the highly favored Professor Karl Haushofer,²²⁹ the founder of the geopolitical Lebensraum theory, and his son Albrecht.²³⁰ At the time that Hess had visited Hitler regularly in the Landsberg prison in 1924 and helped him write down *Mein Kampf*, he had been Karl Haushofer’s assistant at the University of Munich.

Naturally, Mrs. Hess was questioned as well, on May 12. Of course, she had had time to prepare for this and denied any knowledge of her husband’s activities. She confidently demanded to speak immediately to the Führer.²³¹

Thanks to Hitler’s statement, the British now knew that their guest of Saturday night truly was Rudolf Hess. Therefore, they no longer hesitated to make his arrival public in a radio broadcast. Now this whole incident became even more embarrassing for Hitler.

Ribbentrop heard the news when he arrived in Rome.²³² As Hitler’s “No. 1 parrot,”²³³ he immediately undertook to persuade the Italians that Hess had really gone insane. When the Italians informed him that, according to British reports, Hess was spending his time writing, von Ribbentrop grew perceptibly disquieted. On Ribbentrop’s departure, the German ambassador von Mackensen allegedly told Ciano’s secretary Anfuso: “Let’s hope that they will all crash and break their necks; but not here, or we’ll have some unpleasant work to do.”²³⁴

May 13, 1941

Confronted with the reports on British radio, Hitler was forced to issue a new statement on the Hess case.

He chose the "National Socialist Party News Agency" (NSK) as his means to do so, pretending that this source was unrelated to the obviously mistaken earlier communiqué.²³⁵ This public announcement read:²³⁶

Berlin, May 13

The National Socialist Party News Agency announces:

Examination of the papers left behind by Rudolf Hess has thus far revealed that Hess lived under the illusion that he could still bring about an understanding between Germany and England through intervening personally with Englishmen known to him. As information from London has in the meantime confirmed, he indeed bailed out of the airplane over Scotland in the vicinity of the location he was trying to reach, and was found there, apparently injured.

As was known within the party, Rudolf Hess, after suffering from a severe organic disease for years, had recently resorted to various remedies, practitioners in magnetotherapy, astrologers, and so on. At present, it is being determined how far these persons are to be held responsible for bringing about the mental derangement which caused Hess to take this step. It is equally conceivable, however, that Hess was consciously lured into a trap by the English side.²³⁷

The entire manner in which he proceeded already confirms the information contained in the first statement—that he suffered from hallucinations. Better than anyone else, he knew the numerous peace proposals that came from the honest heart of the Führer. Apparently, he deluded himself into believing that by making a personal sacrifice he could prevent a development which, in his eyes, could only end in the complete destruction of the British Empire. As his notes reveal, Hess, the scope of whose duties was restricted to the party, as is well known, had no clear idea about the implementation or the consequences of this step.

The National Socialist Party regrets that this idealist has become the victim of hallucinations with such consequences. This has no effect on the continuation of the war against England, which was forced on the German Volk. As the Führer declared in his last speech, it will be continued until the British rulers are overthrown or willing to make peace.

Hitler's second public announcement was no better than the first. Again, he spoke of "hallucinations," and even of "a severe organic disease" which already had afflicted Hess "for years." This was hard to believe of a man who had just accomplished a daring and unheard-of feat in aviation. If truly he had suffered from "hallucinations," then why had he been allowed to run about freely and to assume public office? And

May 13, 1941

where had the Gestapo been, where the Sicherheitsdienst (SD), where the special surveillance units of the SS assigned to watch party members, when Hess had been making his preparations? And why had there been no mention of Scotland as Hess's destination in the first statement, if he himself had listed it in the papers he had left behind?

As irate as Hitler might have been about the whole Hess affair, he didn't hesitate to use it as an opportunity to expand his political power. As in earlier instances, like the Pfeffer crisis in 1930, the Strasser crisis in 1932, and the Blomberg crisis in 1938, he simply appropriated the office in question. He was able finally to do away with the undesirable position of "deputy Führer." All subaltern tasks were assigned to the servile Bormann.²³⁸ The measure was published as follows:²³⁹

May 12, 1941

The National Socialist Party News Agency announces:

The Führer has decreed the following:

"The former office of the deputy Führer now bears the designation party chancellery. It is subordinate to my person. As before, its leader is party comrade Reichsleiter Martin Bormann."

Adolf Hitler

Hitler carried things even further, summoning all Reichsleiters and Gauleiters to the Reich Chancellery and delivering a speech as he had done during the Strasser crisis. On this May 13, Hitler reiterated the latest version of the Rudolf Hess case, read his letter to the audience, and reported on the status of the investigation.²⁴⁰ The following communiqué was published on the speech:²⁴¹

Berlin, May 13

The National Socialist Party News Agency announces:

Today, a meeting of all Reichsleiters and Gauleiters of the NSDAP, which Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring also attended, took place at the Führer's residence. The leaders of the party rallied to the Führer, who spoke to the assembled men in their determined will to victory.

The discreet mention of the presence of the Reichsmarschall was remarkable in that, as a Reichsleiter, he would be expected to attend such a meeting in any event. As president of the Reichstag, he usually paid homage to Hitler in a short address at such a rally. In view of the situation, however, Hitler apparently felt it was necessary to stress Göring's loyalty. After all, Göring was designated to succeed Hitler even before Hess, and he also was a pilot. Who was to say that he would not also go "insane" and fly from the nest shortly?

May 20, 1941

The German public had to take a lot in terms of public announcements during those days. Many remained silent at this time; many others had no qualms about stating their opinion that, whatever may have happened, Hess, in any event, made a statement: he would not go along with that (Hitler's government) anymore. Others made ironic comments.²⁴²

In the days to come, Hitler was quite happy that Hess did not say more than he did, and that the English let matters be. Of course, he would have acted differently. As he greatly overestimated the power of propaganda, he certainly would have tried to make political capital out of the story.^{243, 244}

On May 13, Admiral Darlan, vice president of the French ministerial council, visited Hitler at the Berghof.²⁴⁵ In view of the pending war against Russia, Hitler had decided to make a gesture by releasing a hundred thousand French prisoners of war who were veterans of the First World War.²⁴⁶

On May 14, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the President of Paraguay, General Hilgino Morino, on the country's national holiday.²⁴⁷

On May 16, the *Völkischer Beobachter* published a somewhat peculiar declaration by the Japanese foreign minister.²⁴⁸ Matsuoka stressed that "there was only one situation in which Japan would not feel obliged to fulfill its obligations under Article III of the Tripartite Pact," that is, if Germany attacked America by itself. This could only mean that Japan was not necessarily going to follow the German lead. After all, Hitler constantly felt provoked by America and, if it came to a clash, it would be most difficult for Japan to judge who was the aggressor.

On May 17, Hitler issued Directive No. 29, which dealt with the chain of command in the Balkans.²⁴⁹ He was careful not to allow his Italian ally too many liberties.

On May 20, parachutists and airborne troops launched the assault on Crete. The battle for the island, which was not mentioned by the OKW until May 24, lasted until June 2 and was marked by heavy losses. It showed that airborne operations are extremely risky if connections to supply bases cannot swiftly be established on land or by sea.²⁵⁰ But why would Hitler care about losses, as long as he drove the British from Crete and showed them that they were not safe from him anywhere, and that therefore it would be best if they made peace with him.²⁵¹

May 23, 1941

On May 22, Hitler, who had returned to the Berghof, received the Italian ambassador Dino Alfieri on the occasion of the second anniversary of the signing of the Pact of Steel.²⁵²

In the middle of May, the Iraqi prime minister Rashid Ali al Kailani, who sympathized with the Axis, had instigated an uprising against the British garrisons in his country. He had requested German assistance. In spite of a number of successful coups, his chances for success were close to zero, as the British military force in the Near East could easily deal with any undertakings of that sort.

Whether Hitler actually believed that the Iraqi could succeed is questionable. After all, as mentioned before, Hitler was a great “admirer” of the British Empire. In the Near East, he continually needled the British in the hope that these slaps in the face would promote their readiness to accept peace on his terms.

On May 23, Hitler issued a bombastic “Directive No. 30: The Middle East,” which read:²⁵³

1. The Arab liberation movement in the Middle East is our natural ally against England. In this connection, the uprising in Iraq has special importance. It strengthens beyond the boundaries of Iraq the forces hostile to England in the Middle East, disturbs English communications, and ties down English troops and shipping at the expense of other theaters of war.

I have therefore decided to advance developments in the Middle East by giving assistance to Iraq.

Whether and how the English position between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf—in connection with an offensive against the Suez Canal—will later be definitively defeated, is to be decided only after Barbarossa.

2. In summing up my specific decisions, I order the following for the support of Iraq:

- the dispatch of a military mission;
- support by the Luftwaffe;
- arms shipments.

3. The military mission (cover name: Special Staff F) is placed under General Felmy of the Luftwaffe.²⁵⁴

Its tasks are as follows:

- (a) to advise and assist the Iraqi armed forces;
- (b) to establish military liaison, where possible, with forces hostile to England outside Iraq as well;
- (c) to gain experience and intelligence for the German Wehrmacht in this area.

Its composition, in conformity with these duties, shall be determined by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

May 23, 1941

The following applies regarding the chain of command:

(a) All Wehrmacht personnel to be sent to Iraq and, in addition, the Syrian liaison unit are subordinate to the head of the military mission.

(b) The head of the military mission is subordinate to the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht with the proviso that orders and directives for the air-force units are issued exclusively by the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe.

(c) The head of the military mission deals only with the military authorities of Iraq. Negotiations with the Iraqi government on affairs of the mission will be conducted by the representative of the Foreign Ministry in Iraq.

In the case of military arrangements that could have foreign-policy repercussions, the head of the military mission must first come to an agreement with the Foreign Ministry representative in Iraq.

(d) The members of the military mission for the time being are considered volunteers (in the manner of the Condor Legion). They wear a tropical uniform with Iraqi insignia. The latter will also be carried by German aircraft.

4. Luftwaffe

Its employment, which is to be limited in numbers, in addition to having a purely military effect, serves also the purpose of strengthening the self-confidence and will to resist of the armed forces and people of Iraq.

The manner and extent of German intervention will be determined by the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe.

5. Arms shipments

The necessary dispositions (shipments from Syria on the basis of the agreement concluded for that purpose with the French, and from Germany) will be made by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

6. Guidance of the propaganda in the Middle East is the responsibility of the Foreign Ministry, which collaborates with the High Command of the Wehrmacht (WFSt/WPr) for that purpose.

The basic idea of the propaganda is as follows:

"The victory of the Axis brings to the countries of the Middle East liberation from the English yoke, and thus the right of self-determination. Whoever loves liberty will therefore join the front against England."

Propaganda against the French position in Syria must be avoided.

7. Insofar as members of the Italian armed forces are engaged in Iraq, there will be cooperation with them on the basis of this directive. Their subordination to the head of the German military mission will be aimed for.

Adolf Hitler

In reality, the promised German assistance consisted of no more than said military mission and the flying of a few troops to Iraq.²⁵⁵ In a fateful manner, the whole undertaking resembled the daring but senseless German attempt to take the Suez Canal from the Near East in the First World War.²⁵⁶

May 27, 1941

The revolt in Iraq had collapsed by June 1. A number of German and Italian soldiers were taken prisoner, that is, put in internment camps. The German planes managed to escape via Syria just in time.

The use of the Syrian airports had unpleasant consequences for Hitler, as British forces and de Gaulle's troops began to occupy Syria on June 8 as a result. The French troops under General Dentz²⁵⁷ put up a resistance until June 11 and then surrendered. From this time on, Hitler no longer had access to the Near East.

On May 26, the public was informed that the German battleship *Bismarck*²⁵⁸ had made contact with the superior British naval forces in the Atlantic. In consideration of the "Navy theory,"²⁵⁹ the German naval war conduct in World War II had sought to deploy the few existing naval units as much as possible, especially in the Atlantic. Of the four German battleships, the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* had been so badly damaged in battle against the British battleship *Malaya* in February 1941 that they were forced to return to dock at Brest.

On the night of May 22, the *Bismarck* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* had sailed out of Bergen. On May 24, they made contact with the enemy between Iceland and Greenland and exchanged fire with a British naval formation. In the course of the battle, the British battle cruiser *Hood*, the largest of its kind in the world,²⁶⁰ sustained a direct hit from the *Bismarck*. Since its magazine was immediately affected, the ship blew up. Of its crew of fourteen hundred men, virtually no one survived.

The British fleet then pursued the two German ships. While the *Prinz Eugen* reached safety in the harbor of Brest, the *Bismarck* was hit by a torpedo fired from a plane belonging to the aircraft carrier *Victorious*, on the night of May 24. This reduced its speed.

On May 26, four hundred nautical miles west of Brest, the *Bismarck* sustained two new torpedo hits, this time from bombers of the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*. The German fleet commander, Admiral Lütjens, sent the following message at 11:42 p.m.: "Ship unmaneuverable. We will fight to the last grenade. Long live the Führer! Fleet Commander."

In spite of no longer being able to maneuver and having no chance of being rescued, the *Bismarck* had to allow itself to be shot to pieces on May 27—in accordance with the Navy's code of honor²⁶¹—and to go down with all two thousand men aboard.

Almost exactly twenty-five years after the Battle of the Skagerrak (Jutland),²⁶² the loss of the *Bismarck* terminated the war at sea as regards surface craft. Now the naval commanders would be happy if they

May 31, 1941

managed to return the ships anchored in French ports to Germany, without being molested.²⁶³

On May 28, Hitler established a "War Service Pennant" for commanders of the merchant marine.²⁶⁴ As everybody in Germany was shaken by the loss of the *Bismarck*, this was somewhat out of place.

On May 29, Hitler again concerned himself with domestic politics. He signed decrees on the reconstruction and design of Frankfurt am Main (the city of "German craftsmanship") and Heidelberg.²⁶⁵ A further decree dealt with the "position of the chief of the party Chancellery."

Hitler was not about to appoint Bormann minister of the Reich, the way that he had appointed Hess by the law of December 1, 1939. This was completely out of the question— just as it had been in the case of Lutze, Röhm's successor. The only concession Hitler made was that Bormann became a cabinet minister, like the commanders in chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht. Hitler's decree read:²⁶⁶

By the decree of May 12, 1941, regarding the National Socialist German Workers Party, I ordered that the former office of the deputy Führer be designated the party chancellery and be subordinate to my person. In addition, in order to warrant the closest cooperation between the party chancellery and the high administration of the Reich, I decree the following:

The Leader of the party chancellery, Reichsleiter Martin Bormann, shall have the authority of a minister of the Reich. He shall be a member of the Reich government and of the ministerial council for the defense of the Reich.

Wherever the office of the deputy Führer is cited in laws, ordinances, and decrees, or other regulations, it shall be replaced by the leader of the party chancellery. The implementing and supplementing regulations necessitated by this decree shall be issued by the minister of the Reich and chief of the Reich Chancellery in agreement with the leader of the party chancellery.

On May 31, the *Völkischer Beobachter* noted with great dismay the intransigent statements which the British Foreign Secretary Eden and the British ambassador in Washington, Lord Halifax, had made.²⁶⁷ According to the paper, Eden had said: "Hitler's empire must be destroyed! Every German must and should know this!" Halifax had announced that the day would come when England will send "five hundred to six hundred bombers to Germany at the same time."

On May 31, Hitler informed his friend Mussolini that he desired an immediate meeting. This annoyed the Duce, who told Ciano: "I am sick and tired of being summoned by the bell."²⁶⁸ His reply to Hitler was more tame, however. He even thought that he had scored a

June 1, 1941

substantial victory by getting Hitler to agree to a meeting on June 2 instead of June 1.

Hitler and Mussolini again met at the Brenner Pass. The communiqué read as follows:²⁶⁹

The Führer and the Duce met on Whit Monday [June 2] at the Brenner Pass. In the presence of the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, and the Italian foreign minister Count Ciano, they discussed the political situation in a talk lasting several hours. The exchange took place in the spirit of heartfelt friendship and resulted in a complete agreement of opinion by the heads of state of the two countries.

Actually, Hitler had spoken about the Hess case for several hours and had lamented the loss of the *Bismarck*. He had declared: "German U-boats will force England's capitulation!" In the eyes of Mussolini and of the interpreter Schmidt, there had been no substance to the talks whatsoever. As Mussolini told Ciano:

These conferences that begin with the ringing of a bell are not to my liking; when people call their servant they ring the bell. And besides, what kind of meetings are these? For five hours I am forced to listen to a monologue that is quite pointless and boring. He spoke for hours and hours about Hess, about the *Bismarck*, about things more or less related to the war, but he did not propose an agenda, he did not go to the bottom of any problem, or make any decisions.

The interpreter Schmidt also remarked that Hitler had not said a word to Mussolini about his intention to attack Russia. For Hitler, however, that was the key to his talk with Mussolini! He wanted to leave Mussolini in the dark. He felt that this was necessary because, in spite of himself, Hitler would soon be forced to conduct more substantive talks with the Romanians regarding their involvement in the war against Russia.²⁷⁰ And Mussolini was to believe that there was no more to these talks than to those at the Brenner Pass.

On June 4, the former German Kaiser, William II, died in Doorn.²⁷¹ Fate spared him having to witness a second collapse of Germany, a collapse which far surpassed that of 1918. Hitler wired the widow and the Crown Prince his condolences²⁷² and sent a guard of honor to attend the funeral on June 9 in Doorn. He instructed the Reich Commissar for the Occupied Dutch Territories, Seyss-Inquart, to lay a wreath at the grave. The following German dignitaries attended the event: Field Marshal von Mackensen, General Reinhardt as the head of the National

June 15, 1941

Socialist Reichskriegerbund, Colonel General Haase, Air Force General Christiansen, and Admiral Canaris.²⁷³

On the afternoon of June 6, Hitler received the Croatian head of state Ante Pavelich at the Berghof, greeting him in a black cape. The communiqué on this “state visit” read as follows:²⁷⁴

The discussion with the head of state of young Croatia, whose people the victory of the Axis freed from the yoke of Versailles, was conducted in the spirit of the heartfelt friendship between the German and Croatian people.

After the talks, Dr. Pavelich presented the Führer with a Frederician flag from the Seven Years’ War and a chess set of Frederick the Great.

On June 7, Hitler received King Boris of Bulgaria at the Berghof in the presence of von Ribbentrop.²⁷⁵ Nothing was published on the content of the talk. Apparently, Hitler once more failed to recruit Bulgaria for the war against Russia.

On the morning of June 12, Hitler met with the Romanian head of government, General Antonescu, at the Führerbau in Munich for an important discussion. Before the meeting, Antonescu had laid wreaths at the monument on the Königlicher Platz. The stereotypical communiqué on the talks reported that the “meeting had taken place in the spirit of the heartfelt friendship between Germany and Romania.”²⁷⁶

Hitler had initiated Antonescu into his plans for war against Russia. He promised Bessarabia and other lands in Russia to Romania. Naturally, the old trooper, who hated the Slavs, was delighted: “Of course, I will be there from day one. If you go against the Slavs, you can always count on Romania.”

At noon, Hitler gave a reception in honor of Antonescu at the Führerbau, which von Ribbentrop, Keitel, Jodl, von Epp, and numerous other Reichsleiters and generals attended.

On June 15, Croatia formally acceded to the Tripartite Pact in the Doge’s Palace in Venice. Of course, this was a poor replacement for the elaborate ceremony in the Belvedere Palace in Vienna that had marked the accession of Yugoslavia on March 25, an event which had such unfortunate consequences for Hitler. Now, not even the customary exchange of telegrams took place between the heads of state, heads of government, and ministers of the states that formed the Tripartite Pact. As Ciano put it in his diary: “the participation of Croatia has the flavor of homemade tagliatelle.”²⁷⁷

June 21, 1941

On June 17, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Horthy on his birthday.²⁷⁸ Afterwards, he had Schirach place a wreath at the grave of the retired councilor of state Karl Hermann Wolf. The wreath was dedicated to "the pioneer of the Greater German idea."²⁷⁹

On June 18, a German-Turkish Friendship Pact was signed in Ankara.²⁸⁰ This pact was to secure the south flank of the German attack on Russia. In Germany, it was celebrated as a masterpiece of statesmanship on the part of Hitler and von Papen. In view of the existing military alliance between Turkey and Great Britain, the treaty was indeed remarkable, but its importance was greatly overestimated by Germany. Both parties to the pact guaranteed the inviolability of their borders in article I of the treaty. Article II dealt with friendly consultations on questions concerning both parties. The pact was not fundamentally different from the Russian-Turkish Declaration of Friendship and Neutrality which had been signed on March 24, 1941. Whereas Russia and Turkey respected each other's neutrality, the friendship between Germany and Turkey ended in the Turkish declaration of war on Germany on March 1, 1945.

On June 18 and 19, an exchange of telegrams took place between the two heads of state. Hitler replied to the telegram of Ismet İnönü in the following manner:²⁸¹

On the occasion of the signing of the German-Turkish treaty which affirms the sincere friendship between our countries, I inform Your Excellency, in reply to your kind telegram, that I also am greatly satisfied with the conclusion of this treaty.

I am also certain that our two countries enter an era of lasting, mutual trust. By thanking you for this assurance of your friendly sentiments, I fondly reciprocate.

Adolf Hitler

On July 19, the Turkish ambassador Gerede brought a handwritten letter from Ismet İnönü to Hitler at the Reich Chancellery.²⁸² Also on this day, Hitler received Field Marshal List, who had commanded the German troops during the campaign in the Balkans.²⁸³ Hitler thanked him with "heartfelt words and the unconditional appreciation of the outstanding achievements of the leaders and the troops."

On June 21, Hitler awarded Lieutenant Colonel Galland the first Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and sent him the following telegram:²⁸⁴

June 22, 1941

Accept my congratulations on your three new air victories. In appreciation of your heroism, proved time and again, I award you, as the first officer of the German Wehrmacht, the addition of the Oak Leaf with Swords to your Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

Adolf Hitler

Undoubtedly June 22, 1941, was an important day in the life of Adolf Hitler. It was on this day that he launched the undertaking that, in addition to the concept of friendship with England and Italy, had been central to all his ideas and plans after 1919: the war against Russia, the conquest of new Lebensraum. It was true that he had planned things differently; he had thought he could go to war with the explicit approval of England and Italy and their help and friendship.²⁸⁵

While he could be sure of Italy's support, its assistance did not count for much. Things had not worked out as well with England: Germany was in the midst of a war with England!

But did that matter to Hitler? After all, in his opinion, it made little difference in which sequence he realized the concepts of 1919: friendship with England and Italy, war with Russia. He had Italy's friendship, he was ready to attack Russia, and so friendship with England simply had to follow! It would do so all the more since he was now employing the same old trick abroad—the menace of Bolshevism—that he had used so successfully in his fight against the senile German Nationalists at home.

Hitler did not worry too much about the war against Russia at this point. Accustomed to victory, the German Wehrmacht, this “most mighty instrument of war of all time,”²⁸⁶ could easily deal with the “primitive” Russians, whom Bolshevism had instilled with a “cowardly, anxious acquiescence.”²⁸⁷

All Hitler needed now was a plausible pretext for this unheard-of attack on a friendly power, with whom, according to his own words, Germany never again wanted to fight.²⁸⁸

In his proclamation “to the German Volk” on June 22, Hitler maintained that it was all the fault of the “Jewish-Bolshevik rulers.” They had kept him from a “radical ending of the war in the west.” They had blackmailed him and threatened “European culture and civilization.” They had “organized the Serb putsch,” and “together with England and the help of the expected American deliveries,” they wanted “to suffocate and crush the German Reich.” Hitler's proclamation read as follows:²⁸⁹

June 22, 1941

Berlin, June 22, 1941

German Volk! National Socialists!

The hour has finally come for me, weighed down by heavy burdens and sentenced to remain silent for months, to speak openly.

When, on September 3, 1939, the German Reich received the English declaration of war, the British attempted again to foil the consolidation and rise of Europe by fighting the strongest power on the continent. This is how England once destroyed Spain in many wars. This is how it waged war against Holland. This is how, with the help of all Europe, it later fought France. And this is how, at the turn of the century, it began the encirclement of the German Reich and then in the year 1914, it began the World War.

It was only because of its inner discord that Germany was defeated in the year 1918. What followed was terrible. First, they claimed hypocritically that they were only fighting the Kaiser and his regime. Then, after the surrender of the German Army, the systematic destruction of the German Reich was started. While the prophecies of a French statesman that there were twenty million too many people in Germany,²⁹⁰ that is, people who had to be eliminated by hunger, disease, or emigration, seemed to become literally true, the National Socialist movement began its work of uniting the German Volk and thereby initiating the rise of the Reich.

This new rising up of our Volk from need, misery, and shameful contempt was a sign of a purely inner rebirth. England, in particular, was neither concerned nor threatened by this. In spite of this, a new policy of encirclement, seething with hatred, immediately set in again against Germany. At home and abroad, there was the well-known conspiracy between Jews and democrats, Bolsheviks and reactionaries, with the single goal of preventing the establishment of a new German people's state and plunging the Reich again into impotence and misery.

Besides us, the hatred of this international, worldwide conspiracy singled out those people whom fortune has likewise overlooked and who are also forced to earn their daily bread in a hard struggle for existence. Italy and Japan especially were denied their share of the goods of this earth, like Germany—yes, they were virtually forbidden them. The alliance of these nations therefore was only an act of self-defense in view of the threatening, egotistic international coalition of wealth and power.

In 1936, Churchill declared, according to the statements of the American general Wood before a committee of the American House of Representatives, that Germany was again becoming too powerful and therefore had to be destroyed.

In the summer of 1939, England thought the time had come to realize the new destruction by a repetition of a comprehensive policy of encirclement directed against Germany. The method of the campaign of lies staged for this purpose was to declare other people threatened, to trap them with British guarantees and promises of assistance, and then, as in the World War, to let them march against Germany.

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And so England, from May to August 1939, succeeded in spreading the idea that Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Bessarabia, as well as the Ukraine, were directly threatened by Germany. Some of these states were thereby seduced into accepting the guarantees connected to these claims, and so joined the new front of encirclement against Germany.

Under those circumstances, I believed, before my conscience and the history of the German Volk, that I could not only assure these states, that is, governments, of the falsehood of the British claims, but also calm the strongest power of the East by making solemn declarations on the limits of our respective interests.

National Socialists!

Probably all of you felt that this step was bitter and difficult for me. Never has the German Volk harbored feelings of animosity against the people of Russia. Alas, for over two decades, the Jewish-Bolshevik rulers have labored from Moscow to set afire not only Germany, but also all of Europe. Never has Germany attempted to carry its National Socialist ideology into Russia. However, the Jewish-Bolshevik rulers in Moscow have constantly undertaken to force their rule on our people and others in Europe as well, and not merely ideologically, but especially in terms of military force and power. In all countries, the consequences of the activities of this regime were chaos, misery, and famine.

In contrast to that, I strove in the past two decades to achieve a new socialist order in Germany with a minimum of intervention and without destroying our production, a new socialist order that not only eliminated unemployment, but also increasingly let the profit from the work go to the working man.

The successes of this policy of a new economic and social order for our Volk, the systematic overcoming of social differences and class distinctions, are unequalled in the world.

Therefore, in August 1939, despite great misgivings, I sent my foreign minister to Moscow to attempt there to counteract the British policy of encirclement against Germany. I did this only because of a sense of responsibility to the German Volk, and, above all, in the hope of achieving a lasting détente in the end and, perhaps, lessening the sacrifices which might otherwise be demanded of us.

And then, after Germany solemnly declared in Moscow that the aforementioned areas and countries were outside the German sphere of interest—with the exception of Lithuania—a special agreement²⁹¹ was made in case England succeeded in driving Poland to war against Germany. Here, too, the German demands were limited and stood in no relation to the accomplishments of the German arms.

National Socialists!

The consequences of this treaty, which I desired in the interest of the German Volk, were very hard on the Germans living in the countries concerned.

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Far more than half a million German Volksgenossen—all small farmers, craftsmen, and workers—were forced, practically overnight, to leave their former homeland in order to escape a new regime, which at first threatened them with infinite misery and, sooner or later, with complete extermination. In spite of this, thousands of Germans disappeared! It is impossible to know what happened to them or where they are now. Among them, there are a hundred sixty men with German Reich citizenship.

I remained silent about all this, because I had to remain silent! After all, it was my wish to bring about a *détente* for good and, if possible, a lasting settlement with this state.

However, as soon as we advanced into Poland, the Soviet rulers suddenly claimed Lithuania in violation of the treaty.²⁹² The German Reich never intended to occupy Lithuania. Not only did it not make any such demand on the Lithuanian government—on the contrary, it also declined a request by the Lithuanian government at the time to send German troops to Lithuania for that purpose, as this did not correspond with the goals of the German policy.

In spite of this, I yielded to this new Russian demand. However, this was only the beginning of constantly new extortions, which since then have been repeated time and again. The victory in Poland, exclusively secured by German troops, induced me to direct a new offer of peace to the western powers. It was rejected because of the international and Jewish warmongers.

Already at that time, the cause of this rejection was that England was still hoping to mobilize a European coalition against Germany, including the Balkans and Soviet Russia.²⁹³ And so they decided in London to send Ambassador Cripps to Moscow. He received clear instructions to enter again into diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia and to develop them in the interest of England. The English press reported on the progress of this mission for as long as tactical reasons required.

In the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940, the first consequences became apparent. While Russia undertook to subjugate not only Finland militarily but also the Baltic states, it all of a sudden tried to justify doing so with the mendacious and ridiculous claim that it had to protect these countries from, that is, to prevent, an external threat. No power other than Germany could penetrate these areas along the Baltic Sea or wage war there. In spite of this, I had to remain silent. But the ruling powers in the Kremlin immediately went a step further.

While, in the spring of 1940, Germany withdrew its armed forces far behind the eastern frontier in the spirit of the so-called Friendship Pact, thereby virtually clearing most of these areas of German troops, Russian forces immediately began to deploy to such an extent that this could only be seen as a deliberate threat to Germany.

According to a personal statement made by Molotov at the time, twenty-two Russian divisions were in the Baltic states alone. Since the Russian government always maintained that it had been called in by the local population, the purpose of its presence there could only be a demonstration against Germany. While—from May 10, 1940, on—our soldiers broke the

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French-British power in the west, the Russian concentration along our eastern front continued in an increasingly dangerous degree.

From August 1940 on, therefore, I believed that, in the interest of the Reich, I could not any longer leave our eastern provinces, which have so often been devastated in the past, unprotected from this colossal concentration of Bolshevik divisions.

This brought about what the Anglo-Soviet cooperation aimed for, namely to tie down strong German forces in the east, so that, especially in terms of the [war in the] air, a conclusive end of the war in the west would no longer be possible for the German leadership.²⁹⁴

This was not only the goal of the British but also of the Soviet policy. England as well as Soviet Russia intend to let this war last as long as possible in order to weaken Europe and to make it increasingly impotent.

The alarming Russian attack on Romania ultimately served the purpose of getting hold of an important element of the economic life not only of Germany but also of all Europe, and, possibly, destroying it. However, it was the German Reich which, from the year 1933 on, strove with infinite patience to win the states of southeastern Europe as trading partners. Therefore, we had the greatest interest in their internal, governmental consolidation and order. Russia's invasion of Romania, and Greece's political ties with England, threatened to transform these areas shortly into a theater of war, too.

Contrary to our principles and customs, at that time I directed an urgent appeal to the Romanian government, which itself was responsible for this development, and I advised it to yield to the Soviet extortion for the sake of peace and to cede Bessarabia.

The Romanian government believed that it could tolerate this before its own people only if Germany and Italy gave a guarantee that the continuing existence of the remainder would not be disputed. I did this with a heavy heart.²⁹⁵ Because, after all, if the German Reich gives a guarantee, this means it will vouch for it. We are neither Englishmen nor Jews.

So I believed myself to have rendered a service to peace in these areas practically at the last minute, even if this meant taking on a heavy responsibility myself. In order to resolve these problems for good and to obtain clarity on the Russian attitude to the Reich, as well as under the pressure of the consistently increasing mobilization along our eastern borders, I invited Mr. Molotov to Berlin.

The Soviet foreign minister now demanded a clarification by Germany, that is, its answer to the following four questions:²⁹⁶

Molotov's first question:

In the event of a Soviet attack on Romania, will the German guarantee to Romania be directed against Soviet Russia?

My answer:

The German guarantee is a general one and is absolutely binding for us. Russia has never informed us that, apart from Bessarabia, it has any interests in Romania. The occupation of northern Bukovina has already violated this

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assurance. Therefore, I do not believe that Russia could suddenly have further intentions against Romania.

Molotov's second question:

Russia again feels threatened by Finland. Russia is determined not to tolerate this. Is Germany ready not to assist Finland in any manner and, in particular, immediately to withdraw the German troops that are marching through it to Kirkenes for replacement?

My answer:

As before, Germany has no political interests in Finland. A new war by Russia against the small Finnish people cannot be regarded as tolerable by the German Reich government, all the more so as we cannot believe that Finland is threatening Russia. However, we do not wish the Baltic Sea to become a theater of war again.

Molotov's third question:

Is Germany willing to agree to Soviet Russia's extending a guarantee to Bulgaria and sending Soviet troops into Bulgaria for this purpose? He, Molotov, also wished to declare, for example, that the Soviets did not intend to eliminate the king on this occasion.

My answer:

Bulgaria is a sovereign state, and I do not know whether, unlike Romania, Bulgaria has even requested such a guarantee from Soviet Russia. Besides this, I will have to talk with my allies about this matter.

Molotov's fourth question:

Soviet Russia in any event needs free transit through the Dardanelles. To protect it, Russia requires the occupation of strongholds along the Dardanelles, that is, at the Bosphorus. Will Germany agree to this or not?

My answer:

Germany is prepared to give its consent at any time to a change in the status of Montreux in favor of the Black Sea states. Germany is not willing to agree to Russia's taking possession of bases along the straits.

National Socialists!

I assumed an attitude here, which I had to assume not only as the accountable Führer of the German Reich but also as the responsible representative of European culture and civilization.²⁹⁷ The consequence was a reinforcement of the Soviet activities directed against the Reich, particularly the immediate start of subversive activities inside of the new Romanian state and the attempt to remove the Bulgarian government by propaganda.

With the help of the confused, naive heads of the Romanian Legion, a coup d'état was staged in Romania with the goal of toppling the head of state, General Antonescu, and to create chaos in the country so that the elimination of legitimate authority would remove the preconditions for the German guarantee to take effect.²⁹⁸

Despite this, I still believed that it was best to remain silent.

Immediately following the failure of this undertaking, a renewed reinforcement of the Russian troop concentrations along the eastern border of Germany took place. armored units and parachute troops were moved in

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increasing numbers alarmingly close to the German border. The German Wehrmacht and the German homeland know that, only a few weeks ago, not a single German panzer or motorized division was on our eastern border.

Had there been need of conclusive proof of the coalition between England and Soviet Russia, which had meanwhile come about despite all the diversions and disguises, then the Yugoslav conflict would have served as such.

While I labored to make a last attempt to pacify the Balkans and, with the understanding cooperation of the Duce, I invited Yugoslavia to join the Tripartite Pact, England and Soviet Russia worked together to organize the turmoil which overnight removed the government that was willing to negotiate.

The German Volk can be told today: the Serbian *coup de main* against Germany took place not only under the English, but essentially under the Soviet, flag. Since we remained silent on this matter as well, the Soviet leadership went a step further. Not only did it organize the Serb putsch but also, only a few days later, it concluded the well-known Friendship Pact with its new subservient creatures. This was intended to encourage the Serbs in their resistance to a pacification of the Balkans and to goad them on against Germany.

And this was not a platonic ambition. Moscow demanded the mobilization of the Serbian army.

Since I still believed that it was better not to speak, the ruling powers in the Kremlin went a step further: the German Reich government today possesses documents which prove that Russia, in order to get Serbia finally to fight, promised to deliver weapons, planes, ammunition, and other war matériel via Salonika.²⁹⁹

And this occurred almost exactly at the same moment when I gave the Japanese foreign minister, Matsuoka, advice to seek a détente with Russia, always in the hope of rendering peace a service.³⁰⁰

Only the rapid breakthrough to Skopje and the taking of Salonika by our peerless divisions have prevented the ambitions of this Soviet-Anglo-Saxon conspiracy. The Serbian air-force officers escaped to Russia and were welcomed there immediately as allies.

The victory of the Axis powers in the Balkans alone prevented the plan to engage Germany in battle in the southeast for months on end this summer, while, in the meantime, the concentration of the Soviet armies would be completed, their readiness for battle reinforced, and then, together with England and supported by the expected American deliveries, Russia would strangle and eventually: crush the German Reich and Italy. Through this, Moscow not only violated the provisions of our Friendship Pact, it has also betrayed this pact most wretchedly. And all this, while the ruling powers in the Kremlin, as in the case of Finland and Romania, hypocritically spoke of peace and of friendship abroad.

If, previously, circumstances forced me to be silent time and again, the time has come when continuous sitting back and watching would not only be a sin

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of omission, but also a crime against the German Volk, yes, against all of Europe.

Today, approximately a hundred sixty Russian divisions stand at our border. For weeks, there have been persistent violations of this border not only down here, but also far up north, as in Romania. Russian pilots amuse themselves by lightheartedly looking over these borders, perhaps to prove to us that they already feel themselves the masters of these territories. On the night of June 17 to 18, Russian patrols reconnoitered German Reich territory and could only be driven back after a lengthy exchange of fire.³⁰¹

Therefore, the hour has now come in which it has become necessary to oppose this conspiracy of the Jewish-Anglo-Saxon warmongers and likewise the Jewish ruling powers in the Bolshevik control station at Moscow.

German Volk! At this moment, the greatest concentration which the world has ever seen in terms of scope and dimensions is taking place. In unison with the Finnish comrades, the victorious warriors of Narvik³⁰² stand at the Arctic Ocean. German divisions under the command of the conqueror of Norway protect Finnish soil, together with the heroic Finnish freedom fighters under their marshal. The formations of the German front in the east reach from East Prussia to the Carpathian Mountains. On the banks of the Pruth river, the lower reaches of the Danube, up to the shores of the Black Sea, German and Romanian soldiers unite under General Antonescu.

The mission of this front, therefore, is no longer the protection of individual countries, but the securing of Europe and, hence, the salvation of all.

Today, I have therefore determined to lay the fate and the future of the German Reich and of our Volk again into the hands of our soldiers.

May the Lord Almighty help us especially in this battle!

Adolf Hitler

In addition to this proclamation, Hitler issued an order of the day for the soldiers of the eastern front on June 22. While the main ideas were those already expressed in the proclamation, it contained the following passage at the end:³⁰³

German soldiers! Hereby you enter a very hard battle, laden with responsibility. Because the fate of Europe, the future of the German Reich, the existence of our Volk now lie in your hands alone.

May the Lord Almighty help us all in this!

As turgid and wordy as the proclamations of June 22 were, at their core was the claim of a Russian-English “conspiracy” against the Reich—yes, against Europe—and of Russia’s breach of the alliance treaty with the Reich. Under exactly the same pretext, Napoleon I invaded Russia in 1812, also on June 22 (!), a Monday. Napoleon’s proclamation to his soldiers read:³⁰⁴

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Imperial Headquarters at Wilków (Wilkowski), June 22, 1812

Soldiers!

The second Polish war has begun.

The first ended at Friedland and Tilsit!³⁰⁵ At Tilsit, Russia vowed eternal alliance with France and eternal war with England. It is now breaking this vow! It is not willing to make a declaration on its peculiar attitude before the French eagles have withdrawn across the Rhine. We would thereby leave our allies at its mercy. Russia is heading for ruin! It must meet its fate! Perhaps it thinks we are degenerate? Are we no longer the soldiers of Austerlitz? It makes us choose between disgrace and war. There is no doubt of our choice. So, let us step forward, let us cross the Neman, and carry the war to its territory! The second Polish war will be as glorious for French arms as the first was. But the peace which we shall conclude will bear a guarantee in itself that there will be an end to the ruinous influence which Russia has exercised on European affairs for fifty years.

Napoleon

Hitler was ignorant of the striking similarity to Napoleon's appeal and the date of June 22.³⁰⁶ He had chosen this date only because June 22 was a Sunday,³⁰⁷ and this would add an element of surprise to the attack.³⁰⁸ These two attacks on Russia had even more in common than the "coincidence" of the same date and pretext. Both conquerors—whose careers, achievements, and goals had already corresponded in several important points—invaded Russia without prior declaration of war.³⁰⁹ They thereby violated a sacred law of war which has been respected ever since antiquity. This in itself already illuminated the same moral attitude of the two statesmen, the only dictators who strove for world power in the modern age.³¹⁰

Despite many observations and numerous warnings, the Russians did not think Hitler was serious about going to war. Not only had Churchill and Roosevelt warned Stalin of the threat of war, but also any traveler journeying through Germany to Moscow could tell of the enormous preparations for war along the German-Russian border. Dozens of German reconnaissance planes had penetrated Russian air space during the preceding months.³¹¹ But the Russians stood as though paralyzed. In the last two years, they had grown accustomed to the idea of friendship with Germany. Now, they did not know what to do. Their only hope was that this was another one of Hitler's bluffs. Perhaps he was seeking to distract attention from an attack on the British Isles.

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Bolshevik Russia faced the same situation in 1941 that Tsarist Russia faced in the year 1812. The peace of Tilsit between Napoleon and Russia in 1807 aroused England's indignation as much as the alliance of 1939 that the Soviet Union entered into with Hitler.

Relying on the German-Russian Pact, the Soviet government adopted an impudent tone in its dealings with England and the United States, which it would never have dared to do otherwise. If a rupture with Germany came about—if Germany attacked Russia—the Soviet Union would be doubly humbled in having to ask for the assistance of the western powers. Understandably, Moscow was reluctant even to consider such a development. The only thing which the Soviet government could pull itself together to do was to make a renewed protest in Berlin against the persistent violations of its air space.

To this end, the Russian ambassador Dekanozov repeatedly called for a meeting with von Ribbentrop. Time and again, he was told that he could not speak to the minister. Finally, he was asked to come to the foreign ministry at 4:00 a.m. on June 22. This was an unusual hour for a meeting, but, considering that the foreign minister did not seem to have time otherwise, Dekanozov was ready to meet with him that morning.

By four o'clock in the morning, the German attack on Russia was already fifty-five minutes old. Von Ribbentrop was not pleased with Hitler's order to inform the Russian ambassador of the new situation. After all, he himself had always advocated German-Russian understanding and had greatly enjoyed his visit to Moscow in 1939. Above all, he knew that nothing good could come of this war. Of course, if the omniscient Führer thought otherwise, then it simply had to be this way! Nevertheless, von Ribbentrop was extremely nervous as, together with Envoy Schmidt, he waited for the Russian ambassador shortly before 4:00 a.m., repeatedly muttering: "The Führer is always right!" and "The Russians would surely attack us, if we did not do it now."³¹²

When Dekanozov came in, he first shook hands with Ribbentrop, sat down, and then got ready to make the *démarches* on behalf of his government. But Ribbentrop interrupted him, saying: "That's not what this is about," and he then proceeded to read a declaration which culminated in the claim that Germany had taken "military countermeasures" against Russia.

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Dekanozov quickly composed himself, expressing his regret that events had developed in this manner, saying that the German government was responsible for this, and, bowing, left the room without shaking hands with Ribbentrop.

What took place at the Foreign Ministry in Moscow at this time was even more scandalous.³¹³ According to the principle, "only to say what must be said to him who must know it, and only when he must know it,"³¹⁴ Hitler had informed the German ambassador, Graf von der Schulenburg, only at the last minute of his intention to attack Russia. He did so in the same shameful manner in which he had already compromised German diplomats in Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, Yugoslavia, and Greece. Totally ignorant of what was going on, Schulenburg had met with Molotov the evening before, at 9:30 p.m. on June 21.³¹⁵ The Soviet foreign minister had told him of disquieting rumors of the German government's dissatisfaction with the Soviet Union, and even of a pending war. He had not understood this dissatisfaction and had asked for an explanation.

Schulenburg had assured Molotov of Germany's loyalty and had promised to wire an inquiry to Berlin that same night. Instead of receiving a reply, Schulenburg was sent instructions to present a declaration to the Russian foreign minister. It contained the following passage:³¹⁶ "...there are reports from England regarding ... closer political and military cooperation between England and the Soviet Union. The Führer has therefore ordered the Wehrmacht to oppose this threat with all means at its disposal."

And so Schulenburg found himself at the Russian Foreign Ministry once more early on June 22. Molotov, who had not yet had news of the German attack, which had already been underway for over an hour, thought he was not hearing correctly when Schulenburg told him of German "military countermeasures."

"That is not possible," Molotov replied, "tell me about the demands of your government!" As embarrassing as this was for Schulenburg, he had to point out that this was not a mistake and that the war had already begun.³¹⁷ In silence, Molotov listened to the remainder of the declaration. Then, he said: "This is a great misfortune for us and also for you!"

In the course of the day, Molotov broadcast an announcement on radio, explaining that the "Fatherland of Workers and Farmers" had been attacked, declaring the following:³¹⁸

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At four o'clock in the morning [Russian time], German and Romanian armed forces carried the war into our country, without the Soviet Union's being presented with any type of reason or declaration of war. The cities Kiev, Sevastopol, Kovno, and others have been bombed. According to the reports which we have received up to now, over two hundred persons have been killed or wounded.

The attack on the Soviet Union was undertaken in spite of the existence of a treaty of nonaggression between Germany and Russia which has responsibly been respected by us to the most minute detail. This war is not a war waged by the German people; instead, it was forced on them by the rulers of Germany, who proceeded against us in the same manner as they did against the French and Czechs, the Poles, the Serbs and the Norwegians, the Danes, the Belgians and the Dutch, and against other nations. While at four o'clock this morning German and Romanian batteries opened fire on us, the German ambassador in Moscow, Graf von der Schulenburg, appeared before me at 5:30 a.m. in order simply to inform me that Germany had opened hostilities against us.

I pointed out to the German ambassador that, up to this moment, Germany had not lodged the slightest complaint, nor had it made any type of protest or demand. I emphasize before the Russian nation and the world that neither does Hitler's proclamation correspond to the truth, nor do his arguments rest on facts. It is not the first time in the history of the Russian people that they have been invaded. They fought against Napoleon and won that fight with their enthusiastic love for the fatherland.

I informed the German ambassador on behalf of the Soviet government that we would take on the challenge. The Russian people are fighting for their fatherland, their honor, and their freedom. We will win!

People of the Soviet Union! Unite as never before! Believe in our army, fleet, and air force! Everyone of us will do his duty!

In Rome, the German Embassy was likewise the site of agitated activity early that morning. Naturally, Hitler had waited until firing had begun to inform his friend Mussolini of the attack on Russia.

On June 21, Hitler had penned the following message to Mussolini:³¹⁹

Duce: I am writing this letter to you at a moment when months of anxious deliberation and continuous nerve-racking waiting are ending in the hardest decision of my life.

He cited a variety of reasons for this "hardest decision," that is, to attack the Soviet Union: with the Russians in the rear, he claimed, "the German Command can no longer vouch for a large-scale attack in the west." Also, "the elimination of Russia means, at the same time, a tremendous relief for Japan." Moreover, "England will be all the less ready for peace while it is able to pin its hopes on its Russian partner."

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The elimination of Russia would enable Germany and Italy “to secure a common food-supply base in the Ukraine.”

His excuse for waiting to tell Mussolini about his plans was most original: “If I have waited until this moment, Duce, to send you this information, it is because the final decision itself will not be made until seven o’clock tonight.”

At 3:00 a.m. on June 22, the German Embassy Counselor von Bismarck visited Ciano with Hitler’s lengthy letter in hand and demanded that it be immediately presented to Mussolini.³²⁰ Since the Duce was in Riccione at the time, Ciano had to wire him the contents of the letter.

Mussolini was greatly annoyed by the manner in which Hitler treated him once again.

There was absolute silence on their part and only a “wake-up call” at night to inform him of the accomplished fact. “Even I don’t dare disturb my servants at night,” said the Duce, “but the Germans make me jump out of bed at any hour without the slightest consideration.”³²¹ Despite his annoyance, Mussolini immediately sent out instructions to declare war on Russia and to move Italian divisions to the new front. While Hitler had written that he did not need Italian forces, he was nonetheless glad to receive this assistance.³²²

Mussolini feigned his eagerness to help Hitler against Russia. On July 1, he told Ciano:

I hope for only one thing, that in this war in the East the Germans will lose a lot [of] feathers. It is false to speak of an anti-Bolshevik struggle. Hitler knows that Bolshevism has disappeared for some time. No code protects private property like the Russian Civil Code. Let him say rather that he wants to vanquish a great continental power [which was equipped] with fifty-two-ton tanks [and] which was getting ready to settle his account.³²³

So this was the attitude of Italy, a country which, according to Hitler,³²⁴ was as predestined as England to rejoice in the conquest of new Lebensraum for Germany.

What about England’s attitude? Hitler didn’t miss the opportunity to instruct the German media, including radio, to portray the new war as the “yearned-for crusade³²⁵ against Bolshevism.” Correspondingly, this “holy war” was being followed with great interest all over the world, including the United States and Great Britain.

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Whoever followed events on German radio or in the German papers on June 22 and 23 felt as though he or she was in a madhouse. With phrases which at best could impress men like von Papen,³²⁶ Hitler sought to induce the Anglo-American powers to ally themselves with Germany as their savior from Bolshevism! And this after Hitler himself had once again proved, through his impudent attack on Russia, that he was led only by his thirst for conquest and power.

Anyone who knew the western powers could imagine how they must have rejoiced at Hitler's decision to establish a second front³²⁷ and to waste his forces in Russia. Even if he succeeded in taking this country, he would be so weakened that it would cost the western powers relatively little effort to defeat him for good.

Still on the evening of June 22, England gave a fitting reply to Hitler's grotesque speculations. In a speech which since has become famous, Churchill declared as follows:³²⁸

. . . At four o'clock this morning Hitler attacked and invaded Russia. All his usual formalities of perfidy were observed with scrupulous technique. A non-aggression treaty had been solemnly signed and was in force between the two countries. No complaint had been made by Germany of its non-fulfillment. Under its cloak of false confidence, the German armies drew up in immense strength along a line which stretches from the White Sea to the Black Sea; and their air fleets and armoured divisions slowly and methodically took their stations. Then, suddenly without declaration of war, without even an ultimatum, German bombs rained down from the air upon the Russian cities, the German troops violated the frontiers; and an hour later the German ambassador, who till the night before was lavishing his assurances of friendship, almost of alliance, upon the Russians, called upon the Russian foreign minister to tell him that a state of war existed between Germany and Russia.³²⁹

Thus was repeated on a far larger scale the same kind of outrage against every form of signed compact and international faith which we have witnessed in Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium, and which Hitler's accomplice and jackal Mussolini so faithfully imitated in the case of Greece.

All this was no surprise to me. In fact I gave clear and precise warnings to Stalin of what was coming. I gave him warning as I have given warning to others before. I can only hope that this warning did not fall unheeded. All we know at present is that the Russian people are defending their native soil and that their leaders have called upon them to resist to the utmost.

Hitler is a monster of wickedness, insatiable in his lust for blood and plunder. Not content with having all Europe under his heel, or else terrorized into various forms of abject submission, he must now carry his work of butchery and desolation among the vast multitudes of Russia and of Asia. The terrible military machine, which we and the rest of the civilized world so foolishly, so supinely, so insensately allowed the Nazi gangsters to build up

June 22, 1941

year by year from almost nothing, cannot stand idle lest it rust or fall to pieces. It must be in continual motion, grinding up human lives and trampling down the homes and the rights of hundred of millions of men. Moreover it must be fed, not only with flesh but with oil.

So now this bloodthirsty guttersnipe must launch his mechanized armies upon new fields of slaughter, pillage and devastation. Poor as are the Russian peasants, workmen and soldiers, he must steal from them their daily bread; he must devour their harvests; he must rob them of the oil which drives their ploughs; and thus produce a famine without example in human history. And even the carnage and ruin which his victory, should he gain it—he has not gained it yet—will bring upon the Russian people, will itself be only a stepping-stone to the attempt to plunge the four or five hundred millions who live in China, and the three hundred and fifty millions who live in India,³³⁰ into that bottomless pit of human degradation over which the diabolic emblem of the Swastika flaunts itself. It is not too much to say here this summer evening that the lives and happiness of a thousand million additional people are now menaced with brutal Nazi violence. That is enough to make us hold our breath.³³¹ But presently I shall show you something else that lies behind, and something that touches very nearly the life of Britain and of the United States.

The Nazi régime is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism. It is devoid of all theme and principle except appetite and racial domination. It excels all forms of human wickedness in the efficiency of its cruelty and ferocious aggression. No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it. But all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding. The past with its crimes, its follies and its tragedies, flashes away. I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land, guarding the fields which their fathers have tilled from time immemorial. I see them guarding their homes where mothers and wives pray—ah yes, for there are times when all pray—for the safety of their loved ones, the return of the breadwinner, of their champion, of their protector. I see the ten thousand villages of Russia, where the means of existence was wrung so hardly from the soil, but where there are still primordial human joys, where maidens laugh and children play. I see advancing upon all this in hideous onslaught the Nazi war machine, with its clanking, heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers, its crafty expert agents fresh from the cowing and tying-down of a dozen countries. I see also the dull, drilled, docile, brutish masses of the Hun soldiery plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts. I see the German bombers and fighters in the sky, still smarting from many a British whipping, delighted to find what they believe is an easier and a safer prey.

Behind all this glare, behind all this storm, I see that small group of villainous men who plan, organize and launch this cataract of horrors upon mankind. And then my mind goes back across the years to the days when the Russian armies were our allies against the same deadly foe,³³² when they fought with so much valour and constancy, and helped to gain a victory in which all share, alas, they were—through no fault of ours—utterly cut off. I have lived

June 24, 1941

through all this, and you will pardon me if I express my feelings and the stir of old memories.

But now I have to declare the decision of His Majesty's Government—and I feel sure it is a decision in which the great Dominions will, in due course, concur—for we must speak out now at once, without a day's delay. I have to make the declaration, but can you doubt what our policy will be? We have but one aim and one single, irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi régime. From this nothing will turn us—nothing. We will never parley, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. We shall fight him by land, we shall fight him by sea, we shall fight him in the air, until with God's help we have rid the earth of his shadow and liberated its people from his yoke. Any man or state who fights on against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe.³³³

The Russian danger is therefore our danger, and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free people in every quarter of the globe. Let us learn the lessons already taught by such cruel experience. Let us redouble our exertions, and strike with united strength while life and power remain.

After this speech by Churchill on the evening of June 22, it was clear that Hitler had already lost the war against Russia, at least politically. His theory, based on the belief that the English would, like the German nationals earlier, fall for this old trick of invoking fear of Bolshevik Russia and become his allies, proved to be wrong with catastrophic consequences.³³⁴

On June 22, Hitler sent Lieutenant Colonel Mölders a telegram to award him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords on his seventy-second air victory.³³⁵

The next day, he received the Italian minister of people's education, Alessandro Pavolini, at the Reich Chancellery in the presence of Goebbels.³³⁶

On June 24, Slovak troops crossed the border to join in the war against Russia. On this occasion, an exchange of telegrams took place, the only exchange of its kind between the dictators who participated in this campaign and who, on other occasions, had so eagerly exchanged telegrams.

Hitler replied to Tiso in the following telegram:³³⁷

I thank Your Excellency for the information, relayed to me by telegram, that Slovakia has entered the fateful struggle for Europe's future on the side of Germany, along with the assurance of your loyal dedication. In the unshakable

June 29, 1941

conviction that we are right, I am certain that a complete victory will be imparted to our arms.

Adolf Hitler

Hungary severed its diplomatic ties to Russia on the same day.³³⁸

It was not until June 24 that Moscow finally decided to accept the British offer of assistance and officially informed the United States that Germany and Russia had entered into war. Obviously, the Soviets were embarrassed to admit that they had made deals with Germany for so long and had disregarded warnings of German disloyalty. Of course, they were also apprehensive of the securities the western powers would probably demand in order to prevent another special pact with Hitler. They remembered well the harsh conditions which England had imposed on Russia after similar events in the year 1812.³³⁹

On the morning of June 25, Finland noticed that it had become the "target of Soviet attacks" and was taking "defensive measures."³⁴⁰ A general mobilization had already been ordered in Finland on June 20. On June 22, Hitler had declared: "In unison with the Finnish comrades, the victorious warriors of Narvik stand at the Arctic Ocean."³⁴¹

On June 25, Sweden yielded to German pressure and permitted a German division to be transported from Norway across its territory to Finland.

Denmark severed relations with the Soviet Union on June 25. On June 30, it announced the creation of a "Free Corps Denmark," which would participate in the campaign against Russia. Spain organized a "Blue Division" for the same purpose. Recruitment of French volunteers for a "Legion" began on July 2.

The English perceptively increased the number of bomber flights over Reich territory after June 22, as is evident from the number of downings cited in the OKW report.

For days, no information was available on the situation of the front in the east, other than everything going "according to plan." It was not until Sunday, June 29, that a dozen "special reports" on more or less significant initial successes were made public.³⁴²

On the same day, Hitler signed a decree which, in view of Hess's escape, named Göring as the Führer's successor in the event of his death. However, this decree was not published in either the press or the Reich Law Gazette.

June 30, 1941

On June 30, Hitler received the three U-boat commanders Liebe, Schultze, and Endrass, and presented them with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.³⁴³

In the course of the following weeks, it became clear that Hitler was greatly mistaken in his assessment of the military aspects of the campaign, and so were his generals! Hitler's theory of the "cowardly and anxious" Bolsheviks, whom he intended to overrun as swiftly and brutally as he had the German communists, ended in a fiasco.

As during the Reich's wars against France after the French Revolution, it became clear that ideological changes in a regime did not affect the people's willingness to resist. Bolshevik Russia fought the German invaders as energetically as Tsarist Russia had defended itself against the armies of Charles XII and Napoleon I. Neither Hitler's methods of terror nor the technological improvements in the equipment of his armies could change this.

Hitler had calculated that it would take his panzers, which, in theory, could cover hundreds of kilometers every day, a few days—at most a few months—to reach Moscow, Leningrad, and the Volga.

In 1812, it took Napoleon eighty-four days to advance from the Neman to Moscow, that is, to cover a distance of nine hundred fifty kilometers. On September 14, he had reached his destination. Hitler's troops likewise set out on June 22, but by September 14 Moscow was still three hundred kilometers away.

The German High Command had also believed that the Russian steppe was ideal terrain for tanks and that this alone would be decisive. Its calculations and plans proved wrong. Four weeks of heavy frontier fighting and everything would be over, so the generals had thought.³⁴⁴

The long-winded OKW reports of the first weeks revealed that, militarily, Hitler's coup in Russia had also failed. This venture and its consequences would haunt him to the end of his life. Even Hitler could not deny that the campaign against Russia had failed. But the reasons he gave for this failure missed the point entirely and reached from Mussolini's Greek adventure to the alleged "high treason" by the German generals.³⁴⁵

After the Second World War, the German generals eagerly tried to prove that, had things gone according to their plans, this campaign could have been won. Numerous military historians examined different stages of the battle and developed theories on how things might have gone if this or that battle had been planned differently, if this or that

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advance had come earlier, had been conducted more energetically or more cautiously.

As interesting and necessary as such research might be, one should never forget the clear historical facts or attempt to challenge their significance. And the facts are the following:

1. Whether or not Hitler's campaign against Russia was successful, it was without significance for the ultimate outcome of the Second World War. This means: that even if Hitler had succeeded in conquering all of Russia and subjugating it, the western powers would have defeated and destroyed him sooner or later. Under such circumstances, the war might have lasted a year or two longer. But never would Hitler have been able to control effectively so vast a terrain and, at the same time, prevent an invasion by the Allies. In addition to this, Hitler never would have been satisfied with a successful campaign against Russia. His insatiable thirst for further conquests would have compelled him onward immediately to attack India.³⁴⁶

2. Hitler's campaign against Russia failed because Germany's war potential was insufficient to break the Russian resistance. A different operational plan or strategy could not have changed this.

3. What was surprising about Hitler's campaign was that in spite of the harshness and brutality with which the German Wehrmacht proceeded, it failed to attain even one of its goals:

While, in some instances, the Wehrmacht reached the municipal areas of the cities, it was unable to take either Murmansk or Leningrad, Moscow, or Stalingrad. In the south, too, it proved unable to get hold of the oil fields in the Caucasus,³⁴⁷ although the Swastika flag flew on Mount Elbrus for a while.

In essence, the German conquests remained restricted to the Baltic states, eastern Poland, the Ukraine, and the Crimea, that is, those areas, which the Imperial armies had also taken in the First World War.

This conclusion is remarkable insofar as Hitler had maintained that under his leadership "nothing is impossible for the German soldier,"³⁴⁸ and that the Wehrmacht that he had created was "the most gigantic instrument of war of all time."³⁴⁹

4. The successful resistance of the Soviet Union in view of the invasion by Hitler must be attributed, as in the case of Napoleon I, to the power of the Russian artillery. Like the line divisions and the guards of Napoleon,³⁵⁰ the German armies in the Second World War suddenly found themselves confronted with the combat strength, precision, and

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superiority of the Russian batteries and mortars. The Russian cannons in front of Moscow in 1941, the missiles of the *Stalinorgeln* (multiple rocket launchers), and the five thousand guns firing at Stalingrad belong forever to the picture of the great Russian defensive war from 1941 to 1945. And the thunder of artillery, which during the war announced every new victory to the citizens of Moscow, was at the same time an honor salute to Russia's best branch of the armed services.³⁵¹

From the end of June 1941 on, Hitler was at the "front," that is, he stayed at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in East Prussia.³⁵² He expected his stay to last approximately four weeks, which corresponded to the time he had spent at the Felsenest headquarters in the Eifel mountains the year before.³⁵³ He thought it would include a few more or less extensive sight-seeing tours and inspections of the front in the more or less conquered Russia, similar to how things had been in the west in 1940. But those four weeks, with few interruptions, would turn into three-and-a-half years!

During lunches and dinners at his Werwolf headquarters at Winniza (Vinnitsa) in the Ukraine from July 1941 to August 1942, Hitler would conduct the so-called "Table Talk."³⁵⁴ This "Table Talk" was a continuation of the monologues Hitler usually gave late at night at the Berghof or at dinners at his apartment at the Chancellery in Berlin. Here, too, he insisted on absolute silence while he spoke. Nobody was allowed to contradict him, irrespective of the topic he talked about, whether it was politics, art, history, technology, or the like. Mrs. Goebbels perhaps best summed up the "Table Talk" when she told Ciano on one occasion: "It is always Hitler who talks! He can be Führer as much as he likes, but he always repeats himself and bores his guests."³⁵⁵

The topics which Hitler discussed in the "Table Talk" had mostly been discussed on countless previous occasions: the idea of the earth as a "trophy cup" which passes into the hands of the strongest people,³⁵⁶ the supposed identity of struggle at home and abroad,³⁵⁷ motorization and mass production of the Volkswagen,³⁵⁸ the abnormality of the Zeppelin and the present form of ship propulsion,³⁵⁹ Rosenberg's ludicrous book on mythology,³⁶⁰ the desired friendship with England and the great achievements of the English,³⁶¹ world Jewry,³⁶² city planning,³⁶³ and supposed casualty figures for the Thirty Years' War.³⁶⁴ Often he would swagger and, for cheap effect, would claim things that could not possibly be true chronologically.³⁶⁵

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Sometimes Hitler would also speak of current affairs, for example, the treatment and organization of Russia, the suppression of the non-German population,³⁶⁶ the extermination of millions of Leningrad's citizens through bombardment and starvation,³⁶⁷ the planning of gigantic highways and railroads with a gauge of four meters.³⁶⁸ Hitler's attacks on lawyers likewise played a role of importance and will be discussed in more detail later.

In September 1942, the "Table Talk" suddenly ended. Hitler was just criticizing a measure Field Marshal List had taken in the southern sector, when Jodl interjected that the Führer himself had ordered him to do so.³⁶⁹ Unbelievable! Hitler screamed: "That is a lie!" Foaming with rage, he left the dining room. That was the end of the "Table Talk" for all time. The God-man Hitler, who was always right, had been insulted. Someone had dared accuse him of making a mistake, of committing a sin!

From July 1941 on, Hitler's lifestyle markedly changed. He spent most of the day in rooms in the bunkers and barracks of his headquarters, which had to be lighted artificially even in daytime. The monotonous daily routine of discussion of the situation, reception of news, and issuing of directives was disrupted only by the repetitive awarding of the Knight's Cross in all categories to officers. On occasion, Hitler flew to some backward operational theater. Every once in a while, potentates from the satellite states or even his friend Mussolini made an appearance. Visits from unterführers, ministers, and so on, became increasingly rare over time.

July 17, 1941

4

On July 12, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to State President Háchá on his sixty-ninth birthday.³⁷⁰

Two days before, the OKW had reported on the double battle for Bialystok and Minsk, stating that the “greatest battle of matériel and encirclement (*Material- und Umfassungsschlacht*) in world history” had taken place there.³⁷¹ Following this battle of world-historic dimensions, Hitler obviously believed that Russia had had it. Therefore, on July 14, he issued “guidelines on the reduction of the army,” which began with the following note:³⁷²

The military domination of the European area after the defeat of Russia allows us to reduce the size of the army considerably.

On July 15, Hitler awarded Lieutenant Colonel Mölders the first Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds. He sent him a handwritten letter:³⁷³

Accept my sincere congratulations on your five new air victories today. With these successes, you have downed a hundred one enemies in the Greater German fight for freedom and, together with your successes in the Spanish Civil War, you have emerged victorious a hundred fifteen times from battle in the air.

In appreciation of your everlasting, heroic struggle in the fight for the freedom of our Volk and in recognition of your great services as a fighter pilot, I award you, as the first officer of the German Wehrmacht, the highest German medal for bravery, the Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds as an addition to the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.

I add my best wishes for your future to my gratitude and that of the entire German Volk,

Adolf Hitler

On July 17, Hitler received Air Force General Student and Major General Ringl,³⁷⁴ who headed a delegation of soldiers who had fought in

July 18, 1941

Crete and had been awarded the Knight's Cross. In an address, Hitler said that "this daring feat is one of the prerequisites to the successful continuation of our fight for freedom."

On July 18, Hitler decorated Lieutenant Colonel Galland and other officers.³⁷⁵ On July 19, Hitler felt compelled to issue Directive No. 33 on the "continuation of the war in the east,"³⁷⁶ in spite of the recent "greatest battle of matériel and encirclement in world history." He felt that it was necessary to attempt once again to encircle enemy troops in the Ukraine. The directive read:

Directive No. 33: Continuation of the War in the East

(1) The second round of battles in the east has ended on the whole front with the breakthrough of the Stalin Line and sweeping advances of the armored units. For Army Group Center, the elimination of the strong enemy combat forces remaining between the motorized units will still require considerable time.

The northern wing of Army Group South is hampered in its action and freedom of movement by the Fortress of Kiev and the Fifth Soviet Army in its rear.

(2) The aim of the next operations must be to prevent further strong elements of the enemy from withdrawing into the vast Russian expanse, and to destroy them.

Preparations to that effect are to be set afoot along the following lines:

(a) eastern front—south:

The principal objective is the destruction of the enemy's Sixth and Twelfth Armies while they are still west of the Dnieper by a concentric attack. The Romanian main forces will have to cover this operation in the south.

The enemy's Fifth Army can also most quickly be destroyed by joint action between forces of the Army Group Center's southern wing and Army Group South's northern wing.

Some infantry divisions of Army Group Center will have to turn south. Additional forces, particularly motorized units, will have to be employed in a southeasterly direction after fulfilling their present missions, securing their supplies, and screening in the direction of Moscow. This will be in order to cut off from escape those enemy forces which transfer to the far side of the Dnieper and thus into the depths of the Russian space, and to destroy them.

(b) eastern front—center:

Army Group Center, after eliminating the numerous encircled enemy pockets and after making its supplies secure, will continue to advance toward Moscow with infantry units. Motorized units, not being employed southeastward toward the Dnieper Line, will have the mission of cutting Moscow-Leningrad communications, thereby covering the right flank of the thrust of Army Group North toward Leningrad.

July 21, 1941

(c) eastern front—north:

The advance in the direction of Leningrad must not be resumed until the Eighteenth Army has closed up with the Fourth Armored Group and their deep flank is securely covered toward the east by the Sixteenth Army. Army Group North must also endeavor to block the withdrawal to Leningrad of the Soviet forces still fighting in Estonia.

The early seizure of the Baltic islands as possible bases of the Soviet fleet is desired.

(d) Finnish front:

It remains the mission of the Finnish main forces, reinforced by the bulk of the 163rd Division, to attack the enemy confronting them. The main effort will be east of Lake Ladoga. Ultimately, the Finnish forces, by concerted effort with the Army Group North, will destroy them.

The objectives of the attack under command of the 36th Corps and the Mountain Corps remain unchanged with the understanding that, for the time being, stronger support cannot be expected from air units and therefore, if necessary, one will have to put up with a temporary postponement of operations.

(3) For the Luftwaffe, upon the release of any units from the eastern front—center, it is especially important to support the main effort (*schwerpunktartig*) of the attack along the eastern front—south through the commitment of air and antiaircraft forces, and, if necessary, by prompt reinforcements or suitable regrouping.

The attack on Moscow with forces of the Second Air Fleet, reinforced by fighter formations from the west, is to be carried out as soon as possible as “retaliation for the Soviet attacks on Bucharest and Helsinki.”

(4) The mission of the navy remains to maintain the maritime traffic, especially in order to transport supplies for the land operations as far as enemy activity in the sea and in the air permits. Furthermore, while we progressively threaten the enemy bases, our actions must as much as possible be directed at preventing enemy forces from escaping to Swedish ports of internment.

After the fleet units in the Baltic are set free once more, the motor torpedo boats and minesweepers—at first in the strength of one flotilla of each—are to be transferred to the Mediterranean.

Several submarines are to be dispatched to the Arctic Ocean for the support of the German operations in Finland, which are hampered by enemy reinforcements by sea.

(5) In the west and north, all three Wehrmacht branches must be on the alert to repel possible British attacks on the Channel Islands and the Norwegian coast. The rapid transfer of combat aircraft from the western theater to all parts of Norway must be ready and prepared.

Adolf Hitler

On July 21, at the Führer headquarters, Hitler received “the Croatian deputy head of state and minister of defense, Marshal

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Kvaternik, who was briefly visiting Germany,” and engaged him in a “heartfelt conversation.”³⁷⁷

On July 26, Hitler was too busy to participate in the opening of the Greater German Art Exhibition in Munich. The previous year, he had asked Hess to substitute for him. Since Hess was no longer available, he had Goebbels open the exhibition.³⁷⁸

On July 29, Hitler sent his friend Mussolini the following congratulatory telegram on his birthday:³⁷⁹

In loyal comradeship, I express to you, Duce, my heartfelt congratulations and those of the German Volk on your birthday, to which I add sincere best wishes for your personal welfare as well as for the future of the Italian people, which, under your leadership and in close brotherhood in arms with the German Volk, is fighting for a new Europe and is marching towards our mutual victory.

Adolf Hitler

Also on July 29, General von Schröder died in Hohenlychen. He had commanded the army in Serbia and had formerly been the president of the Reich Air Defense Union (*Reichsluftschutzbund*). He died as the result of a “sudden embolism,” caused by an earlier flying accident.³⁸⁰ Schröder was the first in a series of high-ranking officers, state administrators, and party functionaries to die such a “sudden death.” In the years 1941 through 1945, papers in Germany reported on a multitude of “sudden deaths,” usually resulting from heart disease, stroke, or flying accident and, at the same time, announced a state funeral. In a few cases, it later became known that the persons in question had committed suicide (for example, Air Force General Udet, Luftwaffe chief of staff Jeschonnek, Field Marshal Rommel, and Gauleiter Bürckel).

The “bad state of health” of high-ranking officers, functionaries in state and party, and the number of state funerals became so alarming that people on the street jokingly began to refer to those who dared to criticize the general situation as “candidates for a state funeral.” While it is possible that a number of these deaths truly resulted from illness or accident, on the whole, they do appear odd, especially since the SS Führers apparently enjoyed better health.

By now, the campaign in Russia had been underway for over five weeks without bringing about any decisive victory. Therefore, on July 30, Hitler issued Directive No. 34, which read as follows:³⁸¹

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The development of the situation in the last few days, the appearance of strong enemy forces on the front and on the flanks of Army Group Center, the supply situation, and the necessity of giving the 2nd and 3rd Armored Groups about ten days of time to reorganize their formations, force me for the moment to postpone the more distant missions and targets assigned in Directive 33 of July 19 and its supplement of July 23.

I order therefore the following:

I. (1) In the northern sector of the eastern front, the attack with the main effort between Lake Ilmen and [the city of] Narva to be continued in the direction of Leningrad with the objective of encircling Leningrad and establishing contact with the Finnish army.

This offensive is to be screened off north of Lake Ilmen in the Volkov sector, and south of Lake Ilmen to be pressed to the northeast only as far as securing the right flank of the advance north of Lake Ilmen demands it. Before that the situation around Velikie Luki is to be cleaned up. All forces not required for this mission are to be added to the assault wing to the north of Lake Ilmen. The thrust of the 3rd Armored Group upon the Valdai Hills that was planned earlier will not take place until the armored formations are again fully ready for action. Instead, however, the left wing of Army Group Center must be pushed ahead to the northeast as far as the flank protection of the right wing of Army Group North demands it.

Estonia is first to be cleared with all the forces of the Eighteenth Army; only then can divisions be brought through in the direction of Leningrad.

(2) Army Group Center, with the utilization of favorable terrain sectors, will shift over to the defensive. Insofar as it is necessary to gain favorable jumping-off positions for the later assault operations against the Twenty-First Soviet Army, some attacks with limited objectives may still be carried out. For the rest, the 2nd and 3rd Armored Groups are to be withdrawn from the front as soon as the situation permits, and be speedily reorganized.

(3) On the southern sector of the eastern front, operations will be, for the time being, continued with forces of Army Group South alone. Their objective must be the destruction of the strong enemy forces west of the Dnieper, and, for the rest, by gaining bridgeheads near Kiev and to the south, the creation of suitable conditions for later pushing the 1st Panzergrenadier Division across to the eastern bank of the Dnieper.

The Soviet 5th Army, fighting in the swamp area northwest of Kiev, must be forced to give battle west of the Dnieper and must be destroyed. The danger that it might break through to the north across the Pripet must be prevented as early as possible.

(4) Finnish front:

The attack in the direction of Kandalaksha is to be called off. The threats to the flank from Motoskiy Bay are to be eliminated by the Mountain Corps, and only those forces left to the 36th Corps headquarters that are necessary for defense and for the feigning of further assault preparations.

The cutting of the Murmansk railway is now to be attempted in the sector of the 3rd (Finnish) Corps, especially in the direction of Loukhi; all the forces

July 29, 1941

suitable for this attack are to be transferred there, with any surplus units to be turned over to the Karelian army. If, because of difficult terrain, the attack by the 3rd (Finnish) Corps should come to a halt too, the German forces are to be withdrawn and added to the Karelian army. This applies particularly to mobile units, tanks, and heavy artillery. The 6th Mountain Division is to be moved to the Mountain Corps with the utilization of all available transport routes. Whether the rail route through Sweden to Narvik can also be used will be clarified by the Foreign Ministry.

II. Luftwaffe

(1) eastern front—north:

The Luftwaffe will shift the main effort in the air combat to the northeastern front by bringing the bulk of the 8th Air Corps into the First Air Force. The reinforcements are to be brought in early enough to be utilized at the beginning of the main thrust of the attack by Army Group North (early on August 6).

(2) Center:

It will be the mission of the Luftwaffe units remaining with Army Group Center to provide the absolutely necessary fighter protection on the front of the Second and Ninth Armies and possibly to support local attacks. The attacks on Moscow are to be continued.

(3) Southeastern front:

Missions as before. No reduction of the Luftwaffe units employed with Army Group South is planned.

(4) Finland:

The principal mission of the Fifth Air Force is the support of the Mountain Corps. In addition, the attack of the 3rd Finnish Army Corps is to be supported at some promising sector.

The necessary preparations are to be made for the possibly necessary dispatch of forces in support of the Karelian army.

Adolf Hitler

Crucial to the success of these undertakings was “the attack with the main effort between Lake Ilmen and Narva is to be continued in the direction of Leningrad with the objective of encircling Leningrad and establishing contact with the Finnish army.” Therefore, Hitler invited the Finnish general Oehqvist³⁸² to the Führer headquarters that day.

German troops had met with strong resistance at Smolensk, as Napoleon’s soldiers had in 1812. The Russians were not ready to give up their “holy city” without a good fight.³⁸³

On August 6, the city was finally taken. After a pause of four weeks, the OKW issued a long-winded, comprehensive report on the successes to date. Several photos taken at the Führer headquarters that were published at this time show Hitler, Göring, Keitel, Brauchitsch, and Halder looking rather pensive.³⁸⁴

August 14, 1941

Also on August 6, the following announcement from the Führer headquarters was made public:³⁸⁵

On the occasion of the liberation of Bessarabia, the Führer and Supreme Commander awarded the Romanian head of state and supreme commander of the Romanian troops, General Antonescu, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. The Führer personally presented the award at the southern front of the theater of war in the east.

In order to do so, Hitler had flown from Rastenburg to Berdichev along with his interpreter Schmidt. He had a political discussion with Antonescu and was present as Rundstedt delivered his situation report. Immediately after that, he returned to East Prussia.³⁸⁶

On August 9, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to Mussolini, whose second son Bruno had crashed during a test flight near Pisa.³⁸⁷

On August 19, Hitler bade farewell to the Spanish ambassador de Los Monteros, who had been recalled from Berlin.³⁸⁸

On the same day, Hitler issued a supplement to Directive No. 34.³⁸⁹ He wanted the Crimea, the Donetsk Basin, and Kharkov to be taken, and the moving of mountain troops in the direction of Batumi to be considered.

The goal must be to take from the enemy the entire administrative, armament, and transport center surrounding Moscow before the onset of winter.

Operations against Leningrad must be concluded before the attack in the direction of Moscow begins.

On August 14, the Atlantic Charter, which Churchill and Roosevelt had drawn up aboard the battleship *Prince of Wales*, was made public.³⁹⁰

Hitler was furious about the meeting of the Anglo-American statesmen and, at the same time, jealous. He immediately thought about arranging a meeting with Mussolini, but first he needed the triumphal setting and military victories.

In Hitler's opinion, it was the fault of the generals that operations in Russia had not yet been concluded. Contrary to his instructions, they had failed to defeat the Russians swiftly. In order to set them straight, he made clear that they should follow his instructions only. On August 21, he decreed the following:³⁹¹

The proposal of the army (dated August 18) concerning the continuation of the war in the east does not correspond to my intentions. I order the following:

August 25, 1941

1. The most important goal, which must be reached before the onset of winter, is not to take Moscow, but the Crimea, the industrial and coal areas along the Donetsk Basin, and to cut off the Russian oil supplies from the Caucasus, and, in the north, to seal Leningrad off and to unite with the Finns.

2. The rare, operationally advantageous situation that was created by the establishment of the Gomel-Potshop line must immediately be taken advantage of for a concentric operation of the inner wings of the Army Groups South and Center.

Its goal must be not only to force the Soviet Fifth Army behind the Dnieper through a general attack of the Sixth Army, but also to destroy this enemy before he can break out from the Desna-Konotop-Sula line. This will secure Army Group South so that it can gain a foothold east of the central section of the Dnieper and continue operations in the direction of Rostov-Kharkov in the center and on the left wing.

3. Irrespective of later operations, Army Group Center must deploy sufficient forces so that the goal, the destruction of the Russian Fifth Army, is accomplished, and the Army Group, in positions which economize power, remains ready to thwart enemy attacks against the center of its front.

The intention remains unchanged to drive the left wing of Army Group Center toward the heights around Toropec in order to establish contact with the right wing of Army Group North.

4. The taking of the Crimean Peninsula is of supreme importance to securing our oil supplies from Romania. A swift crossing of the Dnieper in the direction of the Crimea must be sought by all means before the enemy has time to lead up new forces, even if mobile units have to be deployed.

5. Only the firm sealing-off of Leningrad, the union with the Finns, and the destruction of the Russian Fifth Army create the preconditions and free the forces that are necessary, in the spirit of the orders supplementing Directive No. 34 (dated August 12). Those orders: to attack the enemy Army Group Timoshenko with good hope of success and then defeat it.

Adolf Hitler

On August 25, Hitler received Mussolini, whom the interpreter Schmidt had brought from the Brenner Pass, at the small Görlitz station near Rastenburg. The "meeting of the Axis partners" began.³⁹²

The time was not a happy one for the gentlemen since, on this day, England and Russia moved to occupy Iran. Shah Reza Pahlavi³⁹³ put up resistance for three days before he had to admit that, in time of war, it was best for small powers to submit to bigger ones. Hitler had thought that small states were his game, but he hadn't realized that the Anglo-American powers were not willing to let that happen and that he himself was too weak to do things against their will.

August 29, 1941

From the station, the two dictators drove to the Wolfsschanze headquarters. That evening, there was a bivouac in a forest glade at the Führer headquarters.

The next day, they flew to Brest-Litovsk, where Mussolini was brought especially to study the effectiveness of a new German gun with a sixty-centimeter caliber, which had been used in taking the place. After a meal at the field mess, they returned to Wolfsschanze.

That night, Mussolini went on alone to Gorsk aboard his special train. The two dictators met there again on August 27. To protect the two special trains against aerial bombing, they were parked inside a concrete pipe.

On August 28, they flew to Uman in the Ukraine aboard Hitler's four-engined Focke-Wulf plane Condor 'D 2600.' There they got into jeeps. After driving around for some time, they finally found the Italian division, which Mussolini was supposed to inspect. Of course, Hitler was leading as usual and allowed Mussolini only to play second fiddle to him. Mussolini took his revenge by flying the plane back to Gorsk himself and terrifying Hitler.

In the course of the "discussions" during those days, according to Schmidt's report, Hitler once again overwhelmed Mussolini with "numbers and technical details." He spoke of the imminent collapse of Russia and England, and of the inevitable final victory of Germany. While Mussolini listened in silence, he apparently felt strengthened morally, since he later sent Hitler a most enthusiastic telegram of thanks.³⁹⁴

On August 29, the Führer's headquarters published a communiqué on the talks, which was obviously intended to counteract the Atlantic declaration of August 14 by Roosevelt and Churchill. It read as follows:³⁹⁵

The Führer and the Duce met at the Führer's headquarters in the period between August 25 and 29.

During the talks, which took place at the Führer's headquarters, all military and political questions concerning the development and the duration of the war were discussed in great detail. These questions were examined in the spirit of the close comradeship and the feeling of being united by a common fate which are characteristic of the relations of the two Axis powers. The talks were suffused by the unchangeable will of the two people and their leaders to bring the war to a victorious end.

The new European order that will result from this victory should, as far as possible, eliminate the causes that, in the past have led to the European wars.

August 31, 1941

The destruction of the Bolshevik danger and of plutocratic exploitation will create the possibility of a peaceful, harmonious, and fruitful cooperation between all people of the European continent in the political, as well as in the economic and cultural spheres.

In the course of this visit, the Führer and the Duce went to significant points on the eastern front. An Italian division deployed in the struggle against Bolshevism was inspected. Field Marshal von Rundstedt greeted the Führer and the Duce on their visit to the southern front. In addition, visits to the headquarters of the Reichsmarschall and the commander in chief of Army Group South took place.

The Italian ambassador to Berlin, Dino Alfieri, the chief of the Italian armed forces general staff, General Cavallero, the cabinet chief envoy Anfuso, who substituted for Foreign Minister Count Ciano (who was unable to come because of an illness),³⁹⁶ Generals Marras and Gandin, as well as a series of other high-ranking general staff officers, accompanied the Duce. The German ambassador von Mackensen and the German military attaché to Rome, Lieutenant General von Tintelen, likewise accompanied the Duce on his tour. On the German side, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, participated in the political and military discussions.

On August 30, Hitler sent the following congratulatory telegrams to Mannerheim and Ryti on taking Vyborg:³⁹⁷

Today, the fight for Finland's freedom was crowned by the capture of Vyborg. Along with me, the German Volk, and especially the German Wehrmacht, share the pride and joy of the Finnish people, filled with admiration for the bravery of your soldiers.

As an external symbol of the solidarity between the German and Finnish armed forces in our common, fateful struggle and in appreciation of your bravery and that of your troops, I award you, in the name of the German Volk, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with clasps to the Iron Cross First and Second Class of 1914.

Adolf Hitler

On the capture of the city of Vyborg by the Finnish troops, I send you my heartfelt congratulations and those of the entire German Volk. This great success is a significant milestone on the way to completely liberating Finland from the enemy and to a final victory over nation-destroying Bolshevism.

Adolf Hitler

On August 31, Hitler sent a greeting to the Leipzig Fair on its opening.³⁹⁸

The next day at the Führer headquarters, he received the Spanish general Munoz Grande, commander of the "Blue Division," to have him report to be ready "to destroy the enemy of the world."³⁹⁹

September 6, 1941

On September 3, the eve of his fiftieth birthday, Reich Minister Todt was received by Hitler at the Führer headquarters.⁴⁰⁰

On the same day, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to the Croatian Marshal Kvaternik on the death of his wife.⁴⁰¹

On September 4, Hitler sent a handwritten letter to Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb, the commander in chief of Army Group North, on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁴⁰²

On September 6, the state funeral that Hitler had ordered for the publisher Hugo Bruckmann took place in Munich. Gauleiter Adolf Wagner brought "the Führer's last greetings and a gorgeous wreath."⁴⁰³

On the same day, Hitler issued Directive No. 35, which read as follows:⁴⁰⁴

The initial successes against the enemy forces in the area between the inner wings of Army Groups South and Center have, with a view to the progressive encirclement of the Leningrad area, created the basis for a decisive operation against Army Group Timoshenko, which is now tied down on the central front by offensive fighting. Army Group Timoshenko must be beaten and annihilated within the limited period of time left before winter weather sets in. To attain this it is essential to concentrate on the wings all army and Luftwaffe forces that become available and that can be transferred in time.

In accordance with the presentation of the commander in chief of the army, I order for the preparation and execution of these operations the following:

1. On the southern half of the front, it must be the objective of the forces of Army Group South advancing northward across the Dnieper, in coordination with the attack by the southern wing of Army Group Center, to annihilate the enemy lodged in the Kremenchug-Kiev-Konotop triangle. As soon as execution of this mission permits, the elements of Second and Sixth Armies and Second Panzer Group that are no longer needed must be regrouped for new operations.

Army Group South, as of about September 10 at the latest, must launch a surprise push of mobile units reinforced by infantry divisions and supported by the Fourth Air Force concentrated for massive blows, out of the bridgehead won by the Seventeenth Army in a northwesterly direction via Lubny, while the Seventeenth Army gains room in the direction of Poltava and Kharkov.

On the lower Dnieper, the offensive against the Crimea must be continued with the support of the Fourth Air Force, as must also the offensive out of the Dnepropetrovsk bridgehead if forces are available for that purpose. A drive by mobile units south of the lower Dnieper in the direction of Melitopol would bring substantial advances for the mission of the Eleventh Army.

2. In the Army Center, the preparations for the operation against Army Group Timoshenko must be carried forward in such manner as to permit at the earliest possible date (end of September) the launching of the attack which

September 6, 1941

would have as its object the annihilation of the enemy in the area east of Smolensk by a double envelopment—with strong, massed armored forces on the wings—aimed in the general direction of Vyazma.

To this end, heavy concentrations of mobile forces must be formed:

On the southern wing—probably in the area southeast of Roslavl and with a northeastern direction of thrust—from the available forces of Army Group Center together with 5th and 2nd tank Divisions released for the purpose.

In the sector of Ninth Army—probably with direction of thrust via Byeloy—by transferring the strongest elements that can be obtained from Army Group North.

Only after the bulk of Army Group Timoshenko has been beaten in this tightly contained operation of annihilation by close-in envelopment, will Army Center be required to launch the advance in the direction of Moscow, resting on the Oka on the left, and on the upper Volga on the right.

The Luftwaffe is to support the attack with the Second Air Force, which is to receive timely reinforcement especially from the northeastern sector, providing for main concentration of the wings and committing the bulk of the divebombing units (8th Air Corps) with the mobile units on both attacking wings.

3. On the eastern front north, encirclement of the enemy forces fighting in the Leningrad area (which also requires seizure of Schlüsselburg) must be carried out in cooperation with the Finnish Corps attacking on the Karelian Isthmus in such a manner as to permit release to Army Group Center, on September 15 at the latest, of substantial portions of the mobile troops and of the First Air Force, especially the 8th Air Corps. Before that, a tighter encirclement of Leningrad to the east at least must be sought and, in addition, if the weather permits, a total air attack is to be launched against Leningrad; there the most important objective is destruction of the water works.

In order to help along the Finnish advance through the fortifications laid out along the old Russo-Finnish frontier, and with a view to narrowing the combat zone and eliminating enemy air bases, it is necessary as soon as possible to launch forces of Army Group North across the Neva sector toward the north.

Kronshtadt Bay must, in cooperation with the Finns, be sealed off by mine fields and artillery so as to prevent any escape of enemy forces into the Baltic (Hangö, Baltic islands).

The battlefield around Leningrad must be screened off to the east, also on the lower Volkhov, as soon as troops can be made available for the purpose; a linkup with the Karelian army in direction of the Svir should be sought only after annihilation of the enemy around Leningrad is assured.

4. With regard to the further development of the operations, preparations must be made for providing cover for the Moscow offensive of Army Group Center by part of Army Group South using a flank-securing force (made up of mobile troops becoming available there), which is to advance in a general northeastern direction. Also, a drive shall be launched by forces of Army

September 12, 1941

Group North on both sides of Lake Ilmen for the purpose of securing the northern flank and linking up with the Finnish army of Karelia.

5. Anything that saves time and thus speeds up the respective deadlines would benefit the overall operation and the preparations for it.

Adolf Hitler

The cover name for the offensive against Moscow was *Taifun* (typhoon).

From September 8 to 10, Horthy was Hitler's guest. The following long-winded communiqué was published on this "memorable" meeting at the East Prussian headquarters:⁴⁰⁵

Führer Headquarters, September 11

On an invitation by the Führer, the regent of the kingdom of Hungary, von Horthy, visited the Führer from September 8 to 10 at his headquarters on the eastern front.

The Regent was accompanied by the royal Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister, von Bardossy, as well as the chief of the Hungarian general staff, Field Marshal-Lieutenant Szombathely. The Hungarian envoy to Berlin, Field Marshal-Lieutenant Sztojai, as well as the German envoy to Budapest, von Jaglow, also accompanied the regent on his travels.

During his stay, the Führer and the regent discussed the political and military situation. The discussions were conducted in the spirit of the traditional brotherhood in arms of the two people, which is shown once again today in the common struggle against Bolshevism.

On the German side, the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, participated in the discussions, and, on the Hungarian side, the Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister, von Bardossy, and the chief of the Hungarian general staff, Field Marshal-Lieutenant Szombathely.

During his stay at the Führer headquarters, Regent von Horthy visited the commander in chief of the army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, at the army high command. At the end of his stay, he accepted an invitation by Reichsmarschal Göring to his headquarters.

The discussions between the Führer and the regent of the kingdom of Hungary, von Horthy, ended on September 10. In a ceremonial act, the Führer awarded the regent, in his capacity as the supreme commander of the royal Hungarian armed forces, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

At the Wolfsschanze headquarters on September 11, Hitler received the newly appointed Spanish ambassador, Count Mayalde, and the newly appointed envoys Count Tovar of Portugal and Mohr of Denmark, who presented their credentials to him.⁴⁰⁶

September 22, 1941

On September 12, Hitler issued the following appeal to the German Volk for the wartime Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Campaign) 1941-1942:⁴⁰⁷

Führer Headquarters, September 12, 1941

For the ninth time, I call on the German Volk to make a voluntary contribution to the Winterhilfswerk.

In these historic days, our Wehrmacht is fighting in a gigantic struggle for the existence of the German nation, and beyond this for the preservation of a Europe that throughout the millennia has given mankind culture and civilization and shall do so again in the future.

As once at home, today in a world hostile to us, Jewish capitalists and Bolsheviks have joined forces in order to destroy the National Socialist German Reich as the strongest fortress of this new Europe and, above all, in order to exterminate our Volk.

For two years, the German soldier has risked life and limb in the defense of our dear homeland and Volk. At this moment, together with our allies, he is fighting all the way from the northern part of Europe down to the shores of the Black Sea against an enemy who is not human, but consists of beasts. The successes of his sacrifice in blood and sweat, in cares and privations, are unheard-of in world history. Through its attitude and its own sense of sacrifice, may the homeland prove itself worthy of the heroic deeds of its sons.

Their efforts shall reinforce the idea of our National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft at home and strengthen the knowledge at the front that the German Volk stands behind them and that their struggle will not be in vain, but is helping to realize the great National Socialist ideal of community.

May the world recognize that front and homeland in the German Reich are a unity sworn together in loyalty and therefore invincible.

Adolf Hitler

Also on September 12, Hitler sent Reichsleiter Hühnlein a congratulatory telegram on his sixtieth birthday.⁴⁰⁸

On September 15, he transmitted a “heartfelt” congratulatory telegram to the Italian Crown Prince Umberto on his birthday.⁴⁰⁹

On September 22, Hitler had to come to terms with the realization that, in spite of the “hero of Narvik”⁴¹⁰ and the “heroic” Finnish people,⁴¹¹ it did not seem as though it would be possible to take Murmansk “this year.”

Directive No. 36:⁴¹²

I. Unusual difficulties with the terrain, inferior communications, and Soviet reinforcements constantly channeled to Karelia and Lapland were the reason why the weak forces of headquarters, Army of Norway, and the Fifth Air Fleet, despite outstanding performance and unflinching courage, have so far not succeeded in reaching the Murmansk railway. Interference by the enemy

September 22, 1941

with our sea lines of communication on the Arctic coast has further reduced the prospects that the Mountain Corps will reach Murmansk this year.

Yet it was possible to tie down and draw away from the Russian main front considerable enemy forces, to push the enemy everywhere over the old Finnish borders, and to eliminate any threat so far to northern Finland, especially the nickel mines.

II. The ultimate aim of the operations in northern and central Finland, to destroy the enemy forces stationed around Murmansk and along the Murmansk railway, must be maintained.

The importance of this area lies in the nickel mines, which are vital for the German conduct of the war. The enemy is aware of that importance. We can expect the English to establish themselves around Murmansk and Kandalaksha with strong air-combat forces, perhaps even to operate with Canadian or Norwegian troops, and to bring to Murmansk war materiel on the largest scale. One must also expect air raids, even during the winter, on the nickel mines and on the living quarters of the miners. Our own efforts must match the extent of this danger.

III. I therefore order the following:

(1) Headquarters, Army of Norway:

(a) In the sector of the 3rd (Finnish) Army Corps, attacks shall be discontinued; forces released thereby are to be transferred to the 36th Army Corps.

(b) The 36th Army Corps shall make every preparation to resume the offensive in the direction of Kandalaksha in the first half of October, with the objective at least to cut off Murmansk from the rail link before winter comes. Furthermore, it should be examined whether a continuation of this offensive in winter offers better prospects for success than in the autumn.

The Finnish High Command will be requested to dispatch the 163rd Division as soon as possible by rail via Rovaniemi to headquarters, Army of Norway.

(c) The attack of the Mountain Corps in the direction of Murmansk is, for the time being, to be discontinued, and continued with the northern wing only as needed to improve the position and deceive the enemy. In view of the tasks of the navy, it is, however, necessary to seize at least the western part of the Rybachi Peninsula before the beginning of winter and thereby to eliminate enemy activity by artillery and patrol craft against the entrance to the port of Liinahamari.

Reconnaissance and deliberations regarding such an attack shall begin immediately, and the result is to be reported as soon as possible. Special weapons which are still to be brought up for use against land and sea targets, and which are suitable for employment, will be allocated.

Whether the intentions of the army headquarters for the winter can be realized, that is, to leave two reinforced mountain divisions in the area around Petsamo and to put the 2nd Mountain Division into rest quarters in and around Rovaniemi, can only be decided later, but remains desirable. The later relief of

September 23, 1941

the 3rd Mountain Division by the 5th Mountain Division or a newly constituted mountain division is also planned.

(d) In order to shift the supply train of the Mountain Corps to the Arctic Highway, fleets of trucks will be bought and rented in Sweden. If this trucking capacity should not suffice, additional trucks will be ordered from the homeland.

(e) I have directed Minister Todt to build as quickly as possible, with ruthless utilization of Russian prisoners of war, a field railway from Rovaniemi along the Arctic Highway to Petsamo.

(f) In order to resume the offensive against Murmansk, the bringing in of all the modern offensive weapons that are usable in the tundra is being planned.

(2) Navy

The mission of the navy is to attack the enemy supply route to Murmansk even during the winter, especially during the period when the Luftwaffe is more or less at a standstill.

For this purpose, a suitable auxiliary base is to be established for light naval craft—preferably in Petsamo Bay—if it is possible to seize the western portion of the Rybachi Peninsula. The supply line by sea to Kirkenes and Petsamo, even if interrupted at times, must again and again be attempted and reopened.

The coastal defense of Petsamo Fjord and the fjord at Kirkenes must be reinforced to the extent that it can deal with attacks even from heavy naval vessels.

(3) Luftwaffe

It is of decisive importance that the Fifth Air Force, with strong forces that are equipped for action in winter, should remain in the area of northern Norway.

These forces are to be apportioned in such a way that, up to the beginning of the bad-weather season, the intended continuation of the Kandalaksha operation and the seizure of the western part of the Rybachi Peninsula can effectively be supported. Meanwhile, the sea supply route and the rear communications of the enemy, as well as his supply and storage installations, must be constantly harassed.

This struggle must be continued during the bad-weather season at every opportunity and extended to include interference with enemy supply trains and construction of fortifications.

To that end, our Luftwaffe ground organization must be retained as far as possible in the north Norwegian and Finnish theater and made effectively winterproof.

Protection against air raids must be secured for the quarters of our own troops, for their supply, but especially for the nickel mines and for the sea base to be established there.

The ground organization and supplies shall be replenished to such an extent that the resumption of the advance on Murmansk at a given time can be supported with strongly reinforced air formations.

Adolf Hitler

September 24, 1941

On September 23, a state ceremony ordered by Hitler in honor of the former commander of defense District VII (southern Bavaria) and army commander, Colonel General Ritter von Schobert, took place in Munich, in front of the army museum. Colonel General Fromm conveyed the Führer's sympathies to the family.⁴¹³

On September 24, an enormous headline in the *Völkischer Beobachter* announced the conclusion of "the greatest battle of annihilation (*Vernichtungsschlacht*) of all time" in the pocket east of Kiev.⁴¹⁴ Following this victory, Hitler felt it was time to consider the offensive against Moscow, which was scheduled to begin in late September.⁴¹⁵ He personally journeyed to Borisov, the headquarters of Army Group Center, to give final instructions to its commander in chief, Field Marshal von Bock.

Because of his fear of assassination attempts, Hitler had sent his column of cars ahead several days before, so that he did not have to travel the four kilometers from the Borisov airfield to the headquarters in the unreliable vehicles of the Wehrmacht.

Bock pointed to the difficulties of launching an offensive against Moscow so late in the year and suggested that the army pass the winter months in fortified positions.⁴¹⁶ Hitler had a fit of rage. Unbelievable! The generals were trying to keep him from landing his "final gigantic blow"⁴¹⁷ and from taking Moscow. He declared as follows:

In the days when I was not yet Reich Chancellor, I always thought of the general staff as a bloodhound whose collar I had to grip tightly lest he attack everybody. After I had become Reich Chancellor, I found out that the German general staff is nothing like a bloodhound. This general staff has always prevented me from doing what I felt was necessary. The general staff was against rearmament, the occupation of the Rhineland, the invasion of Austria, the occupation of the Czech territory, and finally the war against Poland. The general staff advised me not to wage war against France. The general staff advised me not to wage war against Russia. I always have to get these bloodhounds moving first.

After this harangue against the general staff, Bock no longer dared to speak his mind. Hitler scheduled the offensive against Moscow for early October 2.⁴¹⁸ In addition, Hitler discussed how he planned to treat the citizens of the Russian capital:

No German soldier would be allowed to enter the city. In a vast sweep, it would be sealed off. No soldier, no civilian—whether man, woman, or child—would be allowed to leave it. Any attempt would be repelled by force of arms.

September 27, 1941

Hitler had taken preliminary steps to flood Moscow and its surroundings by means of huge installations and to drown it in water. Where previously there had been Moscow, a gigantic lake would be formed, which would forever keep the metropolis of the Russian people out of the sight of the civilized world.

On September 27, the anniversary of the signature of the Tripartite Pact, an extensive exchange of telegrams between the concerned heads of state, ministers, and so on, took place. Hitler himself sent telegrams to Mussolini and Prime Minister Prince Konoye:⁴¹⁹

Duce!

On this day on which, one year ago, Germany, Italy, and Japan joined forces in the Tripartite Pact, I think of you in heartfelt friendship. The Tripartite Pact has proved the basis for a future new order; to it numerous other young and constructive nations have acceded in the meantime. The pact will continue to be a guarantor of the success of the tasks that still lie before us. Only future generations will realize that it was the determination of the people united together in the Tripartite Pact which saved the world from the exploitation of powers alien to this area and from the deadly threat of Bolshevism.

Adolf Hitler

On the anniversary of the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, I wish to express the heartfelt feelings of solidarity with the great nation of the east, which surge through me and the German Volk. With great sympathy, the German Volk follows the struggle of the Japanese people in securing their existence and for the absolute vital rights of the East Asian people under the leadership of Japan. I am certain that, in cooperation with the people allied in the Tripartite Pact, Japan will achieve the goals which will guarantee the Japanese people and all of East Asia a secure and prosperous future.

In this spirit, I greet Your Highness on this day,

Adolf Hitler

Still, these telegrams could not conceal the fact that Germany had lost power in the last year. It had become obvious that the German Wehrmacht was not capable of dealing with the English and, surprisingly, not with the Russians either!

This changing assessment of German military strength had its effects also in those countries which had previously been conquered. Here and there resistance was felt. In Norway, a state of emergency had to be declared on August 1. Terboven assumed all governmental power.

In France on September 13, the possession of arms was forbidden under penalty of death. In Prague, the situation became so critical that

September 29, 1941

Hitler felt he had to relieve Neurath of his duties, supposedly because of an illness. He entrusted executive power to the bloodthirsty chief of the Gestapo, SS Obergruppenführer Heydrich. Hitler's decree of September 27 read as follows:⁴²⁰

For the duration of the illness of the Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia, Reich Minister Baron von Neurath, I assign SS Obergruppenführer Heydrich to conduct the affairs of the Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia by proxy.

Heydrich did his job as Hitler wanted: on his first day in office, there were twenty-four executions. On September 30, a hundred eighty-eight persons were executed. The former prime minister of the protectorate, General Elias, was among them.

On September 27, Gottfried Feder, who had died three days before in Murnau, was buried in Munich. Gauleiter Wagner placed a wreath from the Führer, who had failed to order a state funeral this time.⁴²¹

On September 28, Hitler established a new pin-on war medal: the German Cross.⁴²²

In Directive No. 35 of September 6, Hitler had demanded that Leningrad be surrounded by September 15 at the latest, and that a link to the Finnish troops be established by this date. It was already late September, and neither of these tasks had been accomplished. On the contrary, the resistance of Leningrad's soldiers and workers grew stronger by the day.⁴²³ Hitler was angry and decided to have "the city swallowed up by the earth." The navy war office informed Army Group North of Hitler's decision on Leningrad in a letter, dated September 29, 1941:⁴²⁴

Reference: The future of the city of St. Petersburg [Leningrad]

II. The Führer is determined to have the city of St. Petersburg swallowed up by the earth (*vom Erdboden verschwinden zu lassen*). After the defeat of the Soviet Union, no one will be interested in the continued existence of this population center. Finland has likewise not indicated any interest in having this city continue to exist directly on its new border.

III. It is intended to encircle the city tightly and to level it to the ground (*dem Erdboden gleichzumachen*) with artillery fire of all calibers and continuous air raids.

IV. Requests for a surrender resulting from the situation of the city will be declined, since the problems of housing and feeding the population cannot and should not be solved by us. We are not interested in sustaining in existence even a part of the population of this metropolis in this war. If necessary, there will be a forced deportation into the eastern Russian area.

October 2, 1941

Two months later, Hitler publicly claimed that he had never intended to reach Leningrad.⁴²⁵

Someone who has marched from the East Prussian border up to ten kilometers outside of Leningrad can also march those ten kilometers from outside Leningrad into the city.

But this is not necessary. The city is encircled. Nobody will enter it anymore. It will fall into our hands. And when they say, “only as a heap of ruins”—I am not interested in any city Leningrad, but only in the destruction of the industrial center Leningrad. If it pleases the Russians to blow up their cities, then perhaps they are saving us a bit of work. Questions of prestige—let me repeat this—do not play a role with us.

Hitler could declare as much as he liked; he talked like the fox about the sour grapes! One year later, he repeated the same pitiful statement in the case of the prestige-oriented undertaking of Stalingrad.⁴²⁶

The great offensive in the direction of Moscow began on October 2. Hitler issued a proclamation, which was read to the soldiers on the night of October 1. He claimed that “this time” (!) things had gone “according to plan.” It was merely a question of a “last gigantic blow, which shall crush this enemy before the onset of winter!”

The proclamation read as follows:⁴²⁷

Führer Headquarters, October 2, 1941

Soldiers of the Eastern Front!

Filled with grave concern for the existence and the future of our Volk, I decided on June 22 to direct an appeal to you in order to forestall the threatening attack of an opponent at the last minute. As we know today, it was the intention of the rulers in the Kremlin to destroy not only Germany, but also Europe. Comrades, you have realized two things in the meantime:

1. This opponent armed himself militarily for his attack to such an enormous extent that even our greatest fears were surpassed.

2. Lord have mercy on our Volk and on the entire European world if this barbaric enemy had been able to get his tens of thousands of tanks to move before we could. All of Europe would have been lost. For this enemy does not consist of soldiers, but, for the most part, of beasts (*Bestien*).

Now, my comrades, you have personally seen this “paradise of workers and peasants” with your own eyes. In a country, whose vastness and fertility could feed the whole world, a poverty reigns that we Germans cannot imagine. This is the result of nearly twenty-five years of Jewish rule which, as Bolshevism, basically reflects the basest form of capitalism. The bearers of this system are the same in both instances: Jews and again Jews!

Soldiers!

When I called on you to ward off the danger threatening our homeland on June 22, you faced the greatest military power of all time.⁴²⁸ In barely three

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months, thanks to your bravery, my comrades, it has been possible to destroy one tank brigade after another belonging to this opponent, to eliminate countless divisions, to take uncounted prisoners, to occupy endless space. And this space is not empty, it is a space in which this opponent lives and from which his gigantic war industry receives raw materials of all types. In a few weeks, three of his most vital industrial districts will be completely in your hands!

Your names, soldiers of the German Wehrmacht, and the names of our brave allies, the names of your divisions, regiments, your ships and squadrons, will be tied for all time to the mightiest victories in world history.

You have taken over two million four hundred thousand prisoners, you have destroyed or captured seventeen thousand five hundred tanks and over twenty-one thousand guns, you have downed or destroyed on the ground fourteen thousand two hundred planes. The world has never seen anything like this!

The area which the German troops and those allied with us are occupying today is more than twice as large as the German Reich in the year 1933, more than four times as large as the English motherland.

Since June 22, the strongest system of positions has been broken through, mighty streams have been crossed, countless towns stormed, fortress and bunker installations smashed or smoked out. Starting in the far north, where our exceedingly brave Finnish allies showed their heroism a second time, down to the Crimea, you stand today, together with Slovak, Hungarian, Italian, and Romanian divisions, about a thousand kilometers deep in enemy territory.

Spanish, Croatian, and Belgian units now join you, others will follow. Because this struggle, perhaps for the first time, is regarded by all European nations as a common action to save the continent of the most valuable culture.

Mighty also is the work which is being done behind your gigantic front. Nearly two thousand bridges over twelve meters in length have been constructed; four hundred five railroad bridges have been set up; twenty-five thousand five hundred kilometers of railroad have begun operation again; yes, over fifteen thousand kilometers of railroad have already been adjusted to European gauge. Thousands of kilometers of road are under construction.

Vast areas have already been taken over by civil administration, and normality of life is quickly being reestablished under reasonable laws. Enormous stores of provisions, fuel, and ammunition are ready!

This greatest success of the struggle was secured by sacrifices, the numbers of which—while most difficult for the individual comrade and his family—on the whole do not amount to five percent of those of the World War.

What you, my comrades, together with our brave allied soldiers, have behind you in terms of accomplishments, bravery, heroism, privations, and efforts in the last three-and-a-half months, no one knows better than someone who himself once did his duty as a soldier in the past war.

But in these three-and-a-half months, my soldiers, the preconditions were finally created for that last gigantic blow, which shall crush this enemy before the onset of winter! As far as is humanly possible, all preparations have been

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completed. This time,⁴²⁹ everything was prepared step by step and according to plan in order to bring the opponent into such a situation that we can deal him the deadly blow now.

Today, the last great decisive battle of this year begins.

It will have a crushing effect on this enemy and, at the same time, on the instigator of this war itself, England. By beating this opponent, we will eliminate England's last ally on the continent. Thereby, we will free Germany and all of Europe from a danger, the like of which has not imperiled the continent more dreadfully since the times of the Huns and later the Mongolian invasions. The German Volk will therefore be with you even more in the coming few weeks than ever before.

What you and the soldiers allied with us have accomplished already obliges us all to profound gratitude. The entire German homeland accompanies you in the coming difficult days with bated breath and good wishes. Because, with God's help, you will give it not only the victory, but also the most important prerequisite for peace.

Adolf Hitler, Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

Once again, Hitler had prematurely praised himself in this proclamation.⁴³⁰ He was so convinced that within a few days he would be in Moscow, that he traveled to Berlin to deliver a triumphant speech.

On the afternoon of October 3, Hitler spoke at a "mass rally," organized by Goebbels at the Sportpalast on the opening of the Kriegswinterhilfswerk. After lying about the course of the war up to this point, he daringly proclaimed a new offensive of "a gigantic scope" against an enemy who "consists not of humans, but of animals, of beasts." He claimed that Molotov would leave Moscow by the next day or the following one. Russia had already "broken down" and would never "rise again." With regard to his English opponents, he complained that he was faced with "democratic zeros" and "insane idiots." Hitler's speech read as follows:⁴³¹

My German Volksgenossen!

When I speak to you again today after many long months, then I do so not to account to one of those statesmen who only recently were wondering why I was silent for so long. Posterity will one day be able to assess and find out what carried more weight in these three-and-a-half months: the speeches of Mr. Churchill or my actions. I have come here today in order to give a short introduction to the Winterhilfswerk, as always. This time, coming here was very difficult for me because, at this hour, a newly-begun operation on our eastern front is resulting in a gigantic success. In the last forty-eight hours,⁴³² it has been underway on a gigantic scope. It will help crush our opponent in the east.

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I now speak to you in the name of those millions who are fighting at this moment in order to ask you, the German homeland, to take on yourselves, besides all other sacrifices this year, the additional sacrifice for the Winterhilfswerk.

Since June 22, a struggle of truly world-decisive importance is raging. Only posterity will clearly recognize the scope and consequences of this event. Posterity will one day find out that a new era began with it. But I did not want this struggle. Since January 1933, when Providence entrusted me with the leadership and guidance of the Reich, I had only one goal, and the program of our National Socialist Party essentially outlines it. I have never been untrue to this goal. I have never given up my program. I tried then to bring about the inner recovery of a people who, after a war that was lost due to its own fault, had the deepest fall in its history behind it. This alone was a gigantic task! I began working on this task at a time when all others had either been frustrated by it or no longer believed in the possibility of seeing through a like program.

What we have achieved in these years of peaceful reconstruction is unique. Therefore, for me and my assistants, it is tantamount to an insult when we have to deal with these democratic zeroes, who are unable to look back on a single truly great accomplishment in their lives.

I and my assistants did not need this war to give lasting fame to our names. The works of peace would have taken care of that—and sufficiently. And, besides, it was not as though we had concluded our creative work. In many spheres, we were just beginning. The inner redevelopment of the Reich had succeeded under the most difficult conditions, since, after all, we must feed a hundred forty persons per square kilometer in Germany. Things are easier for the outside world. In spite of this, we have solved our problems, while the outside, the democratic world, to a great extent foundered precisely because of these problems. Our goals were the following:

1. the inner consolidation of the German nation,
2. obtaining equal rights for us abroad,
3. the unification of the German Volk and, thereby, the restoration of a natural state which for centuries had been artificially disrupted. Through this, my Volksgenossen, our program was laid down from the start, the necessary measures were determined from the start. This did not mean, however, that we sought war. But one thing was certain: under no circumstances would we renounce the restoration of German freedom and, hence, the condition for a German resurrection.

On the basis of these thoughts, I made many proposals to the world. I do not need to repeat them here. The daily publishing activities of my assistants take care of that. How many proposals I offered to this outside world, how many proposals for disarmament, how many proposals for a peaceful, new, reasonable economic order, and so on! All of them were rejected. Mostly, they were rejected by those men who obviously did not believe they could fulfill their missions in works of peace, or, rather, keep their own regimes at the helm.

In spite of this, in peaceful work throughout many years, we slowly succeeded not only in completing our great domestic reforms, but also in

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beginning the unification of the German Volk, in creating the Greater German Reich, in bringing back millions of German Volksgenossen to their actual homeland. In doing so, their weight was added to that of the German Volk as a factor in power politics. In this period, I succeeded in gaining a number of allies. At their head stood Italy, with whose statesman I have a personal, close, and sincere friendship still. Our relations with Japan also steadily improved. Besides that, there were a number of people and states in Europe whose constant sympathy and friendship we had enjoyed in the past, above all, Hungary and a few Nordic states.⁴³³ Others have joined these people. Regrettably, not that one people whom I have courted the most during my lifetime: the British. Not that the English people as a whole are responsible for this. No, there are a few men whose stubborn hatred and insanity have sabotaged every attempt at reaching an understanding. They are supported by that international enemy of the world whom we all know: international Jewry.

Regrettably, it was not possible to establish the connection that I had always hoped for between Germany and Great Britain, and, above all, the English people. That is why, as in 1914, the day came when a most difficult decision had to be made. I did not shrink from that either. Because one thing was clear to me: if it was not possible to win England's friendship, then it was best that its animosity should bear on Germany at a time when I still led the Reich. For, if my measures and concessions failed to court England's friendship, then it was lost for all time. At that point, nothing remained but struggle. I am grateful to Providence that I myself am able to lead this struggle. I am convinced that no understanding is possible with these men. They are insane idiots. All they could say in the past ten years was: "We want another war with Germany!"

As in all those years in which I sought an understanding under any circumstances, Mr. Churchill only cried: "I want my war!" Now, he has it. And all his cohorts, who had nothing better to say than that it would be a "lovely" war and who, on September 1, 1939, could only congratulate one another on the coming, "lovely" war, have probably learned to change their minds in the meantime. And, if they still have not realized that this war will not be a "lovely" affair for England, over time they will realize it, as sure as I am standing here!

These warmongers, not only of the old, but also of the new world, managed to use Poland as a dummy. Cleverly, they told it, first of all, that Germany was not what it pretended to be, and, secondly, that, if you had a guarantee, you would at any rate receive the necessary help. That was at a time when England was not begging the world for help, but instead was generously promising anyone its help. This has greatly changed since then. Now, we feel that England is begging the world for help in its war. At the time, I submitted proposals to Poland. Today, after the course events have taken, I must say that it was Providence—almighty Providence—which prevented my proposals from being accepted.⁴³⁴ It knew why this could not be allowed to happen, and, today, I also know why.

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Two years ago, the conspiracy of democrats, Jews, and Freemasons managed to plunge Europe into war. Arms had to decide. Since then, a struggle between the truth and the lie has been taking place. As always, this struggle will end victoriously for the truth. In other words, whatever pack of lies British propaganda, international world Jewry, and its democratic accomplices tell, they will not change the historical facts. And it is a historical fact that neither do the English stand in Germany, nor have other states conquered Berlin, nor have they advanced westward or eastward, but the historical truth is that, within the past two years, Germany has defeated one opponent after another.

I did not want this. Immediately after the first confrontation, I extended my hand again. I myself was a soldier and I know how much it costs to gain victory: how much blood and misery, despair, deprivations, and sacrifices it takes. However, my hand was rejected even more brusquely. And since then, you have seen how every single one of my peace proposals was used by the warmonger Churchill and his followers to tell the threatened people that this was a sign of German weakness, that it was proof that we could not fight any longer and were about to capitulate. Therefore, I gave up trying it this way again. I came to the conviction that we must fight for a clear decision here, a decision with an impact on world history for the next hundred years.⁴³⁵

Always striving to limit the extent of this war, I determined in the year 1939 to do something which you, my old party comrades, understand to be most difficult for me to accept—let me say—in terms of humiliation. At the time, I sent my minister to Moscow. It was a bitter victory over my sentiments. But, at moments when the welfare of millions of others is at stake, sentiments are not important. I tried to obtain an understanding. You know it best yourselves, how honestly and sincerely I handled this commitment. Our press did not write anything about Russia, nor did we say anything against Bolshevism in our meetings.

Regrettably, from the start, the other side did not play by the rules. The result of this agreement was treason. All of northeastern Europe was liquidated. What it meant for us at the time, to have to watch in silence as the small Finnish people were strangled, you know best yourselves. However, I remained silent.⁴³⁶ How it hit us when the Baltic states were overpowered, only he can appreciate who is familiar with German history and knows that there is not a single square kilometer that was not opened up to human culture and civilization by the pioneering work of Germans.⁴³⁷

I remained silent, although every week I felt more and more that the Soviet Union thought the hour had come to proceed against us, and although, at a time when we had barely three divisions in East Prussia, I saw twenty-two Soviet divisions assembling there. Once I received documents showing that airfield upon airfield was being built along our border, that one division after another was being massed together, coming out of the gigantic Soviet Empire, it became my duty to be worried. There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance, in the sense that one explains afterwards: I didn't notice that or I didn't take it seriously. Standing at the head of the German Reich, I happen to feel responsible for the German Volk, its existence, its

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presence, and, insofar as this is possible, for its future. Therefore, I was forced to take different measures. They were purely defensive in nature. In August and September of the past year, I realized one thing: a confrontation in the west, which would above all have tied down the entire German Luftwaffe, was no longer possible, because, at our rear, there was a state which was preparing daily to proceed against the Reich at such a moment. However, just how far its preparations had already gone is something we have only realized fully now. I again wanted to clear up the whole problem at the time and, therefore, I invited Molotov to Berlin. He made the four demands of which you are aware:

First, Germany had finally to consent to the Soviet Union's proceeding to Finland's liquidation, since it again felt threatened by that country. I could not help but refuse this consent.

The second question concerned Romania: the question was whether the German guarantee would also protect Romania against the Soviet Union. I had to keep my word here, too. I do not regret doing it. For I found General Antonescu in Romania to be a man of honor who has also blindly kept his word.

The third question concerned Bulgaria. Molotov demanded that the Soviet Union be allowed to establish garrisons in Bulgaria in order to effect a Russian guarantee to this state. What that actually meant we knew well enough, thanks to the examples of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. I could refer to the fact that such a guarantee would be determined by its content. I had not heard of such a wish and, therefore, I would have to investigate the matter and discuss it with my allies.

The fourth question concerned the Dardanelles. Russia demanded bases at the Dardanelles. If Molotov attempts to deny this now, then this is not surprising. If tomorrow or the day after, he is no longer in Moscow, he will probably deny not being in Moscow any longer.⁴³⁸ But he made this demand, and I rejected it. I had to reject it, and it was perfectly clear to me that extreme caution was now called for. Ever since, I have carefully watched the Soviet Union. Every division which we observed was scrupulously registered by us and was duly answered by countermeasures. The situation had so darkened by May that no doubt was left that Russia intended to attack us at the first opportunity. By the end of May, these considerations had grown stronger, so that the possibility of an imminent showdown, a matter of life and death, could no longer be denied.

I had to remain silent at the time, and it became difficult for me in two respects. It was not so difficult before the homeland, because, in the end, you have to understand that there are times when you cannot speak, unless you want to endanger the whole nation. It was more difficult for me to remain silent before my soldiers, who now stood at the eastern border of the Reich, one division next to another, and did not know what was going on, who had no idea of what had really changed in the meanwhile, and who, one day, would perhaps be asked to line up for a difficult battle, yes, the most difficult battle of all time. Because of them, I could not speak. Had I mentioned a single word about it, it would not in the least have changed Mr. Stalin's decision. However,

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it would have eliminated the element of surprise, the ultimate weapon in my hand. And any such advance notice, any such intimation, would have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of our soldiers.

Therefore, I remained silent even when I finally decided to take the first step myself. Because if I see an opponent bringing a rifle to his shoulder, then I am not going to wait for him to pull the trigger. Instead, I am determined to pull it before he does.

I may say today that this was the most difficult decision in my life up to now. Every such step opens a gate behind which mysteries are hidden, and only posterity will know for sure how everything came about and what happened.

And so everybody has to come to terms with his own conscience. He has to trust his own Volk and the forged strength of its arms. Finally, as I have said so many times before, he has to ask for the blessings of the Lord God, Who bestows them on him who is willing and ready to enter the sacred struggle, full of sacrifice, for his own existence.

On the morning of June 22, this greatest struggle in the history of the world began. Since then, three-and-a-half months have passed. Today, I can state: everything since has gone according to plan.⁴³⁹

Whatever surprises the individual soldier or troop may have had, the leadership never for a second allowed the initiative to be taken from it during this time. On the contrary, to this day, every action has gone as much according to plan as it did in the east against Poland, then against Norway, and finally against the west, and in the Balkans. And I have to state something else here: neither did the correctness of our planning deceive us, nor did the competence, the unique historic bravery of the German soldier. Finally, the quality of our weapons did not deceive us. Neither the smooth functioning of all our operations at the front, the domination of the gigantic rear areas, nor the German homeland deceived us. However, something did deceive us: we had no idea⁴⁴⁰ how gigantic the preparations of this opponent against Germany and Europe had been, and how immensely great the danger had been, how this time we escaped by a hair's breadth the destruction not only of Germany, but also of all Europe. I can say this here today.

I say this here today because I may say today that this opponent has already broken down and will never rise again! There was a power massed against Europe, of which most people regrettably had no idea and of which many today still have no idea. This could have become a second Mongolian invasion by a new Genghis Khan.

That this danger was averted, we owe primarily to the bravery and perseverance of our German soldiers, to their willingness to sacrifice. Then, we owe it to the sacrifices of all those who marched with us. For the first time, something like a European awakening occurred on this continent this time. In the north, Finland fights, a truly heroic people. In its vast spaces, it frequently stands alone, depending on its own strength, its courage, its bravery, and its capabilities. In the south, Romania fights. It recovered with surprising speed from one of the most difficult crises of state which can befall a country and people, under a man who is as brave as he is enterprising.

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Thus, we embrace the expanse of the theater of war, stretching from the White to the Black Sea. And, in these areas, our German soldiers are fighting, and together with them, in their ranks, the Italians, the Finns, the Hungarians, the Romanians, the Slovaks. The Croats are marching up. The Spaniards are now going into battle. The Belgians, the Dutch, the Danes, the Norwegians, even the French, have joined up with this great front or will do so shortly.

By and large, you are familiar with the course of these unique events, insofar as they can be grasped now. Two great army groups lined up and had the task of breaking up the center. One of the two wings had the mission of advancing to Leningrad, the other of occupying the Ukraine. Essentially, these first tasks have been accomplished. Our opponents, in this time of enormous, unique struggle of world-historic impact, frequently ask, "Why isn't anything happening now?" Well, something was always happening. And precisely because something was happening, we could not speak.

If I were England's prime minister today, then, under the circumstances, there would always be peace there, simply because nothing is happening there. And here is the difference. My Volksgenossen! I have to speak here today before the entire German Volk. We could not keep on talking, not because we failed sufficiently to appreciate the persistently great accomplishments of our soldiers, but because we did not wish to inform our opponent about situations too soon, even if his miserable intelligence service would not in any event find out until days, or weeks, later. I already had this explained in the Wehrmacht report the other day.⁴⁴¹ The German Wehrmacht report is a report on the truth. Now, some stupid British-newspaper lout declares that it still has to be confirmed. The German Wehrmacht report has always been thoroughly confirmed up to now.

After all, there is no doubt that we won in Poland, and not the Poles, although the British press, claims differently. There is no doubt that we are sitting in Norway, and not the English. There is no doubt that we were successful in Belgium and Holland, and not England. And there is no doubt that Germany won in France, and not the other way around. Finally, there is no doubt that we are in Greece, and not the English or the New Zealanders. They were not the victors, we were. And so the German army report spoke the truth and not the. . .⁴⁴²

And it is no different in the east now. According to the English version, we suffered defeat upon defeat there in the past three months. But we are standing a thousand kilometers beyond our border, we are standing east of Smolensk, we are standing before Leningrad, and we are standing at the Black Sea, and we are standing before the Crimea—the Russians are not standing at the Rhine. And if the Soviets had kept winning up to now, they must have not taken advantage of their victories properly. Instead they retreated a hundred or two hundred kilometers immediately after every victory—perhaps to lure us into the depths of their space.

Besides, the numbers speak for the greatness of this struggle. There are many among you who were in the World War, and you know what it means to take prisoners and, at the same time, to advance hundreds of kilometers.

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The number of prisoners has now risen to two and a half million Soviets. The number of guns, either wiped out or captured, that is, which are in our hands, stands at approximately twenty-two thousand. The number of tanks, either wiped out or captured, that is, which are in our hands, is over eighteen thousand. The number of planes which were either wiped out, destroyed, or downed is over fourteen thousand five hundred. And behind our troops lies a terrain which is twice as big as the German Reich was when I began to lead it in 1933, and which is four times as big as England.

The linear distance which the German soldiers have covered today stands at eight hundred to a thousand kilometers. That is linear distance! For marching, that means one-and-a-half times or twice the kilometers. As a base frontline, this is gigantic, especially when you confront an opponent which, I must say this here, consists not of human beings, but of animals, of beasts (*Bestien*).

What Bolshevism can do to man, you have seen. We can show the homeland photos of it, which are at our disposal. It is the cruelest thing that the brain of man can contrive. It is an opponent who, on the one hand, fights driven by his thirst for blood and, at the same time, by cowardice and fear of his commissars; it is a country that our soldiers are now getting to know after twenty-five years of Bolshevik existence. I know one thing: someone who has been there and who was somehow a Communist at heart, even if only in the idealistic sense, comes back cured of this view. You can rest assured of that.

I always correctly described this paradise of workers and peasants. After ending this campaign, five to six million soldiers will confirm that I spoke the truth. I will be able to call them as witnesses. They marched through these streets. They were not able to live in the miserable huts of this paradise because they did not enter them unless absolutely necessary. They saw the institutions of this paradise. It is nothing but a single arms factory existing at the expense of the living standards of the people, an arms factory against Europe. And against this cruel and bestial opponent, against this opponent with his gigantic armament, our soldiers secured mighty victories.

I am at a loss for words to explain their feats. What they are persistently demonstrating in courage and bravery with immeasurable effort cannot be imagined. They are all the same, whether it is a question of our panzer divisions or motorized units, whether we talk about our artillery or engineers, whether we take our pilots, dive bombers, or anti-aircraft gunners, or whether we think of our navy and the crews of our U-boats, whether we talk about our mountain troops in the north or about the men of our Waffen SS. I would like to stress here that above all this stand the accomplishments of the German infantryman—the German front-line soldier.

For, my friends, there are millions who, since the spring, have marched twenty-five hundred to three thousand kilometers on foot, numerous divisions which have covered fifteen hundred to two thousand kilometers. I can only say: if you speak of a Blitzkrieg here, then these soldiers deserve that their feats be described as lightning, because on the march they have never been outdone in history. Only perhaps by a few English regiments in retreat.

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There are a couple of historic lightning retreats (*Blitzrückzüge*) that have outdone these actions in terms of speed. But the distances in question were never so great, as they [the English] stayed somewhat closer to the coast in the first place. I do not wish to disparage an opponent here, but I do wish to do justice to the German soldier, who deserves it. His accomplishments are unsurpassable. And so are those of all organizations whose members are today workers and soldiers at the same time. For, in this area, almost everybody is a soldier today. Every laborer is a soldier, every railroad worker is a soldier, because military service must persistently be performed by everyone in this entire area. And it is a gigantic amount of work that is being done behind this front. And, by nature, this work is just as enormous as the accomplishments of the front.

Over twenty-five thousand kilometers of Russian railroad are operating again; over fifteen thousand kilometers of Russian rails have been reconverted to the German gauge. My Volksgenossen, do you know what that means?! That means that the greatest cross section of the German Reich of old—let us say from Stettin to the Bavarian mountains, which is a line of about a thousand kilometers—was laid out fifteen times next to one another in the east and was adjusted to the German gauge.

Perhaps the homeland cannot yet fully appreciate what this costs in terms of effort and sweat. Behind all this stand the battalions of the Labor Service, our organizations, above all, the Todt Organization, and the Berlin Speer organizations, and all the others who take care of them in turn.

Our Red Cross is devoted to the service of this whole gigantic front, as are our medical officers, medical personnel, and the Red Cross nurses. They all are truly sacrificing themselves. Behind the front, a new administration is already being set up so that, in case this war takes longer, these gigantic areas will benefit the German homeland and our allies. The benefit can be immense, and let no one doubt that we know how to organize these areas.

As I am briefly outlining the unique accomplishments of our soldiers and all those who fight today in the east or are active there, I would also like to convey the gratitude of the front to the homeland—our soldiers' thanks for the weapons which the homeland built, these outstanding and first-class weapons; and their thanks for the ammunition which, unlike that of the World War, is at their disposal in unlimited amounts.

Today, it is only a question of transport. Today, we have taken care in advance so that, in the midst of this war of matériel, I can order further production in many spheres to cease, because I know that there is no opponent whom we would not be able to defeat with the existing amounts of ammunition.

If, from time to time, you read something in the paper about the gigantic plans of other states, all that they are thinking of doing and all that they wish to undertake, and when you hear of sums going into billions, then, my Volksgenossen, remember what I say now.

1. A whole continent is also devoted to our struggle;

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2. we do not speak of capital, but of manpower, and this manpower we will deploy one hundred percent; and,

3. if we do not talk about it, then this does not mean that we are not doing anything. I know quite well that the others can do everything better than we can. They are building tanks that are invincible. They are faster than ours, they are better armored than ours, they have better guns than ours, and they do not need any gas. But, in battle up to now, we have always disabled them. And that is what counts! They are building miracle airplanes. They are always making miraculous things; everything is incomprehensible—technically incomprehensible. But still they do not have any machines that surpass ours. And the machines which we are driving, firing, or flying today are not the machines which we will be driving, firing, or flying next year. I believe that this will suffice for every German. Our inventors are taking care of all that, as are our German workers and also our female German workers.

Behind this front of sacrifice, death-defying courage, and risk of life stands the home front, a front which is formed in the city and in the country. Millions of German farmers, already largely replaced by old men, adolescents, or women: they are doing their duty to the full.

Millions and millions more German workers, they are working all the time; their accomplishments deserve admiration, especially those of the German women and the German girls, replacing the millions of men who are at the front today. We can truly say that, for the first time in history, a whole people is doing battle, part at the front, part at home.

I say this and, as an old National Socialist, a realization forces itself on me: we have met with two extremes. On the one side, there are the capitalist states. Through lies and fraud, they deny their people the most natural vital rights. They have an eye constantly to their financial interests and they are ready to sacrifice millions of men for them at any time. On the other side, we see the Communist extreme: a state which has brought untold misery to millions and has sacrificed the happiness of all others to its doctrine. In my eyes, there is only one obligation arising from this: to strive ever the more to attain our nationalist and socialist ideals. We have to realize one thing: when this war is over, then the German soldier, who comes from the farms, from the factories, and who truly represents the mass of our Volk, will have won.

The German homeland will have won, with its millions of workers and peasants. The creative men in offices and professions will have won. All the millions of Germans who are active will have won. And this state must then be oriented exclusively to these men.

When this war is over, I will return to the Volk as an even more zealous National Socialist than I was before.

And it will be the same for all those who were called on to lead. Because in this state, it is not the principle of so-called equality, which reigns supreme, but the principle of justice. Whoever proves his capabilities as a leader, politically, militarily, or economically, is of equal value to us. However, that man is just as valuable without whose cooperation all the work of a leader would remain empty and mere mental acrobatics. And that is what counts. The German Volk

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today can be proud. It has the best political leaders, it has the best military leaders, it has the best engineers, economic leaders, and organizers. It also has the best workers and the best peasants.⁴⁴³ To forge a community out of all these people was a task we once undertook as National Socialists—a task which is clearer to us today than ever before.

I will return from this war again with the old party program, whose realization seems more important to me now than it did perhaps in the beginning. This realization brought me here briefly today.

There is no way of repaying the front for its sacrifices. But the accomplishments of the homeland will likewise withstand the test of history. It is necessary that the soldier at the front knows that everyone who has to stay behind will be taken care of at home by the homeland, and that it will take care of him to the best of its abilities. He has to know this, and this is how things must be, so that the homeland can later be mentioned in relationship to the enormous accomplishments of the front. Everybody knows what he must do at this time. Every woman, every man—they know what is rightly asked of them and what they are obliged to give.

If you are walking down the street and have any doubts whether you should give something again, then turn your gaze sideways. Perhaps you will see somebody who has sacrificed far more for Germany than you have. Only if the German Volk forms a community of sacrifice can we hope and expect that Providence will stand by us in the future, too.

The Lord God has never helped the lazy person. Nor does He help the coward. He will never help him who is not ready to help himself. Here the principle applies: Volk, help yourself, then the Lord God will not refuse you His assistance either.

Having returned to East Prussia, the Führer visited the commander in chief of the army, von Brauchitsch, at his headquarters, congratulating him on his sixtieth birthday.⁴⁴⁴

On October 6, Hitler exchanged telegrams regarding German students taking up labor duties in the armament industry. Hitler's reply to Reich Students leader Dr. Scheel read as follows:⁴⁴⁵

I thank you for your report. With satisfaction, I note the energetic deployment of labor from the German student body. I ask you to convey my thanks to all German students who, during their vacations, actively helped the war economy in the spirit of the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft and who, thereby, gave the female workers in need of a rest the opportunity to take days off.

Adolf Hitler

On October 7, Hitler personally congratulated Himmler on his forty-first birthday.⁴⁴⁶

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The next day, he broadcast in a special report that “in the vicinity of Wyasma (Vyazma), several Soviet armies have been surrounded. They are headed for relentless destruction.”

On October 9, assuredly speaking with Hitler’s consent, Reich press chief Dietrich told representatives of the German press in Berlin the following: “The campaign in the east has been decided by the smashing of Army Group Timoshenko.”⁴⁴⁷

This statement greatly astonished the German public. What had happened? Had Stalin capitulated? Had German troops marched into Moscow? None of the above; there was only another battle of encirclement underway. Such battles had taken place repeatedly in the past⁴⁴⁸ without the campaign being decided because of them. After all, a proclamation in 1940 had read: “With this, the war in the west will end”—but England had not capitulated.⁴⁴⁹

Franco, however, was deceived by Dietrich’s declaration and sent Hitler the following congratulatory telegram:⁴⁵⁰

In my name and in that of the Spanish people, I send Your Excellency my enthusiastic congratulations on the last and final victory of the glorious German Wehrmacht over the enemy of civilization.

Hitler’s answer was more cautious:

I thank Your Excellency for the heartfelt congratulations on the success of the German arms. With grateful joy, I welcome the fact that Spanish volunteers are also fighting in this final disintegration of military Bolshevism.

In view of the “favorable” developments in the eastern theater of war, Hitler felt it was no longer necessary to take Murmansk in 1941. On October 10, he issued Directive No. 37:⁴⁵¹

The swift, favorable development of the situation in the eastern theater of war, together with the reports from the headquarters, Army of Norway, concerning the condition of the troops and the future operational possibilities in Finland, prompts me to issue the following orders:

1. Now that the bulk of Soviet Russia’s armed forces in the main theater of operations has been smashed or destroyed, there is no longer any compelling reason for conducting offensive operations to tie down Russian forces in Finland. Seizure of Murmansk or the Rybachi Peninsula or cutting through the Murmansk railroad in central Finland before winter sets in can now no longer be accomplished given the insufficient strength and striking power of the available forces and the advanced season.

The most urgent task remaining, therefore, is to hold the gains, to secure the Petsamo nickel mines against attacks on land, from the air, and from the

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coast, and to carry out all preparations—starting already in winter—for the final capture of Murmansk, of the Rybachi Peninsula, and the Murmansk railroad in the coming year.

The timetable will be as follows:

(a) Shift by the ground forces to the defensive in favorable positions economical of manpower, improvement of the winter billets, and changeover to winter warfare.

(b) Relief movements and bringing up new forces.

(c) During the winter, concentric attacks against the Murmansk railroad, specifically with Finnish forces, from the south, against Belomorsk-Kem and, if possible, also Loukhi; with German forces, from the Verman sector, against Kandalaksha.

(d) At the time most favorable for the purpose, seizure of the Rybachi Peninsula in its entirety, if possible, and attack against Murmansk.

These operations must be so timed as to permit at any given moment concentration of the bulk of attacking forces for the main efforts against a single point.

2. The next mission of headquarters, Army of Norway, while assuring defensive operations in positions sparing of manpower, is to dispose its units in such a manner as to permit the forces which have been in combat for prolonged periods to be reorganized and equipped for winter warfare or, as may be the case, relieved by newly arriving reinforcements and withdrawn. Specifically:

(1) In the Mountain Corps, the 2nd and the 3rd Mountain Divisions are to be relieved by the reinforced 6th Mountain Division. One mountain division is to be left in northern Finland, while the other is to be moved to the area around and south of Rovaniemi. Its return to the interior zone is scheduled to coincide with the arrival of the 5th Mountain Division (approximately January 1942).

Another newly constituted or reorganized mountain division will subsequently take the place of the mountain division left in northern Finland.

(b) The 36th Army Corps is to be reinforced by the 163rd Infantry Division as soon as it is ascertained that the division is no longer needed for commitment to a concentric operation between the Karelian army and Army Group North against the southern shore of Lake Ladoga.

Efforts are being made to arrange for relieving the personnel of the 169th and the 163rd Infantry Divisions in the course of the winter by divisions from Norway or from the homeland.

3. All relief movements, including those of the mountain divisions, are to be conducted in a manner whereby the bulk of the heavy weapons, equipment, horses and pack animals are left behind on the spot, and in consequence only the personnel with their light weapons are exchanged. This will save both time and transport space.

4. As regards the SS units, plans call for relief of the 9th SS Regiment, now attached to the 2nd Mountain Division, by an SS regiment made up of Norwegians and Finns, and for formation of a mountain brigade out of SS Battle Group North with the addition of an SS regiment from Austria.

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Execution of this measure will be coordinated by the high command of the Wehrmacht in line with the general plan for exchanges of staffs and troops.

5. Since the Finnish high command is planning a complete reorganization of the army, the German and Finnish forces under command of 3rd Finnish Corps are to be exchanged (6th Finnish Division for SS Battle Group North). When this has been done, it is proposed to place the front of 3rd Finnish Corps under the command of Field Marshal Mannerheim.

For the initial stage of the new operations, Field Marshal Mannerheim will be requested to reassign at least a few small Finnish units to the German group attacking Kandalaksha.

6. To the Luftwaffe the following immediate missions in the Finnish theater of operations are assigned, so far as the weather permits:

(a) To patrol the sea areas along the coasts of northern Norway and Finland in order to protect friendly and to combat enemy sea traffic;

(b) To secure the air defenses, especially of the Petsamo nickel mines, the ports of discharge, and the naval bases;

(c) To fly reconnaissance missions over the areas of future operations and to carry out sustained attacks against the enemy supply base at Murmansk and against supply movements to Murmansk by sea and by railroad;

(d) To make preparations for the employment of stronger forces in support of the forthcoming operations.

7. The navy shall have the mission of attacking enemy supply movements to Murmansk by sea and of doing its utmost to support friendly sea traffic in the Arctic Ocean.

In order to accomplish this, it is necessary as soon as possible to provide reinforcements for the light naval forces as well as to introduce motor torpedo boats.

Kirkenes is to be developed and equipped as an improvised base.

The safety of friendly coastal traffic requires the bringing up of additional coastal batteries. The relevant orders will be issued by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

Kirkenes and Petsamo are each to be reinforced over and above the submitted program by a battery of 21-cm. guns, and a 28-cm. battery is to be constructed at Vardö. Plans are also to be prepared for construction of a battery of the heaviest caliber on the Rybachi Peninsula when it is captured.

8. The cooperation between headquarters, Army of Norway, the navy, and the Luftwaffe must be very close, especially during the coming months in order to check any attacks that might be launched against the front and the sea flank. To this end, in order to simplify mutual cooperation, the navy shall designate a navy commander, north (*Marineführer Nord*), and the Luftwaffe—upon withdrawal of Fifth Air Force headquarters to Norway—an aerial commander, north (*Fliegerführer Nord*).

9. The orders for executing these measures will be issued by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht. Through him the following will be submitted to me:

(a) From headquarters, Army of Norway:

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Timetable for the regrouping movements.

Proposals regarding changes in equipment with a view to enabling all troops to fight in the tundra and the virgin forests of eastern Karelia.

Operational proposals and requests for army headquarters troops.

Proposals for the exchange of staffs.

(b) From the Navy and the Luftwaffe.

Their intentions in detail.

12. To the extent that Directive No. 36 is superseded by this order, it is annulled.

Adolf Hitler

On October 13, Hitler sent Tiso the following congratulatory telegram:⁴⁵²

I send Your Excellency my heartfelt congratulations on your birthday. I am also thinking of the brave Slovak soldiers who, at the side of the German Wehrmacht, are helping to secure the victory over the destructive forces of Bolshevism.

Yours sincerely,

Adolf Hitler

On October 16, the Russian Foreign Ministry instructed the members of the Diplomatic Corps to leave Moscow for Kuibyshev (Samara).⁴⁵³

The military experts and a number of other experts from the three powers (Britain, the United States, and Russia) had conferred in Moscow from September 29 to October 2. The topic of the discussion had been the delivery of war materiel to the Soviet Union. Hitler felt that reports on the conference were a personal challenge to him and replied by organizing his own conferences.

On October 21, a voluminous communiqué informed the international public that a most significant German-Slovak conference had taken place at Hitler's headquarters:⁴⁵⁴

Following an invitation by the Führer, the Slovak state president, Dr. Tiso, and the Slovak prime minister, Dr. Tuka, visited the Führer headquarters. They were accompanied by Interior Minister Mach, Defense Minister General Catlos, as well as the Slovak envoy in Berlin, Cernak, and the German envoy in Pressburg [Bratislava], Ludin.

The political and military discussions at the Führer's headquarters were conducted in the spirit of the heartfelt friendship between the two peoples and were marked by the brotherhood in arms, which has again been successful in the fight of the German and Slovak troops against their common Bolshevik enemy.

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During their visit, the Slovak statesmen heeded an invitation by Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop. The defense minister General Catlos, the commander in chief of the army, General Cunderlic, and their military companions met for talks with the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, and his staff.

The last part of the communiqué described visits to Brauchitsch and Göring. One really could have thought that, after this visit of the Slovaks, the war had already been decided in Hitler's favor.

On October 24, Hitler sent state secretary Dr. Schlegelberger a congratulatory telegram on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁴⁵⁵ The next day, there was another conference at the Führer headquarters. This time, Ciano was Hitler's guest. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁵⁶

On Saturday morning [October 25], the Führer received the royal Italian foreign minister at his headquarters for talks, which were conducted in the spirit of the traditional friendship and the proven comradeship in arms of the two people. Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop also participated in the talks, upon whose invitation Count Ciano is presently visiting Germany for several days.

Ciano reported to Mussolini on the talks:⁴⁵⁷

In the past we have seen in turn the flowering and decline of a series of slogans which are born in the mind of the Leader and are repeated all the way down to the lowest-ranking of his collaborators. We first of all heard talk of the landing in Britain, then of the air attacks, then of the submarine war. Now the fashionable slogan is that of "European solidarity". Europe—the Führer said—besides being a geographical expression is a cultural and moral conception. In the war against Bolshevism the first signs of continental solidarity have shown themselves. . . . This is what all those near him repeat.

On the nineteenth anniversary of the march on Rome on October 28, Hitler sent King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini the following congratulatory telegrams:⁴⁵⁸

On today's commemoration of a most significant turn in the historical development of Italy, I think of Your Majesty with my heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and a happy future for the allied Italian nation.

Adolf Hitler

On the anniversary of the march on Rome, I think of you, Duce, with my heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and a happy future for Fascist Italy. To my best wishes are tied the best wishes of the German Volk for allied Italy in the struggle for victory in the service of a new Europe.

In comradesly solidarity,

Adolf Hitler

November 6, 1941

On October 29, Hitler sent the Turkish state president Ismet İnönü a congratulatory telegram on the country's national holiday.⁴⁵⁹

German troops had still not reached Moscow by early November. In spite of the successful battles of encirclement at Vyazma and Briansk, Russian resistance did not weaken. Moreover, the seasonal mud made it difficult for the German motorized vehicles to move. The horse, which Hitler so despised,⁴⁶⁰ had to help out. The weather conditions, however, were not extraordinary at first, and winter did not begin earlier than usual.⁴⁶¹

On the Russian side, General Zhukov⁴⁶² had taken command of the central sector. In the summer, he had already defeated the German troops at Yelna (southeast of Smolensk). He was now preparing to deal them a decisive blow in front of Moscow.

On November 6, Ciano noted the following in his diary:⁴⁶³

Anne Marie Bismarck⁴⁶⁴ told Anfuso⁴⁶⁵ that when General Rintelen⁴⁶⁶ went to see the Führer on the eastern front he was approached by the German marshals and generals, and that a sort of meeting took place. During the meeting they begged him to find some way of making Hitler understand that the way the war is conducted in Russia is pure madness, that the German army is gradually wearing out, that it cannot hold on, and that, finally, he is leading Germany to the brink of ruin. It seems that this is the unanimous opinion of all the military leaders, but no one dares say so to Hitler. Naturally, Rintelen, too, was careful not to do so.

The German generals were not without blame for these "developments in Russia." They had eagerly placed themselves at Hitler's disposal for this undertaking. Furthermore, they had accepted his argument that the German army would be demoralized if it was not "kept busy." Now, however, things had become somewhat too busy for them, but they were afraid to speak up. Of course, this would have been as useless with Hitler as it had been with Napoleon: "The wine has been poured out, now it must be drunk!"⁴⁶⁷

5

Even if the generals were silent, Hitler knew only too well what they were thinking and what the mood in Germany was like. Therefore, he felt not in the least inclined to speak publicly. In times of crisis, he preferred to remain silent or to issue a proclamation. But now, November 8, the commemoration of the Putsch of 1923, was at hand. He had never missed this celebration. And so he decided to go to Munich, above all, because he felt in need of a two-week vacation at the Berghof with Eva Braun.

Hitler's speech at the Löwenbräukeller was very ordinary.⁴⁶⁸ He repeated the arguments that he had used in his proclamation on June 22 and in his speech on October 3. He had nothing new to say, with the exception of calling Churchill an "insane drunkard" and a "whiskey-happy gentleman." What could he have said after he had spent all his energies on October 3, and his prophesies, none of which had come true, still rang in the ears of his audience?

In this speech, however, it was already evident that Hitler was about to change his mind on one subject. If his coup in Russia failed, and it did look as though it might, then he had no choice other than to threaten England with a massacre of the Jews in order to make it ready to accept peace with him. He felt that this choice held promise. While he had not yet given up all hope of dealing the Russians a decisive defeat within the next weeks, he did appear very much preoccupied with the Jews in his speech on November 8.

In the initial stages of the war, he had barely touched on the Jewish question. That was because all had gone well. It had not been until January 30, 1941, after the "peace campaign" and the "Battle of Britain" had failed, that he had begun to make massive threats.⁴⁶⁹ Now, he claimed that the Jews were responsible for the war, calling them "incendiaries of the world." He maintained that they had first used

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“Poland as a dummy,” later “France, Belgium, Holland, and Norway,” and, of course, England and the Soviet Union, which was “the greatest servant of Jewry.”

Hitler began with the following words:⁴⁷⁰

Party Comrades! German Volksgenossen!

I have come here again for a few hours, true to the old custom, in order to speak with you, my first followers and comrades-in-arms, and to honor the men who at the time made the greatest sacrifice that they could possibly make for our movement and for Germany. When I stood before you the last time, behind us lay a glorious year of great events.

Subsequently, Hitler recapitulated the campaign of “eighteen days,”⁴⁷¹ and the campaigns in Norway and in the west, as well as his various “peace proposals.” He continued:

The insane drunkard (*wahnsinniger Säufer*) who has been controlling England for years now immediately regarded this as a new sign of my weakness. At the time, I was portrayed as a man who sees a bleak future and, therefore, no longer dares to continue the struggle. But, I never imagined the future to be any different from what actually came to pass. And, besides all the glory, I anticipated the sacrifices, and I wanted to spare all sides these sacrifices.

First, I wanted to spare our own Volk the sacrifice. But, toward the rest of the world, I also felt that, as the victor, I could take responsibility for extending my hand for reconciliation. As I said before, this was not understood by those who never made a sacrifice in their own lives and had no close contact with the sacrifices of their own people.

So we had no other choice than to fasten on the helmet for good and to step out on that path which would free us for all time from the dangers threatening not only Germany, but all of Europe.

When I spoke to you here the last time, my old party comrades, I did so fully conscious of victory as hardly a mortal has been able to do before me. In spite of this, a concern weighed heavily on me. It was clear to me that, ultimately, behind this war was that incendiary who has always lived off the quarrels of nations: the international Jew. I would no longer have been a National Socialist had I ever distanced myself from this realization.

We followed his traces over many years. In this Reich, probably for the first time, we scientifically resolved this problem for all time, according to plan, and really understood the words of a great Jew who said that the racial question was the key to world history. Therefore, we knew quite well—above all, I knew—that the driving force behind these occurrences was the Jew. And that, as always in history, there were blockheads ready to stand up for him: partly spineless, paid characters, partly people who want to make deals and, at no time, flinch from having blood spilled for these deals. I have come to know these Jews as the incendiaries of the world.

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After all, in the previous years, you saw how they slowly poisoned the people via the press, radio, film, and theater. You saw how this poisoning continued. You saw how their finances, their money transactions, had to work in this sense. And, in the first days of the war, certain Englishmen—all of them shareholders in the armament industry—said it openly: “The war must last three years at least. It will not and must not end before three years.”—That is what they said. That was only natural, since their capital was tied up and they could not hope to secure an amortization in less than three years. Certainly, my party comrades, for us National Socialists, this almost defies comprehension.

But that is how things are in the democratic world. You can be prime minister or minister of war and, at the same time, own portfolios of countless shares in the armament industry. Interests are explained that way.

We once came to know this danger as the driving force in our domestic struggle. We had this black-red-golden coalition in front of us;⁴⁷² this mixture of hypocrisy and abuse of religion on the one hand, and financial interests on the other; and, finally, their truly Jewish-Marxist goals. We completely finished off this coalition at home in a hard struggle. Now, we stand facing this enemy abroad. He inspired this international coalition against the German Volk and the German Reich.

First, he used Poland as a dummy, and later pressed France, Belgium, Holland, and Norway to serve him. From the start, England was a driving force here. Understandably, the power which would one day confront us is most clearly ruled by this Jewish spirit: the Soviet Union. It happens to be the greatest servant of Jewry.

Time meanwhile has proved what we National Socialists maintained for many years: it is truly a state in which the whole national intelligentsia has been slaughtered, and where only spiritless, forcibly proletarianized subhumans remain. Above them, there is the gigantic organization of the Jewish commissars, that is, established slaveowners. Frequently people wondered whether, in the long run, nationalist tendencies would not be victorious there. But they completely forgot that the bearers of a conscious nationalist view no longer existed. That, in the end, the man who temporarily became the ruler of this state, is nothing other than an instrument in the hands of this almighty Jewry. If Stalin is on stage and steps in front of the curtain, then Kaganovich⁴⁷³ and all those Jews stand behind him, Jews who, in ten-thousandfold ramifications, control this mighty empire.

When I spoke to you here last year, I was already weighed down by this insight into a development that could no longer be misinterpreted.

Hitler repeated the arguments that supposedly had led him to proceed against Russia. Among other things, he claimed the following:

Finally, the moment came when the Russian concentration became evident in that—with the exception of a couple of divisions in Moscow, which were apparently held back as a lever against their own people, and a few divisions in the east—nothing was left that was not at the western front.

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Well, the German army would later find out how many Russian divisions were not yet at the western front. Hitler continued:

Today, I can say so for the first time: there was something else which also cautioned us:

In the year 1940, a number of so-called "secret sessions" of the British House of Commons took place in London. And during these secret sessions, the whisky-happy gentleman (*whiskeyseliger Herr*), Churchill, revealed his thoughts, his hopes, and finally his conviction that Russia was on its way to England. Mr. Cripps had given him absolute proof that it would take one to one-and-a-half years at the most until Russia would appear. One would have to endure another one to one-and-a-half more years at the most. That was the reason behind the incomprehensible courage of this gentleman at the time.⁴⁷⁴ We knew about this all the time. I have now drawn the consequences. First, we freed our southeastern flank. After all we know today, I can only say that we owe gratitude to Mussolini for attacking this festering sore as early as the year 1940. Within a few weeks, we managed to solve this problem for good, with the help of the European states at our side. By taking Crete and closing off the Dardanelles, we victoriously concluded this undertaking.

I have often talked about the accomplishments of our Wehrmacht. It proved gloriously successful in this campaign as well, the army as well as the Luftwaffe.

After that, I watched every movement of our great enemy in the east. Since April and May, I was constantly, I would say, at the observation post. Without pause, I watched every occurrence, determined at any moment—once I realized that the enemy was about to attack—to strike twenty-four hours earlier if necessary.⁴⁷⁵

In mid-June, the signs became more threatening. By the second half of June, no doubt was left that it was just a question of weeks, perhaps only days. And so I gave orders that we should take the offensive on June 22.

Believe me, my old party comrades, this was the most difficult decision of my life up to then. It was a decision which I knew would embroil us in a very difficult struggle. However, I hoped that our chances to win it would be the greater the quicker we defeated the others.

What was the situation at the time? The west was basically secured. To come straight to the point: there are so-called ingenious politicians in the camps of our enemies who now claim that I knew that we would not be attacked in the west and, therefore, I had the courage to go for it in the east. I can only tell these geniuses: they fail to appreciate my caution. I am so prepared in the west that they can take the offensive at any time.

If the English gentlemen want to start an offensive, whether in Norway, against our German coast, in Holland, in Belgium, or in France, we can only tell them: fall in—you will fall out more quickly than you came!

These coasts are in a different state today than they were one year ago. We have worked there with National Socialist thoroughness. The chief of the biggest part of this work—to name only one man—was our Todt.

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Naturally, work there continues. You know me from our time in the party. I have never known rest. If there are ten batteries somewhere, then five will be added. If there are fifteen, then five more will be added, and more still—our enemy himself is delivering the guns!⁴⁷⁶

We left sufficient forces everywhere in order to be ready at any time. The enemy did not come. Fine! I do not wish to spill blood. And even if they had come—as I said—they would be long gone by now. We were secure here.

We also cleaned up the Balkans. In North Africa, our mutual efforts made it possible to establish a stable order. Finland declared itself willing to join our side. The same with Romania. Bulgaria likewise understood the danger. Hungary recognized the great historic hour and arrived at a heroic decision. And so, on June 22, I believed that I could, in accordance with my conscience, confront this danger, even if with a lead of a few days only.

Now, this struggle, my old party comrades, really is a struggle not only for Germany, but also for all of Europe; a struggle of life and death!

You know our allies, beginning in the north: the brave little heroic people of Finland, which has proved its worth so outstandingly again. They were joined by Slovaks, Hungarians, Romanians, and, finally, allies from all over Europe: Italians, Spaniards, Croats, Dutch, Danish volunteers, even French and Belgian volunteers. I can truly say that, in the east, all of Europe is for the first time fighting in a common realization: just as against the Huns back then, we now fought against this Mongolian state of a second Genghis Khan. The goal of this struggle was the following:

1. the destruction of the enemy power, that is, the enemy's armed forces, and
2. the capture of the enemy's armament and food-production centers.

Now Hitler spoke about Leningrad:

Questions of prestige do not play any role with us. If somebody says today: "You are on the defensive at Leningrad," then I come and say: we were on the offensive in front of Leningrad just as long as this was necessary in order to encircle Leningrad. Now, we are on the defensive, and the other side has to try to break out. But he will starve in Leningrad! I will surely not sacrifice one more man than is absolutely necessary.

If there were somebody there today to relieve Leningrad, I would give orders to storm it, and we would take it by storm. Someone who has marched from the East Prussian border up to ten kilometers outside of Leningrad can also march those ten kilometers from outside Leningrad into the city.

But this is not necessary. The city is encircled. Nobody will enter it anymore. It will fall into our hands. And when they say, "only as a heap of ruins"—I am not interested in any city Leningrad, instead only in the destruction of the industrial center Leningrad. If it pleases the Russians to blow up their cities, then perhaps they are saving us a bit of work. Questions of prestige—let me repeat this—do not play a role with us.

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If, for example, someone asks: "Why aren't we marching now?"—Because, at the moment, it is raining or snowing, or perhaps we are not totally finished with the railroads! The speed of this advance is not determined by those wonderful British strategists who determine the speed of their retreats. Instead, it is exclusively determined by us.

And, secondly, there is the occupation of the enemy's armament and food-production centers. Here, too, we will proceed according to plan! Sometimes, it is enough to destroy one factory in order to bring many factories to a standstill.

Hitler again juggled with figures:

If I wanted to sum up the success of this campaign until now, then the number of prisoners now stands at approximately three point six million, that is, three million six hundred thousand prisoners. And please don't tell me an English blockhead says that this has not been confirmed. If a German military office counts something, then it is correct! There is an essential difference between a German officer and a British stockbroker! It is totally correct, just as our numbers for French and English prisoners were correct!

The English know this quite well themselves because they always want to take care of their prisoners. Now, if I look at three point six million prisoners on the one side and I go by World War standards, then this means a corresponding number of casualties. It would be a bad testimonial for Mr. Stalin if his people were fighting less bravely now than they did in the World War. On the contrary, they fight in part out of fear and in part with bestial, fanatical madness. And, if I now assume that in Russia, as here with us, there are three to four wounded for every fatal casualty, then the result is an absolute loss of at least eight to ten million, without considering those only slightly wounded, who might be cured and put back into action. My party comrades, no army in the world can recover from this, not even the Russian.⁴⁷⁷

Now that Stalin is suddenly saying that we lost four-and-a-half million men, while Russia was missing only three hundred seventy-eight thousand men in action—this would have to be the prisoners—three hundred fifty thousand dead and one million wounded, then I can only ask: Why did the Russians retreat one-and-a-half thousand kilometers if they only had half the losses we had, especially considering the gigantic masses of their troops?

What this mighty man in the Kremlin says seems to me strikingly Jewish. Besides, the prisoners are slowly moving in the direction of Europe. Here, we will integrate them usefully in the production process, and we will see that they are not three hundred seventy-eight thousand, but really three point six million men.

The matériel booty we took in this period is immense. Right now, we have over fifteen thousand planes, over twenty-two thousand tanks, over twenty-seven thousand guns. It is truly an enormous amount of matériel. The entire industry of the world, including German industry, could only replace such

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amounts slowly. In any event, our democrats' industries will not replace it in the next few years!

And now I will speak of territorial matters. Until now, we have occupied one million six hundred seventy thousand square kilometers. That is an area three to four times as big as France and about five times as big as England [*sic*]. Sixty to seventy-five percent of all industries and all raw materials that Russia possesses are situated in this area. I hope that shortly we will be able to take a couple of further steps, slowly but surely, to cut them off cord after cord.

Now somebody says, "Yes, but you are wrong on the time."—These people know exactly what a conception of time I have! We defeated France in around six weeks; the occupied area is only a fraction of what we conquered in the east. Now somebody comes and says that we had expected this to be done in the east in a month-and-a-half. With all due respect to lightning warfare—you still have to march!

And what our infantry has accomplished in terms of marching is truly unique in world history. Naturally, if you go from Dunkirk to Ostend and then retreat from Ostend to Dunkirk again, this is much easier. I will admit that. However, if you walk all the way from the German border to Rostov or the Crimea, or Leningrad, then we are talking real distances, especially considering the roads in the "paradise of workers and peasants."

I have never used the word *Blitzkrieg* because it is a really stupid word.⁴⁷⁸ If it can be applied to any campaign at all, however, then to this one!

Never before has a gigantic empire been shattered and defeated in a shorter time than the Soviet Union has been this time. This could occur and succeed only thanks to the unheard-of, unique bravery and willingness to sacrifice of our German Wehrmacht, which takes upon itself unimaginable strains.

What all the German arms have accomplished here cannot be expressed by words. We can only bow deeply before our heroes.

I already said in Berlin that it does not matter whom we take: our panzer gunners, our engineers, our artillery, our reconnaissance troops, our pilots, our dive-bombers, our fighter or reconnaissance planes, or our navy—in the end, the result is always the same: The crown belongs to the German infantryman, the German front-line soldier!

He marches across endless expanses on rough trails, through morass, through swamps. He marches in the heat of the sun across the endless fields of the Ukraine, or in the rain, in snow and frost, and he defeats bunker after bunker. With his storm engineers, he tears up front after front. It is truly a heroic song that he is singing for himself.

Behind this front, there is a second front. It is the German homeland. And behind this German homeland, there is a third front. Its name is Europe. And when I am told, as so often lately, that the democrats are now arming, then I must say that I have also repeatedly mentioned that we are not doing nothing. I did not stop German armament in the years 1939–1940 and 1941. What we have achieved in this sphere up to now is something. And we continue to arm. I have merely concentrated armament in a few special spheres. When the

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gentlemen keep talking of figures—I do not speak of figures, but I will say one thing: They will be surprised with what we will line up one day.

My old party comrades, we have already experienced this at home. Every year we heard what the democrats were doing, what the Social Democrats were doing, what the Center or the Bavarian People's Party was doing, what—for all I care—the bourgeois or other groups were doing, even what the Communists were doing. But, we were also doing something. And, in the end, it was more than this entire coalition together: we knocked them to the ground!

They tell me: "Yes, but there is America with a hundred twenty-five million people."—The Reich territory together with the Reich protectorate and the General-Government also has a hundred twenty-five million people! The area that works directly for us today contains far more than two hundred fifty million people. The area in Europe that works indirectly for this struggle now already contains over three hundred fifty million! Insofar as the area in question is German, areas which we occupy, and areas in which we have taken over the administration—let no one doubt that we will manage to recruit these areas completely for this task. They can believe us!

It is not the German Volk of the World War that is doing the fighting today. It is a completely different German Volk! And it is the misfortune of our enemies that they have not understood this and that they run after these Jewish blockheads who declare time and again, "You just have to do exactly the same thing that you did once."—I do not think this even of our enemies, although I do not consider them too intelligent. I myself never do the same thing twice; instead, I always do something different. They should finally give up for good placing their hopes on the old thing!

Now, for instance, they say, "At this stage, a revolt will break out." Perhaps, listening to English broadcast, some fool might suddenly react. But not for long! We can deal with such matters! You should not delude yourselves; such attempts quickly collapse. Today, you are not confronting a bourgeois Germany with kid gloves, but a National Socialist one, and it has strong fists!

We are very polite and decent toward the civilian population wherever we occupy areas. Sometimes, perhaps, we are too decent, too obliging. We do not rape anyone over there, for many reasons. Nor are there any break-ins by German soldiers in order to steal and pillage. Something like that is punished more severely there than at home. We protect this population.

But if somebody believes he can resist the occupation, or upset it by a treacherous assassination, then we will strike as we did at home in the years when our enemies believed that they could terrorize us. In the end, we dealt with their terror. We created the organizations necessary for it. We will also deal with the terror of our present enemies!

And then comes the most stupid hope: namely, that an uprising, a revolution, will break out in Germany. The people who could start a revolution here are no longer here. They have been in England, in America, in Canada, and so on, for a long time already. However, the people who perhaps would want to start a revolution are so few and so unimportant that it is ridiculous to hope for their assistance. Should somebody seriously hope to

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disturb our front here—irrespective of where he is coming from, from which camp he is—then you know my method: I will watch him for a certain time.

That is his period of probation. But the time will come when I will strike like lightning to remove all that quickly. And then no disguise will be of any use, not even the disguise of religion. But, as I said, that will not be necessary with us, because, above all, this entire German Volk is today organized in one movement. Our enemies have simply not understood that it is a movement which reaches into every house, and which jealously watches so that November 1918 will never happen again. I have been a prophet so often in my life, and they always laughed at me, but I was always right in the end. I want to be one again: Never will November 1918 be repeated in Germany! It cannot repeat itself! Everything is conceivable but only one thing is not: that Germany will ever capitulate!

If our enemies say, "Well, then the war will last until the year 1942!"—The war can last as long as it wants—but the last battalion on the field will be a German one!¹⁴⁷⁹

It is useless to try to intimidate me! You know that I can remain silent on certain matters for months, even years. This does not mean that I am not considering it, that I am not aware of it. If today ever new threats against Germany are made, especially in America, then I have taken them into account in good time. I declared one year ago: Whatever ship brings war materiel, materiel to kill people, will be torpedoed!

If the American President Roosevelt—who was responsible for Poland's entry into the war and who, as today we can support by documentary evidence, determined that France should enter the war—if he believes he can weary me by an order to fire,⁴⁸⁰ then I can make only one reply to this gentleman: Mr. President Roosevelt has ordered his ships to fire if they sight a German ship. And I have ordered German ships, if they sight American ones, not to fire, but to defend themselves if they are attacked. A German officer who does not defend himself will be court-martialed by me.

If, on the President's order, an American ship fires, then it does this at its own risk. The German ship will defend itself, and our torpedoes will not miss.

I do not feel like wasting much time on these ridiculous falsifications, for example, that I had German experts manufacture a map. I can only tell Mr. Roosevelt: I have no experts at all.⁴⁸¹ For me, my head is good enough! I do not need a brain trust to assist me. If there truly needs to be a change somewhere, then it first has to take place in my brain and not in the brains of others, not even in the brains of experts. I am not a high-school student who draws maps on his school atlas. For all I care, South America is as far away as the moon. These are really stupid claims.

Or let us take the second falsification—that we wished to eliminate all the world's religions. I am fifty-two years old now, and I have something better to do than to deal with this child's play and stupidity. Besides that, it does not interest me how many kinds of religion there are in the world and how the people adhere to these religions. This interests only the American President

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Roosevelt. In the German Reich, according to our view, each may live after his own fashion!

I have read that in the United States a preacher is not allowed to speak against the state and that soldiers are not allowed to attend such sermons. It is the same here with us. But there is a difference: namely, that the denominations in the German Reich receive nearly 900 million Reichsmark annually from the state, and not a penny in America! No priest has ever been persecuted in the German Reich because of his doctrine of faith unless, because of his doctrine of faith, he interfered with the doctrine of state. But this only a very few did. The great majority stands behind the German state in this struggle. It knows quite well that if this struggle is lost for the German Reich, religion would fare far worse in a Stalinist protectorate than it does in ours.

All attempts to influence the German Volk from abroad are childish and ridiculous. The German Volk has known the National Socialist regime for twenty years now as a party, for eight years as the leader of the state. And I believe that there has never been an era in German history in which such gigantic things have been achieved as within the eight years the German Reich has been led by the National Socialist movement. The best witnesses for the work of our movement will be the men who return from the front and who have been able to compare the effects of twenty-three years of Communist rule to ours.

They can judge what National Socialism has accomplished and what Europe would face if this other world won. They understand our great ambition: that in this struggle we finally want to free Europe of the danger posed by the east, and that, at the same time, we prevent the east, with its immeasurable fertility, its immeasurable riches in raw materials and ores, from being mobilized against Europe, and instead place it in the service of Europe.

This is truly a gigantic goal, which reaches far beyond the frontiers of our German Reich—gigantic not only in terms of accomplishments, but also gigantic in its consequences. The situation as it is now is madness—this Europe where in some areas nearly two hundred sixty people live on one square kilometer—and that is just the west!

I see all these things from a higher point of view, if I may say so. I differentiate between the French and their Jews, between the Belgians and their Jews, between the Dutch and their Jews. I know that countless people live there who are also the victims of this crazy European construction, according to which the genuinely richest part of Europe is constantly mobilized against that part of Europe where the people living there possess not even the most primitive standard of living. Our soldiers saw this: in a country where the soil is virtually brimming with fertility; in a country, where a fraction of the work could result in as many times the profit as it makes here; there people have barely enough to call a pot their own; they dwell in miserable huts, neglected, full of lice, and dirty.

A few days ago, I read that lice had been found on a German prisoner of war in the east. Mr. Stalin is circulating this. I assume that he wants to make believe that this prisoner of war brought the lice all the way from Munich or

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Berlin to Russia. In the Soviet paradise, the most miserable type of slavery exists that the world has ever seen: millions of frightened, oppressed, neglected people, half-starved! Above them, there is the regime of commissars, ninety percent of whom are of Jewish descent, who control this whole slave state.

It will be a great relief for Europe not only if this danger disappears, but also if the fertility of this soil benefits all of Europe.

This is a gigantic task posed to us. However, I am so much a materialist that I regard it as far more important than worrying about what religions are predominant in what countries.

We have a goal. It spans this continent. Primarily, there is our Fatherland, then come all those who live in the same misery as we do. And I am convinced that this continent will not be second in the world, but that it will remain the first.

And if Mr. Willkie,⁴⁸² this man of honor, declares that there are only two possibilities: either Berlin will become the capital of the world or Washington, then I can only say: Berlin does not want to be the capital of the world, and Washington will never be the capital of the world. I believe that, in Europe at least, hundreds of medium-sized towns would protest against such a burdening of human civilization.

Basically, our great goal in the east is the final part of our program. In accordance with this sober program, we once began to place man's work and, thereby, man himself at the center of our actions, aspirations, and performance. Against the terms "gold" and "capital," we set the terms "man, Volksgenosse," and "work." Today, too, we set man and his work against these terms. With this, we embrace all those who are allied with us today and who suffer hardships as great as Germany does, and even greater in part: Italy. The Duce—I know he feels no differently about this struggle than we do: his country also is poor, overpopulated, always disadvantaged, and it does not know from where it will take its daily bread. He has sworn himself to me, and this union cannot be dissolved by any power on earth!

There are two revolutions which started out at different times, in different forms, but with the same goals. Together, they will reach these goals. A number of other European states have joined us. We can say that almost all of southeastern Europe is in our camp today. And the greater part of the remainder of Europe also stands at our front in sentiment, even if not in public.

So, today, we do not fight alone as National Socialists, but together with a gigantic European front. And at the end of this year, we can say that the gravest danger has already been parried by this European front.

When I spoke in Berlin the other day, we were just about to land one last gigantic blow. It succeeded beyond all measure.⁴⁸³ About seventy-five divisions were eliminated and destroyed in one blow.

And the leaders and executors of this struggle will not tire and will not slacken. The heroism of this front is immortal. As men who believe in Providence, we can assume that for such an immortal feat, there will be undying recompense!

November 14, 1941

We may not doubt that this period will determine the fate of Europe for the next thousand years.⁴⁸⁴ We can all be happy that we initiated this period. You, my friends from the old days, you can be proud that you followed me, whom Providence has predestined to stride forth on this path, at the time when I set out on my path in this city, as an unknown man.

We may step up to the graves of our old comrades with even greater pride in this year. In the past year, we felt somewhat burdened before them. We no longer fought against the Red front because fate had forced us to make a truce with it. I honestly upheld this truce. The other side relieved me of this duty. This year, I look with something almost like relief at the graves of our party comrades because I know that they once had the same goal: the struggle against this Marxist enemy of the world and his allies. At the time, they fell victim to the bullets of this front which stretches all the way from a stupid reaction to the zealous insanity of Bolshevism.

Especially in this year, we think of the fallen with particular emotion and particular grief. You will understand my feelings.

It is only for a few hours that I am in this city again from which I once set out. But I am so happy to see you here again, my old companions, my old comrades in arms. And you may believe me when I say that this year a great weight was taken from my heart. I do feel the sacrifice that we had to make: all our young and old friends, they who again had to pay with their own blood for Germany's salvation and perhaps will still have to pay.

Alas, it is the old, eternal argument and the old, eternal fight. It just did not end in the year 1918. We were swindled out of the victory at the time. We sacrificed two million dead at the time, we had seven-and-a-half million wounded, and, in spite of this, the insanity of an internal revolution cheated us out of the victory.

But it was only the beginning, the first part of this drama. The second part and the end are now being written. This time, we will take what we were swindled out of. Point for point, position for position, we will put it on the bill and cash it in.

The hour will come when we can step up to the graves of the fallen of the Great War and we can say: Comrades, you did not die in vain! What we once said in front of the Feldherrnhalle we will be able to pronounce with a thousandfold greater right in front of the graves of our World War soldiers: Comrades, you won after all!

On November 11, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to King Victor Emmanuel III on his birthday.⁴⁸⁵

On November 13, he expressed his sympathies to Pétain in a telegram on the death of War Minister Huntziger.⁴⁸⁶ The general, who had signed the French capitulation in 1940, had crashed on November 12 on a return flight from North Africa.

On November 14, Hitler signed a decree on the German Academy at his headquarters. It read as follows:⁴⁸⁷

November 17, 1941

I

The academy for the scientific investigation and cultivation of German national characteristics—the German Academy—shall be vested with the character of a corporation under public law and shall bear the name “German Academy.” Its seat will be in Munich.

II

1. The mission of the German Academy will be primarily the investigation and cultivation of the German language at home and its promotion and dissemination abroad.

2. In addition, the German Academy will participate in the investigation and cultivation of the German cultural heritage of past and present.

III.

1. A president will head the German Academy. I shall appoint and dismiss him. His office will be an honorary function.

2. The president will represent the German Academy legally and extralegally.

This “German Academy” was placed “under the supervision of the Reich propaganda minister,” which said much about its “scientific” character.

On November 17, Hitler named Alfred Rosenberg, who already served as his agent “for the central control of questions connected to the east-European area,”⁴⁸⁸ Reich minister for the occupied eastern territories. Characteristically enough, this decree was not even published in the Reich Law Gazette. Instead, it came into force due to an informal announcement in the press:⁴⁸⁹

The Führer has ordered the establishment of civil administrations in those parts of the eastern territories that German troops have occupied and in which fighting has ceased. The task of these civil administrations for the time being is the restitution of public order and public life.

On the Führer’s orders, these civil administrations are subordinated to a Reich minister. To this end, the Führer has named Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg Reich minister for the occupied eastern territories. As his permanent representative, the Führer has appointed Gauleiter and Reich governor, Dr. Alfred Meyer.⁴⁹⁰

First, civil administrations have been set up in the area of the former free states of Lithuania, Latvia, and in parts of White Ruthenia. These areas together form the Reichskommissariat Ostland.

The Führer has appointed Gauleiter and Oberpräsident Hinrich Lohse⁴⁹¹ Reichskommissar for Ostland.

Civil administrations have also been set up in parts of the Ukraine. The Führer has appointed Gauleiter and Oberpräsident Erich Koch⁴⁹² Reichskommissar for the Ukraine.

November 20, 1941

This announcement made clear that Hitler was not about to restore the Baltic states or grant the Ukraine any autonomy. Advocates of autonomy had enthusiastically welcomed the entry of the German troops into Kiev. Hitler immediately ordered their arrest and imprisonment.

Never had he allowed locals to wield any power or pursue their own political agenda in a newly conquered country. Not even the Austrian National Socialists had been allowed to take power. Instead, he had vested crucial powers in Reich Germans from far away whom he knew to be unconditionally loyal to him.

He had proceeded in this manner in Poland, in Norway, and in Holland.⁴⁹³ In the east, too, he wanted to secure his own autocratic rule. Therefore, Gauleiter Erich Koch of East Prussia was not allowed to take over the neighboring Baltic states, but was instead sent to the Ukraine. Gauleiter Lohse of Schleswig-Holstein was assigned the Baltic states. And so both suddenly found themselves in foreign countries, far away from the Gaus of their homeland.

Hitler felt that he had proceeded quite cleverly in suppressing any independent sentiments in the subjugated areas. But less than three years later, these "Reichskommissariats,"⁴⁹⁴ which had been meant to last over a thousand years, had already disappeared from the map like apparitions.

On November 17, the inspector general of the Luftwaffe, Ernst Udet, committed suicide. The public was informed that he had crashed "test-flying a new plane." Hitler ordered a state funeral and named Fighter Squadron III after Udet.⁴⁹⁵

On November 19, in a meeting with Halder at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, Hitler said that he felt that the collapse of Russia and England was within reach:⁴⁹⁶

The Führer politically rates success in Russia, which he regards as an unheard-of achievement, very high. He believes that the loss of sources of essential raw materials (especially coal) has severely impaired the armament potential of the Russians. Their armament economy will not recover from that any time soon. In England, he assigns great importance to domestic political and social tensions.

On November 20, an exchange of telegrams marked the first anniversary of Hungary's accession to the Tripartite Pact. Hitler wrote Prime Minister von Bardossy:⁴⁹⁷

November 25, 1941

I thank Your Excellency for the best wishes transmitted to me by wire on the first anniversary of Hungary's accession to the Tripartite Pact. I share with you the first conviction that the Tripartite Pact will continue to be effective as the foundation for a just new order of the relations between the people of Europe and that, through this, it will become the guarantor of the prosperity of our states.

Adolf Hitler

On November 21, Hitler attended a memorial for Ernst Udet at the Reich Air Ministry in Berlin. Göring delivered the address. Afterwards, Hitler placed a wreath at the coffin.⁴⁹⁸

The next day, another mysterious crash was reported. This time, Colonel Mölders was the victim. On July 16, Hitler had awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds on his hundred first air victory. Supposedly, he had been aboard a courier airplane, which he was not flying himself, when he had crashed near Breslau.⁴⁹⁹ Hitler again ordered a state funeral.

On November 23, Hitler wired a congratulatory telegram to Professor Bier on his eightieth birthday.⁵⁰⁰

On November 25, Hitler sent a long, but inconsequential, handwritten letter to Reichsleiter Amann on his fiftieth birthday.⁵⁰¹

In addition, he sent the following telegram to the president of the "Reich University of Strasbourg":⁵⁰²

I thank you for your report on the opening of the University of Strasbourg. In commemoration of the great significance of the old University of Strasbourg for German intellectual life, I reciprocate your greetings with my best wishes for a similarly fruitful development of the new Reich University of Strasbourg.

Adolf Hitler

On November 25, on Hitler's orders, a "state act of world historic importance" took place in Berlin.⁵⁰³ The Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936 was to be refurbished. Because of the Pact of Steel of 1939 and the Tripartite Pact of 1940, it had somewhat fallen into oblivion. Now, the Anti-Comintern Pact was designed to tie to Hitler those states that had refused to join the Tripartite Pact and to enter into a military alliance with Germany, for example, Denmark and Finland. The pact was renewed for a five-year period.

Ciano, who like Serrano Suñer had come to Berlin to attend this event "of world historic importance," gave a vivid account in his diary

November 27, 1941

of what a pitiful figure the Danish foreign minister Scavenius made, who felt decidedly uncomfortable in this "Anti-Comintern circle."⁵⁰⁴

On the same day, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to the heads of state of the countries allied in the Anti-Comintern Pact, as well as to the Duce and the Romanian head of state.⁵⁰⁵ In addition, he sent a telegram of condolence on the death of the Chilean president.⁵⁰⁶

The festivities in Berlin continued on November 26. The next day, Hitler personally attended the celebrations. The following communiqué was published on this occasion:⁵⁰⁷

On Thursday [November 27], the Führer received, in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the European statesmen from the powers allied in the anti-Bolshevik front, who are presently staying in the Reich capital: the Slovak prime minister, Professor Tuka; the royal Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister, von Bardossy; the royal Romanian deputy prime minister, Mihai Antonescu;⁵⁰⁸ the royal Italian foreign minister, Count Ciano; the royal Bulgarian minister of the exterior, Popov; the royal Dutch foreign minister, Scavenius; the Spanish foreign minister, Serrano Suñer; the Finnish minister of foreign affairs, Witting; the Croatian foreign minister, Lorcovic; as well as the plenipotentiary of the imperial Japanese government, Ambassador Oshima, and the plenipotentiary of the government of the Empire of Manchukuo, Envoy Lue-i-Wen.

At noon Thursday, the Führer entertained as his guests the statesmen present in Berlin and the heads of the missions of the Anti-Comintern powers in Berlin. From the German side attended the following: the Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich, Hermann Göring; the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop; Grand Admiral Raeder, the Field Marshals Keitel and Milch, the Reich ministers Dr. Goebbels, Rosenberg, and Dr. Lammers; the Reichsleiters Bouhler, Bormann, Dr. Dietrich, Reichsführer SS Himmler, the SA chief of staff Lutze, state minister, Dr. Meissner, and, in addition, the state secretary of the foreign ministry, von Weizsäcker; the under state secretaries Woermann and Gaus, as well as the heads of the German missions in the countries associated with the Anti-Comintern Pact.

It had been a long time since Hitler had last participated in such a "meeting of diplomats," and he thoroughly enjoyed the now rare opportunity. It didn't bother him to be at the center of attention that, in spite of their resounding titles, many of the present "statesmen" were completely unimportant and of questionable character.

On November 27, Hitler named Reich students leader, Dr. Scheel, Gauleiter of Salzburg and Salzburg's former Gauleiter, Dr. Rainer, Gauleiter of Carinthia.⁵⁰⁹

November 28, 1941

At 11:45 a.m. on November 28, Hitler attended the state service in honor of Colonel Mölders at the Reich Ministry of Aviation. He also placed a wreath on his coffin.⁵¹⁰

Hitler had enjoyed the “meeting of the diplomats” the previous day so much that he asked the statesmen to individual audiences at the Reich Chancellery. Some of them he received that same afternoon, as well as in the course of November 28.⁵¹¹

It was about time for Hitler to return to the “front,” that is, to his headquarters in East Prussia. Things were not going well in the east. On November 17, the central sector of the front had taken the offensive in the direction of Moscow again, after months of virtually standing still. The troops, already wearied by months of fighting, advanced only slowly, meeting with ever more determined resistance by the Russians.⁵¹²

The troops of the southern sector had made better headway. They had reached the River Don and, on November 21, fast-moving units of the army and Waffen SS had taken Rostov, the “gateway to the Caucasus.” On November 26, the situation changed completely. Suddenly, Timoshenko’s troops attacked with unexpected strength and forced the Germans out of Rostov. Worse still, they drove the German units, including the Waffen SS, back eighty kilometers to the Mius River and almost all the way back to Taganrog. And the pressure which the enemy exerted did not appear to diminish.

When Hitler arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on November 30, the news seemed catastrophic. Was it possible? Soldiers of the National Socialist Greater German Reich in retreat? Hitler ordered them to halt immediately and to resume the advance. He wired the following orders to Rundstedt, the commander in chief of the Army Group South: “Stay where you are. No more retreats!”⁵¹³

The German front would not budge simply because of a few “primitive Bolsheviks!” He would ruthlessly crack down on people, dismiss them, reduce them in rank, have them shot, and so on.

Hitler’s apparently complete ignorance of tactics—namely, to hold on to a point once taken at all costs, no matter how unimportant it might be—began to show for the first time on this day. He later repeatedly resorted to these tactics.

From his point of view, these tactics were not as senseless as they appeared. They reflected his mentality. He had proved himself a liar

November 30, 1941

many times before. He had solemnly declared in front of the world public the following:

“Nothing is impossible for the German soldier!”⁵¹⁴

“A place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!”⁵¹⁵

“What we once possess, we will never again surrender! Where our banners are driven into the earth, there stands before them a living wall of Germans!”⁵¹⁶

“Wherever our banners are driven into the earth, there they remain.”⁵¹⁷

Given such principles and prophecies, there could naturally be no talk of withdrawing even a little. Hitler had become a prisoner of his own bombastic phrases. There was another consideration as well: to yield to the enemy’s pressure and to clear out of an area would mean revealing the monstrous atrocities committed on Hitler’s orders by the German conquerors: the murder of the Russian commissars; the massacre of the civilian population, especially the Jews; the shooting of defenseless prisoners of war without prior trial; and so forth.⁵¹⁸ However, if resistance was maintained down to the last bullet and no stone was left unturned, then it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the enemy to investigate these matters.

A third factor in these considerations was Hitler’s “perseverance” theory. In his opinion, what mattered was who would lead “the last battalion on the field” and that it would “be a German one!”⁵¹⁹ Whether you sacrificed all other battalions beforehand was inconsequential, as long as one “last battalion” remained which could be led to the battlefield. Only if Hitler himself survived all the privation, suffering, and sacrifice of blood, only then “Providence,” this German god in the clouds, would crown him. Heedlessly, Hitler sacrificed millions of Germans on all fronts to this “perseverance” theory.

There were, however—and this happened more and more frequently later on in the war—situations in which Hitler had to consent to retreats, so-called “reduced fronts” or “backing up disengagement,” the abandoning of cities (for example, Rome and Florence). He took care, however, to create the impression that this was being done voluntarily in the service of some higher strategy. But he did live long enough to see how a harsh reality daily disproved his claim that “a place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier.”

On November 30, 1941, Hitler had a conference with Brauchitsch at the Führer headquarters. Halder noted the following:⁵²⁰

December 2, 1941

It seems to have been a highly unpleasant, one-sided discussion, in which the Führer bandied about accusations and insults.

On the same day, Rundstedt's reply to Hitler's orders arrived. He said that it was "insanity to try to hold the position" and offered his resignation. Hitler wired back: "I grant your request. Lay down your command."⁵²¹

On December 1, another conference with Brauchitsch took place at the Führer headquarters.⁵²² Hitler was determined to replace Rundstedt immediately with Field Marshal von Reichenau who, as mentioned before, was one of the few high-ranking officers in the Reichswehr with National Socialist inclinations. His army stood in the eastern Ukraine. With his assistance, Hitler hoped that mastering the momentary crisis would be child's play. He ordered his plane to be ready the next morning. He himself would look after matters at the southern sector.

Before doing so, however, he issued Directive No. 38. The situation in the Mediterranean had also become critical. On November 20, the English had started a new offensive against Libya. Supply convoys never reached the Africa Corps; instead they were sunk while on the way. Improvisation was called for again! The directive of December 2 read as follows:⁵²³

1. As a basis for securing and extending our position in the Mediterranean and in order to establish the strength of the Axis powers in the central Mediterranean, I herewith, after consulting with the Duce, order the transfer to southern Italy and North Africa of contingents of the Luftwaffe units released in the east, in the strength of one air corps, together with the necessary air-defense elements.

Apart from its immediate effect upon the conduct of operations in the Mediterranean and in North Africa, the object sought by this movement is to exert a potent influence on the entire course of future developments in the Mediterranean theater.

2. I assign command over all the forces to be committed to the execution of this mission to Field Marshal Kesselring, whom I designate at the same time as commander in chief, south [*Oberbefehlshaber Süd*].

His missions are as follows:

To gain air and sea supremacy in the area between southern Italy and North Africa, to establish secure links with Libya and Cyrenaica, and then especially to neutralize Malta, to cooperate with the German and allied forces committed in North Africa, to interdict enemy traffic through the Mediterranean and British supply movements to Tobruk and Malta, in close cooperation with the German and Italian naval forces available for that purpose.

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3. The commander in chief, south, is subordinate to the Duce and receives through the *Comando Supremo* the Duce's general directives on overall operational matters. In all matters immediately pertaining to the Luftwaffe, the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe will communicate with the commander in chief, south, directly, keeping the high command of the Wehrmacht informed when questions of basic importance are involved.

4. The commander in chief, south, will have under his command the following:

All committed Luftwaffe forces in the Mediterranean and in North Africa; The Italian air force and anti-aircraft units made available by the Italian armed forces for the execution of his missions.

5. The German naval forces employed in the central Mediterranean remain under control of the commander in chief of the navy.

The commander in chief, south, is authorized, in execution of the missions assigned to him, to issue directives to the German admiral with the high command of the Italian navy and also, if the need arises, to the Navy Group, South (for the eastern Mediterranean). Orders for action are to be issued by the navy headquarters in agreement with the commander in chief, south.

The wishes of the commander in chief, south, for coordination of joint action with the allied naval forces are to be addressed exclusively to the German admiral with the high command of the Italian Navy.

6. The missions of the Wehrmacht commander, southeast, and of the German general with the headquarters of the Italian armed forces remain unchanged.

Adolf Hitler

On December 2, the Führer flew aboard his four-engined Condor plane from Rastenburg to the rearward operational area of Army Group South.⁵²⁴ Besides Hitler's chief pilot, Captain Hans Baur, the following men were also aboard: Chief Adjutant Schmudt, manservant Linge, and Hitler's personal physician, Dr. Theodor Morell. The weather was cold and wintry.

During a stopover in Kiev, Hitler spent about forty-five minutes on the telephone with Army Group South, trying to speak to Sepp Dietrich, who commanded the Waffen SS in the southern sector. He wanted Dietrich to meet him at the airport near Mariupol (Zhdanov) on the Sea of Azov. Hitler was not going to travel to a general's headquarters without SS guards and a secure vehicle. The flight continued on to Poltava, where the men changed planes to a faster, but chillier Heinkel 'He 111.' In addition, Hitler picked Field Marshal von Reichenau up there, who followed in a second 'He 111' plane.

Quite frozen, they arrived in Mariupol, where Hitler changed into Sepp Dietrich's car. They drove to the Army Group's headquarters in

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the vicinity of Taganrog, where Hitler gave further instructions on the change in the chain of command.

The next day, the traveling party, including Reichenau, set out from Mariupol again. On the way, Hitler could not resist mocking the former army commander. He said to his servant Linge: "This Rundstedt was not cut out for the east. In the west, he was very good—especially when French red wine was concerned."

But Hitler's good mood was not to last. The weather became so bad that it was impossible to fly back to Rastenburg that day. The party had to spend the night at Poltava.

At the same Poltava in the Ukraine, the presumptuous King Charles XII of Sweden had once met his fate. Tsar Peter the Great dealt the Swedish forces a deadly blow in the Battle of Poltava on July 18, 1709. This forced Charles to take refuge in Turkey and finished Sweden's hegemony.⁵²⁵ No doubt, Hitler was not aware of this coincidence. But he was also headed toward disaster, the well-deserved, inevitable destiny of all conquerors, and this process was now approaching its point of culmination. Even if Hitler yet failed to realize this fully, his forced stay at Poltava became one of the worst nights of his life.

Cut off from the outside world, without any means of communication, locked up in an old ramshackle, bug-ridden castle, hundreds of kilometers away from the Führer headquarters and the Reich Chancellery, he suffered the torments of hell, thinking of what might have happened there in the meanwhile. His guilty conscience caught up with him: since 1939, all his forecasts had failed, many of his "basic beliefs" had proved mistaken, and he still had not had the decency "at the very least [to] forego the public performance of any further political function," as he himself had once demanded.⁵²⁶

What if some general or Unterführer used his absence to usurp power and declared him dismissed because of proven incompetence, or called on the Reichstag? He did not fear the generals that much, as their training taught them obedience. In his view, the Obergruppenführers of the SA and SS represented a far greater danger. They had revolted along with him, so they did not respect the state and perhaps sometime they would stop respecting the Führer! Once, Hitler told his manservant: "Linge, I am glad that you are sitting behind me instead of an Obergruppenführer who could shoot me in the back with a pistol."⁵²⁷

The night at Poltava came to an end, but Hitler promised himself and Linge "never again to go so far away from his headquarters, never

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again to seek direct contact with the armies at the front by traveling himself.”⁵²⁸

On December 4, Hitler arrived at Rastenburg after an anxious return flight. He was prepared for the worst news of rebellions. But everything was calm at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Nobody in the Reich had attempted to rebel!

Things had gone less well at the central sector of the eastern front. The German armies, whose greatest efforts had brought them within sixty kilometers of Moscow, had literally got stuck north, west, and south of the Soviet capital. It had begun to snow. Temperatures had dropped below freezing. The German panzers had frozen, their guns no longer fired, and there were no supplies.

After all, it was December, and they were in the middle of Russia! It is ridiculous to maintain that the beginning of winter in 1941 was an unforeseeable natural disaster.⁵²⁹ The German troops had to camp outside, in front of Moscow, and many suffered severe frostbite. They did not even have winter coats, nor did they have special padded uniforms. And Hitler alone was to be blamed for this! He had always spoken of the “primitive” Bolsheviks who would immediately collapse under the brutal German blows. He had maintained that this campaign would last no longer than that in France, that is, six to eight weeks at the most. Why bother about winter clothes? And then, after many things had already gone wrong, it was he who declared in his proclamation on October 2 that “that last gigantic blow” would “crush this enemy before the beginning of winter!”⁵³⁰

He had said on October 3 that the German soldiers would be in front of Moscow by October 4 or 5, and that this enemy was “already broken” and that he would “never rise again.”⁵³¹

The German soldiers lay in the snow on the vast Russian plain, weary, hungry, and cold, under fire from Russian artillery. Now, the terrible realization of Hitler’s prophecies dawned on them. Meanwhile, the Führer and supreme commander sat in his cozy headquarters in East Prussia and sent out diplomatic telegrams.

On December 4, he congratulated Franco on his birthday.⁵³²

The next day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to the Finnish state president Ryti on the conquest of Hangö.⁵³³

On December 6, he sent another congratulatory telegram to Ryti. It read as follows:⁵³⁴

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On the anniversary of the Finnish declaration of independence, I send you and the Finnish people my sincere best wishes. The heroic, defensive war which Finland is fighting in true brotherhood-in-arms with Germany in order finally to gain security for itself will be crowned by victory.

Adolf Hitler

It is open to question whether or not this telegram compensated for the fact that England had just declared war on Finland, as it had earlier declared war on Hungary and Romania.

Still on December 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Field Marshal von Mackensen on his ninety-second birthday.⁵³⁵

On December 7, Hitler dictated the so-called "Night and Fog Decree," which provided for the penalizing of offences against the German occupying power in the conquered territories. The offenders were to be either killed or secretly deported to Germany. The decree read as follows:⁵³⁶

In the occupied territories, with the beginning of the Russian campaign, Communist elements and other anti-German circles have intensified their attacks against the Reich and the occupying power. The scope and the danger of these subversive activities force us, for reasons of deterrence, to take most severe measures against the offenders. For the time being, the following guidelines shall be observed:

I

In the occupied territories, offences by non-German civilians that are directed against the Reich or the occupying power and that threaten their security and ability to strike, in principle always call for capital punishment.

II

In principle, offences under Section I are to be tried in the occupied territories only if it is probable that death sentences will be passed on the offenders, or at least the principal offenders, and that trial and execution can speedily be carried out. If not, offenders, or at least the principal offenders, will be brought to Germany.

III

Offenders who are brought to Germany will be tried by court-martial if special military interests make this necessary. In response to inquiries by German and foreign offices regarding these offenders, it should be said that they have been arrested and that the nature of the trial does not allow one to give further information.

IV

The commanders in the occupied territories and the justices bear personal responsibility for the implementation of this decree within the framework of their jurisdiction.

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V

The chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht determines in which occupied territories this decree will be applied. He is authorized to issue explanations, supplements, and to implement regulations. The Reich minister of justice decrees the implementing regulations for his jurisdiction.

Hitler thought that he could master the rising unrest and outrage everywhere by such draconian measures. In reality, this decree merely documented his declining power. After all, the assassination attempts and acts of sabotage had become possible because Germany's luck was running out at the front, and the German forces were increasingly less able to control the huge occupied territories.

On December 6, the Russian general Zhukov began a large offensive to relieve Moscow with a hundred fresh divisions. Among them were five hundred thousand well-equipped, warmly dressed Siberian soldiers and seventy thousand mounted troops⁵³⁷ who suddenly threw themselves at the exhausted Germans. The German soldiers suffered heavy losses and were forced back more and more each day. Army Group Center experienced a serious crisis.

Hitler's headquarters felt as if the end of the world was near. Keitel had a pistol in front of him, playing with the thought of ending it all. Jodl had to remind him that it was his duty to hold out with Hitler.⁵³⁸

Brauchitsch again offered his resignation on December 7. Instead of immediately saying that Brauchitsch "had to fulfill [his] obligations and do [his] duty just as any other soldier,"⁵³⁹ as he had on November 23, 1939, Hitler postponed his answer this time.

No matter how precarious a situation was, Hitler never neglected to use it in order to expand his own powers. The crisis that the army was going through in front of Moscow came at a most opportune time, so he felt. It allowed him to further curtail the generals' freedom of action and to make himself commander in chief of the army.

Nevertheless, these considerations did not captivate him to the extent that he overlooked the serious danger which this new and unexpected development posed to the army in front of Moscow and to his regime. On the night of December 7, he sat pensive at the Wolfsschanze headquarters and stared ahead.

Then news of the Japanese bombing of the American naval base at Pearl Harbor on Hawaii arrived. Without an official declaration of war, Japanese bomber formations had attacked on a Sunday—just as Hitler

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would have done. Now, that was news to his liking!⁵⁴⁰ He slapped his thighs, jumped up as if electrified, and cried: "Finally!"

Hitler had neither foreseen nor anticipated this Japanese action. Just as *he* usually did with *his* allies, the Japanese had left him in the dark regarding their intentions. Hitler had never encouraged them to attack the United States; instead, he had advocated proceeding against England, for example, by attacking Singapore. Moreover, the Tripartite Pact of September 27, 1940, between Germany, Italy, and Japan had been intended to prevent involving the United States in the war.⁵⁴¹

In the past months, Hitler had attempted to induce the Japanese to move against Russia.⁵⁴² He had hoped that this would provide relief for the German troops, but the Japanese had declined. Instead, they had now opened hostilities against the United States; unlike Hitler, the Japanese knew that England and the United States formed one entity.

Formally, the Japanese-American conflict did not oblige Hitler to declare war on the United States according to the stipulations of the Tripartite Pact, since the United States was not yet involved in the European theater of war as a belligerent power. However, as Hitler told the worried Ribbentrop, in the long run things could "not continue without a German-American war."⁵⁴³

This was true, of course, but it was still odd that the Tripartite Pact would result in Germany itself declaring war on America first! On the other hand, the American declaration of war on Germany would probably have been a question of days anyway, now that the attack on Pearl Harbor finally motivated the American people to take part in a conflict that was far away from their minds previously. The declaration of war on Germany by Chiang Kai-shek's China, which was transmitted on December 9, also made this clear.

For Hitler, the Japanese attack came just at the right time. It diverted attention from his own failures and from the catastrophic situation in the east. He regarded it as a turning point, as if Providence were beckoning him with her finger, and resolved to press on with full force and deliver a formal victory speech before the Reichstag.

Later, he would frequently stress that Japan's entry into the war could not have come at a more "opportune time." The mood of the Germans, who had felt "at a real low point because of the Russian winter," had been greatly improved by the Japanese intervention.⁵⁴⁴ Hitler worried that Roosevelt might possibly beat him to a declaration of war.⁵⁴⁵ He wanted to be the one to open hostilities.

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On December 8, after this “fateful turn of events,” Hitler was in such a good mood that he allowed for a few “collapsed fronts” in the center and north sectors of the eastern front. He issued Directive No. 39, which was relatively reasonable. It read as follows:⁵⁴⁶

The surprisingly early arrival⁵⁴⁷ of severe winter weather in the east and the supply difficulties resulting therefrom call for the immediate cessation of all major offensive operations and a shift to the defensive.

The conduct of this defensive will be determined by the objective to which it is directed, namely the following;

(a) To retain such areas as are of great importance to the enemy with respect to his operations and armament production.

(b) To make recuperation and rehabilitation possible for the Wehrmacht forces committed in the east.

(c) To bring about by the abovementioned measures the prerequisites for resuming major offensive operations in 1942.

Specifically, I order the following:

I. Army:

1. The bulk of the army in the east will as soon as possible shift to the defensive in positions sparing of manpower and designated by the commander in chief of the army, and then initiate rehabilitation of the units, while the tank and other motorized divisions in particular are to be withdrawn from the front line.

2. Wherever the front is moved back in the absence of enemy pressure, provision must first be made for a rear position affording better living conditions and better defensive facilities to the troops than the positions previously held.

Abandonment of important lateral communications to the enemy may put in jeopardy other front sectors not as yet consolidated. Where this occurs, timing of the withdrawal from particular sectors must take account of the overall situation.

3. The perimeter of the front must be calculated to facilitate billeting of the troops and to permit organization of a simplified supply system that would also function during the thaw.

Switch and rear positions must be laid out and constructed as operations, and the following special missions must be accomplished:

(a) Sevastopol is to be seized as soon as possible; employment of the bulk of the Eleventh Army (less the contingents required for coastal defense) will be decided after conclusion of fighting in that area.

(b) Army Group South in spite of all difficulties must endeavor to achieve the conditions that, given favorable weather conditions, would permit launching an offensive to seize the lower Don-Donetsk line while it is still winter. That would provide favorable conditions for the spring offensive aimed against the Caucasus.

(c) Army Group North is to shorten its eastern and southeastern front north of Lake Ilmen without relinquishing the road and railroad line from

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Tikhvin to Volkhov and Kolchanovo [Koltschanawo] to the enemy, an essential condition for resolving the situation south of Lake Ladoga as soon as reinforcements arrive. Only through this can the final isolation of Leningrad and establishment of contact with the Finnish Karelian army be assured.

(d) Should it be found that the enemy has withdrawn the bulk of his forces from the coastal strip south of Kronshtadt Bay and no longer intends to put up any serious defense there, the shore in that area must be seized to economize forces.

II. Luftwaffe:

1. The mission of the Luftwaffe will be to disrupt rehabilitation of the Russian armed forces as much as possible by raids against the armament and training centers, especially Leningrad, Moscow, Shcherbakov, Gorki, Voronezh, Rostov, Stalingrad, Krasnodar, and so forth. Of particular importance is the continuing disruption of the lines of communication by which the enemy lives, and the utilization of which imperils our own front sectors. In addition to combating the enemy air force, all-out support must be given to the [German] army in the defense against enemy attacks on the ground and from the air.

2. The organizational plans, conforming with the army-group boundaries submitted to me and the strength of the Luftwaffe contingents scheduled to remain in the east, have my approval. Wherever the situation permits upon conclusion of the army operations, individual units may be withdrawn for rehabilitation and training.

3. In order to repulse any winter offensive effectively and to allow for our planned winter operations (see I, 4), a ground organization must be maintained to permit prompt shifting of forces and advancing reinforcements from withdrawn units. To this end, the rehabilitation areas will be organized as close as possible to the eastern front.

4. Continuous, complete, and far-reaching air reconnaissance is especially important for early detection and observation of regrouping movements of the enemy. The army and the Luftwaffe shall supplement each other in this task through allocation of resources and missions.

5. I shall continue to reserve the right to authorize withdrawal from the front near Moscow of contingents still earmarked for commitment in the area of the commander in chief, south.

6. Local forces must provide for the air defense of their own billeting and supply areas, and also for securing their important rear communications. In order to take effective countermeasures when concentrations of the enemy's attacking air forces have been identified, arrangements will be made that will permit prompt formation of concentrations of our own fighter forces for interception.

III. The navy will take steps to ensure that the sea route to Helsinki, which will be less hazardous after the seizure of Hangö and Osmussar [Ostrov], will be available on a large scale for commercial navigation and supply movements for our forces in Finland.

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The number of small vessels to be constructed at home and in the allied or occupied countries for supply operations (especially across the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea) must still be substantially increased, setting aside all not absolutely vital demands and security considerations.

IV. Personnel replacements for the Wehrmacht in 1942 must be assured, even in the event that casualties should run high. Since the 1922 age class [that is, those German men born in 1922, and hence liable as twenty-year-olds for service in the German army in 1942] alone will be insufficient, drastic measures are called for.

I therefore order the following:

1. All personnel now on Wehrmacht assignment at home or on special missions (for example, Wehrmacht mission to Romania) that can be released be made available for the fighting front through a sweeping retrenchment program.

Soldiers of younger age classes now in the Zone of the Interior or in rear services will for the same purpose be exchanged for older frontline soldiers.

2. Regarding the exchange between the eastern and western theaters of war, the following rules will apply:

Fully employable divisions of the second and third wave stationed in the west will be exchanged for exceptionally combat-worn divisions in the east. A temporary weakening in France, during the winter only, is acceptable.

Combat-experienced officers, noncommissioned officers and men from eastern divisions slated for disbanding may be assigned to such western divisions.

Whether additional western divisions which cannot be employed as units in the east will be disbanded and used for replenishing tried eastern divisions will be decided by me when I have before me the complete plan of the army for its reorganization and disposition.

The combat efficiency of the army in the west must in any event be kept up to the level of assuring protection of the coasts and execution of Operation Attila.

3. Young workers with service exemptions must to the greatest possible extent be gradually replaced by prisoners and Russian civilian workers, who are to be put to work in groups. Special directives to that end will be issued by the high command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On December 8, Hitler received the Bulgarian chief of staff Lukash at the Führer headquarters. In addition, he met with the Spanish general Moscarde, who had defended the Alcazar in the Spanish Civil War.⁵⁴⁸ Both men had visited sections of the eastern front.

Hitler returned to Berlin the next morning. On the same day, he received the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem at the Reich Chancellery "for a discussion of great importance." The political weight of this emigrated charlatan was close to zero and, no doubt, Hitler realized this.

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Nevertheless, it flattered the fragments of his vanity to be visited by any foreigner at all who did not come from Germany's satellite states. The following communiqué was published:⁵⁴⁹

In the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Führer received the Grand Mufti of Palestine, Sayid Amin al Husseini, for a heartfelt discussion of great importance for the future of the Arab countries.

Hitler began delivering his speech to the Reichstag at 3:00 p.m. on December 11. In the course of the speech, he declared war on America. But first, he rendered a "triumphant account" of the course of the war up to this point. He did not hesitate to include the obviously failing campaign in Russia in this overview of victories.⁵⁵⁰ He acted as though the initial Japanese successes in the Pacific were due to his influence. After all, he had always pointed to Roosevelt as the "main culprit" of the war, and the Japanese had evidently understood this. Undoubtedly, the verbal attack on the American President represented the climax of his speech. Hitler believed that his endless speech would be followed with great interest, but he was mistaken. Even the German public was quite indifferent to his gabble. The only sentence that really interested most people was: "Therefore, today I had the American Chargé d'Affaires hand over the passports." These words made clear that a state of war existed between Germany and America from then on. And what this meant, most people remembered from the First World War. That the German head of government spared America the necessity of declaring war was undoubtedly an "accomplishment" of which only Hitler could be proud, no matter how much members of his clique in the Reichstag applauded. Hitler's speech read as follows:⁵⁵¹

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

A year filled with world historic events is drawing to a close; a year of great decisions stands before us. In these grave times, I speak to you, Deputies of the Reichstag, as the representatives of the German nation. But, beyond this, the whole German Volk should take note of this review and of the decisions that the present and the future force on us.

After another rejection of my peace proposal by the present British prime minister and the clique that supports or controls him, it became clear by the autumn of 1940 that this war, contrary to all reason and necessity, had to be fought to the end with arms. You know me, my party comrades. I have always been against halfhearted or weak decisions. If Providence wished that the German Volk could not be spared this fight, then I would be grateful to it for entrusting me with the waging of a historic struggle which will decisively

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fashion not only our Germany history for the next thousand years, but also the history of Europe—even the history of the entire world.

The German Volk and its soldiers today fight not only for themselves and their own time, but also for coming generations—even the most distant ones. The Creator entrusted us with a historic revision of unique scope, which we now are obligated to see through. The armistice in the west, which had become possible immediately after the end of fighting in Norway, forced the German leadership first to militarily secure the conquered territories of political, strategic, and economic significance.

In this way, the power of resistance of the territories conquered at the time has changed. A belt of bases and fortifications of great proportions stretches from Kirkenes to the Spanish border.

Countless airfields have been built. In the north, sometimes they had to be blasted into prehistorical granite. Naval bases were furnished with shelters in such numbers and of such strength that they cannot practically be harmed either from the sea or from the air. For their defense, there are more than one-and-a-half thousand new batteries whose positions had to be reconnoitered, planned, and built. A network of streets and railroads was designed in such a manner that the link between the Spanish border and Petsamo today is secured, irrespective of the sea. Engineering and construction battalions of the navy, the army, and the Luftwaffe, in connection with the Todt Organization, have created installations here that are not inferior to the West Wall in any way. We continue to work persistently on reinforcing them. It is my imperturbable resolve to make this European front unassailable for every enemy. This defensive work, which continued throughout the last winter, was supplemented by an offensive conduct of the war insofar as this was possible, given the seasonal conditions. German surface craft and submarine naval forces continue to wage their constant war of destruction against the British Navy and Merchant Marine and against those in its service. By flying reconnaissance and attacks, the German Luftwaffe lent support to the destruction of enemy tonnage. In countless retaliation attacks, it gave the English a better idea of the “lovely war,” whose mastermind has been primarily its present prime minister.

In this struggle, in the middle of last year, Germany received the support above all of its Italian allies. For many months, the weight of a large part of the British power lay on the shoulders of the allied Italian state. Only because of an enormous superiority in heavy tanks, the English succeeded in bringing about a temporary crisis in North Africa.

As early as on March 24 of last year, a small group of German-Italian units, led by Rommel, started a counterattack. Ajdabiyah fell on April 2. Benghazi was reached on April 4. Our common units moved into Darnah on April 8. Tobruk was surrounded on April 11. Bardiyah was occupied on April 12. The accomplishments of the German Africa Corps were all the more outstanding because this theater of war was completely foreign and [its climate was] unlike the German climate. Just as in Spain once, Germans and Italians again fought the same enemy together, [this time] in North Africa.

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While, with the blood of German and Italian soldiers, these daring measures again secured the North African front of our two allied countries, a dreadful danger cast its long, ominous shadows on Europe.

Bowing to bitter necessity, I decided in the autumn of 1939 at least to attempt the elimination of the acute German-Russian tensions in order to create the prerequisites for a general peace. Psychologically, this was difficult because of the overall attitude of the German Volk and especially the party toward Bolshevism. Technically, however, this was easy because Germany had always had and pursued only economic interests in those areas that England declared were threatened by us and which it assaulted with pacts of assistance.

Deputies, Men of the German Reichstag, I may remind you that, in the early summer and midsummer of 1939, England again offered its assistance to numerous states and countries, claiming that Germany intended to invade them and rob them of their freedom. The German Reich and its government could, with a clear conscience, assure them that these were mere allegations which did not in any way correspond to the truth.

In addition, there was the sober military realization that, in the event of a war forced on the German Volk by British diplomacy, fighting on two fronts would at any rate lead to very heavy sacrifices. Moreover, once the Baltic states, Romania, and others, were inclined to accept the British pacts of assistance and thereby showed that they also believed in such a threat, it was not only the right of the German Reich government, but also a duty, on its own responsibility, to delineate German interests.

To the great regret of the German Reich, these countries shortly realized that the only factor that could constitute a strong guarantee against the threat from the east was Germany. They were lost, since their own policy had severed their ties to the German Reich, and since they had entrusted themselves to the assistance of that power whose notorious egotism throughout the centuries has never afforded anyone any assistance, but instead has always asked for the help of others.

Nevertheless, the fate of these countries evoked strong sympathy from the German Volk.⁵⁵² The sentiments that the winter war of the Finns forced on us were a mixture of bitterness and admiration. As a military people, our hearts went out to them in admiration of their heroism and self-sacrifice. We felt bitter because, in view of the enemy threatening us in the west and danger in the east, we were unable to help militarily.

As soon as it became clear to us that Russia practically derived the right, from the delineation of Germany's political spheres of interest, to kill off the nations living outside of them, further relations served only as a means to an end and were contrary to reason and sentiment.

As early as the year 1940, we realized more and more each month that the plans of the men in the Kremlin aimed at the domination of Europe and, thereby, its destruction. At a time when Germany had only a few divisions in the area bordering on Russia, I already explained to the nation the concentration of Russian military power in the east. Only a blind man could have failed to see that this concentration was of such unique dimensions that it

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would have an impact on world history. And this was not to defend something that was not threatened, but to attack something that appeared unable to defend itself. Even if the lightning⁵⁵³ end of the campaign in the west prevented the ruling powers in Moscow from counting on an immediate exhaustion of the German Reich, it did not destroy their plans. Instead, it merely postponed the date of the attack. They felt that the summer of 1941 was a most opportune moment to strike. A new Mongol invasion would sweep across Europe.

At the same time, Mr. Churchill promised a change in the British fight against Germany. Today, he cowardly seeks to deny that, in the secret session of the House of Commons in the year 1940, he pointed to the Soviet entry into the war as a crucial factor in the successful continuation and ending of the war. This entry would take place at the latest in the year 1941 and would also enable England to take the offensive.

Then Hitler gave an overview of the supposed development of Europe and again claimed that England had been “cultivated by splinters of the Germanic nation.”

There was a time when Europe was that Greek island into which Nordic tribes penetrated in order to light the flame for the first time that has since slowly but steadily begun to enlighten the world of man. And as these Greeks parried the invasion of the Persian conquerors, they were not only defending their own homeland, which was Greece, but also that idea that today is called Europe.

And then Europe moved from Hellas to Rome.

Greek spirit and Greek civilization united with Roman thinking and Roman statesmanship. An empire was created which even today is not equaled in significance and fertility, not to mention surpassed. As the Roman legions defended Italy against the African assault of Carthage in three difficult wars and finally secured the victory, again it was not Rome that they were fighting for, but the Roman-Greek world—the Europe of the day.

The next invasion of this new human civilization’s native soil issued from the expanses of the east. A dreadful storm of uncivilized hordes poured out of inner Asia deep into the heart of today’s European continent, burning, pillaging, murdering, like a true scourge of God.

In the Battle on the Catalaunian Field,⁵⁵⁴ Romans and Teutons joined together for the first time to defend that civilization in a struggle of unforeseeable significance. Starting with the Greeks, this civilization first cast its spell on the Romans and now finally on the Germanic people.

Europe grew. Hellas and Rome developed into the Occident. For many centuries, its defense was the task not only of the Romans, but also in particular of the Germanic people. The term Europe experienced a spatial expansion. The degree to which the Occident, enlightened by Greek civilization and inspired by the mighty heritage of the Roman Empire, expanded its space through Germanic colonization, irrespective of whether a German emperor fended off invasions from the east at the Unstrut or on the Lechfeld, or whether

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Africa was forced to retreat from Spain in long battles, it was always the struggle of the developing Europe against a profoundly alien, surrounding world. While Rome had earned undying merit in the creation and defense of this continent, the Germanic people now took over the defense and protection of a family of nations. Irrespective of how each nation's political designs and ambitions differed and diverged, as a whole, this family of nations formed one unit in terms of blood and culture, while its various parts either equaled or complemented one another.

And not only did the settlement of other parts of the world start out from this continent, so did a spiritual and cultural fertilization, as any man who is willing to search for the truth, instead of denying it is aware.

Therefore, England did not cultivate this continent, but splinters of the Germanic people of our continent moved to this island as Anglo-Saxons and Normans, and made possible a development that is certainly unique. And likewise, America did not discover Europe, but the other way around. And everything that America did not get from Europe may seem admirable to a Jewish mixed race. But Europe sees it as a sign of the decline of art and civilized living, as the heritage of Jewish and Negro blood.

My Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

I have to make these detailed statements because the struggle, which in the first months of this year slowly began to emerge as inevitable and which primarily the leadership of the German Reich is called on to lead this time, goes far beyond the interests of our own Volk and country. It was not Rome that the Greeks [*sic!*] once defended against Carthage. It was not the Occident that the Romans and the Germanic people defended against the Huns. It was not Germany that the German emperors defended against the Mongols. It was not Spain that the Spanish heroes defended against Africa. Instead, it was Europe that all of them defended. In the same way today, Germany does not fight for itself, but for the continent that belongs to all.

Therefore, it is fortunate that this realization has imprinted itself so profoundly into the subconscious of most European people that, either through comments or the flow of volunteers, they participate in this struggle.

When the German and Italian armies deployed on April 6 of this year for the attack against Yugoslavia and Greece, it was the prelude to the great struggle in which we are still involved at the present. The revolt which led to the overthrow of the former prince regent and his government in Belgrade decided the further course of events in this part of Europe. While England was prominently involved in this putsch, the leading role was played by the Soviet Union. Mr. Stalin believed that he could obtain, via a revolutionary movement, against our will what I had refused Mr. Molotov on the occasion of his visit to Berlin. Without paying heed to the concluded treaties, the Bolshevik rulers expanded their goals. The friendship pact with the new revolutionary regime revealed like lightning the closeness of the danger.

What the German Wehrmacht accomplished in this campaign was honored by the German Reichstag on May 4, 1941. What I was regrettably unable to express at the time was the realization that we were heading at breakneck speed

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toward a confrontation with a state that did not intervene at the time of the campaign in the Balkans only because its concentration of troops had not yet been completed and because it had not been able to utilize the airfields because of the thaw which sets in during this season and turns the runways muddy.

My Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

As soon as I became aware, in the year 1940, through information received from the English House of Commons and observations of Russian troop movements along our borders, that there was the possibility of a danger developing to the east of the Reich, I immediately ordered the activation of numerous new panzer, motorized, and infantry divisions. The prerequisites for this were amply fulfilled as regards both personnel and materiel. I can assure you, my Deputies, and the entire German Volk of one thing: even if they do understandably talk about armament a lot in the democracies, we nevertheless work far more in National Socialist Germany. It was this way in the past, and it is no different today. Every year will find us with more and, above all, with improved weapons where decisions are made.

In spite of seeing the necessity of under no circumstances offering the enemy the possibility of delivering the first strike at our heart, the decision was nonetheless very difficult in this case. If the authors of articles in our democratic newspapers today claim that, realizing the strength of the Bolshevik enemy, I decided to attack, then they misjudge both the situation and my mind. I was not looking for a war. On the contrary, I did everything to avoid it. However, I would have been derelict in my duties and irresponsible, had I failed to act on the possible consequences in spite of realizing the inevitability of the clash of arms. Since I regarded the Soviet Union as a deadly danger not only to the German Reich but also to all of Europe, I was determined, if possible, to give the sign to attack a few days before this confrontation broke out. Today, we have truly crushing and authentic material⁵⁵⁵ to prove that Russia intended to attack. Likewise, we are aware of the time chosen for the attack. In view of the great danger, the full extent of which we realize perhaps only today, I can only thank the Lord for enlightening me at the right moment and giving me the strength to do what had to be done. Not only millions of German soldiers owe their life to Him, but so does all of Europe.

Because—I can say this today—had this wave of more than twenty thousand [Soviet] tanks, hundreds of divisions, tens of thousands of guns, accompanied by more than ten thousand planes, unexpectedly started to move across the Reich, then Europe would have been lost. Fate has chosen a number of nations to risk their blood in order to prevent this blow, or rather to parry it. Had Finland not been immediately determined to take up arms a second time, then the easy middle-class way of life in the other Nordic states would quickly have come to an end.

Had the German Reich not confronted this enemy with its soldiers and arms, then a wave would have swept over Europe that would have taken care of the ridiculous British idea of the balance of power in Europe in all its banality and stupid tradition—once and for all.

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Had not Slovaks, Hungarians, and Romanians also taken on the defense of this European world, then the Bolshevik hordes, like Attila's gangs of Huns, would have roared across the Danubian lands and then today Tartars and Mongols would stand at the Ionian Sea, forcing a revision of the treaty of Montreux. Had not Italy, Spain, and Croatia sent their divisions, then the resistance of the European front would not have developed, which, as the proclamation of a new Europe, has won over all other nations. With this anticipation, they came as volunteers from northern and western Europe: Norwegians, Danes, Dutch, Flemish, Belgians, even Frenchmen. They gave the struggle of the powers allied to the Axis the character of a European crusade, in the true sense of the word.⁵⁵⁶

It is not yet the right time to speak about the planning and conduct of this campaign. Alas, I believe that I can now already point out, in a few sentences, what has been accomplished in this mightiest struggle of all time, in which the impressions are all too often blurry and fade in our memories because of the vastness of the space and the multitude and power of the events.

Again "in a few sentences," Hitler now gave a highly detailed account of the events in question:

On June 22, the attack began at daybreak. With irresistible daring, the border fortifications were broken down, fortifications which had been intended to protect against surprise from the Russian concentration against us. Grodno fell as early as June 22. After the conquest of Brest-Litovsk on June 23, the citadel was overwhelmed, and Vilnius and Kaunas [Kovno] were taken. On June 26, Daugavpils fell.

On July 10, the first two great battles of encirclement at Belostok (Bialystok) and Minsk were concluded. A total of three hundred twenty-four thousand prisoners, thirty-three hundred and thirty-two tanks, eighteen hundred and nine guns fell into our hands. By July 13, there already was a breakthrough at almost all the decisive points of the Stalin Line. On July 16, Smolensk fell after heavy fighting, while, on July 19, German and Romanian units forced the crossing of the Dniester.

On August 6, the battle of Smolensk ended in many pockets. Again three hundred ten thousand Russians marched into German captivity, while thirty-two hundred and five tanks and thirty-one hundred twenty guns were partly destroyed, partly taken as booty. And three days later, a further Russian army group met its fate. On August 9, a hundred three thousand Soviets were taken prisoner in the battle of Uman, three hundred seventeen tanks and eleven hundred guns were either destroyed or captured.

On August 15, Nikolayev fell. On the 21st, Kherson was taken. On the same day, the battle near Gomel ended; eighty-four thousand prisoners, a hundred forty-four tanks, and eight hundred forty-eight guns were captured or destroyed.

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On August 21, Russian positions between the Ilmen and Chudskoye lakes were broken up, while, on August 26, the bridgehead across the Dnieper around Dnepropetrovsk fell into our hands.

On the 28th of the same month, German troops moved into Reval [Tallinn] and Baltic Port [*sic*] after heavy fighting, while the Finns took Vyborg on August 30. With the conquest of Schlüsselburg on September 8, Petersburg [Leningrad] was also sealed off to the south for good.

On September 16, we succeeded in establishing bridgeheads across the Dnieper. As early as September 18, Poltava fell into the hands of our soldiers. On September 19, German units stormed the citadel of Kiev. And, on September 22, the conquest of Oesel [Saaremaa] was crowned by the taking of the capital.

It was only now that the bigger operations began to bear fruit in unexpected successes. On September 27, the battle at Kiev was concluded. Six hundred sixty-five thousand prisoners began to move westward in endless columns; eight hundred eighty-four tanks and thirty-one hundred seventy-eight guns remained behind in the pockets as booty. As early as October 2, a breakthrough battle began at the center of the eastern front, while, on October 11, the battle at the Sea of Azov ended in victory. Again, a hundred seven thousand prisoners, two hundred twelve tanks, and six hundred seventy-two guns were counted. On October 16, after a hard battle, German and Romanian units entered Odessa. On October 18, the breakthrough battle at the center of the front, which had begun on October 2, ended in a new success, unique in world history. The result was six hundred sixty-three thousand prisoners, twelve hundred forty-two tanks, and fifty-four hundred fifty-two guns destroyed or captured. On October 21, the conquest of Dagö (Hiiumaa) was completed. On October 24, the industrial center Kharkov was taken. On October 28, after hard fighting, a gateway to the Crimea was forced open. As early as November 2, the capital Simferopol was stormed. On November 16, the Crimean Peninsula was cut through at Kerch. On December 1, the total number of captured Soviets stood at three million eight hundred six thousand eight hundred sixty-five. The number of destroyed or captured tanks was twenty-one thousand three hundred ninety-one, the number of guns thirty-two thousand five hundred forty-one, and the number of planes fourteen thousand three hundred twenty-two.

In the same period, twenty-one hundred ninety-one British planes were downed. The navy sank four million one hundred seventy thousand six hundred eleven GRT (gross register tons), while the Luftwaffe sank two million three hundred forty-six thousand one hundred eighty GRT. Altogether, six million five hundred sixteen thousand seven hundred ninety-one GRT were destroyed.

My Deputies! My German Volk! These are sober facts and perhaps dry figures. May they never fade from the history and, above all, from the conscience and memory of our own German Volk. For behind these figures are hidden the accomplishments, the sacrifices, the privations, the heroism, and the

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readiness to die of millions of the best men of our own Volk and of the allied states.

All this had to be fought for at the risk of life and limb, and with efforts of which the homeland has hardly any idea.

Marching endless distances, tortured by heat and thirst, often driven to despair by muddy roads, at the mercy of the rigors of the climate from the White to the Black Sea, from the scorching heat of the days of July and August to the winter storms of November and December, tormented by insects, suffering from the dirt and the bugs, freezing in the snow and ice: that is how the Germans fought, and the Finns, the Italians, the Slovaks, the Hungarians and Romanians, the Croats, the volunteers from the northern and western European countries; all the soldiers of the eastern front.

I do not want to name any branch of the service today, I do not want to praise any leader: they all gave their best. And yet, insight and justice compel me to state one thing: of all our German soldiers, our unique infantry bears the greatest burden of the battle in this struggle, today as well as in former times.

From June 22 to December 1, the German Army lost in this heroic struggle: a hundred fifty-eight thousand seven hundred seventy-three dead, five hundred sixty-three thousand eighty-two wounded, and thirty-one thousand one hundred ninety-one missing in action. The Luftwaffe: thirty-two hundred thirty-one dead, eighty-four hundred fifty-three wounded, and two thousand twenty-eight missing in action. The Navy: three hundred ten dead, two hundred thirty-two wounded, and a hundred fifteen missing in action. Therefore, the Wehrmacht together had one hundred sixty-two thousand three hundred fourteen dead, five hundred seventy-one thousand seven hundred sixty-seven wounded, and thirty-three thousand three hundred thirty-four missing in action.⁵⁵⁷

That is a little more than twice the number of dead and wounded in the battle of the Somme in the World War, and a little less than half the number of missing at the time, and yet they are the fathers and sons of our German Volk.⁵⁵⁸

And now let me make my case before the outside world, which is represented by a man who, while other nations and soldiers are fighting in the snow and ice, tactfully chats by the fireside⁵⁵⁹ and therefore, is the principal in this war. When, in the year 1939, the situation of the nationalities in the former Polish state seemed to become increasingly unbearable, I first attempted to eliminate the intolerable circumstances by means of a fair settlement. For some time, it appeared as though the Polish government itself was seriously considering accepting a reasonable solution. I may add here that all these proposals contained no demands by Germany for anything that had not formerly been in Germany's possession. On the contrary, we renounced many things that had belonged to Germany before the World War.

You will remember the dramatic events of this time: the persistently increasing sacrifices by the German ethnic group. My Deputies, you are in the best position to judge the severity of this sacrifice of blood by comparing it to the sacrifices of the present war. For the campaign in the east up to now has

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cost the entire German Wehrmacht about a hundred sixty thousand dead, while, in the midst of peace, over sixty-two thousand ethnic Germans were killed within a few months at the time, some of them killed after the cruelest tortures.⁵⁶⁰ That the German Reich had the right to complain about this state of affairs at its border and to urge its elimination, and, in general, to attend to its security, can hardly be denied at a time when other countries seek elements of their security even on foreign continents. The problems that were to be corrected were insignificant in terms of territory. Essentially, it was a question of Danzig and connecting the severed province East Prussia to the rest of the Reich. By contrast, the cruel persecution of the Germans especially in Poland weighed heavier. The other minorities there also endured a no less terrible fate.

As the attitude of Poland became ever more stubborn during the days of August, thanks to the *carte blanche* provided by the English guarantee, the German Reich government felt compelled, for the last time, to make proposals, based on which it was willing to enter into negotiations with Poland and of which it orally informed the English ambassador at the time.

Allow me to retrieve these proposals from oblivion today and to remind you of them.

Going into great detail, Hitler now repeated the proposals he had made on the settlement of the problem of Danzig and the Corridor in order to use them as an “alibi.” He went on:

Meanwhile, insight into the papers at the foreign office in Warsaw later provided all of us with a surprising explanation: A man with devilish recklessness employed his entire influence in order to strengthen Poland in its resistance and to eliminate any possibility of an understanding.

The reports that the Polish envoy in Washington at the time, Count Potocki, sent his government in Warsaw are documents that make frightfully clear how much a single man and the forces driving him bear responsibility for the Second World War.

The question poses itself, for what reason was this man so fanatically hostile toward a country that up to now has never in its history harmed either America or this man? Insofar as this regards Germany’s attitude to America, the following can be said:

1. Germany is perhaps the only great power that has never possessed colonies on the north and south American continents or has become politically active there in any other respect, with the exception of the emigration of millions of Germans and their work, from which the American continent, especially the United States, has only benefited.

2. The German Reich has never in the entire history of the development and existence of the United States assumed a politically adverse or even hostile attitude to it. On the contrary, through the blood of many of its sons, it has helped to defend the United States.

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3. The German Reich has never participated in a war against the United States while, in the year 1917, it was invaded by the United States for reasons that have been revealed completely by a committee that the current President Roosevelt had himself formed in order to examine this question.

It was this investigative committee for the examination of the reasons behind the American entry into the war that clearly stated that the American entry into the war in 1917 was due to the capitalist interests of a few small groups, and that Germany had no intention of coming into conflict with America.

Beyond this, there is likewise no antagonism between the German and the American people, either territorial or political in nature, that could somehow interfere with the interests or the existence of the United States. There has always been a difference in the form of government. However, this cannot be regarded as the cause of animosity in the life of nations, as long as one form of government does not try, outside its natural sphere, to intervene in others.

America is a republic led by a president with great authoritarian powers. Germany was once a monarchy with limited authority, later a democracy without any authority at all, and today it is a republic with great authority. There is an ocean between the two states. The differences between capitalist America and Bolshevik Russia, if there is any truth to these terms at all, must be considerably greater than the differences between an America led by a president and a Germany led by a Führer.⁵⁶¹

However, it is a fact that the two historic conflicts between Germany and the United States, while inspired by the same force, were fanned by two men in the United States of America, namely, President Wilson and President Franklin Roosevelt. History itself passed a verdict on Wilson. His name remains tied to the vilest breach of promise of all time. The consequences of this breach of promise disrupted the life not only of the vanquished, but also of the victors. The Diktat of Versailles, which was made possible only by this breach of promise, tore states apart, destroyed cultures, and ruined the economy.

Today, we know that an association of interested financiers stood behind Wilson. They used the paralytic professor in order to lead America into a war which they hoped would be good business for them. The German Volk had to pay for that with the collapse of its political and economic life.

For what reason is it that, after these bitter experiences, another president of the United States sees as his only mission allowing wars to develop and, above all, increasing the animosity against Germany to the point of war breaking out?

National Socialism came to power in Germany in the same year in which Roosevelt was elected president of the United States. It is now important to examine those elements that have to be regarded as the cause of the present development. First, the personal aspects:

I understand only too well that the philosophy of life and the attitude of President Roosevelt and my own are worlds apart.

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Roosevelt comes from a family rolling in money. From the start, he belonged to that class of men for whom birth and descent pave the way and secure success in life in the democracies.

I myself was the child of a small poor family. With unspeakable effort, I had to make my way through work and diligence.

When the World War came, Roosevelt experienced it from where he was in the shadow of Wilson, from the point of view of the profiteer. Therefore, he only knows the pleasant consequences of the confrontation of people and states, reserved for the man who makes deals where others bleed to death.

During this time, I lived my own life on the other, completely opposite, side. I did not belong to the men who make history or deals. I belonged to those who followed orders.

As a common soldier, I labored to do my duty in front of the enemy during these four years. I returned from the war just as poor as I had left for it in the autumn of 1914. I shared the fate of millions of others. Mr. Roosevelt shared the fate of the so-called upper ten thousand. While, after the war, Mr. Roosevelt tried his hand at financial speculations in order to benefit personally from the inflation, that is, the diligence of others, I was still lying in the military hospital like hundreds of thousands of other men.

And while Mr. Roosevelt finally set out to pursue the career of a normal politician, who is experienced in business, has economic backing, and is protected by his birth, I fought as a nameless and unknown man for the resurrection of my Volk, a people which had just suffered the greatest injustice in its history.

The course of the two lives! When Franklin Roosevelt became the head of the United States, he was the candidate of a thoroughly capitalist party, which used him. When I became the chancellor of the German Reich, I was the Führer of a popular movement which I myself had created.

The forces that drove Mr. Roosevelt were forces that I fought, for the fate of my Volk and my sacred inner beliefs. The "brain trust" that the new American president had to rely on consisted of members of the same people that we once fought in Germany as a parasitic phenomenon of mankind, and which we had begun to remove from public life.

But still we had something in common: Franklin Roosevelt took over a state with an economy dilapidated due to democratic influences, and I headed a Reich likewise facing complete ruin thanks to democracy.

The United States had thirteen million unemployed, while Germany had seven million, along with another seven million part-time workers. In both states, public finances were in ruins and the decline of economic life in general appeared inevitable.

At this moment, a development set in in the United States and in the German Reich that will make it easy for posterity to pass a final judgment on the correctness of the theories. While the German Reich, under its National Socialist leadership, experienced an enormous improvement of life within a few years, as regards the economy, culture, art, and so on, President Roosevelt did not manage to bring about even the smallest improvements in his own country.

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However, how much easier must this work have been in the United States, where barely fifteen persons live on one square kilometer compared to the one hundred forty in Germany. If it was not possible to bring about a flourishing of the economy in this country, then this was either due to the lack of will on the part of the ruling leadership or the total incompetence of the responsible persons.

Within barely five years, the economic problems in Germany were solved and unemployment eliminated. During this time, President Roosevelt increased the national debt of his country to enormous proportions, devalued the dollar, continued to ruin the economy, and maintained unemployment.

That was not surprising, if you consider that the spirits which this man had called on to support him, or rather who had called on him, belonged to those elements which, as Jews, always have an interest in ruin and never in order.

While we fought speculation in National Socialist Germany, it experienced an astounding boom during the Roosevelt era. The New Deal legislation of this man was wrong. Therefore, it was the greatest setback that a single man ever suffered. There is no doubt that, in peacetime, a continuation of this economic policy would have meant the fall of this president sooner or later, in spite of his dialectical talents.

In European states, he would surely have met his end before the supreme court, because of the willful waste of national wealth. In front of a civil court, he would hardly have escaped being found guilty of bad business practices and he would have ended up in jail.

Many distinguished Americans agree with this assessment or, rather, realization. A threatening opposition hangs over the head of this man. It made him realize that only a diversion of the public's attention from domestic to foreign policy could save him. In this respect, it is interesting to study the reports from Washington by the Polish Envoy Potocki. He points out time and again that Roosevelt was quite aware of the danger of a collapse of his entire economic house of cards and that, in any event, he therefore needed a foreign policy diversion.

He was reinforced in this by the circle of Jews surrounding him, steeped in the greed of the Old Testament, who saw the United States as an instrument for preparing a second Purim⁵⁶² for the increasingly anti-Semitic European nations. It was the sheer, satanic malice of the Jews who gathered about this man but for whom this man also reached out. And so the influence of the president increasingly became felt in the creation of new conflicts and in the deepening of existing conflicts, and, in any case, in the prevention of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. For many years, this man has had only one wish: that a dispute might arise somewhere in the world—in Europe, if possible—which would allow him to bring about an intertwining of political interests, based on the obligations of the American economy to one of the disputants, and which would be suited to drawing America slowly into such a conflict. In this way, he might be able to divert attention from his confused economic policy at home to events abroad.

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This made his procedure against the German Reich become especially brusque. From the year 1937 on, there has been a series of speeches—among them an especially vile one in Chicago on October 5, 1937—in which, according to plan, this man began to agitate the American public against Germany. He threatened the establishment of a type of quarantine against the so-called authoritarian states.

In the course of this continuously augmented campaign of hatred and agitation by President Roosevelt, he recalled the American ambassador in Berlin to Washington, following renewed insulting declarations. Ever since, both states have been represented only by a *chargé d'affaires*.⁵⁶³

From November 1938 on, he consciously began to sabotage, according to plan, all possibilities for a policy of European pacification. Externally, he hypocritically pretended to have an interest in peace, while threatening every state ready to pursue a policy of peaceful settlement with the freezing of loans, other economic acts of retaliation, the cancelation of credits, and so on. Here the reports of the Polish ambassadors in Washington, London, Paris, and Brussels give shocking insights.

In January 1939, this man began to reinforce his campaign of hatred. In front of Congress, he threatened to take all steps short of war against the authoritarian states.

While he always maintains that other states are seeking to interfere in American affairs and insists on adherence to the Monroe Doctrine, he began, from March 1939 on, meddling in intra-European affairs, which are none of the business of the president of the United States. First, he does not understand these problems. Second, even if he understood them and the historical course of events, he would likewise have no right to concern himself with the Central European area, just as the German head of state has no right to judge the situation in a state of the United States of America or to comment on it.

Yes, Mr. Roosevelt went further still. Contrary to all the provisions of international law, he declared that he would not recognize governments that were not to his liking, that he would not accept any new order, would not dismiss missions from long-dissolved states, which he instead put in place as legal regimes. Finally, he went so far as to conclude treaties with such envoys, which gave him the right to occupy foreign territories.

This was followed, on April 15, 1939, by Roosevelt's famous appeal to me and the Duce.⁵⁶⁴ It represented a mixture of political and geographic ignorance on the one hand, coupled with the arrogance of a member of certain circles of millionaires on the other. It demanded that we give declarations and conclude treaties of nonaggression with any named states, to a great extent states that were not free, because the allies of Mr. Roosevelt had either annexed them or transformed them into protectorates. You remember, my Deputies, that I gave this impertinent gentleman a response that was as polite as it was definite, and which stopped the torrent of words from this worthy warmonger for a few months at least.

He was replaced by his dear wife.⁵⁶⁵ She did not want to live with her sons in a world like the one we have today. Understandably so, because this is a

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world of work, and not a world of fraud and manipulation. After a short convalescence, the husband of this woman got an amendment of the law on neutrality passed on November 4, 1939, which lifted the ban on weapon export and led to a unilateral supply of arms to Germany's enemies.

As in East Asia with China, he then began by means of an economic net to establish a community of interests which would become effective sooner or later. In the same month, he recognized a bunch of Polish emigrants as the so-called government-in-exile, whose political foundation consisted in a few million Polish gold coins that they had brought from Warsaw. On April 9, the story continues. He ordered the freezing of Norwegian and Danish funds, under the mendacious pretext of preventing German access to them, although he knew that, for example, Germany does not pay attention to the Danish government's administration of property, not to mention control it.

In addition to the various governments-in-exile, the Norwegian one received recognition, too. As early as May 15, 1940, the Dutch and the Belgian emigré governments were added to this. Likewise, Dutch and Belgian funds were frozen. The true sentiments of this man were revealed in a telegram to the French Premier Reynaud on June 15. He informed him that the American government would double its assistance to France, provided that France continued the war against Germany. In order to emphasize this desire for a prolongation of the war, he declared that the American government would not recognize the results of the conquest, that is, the reclaiming of the areas Germany was once robbed of.

I need not assure you that it does not matter to any German government whether the President of the United States recognizes a border in Europe or not, and that it will not matter in the future either.

I cite this case only to make clear the nature of this man's planned campaign to simulate peace while eternally agitating for war. Because now he begins to fear that, if peace is achieved in Europe, the millions wasted on his armament will shortly be recognized as pure fraud, for nobody will attack America unless the Americans provoke the attack!

On June 17, 1940, the president of the United States decreed French funds frozen in order, as he put it, to prevent German access to them. In fact, with the help of an American cruiser, the gold was removed from Casablanca to America.

From July 1940 on, Roosevelt's measures increasingly aimed for war, ranging from American citizens joining the Royal Air Force to English crews being trained in the United States. And, in August 1940, the United States and Canada established a military program together. In order to make the formation of an American-Canadian committee for defense appear plausible to even the biggest blockheads, he invented a crisis from time to time. Then, he acted as though America were threatened by an attack. And he got his followers—they are truly pitiful—to believe this by interrupting his travels and rushing back to Washington in order to underline the gravity of the situation.

In September 1940, he drew still closer to war. He transferred fifty destroyers from the American fleet to the English fleet, in return for which,

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however, he took over military bases in the British possessions in northern and central America. Only posterity will be able to determine one thing clearly: whether he, along with all this hatred against socialist Germany, intended to take over the British empire in its hour of disintegration as safely and with as few risks as possible?

Now that England was no longer able to pay cash for American deliveries, he forced the Lend-Lease Act on the American people. As the president, he now had the power to lend and lease in support of those countries whose defense appeared to him—Roosevelt—to be vital to the defense of America. Again in March 1940, since Germany could not be moved under any circumstances to react to his persistent insults, he went yet a step further.

As early as December 19, 1939, American cruisers inside the security zone drove the German steamer *Columbus* into the hands of British warships. Because of this, it had to be scuttled. On the same day, United States forces played a part in the attempt to capture the German steamer *Arauca*. On January 27, 1940, the United States cruiser *Trenton* informed enemy naval forces, in violation of international law, of the movements of the German merchant steamers *Arauca*, *La Plata*, and *Wangoni*. On June 27, 1940, again in complete violation of international law, he ordered a restriction of the freedom of movement of foreign merchant ships in American ports.

In November 1940, he had the German steamers *Phrygia*, *Darwald*, and *Rhein* pursued by United States warships until these steamers were scuttled to avoid falling into the enemy's hands. On April 13, 1941, the opening of the Red Sea to traffic followed, which enabled United States ships to supply British armies in the Near East. In the meantime, American public authorities had confiscated German ships in the month of March. Citizens of the German Reich were treated in a disgraceful manner and, in violation of international law, certain places of residence were assigned to them, travel restrictions imposed on them, and so on.

Likewise in violation of all stipulations of international law, two German officers who had escaped Canadian captivity were arrested and extradited to Canada. On March 27, the same president, who is opposed to all aggression, welcomed that clique of putschists under Simovich and his comrades who usurped power through aggression in Belgrade by overthrowing the legitimate government. Many months before, this President Roosevelt had sent Colonel Donovan, a completely inferior individual, to the Balkans to attempt on his behalf to bring about a rebellion in Sofia and Belgrade directed against Germany and Italy.

In April, he promised assistance based on the Lend-Lease Act to Yugoslavia and Greece. In late April, this man recognized Yugoslav and Greek emigrants as governments-in-exile and, again in violation of international law, he froze Yugoslav and Greek funds. From mid-April on, surveillance of the western Atlantic was extended to include United States patrols and reports to the English.

On April 26, Roosevelt delivered twenty motor torpedo-boats and, at the same time, repair work on British warships continued in United States ports.

December 11, 1941

On May 12, in violation of international law, Norwegian steamers, sailing under English flag, were armed and repaired. On June 4, American troop carriers arrived in Greenland for the construction of airfields. On June 9, there was a first English report that, on the orders of President Roosevelt, a United States warship had fired depth charges at a German U-boat off Greenland.

On June 14, again in violation of international law, German funds in the United States were frozen. On June 17, under mendacious pretexts, President Roosevelt demanded the recall of German consuls and the closing of German consulates. He further demanded the shutting down of the German press agency Transocean, the German library of information, and the German Reichsbahn center. From July 6 to 7, on the orders of Roosevelt, American forces occupied Iceland, which lay inside the German combat zone. Thereby, he hoped for certain results:

1. to force war on Germany,
2. to render German submarine warfare as useless as it had been in the years 1915-1916.

At the same time, he sent an American promise of assistance to the Soviet Union. On July 10, Secretary of the Navy Knox⁵⁶⁶ suddenly announced that the United States had orders to fire on the Axis powers. On September 4, based on this order and together with English planes, the United States destroyer *Greer* operated against German submarines in the Atlantic. Five days later, a German submarine noticed United States destroyers serving as escort vessels in an English convoy. On September 11, Roosevelt finally delivered the speech in which he confirmed and reissued the order to fire on ships of the Axis.⁵⁶⁷ On September 29, the United States Coast Guard attacked a German U-boat east of Greenland with depth charges. On October 17, the United States destroyer *Kearny*, in convoy for England, again attacked a German submarine with depth charges. Finally on November 6, in violation of international law, United States forces captured the German steamer *Odenwald*, towed it into an American harbor, and arrested the crew.

I shall pass over as trivial the insulting attacks and affronts by this so-called president against my person. That he calls me a gangster is of all the less consequence, as this term did not originate in Europe, perhaps because it lacks appropriate subjects here, but instead originated in the United States of America.

Apart from this, I cannot be insulted by Mr. Roosevelt, because I think that he is mentally ill, just as I thought Woodrow Wilson once was. We are aware that this man and his Jewish following fight Japan by the same means. I do not need to discuss them here. Here, too, the same methods were employed. First, this man agitates for war, then falsifies the causes, makes arbitrary declarations, later disgustingly hides behind a cloud of Christian hypocrisy. Slowly but surely, he leads mankind toward war. As an old Freemason, he cannot do so without calling God as a witness for the integrity of his actions.

I think that all of you felt relieved that now finally one state has protested, as the first, against this historically unique and brazen abuse of truth and law. This man asked for it and, therefore, he should not be surprised by it. It fills all

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of us—the German Volk and, I think, all decent people of the world—with profound satisfaction that the Japanese government, after negotiating with this falsifier for years, has finally had enough of being derided in so dishonorable a manner.

We know what force stands behind Roosevelt. It is the eternal Jew. He thinks that the time has come to force on us something that made us shudder in the Soviet Union. We know the Jewish paradise on earth. Millions of German soldiers gained personal insights into a country where this international Jew has destroyed man and property. Perhaps, the president of the United States himself has failed to understand this. This speaks for his mental limitations.

But we know what the goal of his struggle is: even if we were not allied to Japan, we would realize that it is the intention of the Jews and their Franklin Roosevelt to destroy one state after another. Today's German Reich has, however, nothing in common with the former Germany. For our part, we shall now do what this troublemaker has tried to get us to do for years. Not only because we are Japan's ally, but also because the present leaders of Germany and Italy understand that, in this historic time, the existence or nonexistence of nations is being determined, perhaps forever. It is clear to us what this other world plans to do with us. They made the former democratic Germany starve, and they would exterminate the National Socialist Germany of today.

If Mr. Churchill or Mr. Roosevelt now declare that they wish to establish a new social order later, then this is tantamount to a bald hairdresser recommending his unflinching hair restorer. These gentlemen, who live in socially retarded states, should have taken care of their unemployed instead of agitating for war. There is enough need and misery in their countries to keep them occupied with the distribution of foodstuffs. As far as the German Volk is concerned, it does not want handouts from Mr. Churchill or Mr. Roosevelt—it wants its rights. And it will secure these rights to life, even if a thousand Churchills conspire against it. This Volk has a history of nearly two thousand years. Thanks to the National Socialist movement, it has never been as united and unified as it is today and as it will be in the future. Perhaps never before has it been so clear-sighted and rarely so aware of its honor.

I have therefore had passports sent to the American Chargé d' Affaires and had the following announced to him:⁵⁶⁸

In the pursuit of the continuous expansion of the policy by President Roosevelt to establish a dictatorship of unlimited world rule, the United States of America, together with England, has not shied away from employing every means to dispute the foundations for the natural preservation of the German, the Italian, and the Japanese people's life. Because of this, the governments of England and of the United States of America have opposed any justified revision to bring about a better new world order, not only for the present but also for the future.

Since the beginning of the war, the American President Roosevelt has committed more and more crimes against international law. Lawless attacks on ships and other property of German and Italian citizens have been accompanied

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by threats to—yes, and even arbitrary deprivation of—their personal liberty by means of internment, and so on. The attacks by President Roosevelt of the United States have escalated in other respects as well and have led him to order the navy, contrary to the rules of international law, to attack immediately ships of German and Italian nationality, to fire on them, and to sink them. American cabinet secretaries have participated in this in a criminal manner by destroying German U-boats through their campaigns of agitation. German and Italian merchant ships have been attacked by American cruisers, captured, and their peaceable crews imprisoned. Furthermore, without any effort by the American government to deny it publicly, a plan by President Roosevelt was published in America, indicating that he wanted to attack Germany and Italy in Europe by military means, at the latest in the year 1943.

Because of this, Germany and Italy's sincere and patient efforts to prevent an expansion of the war and to maintain relations with the United States in spite of the unbearable provocations by President Roosevelt over the years have been frustrated.

In response to this, Germany and Italy have finally felt obliged to fight together, side by side with Japan, against the United States and England, true to the stipulations of the Tripartite Pact of September 27, 1940, in the struggle for the defense—and thereby the preservation of the freedom and independence—of their people and empires. The three powers have therefore concluded the following agreement, which was signed today in Berlin:

In the unshakable determination not to lay down their arms until the common war against the United States of America and England has been brought to a victorious end, the German, the Italian, and the Japanese governments have agreed on the following:

Article I

Germany, Italy, and Japan will together fight this war, a war that was forced on them by the United States of America and England, and bring it to a victorious end by deploying all instruments of power at their disposal.

Article II

Germany, Italy, and Japan pledge themselves not to conclude a separate armistice or peace with the United States of America and England without obtaining full mutual consent.

Article III

Germany, Italy, and Japan will continue to cooperate closely, even after the victorious conclusion of the war, as a sign of bringing about a just new order in the spirit of the Tripartite Pact concluded on September 27, 1940.

Article IV

This agreement comes into force upon signature. It will remain in force for the term of the Tripartite Pact of September 27, 1940. The high contracting parties shall reach an understanding on the nature of the cooperation provided for in Article III of this agreement in a timely fashion prior to the expiration of this term.

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Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

Ever since the rejection of my last peace proposal in July 1940, we have been aware that this war has to be fought to the bitter end. That the Anglo-American, Jewish-capitalist world formed a front with Bolshevism does not come as a surprise to us National Socialists. At home, we found them in the same union, and we succeeded in our struggle at home by defeating our enemies after a sixteen-year-long struggle for power.

When I decided twenty-three years ago to enter politics in order to reverse the decline of the nation, I was a nameless, unknown soldier. Many of you know how difficult the first years of this struggle were. The way from a small movement of seven men to the taking over of responsible government on January 30, 1933, was so miraculous that Providence itself must have made it possible through its blessings.

Today, I head the strongest army in the world, the mightiest air force, and a proud navy. Behind me, I am conscious of the sworn community of the party, which made me great and which became great through me.

The enemies that I confront have been known to be our enemies for over twenty years. Alas, the road that lies ahead of me cannot be compared to the one lying behind me. The German Volk realizes the decisiveness of the hour for its existence. Under the most difficult circumstances, millions of soldiers are obediently and loyally doing their duty.

Peasants, workers, German women and girls work by the sweat of their brows in the factories and offices, in the fields and in farmland, to secure bread for the homeland and weapons for the front. The strong people allied to us suffer the same misery and face the same enemies.

The American President and his plutocratic clique have called us a people of have-nots. That is right! And these have-nots want to live. In any event, they will not allow the owners to rob them of the little that they have to live on. My party comrades, you know my relentless resolve to conclude a struggle victoriously once it has begun. You know my intention not to shy away from anything in such a fight and to break all the resistance that has to be broken.

In my speech on September 1, 1939, I assured you that, in this struggle, neither the force of arms nor time will defeat Germany. I want to assure my enemies that neither will the force of arms nor time defeat us, but neither inner doubts make us falter in the fulfillment of our duty. When we consider the sacrifices of our soldiers, how they risk their lives, then the sacrifices of the homeland become completely insignificant and unimportant. When we think of the numbers of those who, generations before us, fell for the existence and greatness of the German Volk, then we become all the more aware of the greatness of the duty imposed on us.

Whoever seeks to forsake this duty has no right to expect treatment as a Volksgenosse in our midst.

Just as we were mercilessly harsh in our struggle for power, we will be merciless and harsh in our struggle for the preservation of our Volk. Thousands of our best men will fall in its course, the fathers and the sons of our Volk. Therefore, no one can expect to live who thinks that he can depreciate the

December 11, 1941

front's sacrifices at home. Irrespective of the form of disguise for this attempt to disrupt this German front, to undermine this Volk's willingness to resist, to weaken the authority of this regime, to sabotage the efforts of the homeland, the offender will fall! There will be only one difference: the soldier honorably makes this sacrifice at the front, while the other, who wishes to depreciate this honorable sacrifice, dies in shame.

Our enemies should not deceive themselves. In the two thousand years of the history known to us, our German Volk has never been more unified and united than it is today. The Lord of the Worlds has done so many great things for us in the last years that we bow in gratitude before Providence, which has permitted us to be members of such a great Volk. We thank Him that, in view of past and future generations of the German Volk, we were also allowed to enter our names honorably in the undying book of German history.

The reaction of the audience to this speech could again be described as "applause on cues, but thin."⁵⁶⁹ Even Göring's customary "pledge of loyalty" seemed hollow. With Hess missing from the bench for the first time, the faces of the other members of the government appeared solemn and pensive.

Naturally, Hitler felt that he had to celebrate the great day on which he declared war on America and entered into a military alliance with Japan by sending out a number of telegrams, for example, to the Italian king, the Duce, the Japanese emperor, and the Japanese prime minister.⁵⁷⁰

To King Victor Emmanuel III:

On the signature of the treaty through which the Axis powers have allied themselves with the Japanese Empire for the combined conduct of the war and for cooperation in the securing of a just new order, I send Your Majesty my sincere regards and, at the same time, heartfelt best wishes for the struggle continuing with the now closely allied arms of the three powers.

To the Duce:

On today's conclusion of the treaty through which the Axis powers and Japan have decided on a united brotherhood-in-arms, I send you, Duce, my heartfelt regards. I know that you agree with me in the conviction that this act represents a guarantee of the combined victory of the three powers.

To the Japanese emperor:

On this significant day, on which the Axis powers have allied themselves with the Japanese Empire in the combined waging of war for a joint victory, I send Your Majesty my sincere regards along with my congratulations on the great victories of the Japanese armed forces up to now, as well as my and the German Volk's best wishes for a victory of Japanese arms.

December 15, 1941

To the Japanese prime minister, Lieutenant General Tojo:

On the occasion of today's conclusion of the agreement between the Axis powers and the Japanese Empire, through which the three powers have allied themselves for a joint struggle, a joint victory, and a joint development in the future, I send Your Excellency my heartfelt congratulations on the highly significant successes of the Japanese arms already achieved and tie to this my warmest wishes for the future course of the now jointly led struggle.

While Hitler had taken the initiative in declaring war on the United States, he soon found on his desk a number of declarations of war from states that maintained relations with the United States. On December 11, the Philippines, Costa Rica, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic declared war on Germany. A day later, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and San Salvador followed suit, as did Nicaragua on December 13, the government-in-exile of Czechoslovakia on December 16, and Panama on December 18. In the course of the next three years, nearly all remaining neutral countries in the world followed their example. On the other hand, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, and Italy declared war on the United States.

For the time being, Hitler continued to be triumphant. On December 12, he received the leader of the Dutch Fascists, Mussert, at the Reich Chancellery. Seyss-Inquart accompanied the guest.⁵⁷¹

Also on December 12, Hitler conferred with Raeder on what would be the appropriate action for the navy to take against the new enemy, the United States.⁵⁷² They decided to move six large U-boats to the American East Coast. But the cheap entertainment of firing at American cities, where windows had not yet been blacked out, would soon cease!

At noon on December 13, Hitler received the Japanese ambassador, General Oshima, at the Reich Chancellery. In the course of the "special audience," Hitler presented him with the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in gold in recognition of his contribution to the Tripartite Pact.⁵⁷³

That night in Berlin, Reich Minister Kerrl died "suddenly as the result of a heart attack." Hitler ordered a state funeral as usual.⁵⁷⁴

In Vienna on December 14, a memorial service was held for the deceased Field Marshal Böhm-Ermolli. Keitel placed a wreath on behalf of the Führer.⁵⁷⁵

On December 15, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the former Finnish state president, von Svinhufvud, on his eightieth birthday.⁵⁷⁶

December 17, 1941

On December 16, the state ceremony in honor of Hanns Kerrl took place in the Marble Hall of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler had preferred going to his headquarters to attending. Göring had to deliver the address and lay a “wreath from the Führer.”⁵⁷⁷

On December 17, Brauchitsch presented another letter of resignation. Hitler relieved him on December 19, because of a “heart condition.”

Throughout the world, generals who fail to win battles are normally sent off by their supreme commanders. It was clear that especially a warlord like Hitler would not act otherwise. The Führer concerned himself solely with victories; he was really not the man to look to his own person in investigating the causes for failures and defeats. Rundstedt had been the first man whom he had brought down. Guderian and many others would follow.⁵⁷⁸

However, in Brauchitsch’s case, Hitler pursued another goal, too. He personally wanted to replace him so that the military command would be completely his own, from top to bottom. He had long been vexed by the fact that there was a commander in chief of the army whose name was not Adolf Hitler.

He told Halder:⁵⁷⁹

Anyone can do that little bit of operational planning. The mission of the commander in chief of the army is to educate the army in the spirit of National Socialism.⁵⁸⁰ I do not know any army general who would be able to fulfill this mission in accordance with my wishes. Therefore, I have decided to take over the high command of the army myself.

As mentioned before, this was the typical manner in which Hitler went about solving a crisis, namely, by either dissolving the post or taking it over himself: in 1930, it was the supreme commander of the SA (Oberster SA Führer, OSAF—the Pfeffer crisis); in 1932, it was the head of political organization (Reichsorganisationsleiter—the Strasser crisis); in 1938, it was the Reich war minister (the Blomberg crisis); in 1941, it was the office of “Deputy Führer” (the Hess crisis); and now, he took over the post of commander in chief of the army (the Brauchitsch crisis).

He did not shy away in the least from describing publicly the change in the chain of command as a “logical consequence,” even though this had a disastrous effect on German and international public opinion. The measure not only created the impression that the German armies on the eastern front were in a critical position, but also convinced the general public that the army itself was undergoing a severe internal crisis.

December 19, 1941

Hitler's proclamation on the change in the high command contained a general section in which he reported on his own activities, so to speak, and another section that consisted of a proclamation to the soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS. The announcement read as follows:⁵⁸¹

Führer Headquarters, December 19, 1941

When the Führer personally took over the supreme command of the entire Wehrmacht on February 4, 1938, he did so out of concern about the military confrontation over the freedom of the German Volk, which already threatened us at that time.⁵⁸² The *raison d'état* authoritatively demanded the concentration of all forces in one hand. Only in this manner was it possible to prepare for a successful resistance. We knew that it would lead to a "total war" and far more so than the one forced on the German Volk by the same enemies in the World War from 1914-1918. Besides this, the awareness of an inner calling and his own will to take on the responsibility influenced the statesman Adolf Hitler in making the decision to become his own military commander.

In the course of this war, the correctness of this realization has been confirmed again and again, but it was not until the campaign in the east that the war took on proportions that boggled all imagination. The vastness of the theater of war, the close intertwining of the operational conduct of the war on land with the goals pursued by politics and the war economy, as well as the numerical size of the army in comparison to the other branches of the Wehrmacht, urged the Führer, following his intuition, to reserve for his person all crucial decisions in this sphere in order to exercise the strongest influence possible. As a logical⁵⁸³ consequence of his decision of February 4, 1938, and in full appreciation of the accomplishments of the former commander in chief of the army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, the Führer therefore decided on December 19, 1941, to unite in his hand the leadership of the entire Wehrmacht with the high command of the army. On this occasion, he has issued the following appeal to the soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS:

Soldiers of the Army and the Waffen SS!

The struggle for the freedom of our Volk, to secure the basis for its existence in the future, and for the elimination of the possibility of an invasion every twenty or twenty-five years, which has basically always been there due to the same Jewish-capitalist interests, is now heading for a climax—a turning point.

The German Reich and Italy, as well as the states allied to us, have been equally fortunate in finding a new friend and comrade in arms in the world power Japan. It was to be strangled under the same pretexts and with the same consequences as we were. With the lightning destruction of the American fleet in the Pacific as well as of the British forces in Singapore, and the Japanese armed forces' occupation of English and American bases in East Asia, this war now enters a new and, for us, advantageous phase.

Thus, we also face decisions of global importance now. Because of the impact of the sudden onset of winter, the armies in the east, following their

December 19, 1941

undying and historic successes against the most dangerous enemy of all time, must now halt movement and deploy in a front of positions. Until spring, it is their mission to hold zealously and doggedly and to defend what they have secured in battle with immeasurable heroism and difficult sacrifices. Nothing more is expected of the new eastern front than German soldiers accomplished twenty-five years ago in four war winters in Russia.⁵⁸⁴ Every German soldier must set an example for our loyal allies.

In addition, new units are being established as last winter and, above all, new and improved weapons are being supplied. The defense of the front in the west is being reinforced from Kirkenes to the Spanish border. The difficulties in organizing a linkup of this front, which today spans a whole continent and reaches to North Africa, must be overcome—we will succeed in this, too. Preparations to resume the offensive as soon as spring is here, which will last until the final defeat of the enemy in the east, must be made right now. Other decisive war measures are soon to be taken. These tasks necessitate the Wehrmacht and the homeland to make the greatest efforts and to be deployed jointly. However, the principal vehicle of the Wehrmacht's battle is the army.

Under these circumstances, I have therefore decided today, as the supreme commander of the German Wehrmacht, to take charge of the army myself.

Soldiers! I know war from the four years of mighty struggle in the west in 1914–1918. As a common soldier, I experienced the horrors of nearly all great battles of matériel myself. I was wounded twice and almost went blind. Thus, I am no stranger to your torments, your burdens, and your concerns.⁵⁸⁵ Alas, even after four years of war, never for a second did I doubt the resurrection of my Volk. With my zealous will as a common German soldier, I succeeded in uniting the German nation after more than fifteen years of work and in freeing it from the death sentence of Versailles.

My soldiers! So, you will understand that my heart belongs to you, and that my will and my work unerringly serve the greatness of my and your Volk. However, my mind and my strength of purpose know only the destruction of the enemy, that is, the victorious conclusion of this war.

My soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS! I will do for you all I can in terms of care and leadership. I know what you can and will do for me: you will follow me loyally and obediently until the final salvation of the Reich and our German Volk. The Lord will not refuse His brave soldiers the victory!

Adolf Hitler

This announcement certainly was not written very adroitly.⁵⁸⁶

Compared to the vain and bombastic proclamations that Hitler usually issued, this awkward appeal suggested that the German army high command was facing a catastrophe, and, in fact, it did contribute to making the situation of the German army at the eastern front appear worse than it actually was. However, Hitler's main intent was to rationalize his taking command of the army and to point to a

December 23, 1941

supposedly imminent “turning point” in the war, namely how “fortunate” Japan’s entry into the war was for Germany.

Hitler’s appeal of December 20, for a “collecting of winter clothing” for the eastern front, had a similar disastrous effect. It read as follows:⁵⁸⁷

German Volk!

While the German homeland is not directly threatened by the enemy, with the exception of air raids, millions of our soldiers, after a year of the most difficult fighting, confront a numerically and materially far superior enemy at the front. Victories, as never before witnessed in world history, have been secured in battle thanks to the conduct and bravery of officers and men.

The greatest front of all time holds its own and fights from the polar regions to the Black Sea, from the snowfields of Finland to the mountains of the Balkans. And it will do so until the hour of the final destruction of this most dangerous enemy has come again.

If the German Volk wishes to give something to its soldiers at Christmas, then it should give the warmest⁵⁸⁸ clothing that it can do without during the war. In peacetime, all this can easily be replaced.

In spite of all the winter equipment prepared by the leadership of the Wehrmacht and its individual branches, every soldier deserves so much more! The homeland can help here! This will show the soldier at the eastern front that the Volksgemeinschaft for which he is fighting is not an empty phrase in National Socialist Germany.

Adolf Hitler

This appeal conclusively proved that the German soldiers had only insufficient winter equipment. This was not surprising. After all, on October 2, Hitler had announced that he would deal with the enemy in “that last gigantic blow that will crush this enemy before the onset of winter!”⁵⁸⁹ And now this collection of woolen clothing was supposed to help out, in spite of coming too late for this winter, anyway.

In addition to his appeal to the German Volk, Hitler decreed the death sentence for offenders who had stolen any of the winter clothes.⁵⁹⁰ The ordinance for the “protection of the collection of winter clothes for the front” read as follows:

Führer Headquarters, December 23, 1941

The collection of winter clothes for the front represents a sacrifice made by the German Volk for its soldiers. I therefore order the following:

Whoever gets rich on the collected items or items designated for the collection by an authorized person, or whoever otherwise diverts these items from their purpose, will receive the death penalty. This ordinance comes into force upon its announcement on the radio. This ordinance is effective in the

December 26, 1941

Greater German Reich, the General-Government, and in the territories occupied by German troops.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

Even though Hitler was alone responsible for the catastrophic situation at the eastern front, he nevertheless tried to blame indirectly the sacked Brauchitsch by issuing these appeals.

A highlight in these efforts was the following “order of principle,” which Hitler issued out of concern for the “unconditional love of truth” in the Wehrmacht:⁵⁹¹

Führer Headquarters, December 26, 1941

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

Order of principle on the system of reporting in the Wehrmacht

1. Every report—irrespective of its nature—is a means of leadership and can initiate decisive resolutions.

2. Every report must therefore be based on the principle of unconditional love of truth and conscientiousness.

3. Every report must be composed in such a manner that the senior officer is provided with a clear picture of the situation or an unequivocal reply to the posed question.

4. Exaggeration and palliation are dangerous. It does honor to every soldier to report truthfully on unfulfilled demands and on his own mistakes.

5. Every superior has the duty to investigate dubious reports and to use his influence, with relentless sternness, to enforce adherence to the above principles. Conversely, subordinates must know that reports will be requested only where necessary.

Adolf Hitler

This proved in black on white that the Wehrmacht had begun to “exaggerate” things and to gloss over unpleasant realities! The good Führer was not receiving “truthful” reports. No one had told him about “unfulfilled demands” and their “own mistakes.” Therefore, it was not surprising if the Führer lost control of the situation and everything which he had in his wisdom planned went wrong. This Brauchitsch must have been quite a nasty fellow. A good thing that the Führer took things into his own hands now.

Hitler truly did not shrink from anything in trying to make himself look good and to disavow others.⁵⁹² However, it had been Hitler who had forbidden any unfavorable reports on the very first day of the war, on September 1, 1939.⁵⁹³

That is how the year 1941 ended, for which Hitler had prophesied “the completion of the greatest victory in world history.”



L Himmler and Heydrich in Munich

Photo: Publisher's archives

THE YEAR 1942

Major Events in Summary

On New Year's Day, Hitler was more cautious in making a forecast for the year 1942 than in previous years. Two years ago, he proclaimed: "May the year 1940 bring us the decision."¹ Then, he had prophesied: "The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history."² Now, he modestly turned to the Almighty: "Let us ask the Lord to allow the year 1942 to bring a decision for the salvation of our Volk and the allied nations."³

For the time being, Hitler wanted to obtain a stabilization of the situation on the eastern front. Russia was on the offensive there, especially in the central sector, where it had forced German troops back by up to a hundred kilometers. In retrospect, many commentators have praised Hitler's genius for preventing a complete debacle there at this time.⁴ In particular, the Führer himself was greatly impressed by the ingenuity of his policy and believed that he had outdone Napoleon in this respect.⁵

However, a comparison of the situation faced by Napoleon's Grande Armée of 1812 with that of the German armies in the winter of 1941–1942 is out of place. There was little similarity, aside from its having been cold in Russia in both instances. Napoleon's Grande Armée was marching in a long column, moving rapidly from east to west in order to reach its supply bases at Smolensk and Vilnius. At times, this army on the march was threatened on its flanks by Russian attacks and, as at the Berezina River, its retreat was hindered by natural barriers.

By contrast, the German troops in 1941–1942 formed a more or less connected front from north to south. The more they retreated westward, the shorter their supply lines became, while the Russians, in pursuing them, extended *their* lines of supply further and further. At this point, they were not yet able to transform their victories into larger envelopments. Their military potential was still partly in the developmental stage. The battle-hardened German troops, however, clung to their positions, irrespective of losses, in accordance with

Hitler's orders. Only when absolutely necessary did they retreat, one step at a time.

To regard Hitler's tactics as ingenious is truly inappropriate. It cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of German soldiers, who fell or froze to death.⁶ And what was achieved by this? The collapse of the Third Reich was postponed for the time being, but the war was nonetheless lost. In the course of the next three years, millions of German soldiers would either perish or fall into an arduous captivity.

The ruthlessness in sacrificing hundreds of thousands of their own men was one characteristic shared by the warlords of the two Russian campaigns (in 1812 and 1941), while both Napoleon and Hitler paid heed only to their personal safety and comfort.⁷

Hitler's offensive plans for 1942 remained limited in nature. He realized that he would never again be able to risk a push for Moscow, no more than he would be able to threaten England with a landing, as he had in 1940. On the other hand, he believed that a push in the direction of Stalingrad in southern Russia was still possible, as well as one in the direction of the oil fields at Maikop and Grozny and the Caucasus. He planned to pierce southern Russia in order to reach Turkey. This would secure his right flank and enable him to pose a threat to Iran. Perhaps this would then move the English to consider peace.

In the north, he planned a personal visit to Finland, where he would urge Marshal Mannerheim⁸ to move more energetically against Leningrad, which would finally make a linking up with the Finns possible on land.

In the Mediterranean, Hitler wanted to paralyze Malta, but not to conquer it. He would allow Rommel to drive the British back to Egypt, but not to treat them too harshly, as Hitler did not wish to alienate his future "allies" too much.

From a political point of view, Hitler placed great stock in threatening a massacre of the Jews. His forecasts on the imminent collapse of England and Russia had not come true. Who was to blame for this? Surely not he, because his theories of 1919 were right after all! No, the Jews were to blame! Their secret Jewish world government had apparently backed up England and Russia. It had not allowed these states to collapse.

In Hitler's opinion, this left only one alternative: to threaten the annihilation of all Jews within the German sphere of influence. This

would scare the secret Jewish world government so much that it would urge the governments in London, Washington, and Moscow to acquiesce to Hitler's demands in order to save a few million Jews.

The threatened massacre of the Jews was the last trump that Hitler believed he held. On January 30, 1941, he had already alluded to it.⁹ On January 30, 1942, he made additional massive threats.¹⁰ His gamble was completely utopian, since the secret Jewish world government existed only in the minds of Adolf Hitler, Erich and Mathilde Ludendorff, Julius Streicher, and other similarly profound "philosophers."¹¹ The Jews simply had no influence on the political and military decisions of importance made in England, America, and Russia.

If the leaders of these states would regret that Hitler killed the several million Jews at his mercy, they were nevertheless unwilling to change their stance on the elimination of Hitler's regime because of the Jews. Churchill made this clear on June 22, 1941:¹²

"We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi régime. From this nothing will turn us—nothing."

Nothing! Not even the threatened massacre of the Jews!

However, Hitler did not believe the "senile" English.¹³ And so, in the year 1942, he felt compelled to go ahead with his monstrous threat. He had millions of Jews—men, women, children, and the elderly—killed, shot, massacred, gassed in the cremation chambers. Nevertheless, he was still unable to profit politically from this unprecedented crime.

In the military field, Hitler also suffered defeat after defeat in the last quarter of 1942. On the night of October 23, the British Eighth Army under General Montgomery¹⁴ launched an offensive at El Alamein, which ultimately led to the complete elimination of the German Africa Corps and the Italian armies. On November 8, American troops under General Eisenhower¹⁵ landed in North Africa and quickly gained possession of Morocco and Algeria. Hitler was forced to send troops to southern France, lest he risk the occupation of this part of Europe by Anglo-American forces.

On November 19 and 20, the Russian generals Vatutin, Rokossovski, and Yeremenko launched a large-scale offensive that led to the encirclement of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad.

While Hitler suffered painful political defeats abroad in the year 1942, he was able to increase his power at home. Having taken over command of the army in December 1941, he concluded that the time

had finally come to remove the judges, whom he hated and despised, from their privileged positions and to proclaim himself "Supreme Law Lord." On April 26, 1942, he put through a resolution of the Greater German Reichstag that granted him the right to dismiss from office judges, civil servants, and officers as he saw fit "without being bound by existing regulations."

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Report and Commentary

1

Addressed to the “German Volk, National Socialists, Party Comrades,” Hitler’s New Year’s Proclamation in 1942 was quite lengthy. He reiterated the events leading up to the war, his various “peace proposals,” and so on. He also spoke of his struggle against unemployment and Marxism. He went on as follows:¹⁶

At the end of this year, there is no need for me to enumerate all the events that have overwhelmed us with their spellbinding, unique greatness. When, on June 22, nearly all of Europe stood up, it proved its awareness of the unprecedented magnitude of the danger, the like of which has never before threatened our continent!

Once this coalition had decided on war against Germany, I believed that I owed it to my conscience, the security of the Reich, the preservation of our Volk, and, in a broader sense, to the future of all of Europe, not to lose another hour and, by acting swiftly, to spare the Volk those sacrifices that this inevitable struggle would otherwise have exacted of us to a far greater extent.

The German Volk will believe me when I say that I would have chosen peace over war. Because for me, peace meant a multitude of delightful assignments.¹⁷ What I was able to do for the German Volk in the few years from 1933 to 1939, thanks to Providence and the support of numerous excellent assistants, in terms of culture, education, as well as economic recovery, and, above all, in the social organization of our lives, this can surely one day be compared with what my enemies have done and achieved in the same period.

In the long years of struggle for power, I often regretted that the realization of my plans was spoiled by incidents that were not only relatively unimportant, but also, above all, completely insignificant. I regret this war not only because of the sacrifices that it demands of my German Volk and of other people, but also because of the time it takes away from those who intend to carry out a great social and civilizing work and who want to complete it. After all, what Mr. Roosevelt is capable of achieving, he has proved. What Mr. Churchill has achieved, nobody knows. I can only feel profound regret at what this war will prevent me and the entire National Socialist movement from doing for many years. It is a shame that a person cannot do anything about true bunglers and

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lazy fellows stealing the valuable time that he wanted to dedicate to cultural, social, and economic projects for his Volk.

The same applies to Fascist Italy. There, too, one man has perpetuated his name for all time through a civilizing and national revolution of worldwide dimensions. In the same way it cannot be compared to the democratic-political bungling of the idlers and dividend profiteers, who, in the Anglo-American countries, for instance, spend the wealth accumulated by their fathers or acquire new wealth through shady deals. It is precisely because this young Europe is involved in the resolution of truly great questions that it will not allow the representatives of a group of powers who tactfully call themselves the “have” states to rob them of everything that makes life worth living, namely, the value of one’s own people, their freedom, and their social and general human existence. Therefore, we understand that Japan, weary of the everlasting blackmail and impudent threats, has chosen to defend itself against the most infamous warmongers of all time. Now a mighty front of nation-states, reaching from the Channel to East Asia, has taken up the struggle against the international Jewish-capitalist and Bolshevik conspiracy.

The first year of this struggle now lies behind us. It was the year of the greatest victories in the history of man. The accomplishments of the German soldiers and of the soldiers of the allied nations are unique and immortal. The millennia to come will speak of these battles and victories. They will admire them as the greatest self-preserving acts ever undertaken by honorable nations. How great the sacrifices have been, the privations, and the death-defying courage which made these victories possible can truly be appreciated only by a man who has himself served as a soldier and fighter for his Volk—either in this war or in the First World War.

Never will the homeland be able to repay its sons for what they did for it. It only knows the consequences of these victories, that is, the preservation of the security of the nation in spite of the air attacks, its present existence, and the future of its children. It has no idea of what dreadful misfortune would have afflicted Germany, and all of Europe, had Jewish Bolshevism, as the ally of Churchill and Roosevelt, secured the victory. After all, Churchill and Roosevelt turned Europe over to Stalin! And I am speaking now with faith in a higher justice. The Bolshevik monster at whose mercy they wanted to leave the European nations will one day corrupt them and their own people. The Jew will not exterminate the European people, he will instead become the victim of his own plot. Great Britain and the United States of America will not be able to use Bolshevism in destroying Europe. Sooner or later, their own people will become the victims of this plague. With the reckless sacrifice of the blood of the Soviet slaves, the fighting in eastern Europe still goes on, moving up and down the front, only to come finally to a halt. In East Asia, however, it has just begun. While the two blasphemers pray for their deals, the nations are shaking off their shackles.

The coming year will make great demands on us, but the front and the homeland will meet all requirements! As a National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft, the homeland will make every sacrifice. If necessary, it will

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make the supreme sacrifice. In the homeland, men and women will work to feed our Volk and to secure and strengthen its armament. At the front, the hour will come when we will step up to finish what we have begun.

At the turn of the year, we can only ask the Almighty to give the German Volk and its soldiers the strength to hold their ground, through hard work and with a brave heart, all that is needed to preserve our freedom and our future.

If together we loyally do our duty, then we will meet the fate that Providence has determined for us. He who fights for the life of his Volk, for its daily bread, and for its future, will win! He who seeks in his Jewish hatred to destroy the people in this war will fall!

Let us ask the Lord to allow the year 1942 to bring about a decision for the salvation of our Volk and the allied nations.

Adolf Hitler

In addition, as the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht and as the new commander in chief of the army, Hitler issued an order of the day to the soldiers. He claimed that they had “saved all of Europe.” The order read as follows:¹⁸

Soldiers!

As after the campaign in Poland, I decided also in July 1940, in spite of bitter experiences, to extend my hand for peace to the enemies who had declared war on us on September 3, 1939. My hand was rejected, and my offer was interpreted as a sign of weakness.

The men who had already agitated for the First World War before 1914 felt certain that a new coalition would finally defeat the German Volk and its allied states in the year 1941. They would dissolve them and, at the same time, eliminate them. So we had no choice but to fasten on our helmets and to think about the continuation of the struggle.

The reason that these international warmongers decided not to conclude peace under any circumstances was, besides their economic-capitalist interests, the conviction that they would finally be able to destroy the Reich by means of the Soviet Union’s entry into the war against Europe, an entry which had secretly been prepared for the summer of 1941.

Now the year 1941 lies behind us! It was a year of most difficult decisions and extremely bloody battles. However, it will enter history as the year of the greatest victories of all time.

The sons of all German Gaus gloriously fought side by side with the soldiers of our allies in the Balkans, on Crete, in Africa, in the Mediterranean, and in the Atlantic. Since June 22, my Soldiers, you have held your ground in the eastern theater of war, from the regions of the far north to the borders of the Black Sea. You fought battles, the scope and harshness of which taxed you severely, but which, in their successes, are the most glorious military feats in history.

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Through you, my Soldiers, the struggle for existence, which has so often been forced on our Volk, has been crowned by victories far surpassing anything known in the past.

Your bravery, your death-defying courage, your willingness to sacrifice, saved not only our German homeland but, beyond this, all of Europe. We shudder at the sight of the fate that it was spared. Women and children and all other working persons in the homeland can never thank you enough for what you have done for them, my Soldiers of the eastern front.

Ever since June 22, you have seen with your own eyes the type of “paradise” into which the joint conspiracy of Jewish capitalists and Jewish Bolsheviks wished to transform our Germany.

My Soldiers!

As the Führer, the spokesman for millions of members of our Volk, and the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, I thank with all my heart all the brave men for the heroism that they so often demonstrated. I greet you, the soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS, especially those on the eastern front, in proud joy of command over that Wehrmacht branch that always and everywhere bears the heaviest burden in battle, and does so here, too.

The entire German homeland looks up to its Wehrmacht with infinite faith. It would like to help every single one of you, as best it can.

All of us, front and Volk together, hold in reverence the comrades who had to seal their love and loyalty for Germany with their deaths. We also think of our fallen allies who fought in our ranks for their countries and for all of Europe.

Soldiers of the Eastern Front!

In countless battles in the year 1941, you not only removed from the Finnish, German, Slovak, Hungarian, and Romanian borders the enemy who was ready to launch an attack, but you also drove him back over a thousand kilometers into his own land. In attempting to bring about a turn of events in the winter of 1941–1942 and to move against us once more, he must and will fail! Yes, on the contrary, in the year 1942, after all the preparations that have been made, we will engage this enemy of mankind anew and do battle with him for as long as it takes to break the destructive will of the Jewish-capitalist and Bolshevik world. Germany will not and cannot be dragged into a new war for its existence or nonexistence by the same criminals every twenty-five years! Europe cannot and will not tear itself to pieces forever, just so that a bunch of Anglo-American and Jewish conspirators can find satisfaction for their business machinations in the dissatisfaction of the people.

It is our hope that the blood that is spilled in this war will be the last in Europe for generations. May the Lord help us with this in the coming year!

Adolf Hitler

At the turn of the year, Hitler sent his friend Mussolini a long letter. Ciano described it as follows:¹⁹

January 16, 1942

It is a long summary of how things have gone in Russia; mostly excuses, not explanations. The tone is courteous and vaguely subdued with regard to Italy. Very different from the tone used last year about this time when we had our Albanian problem.

On January 2, an announcement stated that an exchange of telegrams on New Year's Day had taken place between Hitler and "numerous heads of state and government abroad, especially in the allied countries."²⁰ The texts were not published. In general, the tone of the German press in that January was subdued. Hitler appeared to busy himself with the awarding of medals at the Führer headquarters. The press reported on this in great detail. Also the "SS Obergruppenführer, general of the Waffen SS, and commander of the *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* (now a panzer corps)," Sepp Dietrich was awarded the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.²¹

On January 8, the state funeral ordered by Hitler for the leader of the war economy and chairman of the Bochum Association, Dr. Walter Borber, took place in Bochum. Reich Economics Minister Frick conveyed the "Führer's last greetings."²²

On January 10, the president of the International Olympic Committee, Count Baillet-Latour, was buried in Brussels. Ritter von Halt laid "a wreath from the Führer."²³

There was no mention in the press on January 12 of the telegram that Hitler customarily sent to Göring on his birthday.

In the winter of 1941-1942, transportation on the eastern front had undoubtedly become a problem. In order to resolve it, on paper at least, Hitler appointed an old acquaintance at Mercedes-Benz, Jakob Werlin, inspector general for motor. The decree reads follows:²⁴

Führer Headquarters, January 16, 1942

It has proved necessary for me to be informed of all transportation questions that are crucial to the conduct of the war to a greater extent than previously—quicker, in more detail, and in a more direct manner—in order to be able to issue the orders necessitated by the war situation immediately or to have them issued. I therefore appoint SS Standartenführer Direktor Jakob Werlin as my inspector general for transportation. The inspector general is directly subordinate to me. He receives directives only from me.

The inspector general is authorized, on the territory of the Greater German Reich, the General-Government, the occupied territories, and in the area of operations to conduct all inspections and to make all decisions that appear to be necessary to him, at all military and civilian offices of the state, offices of the party, and specialized private enterprises. The mentioned offices

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and enterprises are obliged to permit the inspector general to conduct all desired inspections, to facilitate this for him in every respect, to give him the requested information, and place at his disposal all required documents and papers.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

On January 17, another sensational death became public. Field Marshal von Reichenau, who had been a well-known sportsman, died, at the age of fifty-seven, “as the result of a stroke in the course of his transportation to the homeland.”²⁵ While Reichenau had been an old National Socialist, the old National Socialists in particular had lately become more critical of Hitler. In any event, Hitler ordered a state funeral for him. As the “Führer of the German nation,” he ordered Göring to substitute for him. In his capacity as “commander in chief of the army,” he requested the recently replaced von Rundstedt to act in his stead. The following order of the day was issued to the army:²⁶

Soldiers!

On January 17, the commander in chief of an army group, Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau, died of a stroke.

As in his life he was the standard-bearer of the ideas of a new era, so, as Field Marshal in the war, he stood at the head of his team. Often, he stood at the forward focal point of the battle. The Storm Badges on his chest made him especially close to you, my Frontline Soldiers!

The drive of this electrifying born leader gave new luster to the immortal virtues of soldiery by putting them into the context of the new era and employing its means.

Field Marshal von Reichenau was the first leader of a panzer army in history. I entrusted it to him in the Polish campaign. He led it to victory. With enthusiasm, his men followed him. In his person they saw a combination of true soldiery and National Socialist ideals. In the strong belief in the final victory of our Volk, he now passes into eternity.

Before this life, which he dedicated to his soldiers, his Volk, and the future of Germany, the army lowers the Reich war flag. It honors its glorious field marshal and brave fighter. His name will live on forever in the history of the German Volk and its Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On January 18, the public again heard about Brauchitsch. He had had to undergo surgery that “in spite of heart problems had been successful.” He was “on the way to recovery,” although “after being cured, he will have to undergo extensive treatment.” In the meantime, “the Führer conveyed his best wishes for a speedy recovery to the field marshal.”²⁷

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At this time, Hitler received Field Marshal von Bock. On January 21-22, the German press published a picture showing both men strolling along a path through the woods at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The caption pointed out that the field marshal had returned from a “convalescent leave” and was about to “take over a new sector at the eastern front.” In other words, Bock no longer commanded Army Group Center.²⁸

On January 20, Hitler awarded Rommel the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords. What was surprising and unique was the reason for which Rommel received the award, namely his “defensive victory” in Africa. Hitler’s telegram to Rommel read as follows:²⁹

Thanks to your outstanding action in cooperation with our allies, you have again shattered Anglo-American intentions by a defensive victory over a far superior opponent. In grateful appreciation of your success and the heroic struggle of the German and Italian troops under your command, I award you, as the sixth officer of the German Wehrmacht, the addition of the Oak Leaf with Swords to the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.

Adolf Hitler

On January 22, another state funeral took place, one which Hitler had ordered for the chairman of the German Potash Syndicate, Dr. August Diem. Funk conveyed Hitler’s greetings at the state ceremony at the Technical High School in Berlin-Charlottenburg.³⁰

On January 28, Hitler received Colonel Galland in the presence of Keitel and Milch at the Führer headquarters. He presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds. As successor to Mölders, Galland had been appointed inspector of fighter pilots.³¹

On January 29, the OKW report announced that German and Italian troops had retaken Benghazi and that Hitler had promoted Rommel to the rank of colonel general.

Of course, it was very encouraging to receive this news on the anniversary of January 30. Hitler, who had left East Prussia aboard his special train on the evening of January 28, arrived in Berlin about noon on January 29. In great detail, he discussed Churchill with Goebbels.³² He wanted to get in the right mood for his speech on the anniversary of the seizure of power.

On January 30, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Victor Emmanuel III, Mussolini, Ciano, King Boris, Franco, Antonescu, Tiso, and Pavelich. He sent the following messages to the Italian King and to the Duce:³³

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I thank Your Majesty for the friendly greetings conveyed to me on the anniversary of the seizure of power. I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt best wishes for the prosperity of the allied Italian people, as well as for your personal welfare.

Adolf Hitler

I thank you, Duce, for the friendly greetings that you conveyed to me by telegram on the anniversary of the National Socialist seizure of power. In the secure knowledge that our joint work for the freedom of Europe will be crowned by victory, I reciprocate with my sincere best wishes for Italy's prosperous future, your personal welfare, and the success of your historic work.

Adolf Hitler

At noon, Hitler received a delegation of Italian Fascist leaders at the Reich Chancellery. Goebbels described the address that Hitler delivered on this occasion, in the following manner:³⁴

Hitler is in an extraordinarily good mood. He speaks to the Italian Gauleiters in a vigorous and convincing tone. Awe-inspiring is his absolute and firm confidence in victory, which he expresses so clearly and irrefutably that it makes a profound impression on the Italian gentlemen. They are enthusiastic about the Führer's fascinating personality, especially his vigor and his self-assured manner. Most of the Italian gentlemen have never before seen the Führer, and the impression that he made on them is consequently all the more profound.

For the afternoon, Goebbels had arranged a "mass rally" at the Sportpalast in Berlin. The audience consisted of laborers from armament factories in Berlin, nurses from military hospitals, and wounded or convalescing soldiers.

Hitler began his address with the following words:³⁵

My German Volksgenossen! Comrades!

These days, every man may speak to that forum which he feels is most appropriate. One speaks in front of a parliament whose existence, composition, and development we are amply aware of. I believe that, on this day, I should return to where I come from, namely, the Volk! All those who sit before me now are also deputies, the only difference being that they do not collect parliamentary allowances.

Hitler's words were revealing. There had been times when he had enjoyed speaking to the Reichstag deputies, as "the highest appointed forum of the nation," especially on occasions like the anniversary of the seizure of power.³⁶ Now, of course, he hated the deputies—not because

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they received “parliamentary allowances”—but because they had the theoretical power to depose him.

A “party narrative” took up a large part of Hitler’s speaking time.³⁷ He launched an attack on “British untruthfulness” in the First World War, the “vile revolt in 1918,” the “paralytic” Wilson, and, of course, his domestic “struggle against the entire world.” He spoke of the “blows of fortune” he had survived back then. He said that he belonged to the “strong” in life, and, therefore, he was perfectly capable of surviving any “blows of fortune” that he might now suffer, for example, in the east. Hitler declared the following:

And I believe that this was probably decisive for the party: any weakling can manage victories, but only the strong can manage blows of fortune. Providence gives the final and the supreme reward only to those who can handle blows of fortune. At the time, I suffered the first severe blow on a larger scale in the movement. It was overcome a few years later. The men who were close to me at the time know how much work and strength of nerve this cost us.

But I have also preserved this boundless faith, in my person as well, that nothing, no matter what, would ever be able to throw me out of the saddle, would shake me up anymore. Whoever thinks he can frighten me somehow or surprise me is wrong. I have always taken to heart the words of a great German philosopher: “A blow that does not knock a strong man over, only makes him stronger!”³⁸

Finally, Hitler had finished the “party narrative” and turned to the topic of Churchill. For one, he vented his anger at this adversary by calling him a “garrulous drunkard” (*Schwätzer und Trunkenbold*), a “damned liar” (*verlogenes Subjekt*), a “first-rank lazy fellow” (*Faulpelz ersten Ranges*), and “one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals in world history” (*eine der erbärmlichsten Herostratennaturen*³⁹ der *Weltgeschichte*). He then entitled Roosevelt Churchill’s “accomplice in the White House” and a “poor fool” (*armseliger Irrer*). Once again, he complained that he always had to deal with “zeroes.”⁴⁰ He said that the English “have simply been ossifying for too long.”

Before I went to war, I had started a gigantic program of cultural, economic, and social work. I had begun it and, in part, I had already finished it. Everywhere, new plans were being made, new projects being developed by me and my assistants.

By contrast, when I look at my enemies, what have they actually accomplished? It was easy for them to push for war, since they had nothing to show for peace. They had not accomplished anything that might speak for them. This garrulous drunkard Churchill, what has he created that is of lasting

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worth, this damned liar, this first-class lazy fellow? If this war had not come, then centuries would have spoken of our age and also of my person, as the creators of great works of peace. However, if Mr. Churchill had not managed this war, who would ever have spoken of him? This way, he will live on, as the destroyer of an empire. We are not destroying it, he is. He is one of the most pitiful glory-seeking vandals in world history, incapable of creating anything positive, or accomplishing anything. He is capable only of destroying. I do not even want to speak about his accomplice in the White House, who is only a poor fool.

However, the more we worked, the more we put Germany back in order, the greater the hatred became. To this was brought the narrow-minded hatred of social classes abroad, lest it be possible, under certain circumstances, to apply the German social example there. I often listened to foreigners telling me, "but National Socialist ideas cannot be realized in our countries." I replied: I do not demand this. On the contrary, I am not here to worry about the happiness of other people. Rather, I feel responsible only for my own Volk. I will not add to my sleepless nights by taking on the burdens of worrying about foreigners. And, in spite of this, they say, "no, the example is already enough, it is the example that corrupts morals." In this case, morals meant bad habits or vices. They say, "you sail on your KdF ships; we cannot allow them to land here; that would corrupt our laborers." Now, why would that corrupt their laborers? I cannot see why. The German laborer has worked more than ever before; why should he not have a rest? Is it not a joke when today the man in the White House says, "we have a program for the world, and this program for the world will give man freedom and the right to work." Mr. Roosevelt—open your eyes! We have already done this in Germany a long time ago. Or when he says that the sick ought to be taken care of. Please leave the garden of our party program—this is National Socialist teaching and not yours, Sir! This is heresy for a democrat.

Or when he says, "we want laborers to have a vacation." It is a little late to want this, since we have already put this into practice. And we would be much further along now if Mr. Roosevelt had not interfered. Or when he says, "we want to increase prosperity for the masses of laborers, too." All these things are in our program! He might have seen them through, if he had not started the war. After all, we did all this before the war. No, these capitalist hyenas do not have the slightest intention of doing this. They see us as a suspicious example. And now, in order to lure their own people, they have to get in on our party program and fish out a few sentences, these poor bunglers. And even that they do imperfectly.

We had a world unanimously against us here. Of course, not only on the right, but also on the left. Those on the left feared: "What are we going to do, if this experiment succeeds and he actually makes it and eliminates the housing problem? What if he manages to introduce an educational system based on which a talented boy, no matter who his parents are, can attain God knows what position? And, he is capable of doing it, he is already making a Reich protector out of a former farmhand. What if he really introduces an old-age

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pension scheme covering the whole Volk? What if he truly secures a right to vacations for the whole Volk, since he is already building ships? And he is bringing all this up to an ordered and secured standard of living. What are we going to do? We live by the absence of this. We live by this and, therefore, we must fight National Socialism."

What the others have accomplished—that, our comrades were best able to see in Russia. We have been in power for nine years now. Bolshevism has been there since 1917, that is, almost twenty-five years. Everyone can judge for himself by comparing this Russia with Germany. The things we did in these nine years. What does the German Volk look like, and what have they accomplished over there? I do not even want to mention the capitalist states. They do not take care of their unemployed, because no American millionaire will ever come into the area where they live, and no unemployed man will ever go to the area where the millionaires live. While hunger marches to Washington and to the White House are organized, they are usually dispersed en route by the police by means of rubber truncheons and tear gas. Such things do not exist in authoritarian Germany. We deal with such problems without such things—rubber truncheons and tear gas.

In other words, we were truly confronted by a unanimous and hostile world. It was only natural that this hostility would increase with the seizure of power. I tried to initiate a certain foreign policy. You know about it from our time of struggle. I wanted to enter into relations with three countries: England, Italy, and Japan.⁴¹

It was completely pointless attempting to come to an understanding with England. The men there appeared unable to rid themselves of their prejudice, their insane ideology, and their stubbornness. They saw Germany as the enemy. These men were not aware that the world had considerably changed since the days of their great Queen Victoria. They did not realize that, in the end, it was not Germany which threatened their empire and that, if their empire was to be sustained, England would have to tie itself to Europe. On the contrary, they fought with Europe at every opportunity. Above all, one man did this, a man whom I have already mentioned a few times: Churchill. Any attempt to get him to consider an understanding ran aground at his saying, "I want war." It was impossible to talk with this man and the clique surrounding him, for example, Duff Cooper, and so on. It is sad to name them; they are only zeroes. It does not matter. They are like unbreakable eggs: wherever they fall, they will remain for a while. As often as you like, you can throw them somewhere, even the English can, as for example Wavell.⁴² They have simply been ossifying for too long. For centuries, they have been our old, irreconcilable enemies, and I am not talking about the Jews now. They feared that we might thwart their plans or their lives. They hate us just as we must hate them because of this.

Now that Hitler had voiced his anger and frustration with the English, he turned to the Jews. He announced their extermination in Europe, now that "all attempts to reach an understanding with the

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English proved futile.” If England and international Jewry wished to prevent this annihilation, then they would have to make peace with him at last. Otherwise, Jewry, as “the most evil enemy of the world of all time will at least be finished with for the next millennium.” Hitler declared as follows:

We are fully aware that this war can end either in the extermination of the Aryan people or in the disappearance of Jewry from Europe. I said as much before the German Reichstag on September 1, 1939.⁴³ I wish to avoid making hasty prophesies, but this war will not end as the Jews imagine, namely, in the extermination of the European-Aryan people; instead, the result of this war will be the annihilation of Jewry. For the first time, the old, truly Jewish rule of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” will obtain.

And the more the fighting expands, the more anti-Semitism will spread—let that be said to world Jewry. Anti-Semitism will be fed in every prisoner-of-war camp, in every family enlightened to the reason why, in the end, it has to make this sacrifice. And the hour will come when the most evil enemy of the world of all time will at least be finished with for the next millennium.

To my profound regret, all attempts to reach an understanding with the English proved futile, no matter what I did, no matter how often I held out my hand, no matter what I offered them.

I was all the more happy when I was able to obtain that relationship with the second state, which we had once striven for. Actually, it is not surprising. Today, it would be surprising had things come differently. It is not merely a coincidence—I said this to a delegation today⁴⁴—if two people suffer almost identical fates in the course of barely a hundred years. Germany and Italy: in the last century, they fight for their rebirth as a state and its unification, then, for the first time, both states join together. Then, they part company, and their luck runs out. At nearly the same time in both states, a revolution takes place, a revolution whose ideas are as similar as can possibly be imagined for two people. Both revolutions run a nearly identical course. Everywhere severe setbacks, but victory in the end. The program of both revolutions is social and national rebirth. Both staunchly see this program through. Both elicit the hatred of the surrounding world. Both revolutions represent nations whose soil does not yield them their daily bread, in spite of all diligence. Contrary to their will, both nations are one day confronted by the same enemies, by the same international coalition. This begins as early as 1935, as England suddenly turns against Italy for no reason whatsoever. Italy has not taken anything away from England. But England does not want Italy to have its independence. The same goes for us, since England does not want Germany to have its independence. What are we taking away from England, what from France, what from America? Nothing at all! How many times did I offer them peace?! What else should I be offering them? They are men who say, like Churchill, “I want war.” With them, there is a certain clique. And behind these corrupt, drunk creatures, there are the paying forces of international Jewry. On the other side, there is

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an old Freemason who believes that through a war he can win time for stabilizing his bankrupt economy again. And so, both states again confront the same enemies for the very same reasons. And they are forced to fight together, to lead the same struggle, which ties them in life and in death.

And there is a fourth element: in both cases, there are two men who come from the people, who have kindled the revolutions and have uplifted their states. In the few free hours I have had these last weeks, I read a lot about the Fascist revolution in Italy. It seemed to me as though I had before me the history of my own party: everything so similar, so much the same. The same struggle, the same enemies, the same opponents, the same arguments—it really is a miracle. And now, we fight in the same theaters of war: Germans in Africa, Italians in the east. We fight together, and nobody should deceive himself: This struggle will be seen through to our joint victory!

And finally, a third state joined us. For many years, I have wanted to have good relations with this state—Japan—as you know from *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler then claimed that the “three great have-nots” (Germany, Italy, and Japan) had “everything to win,” and that he was ready “to bear full responsibility.”

And so, the three great have-nots are now united. We will see who will be stronger in this struggle: those who have nothing to lose and everything to win, or those who have everything to lose and who cannot win anything. What does England want to win? What does America want to win? They have so much that they do not know what to do with all they own. They need to feed only a few people per square kilometer. They do not have all those worries that trouble us. For us, a single bad harvest is a national disaster. They have the whole world at their disposal. For decades now, they have robbed us, exploited us, bled us white, and still they have not eliminated their own economic misery. They have more raw materials than they could possibly need, and still they have not managed to find a reasonable solution to their problems. We will see on whom Providence will bestow the victor’s laurels in this struggle: on the man who has everything and wants to take even the last bit from the man who has almost nothing, or on the man, who defends the last bit he owns. And when a British archbishop prays to the Lord that He might strike Germany and Europe with Bolshevism as a punishment—then I can only say, it will not come to Germany. But whether or not He will strike England, that is another question.

Then this old sinner and blasphemer can try to avert this danger through his prayer. We never did anything to England, France, or America. In spite of this, a declaration of war followed in the year 1939. And now, it has expanded.

But now you must try to understand my point of view, which is based on my development. I once said something that nobody understood abroad. I said: if war is inevitable, then I prefer to wage it myself. Not because I thirst for sinister glory. On the contrary, I would prefer to do without this type of glory, which is no glory in my eyes. If Providence preserves my life, my pride will be

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the great works of peace which I still intend to create. On the other hand, since Providence has decreed this battle to be fought out in accordance with its impenetrable will, I believe that I can only ask Providence to entrust me with the burden of this struggle with which it burdens only me. I will bear it and I will not shy away from responsibility. In the hour of want, I will take it upon myself. I wish to bear the entire responsibility, just as I have borne it up to now.⁴⁵ I exercise the greatest authority among this Volk. It knows me. It knows of all the plans I had in all the years before the war. Everywhere there is evidence of the beginning of this work and, in some instances, documents of its completion. I know that this Volk trusts me. I am so happy to know this. The German Volk may rest assured of one thing: as long as I live, there will never be another year 1918, because I will never abandon my cause.

I am happy that so many allies have now joined our soldiers: Italy in the south, Finland in the north. Between them, there are all those nations that have also sent their sons east: whether they are Romanians or Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats, Spaniards, Belgians—yes, even French—they all participate in this struggle. In addition, there are the volunteers of our Germanic states from the north and from the west. Today, it has already become a war of Europe. And, finally, in the east, there is a new ally: Japan, which has already cured one gentleman of his ridiculous plans.

I will say very little on the war itself. History says it plain enough: in 1939, the elimination of Poland, in 1940, Norway, France, and England, the Netherlands, and Belgium, and, in 1941, first the Balkans and, finally, the state which a chatty Mr. Cripps told us a few days ago had been preparing for the confrontation with Germany for years. I understood this the moment I realized that they were putting one over on us. The second I was informed that Churchill had already referred to this new ally in secret sessions, the situation became clear to me. And when the hour came for Molotov to say farewell here in Berlin under the impression that his demands had failed, it was quite certain that there would be a confrontation.

I am grateful to Fate for putting me at the head of the Reich, and for granting me the time to deal the first blow fourteen days or three weeks before this.⁴⁶ If there has to be a fight, then, in my opinion, the first [blow] may be the decisive one. And we saw this in East Asia, too. We can only congratulate Japan that, instead of allowing these damned liars to provoke it any longer, it struck without hesitation.

Since June 22, our soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS have been fighting a war in the east that will enter history as the heroic epic of our Volk.

At sea, our naval forces and our U-boats will foil the intentions of President Roosevelt. He intended, by ever new declarations on American territorial waters, slowly to drive the German U-boats from the ocean through simple acts on paper. He wanted to force them into a small area that could have been protected by British naval forces.

That, my Volksgenossen, was the reason for the declining number of sinkings. It was not the poor quality or the declining numbers of U-boats. On the contrary, their number has enormously increased. It was not the lack of

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courage of our crews, nor the impossibility of an attack. It was solely this procedure of restricting our freedom of action by way of declaration.

You will understand that it cost me great effort to decide whether to put an end to this fraud and falsehood, or whether, for the sake of peace, to accept one restriction after another. Japan's attack put an end to our misery. Now they [the Americans] will have to sail in convoy on the oceans, and they will find out how our U-boats work. Whatever plans they may have and whatever these look like, we are ready from north to south, from the coast [*sic*] to the east.⁴⁷

They should realize one thing: they will meet with a Germany different from the Germany of old. They will meet with a Frederician Germany. We stand firm, and where we stand, we will not give up a foot of ground without a fight. And even if we do, we will immediately counterattack the enemy. We are happy to know since yesterday⁴⁸ that, at the moment they [the English] all thought that they had beaten him, our Colonel General Rommel, along with his brave Italian and German panzer and motorized units, immediately turned and drove them back. And they will witness this for as long and as often as it takes for this war to end in our victory.

In addition to these forces, there is a third one: the Luftwaffe. Its glory is unfading. The things they have accomplished in the course of the operations in the arctic cold of the north, in the east, or in the heat of the desert, or in the west, it is the same everywhere: a heroism that simply cannot properly be rewarded by medals.

These three forces comprise everything that belongs to them. I cannot single out a particular branch. Nevertheless, there is one force that I must mention in particular: it is our infantry.

Behind these forces, there is a traffic infrastructure with tens of thousands of drivers and railroad workers. They all work hard. They will master the most difficult tasks. After all, it is obvious that it was not easy to shift from a forward strategy to a defensive one in the east. The Russians did not force us to go on the defensive, but the temperatures of thirty-eight, forty, forty-one, and, in part, forty-five degrees below zero. No unit can fight in this cold if it is not used to it, no more than it can fight in the heat of the desert during the warm months. The moment we were forced to make this adjustment, I regarded it as my duty to take responsibility for it on my shoulders. In so doing, I wanted to become even closer to my soldiers. And, at this point, insofar as they can hear me today at this icy front, I want to assure them: I know what you are accomplishing, but I also know that we have the worst part behind us.

Today, it is the thirtieth of January. The winter was the great hope of our eastern opponent. It will not fulfill his hope. Within four months, we have moved almost up to Moscow and Leningrad. Four months of winter in the north are now over. In single spots, the enemy advanced a few kilometers. He sacrificed hecatombs of blood and human life for this. Perhaps this does not matter to him. However, in a few weeks, winter will be over in the south, and spring will slowly move northward. The ice will melt, and the hour will come when the ground will be hard and firm again. Then the German front-line soldier will again be able to operate his equipment on this ground. The

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homeland will send new weapons. And then, we will beat the enemy and avenge all those who fell victim only to the frost. Let me tell you, the soldier at the front has not lost his feeling of superiority over the Russians at all. It would be an insult to compare him with them. What is decisive is that we succeeded in making this shift from the offensive to the defensive, and I can say: it was a success! The fronts—they stand. And in those instances where Russians did break through and thought that they would be able to occupy small towns, there are no more small towns. There is only a heap of ruins. What does this matter compared with what we do occupy, what we put in good order, and what we will put in order, either in the spring or afterwards?

After all, behind this front, there stands today a worthy German homeland. A few days ago, realizing that all our preparations were still insufficient for the defense against the Far East, I directed an appeal to the German Volk. I now want to say my thanks to this Volk. This appeal also represented a vote. While the others talk of democracy, this is real democracy!

Just how real has been shown by these last days. I know what many poor people have given, but this time there were many, many for whom it was difficult or for whom it would have been impossible before to give away their valuable furs. But today, they did give them, realizing that even the least important front-line soldier is worth more than their most valuable furs. I have seen to it that things did not go as they did in the World War, when the homeland delivered the copper and one copper-delivery company paid a 2,260% dividend, or when the homeland delivered leather and a leather-processing company paid a 2,700% dividend.⁴⁹ In the Third Reich, whoever tries to enrich himself during the war dies. Because nobody knows whether there is not a poor little front-line soldier up front whose hand could have been saved by a pair of gloves, or who could have been protected against the frost by a warm coat which somebody at home deprives him of. I will look after the interests of the soldiers here. And, I know that the entire German Volk is behind me on this!

So I can assure you of one thing on this January 30. I do not know how this year will end. Nobody can say whether the war will end in its course. But I do know one thing: wherever the enemy makes an appearance, we will beat him, just as we have up to now! It will again be a year of great victories.

And just as I always carried the flag in earlier days, I now hold it high all the more. How different my position is today!

My German Volksgenossen! My Soldiers!

We have a glorious history behind us. And one does enjoy making comparisons to this history. In the course of this history, German heroes often fought in spite of a seemingly hopeless inferiority. However, we must not draw comparisons to the Frederician age, for instance. We have no right to do so. We have the strongest army in the world. We have the strongest air force in the world. By contrast, Frederick the Great had to fight against a nearly overwhelmingly superior force. When he fought the first Silesian War, two million seven hundred thousand Prussians confronted a state of at least fifteen

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million. When, seven years later, he was forced to wage the third one, three million seven hundred thousand or three million eight hundred thousand Prussians confronted around fifty or fifty-four million others. A man with an iron will held high his banner, in spite of all setbacks, and never despaired of his people. Every time that he felt like despairing, he pulled himself together again and took the flag anew into his strong hand.

What do we want to say about ourselves today? We confront an enemy who might right now enjoy a numerical superiority over us. However, this will change in the spring again. We will defeat him again. Because then our time will come again. And it will be like this everywhere. But, above all, we have allies today. It is not as in the World War anymore. We cannot assess what Japan alone is accomplishing in the east.

For us, there is no other way than to struggle and to succeed. It may be difficult or it may be easy—but never will it be more difficult than the struggles of our ancestors. We should not expect it to be easy.

In so doing, we have a better comprehension of the sacrifices that our soldiers are making. Having been a soldier once myself, [I say that] nobody comprehends this better than I do. Today, I still think of myself as the first front-line soldier of the Reich.⁵⁰ At the time when I was only a soldier, I did my duty. Today, I do it as unwaveringly. On the other hand, I understand the suffering of my comrades; I know how they feel. Therefore, I cannot and will not indulge in windy rhetoric. After all, they would not understand this. I can only tell them one thing: my comrades, the homeland knows what you have to go through.

The homeland knows what it means to lie in snow and ice—at thirty-five, thirty-eight, forty, forty-two degrees below zero—in order to defend Germany. But, because the homeland knows this, it will do all it can. It wants to work, and it will work! And I have to appeal to you myself: German Volksgenossen at home, work, make weapons, make ammunition, make new weapons, make new ammunition! You will save the lives of many comrades up front. Build means of transportation and work on them so that all this can actually get up front.

Then the front will stand. It will do its duty. Then the German nation can rest assured that the prayer of that satanic priest who wished Europe to be punished by Bolshevism will not come true. A different prayer will come true.

Lord, give us strength so that we can preserve our freedom, our Volk, our children, and our grandchildren. And we will do so not only for our German Volk, but for all the people of Europe. Because this is not a war that we wage only for the German Volk. Rather, it is a struggle for all of Europe and for all of civilized mankind.

After Hitler's speech, Goebbels felt that he "stood on firm ground again."⁵¹

Germany's allies, however, needed more than a speech in view of the poor news from the eastern front. In January, Hitler had already sent

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Ribbentrop and Keitel to Hungary.⁵² Göring spent January 27 to February 4 in Italy and Rome [*sic*], trying to calm the Duce and the Italian generals. Hitler had invited Antonescu to the Führer headquarters for early February.⁵³

On February 1, Reichskommissar Terboven appointed Vidkun Quisling as prime minister of Norway and conveyed to him the Führer's congratulations.⁵⁴

On February 4, a state funeral took place in Munich. Hitler had ordered it in honor of state secretary and Major General Georg Hofmann, an SA Obergruppenführer who had died suddenly on February 1, after a "heart attack." Reich Governor von Epp laid "a wreath from the Führer."⁵⁵

On February 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Emperor of Manchukuo on his birthday.⁵⁶

On February 8 and 9, the following news of a death surprised the German public:⁵⁷

On Sunday [February 8], in soldierly fulfillment of his duty, Reich Minister Dr. Todt died in a plane crash during the execution of his military assignments. The Führer has ordered a state funeral for Dr. Todt.

Following a two-day visit to the Wolfsschanze headquarters, Todt had died on a Sunday under mysterious circumstances near the Rastenburg airfield. After takeoff, his plane turned around and tried to land. Shortly before landing, it exploded.⁵⁸ The precise circumstances of his death may never be known.⁵⁹

In any event, his death meant that Hitler had to worry about one Obergruppenführer less.⁶⁰ After all, Todt was a forceful personality and an impeccable man of stature, who had great organizing ability. He was very energetic and popular. He was just the kind of man who could have handled the difficulties that would undoubtedly have arisen after an attempt to remove Hitler. It is another matter, though, as to whether he would have been willing to do so. It is not known whether he had already turned against Hitler, at least in spirit. In any case, Hitler seemed to be relieved to hear of his death. His greatly exaggerated obituary oration⁶¹ made the whole affair even more suspicious.

On February 9, the following official statement was made public:⁶²

The Greater German Reichstag has suffered a great loss through the accidental death of Reich Minister Dr. Todt. He had held the positions of Reich minister for armament and munitions, inspector general for road construction,

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and inspector general for water and energy. The Führer has transferred these three positions to the inspector general of the Reich capital, Professor Albert Speer, who retains his previous position.

The appointment of Speer, who had previously been entrusted largely with “artistic” tasks, created quite a stir since he was certainly not a man of Todt’s caliber. However, that was exactly why Hitler had chosen him. After all, he did not need any “experts.” His “own head” was “good enough.”⁶³ He felt that he had the young and gentle Speer well in his control. Above all, Speer was not an Obergruppenführer!⁶⁴ Nor was he a general. At this time, Hitler awarded the name “Fritz Todt” to the First Munich SA *Schützenstandarte* (Rifle Standard).⁶⁵

On February 11, Hitler received Antonescu at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.⁶⁶ The “head of state and marshal of Romania” had been picked up by Hitler’s private pilot and nearly froze to death on the trip because of a defective heater.⁶⁷

Hitler wanted to impress Antonescu favorably with the situation at the eastern front. Therefore, Hitler invited him to attend the daily discussion of the situation at the Führer headquarters for a few days. These discussions usually made the situation appear far more advantageous than it was, since Hitler for one had requested only favorable reports. In view of the foreign visitor’s presence, situation maps and news selections painted the situation in its brightest colors. Internally, these situation reports were referred to as “exhibition reports” (*Schaulagen*).⁶⁸

The interpreter Schmidt could not tell whether Antonescu saw through Hitler’s tactics or not. However, it seemed to him that, while the Romanian asked few questions, he left Hitler’s headquarters with “new courage.” Several days later in Bucharest, Schmidt heard that apparently not much of this courage restored by Hitler was left. Schmidt thought this was due to the rosy “exhibition reports,” which, as Antonescu found out, did not correspond to his own situation reports from the front. The main reason perhaps was that Antonescu was one of those Balkan politicians who fell time and again for Hitler’s rhetoric.

Surprisingly, it was not until five days after this visit that the German public was informed that Hitler had presented the Order of the Grand Cross of the German Eagle to Antonescu.⁶⁹ The communiqué on the meeting read as follows:⁷⁰

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At the invitation of the Führer, the Romanian head of state, Marshal Antonescu, visited the Führer at his headquarters on February 11. The marshal of Romania was accompanied by Colonel Dividescu, Lieutenant Colonel Gomescu, and officers of his staff. The Romanian envoy in Berlin, Bossy, and the German envoy in Bucharest, von Killinger, also traveled with him.

In the course of Marshal Antonescu's stay at the Führer headquarters, the Führer and the Romanian chief of state discussed the political and military situation.

The discussions between the Führer and Marshal Antonescu were conducted in the spirit of the loyal friendship and the unswerving comradeship in arms of the two people, which are being expressed and tried in the joint struggle against the enemies of the new Europe. On the German side, the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, participated in the discussions.

On February 12, Hitler sent his "heartfelt congratulations" to the Japanese Emperor, following the conquest of Singapore.⁷¹

At 3:00 p.m. on the same day, the official ceremony in honor of Dr. Todt took place in the Mosaic Hall at the Reich Chancellery. Hitler himself delivered the eulogy. Not since the commemorative address for Richard Wagner had he indulged in similar theatrics.⁷² His voice was choked with tears and he was so overcome with emotions that at times he was unable to go on.⁷³ He declared as follows:⁷⁴

Dear Mourners! Dear Mrs. Todt!

It is very difficult for me to honor a man whose deeds speak more clearly and more powerfully for him than words ever could. When we received the terrible news of the accident in which our dear party comrade Dr. Todt had become a victim many millions of Germans probably felt the same emptiness that we always feel when an irreplaceable man is taken from his fellow men. The entire German Volk knows that the death of this man means an irreplaceable loss for us. And it is not only the creative man who was taken from us, but it is also the brave man and unforgettable comrade whose leaving hits us so hard.

Dr. Todt was a National Socialist. From the moment he gained knowledge of the movement for the first time, he was a National Socialist not only intellectually but also with all his heart. The first contact with the party in the year 1922, the first meeting with me, immediately directed him internally to me. It also obligated him to stand by what he felt was the only means of a German rebirth. Making the connection between the national and the social idea was neither a problem nor a question for the technician and engineer who was temporarily forced to earn his bread by the work of his hands. Rather, it was a categorical duty for him to fight for a true German resurrection, which had to be more than a mere restoration of a form of state whose collapse had proved it to be outdated. As early as 1922, it was clear to this man that the goal of a

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German uprising could not be the restoration of broken old forms. Instead, it had to be a revolutionizing of the German spirit, the German Volk, and its internal social order.

When Dr. Todt joined the movement, he was thirty-one years old. His life up to then had included, besides elementary school, studies at a classical secondary school. From 1910 to 1911, he served one year as a volunteer with the Field Artillery Regiment No. 14 in Karlsruhe. From 1911 until August 1914, he studied civil engineering at the Technical Universities of Munich and Karlsruhe. In 1913, he passed the preliminary examination at the Technical University of Munich. When war broke out, it took him to the western front along with the Field Artillery Regiment No. 14. In October 1914, the reserve lieutenant was seconded for duty with the Grenadier Regiment No. 110. In this regiment, he fought until January 1916. Then, he joined the Luftwaffe and became an observer navigator. Finally, he secured command over his own plane formation on the western front until the end of the war. He was injured in an air battle. In 1919, he finished his studies. In the winter of 1920, he passed the examination for his diploma at the Technical University of Karlsruhe. He wrote his doctoral dissertation at the Technical University of Munich: *Sources of Defect in the Construction of Highway Surfacing Made of Tar and Asphalt*.

On January 5, 1923, this Doctor of Engineering, Fritz Todt of Pforzheim, joined the NSDAP for good through the Ortsgruppe Eitting in Bavaria. Immediately after the lifting of the ban on the party from November 23 until 1925, he again became a member. In the meantime, he agitated constantly. Not until 1924 were the various proceedings against him suspended. He joined the SA in 1931 and, as a true National Socialist, he began as a simple SA man. He then became Scharführer. That same year, he was promoted to Standartenführer. By 1938, he had risen to Oberführer, Brigadeführer, Gruppen- and Obergruppenführer. Alas, his activities in the party are not summed up by his service with the SA. In the beginning, he worked for the *Kampfbund* (Combat League) of German Architects and Engineers in Munich. Further, he was a technical adviser for road construction in the then NSDAP Office for Economic Technology and Job Creation. In 1932, he became the head of a team of civil-engineering specialists, and regional head of the *Kampfbund* of German Architects and Engineers. In 1934, his section and the *Kampfbund* of German Architects and Engineers fused to become the technical office and, finally, the National Socialist League of German Technology under his leadership. In 1936, the technical office was upgraded to head technical office because of outstanding accomplishments.

In the meantime, this man entered that sphere of activity that for the first time presented him not only to the German Volk but also to a large part of the world.

After the opening of the Automobile Exhibition in 1933, I tried to put into effect the then recently proclaimed principles not only regarding the improvement of the existing German road system, but also the construction of special expressways. This was a general plan, essentially regarding only basic

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issues. After extensive examination and deliberation, I believed I had found in Dr. Todt the man capable of putting this theoretical intention into practice.

A brochure published by him on new approaches to road construction was submitted to me. It reinforced me in my hopes. After long discussions, on June 23, 1933, I assigned him the task of building a new Reichsautobahn. Further, I entrusted him with a reform of the entire German road-construction system as inspector general for road construction. Through this, this man had found a role that he began to fill in a truly unrivaled and undying fashion. In their design and realization, the German Reichsautobahnen are the work of a uniquely inspired technician and artist.

I cannot imagine the German Reich without these expressways. In the future, these great lines of communication will as a matter of course extend to the entire European transportation system.

So great is the extent of the roads, which in this period were additionally widened, improved, and straightened with their blind bends eliminated, and of the bridges which were built, that only an intensive study can approximate an overall impression that does justice to this achievement. My dear party comrades, you will remember those stirring moments when this inspector general for road construction in Germany, Dr. Todt, spoke at the Reich Party Congresses in Nuremberg, briefly and pointedly summing up the progress on this assignment, which was beginning to surpass by far all engineering construction that the world had seen to date.

It was, therefore, a matter of course that this man was finally appointed plenipotentiary for the regularization of the entire building industry and held a privileged position as inspector general for special assignments in the Four-Year Plan.

Meanwhile, dark clouds on the horizon were beginning to signal the ever increasing threat of war against Germany. When the incessant inflammatory speeches by Churchill and his followers in England made it clear that the unstable situation in the parliamentary democracies might one day lead to a change in the regime controlling these countries and strike peace a blow, I felt compelled to speed up the defense of the Reich and to secure it generously.

I had arrived at a plan that provided for the construction of a large fortification across from the Maginot Line, but built according to different criteria so that, in any event, even if substantial German armed forces were tied down in the east, it would defend the vital west of the Reich against any kind of attack.

There was only one man who was capable of resolving this most [*sic*] unique engineering problem in the history of the world, and solving it as quickly as possible. On May 28, 1938, I announced my decision to the army and the Luftwaffe. At the same time, I gave instructions to inspector general, Dr. Todt, in cooperation with the appropriate military offices, to take on the responsibility for the construction of the most substantial part of this gigantic project. I stipulated that at least five thousand concrete and armored structures should be ready or ready for use by September 1938 at the latest. The first program was set at twelve thousand items total. This number increased to about

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twenty-three thousand in barely one-and-a-half years due to a steady expansion in general and, later on, through the structures built by the Luftwaffe as well as by fortress engineers. The current wartime experiences have only reinforced the conviction that no power on earth could have succeeded in breaking through this most gigantic fortification of all time. In its constructional design, in the purely organizational features of the construction, as well as in its technical completion, this miraculous work will for all time remain tied to the name Dr. Todt.

The outbreak of war immediately gave this mightiest organizer of the modern age new, additional tasks. A system of great marshaling routes had to be completed within the shortest time possible in areas of the Reich whose routes of communication in the past had been severely neglected. Thousands of kilometers of roads had to be either built or widened, paved, and rid of dust. Yes, when the fighting finally began, the units created by this unique organizational talent marched behind or alongside the troops. They removed obstacles, destroyed bridges, improved roads. Everywhere, they constructed new crossings over valleys, canyons, rivers, canals, and so on. In so doing, they complemented the engineering troops in an irreplaceable manner. They relieved them and enabled them to move up closer to the advancing front in order to participate more actively in the fighting, which otherwise they would not have been able to witness.

The victory in Norway and the victory in the west brought new tasks. Party comrade Todt, who had earlier been appointed Reich minister for armament and munitions and who therefore was responsible for putting a new, truly enormous area in order and under control, took on the additional task of protecting the conquered coasts against enemy attack by constructing new gigantic fortifications. Beyond this, the homeland and the front had to be provided with structures for passive and active air-raid protection. Never before in history had there been anything of this kind. To date, they are unrivaled and they will probably remain so for a long time.

This genius of an inventor and organizer succeeded in constructing, within the shortest time possible, concrete housing structures for numerous U-boats, structures that cannot be destroyed even by heavy bombs.

Gigantic battery sets made of concrete and steel were constructed according to his directions. Air-raid shelters were built for hundreds of thousands of men, some of which have not been equaled in any country on earth.

The war in the east set the Todt organization new tasks. The length in kilometers of the repaired roads and the numbers of the newly built bridges are infinite. With a minimum of helpers, this man mastered this entire tremendous project, in addition to his activities as Reich minister for armament and munitions.

In this respect, he was undoubtedly the greatest organizer that the German Volk has called its own up to now. Far from bureaucratization, he knew how, with the smallest conceivable apparatus of his own, to make use of all the offices and forces that had previously been responsible for the solution of his problems or which appeared useful otherwise.

February 12, 1942

Much of what this man has created will come to the knowledge of the German Volk only after the war and will lead it to admiring astonishment. The creations of this man are so unique that we will never be able to thank him enough.

If I have been speaking of the technician and organizer Fritz Todt up to now, I must now make special mention of the man who was so close to all of us. You cannot characterize his personality better than by stating that this mighty ruler of men in the homeland never had a single enemy in the party or among his coworkers.

I must thank him especially that, despite his workload, he never forgot or abandoned National Socialist ideas and the goals of the movement. On the contrary, he became one of the creators of our ideology. And this applied especially to his attitude toward the social problems of life. The man who led millions of workers was not only intellectually a true socialist, but he was so with all his heart. Fate forced this greatest road engineer of all time to earn his daily bread by working as a common laborer, just as it forced me to do in my youth. He never felt ashamed of this. On the contrary, later on it was always a moment of proud and joyous remembrance when this greatest building supervisor ever known to the world could look at his own picture or show how, covered with dust and dirt, he worked on a road, his work clothes torn, or stood in front of a boiling kettle of tea. Because of this, he loved so dearly his "German road constructors," as he called his roadmen. He constantly strove to improve their living conditions, which were often very difficult. He wanted to replace their old pitiful tents with modern bedrooms and living rooms and to rid their camps of the atmosphere of cold mass accommodation. Above all, he wanted to instill in the laborers the feeling that road construction—and the building trade in general—was a type of work which every single one of them could be particularly proud of. Not only because it creates products of great importance to man, but also products of great durability. Before Dr. Todt, the work of a roadman was not a very highly regarded profession. Today, the tens of thousands of German roadmen have become a proud community aware of its value. He has made a contribution to National Socialist educational work. We must be particularly grateful to him for this today. If all human progress needs a model to strive for, then the Todt organization is such an example. It was about to develop further. Slowly, it intended not only to eliminate a social injustice here, but also thoughtless human stupidity for all time.

No matter whether this man was with laborers, ministers, or generals, he always remained the same. He was a self-confident as well as modest leader and the caring friend of all decent working Volksgenossen.

It is hence not surprising that this man, who so dearly loved his Volk, felt the same tender, loving attachment to his wife and children. Every free hour was, if at all possible, spent by this creator of the greatest technological buildings in viewing the great creations of nature, the little house at the lake in the midst of his beloved Bavarian mountains.

While the West Wall was being finished, parts of which were already under fire by the enemy, and while the columns of the Todt organization joined up

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for the first time with the advancing armies in Poland and assured their supplies, I considered awarding him the Knight's Cross for his role as one of the leading heads of the German resistance and the German will to self-assertion in this war. I changed my mind, because this award—as glorious as it is—could never have done justice to the importance of this unique man.

I had already decided earlier to establish a German medal that, founded on the principles of our movement, would in several categories honor the greatest merits that a German could possibly earn in serving his Volk. After the conclusion of the campaign in France, I told Dr. Todt that I would one day acknowledge his unique merits by awarding him, as the first recipient, the highest class of this medal. From modesty, he did not want to hear of it at the time.

Like the National Award for Arts and Sciences, whose bearer Dr. Todt was, and which had first been awarded to the deceased Professor Troost, I confer, in the name of the German Volk and its National Socialist movement, the new order for the first time on our dear and unforgettable Dr. Todt, the inspector general of our roads, the architect of our West Wall, the organizer of our weapons and munitions in the great war of our Volk for its freedom and its future.⁷⁵

For my part, I can add only a few words to this. With this man, I lost one of my most loyal assistants and friends. I see his death as a contribution of the National Socialist movement to the fight for freedom of our Volk.

Around noon on February 13, Hitler received the new Norwegian prime minister Quisling for a talk at the Reich Chancellery, in the presence of Dr. Lammers and Terboven.⁷⁶

As Hitler later told Goebbels, Quisling had apparently developed “naive ideas.” He had spoken of the “buildup of new Norwegian armed forces” and of a “completely free Norway.” Hitler felt that these ideas were very “naive,” since he wanted to annex Norway body and soul to the German Reich. Why else would he have appointed a Reichskommissar? Following the discussion, Quisling was Hitler's guest for lunch. Goebbels also attended this reception, during which Hitler enthusiastically spoke of a “breakthrough at the Channel by German warships.”⁷⁷

On February 14 at the Reich Chancellery, Hitler received the new Croatian envoy, Dr. Mile Budack, who presented his credentials.⁷⁸

Two weeks had passed since Hitler had threatened a massacre of the Jews, and the English had still not put out a feeler for peace to Germany! His hope that the fall of Singapore would cost Churchill his job⁷⁹ had not come true either. Now the Führer had no choice but to go ahead with the massacre of the Jews. By this undertaking he would, so he said,

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“render mankind an invaluable service.”⁸⁰ He once again took Goebbels to task,⁸¹ telling him of his resolve to do away with the Jews in Europe. [Hitler said to Goebbels:]

One should not get sentimental here. The Jews deserve the catastrophe that they are experiencing today. With the annihilation of our enemies, they will experience their own annihilation. We must speed up this process with cold brutality. With this, we render mankind an invaluable service, since it has suffered under and has been tortured by Jewry for millennia. We must enforce this clear anti-Semitic attitude in our own Volk, too, despite the resistance of some circles.

Hitler claimed that he would make this clear to the “group of officers” to whom he would shortly speak. However, this was just big talk intended to impress and encourage Goebbels.

Hitler was not about to inform the 9,883 officer candidates he would speak to at the Sportpalast in Berlin on February 15⁸² of the planned annihilation of the Jews. Instead, he proceeded in the same old way. Following the usual “party narrative,”⁸³ he reiterated the well-known topics that he usually discussed at such appeals to officer candidates: the inevitability of struggle in life, the relationship between population and Lebensraum, and the Germans as not only the best, but also numerically the strongest people on earth. He dwelt on the history of man, as he saw it of course, and revealed the following flashes of inspiration:

By living, one individual prevents the life of others. By dying, he opens up the way for new life.

The first picture we have of the Germanic people of our sort is one of hopeless fragmentation. German tribes whirled about Europe.

Hitler also spoke of the American “lack of culture” and the “colonization of England by Germans.”

When Mr. President Roosevelt stutters about culture, then I can only say: what Mr. President Roosevelt calls culture, we call lack of culture. To us, it is a stupid joke. I have already declared a few times that just one of Beethoven’s symphonies contains more culture than all of America has managed to produce up to now!

Strictly speaking, we colonized England and not the other way around.

Of course, Hitler had to make himself sound grand. The world was against him because it had been against Frederick the Great and Bismarck.

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Today, I have the honor to be this enemy because I am trying to make a world power out of the German Reich.

I am boundlessly proud of Providence for allowing me to wage this inevitable war. After all, the years pass and, if Providence had not bestowed this blessing on me, I would still be fifty-two years old today. These fifty-two years might have passed in indolence, perhaps in a middle-class life of luxury. In this way, however, these fifty-two years were years of constant struggle, work, cares, and fighting.⁸⁴

No matter when Providence will end my life, not even at the last moment will I regret having led this fight. On the contrary, I will be able to tell myself: It was a life worth living! It was not a life of cowardice, indolence, and restraint. Instead, it was a life that one day will hold its own before history!

Like the Hitler Youth,⁸⁵ Hitler now reminded the officer candidates of their great good fortune to live at a time like this.

Be proud that time has put you in the midst of something very great happening!

After a long “philosophical” discussion, Hitler returned to the present and hinted at wanting to proceed to the Caucasus.

Perhaps you will say: all the things we must do! We march one thousand kilometers into Russia, perhaps one-and-a-half thousand, two thousand, three thousand kilometers. Perhaps, the Führer will lead us to the Caucasus. What tremendous distances!

My young Comrades! Once German emperors and knights on horse rode the same distances. They went to the Holy Land, to Palestine. They went across the Alps countless times. What we are doing is not unique in history. Our ancestors did the same thing!

Hitler then praised the “German front-line soldier”:

I can only take my hat off to every single one of those front-line soldiers who fulfill their duty at the front in this icy cold. They deserve our admiration and our gratitude. All the heroic deeds that their officers have accomplished!

The front-line soldier will never give in as long as his leader never gives in!

In concluding, Hitler stated that he knew all their worries:

I know it all the more since I went through the whole gamut of human responsibility myself: as a common soldier, as an unknown and nameless man, who undertook to conquer a state, as supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, and, above all, as commander in chief of the army. I know everything. I know how difficult this can be at times!

February 24, 1942

Because of this, the young officers should behave in the “hour of trial” in such a manner that people would say of them: “Look here, German Volk, this is how your officers fight!”

After these concluding statements, Göring felt compelled to make a lengthy pledge of fidelity. He stressed: “What the Führer has accomplished in the course of these last weeks and months, what gigantic demands this made on heart and character—only his closest assistants know.”

Having returned to the Führer headquarters, Hitler turned his attention to the problem of morality in the army and SS. He issued a decree that prohibited sexual intercourse between German soldiers stationed in Poland and Polish women. This became an offense punishable by law.⁸⁶

A second decree established the death penalty for SS members guilty of violations of paragraph 175 [homosexuality].⁸⁷

On February 24, Hitler was absent for the first time from the festivities in commemoration of the party’s foundation in Munich. He claimed that it was not possible for him to leave his headquarters since he was “preparing for the final confrontation.” Obviously, this was merely an excuse. There could be no talk of a “final offensive” before May or June. And on other occasions before and after February 24, it was evidently possible for him to leave his headquarters.⁸⁸

The truth was that he was afraid of his old party comrades, especially of the Obergruppenführers.⁸⁹ He feared that one of them would stand up and reprimand him for his various false prophecies. From 1939 on, he had made dozens of wrong forecasts, including the claim that the English would never go to war and that the Russians were “already broken and will never rise again.”

Hitler chose to send a “message” instead, which Gauleiter Wagner read to the audience:⁹⁰

Führer Headquarters, February 24, 1942

Party Comrades!

For the first time in many years, I am unable to participate in the day of commemoration with my oldest comrades in arms. I cannot well leave headquarters at a time when the winter is ending, a winter on which our enemies have placed all their hopes. From June to October 1941, German armies advanced over a thousand kilometers into the empire of an enemy who intended to destroy our Volk and our homeland for good. This winter—the like of which has not been seen in over a hundred years⁹¹—surprised us as early as

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late November 1941. Snow and frost temporarily halted the triumphant advance of the German Wehrmacht that was unique in history.

Our enemies hoped that the German armies would then suffer the same fate as the Napoleonic retreat. This attempt pitifully failed. Above all, it failed because of the bravery and the willingness of our unique men to sacrifice, who side by side with our allies held out during the icy storms of December, January, and February as staunchly as they had before fought for their unfading victories in the heat of June, July, August, and September.

Now that the worst cold is over, now that the snow is beginning to thaw in the Crimea and in southern Russia, I am unable to leave my post, as preparations for the final confrontation are being made, to settle accounts with this conspiracy in which the banking houses in the plutocratic world and the vaults of the Kremlin pursue the same goal: the extermination of the Aryan people and races.

This community of Jewish capitalism and Communism is nothing new to us old National Socialists, especially to you, my oldest comrades in arms. As before, during, and after the First World War in our country, so today the Jews and again only the Jews have to be held responsible for tearing apart the nations.

There is a difference, however, if we compare the present world struggle with the end of the war from 1914–1918. In 1919, we National Socialists were a small group of believers who not only recognized the international enemy of mankind but also fought him. Today, the ideas of our National Socialist and Fascist revolution have conquered great and mighty states. My prophecy will be fulfilled that this war will not destroy the Aryan, but, instead, it will exterminate the Jew. Whatever the struggle may bring, however long it may last, this will be its final result. And only then, after the elimination of these parasites, a long era of international understanding, and therefore of true peace, will come over the suffering world.

Today more than ever, I am with you in spirit, my old National Socialists, since you were already my followers when, as [is still true] today, being a National Socialist only meant making sacrifices.

On this day, I am personally all the more inspired with the imperturbable confidence and the sacred faith that this mighty fight, in which we are engaged today and for which, back then, on February 24, 1920, we set out from this same hall in which you are now assembled, cannot and will not end differently from our own miraculous struggle for power in the German Reich. Just as Providence has blessed our fight in all those years, it will now let us win it for good! What used to be our party program are now the basis of a new and improving world.

Therefore, receive my greetings, which I convey to you through party comrade Adolf Wagner, as though I were standing in your midst.

In my thoughts, I am with you anyway in these hours!

Adolf Hitler

February 28, 1942

In this message, Hitler again expressed his determination to exterminate the Jews. To murder millions of defenseless people was all he had left to offer, a Führer who was too much of a coward to face his old followers at the Hofbräuhaus hall in Munich. Never again would he dare to face them in this hall.⁹²

On February 24, Hitler sent a telegram of condolences to Franco on the death of his father.⁹³

Two days later, Hitler addressed Field Marshal Kesselring in a handwritten letter, awarding him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.⁹⁴

On February 28, Gauleiter Wagner laid a wreath from Hitler at the coffin of Anton Drexler at the Westfriedhof in Munich.⁹⁵

On March 1, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Emperor of Manchukuo on the national holiday.⁹⁶

On the same day, he signed a decree on the "systematic spiritual struggle against Jews, Freemasons, and their allies, the . . . opponents of National Socialism." He called this a "necessary war mission." The decree read as follows:⁹⁷

Jews, Freemasons, and their allies, the ideological opponents of National Socialism, are the authors of the war presently directed against the Reich. The systematic spiritual struggle against these powers is a necessary war mission.

I have therefore instructed Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg to carry out this mission in conjunction with the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht. His operational staff for the occupied territories is authorized to search for relevant materials in libraries, archives, lodges, and other ideological or cultural institutions of all types, and to have this material confiscated for the ideological work of the NSDAP and subsequent research work at the National Socialist Hohe Schule.

The same regulations apply to cultural goods in Jewish possession or ownership, or that are derelict, or whose origin is not incontestably established. Implementing regulations on cooperation with the Wehrmacht will be decreed by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht in agreement with Reichsleiter Rosenberg. In his capacity as the Reich minister for the occupied eastern territories, Reichsleiter Rosenberg will take the necessary measures in the eastern territories under German administration.

Adolf Hitler

This decree on the "mental combating" of the Jews obviously was intended to mask the simultaneous beginning of the "physical combating," that is, the extermination of the Jews. Even though anti-Semitism had been elevated to a political philosophy in the Third Reich and the torment and harassment of Jews had become a feature of everyday life, never before had there been talk of literally exterminating

them and killing them off without exception. It was only recently that Hitler had threatened this, for example, in his speeches of January 30, 1941 and 1942, and in his message of February 24, 1942.⁹⁸ Initially, he had done so by making “prophecies.” Now, however, after the failure of the eastern campaign had become evident, he turned to the practical implementation of his plan. And here some resistance had to be overcome first. It took some time to get Goebbels used to the idea of the total, physical annihilation of the Jews in Europe, that is, those in German hands. His diary entries show this.⁹⁹ It was a different matter, of course, with Heinrich Himmler and his men. Hitler had long seen to training them not only to accept all his ideas—no matter how crazy or criminal—as absolutely correct, but also to carry them out to the letter.

Still on March 7, 1942, Goebbels wrote in his diary:¹⁰⁰ “There are still over eleven million Jews in Europe. Sometime later on, they shall have to be concentrated in the east; it is possible that after the war we will be able to assign them an island, perhaps Madagascar.” On March 20, 1942, he wrote:¹⁰¹ “In this matter [the question of the Jews], the Führer is as inexorable as ever: the Jews are to be thrown out of Europe, if necessary with use of the most brutal means.”

For Goebbels, the situation then underwent a complete change. On March 27, 1942, he wrote: “Jews are now being deported to the east from the territory ruled by the General-Government, starting with Lublin.¹⁰² Here will be used a fairly barbarous method which one can’t come close to describing; not much will remain of the Jews themselves. On the whole, it can be determined that sixty percent of them will have to be liquidated, only forty percent being usable for the purposes of labor. The former district leader of Vienna,¹⁰³ who is in charge of the action, is showing a good deal of circumspection in following a method that does not attract a lot of attention. Justice is being meted out to the Jews; although it is barbarous, they fully deserve it. The prophecy that the Führer uttered against them for having brought about a new world war now begins to be realized in the most frightful way. In these matters, sentimentality must not be permitted to hold sway. If we did not defend ourselves against the Jews, they would destroy us. It is a struggle of life and death between the Aryan race and the Jewish bacillus. No other government and no other regime had the strength to resolve this question in its generality. In this respect too the Führer is the constant champion and spokesman of a radical solution.

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The ghettos being vacated in the cities of the General-Government may now be filled with Jews deported from the Reich, and here, after a certain time, the process will start again. It's no laughing matter for Judaism; the fact that its representatives in Europe must pay dearly for the organizing and propagandizing of war against Germany by its representatives in England and America is no doubt justified."¹⁰⁴ (Cf. *The Goebbels Diaries*, *ibid.*, pp. 114–143.)

As mentioned before and illustrated by example,¹⁰⁵ the doglike subservience of the SS men to Hitler's will formed a parallel case to the subservience of Napoleon's Old Guard. Had Napoleon proclaimed the idea of killing the Jews in his hands, his guardsmen would undoubtedly have done this as they had killed, on the retreat from Moscow, all Russian prisoners by shooting them through the base of the skull.

Hitler's manservant Linge reported on secret conferences between the Führer and Himmler. Nobody else was allowed to be present at these talks, which in all likelihood concerned the annihilation of the Jews.¹⁰⁶ In practice, the procedure was to be the following: first, Jews in the east, in Poland and Russia, would be exterminated, along with their wives and children, and then, under the pretext of a "resettlement" (*Aussiedlung*), the Jews in Germany and western Europe would be deported to the east so that the whole process of annihilation could begin anew.¹⁰⁷

Hitler's argument for this monstrous crime was quite simple: Jews, like Russians, were not human. They were "animals and beasts."¹⁰⁸ If valuable men had to die each day at the front, then it was really of no consequence if such vermin like the Jews were killed. They were no different from "tuberculosis bacilli." If such "innocent natural creatures as rabbits and deer" had to die, then why should "the beasts, who want to bring us Bolshevism, be spared?"¹⁰⁹

Hitler was known to be very fond of animals.¹¹⁰ He shared this fondness with a number of mass murderers.

In spite of all of Hitler's reasons for the annihilation of the Jews, it was not easy for Himmler to find SS men willing to implement the cowardly annihilation of millions of defenseless human beings: men, women, children, and old people. They had not only to be encouraged by extra bottles of brandy; in addition, ethical arguments had to be employed: as difficult and unpleasant as this task might be, those chosen to carry it out had to realize the "exalted nature of their mission,"¹¹¹ by

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means of which they were rendering a service to the fatherland, Europe, and mankind.¹¹²

This confusion of concepts was carried to an extreme reminiscent of the persecution of the Christians in ancient Rome which had led Christ to make the following prophecy: "I have said all this to you to keep you from giving up your faith. They will expel you from the synagogues; indeed, the time will come when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God."¹¹³

And had not Adolf Hitler written in *Mein Kampf*: "By defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."¹¹⁴

Besides the extermination of the Jews, Hitler also envisioned and carried out the annihilation of the Gypsies. In his eyes, they were vermin, beasts, tuberculosis bacilli, too. In this respect, an ordinance by the then Reich minister of labor is of interest, an ordinance which decreed the "equality of Gypsies and Jews under the labor laws."¹¹⁵

As monstrous as Hitler's massacre of the Jews was, as much as it shamed Germany, it nevertheless formed only one part of his rule; and it was not the cause of the fall of the Führer and the Third Reich. Their fate was sealed at eleven o'clock on September 3, 1939. And the reason for it was the same as for the collapse of the Kaiser's empire, namely, the attempt to expand Germany's borders by the use of force. This is a clear, historical fact, and it would be dangerous to try to diminish it by pointing to the Holocaust.

2

On March 1, Hitler exchanged telegrams with King Boris on the anniversary of Bulgaria's accession to the Tripartite Pact.¹¹⁶

One day later, he awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle to the Croatian head of state, Ante Pavelich.¹¹⁷

On March 4, Hitler sent a telegram of condolences to Victor Emmanuel on the death of the duke of Aosta, who had died in English captivity in Nairobi.¹¹⁸

On the same day, the appointment of Otto Gebühr as "state actor" by Hitler was made public. Gebühr would play the title role in *The Great King*, a new film on the life of Frederick the Great.¹¹⁹

On March 8, Hitler promoted Infantry General von Manstein to colonel general "in recognition of the merit he earned in the conquest of the Crimea and the subsequent defensive combat."¹²⁰ At the same time, a photograph taken at a reception for the panzer general, Walter Model, at the Führer headquarters was published and his promotion to colonel general was made public.¹²¹

On March 12, Hitler had his adjutant Schaub present a handwritten letter to Frick, congratulating him on his sixty-fifth birthday.¹²²

On Heroes' Memorial Day on March 15, Hitler appeared in Berlin and delivered the following speech at the state ceremony, which began at twelve o'clock in the inner courtyard of the Zeughaus:¹²³

When, in the year 1940, we celebrated our Volk's Heroes' Memorial Day for the first time in this hall, the German Volk and its Wehrmacht once again found themselves, after decades of humiliating enslavement, in a struggle for their freedom and future, facing old enemies. The defenseless impotence of the Reich calmed them no more than they were satisfied with the economic reduction to misery that was forced on us.

A trial¹²⁴ is taking place in France these days, the most characteristic feature of which is that not a word is said about the guilt of those responsible for this

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war. Instead, it is a question exclusively of too little preparation for this war. We witness a mentality here that we cannot understand. But perhaps it is better suited than anything else to a revelation of the causes for this new war.

In the year 1918, the statesmen responsible for the war in England, France, and America arrived at the insane decision not to allow Germany under any circumstances ever to rise again and become a factor of equal rights in economic or political life. From this intent, all further measures and injustices were derived, at the mercy of which the Reich found itself after the unfortunate day of the Armistice.

The German Volk, despairing of its leadership and itself, now found no means to resist a fate that could be conquered not by subservience, but only by united will power and bravery. The consequences of this weak surrender to the situation forced on us were not only politically and militarily dishonorable, but also truly destructive economically. One of the most hard-working people in the world witnessed the progressive reduction of its economic base and, therefore, the collapse of its existence. It was foreseeable in what a short period the number of our Volk would persistently decline because of its material misery, and, hence, that the German Reich would not be able to ward off the destruction thrust on it because of its own loss of strength.

This economic collapse of the strongest people in Central Europe was no blessing for its enemies either: their hatred prevented them from seeing that the reduction to misery of the German nation by no means meant an economic boom for the so-called victors.

So those states the leadership of which suffered a thorough Jewish-capitalist contamination caught up with the German Reich in their unemployment figures and, in part, exceeded them in spite of their immeasurable riches in the products and the treasures of the earth.

But even this development failed to convey to the blind hatred of the leaders of our old enemies, essentially directed by Jewish elements, a clear insight into the true necessities of the future life of all people. Immediately after the seizure of power by the National Socialists, they began again to take up the old inflammatory slogans—instead of learning from Germany's exemplary economic and social measures—in order to prepare their people emotionally through propaganda for a renewed challenge.

We know today that in the years 1935 and 1936, the decision for war had already been made in England, France, and especially in America, by the influential Jewish circles and by the political leaders in bondage to them.

We now witness the heart-wrenching drama in which the betrayed and dumbfounded people do not see the insane intention of starting a new war as such, but the neglected and, in their eyes, insufficient preparation of their armament.

This foreign, incomprehensible mentality in particular teaches us how necessary the military preparation of the German Volk was, after the rejection of all German proposals for disarmament and understanding, to thwart the second attack on its freedom more successfully than in the First World War in 1914.

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When, for the first time in the year 1940, we celebrated our Volk's Heroes' Memorial Day in wartime, we did so in the proud recognition that we had won the first phase of a confrontation that was forced on us against our will. With the greatest confidence, we could hope to succeed in the second one as well.

And, indeed, by March 1941, a war year of successes unequaled in world history lay behind us. In a triumphant march without equal, the north and the west of Europe were cleansed of the continent's enemy forces. Italy joined our side as a loyal ally in this struggle of the "have-nots" for "to be or not to be."

The accomplishments of the German armies in this campaign pale in comparison with what Fate demanded that our Wehrmacht and our allies solve and master in the past year.

And only today we realize the extent of the preparations of our enemies. Today, we see the interplay of the Jewish wire-pullers, who are spread over the whole world. Through a joint attack by a conspiracy which united democracy and Bolshevism in a community of interests, they hoped to be able to destroy all of Europe.

That Providence allowed us to withstand victoriously this coalition of Jewish Marxism and capitalism on all battlefields makes us grateful from the depths of our hearts to Him, without Whose protection and care all human effort, all diligence and courage would be in vain. For behind us lies not only a year of the greatest battles in world history, but also the year of our own Volk's hardest test.

It was a test that the front as well as the homeland, I can say, passed. That the German does not fear the threats of man, his history has proved frequently enough. This time, he was put to the test not only by the force of the enemy's weapons and virtually infinite blood resources from the most primitive people, but also by the cruel harshness of nature. For today, we can inform you that behind us lies a winter the like of which has not been seen in central and eastern Europe in more than a hundred forty years. Truly, our soldiers and those of our allies were cruelly seized up by Providence in the last four months in order to assess their true inner worth. However, they passed the test in a manner such that nobody is justified in doubting that—no matter what the future or Providence will bring us—what lies ahead can only be easier than what lies behind us.

In barely four months of summer, the German Wehrmacht, following the successful conclusion of the Balkan campaign in the year 1941, began its march into the vastness of the Russian space. Battles were fought and victories secured that will be seen as unique glorious deeds even in the distant future.¹²⁵ United with its brave allies, the Wehrmacht attacked ever new Russian bodies of men. It defeated them, eliminated them, only to confront new droves of men. In four months, endless distances were covered in an offensive whose depth and breadth have no equal in history.

Weeks before experience or scientific forecast led anyone to expect, winter set in on our armies, a fact which gave the enemy four months to bring about a change in his favor in this fateful struggle. After all, it was the only hope of the rulers in the Kremlin that this revolt of the natural elements, which they

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had also never before witnessed, would deal the German Wehrmacht a fate like that of Napoleon in 1812.

Through a superhuman struggle and the dedication of the last forces of soul and body, the Germans and our allied soldiers have passed this test and have overcome it. In a few months, history will be in a position to judge whether it was militarily correct or incorrect to pour hecatombs of Russian lives into this struggle.

Today, we already know one thing: the Bolshevik hordes, who were unable to vanquish the Germans and the allied soldiers this winter, will be defeated by us this coming summer and annihilated. The Bolshevik colossus, whose cruel danger we only now realize, may never again touch the sacred fields of Europe—and this is our irrevocable resolve—but instead it should receive its final borders far from them!

At this moment, we all sense the greatness of the times in which we live. A world is being fashioned anew. While in the Far East, the heroic Japanese people—just as provoked, abused, and economically choked as the Germans and Italians—is crushing the democratic-capitalist citadel in mighty blows at sea, in the air, and on land, the conditions are established in Europe to grant this continent its true independence.

For it is unbearable that the life of hundreds of millions of men of the highest cultural worth and indefatigable diligence should be forever dependent on the will of a small, truly criminal, community of Jewish-capitalist, international conspirators and their control of public opinion in a few states which are set against Europe because of this alone. There can be only one solution, namely, to wage this war for as long as it takes to secure a lasting peace, that is, until the enemies of this peace are destroyed!

By professing this decision for a solemn avowal, we are best able to do justice to the sacrifices that the war of 1914–1918, the struggle of the Nationalist Socialists for the domestic resurrection of our Volk, and finally the present fight have demanded of us and will continue to demand of us. How the outside world fashions its life is of no concern to our German Volk. The attempt by the extra-continental powers to interfere persistently in inner-European affairs, and especially in the concerns of our own Volk, will now be warded off for good and prevented.

If, and in which world, the American president intends to live is of no consequence whatsoever to us Germans. However, his intention to bring the German or even the European world into line with his needs, that is, to topple a world which has become dear to us and to erect one hated by and alien to us, will not only come to nothing, but on the contrary: his own world will be ruined in this attempt. As regards the intention to punish Europe with Bolshevism, I have already said elsewhere that the state that has devoted itself to it the most will be the first to become its victim. The German Volk is well-informed today about the blessings of this bestial doctrine. Above all, it is strong enough to be able to resist successfully this deadly threat to its existence.

In view of the past great year and—as we are convinced—the no less great coming one, we commemorate our heroes and those of our brave allies of past

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and present, with the firm intention to see that all these sacrifices are not and will not be in vain. We could not observe this holiday more dutifully than by realizing that the present generation is again on a par with the great times of the past. Its soldiers at the front are on a par with it, as are its men and women in the homeland. Whatever destiny may demand of us, these fighting years will in spite of this be shorter than the years of the long and blessed peace that will result from the present struggle. It is the future task of the National Socialist state to build this peace so that it will do justice to the sacrifices of our soldiers from all classes of our Volk. For they all perished for the eternal German Volk, our shared Greater German Reich, and for a better community of the nations on our continent.

May the Lord grant us all the strength to do whatever duty demands of us now and in the future. With this request, we bow respectfully before the dead heroes, the family members mourning them, and all the other victims of this war.

On Heroes' Memorial Day, Hitler promoted Vice-Admiral Karl Dönitz, the commander in chief of the U-boat fleet, to the rank of admiral. In addition, he had a wreath laid at the grave of Ludendorff in Tutzing.¹²⁶ He also sent a congratulatory telegram to Tiso on the Slovak national holiday.¹²⁷ Furthermore, he engaged Hácha in an exchange of telegrams on the anniversary of the protectorate's establishment, sending him his "sincere best wishes for the future of the Czech people."¹²⁸

Having returned to his headquarters, Hitler received Rundstedt, who reported to him after a "convalescent leave." In addition, Rommel appeared at the Wolfsschanze. As a reward for his "defensive victory," he received the earlier awarded Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords from the Führer's hands.¹²⁹

On March 18, a "state funeral" took place in Stuttgart in honor of the "pioneer of labor" and leader of economy, Dr. Robert Bosch. The Reich minister of economics Funk laid a wreath from the Führer.¹³⁰

On the same day, Hitler commissioned Professor Heinrich Hoffmann, who had served as his personal photographer for many years, to see to the "organization of the 1942 Greater German Art Exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst."¹³¹

Around March 20,¹³² Hitler received Goebbels for a lengthy talk at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Of all Hitler's apostles, he was the only one who truly loved him. He virtually drank in all of Hitler's words, which left him feeling "like a recharged battery."¹³³

March 20, 1942

Goebbels was not unintelligent, but whenever he faced Hitler reason deserted him completely. The crudest platitudes and lies that any child could have seen through seemed to him perfectly acceptable, as long as Hitler was their author. Goebbels was really dependent on him. He considered Hitler to be the archetypal Messiah for whom he and others had been longing for so long. In his barely known book *Michael*, a kind of novella written in the twenties, Goebbels enthusiastically described a spellbinding orator with hypnotic blue eyes, a charismatic savior and liberator who had come from the unknown to lead the disillusioned German Volk after the lost war of 1914–1918 into a better future, into a world of true freedom: “This is no orator. This is a prophet!”¹³⁴ And Goebbels kept faith in him until the end. He was the only one who shared his fate at the Führerbunker.

Hitler did not return Goebbels’ affections. On the contrary, he distrusted him. He thought him to be a type of Mephistopheles because of his clubfoot. He never asked him to attend secret meetings, even though he might summon him in dangerous situation, for example, the Röhm Purge, so that he could keep an eye on him himself. On the other hand, he mercilessly exploited Goebbels’ propagandist abilities in order to launch a particular version of a story in the papers or a so-called “Volk opinion.” Now he used a sentimental approach in the talk at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in order to incite Goebbels against the generals, especially Brauchitsch, as well as against the lawyers and bureaucrats. He lamented his bad state of health, reporting the “strongest” feelings of dizziness. He complained about the “long, harsh, and cruel winter,” and about the war and its “sharpest concentration.” Goebbels noted in his diary:

Sometimes, the Führer said, he had felt that it was no longer possible to overcome it. But then, he had summoned his last willpower to fight off the onslaught of the enemy forces.

Had he been weak for only one moment, then the front would have begun to slide. A catastrophe would have been in the making that would have eclipsed the Napoleonic one by far. Millions of brave soldiers would have died of starvation and cold, and the result would have been that our laborers would have been led off into slavery to do compulsory labor, not to mention our intelligentsia.

Goebbels was profoundly shaken at hearing what the poor Führer had to go through.¹³⁵ But who was to blame for this wretched state of affairs? Brauchitsch, of course!

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The Führer had only words of contempt [for him]. A vain, cowardly wretch, who was incapable of grasping the situation, not to mention mastering it. He had completely made a mess of and ruined the entire campaign in the east, which the Führer had drawn up in a crystal-clear manner, by his constant interference and his constant disobedience. The Führer had had a plan that would have had to lead to victory. Had Brauchitsch done everything that was asked of him and what he actually should have done, then our situation in the east would be different today from what it is now.

The Führer had never had the intention of going to Moscow. He wanted to cut off the Caucasus and thereby strike a sore spot of the Soviet system. But Brauchitsch and his general staff had known better. Brauchitsch had always pushed for Moscow. He wanted prestigious successes instead of actual successes. The Führer described him as a coward and duffer. He had also tried to make a mess of the campaign in the west, but the Führer had been able to intervene there in time.¹³⁶

For the coming spring and summer, the Führer again has a completely clear plan. He does not want to wage war forever. His goals are the Caucasus, Leningrad, and Moscow.

Once we have realized these goals, he wants to be finished under all circumstances by early October and to go into winter quarters in a timely fashion. If need be, he intends to set up a gigantic line of defense and then to let the campaign in the east be.

Possibly, it will come to a hundred-year war in the east, but then this need not worry us particularly.

Hitler did not only want to go over the topics of Brauchitsch and Russia with Goebbels, but he also informed Goebbels of his idea to have the Reichstag issue Hitler a new “carte blanche” for moving against jurists in particular.

The judiciary must not be the master, it must be the servant of national policy. . . .

For the benefit of a rigorous procedure in political and military life, the Führer again wants a special judicial power to be issued to him by the Reichstag. It will let wrongdoers know that he is shielded by the Volksgemeinschaft in every way. He intends shortly to summon the Reichstag and to have it give him full discretionary powers for proceeding against saboteurs, and especially against those who neglect fulfillment of their official duties. A general judicial power for the Führer—which would authorize him not only to remove from office, at his own discretion, those officers who refuse their duty, but also to disgrace them—would work wonders by setting an example.

Hitler then took a broader view, speaking of a “crisis” in England. He speculated that the United States would become “ripe for Bolshevism” and expressed his admiration for the Japanese. However, at

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the same time, he regretted “the white man’s being forced back.” But “the English had wanted it this way.” They should have accepted Hitler’s offer of an alliance and the protection of their empire by German divisions!

When Goebbels took his leave, Hitler was “very touched.” A little more, and he would have broken out in tears. Goebbels felt “almost like in a daze.”

On March 21, Hitler signed a decree on a plenipotentiary for labor duties that would initiate measures in violation of international law and would send Sauckel to the gallows. The decree read as follows:¹³⁷

The securing of the manpower required by the entire war economy, especially by armament, necessitates a uniform management, reflecting the needs of the war economy, of the deployment of all available manpower, including foreign recruits and prisoners of war, as well as the mobilization of the yet unused manpower in the Greater German Reich, including the protectorate, the General-Government, and the occupied territories.

This mission will be carried out by Reich Governor and Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel as plenipotentiary for labor duties within the framework of the Four-Year Plan. In this capacity, he is directly subordinate to the commissioner for the Four-Year Plan.

On the same day, Hitler issued an ordinance on the protection of the war economy.¹³⁸ It dealt with the distribution of raw materials.

Since Hitler had made himself commander in chief of the army, he felt that it was unbearable that anybody in his Reich should have a different opinion from his. Hitler had always detested public servants and their “well-established rights,” “irremovable judges” and their freedom of decision, because they would not unconditionally accept as right whatever corresponded to the Führer’s view. He felt that the party jurists were the worst. They always tried to remind him of his own legal provisions, espousing the “naive” view that the laws of the National Socialist Reich must be recognized and maintained. He much preferred the bourgeois legal experts, like Gürtner and Bumke,¹³⁹ who had no scruples about publicly declaring his breaches of the law “legal.”

The only National Socialist jurist whom Hitler accepted was Lammers. He “took care of things without resorting to legal abstraction.”¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, Göring and Goebbels felt that Lammers was a “super-bureaucrat.”¹⁴¹ Understandably so, as Lammers always demanded that Hitler’s laws be obeyed in a bureaucratic fashion. Nevertheless, if Hitler desired to commit a breach of the law, topple the

March 21, 1942

law in force, or have some hair-raising injustice legally sanctioned, Lammers was always immediately at hand to draw up the required decree and to countersign it. It was not surprising that Hitler considered Lammers to be the “only acceptable jurist.” This splendid cooperation was evidenced by Hitler’s decree of March 21 on the simplification of the administration of justice.¹⁴² Among other things, it provided for the following:

The defense of Volk and Reich necessitates the smooth and swift working of the administration of justice. In order to enable the courts and public prosecutors to continue fulfilling their tasks under the special circumstances of the war, I decree the following:

I

Proceedings in criminal cases, as well as the execution of judgments in civil cases and in matters of voluntary jurisdiction, shall, by the omission of all expendable steps and the deployment of all available forces, be simplified and speeded up insofar as this can still be reconciled with the purpose of the proceedings. In particular in criminal cases, the enforcement of the prosecution by the injured party and the opening of the trial shall be omitted. The penal authority of the judge of the Amtsgericht [district court] shall be enlarged, and the permissibility of the order of summary punishment shall be expanded.

II

Bills of indictment and judicial decisions shall be concise and short, restricted to what is absolutely necessary.

III

Participation of full-time assessors in judicial decisions shall be limited.

Undoubtedly, this decree signaled major interference by Hitler with the existing law. This would actually have required passing a new law. At the very least, it would have necessitated consulting with the Reich minister of justice, state secretary Dr. Schlegelberger, who had temporarily taken over this function following Gürtner’s death. However, he would probably have objected to this, and so Lammers jumped into the breach, simply countersigning as “Reich minister and chief of the Reich chancellery.” The state secretaries, judges, and so on, were free to read in the Reich Law Gazette what new principles of law Hitler had come up with!

However, these arbitrary decrees did not satisfy Hitler. His immense power was not yet great enough. Within the party, he was the sole authoritative leader; supreme commander of the SA; head of the political organization; and—since Hess’s escape—his own deputy.

March 29, 1942

Within the state, he was head of state (as “Führer,” he held the former office of Reich president); head of government (Reich chancellor); and minister of war. Within the armed forces, he was supreme commander of the Wehrmacht and commander in chief of the army. However, why was he not “Supreme Law Lord”¹⁴³ and sole authoritative chief of the entire judiciary?

Hitler spent February and March 1942 preoccupied with the privileges of jurists, including those of the party jurists. Not only did his statements to Goebbels prove this,¹⁴⁴ but also his verbal attacks on jurists with which he pestered his audience at the “Table Talk.”¹⁴⁵

He recounted all sorts of anecdotes from his life in order to prove what “a cancerous sore today’s jurisprudence is for the German Volk.” Besides this, he wildly attacked jurists in general.

On February 8, he declared for example:¹⁴⁶

Our judiciary is not flexible enough. After ten years of imprisonment, a man is a lost cause for the Volksgemeinschaft anyway. Who will give him work then? You either stick a fellow into a concentration camp or you kill him. These days, the latter is more important for the sake of deterrence. If you want to set an example, you must also hit all fellow travelers!

Instead of this, the judiciary dedicates all its love and care to rummaging in the files in order to arrive at a just judgment in line with its peacetime exercises. Such judgments must be quashed under all circumstances.

In a long tirade, Hitler claimed on March 29, 1942:¹⁴⁷

No man of reason can comprehend the jurisprudence that the jurists have concocted. In the end, today’s jurisprudence is nothing other than one great system of shifting the responsibility onto someone else. He would therefore do everything to disparage as much as possible the study of law, that is, the study of this type of interpretation of the law. Because these studies would not form men who were fit for life and suited to guarantee for the state its natural legal order. These studies only meant an education in irresponsibility.

He would take care that all judges, with the exception of a ten-percent true elite, were removed from the judiciary. The whole swindle of lay assessors would be done away with. He wanted to put an end for good to a judge’s getting around taking responsibility for his decision by declaring that the lay assessors had outvoted him.

Today, he was therefore making clear that, for him, a jurist was either someone deficient by nature or someone bound to become so over time.

March 21, 1942

No matter how much Hitler railed against jurists, it soon became obvious, even during the “Table Talk,” what his actual objective was, namely, the autocracy of Adolf Hitler. He did not want to be restrained by legal norms or supervised by jurists. Characteristic of this attitude was the following “example,” with which Hitler sought to make things clear to his audience.¹⁴⁸

Further, he [Hitler] noticed that bequests—which were made to him in large numbers and which, for his own person, he waived as a matter of principle, only sometimes assigning them to the NSV—could only effectively be waived by having his signature under the relevant declaration attested by a lawyer. In the opinion of the jurists, the signature of the German Reich chancellor, together with the seal of the Reich, was apparently not as credible as that of a lawyer.

All of Hitler’s nice speeches and attacks were in vain as long as he did not have a concrete case, some striking example, which would enable him to tell German jurisprudence “to go to hell” and to make himself Supreme Law Lord.

Soon, a suitable occasion presented itself. On March 19, 1942, the case of Ewald Schlitt was tried by the Oldenburg Landgericht (regional court of a land).¹⁴⁹

Ewald Schlitt was a twenty-nine-year-old engineer at the navy shipyard at Wilhelmshaven. He had married in 1937, and this marriage had been far from ideal. In June 1940, the couple had had a violent dispute. In October 1940, Mrs. Schlitt had died in a nursing home. The case was rather unclear. It could not be established by forensic medical tests whether the death of the wife had resulted from an earlier battery by Schlitt or not. Normally, Schlitt would have spent several months in jail for assault occasioning grievous bodily harm. The judge, however, who was known for his strictness, sentenced him to five years in prison! Even in the case of battery resulting in death, the sentence could range from six months to five years in prison.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, the sentence in the Schlitt case was called “too harsh,” even by superior judges.¹⁵¹

The *Berliner Nachtausgabe* reported on the Oldenburg ruling. Hitler read the article on March 21 and decided right away to use this case for his planned move against the judiciary and for seeing his full discretionary powers through the Reichstag. This mild sentence was outrageous: only five years of imprisonment for a man who had beaten his wife to death, while out there at the front thousands of brave soldiers had to die every day! Immediately, Hitler struck a pose and behaved like

March 22, 1942

a madman. He ranted and raved, demanding immediately to speak to Dr. Schlegelberger, although it was the middle of the night. He shouted into the receiver:

That's typical again! A violent criminal like this Schlitt gets away with five years of confinement to safe barracks, and this at state expense, while hundreds of thousands of decent men risk their lives at the front for their wives and children! I will tell you and the entire judiciary to go to hell if this sentence is not immediately revised! Immediately! If this does not happen, I will have the whole sentencing process and the whole criminal prosecution handed over to the Reichsführer SS!

Schlegelberger truthfully replied that he had not read the *Berliner Nachtausgabe* and was not familiar with the Schlitt case. And how would the acting justice minister in Berlin have known about so insignificant a case, which had just been tried by a Landgericht in the province?

Hitler angrily hung up. He then demanded to speak to Freisler, who served as second state secretary in the Reich ministry of justice at the time. Roland Freisler was a man who could not be accused of having any scruples.¹⁵² Nevertheless, he could not tell Hitler either how to go about revising this final sentence. Naturally so, as Freisler was one of those despised party jurists.¹⁵³ Hitler continued to rant and rave, as his pilot Baur told the "Table Talk" assembly the following day:

He [Hitler] was very angry about this mild sentence for a woman's murderer. He regards the murder of women and children as particularly abominable. If the judiciary continues to produce such sentences, then Hitler wants to tell the ministry of justice to go to hell [*zum Teufel schicken*] via a Reichstag law.¹⁵⁴

Undoubtedly, Hitler had already toyed with the thought of getting rid of the ministry of justice ever since Gürtner's death in 1941. For this reason, he had not appointed a successor to him. In 1938, the Reich war ministry had been abolished because it was no longer needed under Hitler. Was there a need for the Reich ministry of justice with an Adolf Hitler around? Why maintain the whole administration of justice? Were there not enough policemen and Gestapo officials? Were there not concentration camps which could see to the execution of a sentence?

On March 22, Rundstedt celebrated his fiftieth military-service anniversary. In December, Hitler had got rid of him by removing him from the southern front. In the meantime, Rundstedt had found favor in the Führer's eyes again. On his service anniversary, Hitler had his chief adjutant Schmundt present Rundstedt with a handwritten letter in

March 24, 1942

which he praised “the great merits of the field marshal in war and peace.”¹⁵⁵ At the same time, the news was made public that “Rundstedt, following his recovery, had taken up a position of responsibility again.”

On March 23, Hitler was forced to issue Directive No. 40. It concerned the powers of command along the coasts. It read as follows:¹⁵⁶

Points of Primary Importance

In the near future, the danger of enemy landings on the European coastline will become more and more imminent. The enemy will not fix the time and place of his landing operations on the basis of military considerations alone. Disappointments in other theaters, commitment to allies, and political considerations may seduce him into plans that from a purely military point of view must seem unlikely. Moreover even landing operations with limited goals, should they enable the enemy to gain a coastal foothold, must in any case involve severe disadvantage to our own planning. They would interrupt our coastal sea traffic and tie up strong infantry and air contingents that would then be diverted from commitment in areas of decisive importance. The danger is particularly acute if the enemy succeeds in reaching airbases or in establishing airbases of his own in the territory gained. Furthermore military bases located on or near the coast and sites forming parts of the defense system and outfitted with particularly sophisticated equipment must constitute enticements to local commando operations. Special attention is to be given English preparations for landing operations on the open coast, for which they have assembled a large number of armored landing craft equipped with personnel carriers and heavy ordinance. Moreover there is increased likelihood of parachute and air-to-land operations. [Technical details follow.]

This sounded strange coming from Hitler. Were small allied landing operations capable of significantly upsetting German intentions?! Had he not just publicly declared that he wanted to evacuate the area where the English were planning to land in order to “spare them the difficulties of a landing” and then to “discuss matters” later?¹⁵⁷

But all Hitler’s big talk had resulted in very little. Now, British commandos¹⁵⁸ disquieted him. In the course of the summer, they caused him endless trouble. This led him to the issuing of the infamous *Kommandobefehl* in violation of international law on October 18.¹⁵⁹

On March 24, Hitler once again received King Boris. The following communiqué was published on their meeting:¹⁶⁰

On March 24, the Führer received King Boris of Bulgaria at his headquarters and entered into a long and heartfelt discussion with him. The talks took place in the spirit of the brotherhood in arms founded in the World War and the friendship between Germany and Bulgaria.

March 30, 1942

No matter how much Hitler spoke of the German-Bulgarian brotherhood in arms during the First World War, he could not talk Boris into declaring war on Russia. He was greatly angered by this. During the "Table Talk,"¹⁶¹ Hitler lashed out at Bulgaria, its pro-Russian attitude, and claimed that Turkey was "a far more valuable ally than Bulgaria was."¹⁶²

On March 29, Hitler thanked the members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra by wire for the greetings conveyed to him on their centennial.¹⁶³

On the same day, the English began their "strategic air offensive" with an air raid on Lübeck. This offensive aimed at the destruction of all large German cities (those with a population of over a hundred thousand). Hitler's infamous threat, "we will erase their cities," (*wir werden ihre Städte ausradieren*)¹⁶⁴ now rebounded against Germany in a dreadful manner.

The strategic air offensive by the Royal Air Force, which was to end in the destruction of the city of Würzburg on March 16, 1945,¹⁶⁵ made one German city after another (those with more than a hundred thousand citizens) suffer the same fate as Coventry.¹⁶⁶ Now, the Germans, who had coined the term *coventrieren* ("coventrying"), would no longer speak of it, while the English now referred to "lübecking" in retaliation. Hitler was forced to watch, unable to do anything about it. From now on, he had to limit his "retaliatory attacks" to verbal ones.¹⁶⁷

The catastrophic news about the damage to Lübeck caused Hitler to phone Goebbels from the Wolfsschanze headquarters on March 30. He immediately transferred to him responsibility for rescue efforts during air raids.¹⁶⁸ Previously, such measures had lain in the sphere of responsibility of the ministry of the interior. However, in the Third Reich, one telephone call by Hitler sufficed to change responsibility!

On March 30, Hitler had Field Marshal Milch, who celebrated his fiftieth birthday in Berlin, presented with a handwritten letter and his picture.¹⁶⁹

In the meantime, the responsible men of German jurisprudence had tried to find a way to appease Hitler in the Schlitt case.¹⁷⁰ Schlegelberger and Freisler had met in conference with the president of the Reichsgericht, Dr. Bumke. Not surprisingly, this bourgeois legal expert, who had always found favor with Hitler,¹⁷¹ was better able than the two National Socialist "judicial officers" to find a way out. Since Hitler obviously desired a death sentence, the only remaining question was

April 2, 1942

how to justify such a revision of the earlier sentence. Bumke felt that this called for an “extraordinary objection by the supreme Reich counsel.” This would mean a new trial by the Leipzig Reichsgericht over which he presided. And that was exactly how things came to pass: without due consideration of the Oldenburg Landgericht, Schlitt was transferred to Leipzig. On March 31, 1942, Schlitt was tried by the “Extraordinary Criminal Division of the Court of Appeal,” presided over by Bumke. Of course, he was sentenced to death and executed on April 2 in Dresden.¹⁷² The German judiciary was capable of working quite speedily, if Hitler’s favor was at stake!

However, in this instance, the German judiciary failed to recognize the actual issue at stake. Hitler was interested in the Schlitt case only as a means of obtaining “full discretionary powers” from the Reichstag. And Hitler would not budge on this. In his speech before the Reichstag on April 26,¹⁷³ he cited the Schlitt case as though nothing had happened in the meantime, and did not even mention the new death sentence!

On April 1, Hitler sent the chief editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Wilhelm Weiss, his picture with a personal dedication on his fiftieth birthday.¹⁷⁴

Hitler remained much preoccupied by legal matters. On April 2, for example, he dictated a decree on the execution of a sentence in the Wehrmacht during the war. It read as follows:¹⁷⁵

Berlin, April 2, 1942

The Führer and Supreme Commander

The execution of a sentence in times of war must be quickly adapted to the changing requirements of the military situation. Measures must not be adhered to that under different circumstances might have proved trustworthy.

The opportunities for probation provided by the eastern front must be taken advantage of to a greater extent in the future. In particular, convicts who do not belong to combat units must be afforded the opportunity, insofar as possible through a transfer, to prove their worth in the face of the enemy.

Also, in the future, certain convicts will not be deployed with combat troops, at least not immediately. Unstable elements, who count on escaping service at the front by serving their term of imprisonment, must be discouraged by the improvement and graduation of the execution of a sentence. To this end, convict details are to be set up immediately, which are to be called in for hard labor under dangerous conditions in the theater of operations, if possible in the operational area of the combat troops. In the new regulation for the execution of a sentence, it is essential that all members of the Wehrmacht be treated equally. In principle, the status of one branch of service or formation is to be prevented from being better than that of another.

April 10, 1942

The necessary regulation on the new order for the execution of a sentence will be decreed by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On April 5, Hitler issued Directive No. 41, which revealed his military plan of action in Russia to a certain extent. As mentioned earlier, his objectives now were limited, restricted mainly to the Caucasus and possibly Leningrad. The directive read as follows:¹⁷⁶

The winter fighting in Russia draws to an end. Thanks to the surpassing courage and self-sacrificing commitment of our troops on the eastern front, German arms have been able to repel enemy efforts of the greatest magnitude. The enemy suffered extremely heavy losses in personnel and material. In an effort to exploit apparent initial successes, they largely expended in this one winter the great bulk of the reserves they were holding back for future operations. As soon as weather and terrain conditions permit, the superior German leadership and men must again seize the initiative to impose their will upon the enemy. The goal is to deprive the Soviets once and for all of the living defensive forces still at their disposal and to cut them off as far as possible from the centers supplying them with military resources. To achieve this, all available forces of the German army and of our allies are to be committed. But it is absolutely necessary that the occupied areas in western and northern Europe, especially the coastlines, be secured.

I. General aim: In accordance with the original features of the eastern campaign, the main point is that the army center hold its ground, while in the north Leningrad is taken and a corridor established to the Finns, and on the southern flank a breakthrough is forced into the Caucasus region. In view of the condition in which our forces will be when the winter fighting is over, of the availability of men and supplies, and of the transportation situation, this goal can be reached only step by step. For this reason, all available units are to be massed first in the southern sector in order to eliminate enemy forces before they reach the Don and then secure the oil fields in the Caucasus region and make the Caucasus itself passable. The final encirclement of Leningrad and the taking of the Ingerman region must await either a favorable development in the area around Leningrad itself or the availability of additional units. [Technical details follow.]

During the next days, some honors to statesmen of “befriended” states followed, reminding them not to forget their honors on the Führer’s birthday. On April 6, Hitler received the royal Romanian chief of staff, General Steflea,¹⁷⁷ at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. In addition, he awarded the “marshal of Croatia,” Slavko Kvaternik, the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.¹⁷⁸

On April 10, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Croatian “head of state,” Ante Pavelich:¹⁷⁹

April 20, 1942

On the first anniversary of the existence of the independent state of Croatia, I send Your Excellency my sincere best wishes for your personal welfare and for the prosperous future of the allied Croatian people, which is so actively participating in overpowering Bolshevism and erecting a new European order.

Adolf Hitler

On April 12, Hitler awarded Horthy the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in gold.¹⁸⁰

On April 15, Hitler sent the President of the Republic of Portugal, General de Fragosa Cramona, a "telegram of heartfelt words" on the beginning his new term of office.¹⁸¹

The next day, Hitler awarded King Boris of Bulgaria the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in gold.¹⁸²

On April 17, shortly before the Führer's birthday, uninvited visitors appeared: four-engine Lancaster bombers of the Royal Air Force attacked the MAN factory in Augsburg in broad daylight. The planes flew low, just above the chimneys. While the daring mission cost about two-thirds of the planes, those "senile" English effectively demonstrated their fighting spirit.¹⁸³

On April 19, Hitler awarded the Finnish state president Ryti the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in gold. The Finnish prime minister Rangell received the Grand Cross of the German Eagle.¹⁸⁴

On April 20, Hitler celebrated his fifty-third birthday at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The obligatory communiqué presented a bit of a problem for him. On the one hand, he did not want to appear to be celebrating too much, because of the war. On the other hand, he wanted to make clear how much he had been honored. Finally, he settled on the following version:¹⁸⁵

The Führer spent his birthday at the headquarters. At the beginning of the military briefings, which took place as on any other working day, the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, and the chief of the army general staff, Colonel General Halder, congratulated the Führer on behalf of the army.

Around noon, the Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich, Hermann Göring, who was accompanied by Field Marshal Milch, and Grand Admiral Raeder, conveyed the congratulations of the Luftwaffe and the navy.

Congratulations were likewise conveyed to the headquarters by the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop; Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, Himmler; the NSDAP Reich leader of organization, Dr. Ley; the chief

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of the party chancellery, Bormann; the Reich press chief, Reichsleiter Dr. Dietrich; the chief of the Reich chancellery, Reich Minister Dr. Lammers; and the Reich minister for armament and munitions, Albert Speer. Earlier in the morning, the members of his closest personal staff had congratulated the Führer, headed by Major General Schmundt and SS Gruppenführer Schaub.

Of course, Hitler had received congratulatory telegrams from Victor Emmanuel III and from Mussolini. He thanked them in the following telegrams:¹⁸⁶

My heartfelt thanks to Your Majesty for the friendly best wishes, which you conveyed to me on the occasion of my birthday today, for the future of the German Volk as well as for my personal welfare. It is my unshakable conviction that, together with our ally Italy, we will emerge greater and stronger than before from this joint struggle.

Adolf Hitler

My heartfelt thanks, Duce, for the friendly best wishes, which you conveyed to me on my birthday today in your own name, and in the name of Italy's Fascist government and the Italian people. More than ever, I share your conviction that Germany and its allies, united by their common will to fight, will victoriously conclude this war for the future of our people.

Adolf Hitler

Congratulations by other heads of state and statesmen were scarce, of course, since by now Germany was at war with the most important states. Neutral states were reluctant to send congratulatory greetings to Hitler. On the other hand, the number of the communiqués could not possibly be shorter now than before. And so, the names cited in the official headquarters publications were rather obscure. In part, these men had never before been heard of:¹⁸⁷

In addition to the already published congratulatory telegrams from the king of Italy, the emperor of Ethiopia, and the Duce, further telegraphic congratulations were received from the following: state president Hácha; the king of Romania; the Romanian head of state, Marshal Antonescu; the king of Bulgaria; the king of Denmark; the regent of the kingdom of Hungary; the Hungarian prime minister; the head of state of Croatia; the marshal of Croatia, Kvaternik; the president of Finland; the president of the Slovak republic; the Spanish head of state; the president of Portugal; the French head of state, Marshal Pétain; the prince of Liechtenstein; the emperor of Manchukuo; and the president of the National Chinese government. Moreover, the former king of Bulgaria, Ferdinand; the crown prince of Italy; the royal Italian foreign minister, Count Ciano; the imperial Japanese war minister, General Tojo; and the chief of the imperial Japanese general staff, General Suyiama, among others, relayed their congratulations to the Führer by telegram.

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The Führer has conveyed his thanks for the best wishes by telegram.

In addition to the already mentioned congratulatory telegrams by foreign heads of state, heads of government, and statesmen, congratulations were received from the president of the Thai regency council, Prince Dibaba; from the Slovak prime minister, Tuka; from the Romanian vice prime minister, Antonescu; from the Croatian foreign minister, Lorkovic; from the French prime minister, Laval; as well as from the Greek prime minister, Tsolakoglou.

On April 22, as was his custom, Hitler published the following expression of his gratitude:¹⁸⁸

This year, I again received so many best wishes on April 20 from all Gaus of the Reich and from abroad that I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have thought of me.

Adolf Hitler

At the same time, Hitler issued the following appeal for the third Kriegshilfswerk of the German Red Cross:¹⁸⁹

Führer Headquarters, April 22, 1942

German Volk!

A winter of the most difficult battles and of the heaviest burdens lies behind us. In its course, the German soldier has passed a trial that by far surpassed all sacrifices previously made by him in this war. Superhuman demands, of a physical as well as psychological nature, had to be made on him. He has fulfilled them with a willingness to sacrifice, in comparison with which pale all burdens and privations suffered by the homeland, no matter how difficult they may have been and still are in each individual instance.

When this winter put us to the severest test, millions of German soldiers thought of their homeland in order to fight for their wives and children, for the existence and future of our Volk, against a barbaric enemy, whose victory would have meant the end of everything. The homeland also knows this. It has understood that its fate lies exclusively in the hands of the German soldier. What the front sacrifices for our Volk, the homeland will probably never be able to repay. It should nevertheless pay off at least a small part of its debt by helping as best it can in healing the wounds that this war has dealt our soldiers.

For a third time, I appeal to the German Volk on behalf of the Kriegshilfswerk of the German Red Cross. The fulfillment of this duty will represent a modest expression of gratitude to our soldiers by the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft. As their Führer and supreme commander, I expect that each German will realize more than ever before the heroism of the front and will attempt by his sacrifice to thank our brave men.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler had planned to spend the next few days as follows: on Sunday, April 26, he wanted to summon the Reichstag in order to give

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a triumphant report on his achievements during this “most difficult winter,” and then, using the Schlitt case, he wanted to have himself declared supreme law lord with full discretionary power.

If all went well—and how could anyone doubt this—then he would permit himself a holiday on the Obersalzberg. So as to have an excuse to do so, he had scheduled a conference with the Duce for the end of April. He would meet with him for several days in Salzburg and at Klessheim Castle.¹⁹⁰ And so, the German ambassador in Rome, von Mackensen, was instructed on April 23 to arrange such a meeting in accordance with Hitler’s wishes. This did not suit Mussolini, however, who requested a postponement of the conference until early May.¹⁹¹

It is easy to imagine how outraged Hitler was at his friend Mussolini’s response. His vacation plans for the Obersalzberg should be upset because Mussolini refused to obey? Such a postponement was completely out of the question.

On April 24, Hitler telephoned Rome, claiming that a postponement was not possible “because of reasons beyond his control.” Something beyond the Führer’s control, that was unheard of. Was that supposed to mean that the schedule for the meeting was in Eva Braun’s control? In any event, Mussolini gave in, and his visit was set for April 29 and 30.

Though everything was settled now, Hitler still felt that it was necessary to add a little drama. He went to the telephone and called Goebbels, pretending that he was unsure of what would be the best time for the Reichstag to convene. The Führer wished to ask Goebbels for advice! Apparently, a lengthy discussion ensued,¹⁹² although the date remained fixed: Sunday, April 26.

On the evening of April 24, Hitler left East Prussia aboard his special train. The next day, he arrived in Berlin at noon. He immediately conferred with Goebbels¹⁹³ at the Reich Chancellery, discussing “the question of vegetarianism at great length.” Eating meat was “injurious to mankind.” He said that he intended “to tackle this problem also after the war.”

On another topic, Goebbels reported that Hitler was “extraordinarily incensed” by the escape of the French general Giraud, who had managed to flee from the Königstein fortress in Saxony to the Alsace region and from there to Switzerland.¹⁹⁴

One day later, Goebbels lunched with Hitler. Goebbels felt depressed because of the heavy English air raids on Rostock. However,

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Hitler immediately made him feel better by juggling the numbers and claiming that the German air raid on Bath, a city in central England, had been far more devastating than the English raid on Rostock. This was a boldfaced lie, but Goebbels swallowed it, as usual:¹⁹⁵

... he gives me some more figures on our attack on Bath. According to these, it was far more extensive than the one which the English made on Rostock. The Führer declared that he would repeat attacks like this night after night, until the English have had enough of their terror attacks.

At 3:00 p.m. on April 26, the Greater German Reichstag, which had been elected on April 10, 1938, met for its sixth and last session at the Kroll Opera House.

Hitler began his speech as follows:¹⁹⁶

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!

On December 11, 1941, when I was last able to speak to you, I had the privilege of accounting for the course of events during the past year. The full extent of their historic greatness and continued political significance will perhaps not be appreciated until centuries have passed. Only a few weeks after the suppression of the revolt in Belgrade, which was instigated jointly by England and Moscow, Europe realized, perhaps for the first time in centuries, the common threat from the east. The existence or nonexistence of our continent has often depended on the successful defense against it. For many men, the causes of the bloody war, which has been forced on us following September 1939, have now become clearer.

For this war does not share any longer the characteristics of the inner-European confrontations that we have previously grown accustomed to. Increasingly, the deep impression has taken hold that the usual or reasonable interests of individual countries do not suffice to explain the reasons for this historic struggle. Instead, it seems to be one of those elemental confrontations which, by shaking up the world once every few millennia, herald the millennium of a new era.

Many of the historical figures who appear in its course are no more aware of the profound meaning of their mission and actions than the simple soldier is in the context of a larger military operation. Such eruptive epochs are so long that the individual human being finds it difficult to see the context and even the significance of his life in relation to the overall course of the events. In spite of this, even where there appears to be no sense to or benefit of such a process, which shakes up people and even continents, there are beneficiaries. Many believe they have to drive, but they are only the driven. Others want to strike and, in the end, they are the ones who are stricken.

When, on September 3, 1939, after endless German endeavors for peace, the new Reich was presented with the declaration of war by France and England, after these states pushed Poland to the front as the chosen force, issuing it a *carte blanche*, one had to despair of the reason of a world which, apparently

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without reason, virtually forced the catastrophe, instead of attempting to prevent the misfortune of an insane war.

Hitler then discussed at great length the history of the British Empire and the English policy during the First World War. This was followed by a tirade directed against England, which now worked together with the Bolsheviks and rejected his "peace proposals."

No matter with what great hypocritical friendship its archcapitalists welcome the Bolshevik statesmen, no matter how tenderly its archbishops embrace the bloody beasts of Bolshevik atheism, the more they resort to lies, hypocrisy, and fraud in order to cover morally for the unnatural coalition with this empire before their own people and the rest of mankind, the less they will be in a position actually to deceive the perceptive people, in order to prevent the natural evolution of an inevitable historical development. There is a wise saying dating from antiquity, namely that the gods first blind those whom they have destined to damnation [actually: "the gods first drive insane those whom they wish to destroy"].

I do not know whether all Englishmen today still consider it a wise and enlightened act to have dismissed the numerous opportunities for an understanding, which I had proposed ever since the year 1935. Or whether today they are still as convinced that it was very clever to have turned down my offers for an alliance, which I had renewed even on September 1, 1939, and to have rejected my peace proposals after the Polish and French campaigns.

I also know another commandment. It says that man must give an added push to what the gods have destined to fall.¹⁹⁷ So now what has to happen will happen.

Naturally, it was the Jews who were to blame for all that.

When understanding and reason have apparently been silenced in international life, then this does not necessarily mean that there is not a rational will somewhere, even if from the outside only stupidity and stubbornness can be discerned as causes.

The British Jew, Lord Disraeli,¹⁹⁸ once said that the racial question is the key to world history. We National Socialists have been raised in this belief. By devoting ourselves to the essence of the racial question, we have obtained clarification of many events that would otherwise appear to defy understanding.

The hidden powers that drove England into the first World War in the year 1914 were Jews. The power that paralyzed us at that time and finally forced us to surrender under the slogan that Germany should not be allowed to carry its flag home victorious was a Jewish one. Jews engineered the revolution by our Volk and thereby robbed us of our powers of further resistance.¹⁹⁹ After 1939, Jews maneuvered the British empire into a dangerous crisis. Jews were the carriers of the Bolshevik infection which once threatened to destroy Europe. At the same time, they were the warmongers in the ranks of the plutocracies. A

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circle of Jews in America once drove this country into the war against all national interest, simply and solely because of Jewish-capitalist motives. And President Roosevelt, lacking capabilities of his own, has the support of said brain trust, whose leading men I need not mention by name: they are only Jews.

Through them, as in the year 1917, the United States of America was driven step by step into a war without reason and sense, by a Jewish-infected president and his completely Jewish cohorts, against nations which have never harmed America, and against people from whom America can never profit.

What sense does a war make that is waged by a state representing a space without a people, against people without space? In this war, politically speaking, it is not a question of the interests of individual people, but a question of the confrontation between nations that seek to secure life on this earth for their members and people, and nations who have become the instrument of an international world parasite. German and allied soldiers have become well-acquainted with the actual activities of this Jewish-international warmongering in a country where Jewry has set up an exclusive dictatorship, preached it as the idol of a future human race to which, as once here with us, other people's inferior subjects have incomprehensibly become enslaved. At this moment, as always in its history, the seemingly aging Europe again raises high the torch of a realization, and its men march today as the representatives of a new and better order, as the true youth of the social and national freedom of the world.

Now Hitler preached that, in the last winter, he had left the "most difficult struggle of his life" behind him in order to fulfill a "sacred mission."

If I speak to you today in the name of this true youth of Europe and therefore of a younger world, then I do this with the sentiment of a man who, for a sacred mission, has left behind him the most difficult struggle of his life. Further, I speak to you as the commander of armies. They are mastering a fate that is the most difficult trial, the kind which Providence only imposes on those who are destined for the greatest things.

If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give His blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible.²⁰⁰

My Deputies!

During this winter, a battle of the world (*Weltkampf*) was decided, a battle the problems of which far surpassed the tasks that should and can be resolved in a normal war.

When, in November 1918, the undefeated German Volk, befuddled by the phraseology of the then American president Wilson, laid down its arms and left the battlefield, it did so under the influence of that Jewish race that now hoped to construct a secure bastion for Bolshevism in the heart of Europe. We know the theoretical principles and the cruel reality of this international plague. It is called the reign of the proletariat but it is the dictatorship of Jewry! It is the

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extermination of the national establishment and intelligentsia of nations, the domination of the proletariat—by that time leaderless and therefore rendered defenseless due to its own fault—by the solely Jewish international criminals. What happened to such a cruel extent in Russia—the extermination of countless millions of leading persons—was to be continued in Germany. If this intention failed, then it was because our Volk still had too many healthy powers of resistance, but insofar as the establishment on the Bolshevik side is concerned, which consisted only of Jews, it was due above all to the lack of courage and to the unanimous approval by the proletariat for the execution in Germany of what had succeeded in Russia. In individual parts of the Reich at least, we witnessed the beginnings of this development and we eliminated it at the risk of numerous idealists' lives.

On Hungary, the curse of this satanic work weighed more heavily. There, too, it was only possible to break the power of Jewish might by the use of national force. The name of the man who, as the leader in the struggle against this crime, became the savior of Hungary lives on today among us as that of one of the first representatives of the incipient European uprising.

The most difficult confrontation with this threatening destruction of people and state took place in Italy. In a heroic rebellion, Italian war veterans and Italian youths, led by a uniquely blessed man, defeated the compromise between democratic cowardice and Bolshevik force in a bloody struggle. They have put in its place a new positive idea of people and state.

I recommend every German to study the history of the Fascist revolution. Not without being deeply moved, he will follow this man's path. His movement has so much in common with ours that we feel its struggle to be part of our own fate. Only with the victory of Fascism could one speak of the incipient salvation of Europe.

Only then, the conglomerate of ideas of a destructive and disintegrating nature was replaced not by the force of the bayonet but by a truly constructive new idea. For the first time, not only were Bolsheviks defeated in a state but also and above all Marxists were won over. Won over not only for the reshaping of a better and healthier social order, which regards the state not as the protector of a certain social class but as the guarantor of the standard of living of all.

At the same time when these history-making events were taking place, the National Socialist movement undertook the fulfillment of its mission in our own Volk. Here, too, the hour came when—in the confrontation between Jewish internationalism and the National Socialist idea of people and state—healthy nature prevailed.

Also in most other European countries, this conflict occurred. However, there was a difference in that it was at first overshadowed by compromise in some countries; in others, it was temporarily eliminated by public funds. We all remember the next great and decisive confrontation in Spain, where the leadership of a single man forced a clear and final decision. Following a bloody civil war, the national revolution there likewise defeated the Bolshevik archenemy.

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With the increasing recognition of Jews as the parasitic germs of these diseases, state after state was forced in the last years to take a position on this fateful question for nations. Imbued with the instinct of self-preservation, they had to take those measures which were suited to protect for good their own people against this international poison.

Even if Bolshevik Russia is the concrete product of this Jewish infection, one should not forget that democratic capitalism creates the conditions for it. In this way, the Jews prepare what the same Jews execute in the second stage of this process. In the first stage, they deprive the majority of men of their rights and reduce them to helpless slaves. Or, as they themselves put it, they make them expropriated proletarians in order to spur them on, as a fanaticized mob, to destroy the foundations of their state. Later, this is followed by the extermination of their own national intelligentsia, and finally by the elimination of all cultural foundations that, as a thousand-year-old heritage, could provide these people with their inner worth or serve as a warning to the future. What remains after that is the beast in man and a Jewish class that, as parasites in leadership positions, will in the end destroy the fertile soil on which it thrives.

On this process—which according to Mommsen results in the Jewish-engineered decomposition of people and states—the young, awakening Europe has now declared war. Proud and honorable people in other parts of the world have allied themselves to it. They will be joined by hundreds of millions of oppressed men who, irrespective of how their present leaders may view this, will one day break their chains. The end of these liars will come, liars who claim to protect the world against a threatening domination but who actually only seek to save their own world-rule.

We are now in the midst of this mighty, truly historic awakening of the people, partly as leading, acting, or performing men. On the one side stand the men of the democracies that form the heart of Jewish capitalism, with their whole dead weight of dusty theories of state, their parliamentary corruption, their outdated social order, their Jewish brain trusts, their Jewish newspapers, stock exchanges, and banks—a combination, a mix of political and economic racketeers of the worst sort; on their side, there is the Bolshevik state, that is, that number of brutish men over whom the Jew, as in the Soviet Union, wields his bloody whip. And on the other side stand those nations who fight for their freedom and independence, for the securing of their people's daily bread.

So it is the so-called "haves" from the cellars of the Kremlin to the vaults of New York's banking houses against the "have-nots," that is, those nations for which a single bad harvest means misery and hunger. In spite of all the diligence of their inhabitants, they are unable to obtain their daily bread at a time when, in the states and countries of the "haves," wheat, corn, coffee, and so on, are thrown into the fire in order to achieve somewhat higher prices. However, the battleground where the decision will fall is situated in the east of Europe.

I spoke to you about the successes of the years of fighting lying behind us, my Deputies, whenever time and circumstances commanded and made it

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possible. The last time I spoke about the fight in the past year was on December 11, 1941.

I would like to stress here that my speeches are primarily addressed to the German Volk and to its friends. I do not speak in order to convince people who, because of stupidity or ill intentions, fail deliberately to see the truth and do not wish to hear about it. Because if I compare the true course of events with the conclusions drawn from them by Mr. Churchill—to cite one example—then there appears so wide a discrepancy between the events and their interpretation that every attempt at reconciling these contradictory views must be futile. Since September 1939, indeed ever since the beginning of the seizure of power by National Socialism, I have made mistake after mistake and faux pas after faux pas.

By contrast, there was not a single phase that Mr. Churchill does not claim to represent an “encouragement” for his cause. He will probably claim this to the end.

That England declared war on us was an encouraging sign of its strength. That others found themselves willing to be led to the slaughter for British egotism was no less encouraging. A mere meeting between Churchill and Daladier or Paul Reynaud produced encouraging symptoms. Discussions between two or more Allied generals are as encouraging evidence of the military progress of the democratic cause as the fireside talks of the sick man in the White House are proof of the intellectual progress. When Mr. Cripps flew to Moscow for the first time, this was no less encouraging than his return flight from India. That General MacArthur was able to flee the Philippines just in time was likewise an encouraging factor. It is just as encouraging when twenty Englishmen with blackened faces and rubber soles, aboard a British inflatable raft, succeed in sneaking up to the coasts occupied by us and land, only to take off again at the appearance of a German patrol.²⁰¹ If an émigré government, that is, an assembly of zeroes, issues a declaration against Germany, then this seems encouraging, just as when Mr. Churchill announces the destruction of German U-boats, or speaks of a new invention, or a new offensive, or a second front, and so on.

Nothing can be done about this. Every people has its own type of encouragements. For example, I once regarded it as encouraging that we succeeded within eighteen days in sweeping away the Polish state with its thirty-three million men in a number of mighty battles of annihilation (*Vernichtungsschlachten*). I further regarded it as encouraging that, in this period, neither France nor England dared to feel their way up to the West Wall. I believe that it was also encouraging that we could land in Norway and that we did not do so at night with our faces blackened and with rubber soles, but in broad daylight and in climbing boots with spikes, and that we gained complete control of this Norway in barely six weeks. It was likewise very encouraging for all of us to see how the British Expeditionary Force was thrown out of Norway within a few weeks.

I likewise believe that we have good reason to find encouraging that it was possible for us in barely six weeks to beat the French-British armies to complete

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annihilation, to gain control of Holland for good in not even one week and of Belgium in barely three weeks, to defeat the British forces, to capture them, or to force them out to sea at Dunkirk. I myself felt that it was particularly encouraging that, together with Italy, we secured great successes not only in France but also in North Africa.

It was likewise encouraging in my eyes that, together with our allies, we were able within a few weeks to smash the Serbian rebellion inspired by Washington and London and engineered by Moscow. It was further encouraging for us to see that the British Expeditionary Force quickly retreated first to the Peloponnesian peninsula and then across the sea to Crete, to the extent that it was not destroyed or captured by us.

It was no less encouraging for the German Volk that, since June 22 of last year, we have been able, together with our allies, to repel from our borders the Bolshevik danger and to force it back over a thousand kilometers, and that, at the same time, our U-boats and Luftwaffe, as well as our other naval forces, sank more than sixteen million GRT [gross registered tons] of enemy merchant ships, continue to sink them today, and will sink them in the future. I regard it as an encouragement that we were able to adjust to our standard the gauges of the railroad system in the expanses of the east and to operate this system, which at this time is larger than that of the entire English motherland.

On the topic of the Japanese deeds of heroism, that unique triumphant march, I can only say that, in our eyes, they are likewise very encouraging. And in this manner, in response to the encouraging elements of which Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt speak, I could list countless deeds that represent an encouragement for us. As I see it, the most encouraging thing for Germany and its allies is that Mr. Churchill and Roosevelt work in London and Washington, and not in Berlin or Rome. The English will not believe this, but that is the way it is!

After this tirade, Hitler spoke again of what he had accomplished during the last winter. He justified taking over the army command, which actually served primarily to satisfy his lust for power, by claiming that it represented "obligation of honor in the most difficult hour." Hitler declared as follows:

My Deputies! Men of the Reichstag!

When I spoke to you the last time, a winter had set in in the east, the like of which Europe had not seen for over a hundred forty years²⁰² even in this area. In a few days, the thermometer dropped from around zero degrees to minus forty-seven degrees and below. Probably nobody can appreciate what that means unless he has experienced it himself. Four weeks earlier than anticipated, all further operations came to a sudden end. The front, which was in the middle of a forward movement, could not be allowed to be swept back, nor could it be left in the positions taken up at that moment. Therefore, a withdrawal to a general line stretching from Taganrog to Lake Ladoga was made. I can say today that, while this process can be easily described here, it was

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infinitely difficult to carry it out in reality. The lightning impact of such a cold wave, which even in these areas occurs only once every hundred years, paralyzed not only the men but also and above all the machinery. There were moments when both threatened to freeze. Looking at the vastness of this east, you also have to consider the psychological strain which destroyed the French army in 1812, and whose memory is still capable of paralyzing the vigor of weak natures.²⁰³

The main burden of the battle lay with the army and the allied foreign units. Therefore, I felt it was an obligation of honor for me to tie my name at this moment to the fate of the army.

As a soldier, I felt so very responsible for the conduct of this battle that I would have regarded it as unbearable in this most difficult hour not to confront personally whatever Providence appeared to have in store for us. That we succeeded in completely mastering the threatening catastrophe, I owe primarily and exclusively to the bravery, the loyalty, and the superhuman capacity for suffering of our brave soldiers. They alone have made it possible for me to hold a front against which the enemy began to throw hecatombs of men.

For months on end, ever new, barely trained masses from the expanses of central Asia or the Caucasus assaulted our lines, which, especially at night, could be held only in the form of strongpoints. It is impossible to lie in an open field without cover at minus thirty, forty degrees or lower. If, in spite of this, the Russians succeeded in pushing or seeping through these barely fortified positions with ever new waves of attack, then this was possible only by sacrificing hundreds of thousands of men.

But the problem that weighed on us most heavily at this time was the question of supplies. Neither the German men nor the German panzers, nor regrettably our German locomotives were prepared for the onslaught of the cold. And, still, the existence or nonexistence of our armies depended on the maintenance of our supply lines. You will therefore understand and surely approve that, in one case or another, I acted ruthlessly and harshly in order to overcome a destiny to which we might otherwise have succumbed, by fighting with the fiercest determination.

Because, my Deputies, when in the year 1812, the Napoleonic armies were swept back from Moscow and were finally wiped out, minus twenty-five was the lowest temperature. This year, however, the lowest temperature we measured at one location along the eastern front was precisely fifty-two degrees below zero.²⁰⁴

In summing up, if I give my view on the accomplishments of the troops themselves, I can only say that they all have fulfilled their duty to the utmost. But surely the German infantry once again ranks at the top. On the march for thousands of kilometers, forever on the attack, it plunged into a winter practically overnight. It had neither anticipated it in this form, nor had it ever before witnessed it. We all know the paralyzing influence of the cold. It puts man to sleep and kills him painlessly. That we were spared this fate in these critical weeks, we owe to the superhuman fitness and strength of will not only of the soldiers, but also and above all of the noncommissioned officers, and

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officers up to those generals who, in realizing the approaching danger and at great risk to their own lives, spurred on the men time and again and formed them into that sworn community that today is probably the best the German Volk has ever called its own. In speaking of this infantry, I would today like to underline for the first time the constant and exemplary bravery and toughness of my SS divisions and SS police units. From the start, I regarded them as an unshakable unit, just as obedient, loyal, and brave in wartime as in peacetime.

However, in the ranks of this infantry also fought the panzer grenadiers and panzer destroyers, engineers, gunners, signalers, and, last but not least, the drivers of our columns. They all deserve the homeland's gratitude. Through its heroic sorties, the Luftwaffe has helped these brave soldiers time and again, and not only through its valiant pilots of fighters, bombers, spotting and transport planes, but also, wherever necessary, through its flak and Luftwaffe battalions which on the ground unshakably defended their airfields and finally also defended the especially threatened sections of the front.

In the fierce cold, construction teams of the Todt organization and the *Standarte Speer* helped time and again to free arterial roads from interference and to defend the traffic routes—if necessary with their own blood—against the partisans. Men of the Labor Service fought with the spade and the rifle. Superhuman efforts were demanded of the medical officers and medical noncommissioned officers, the stretcher-bearers, the male nurses, and, above all, the female nurses of the German Red Cross and the NSV.

Railroad engineers set up ever new lines, bridges, and crossings at a time when the steel was so brittle that tracks began to crack when used. In spite of great weariness, train crews and switchmen tried to help their comrades at the front, because there were times when everything depended on a few single railway sections and trains. That all this was achieved, we owe to the death-defying courage and fighting morale of countless and nameless heroes who will live on through their unfading glorious deeds in the history of our Volk.

It would therefore be a great injustice if I failed on this day to commemorate those who have shared our suffering. It is hardly necessary to speak about our Finnish comrades in arms. They were so excellent and so experienced in this battle that they can only serve as examples to us. In particular, they remained calm in the face of Russian units breaking in or seeping through. By closing their front ranks, they began with the annihilation of the Bolsheviks operating behind their backs. If I start from the north, then I also have to mention the soldiers of one division from the south of Europe who went through everything at Lake Ilmen that our own men had to go through.

When the Spanish division one day returns to its homeland, we cannot neglect appreciation of their loyalty and bravery until death. All other units of our Hungarian, Slovak, and Croatian allies deserve the same evaluation: they have fulfilled their mission with the greatest bravery and reliability. The three Italian divisions remained in their place all winter in spite of the cold, which was particularly painful for them. Thanks to their bravery, every Russian breakthrough was doomed there as well. The same applies to the brave soldiers of the allied Romanian army, under the command of Marshal Antonescu.

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There, as everywhere else along the front, a gradual welding together of the various European nations in the face of the common enemy was notable. This applied not only to the Germanic volunteers with the SS units, but also to the Belgian and French participants in this joint venture. But also Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, and Tartars took part in the fight against the Bolshevik enemy of the world. The air forces of our allies, too, dealt the enemy heavy losses, starting with the Finnish down to the Italian fighter pilots.

In the course of these mighty, historic successes, it was necessary for me to intervene only in a few cases. Only when nerves failed, obedience faltered, or a sense of duty was lacking in performing tasks, did I make hard decisions. I did so empowered by the sovereign right that I believe has been accorded to me by my German Volk. For the homeland's supporting me in this struggle, I wish to say thanks not only in my own name but also and above all in the name of our soldiers.

It fills me with great pride and profound satisfaction that the education of our Volk through National Socialism is increasingly becoming apparent. While the party has by far the greatest number not only of its members but also of its leaders at the front—millions of men from the political organization, the SA, the National Socialist Motorized Corps, and so on, do their duty as soldiers—their leadership truly serves as an example. It helps not only the frequently pressed homeland through its organization of the labor front and the National Socialist People's Welfare Organization, but also the soldiers in the field.

My appeal for a wool collection has made it possible within the shortest time, together with many organizational improvements, to give the troops warmer clothing than possible before. Therefore, we may all feel proud—and I say so at this moment—particularly of the soldiers in the front lines. We have overcome a fate that brought another man²⁰⁵ to his knees a hundred thirty years ago. The trial that this winter represented for the front and the homeland should serve as a lesson to all of us. From a purely organizational point of view, I have made the necessary dispositions to prevent a repetition of a similar state of emergency. No matter where the coming winter finds us, the German Reichsbahn will do a better job than in the previous winter. From locomotives to panzers, tractors, and trucks, the army in the east will be better equipped. For the individual man, however, even in the event that a similar natural disaster repeats itself,²⁰⁶ experience and work will prevent the development of a situation similar to the one we have witnessed. That I am determined to do everything in order to be able to fulfill these tasks, you will not doubt, my old comrades in arms.

All of a sudden, Hitler addressed his main concern, namely, to have the Reichstag issue him again complete discretionary powers and to appoint him "Supreme Law Lord."

In order to do so, I expect the following:

That the nation accords me the right to intervene immediately and act accordingly wherever there is no unconditional obedience and action in the

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service of the greater mission, which is a question of "to be or not to be." Front, homeland, the transportation system, the administration, and the judiciary must be subject to only one thought, namely, the struggle for victory. Nobody can in this period insist on acquired rights; instead, he must know that today there are only duties.

I therefore ask the German Reichstag for an explicit confirmation that I possess the legal right to order everybody to fulfill his duties, or if the case dictates to sentence, to a dishonorable dismissal whoever, in my view, fails conscientiously to fulfill his duty, or to relieve him of duty and position, irrespective of his person and acquired rights.

It is precisely because it is a question of a few exceptions among millions of decent men that above all the rights of these exceptions today there stands one common duty.

I am therefore not interested in whether or not, in the present emergency situations, vacation can be accorded to every official or every employee. And I also refuse to tolerate that this vacation, which cannot be accorded, will be given credit for in later years.

If anybody has the right to request a leave of absence, then this would have to be first our frontline soldiers, and second our workers for the front. And if, for months, I have not been in a position to grant this leave of absence to the front in the east as a whole, then nobody in the homeland should come to me insisting on his office's "acquired right" to leave. I myself have the right to refuse this, because—as these persons may not be aware—I have not even taken three days of vacation for myself since 1933.²⁰⁷

I likewise expect the German judiciary to understand that the nation does not exist for it, but that it exists for the nation. This means that the world, which includes Germany, should not perish so that a formal law can live, but that Germany should live, no matter what the formal opinions of the judiciary may be. To mention only one example, I fail to comprehend why a criminal, who marries in the year 1937 and batters his wife until she finally becomes mentally ill and dies as the result of the last battering, is sentenced to five years' imprisonment²⁰⁸ at a time when tens of thousands of honorable German men must die in order to save their homeland from destruction through Bolshevism, and, most importantly, to protect their women and children. From now on, I will intervene in such cases and I will dismiss from office those judges who obviously fail to recognize the dictates of the moment.

The accomplishments of the German soldier, the German worker, the farmer, our women in the cities and in the country, millions of people of our middle classes, and their sacrifices for the sake of victory demand a congenial altitude in those who have been appointed by the Volk itself to guard its interests. At this time, there can be no highhandedness and acquired rights. Instead, we all are only the obedient servants of our Volk's interests.

My Deputies! Men of the Reichstag!

We have a mighty winter battle behind us. The hour will come when the front loses its stiffness again. Then history will decide who won this winter: the attacker, who idiotically sacrificed masses of his men, or the defender, who

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simply held his positions. Week after week, I read about the mighty threats of our enemies. You know that I regard my mission as far too sacred and serious ever to allow me to be careless. What can be done by man to prevent danger, I have done and will continue to do in the future. And to what extent our preparations for the overcoming of this danger were sufficient will be shown by the future. The great warlords of England and the United States of America do not frighten and terrify me. In my eyes, generals like MacArthur do not possess miraculous abilities, as the British press believes, but at best the ability for running away. What I do admire is the modesty of my enemies in assessing the greatness of their own successes or themselves. Should the idea of continuing the aerial warfare with new means against the civilian population prevail in England, then I would like to say the following to all the world:

Mr. Churchill began this war in May 1940. I warned and waited for four months. Then came a time when I was forced to act. The man who is solely responsible for this type of combat then began to bemoan it. Now, too, my waiting is not weakness. May this man not again wail and whimper if I am now forced to give a response that will bring much suffering to his own people. From now on, I will retaliate blow for blow²⁰⁹ until this criminal falls and his work dies.

If I look at the world we embody and at all the men whom I am fortunate to have as friends and allies, when I further look at the group of my political leaders in the Reich, at my Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, at my ministers, and so on, at my Reichsmarschall, field marshals, admirals, colonel generals, and the numerous other leaders at the fronts, then I look with the greatest confidence to a future where not clowns but men will make history. The war in the east will be continued. The Bolshevik colossus will be beaten by us until it is smashed. And against England, the German U-boats will be increasingly brought to bear. In the autumn of 1939, after he sank about ten U-boats nearly every day, Mr. Churchill assured the English people that he would overcome the danger of the U-boats. Now, I wish to assure him that this danger will more likely overcome him. At another point, I have already stated that the freezing of the German U-boat deployment last year was exclusively due to my efforts which were directed at avoiding every conceivable occasion for a conflict with America. However, this could not prevent the president of the American Union, driven by his Jewish patrons, from attempting to restrict the German conduct of the war by ever new measures and to make U-boat warfare impossible for us through declarations in violation of international law.

Therefore, we were gratified that the valiant Japanese people decided to respond to the impudent provocations by this lunatic in the only way possible in the eyes of its own people and world history. The German U-boats were finally released on the oceans in the full sense of the word. And even if, nearly every week, the British-American press twaddles about a new invention that will lead to the irretrievable loss of the U-boats, this is no newer than the fact that our German and allied U-boats and weapons improve from year to year in the same way. What the German Navy has achieved in spite of its numerically

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small size far surpasses what our far greater navy was capable of achieving in the World War.

What our U-boats are capable of will be proved month after month. Because, contrary to the tipsy statements by Churchill in the autumn of 1939 on the end of the German U-boats, I can assure him that their number will increase at a steady pace every month and that today it has already far surpassed the maximum number of U-boats in the World War.

If the Italian-German cooperation in the Mediterranean has led to an ever closer comradeship and to ever increasing successes, then Germany's cooperation with Italy, Japan, and the other allies will bring equally great results in other theaters of the war. That provoking Japan to enter this war was perhaps the most disingenuous and stupid act by our enemies has already been proved by the few months of heroic struggle by this people. I do not know whether today all Englishmen still firmly believe that the political methods of Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt were correct, and that the deployment in this war was ever in keeping with a possible profit.

We Germans have everything to win in this struggle of "to be or not to be," because losing this war would anyway be our end. Central Asian barbarism would sweep across Europe as at the time of the invasions by Huns and Mongols. Nobody knows this better than the German soldier and the nations allied to him, who are getting to know the essence of the Bolshevik liberation of mankind at the front, who are seeing with their own eyes what the paradise of the worker and peasant looks like in reality, and who has described it correctly: National Socialism and Fascism, or our enemies. England cannot win this war. It will lose. And then perhaps the realization will finally go down in its history that one should not entrust the fate of people and states to cynical drunkards or lunatics.²¹⁰

In this struggle, truth will win in the end! And it is on our side!

That Providence has chosen me and allows me to lead the German Volk in such a great age is my great pride. I will unconditionally tie my name and my life to its fate. I address no other request to the Almighty than to bless us in the future as in the past and to preserve my life for as long as it is necessary in His eyes for the fateful struggle of the German Volk. For there is no greater glory than the honor to be the Führer of a Volk in difficult times and, therefore, the bearer of the responsibility! And I know no greater happiness than the awareness that this Volk is my German one.

Afterwards, an insecure and hesitant Göring delivered his address. He informed the deputies of the "resolution" desired and worded by Hitler, which they were to pass as a type of "Super Enabling Act," so to speak. It read as follows:²¹¹

There can be no doubt that, in the present time of war in which the German Volk struggle for "to be or not to be," the Führer must possess the right claimed by him to do all that serves the struggle for victory or contributes to it. Therefore—without being bound by existing regulations—in his capacity

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as the Führer of the nation, as supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, as head of government, and supreme bearer of the executive power, as supreme Law Lord, and as leader of the party, the Führer must be able at all times to order every German—whether he is a common soldier or officer, low or high-ranking administrator, or judge, leading or lesser functionary in the party, worker or employee—to fulfill his duties by all means that appear appropriate to him; and if he neglects these duties, the Führer must be able to assign him a suitable punishment following a conscientious examination, irrespective of so-called acquired rights, and, in particular, without initiating prescribed procedures, to relieve him of his office, rank, or position.

Of course, the qualification that the Führer could proceed “without being bound by existing regulations” was crucial in this context.

The sequence in which Hitler listed his various functions, in accordance with their importance, was likewise interesting:

1. “Führer of the nation.” This meant head of state, the former office of Reich president.

2. “Supreme commander of the Wehrmacht.” This function was connected to the office of Führer or Reich president.

3. “Head of government.” This office of Reich chancellor, which Hitler had once sought so fervently, had apparently lost in significance in his eyes to such an extent that he felt it was not necessary to refer to it by name.

4. “Supreme bearer of the executive power.” Hitler had not previously made pretenses to this function. Normally, the head of the government was the bearer of the executive power as well; and this was the case at least since January 30, 1934, when the sovereignty of the Länder in police affairs had been suspended. However, Hitler now placed great emphasis on being the supreme chief of the police. After all, you could never tell when some *Obergruppenführer*²¹² might come up with the idea of appropriating for himself police powers.

5. “Supreme Law Lord.” Hitler had coined this term in a Reichstag session on July 13, 1934, when he had claimed with regard to the Röhm purge: “in that hour, I was responsible for the fate of the German nation and was thus the Supreme Law Lord (*Gerichtsherr*) of the German Volk!”²¹³ Now, he wanted to be able to carry out such arbitrary killings at any hour.

6. “Leader of the party.” The party, this “pillar” of the Third Reich, ranked lowest! It appeared only at the tail end of the list of Adolf Hitler’s functions. When it had been a question of seizing power in the state and securing it, the party had been important to him. But now, in

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the year 1942, the NSDAP interested Hitler no more than did the German Volk. Soldiers and policemen were all he needed!

The whole Reichstag session of April 26, including Hitler's speech and the—naturally unanimously approved—plenipotentiary law, made a poor impression on the German public and abroad. Partly, it led to the conviction that Hitler was fighting an inner opposition and no longer commanded the necessary power to enforce his decrees. Actually, the converse applied. While the Third Reich was in trouble militarily, this was because Hitler's political and military ideas were false, unrealistic, utopian, and insane. However, disobedience to his orders was not a problem, and, internally, the Third Reich was as stable as before.

The "resolution by the Greater German Reichstag" had been necessary to quench Hitler's thirst for power and to satisfy his pathological desire for a completely arbitrary reign. He could not bear the thought that anyone might be able to claim a right for himself if this did not correspond with his wishes. And he especially hated the Reichstag, which had once again fulfilled his wishes without objection. After all, this Reichstag had more powers than he did, because the almighty Führer had to *ask* this forum for his juridical powers. The Reichstag could in theory divest him of these special rights again. Completely legally, it could depose him and tell him to go to hell. A terrible thought! Thus Hitler decided now never again to summon the Reichstag.

Naturally, Goebbels was among the few who were enthusiastic about Hitler's speech. At first, he even took it for "one of his best speeches."²¹⁴ Shortly later, he would see it with more restraint.²¹⁵

After the Reichstag session had ended, Hitler took Goebbels up to the Reich Chancellery for a talk about his vacation at the Berghof. Having just told the Reichstag that he had "not even taken three days of vacation" since the year 1933,²¹⁶ Hitler now told Goebbels that "because of his overall state of health he absolutely needed to take a vacation of three months. But when, how, and where?" Goebbels felt sympathetic and later wrote down the following:²¹⁷

He [the Führer] knows quite well himself that this [the three-month vacation] is not possible. However, at the moment, he is pretty worn out. Thank God that he is going to the Obersalzberg for a few days at least for the important talks with the Duce. The Obersalzberg always has a calming effect. The Führer must be very careful about his health right now.

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Before Hitler left for the Obersalzberg, there was a cozy evening get-together at the Reich Chancellery on April 26. Professor Speer attended for the first time in his capacity as artist.²¹⁸ Hitler was in a very good mood, since he had finally got rid of the jurists, who had always spoiled things in the past by referring to “existing regulations.” Freed from this constraint, Hitler talked for hours about art and works of art, picture galleries, and future big projects. He was especially enthusiastic about the “metropolis” Linz and the huge “monumental structures” which he planned to build on the left and at banks of the Danube River.

He was also preoccupied with gigantic projects on the following day, when he stopped over in Munich on his way to the Obersalzberg. At the Osteria restaurant,²¹⁹ he met Hermann Esser and the architect Professor Giesler for lunch. Two years before, Hitler had instructed Giesler on the architecture in Paris.²²⁰ Now, he spoke to him about new gigantic railroad tracks with a gauge of four meters, which he planned to lay across Russia all the way to Berlin and Munich.

After Hitler had left for the south, Goebbels began to feel uneasy about the response to the Reichstag speech in Germany and the allies’ reaction.²²¹ He noted the following:²²²

Even if confidence in the Führer has by no means diminished, the German Volk does ask itself with astonishment why the Führer had to be accorded new legal powers in the first place and what could have caused him to lash out at and criticize German internal affairs publicly.

There is also some skepticism in the assessment of the military situation; especially since the Führer spoke of a second winter campaign in the east, people think that he is not convinced that the war against the Soviet Union can be brought to an end this coming summer. Many questions have been raised by the Führer’s speech. In certain contexts, it has spread feelings of insecurity.

April 29, 1942

3

On April 29, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese emperor on his birthday.²²³ On the same day, he welcomed his Italian guests at the Puch station near Salzburg. Mussolini and Ciano had left Rome on April 28, and the latter had entered the following into his diary:²²⁴

“This is a meeting that was requested by the Germans, and for which, as usual, they have given us no indication of an agenda.”

And the meeting resulted in nothing,²²⁵ since it took place exclusively in order to provide Hitler with an excuse for his stay at the Berghof.

In the course of the “two-day discussions in the spirit of the close friendship and the indissoluble brotherhood in arms,” Hitler as usual dominated the conversation.²²⁶ Mussolini was reduced to listening. The discussed topics were the following: the ingenious overcoming of the Russian winter,²²⁷ Germany’s intention to force Russia’s capitulation by taking the oil fields in the Caucasus, the anticipated English realization that it was better to conclude peace, and that America was a big bluff.

Ciano and Schmidt reported on the talks as follows:²²⁸

Hitler talks, talks, talks. Mussolini suffers, since he is in the habit of talking and, instead, practically has to keep quiet. On the second day, after lunch, when everything had been said, Hitler talked uninterruptedly for an hour and forty minutes. He omitted absolutely no argument: war and peace, religion and philosophy, art, and history. Mussolini automatically looked at his wristwatch, I had my mind on my own business, and only Cavallero,²²⁹ who is a phenomenon of civility, pretended he was listening in ecstasy, continually nodding his head in approval. Those, however, who dreaded the ordeal less than we did were the Germans. Poor people. They have to take it every day, and I am certain there isn’t a gesture, a word, or a pause which they don’t know by heart. General Jodl, after an epic struggle, finally went to sleep on the sofa.

May 1, 1942

Keitel was reeling, but he succeeded in keeping his head up. He was too close to Hitler to let himself go as he would have liked to do.

After the Italians had said goodbye, Hitler left for Munich. The local atmosphere excited him so much that he reflected at great length on opera conductors and general music directors at dinner.²³⁰ Bruno Walter, Clemens Krauss, Hans Knappertsbusch, and Wilhelm Furtwängler all received critical reviews.

On May 1, he was again on the Obersalzberg. The so-called “national holiday of the German Volk” appeared not to interest him any longer after the beginning of the war. Hitler had created it in 1933 only in order to weaken the Social Democrats and Communists. Now, he felt that it sufficed to speak about future “prestige buildings” to his company at his “round table” on the Obersalzberg.²³¹

This year, the “national holiday” had been rescheduled for May 2.²³² No flags would be hoisted. The Japanese emperor, who apparently failed to realize the reduced importance of this day, had sent a congratulatory telegram. Hitler replied as follows:²³³

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for the friendly best wishes which you have transmitted by telegraph to me on the national holiday of the German Volk. I am sending along with this an expression of my sincere admiration for the great achievements that the brave Japanese armed forces have accomplished in their inexorable triumphant march, and an assurance of my strongest conviction that the common efforts by the allied people will succeed in defeating our enemies and opening the way to a new order of the world for the sake of peace and progress. With my best wishes for the personal welfare of Your Majesty, I remain

Your devoted Adolf Hitler

In addition, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Dr. Ley on the occasion of the Reich Labor Chamber conference in the Mosaic Hall at the Reich Chancellery. This exchange was not without problems, since Hitler claimed that Ley’s style was on a “high-school level.”²³⁴

Hitler’s answer read as follows:²³⁵

I thank you and all working men and women for the loyal greetings transmitted to me and for the pledge of tireless work in the service of the fighting front and, therefore, of the struggle for victory and peace. Through its diligence and sense of sacrifice, as well as through its exemplary disposition shown in critical situations time and again, the homeland has proved worthy of our soldiers’ heroism. Just as, previously, May 1 was for us a national holiday on which the German Volk pledged itself in powerful demonstrations to the great works of peace and social progress, so it has become today, for our

May 1, 1942

soldiers at the front and for our working people at home, a day of reflection, as well as of determination to fight and to work without rest until the freedom and social future of our Volk have been assured. I know that in this, the German homeland and especially all its working men and women will never forsake the soldiers at the front.

The war, which we have been forced to wage, is for our Volk a struggle of "to be or not to be." The victory, which we will secure, should therefore be a victory by the entire Volk. The heroism of our front, the diligence and sense of sacrifice of the homeland will then be rewarded in a true Volksstaat of the National Socialist community. As zealous National Socialists, we entered this war, which was forced on us. As zealous National Socialists, we will return from it.

I greet the working German Volk on its national holiday in the secure knowledge that this holiday will one day become again a celebration of peace and joy.

While Hitler's "Super Enabling Act" had been passed by the Reichstag, the Schlitt case, which he had used as a pretext, would still make trouble for him.²³⁶

The president of the Oldenburg Oberlandesgericht (superior court of a land, court of appeal) complained to the Reich governor of Oldenburg, Gauleiter Röver, about the procedure employed in the Schlitt case and attacks against the Oldenburg judges. He said that Schlitt was not a violent criminal but a "poor devil," for whom a five-year sentence was more than sufficient. Contrary to Hitler's claims, the prosecution and the judge had not sentenced him leniently but much too harshly. Röver adopted the senior judge's opinion and—this is really hard to believe—he visited Hitler to explain the true situation to him.

Hitler listened to Röver's lecture. As usual on such occasions, he then raged against certain people who had supposedly informed him incorrectly. In this case, he mainly blamed Freisler (the "Bolshevik").²³⁷ At the end of his performance, he asked Röver to express his regrets to the Oldenburg judges on the unfortunate development of the Schlitt case.

Röver was content and went home. Apparently, he was not even aware of the sacrilege that he had just committed:

1. He had allowed himself to be influenced by jurists in a matter which concerned the Führer.
2. He had dared to intervene personally in the affair.
3. He had proved to the Führer that the rationale for the Reichstag resolution of April 26 was built on a misconception.

May 14, 1942

Well, Röver did not have much time to reflect on these matters. By May 15, he was dead! And—what a strange coincidence—he had supposedly died as a “result of pneumonia.”²³⁸

On May 3, Hitler had Envoy von Renthe-Fink convey his condolences to Copenhagen on the death of Prime Minister Stauning.²³⁹ On the same day, his special train returned him to his headquarters in East Prussia. He had cut short his stay at the Berghof, because it had begun to snow again and he hated snow.²⁴⁰

On May 4, the English occupied the island of Madagascar. This was a further step in their drive to gain control of the entire African continent, which would serve as a powerful supply base, following the conquest of Italian East Africa and Abyssinia. A role of great significance would be played by the construction of a supply route, leading from Duala to Fort Lamy (N'Djamena) and then to Khartoum, which was completed in the summer of 1942.

On May 7, in addition to several insignificant administrative laws, Hitler signed three decrees that concerned the General-Government and the protectorate. Two decrees dealt with the appointment and function of a state secretary for security in the General-Government.²⁴¹ The third authorized the Reich protector to “take suitable measures in order to adjust the administration of Bohemia and Moravia to the existing situation.”²⁴²

Obviously, even in these areas which remained relatively secure in German hands at this time, subversive elements were beginning to exploit German weaknesses at the front, and this forced Hitler to take such measures.

On May 10, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to King Michael and Marshal Antonescu on the Romanian national holiday.²⁴³ Field Marshal List attended the festivities in Bucharest on Hitler's behalf.

On May 12, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the president of the Chinese national government, Wang Ching-wei, on his birthday.²⁴⁴

In addition, he received the Italian army general Gariboldi at his headquarters.²⁴⁵ Gariboldi was scheduled to take over command of the Italian troops in Russia soon.

On May 14, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to King Christian X of Denmark, who was celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of his accession to the throne.²⁴⁶

May 22, 1942

On the same day, Hitler ordered a state funeral for Infantry General von Lossberg, who had died in Lübeck at the age of seventy-five.²⁴⁷

On May 15, the abovementioned daring Gauleiter Röver suffered his “sudden death” in Oldenburg at the age of fifty-three. This event was not made public until May 17 and 18.²⁴⁸ Hitler ordered a state funeral for him.

Hitler replaced Röver with the deputy Gauleiter of the Mark Brandenburg, Paul Wegener. He named him Reich governor of Oldenburg and Bremen as well as Gauleiter of the Gau Weser-Ems. Wegener had served as Terboven’s deputy in Oslo since 1940. Hitler had his reasons for appointing a successor to Röver from so far away. All recently appointed Gauleiters were not from the Gau to which they were assigned.

On May 18, Hitler received Privy Counselor Hermann Röchling, an industrial magnate from the Saarland, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He discussed the construction of railroad and bunkers with him.²⁴⁹ Speer was also in attendance.

On May 20, a big show was put on in Berlin on Hitler’s orders. As he had already announced at lunch on May 10, he had decided that, because of “the immense idealism of the homeland, an armament worker should be presented with the Knight’s Cross of the War Service Cross.”²⁵⁰ In order to stage this ceremony in the flag-decorated Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery, a huge apparatus was set in motion. Delegations of peasants and workers arrived from all over the Reich. Göring, Speer, and Ley attended. The highlight was the presence of “the Führer’s special emissary,” Private First Class Krohn, who served at the eastern front and owned the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross. He handed the Knight’s Cross of the War Service Cross to “a German armament worker,” foreman Franz Hahne, and conveyed the Führer’s heartfelt best wishes.²⁵¹

In the meantime, Hitler had received the Hungarian Colonel General Jany, the commander in chief of an army, at the Führer headquarters.²⁵²

On May 21, Hitler took his special train to Berlin to attend the state ceremony for Röver. At lunch on May 22, only two hours before the ceremony, Hitler significantly expressed great concern with the problem of the administration of justice.²⁵³ Time and again, he stressed that in the war no mercy should be shown to rogues, spies, sex offenders, and juvenile offenders. He was “personally responsible for

May 23, 1942

preventing a front of rogues (*Spitzbuben*) from rising up in the homeland again as in 1918." It was obvious that Hitler had a bad conscience!

At 3:00 p.m., the state ceremony for Röver began in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler walked down the aisle, greeted the coffin with his raised arm, and "sympathetically" shook hands with the family members.²⁵⁴

Rosenberg delivered the eulogy. Afterwards, two SS officers brought in "a wonderful, big wreath," which Hitler laid. Clearly, he did not mind dedicating a wreath to a man who no longer presented a danger to him. The sheer number of state funerals, which had become a characteristic feature of the Third Reich led to the belief that, as a variation of a widely repeated phrase,²⁵⁵ Hitler had come to the conclusion that the best National Socialist was a dead National Socialist.

On May 22, the anniversary of the signing of the "Pact of Steel," a German-Italian exchange of telegrams took place. Hitler's messages to Victor Emmanuel and Mussolini read as follows:²⁵⁶

On the anniversary of the signing of the Pact of Friendship and Alliance, which inseparably ties our two peoples, I ask Your Majesty to accept my sincere best wishes for the glory and greatness of Italy, as well as for the success of its arms.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

On the day on which three years ago Germany and Italy solemnly announced to the world their willingness to stand together as a staunch community, I think of you with heartfelt friendship and solidarity. The unyielding will of our people to win, united by National Socialism and Fascism, and the military deeds of our brave soldiers afford us the most certain guarantee of a joint final victory.

Adolf Hitler

On May 23, Hitler dismissed Reich Minister Walter Darré. The following official announcement was published on this topic:²⁵⁷

Reich Minister Darré has taken an extended leave of absence for reasons of health. For this period, the Führer has entrusted the conduct of the affairs of the Reich minister and Prussian minister of food and agriculture to Herbert Backe, who is state secretary in the Reich ministry of food and agriculture.

That was how another old National Socialist and Obergruppenführer disappeared. The "theoretician" Darré, who had made propaganda for the idea of "blood and soil," was replaced by the servile Backe, who obediently carried out Hitler's order to exploit the

May 26, 1942

occupied territories with all ruthlessness. In spite of starving these areas, the food situation in Germany too began slowly but surely to deteriorate.

On May 23 at the Reich Chancellery, Hitler delivered an address on the current situation to the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters.²⁵⁸ In the Crimea, German troops had conquered the Kerch (Kerchenskiy-Poluostrov) peninsula within eight days. A Russian relieving attack at Kharkov had led to a tank battle that promised to become a full German success. That was reason enough for Hitler to paint the situation in its brightest colors.

On May 24, Hitler was back at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He received Speer and Reich traffic minister, Dr. Dorpmüller, discussing the planned gigantic railroads with them.²⁵⁹ In addition, he received Admiral Dönitz, who reported to him on the recent U-boat offensive.²⁶⁰

On May 26, Hitler again established a new medal, which for a change was to be worn on a ribbon and not as a pin. The award in question was the so-called "East Medal." The ordinance read as follows:²⁶¹

In appreciation of the heroic venture against the Bolshevik enemy in the winter 1941-1942, I establish the medal for the "winter battle in the east in 1941-1942" (East Medal).

Article I

The East Medal will be worn on the ribbon of the order's clasp or in the second buttonhole of the tunic, next to the Iron Cross and the War Service Cross. The ribbon will be red with a thin, white-black-white vertical stripe at its center.

Article II

The East Medal will be awarded in recognition of proof of worth in the fight against the Bolshevik enemy and the Russian winter in the period from November 15, 1941, to April 15, 1942.

Article III

The award recipient will receive a certificate.

Article IV

Following the death of the award recipient, his survivors will retain the East Medal as a keepsake.

Article V

The implementing regulations will be decreed, in accordance with my directives, by the state minister and chief of the presidential chancellery

May 29, 1942

On May 27, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Afghanistan on the country's independence day.²⁶²

On the same day, an assassination attempt was made on Reinhard Heydrich, the deputy Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia and chief of the security police. Heydrich was seriously injured.²⁶³ Hitler instructed SS Obergruppenführer and general of the police, Daluge to act as a stand-in for Heydrich.²⁶⁴

On May 28, Hitler had state minister and Gauleiter Adolf Wagner place a wreath at the grave of Eva Chamberlain in Bayreuth.²⁶⁵

That evening, Hitler left the Wolfsschanze headquarters aboard his special train, heading for Berlin.

On May 29, while lunching at the Reich Chancellery, Hitler held forth on all sorts of subjects.²⁶⁶ First, he attacked the Jews, claiming that even the Siberian climate was too good for them. They ought to be shipped to Africa, to the island of Madagascar. In addition, he spoke about the necessity of breaking Vienna's cultural hegemony, and about King Ludwig I of Bavaria and Lola Montez. Finally, talking about the last winter, he now claimed that it had been the coldest in 150 years.

A special event was a visit by "the pioneer of the Indian liberation movement," Subhas Chandra Bose. For months on end, this charlatan, who exercised no influence whatsoever, had played games with Goebbels, Ribbentrop, Ciano, and Mussolini. Later, he would likewise fool the Japanese.²⁶⁷ In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had mocked hopes for ethnic unrest in India and had written the following:²⁶⁸

Some Asiatic mountebanks—for all I care maybe even real Indian "freedom fighters"—who knocked about Europe at the time [1920–1921], managed to instill the *idée fixe* in otherwise quite reasonable men that the British empire with its cardinal point in India was ready to collapse there of all places!

Now, Hitler himself had to receive such "mountebanks." He had to be content to have any Indian at all as his guest and to be able to issue a communiqué once more. It read as follows:²⁶⁹

The Führer received at his headquarters, in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the pioneer of the Indian liberation movement, Subhas Chandra Bose, for a lengthy discussion.

On May 29, Hitler signed Directive No. 42, which read as follows:²⁷⁰

I. Future developments in the condition of unoccupied France or of the French possessions in North Africa may make it necessary to occupy the entire territory of France. Likewise, the possibility of an attempted hostile move

May 30, 1942

against the Iberian Peninsula requiring immediate countermeasures must be taken into account.

II. Due to the constant shifting about of forces in the west and to the incessant changes in the combat readiness of the units, only general guidelines for conducting this operation can be given. The situation in terms of men and material prohibits our keeping special units and equipment in readiness for it. Hence, effective immediately, all previous directives given for Attila and Isabella are null and void. The improvisation of both operations is to be prepared in such a way as to make it possible for them to be carried out on the shortest possible notice.

III. Occupation of the remainder of France in cooperation with Italian forces. (Code name: Anton. Day of commencement: A-day.) [Technical details follow.]

IV. First countermeasures against enemy move on Iberian Peninsula (Code name: Ilona. Day of border crossing: I-day.) [Technical details follow.]

As pretty as the new code names “Anton” (hitherto “Attila”) and “Ilona” (hitherto “Isabella”) were, Hitler himself had to admit that he could only “improvise” with the available forces.

On May 30, Hitler gave a speech at the Sportpalast in Berlin. He spoke to ten thousand officer candidates who were reported present by Keitel.²⁷¹

As usual in such addresses,²⁷² Hitler reiterated the three standard themes: the inevitability of struggle in life, the relationship between population and Lebensraum, and the Germans as not only the best but also the numerically strongest people on earth.

First, he presented a “party narrative”²⁷³ and long excursus into German history and antiquity. A few new quirks from this speech deserve to be cited, however. Hitler’s obsession with the superlative started in the following greeting:

My young Comrades!

A perhaps most profoundly serious proposition by a great military philosopher says that struggle and, therefore, war is the father of all things.²⁷⁴

After Hitler had assured his listeners that, without his person and his domestic struggle, “a second Genghis Khan would have come,” he declared that “the struggle outside has to be waged with the same objectives.”

We must elevate the German Reich to the leading power within a certain Lebensraum in Europe, if we do not wish our Volk and, along with it, Europe to disappear from this scene.

May 30, 1942

The collapse of the antique world brought a thousand years of chaos. The collapse of Europe would probably bring two to three thousand years of chaos.

Also very nicely said was Hitler's claim that his measures before the war had resulted in two-and-a-half million more people being brought into the world, of which only ten percent had been used up in combat up to now! He declared:

Compared with the state of affairs in the year 1932, the National Socialist revolution has managed to bring a little more than two-and-a-half million people into the world.

The present war has not cost us even ten percent of what flowed into the German nation in terms of additional human life.

Well, if this was how matters stood, then Hitler could proceed with an easy conscience to sacrifice an additional few million Germans! Hitler's flippant remarks parallel the facetiousness of Napoleon who, at the sight of the tens of thousands of Frenchmen killed in the Battle of Borodino, exclaimed: "One night in Paris will make up for this!" Naturally, births were interesting only insofar as they would later provide the state and the military with new recruits.

Having spoken about the winter's "natural disaster," Hitler prophesied new "planned blows," which would shatter and smash Russia.

Now, we face a summer for which we have prepared as much as humanly possible. The first blows [Kerch, Kharkov]—they have served as an introduction, a prelude. They have shown the enemy that, provided the conditions are the same, we are head and shoulders above him. I am convinced that the coming blows, which will fall according to plan, will shatter this state and rob it of its lifelines and sources of raw materials to such an extent that it will break up.

We have no other choice. Everybody should consider this. We are facing a merciless enemy. If this enemy won, he would wipe out our German Volk. Asian barbarism would take root in Europe. The German woman would become fair game for these beasts. The intelligentsia would be slaughtered. Whatever characteristics of a higher humanity we bear in ourselves, they would be wiped out and annihilated. We have no other choice—we must see this battle through.

With these well-known visions of horror, Hitler tried to boost the morale of the officers so that, in the end, *he* could collect the victor's laurels from "Providence." He continued:

May 31, 1942

I do not doubt for one second that we will win. It was not in vain that Providence has had me stride forth along the long path from the unknown soldier of the World War to the Führer of the German nation, to the Führer of the German Wehrmacht. It has not done this only to suddenly take away again all we had to struggle so hard for, as if it were just for the fun of it.

In continuing his speech, Hitler scoffed at the Allied generals in Burma and at Corregidor.²⁷⁵ He contrasted their example to that of General Scherer, who had been surrounded at Kholm for “over a hundred days” before being relieved.²⁷⁶ Hitler encouraged his audience to similar heroic deeds:

At this moment, you are the representatives of the German Reich, my little lieutenants. Your little group or the company that you lead is at this moment entrusted by Germany to your loyal hands! For, if everyone thought, “Things do not depend on me,” then—poor Germany!

At the end, Hitler returned to the topic of Lebensraum. There was no longer any talk of “protecting Europe against Asian barbarism.” Now, he declared the following:

I do not fight for a financial company, nor for any portfolio of stocks. I fight for the German Volk, for its future. We know the great Lebensraum. It will provide generations of Germans with wheat. There is iron under the earth there, there is coal, there is oil. Gigantic areas are there, fiber plants, gum plants, wood.

The German Volk will one day gain from this struggle the life of countless hundreds of millions, although today this struggle may cost hundreds of thousands of dead men.

And then the old prophesy will come true that the blood is blessed that has been spilled so that the soil can be tilled and will bear life for future young generations.²⁷⁷

On May 31, Hitler returned to the Wolfsschanze headquarters. At dinner, he made a derogatory comment on William II.²⁷⁸

He had believed that it was perfectly all right not only persistently to be rude to (*anpöbeln*) the men closest to him, but also to make his guests the laughingstock of all those present by making ironic comments. Also his clumsy friendliness with other monarchs (slapping them on the back and so on) had cost the Reich many sympathies. A monarch simply had to know when he had to exercise restraint and demonstrate dignity in personal relations. The example of William II showed how one single bad monarch could ruin a dynasty.

While there was some truth to Hitler’s statements, the Kaiser was no match for him, if one considers how he had “abused” Anglo-American

June 4, 1942

statesmen even before the war, how he had treated Chamberlain, and how he had relished publicly making fun of foreign heads of state like President Roosevelt.

On June 2, Hitler sent the Reich finance minister, Graf Schwerin von Krosigk a congratulatory telegram on his tenth service anniversary.²⁷⁹

On June 4, Hitler flew to Finland from the Rastenburg. He wished to use the occasion of Marshal Mannerheim's birthday²⁸⁰ in order to tie Finland closer to him and to demonstrate German-Finnish solidarity by means of this personal visit. This appeared necessary to him since it was no secret that the Finns were not partial to the German policy of expansion and, above all, that they did not wish to participate in the conquest of Leningrad.

Hitler had prepared this visit far in advance. He had his pilot Baur look out for a suitable landing ground for the four-engine Condor plane.²⁸¹ On the way to a meeting between Jodl and Dietl in northern Finland, which served as a pretext, Baur had chosen the landing field Micheli near Vyborg. Hitler had then decided on this undertaking, but did not inform the Finnish government until the night before.

With the exception of his trips to Italy, this was Hitler's only stay in a country or area that was not completely controlled by him. This fact alone did not make the decision easy for him.

Mannerheim had probably imagined his seventy-fifth birthday differently, as well as state president Ryti, who promoted him from field marshal to marshal of Finland. However, as a favor to Hitler, the Finnish special trains had to pull up close to the landing field Micheli, where the state ceremony was to take place in an improvised fashion and in the rain.²⁸²

At 11:15 a.m., Hitler's plane landed at the airfield. One of the plane's tires caught fire in the process. Mechanics had to extinguish the fire. Then state president Ryti greeted Hitler, who was accompanied by Keitel, Dietrich, Schmundt, and Envoy Hewel. A car took them close to the special trains. After they had crossed a swaying footbridge, Mannerheim approached Hitler and led him to his special train, where Colonel General Stumpff, General Dietl, and others awaited them. Hitler then delivered a speech reproduced by the German News Office (Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro) in the following manner:

In his address to Marshal Mannerheim, the Führer expresses how fortunate he feels himself to be today in being able to congratulate the marshal of Finland

June 6, 1942

personally. He extends these best wishes in the name of the entire German Volk and in the name of all German soldiers, who look with sincere admiration to their Finnish comrades and their great military commanders.

The Führer recalls the historic brotherhood in arms of the two people. For the second time in history, a joint struggle against a common enemy has brought the German and the Finnish people together. The first joint resort to arms in the year 1918 had created ties of an enduring nature. The second struggle will reinforce these ties for all time. It is easy to speak of friendship when you are aware of such a valiant army on your side. The entire German Volk thinks at this moment exactly as the Führer speaks right now. He admires the Finnish people and the Finnish military commanders. The Führer concludes his address by thanking state president Ryti for the hospitality extended to him and to the other German gentlemen and by expressing the wish that the marshal of Finland might live on for many years to come, to serve his people and the common cause.

Hitler was Ryti's guest for lunch. Ryti introduced him to the presidency of the Finnish parliament, the members of the government, and representatives of Finnish workers. Hitler fawned on them, claiming things that no one could possibly prove wrong. He declared the following:

It has long been my wish to see Finland. I had hoped to come to the Olympic Games in Helsinki.²⁸³ But then came the war.

Ryti and Mannerheim accompanied Hitler to the airport. The marshal was asked to return Hitler's visit at the Führer headquarters, while Dietl was promoted to colonel general. The Condor airplane departed at 5:15 p.m.

Hitler's visit in Finland attracted considerable attention, especially in the west. The next day, the United States published a resolution by the House of Representatives to declare war formally on Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. This was also meant as a warning to Finland not to go too far in its declarations of friendship with Hitler.²⁸⁴

Returning to the Wolfsschanze headquarters, Hitler was informed that Heydrich had died of his injuries that day. At dinner Hitler called Heydrich's "heroic gestures"—such as driving in an open, unarmored car or walking the streets of Prague without security men—"nonsense that does not benefit the nation."²⁸⁵ He now "decreed once and for all that persons at risk must absolutely observe the safety regulations."

Hitler ordered a state funeral for Heydrich. On June 4, he renamed the Sixth SS Infantry Standarte "Reinhard Heydrich."²⁸⁶

June 9, 1942

On June 6, Hitler received the new Hungarian prime minister and foreign minister Kallay at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for a discussion of the political situation. Again, it was supposedly “marked by the traditional German-Hungarian friendship and brotherhood in arms.”²⁸⁷ Hitler awarded Kallay the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.²⁸⁸ Hitler, who loathed Hungarians, was actually not satisfied with Kallay, who had, at the talks, called a military confrontation between Hungary and Romania something worth striving for.²⁸⁹

On June 8, Hitler had his Adjutant Schaub present Reich Postal Minister Ohnesorge with a handwritten letter and his picture along with a dedication on his seventieth birthday. In addition, he sent a congratulatory telegram to Professor Lenard in Heidelberg in appreciation of his “services to science and National Socialism.”²⁹⁰ That evening, Hitler took his special train from East Prussia to Berlin.

On the morning of June 9, his train was delayed for some time because of a broken track. Of course, Hitler could not resist claiming that he had ordered his train to stop based on “intuition,” thus preventing an accident.²⁹¹ In any event, he reached the Reich Chancellery in time for lunch, where he grew impassioned about “the United States of America’s cultural understanding.”²⁹² That afternoon, the funeral ceremony for Heydrich took place in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery. After the eulogy, Hitler stepped up to the coffin and declared as follows:²⁹³

I have only a few more words to dedicate to this dead man.

He was one of the best National Socialists, one of the strongest defenders of the German Reich idea, one of the greatest adversaries of this Reich’s enemies. He fell as a martyr for the maintenance and security of the Reich.

As Führer of the party and as Führer of the German Reich, I bestow on you, my dear comrade Heydrich, as the second German after party comrade Todt, the highest distinction which I can award: the highest class of the German Order.²⁹⁴

Following the funeral ceremony, Hitler received state president Háchá and members of the protectorate government for an “expression of his sympathy” in the presence of Lammers, Himmler, and Daluge.²⁹⁵

After these events, Hitler indulged in a few days’ vacation on the Obersalzberg. He was simply catching up on the Berghof holiday, which he had to cut short because of the annoying snowfall in May.²⁹⁶ Because of this, he probably felt that it was not necessary to stage a “state

June 18, 1942

visit” by Mussolini or another satellite statesman. He stopped over in Munich on June 10. At the Osteria restaurant, he talked with Mrs. Gerda Troost and Mrs. Winifred Wagner, as well as with her daughter and her son,²⁹⁷ and paid everybody compliments.

On June 11, an extension of the British-Russian alliance for twenty years following the end of the war and the conclusion of an American-Russian treaty were made public. These announcements again demonstrated that Hitler’s hopes for a faltering of the British-Russian alliance in the course of the war against Germany were misplaced.

On June 14, Hitler sent the following congratulatory telegram to Antonescu:²⁹⁸

On your sixtieth birthday, I send you, Field Marshal, my heartfelt best wishes. In doing so, I honor the significant contribution by Romania and its valiant army under your leadership to the struggle for the defeat of the common Bolshevik enemy. I sincerely hope that your determined creative power may be preserved for many long years to the benefit of your country and the happiness of the Romanian people.

Adolf Hitler

On June 15, the NSK reported that Hitler had decreed that the Gau “Bayerische Ostmark” should henceforth bear the name “Gau Bayreuth.”²⁹⁹

On June 18, Hitler sent Horthy the following congratulatory telegram on his seventy-fourth birthday:³⁰⁰

I send to Your Highness heartfelt best wishes on your birthday, also in the name of the German Volk. May you have the privilege of determining for many years at the full height of your creative power the destiny of the Hungarian nation, allied to the German Volk in close comradeship in arms.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, the following official announcement was made public:³⁰¹

The murderers of the deputy Reich protector, SS Obergruppenführer and general of the police Heydrich, were apprehended in the morning hours of June 18 . . . in a Prague church [Karl Barromäuskirche] . . . and were shot upon arrest. At the same time, it was possible to render harmless their immediate circle of accomplices. All persons involved are members of the Czech ethnic group and were parachuted from British planes to carry out the assassination.

What was meant by “rendering harmless” was the destruction of the village of Lidice, the killing of all male inhabitants, and the deportation

June 22, 1942

of all females and children. Undoubtedly, Hitler himself ordered this atrocity. He commented on it as follows:³⁰²

When train derailments or assassination attempts take place, when enemy parachutists and agents, for example, Heydrich's assassins, are harbored, and so on, then the mayor has to be shot, the men have to be led away, or, in serious cases, they also have to be shot and their wives transferred to concentration camps.

On June 18, the corps commander of the National Socialist Motorized Corps, Reichsleiter Major General Adolf Hühnlein, died in Munich at the age of sixty years, "following a long and serious illness." Hitler ordered a "state funeral."³⁰³

The ceremony took place at 3:00 p.m. on June 21 in the domed hall of the Army Museum in Munich.³⁰⁴ After a eulogy by Goebbels, Hitler stepped up to the coffin and, "deeply moved, laid a laurel wreath with white carnations." Hühnlein was also awarded the "highest class of the German Order."

On the same day, Hitler visited the ill state minister and Gauleiter, Adolf Wagner in Munich.³⁰⁵ Since a recovery was unlikely, Hitler commissioned Gauleiter Paul Giesler of South Westphalia to substitute for him.³⁰⁶

Hitler's vacation at the Berghof was over. On the morning of June 22, he returned to Berlin. At noon, he again discussed Heydrich's assassination with Himmler at the Reich Chancellery.³⁰⁷

In the meantime, Rommel had started a new offensive in order to force the British out of Cyrenaica. The incessant bombing of Malta had allowed additional supply deliveries to reach the [German] Africa Corps and new divisions to come to North Africa.

There was a time when Kesselring and the Italian chief of staff Cavallero had dreamed of conquering Malta.³⁰⁸ However, Hitler had not assented to this plan, since he had no wish needlessly to anger the English, his future partners in the long-awaited world empire, by making such a move. Hitler yielded to Rommel's thirst for action only insofar as he allowed Rommel to try to force the British out of the conquered Italian territories and perhaps a little into Egypt. He did not wish Rommel to go too far. After all, Hitler wanted German troops everywhere, but not in those areas which belonged to the British Empire's sphere of influence. He wished the English to see what a good ally he was.

June 22, 1942

Rommel's offensive had begun on the night of May 26. By June 11, the British fortress of Bir Hacheim was taken. Tobruk was conquered on June 21, having been thought impregnable the previous year.

Hitler promoted Rommel to field marshal and sent him the following telegram:³⁰⁹

Führer Headquarters, June 22, 1942

Field Marshal Rommel:

In grateful appreciation of your leadership and your own initiative, which decided the battle, and in recognition of the heroic achievements of the troops fighting under your command in the African theater of war, I promote you to field marshal as of this day.

Adolf Hitler

The swift fall of Tobruk surprised not only the world but even Rommel himself.³¹⁰ After barely one day of fighting, twenty-five thousand Englishmen surrendered, among them several generals. The British Eighth Army quickly retreated into Egypt. This strategy stood in striking contrast to that employed the previous year in the determined defense of Tobruk. In the long run, however, it proved successful. Rommel was tempted to pursue the British army far into Egypt. A few months later, this undertaking culminated in the complete annihilation of the German Africa Corps and a second "Stalingrad."

As mentioned before, because of his "friendship" for the English, Hitler was not in favor of the move against Egypt and attempted time and again to delay it until "the end of the campaign in Russia." By contrast, Rommel wished to realize the German military dream of taking the Suez Canal. Whereas in the First World War the Turkish-German troops had at least succeeded in reaching the Suez Canal from the east after a long march through the desert,³¹¹ the German drive to the Suez Canal in the Second World War got stuck at El Alamein, a hundred kilometers west of Alexandria. Rommel's forces were not strong enough to push through the natural, fifty-kilometer-wide line of defense between the sea and the impassable Qattara Depression.³¹² On the contrary, the Desert Fox [Rommel] was forced to take up an echeloned defensive position.

On June 23, Hitler, who remained in Berlin, named National Socialist Motorized Corps Obergruppenführer Kraus to succeed Hühnlein as corps leader.³¹³

June 28, 1942

Hitler was most generous at a talk with Goebbels and Gauleiter Forster at the Reich Chancellery on topics of the domestic situation, the rationing of foodstuffs, and restrictions to be placed on visits to cafés.³¹⁴

On June 24, Hitler sent a telegram to the cultural rally of European Youth in Vienna and thanked the youth leaders assembled there for their “loyal telegram.”³¹⁵

On June 26, Hitler was back at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Reading English and American newspaper reports on Tobruk, he wondered aloud about “the stupid twaddle (*Gequatsch*) mankind falls for.”³¹⁶

On June 27, Hitler received the Finnish Marshal Mannerheim at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for his return visit. His pilot Baur and Major General Schmudt had gone to meet Mannerheim in Helsinki.³¹⁷ At 10:00 a.m., their plane had landed at Rastenburg. Keitel had greeted Mannerheim and had brought him to his quarters.³¹⁸ Shortly thereafter Hitler appeared to welcome his guest.

At the Wolfsschanze headquarters, a detailed discussion of the situation followed. Keitel, Jodl, Halder, and the German general at the Finnish headquarters, General Erfurth, as well as other German and Finnish officers, were in attendance. At the lunch reception, they were joined by Grand Admiral Raeder, Reichsführer SS Himmler, Lammers, Dietrich, Bormann, Envoy Hewel, numerous generals, and so on.

That afternoon, Hitler played the role of commander in chief of the army and introduced Mannerheim to all sorts of generals and OKW personnel. This culminated in a “comradely get-together and exchange of ideas,” that is, monologues by the Führer. Hitler had gone all out to impress Mannerheim. Whether he succeeded in this was difficult to tell from the Finn’s inscrutable face.³¹⁹

The next day, Mannerheim visited Göring before Baur flew him back to Helsinki.

On that June 28, the first phase of Hitler’s summer offensive in the southern portion of the eastern front began. It aimed at crossing the Don at Voronezh, taking the Donetsk area, and the city of Rostov. The second phase consisted of a drive to the Caucasus and the oil fields there. As Churchill put it, the German military machine “must be fed, not only with flesh but with oil.”³²⁰ The fuel was beginning to run out in spite of the Romanian oil fields and German synthetic refineries.³²¹ The following decree by Hitler gives evidence of this:³²²

June 29, 1942

Führer Headquarters, June 29, 1942

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht

Re: violations of the use of motor vehicles

In spite of all previously issued orders regarding the use of motor vehicles, constant violations, to an increasing degree recently, have been reported. Besides this, in many locations, thoughtless habits and a simple lack of thought in the deployment of motor vehicles have been noted. The necessity of combining various missions or isolated trips in form of a planned schedule is no more being observed than the deployment of horse-powered vehicles wherever possible. The fuel situation does not allow such thoughtlessness and violations under the circumstances.

To a great extent, this abuse of motor vehicles can be attributed to a lack of supervision by the responsible superiors. All commanders must therefore vigorously supervise the use of the motor vehicles under their command. In the event of noted or reported violations, they must call the offenders to account strictly for this. In the same way, violations of the duty to supervise must also be punished.

It is the duty of all commanders to observe the given regulations themselves and, by example, to influence educatively the units under their command. The regulations regarding the prohibition of vacation trips, the limitation of official trips from the front and the occupied territories to the homeland and vice versa, aside from especially justified exceptional cases, the observation of speed limits apply also to the commanders of the headquarters and the troops.

The branches of the Wehrmacht and the commanders of the Wehrmacht will take precautions to adjust motor-vehicle traffic in the shortest time in their areas to the fuel situation. Patrols and all other controlling bodies shall be instructed to seize and to report to the appropriate offices all motor vehicles that exceed the speed limit or that the control reveals to be on an inadmissible official trip, prohibited vacation trip, or without a license.

Adolf Hitler

On June 29, Hitler had Meissner present Seldte a handwritten letter along with a picture on his sixtieth birthday.

The next day, he promoted the commander in chief of Army Group North, von Kücheler, to field marshal.³²³ This promotion was intended to compensate for the fact that the conquest of Leningrad was not making any progress. By contrast, the reasons for Manstein's promotion to field marshal on July 1 were better founded in reality: Sevastopol, the fortress in the Crimea, the conquest of which Hitler had already demanded in the autumn of 1941, had finally fallen after many months of fighting involving heavy losses.³²⁴ Hitler's telegram read as follows:³²⁵

To the commander in chief of the Crimean army, Colonel General von Manstein:

July 17, 1942

In grateful appreciation of your particular service in the victoriously concluded fighting in the Crimea, which culminated in the battle of annihilation at Kerch and the defeat of the fortress of Sevastopol, mighty by nature and through fortifications, I promote you to field marshal.

Through your promotion and the institution of a commemorative shield for all Crimean fighters, I honor before the entire German Volk the heroic accomplishments of the troops fighting under your command.

Adolf Hitler

The institution of the “Crimean Shield” would have to wait, however, since Hitler was still working on the institution of the “Kholm Shield.”³²⁶ Again, it was a piñon medal, which was to be worn on the left upper arm in the form of a shield.

On July 4, Göring and the new, for the time being acting, minister of food and agriculture, State Secretary Backe, were present at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Hitler discussed the food situation, in particular the “securing of the needed bread cereals.”³²⁷

On July 5, on Hitler’s behalf, Goebbels opened the “Great German Art Exhibition 1942” in Munich, organized by Heinrich Hoffmann.³²⁸

On the same day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Portuguese prime minister Salazar on his tenth anniversary in government.³²⁹

On July 8, he expressed his condolences in a telegram to Ismet İnönü on the death of the Turkish prime minister Refik Saydam.³³⁰ In addition, he awarded Professor Dr. Karl Brunner in Prien the Goethe Medal on his seventieth birthday for his “services in the struggle against trash (*Schund*).”³³¹

On July 17, Hitler signed Directive No. 43 on the “Continuation of Operations in the Crimea.”³³² In Hitler’s words, they served as a “prelude”³³³ to action in the Caucasus. The directive read as follows:

After cleaning up the Kerch Peninsula and capturing Sevastopol, the next task of the Eleventh Army is, while maintaining the security of the Crimea, to carry out all preparations, by mid-August at the latest, for crossing the Straits of Kerch with the mass of the army, with the goal of breaking through the western foothills of the Caucasus on both sides, to the southeast and to the east.

Action by code name “Blucher”—day of landing is called “Bl.-day.”

[Technical details follow.]

On July 12, Hitler had Reich Minister Lammers present state president Háchá with a handwritten letter on his seventieth birthday.³³⁴

July 17, 1942

The following day, Hitler received the recalled Turkish ambassador Huesrev Gerede.³³⁵

On July 14, Hitler sent the Croatian head of state Pavelich a congratulatory telegram on his birthday.³³⁶ In addition, he presented an “award for valor and service by members of the eastern people.”³³⁷

On July 15, he received the former prime minister of Iraq, Rashid Ali al Gailani, who had so pitifully failed the previous year and had then emigrated. This sad figure fitted in perfectly well with Hitler’s other foreign guests, especially the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and the Indian charlatan Bose.³³⁸ By 1942, the quality of his visitors was of little consequence to Hitler. It sufficed if a visit created, in his eyes, the impression with the German people and abroad that he had held an important meeting. The communiqué on al Gailani’s visit read as follows:³³⁹

The Führer received the Iraqi prime minister Rashid Ali al Gailani on Wednesday [July 15] in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. The discussion took place in the spirit of the trusting friendship that the German Volk feels for the Arab people.

Hitler was so satisfied with the progress of operations in the southern portion of the eastern front that he felt that he could risk moving his new Werwolf headquarters to Vinnitsa in the Ukraine.³⁴⁰ He wanted to conduct the operations in the Caucasus personally; he felt that they would be decisive. On the one hand, Vinnitsa was closer to the operational area than Rastenburg because of the recent advances in the direction of the Don; on the other hand, Vinnitsa was far enough away from the front that he did not have to fear any unpleasant surprises.

Hitler remained at the Werwolf headquarters from July 17 until October 31, 1942, with the exception of a stay of several days in Berlin in late September and early October. Besides military men, Hitler received civilian visitors in Vinnitsa such as the accredited diplomatic representatives of Italy, Turkey, and Bulgaria, as well as politicians from the Balkan states.

The most curious visit was that of Professor Sauerbruch, whom Hitler summoned in order to send him to the Turkish foreign minister Menemencioglu, who had fallen ill.³⁴¹ Sauerbruch had to wait for Hitler for some time in a room. All of a sudden, Hitler’s German shepherd stormed in and attacked him. Sauerbruch, who knew how to handle dogs, quickly calmed him and succeeded in winning his favor. When

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Hitler entered and noticed this, he behaved like a madman, screaming: "What did you do with my dog? That dog normally only comes to me. I will have him shot! I do not want to see him again!" Sauerbruch had decidedly more trouble in calming Hitler than he had with the dog.

Hitler's "Table Talk" at Vinnitsa began at noon on July 17.³⁴² Apparently in order to acquaint him with the Ukrainian milieu, he was told that the local population was not organized in villages, but in "brigades." Hitler was very impressed by this military form of organization. He declared that "we could do nothing smarter than to adopt this system."³⁴³

On July 18, Hitler awarded Kesselring the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords because of his service as "commander in chief of the German Luftwaffe units deployed in the Mediterranean and in North Africa."³⁴⁴

On July 20, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to the widow of a leader of the war economy, Wilhelm Wissel of the Daimler-Benz Company.³⁴⁵

On July 21, Hitler felt that the military situation along the southern part of the eastern front was so excellent that he began planning for the conquest of Leningrad in September, along with the taking of the Murmansk railroad in the north. He issued Directive No. 44, which read as follows:³⁴⁶

Subject: Waging War in Northern Finland.

1. The unexpectedly fast and effective operations against the armies of Timoshenko give us the right to hope that Soviet Russia will shortly be cut off from the Caucasus, hence from her primary source of oil, and from an important route for the flow of English and American war materials. This, added to the loss of all the industry in the Donetsk region, would be a blow to the Soviet Union of incalculable consequence.

2. The important thing now is to cut off Russia from the northern routes connecting her with the Anglo-American powers, that is, primarily from the Murmansk railway, by means of which, mainly in the winter months, Russia received the bulk of her English and American war materials. The importance of this supply line will take on new dimensions when the time of year and the weather conditions block [German] effective operations against the northern convoys.

3. To accomplish this, Geb. AOK 20, in accordance with its proposal, is preparing an autumn offensive in coordination with the Fifth Air Force to seize control of the Murmansk line at Kandalaksha. It may be assumed a) that Leningrad will be taken at the latest by September, so that Finnish forces will be freed up, and b) that the 5th Sector Division will have reached Finland by

July 23, 1942

the end of September. The operation carries code name “Salmon Catch [*Lachsfang*].” The day of attack is “L-day.” [Technical details follow.]

But nothing ever came of *Lachsfang* or of *Feuerzauber* (Operation Magic-Fire, that is, the conquest of Leningrad).

On July 22, Hitler sent Seyss-Inquart a handwritten letter on his fiftieth birthday.³⁴⁷

On July 23, Hitler received Chief of Staff Lutze and SA Obergruppenführer Jüttner at the Werwolf headquarters. They reported on the “activities and deployment of the SA in the war.” On the same day, he congratulated the author Bruno Brehm in a telegram on his fiftieth birthday and ordered a party funeral for Josef Stolzinger-Cerny, an art editor and old party comrade.³⁴⁸

However, most of Hitler’s attention was directed to Directive No. 45, concerning the continuation of Operation Braunschweig, as Hitler dubbed the summer campaign in 1942, apparently in memory of Henry the Lion.³⁴⁹

Hitler demanded that Army Group A take the Caucasus and Baku (Operation Edelweiss), while Army Group B was supposed to conquer Stalingrad and, if possible, Astrakhan (Operation Heron— *Fischreiber* because of the fish in the Volga river). Army Group North was instructed to conquer Leningrad (Operation Fireworks because of the expected artillery fire). The directive read as follows:

I. In a campaign of little more than three weeks, the ultimate goals I had set the south wing of the eastern front have already been accomplished.³⁵⁰ Only some rather weak enemy forces belonging to the armies of Timoshenko have managed to escape the envelopment and reach the banks of the southern Don. These will presumably receive reinforcements from the Caucasus area.

Currently the enemy is massing another army group in the Stalingrad area, where stiff resistance is to be expected.

II. Goals of further operations

A: Army:

1. The immediate mission of Army Group A is to encircle the enemy forces that have escaped across the Don in the area south and southeast of Rostov and destroy them. [Technical details follow.]

2. Following destruction of the groups of enemy forces south of the Don, the most important mission of Army Group A is to take possession of the eastern coast of the Black Sea and therewith to neutralize the enemy’s Black Sea ports and fleet.

For this, assigned elements of the Eleventh Army (Romanian Mountain Corps) are to cross the Straits of Kerch as soon as the advance of the main forces of Army Group A becomes effective and at that point to advance to the

July 23, 1942

southeast along the Black Sea coastal road. With a further group of forces consisting of all remaining mountain and rifle divisions, a crossing of the Kuban is to be forced and the plateaus of Maikop and Armavir are to be taken.

This group, reinforced at the appropriate time by Alpine units, is then to advance against and over the Caucasus making use of every available pass and in this way, in cooperation with Eleventh Army forces, to take possession of the Black Sea coast.

3. Simultaneously, a group of forces to be formed essentially with fast-moving brigades, without cover of eastern flank, is to take possession of the area around Grozny. Its elements are then to block the Ossetian and Georgian Military Highway, as far as possible at the level of the passes. At that point, by means of an advance along the Caspian Sea, the area around Baku is to be occupied. Army Group may count on the later addition of the Italian Alpine Corps. These operations of Army Group A get the code name "Edelweiss." Security level: Command Secret.

4. The mission of Army Group B—as ordered—is to build a defense on the Don, then to advance to Stalingrad, scatter enemy army group currently in formation there, occupy the city, and block the land corridor connecting the Volga and the Don. Once this is accomplished, fast-moving brigades are to move to the Volga with the mission of effecting an advance to Astrakhan, where the main arm of the Volga is to be closed to shipping. These operations of Army Group B get the code name "Heron." Security level: Command Secret.

B. Air Force:

The primary mission of the Air Force is to support with strong units first the army crossing of the Don and then the eastward advance of the brigades moving along the railroad to Tikhorechka, and to assemble and hold in readiness its main force for the destruction of Army Group Timoshenko. Secondly, it is to support the operations of Army Group B against Stalingrad and the western part of Astrakhan. The early destruction of the city of Stalingrad is to be given high priority. Besides that, occasional attacks are to be conducted against Astrakhan. Shipping on the lower course of the Volga is to be harassed by mining. In the subsequent pursuit of the operation, the main thrust of the air offensive is to be directed to cooperation with the land units proceeding against the Black Sea ports, whereby, aside from immediate support of the land forces, intervention of enemy warships is also to be prevented in coordination with the navy. Secondly, sufficient forces are to be provided for support of the advance on Baku by way of Grozny.

As oil production in the Caucasus is of vital importance for the conducting of future military operations, air attacks against the centers of production, the reserve oil tanks, and the Black Sea ports for shipping oil are to be carried out only if absolutely required by army operations. But in order to deny the enemy access to the oil supply coming from the Caucasus, high priority is to be given the swift interruption of usable railroads and pipelines, also to the harassment of shipping connections with the Caspian Sea.

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C. Navy:

The mission of the navy, besides the immediate support of the land forces crossing the Straits of Kerch, is to commit all forces available in the Black Sea to the harassment of enemy naval intervention against our operations on the Black Sea coast. As soon as possible, naval ferry barges are to be brought through the Straits of Kerch to the Don to assist army supply operations. Aside from that, Naval High Command is to effect preparations for committing light sea forces in the Caspian Sea to the harassment of enemy shipping (especially oil tankers connecting with the Anglo-Americans in Iran.)

III. Current preparation of operations in the zones of Army Groups Center and North are to be completed as quickly as possible. The goal is to bring the scattering and dissolution of enemy forces to its highest level. Army Group North is preparing the capture of Leningrad by the beginning of September. Code name: "Fire-Magic."³⁵¹ In line with this mission, five divisions of the Eleventh Army, along with heavy and heaviest artillery units and other necessary infantry units, are to be assigned. Temporarily two German divisions and two Romanian divisions are to remain in the Crimean Peninsula; the Twenty-Second Division, as already ordered, is assigned to Army Group South Commander.

IV. For the processing and transmission of this message and of the commands and directives contained therein, I refer especially to my command of July 12 concerning secrecy.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler has been blamed for Directive No. 45, most notably by some German generals, for his intention of taking the Caucasus and Stalingrad simultaneously.³⁵²

This blame is misplaced, however. Since Hitler had decided to conquer the Caucasus, it was necessary to secure the flanks along the Volga and the Don. If this was not done, the entire Caucasus army would be in danger of being cut off. Because of this, Hitler really needed not only Stalingrad but also Voronezh. But he succeeded in taking neither the one nor the other! The fact that German troops were unable to conquer Voronezh in the summer of 1942—in spite of all OKW reports to the contrary—was one of the causes of the catastrophe at Stalingrad.

On July 25, Hitler finally had time again to see through the announced "institution of the Crimean Shield."³⁵³

On July 28, Hitler issued three ordinances of a primarily domestic nature. The first of these decrees dealt with the restriction of trade in agricultural properties in wartime. It was directed against speculation and investment.³⁵⁴ A second decree concerned child care for members of

July 28, 1942

the German Wehrmacht in the occupied territories.³⁵⁵ This decree began with the following paragraph:

For maintaining and promoting the racially valuable Germanic genotype, children produced in the occupied Norwegian and Dutch territories by members of the German Wehrmacht and born of Norwegian or Dutch women will be accorded, upon request by the mother, special care and looking after through the offices of the Reichskommissars for the occupied Norwegian and Dutch territories.

Of course, French and Belgian women were incapable of giving birth to “racially valuable” children. Earlier, Hitler had even made sexual intercourse between members of the German Wehrmacht and Polish women punishable.

The third decree concerned the medical service and the public-health service in full detail. Hitler tried to dominate here, too, appointing his personal physician Professor Karl Brandt “the Führer’s general commissar for the medical and public-health services.” Brandt was supposed to exercise the powers of his office in accordance with Hitler’s instructions. The decree read as follows:³⁵⁶

The deployment of personnel and materiel in the sphere of the medical and public-health services necessitates unity and planning of management.

I order the following:

1. For the Wehrmacht, I instruct the army medical inspector as chief of the Wehrmacht medical service in addition to his previous tasks to combine all common tasks in the medical service of the Wehrmacht, of the Waffen SS, and of all organizations and units subordinate to and associated with the Wehrmacht.

The chief of the Wehrmacht medical service will represent the Wehrmacht in all matters concerning the medical service of the Wehrmacht’s branches, the Waffen SS and all organizations and units subordinate to and associated with the Wehrmacht, to the civilian authorities and will protect the Wehrmacht’s interests in health-related measures by the civilian administration.

He will receive as subordinates in the comprehensive processing of these tasks one medical officer from the navy and one from the Luftwaffe with the respective rank of chief of staff. Questions of principle regarding the Waffen SS will be decided in agreement with the medical inspection of the Waffen SS.

2. For the civilian public-health service, the state secretary with the Reich ministry of the interior and Reich public-health leader, Dr. Conti, will be responsible for measures to be taken globally. At his disposal will be the appropriate high Reich authorities and their subordinate offices.

3. For special tasks and negotiations to balance the need for physicians, hospitals, medicine, and so on, between the military and the civilian sectors of the medical and public-health services, I vest Professor Karl Brandt with the

August 15, 1942

requisite powers. He will be subordinate only to me and will receive his instructions directly from me.

4. My plenipotentiary for the medical service and the public-health service will be kept informed of fundamental proceedings with the Wehrmacht's medical service and the civilian public-health service. He is authorized to intervene in a responsible manner.

As plenipotentiary for the medical and public-health services, Professor Brandt will bear the title "the Führer's general commissar for the medical and public-health services."

On July 29, Hitler sent the Duce the following congratulatory telegram:³⁵⁷

In comradely attachment, I express to you, Duce, on the occasion of your birthday today my heartfelt best wishes and those of the German Volk. These greetings are above all for your personal welfare and the prosperity of Fascist Italy. In the unshakable conviction that, together with the allies of the Axis, our people will secure the final victory in this fight for Europe's freedom and future, I send you my heartfelt greetings, as always on this day.

Yours,

Adolf Hitler

Mussolini replied as follows:

A thousand times thank you, Führer, for your telegram on my birthday. Accompanied by the most friendly of feelings, I wish to reciprocate the best wishes that you expressed. Shoulder to shoulder we will continue to fight together as loyal and upright comrades.

On August 2, the anniversary of Hindenburg's death, General Weyer placed a wreath at the vault of the Tannenberg Memorial in Hitler's name.³⁵⁸

On August 4, Hitler sent his friend Mussolini a letter on the military and political situation. According to Ciano, the document "was of not great importance."³⁵⁹ This assessment was undoubtedly correct.

The next day, Hitler ordered a "state funeral" for Air Force General von der Lieth-Thomsen, who had died at the age of seventy-five.³⁶⁰

On August 15, Hitler received foreign diplomats at the Werwolf headquarters. The new Turkish ambassador Saffet Arikan, who had arrived in Berlin in early August, was the first to present his credentials.³⁶¹

On this occasion, Hitler once again attempted to whet the appetite of the Turks for neighboring Russian territories. However, his visitor

August 18, 1942

was not interested. Next, the recalled Bulgarian Envoy Paravan Draganov bade Hitler farewell.

For some time now, Hitler had been troubled by the activities of the partisans in the east. In part, they consisted of regular troops who had withdrawn to impassable terrain in the course of the German advance. There were also irregulars and Russian parachutists. As in the days of Napoleon, the partisans attacked supply columns and made surprise raids. Hitler would use a proven method against them: extermination. He did not realize that terror is effective only against a weaker opponent, but not against one of equal or superior strength. In time, he would come to understand this both in the east and in the west.

On August 18, Hitler issued Directive No. 46:³⁶²

I. In the past months, gangster activities in the east have reached an intolerable level and have come to pose a serious threat to the supply of the front and to the economic exploitation of the country. If the Wehrmacht leadership is to be spared disadvantages of a decisive nature in the winter months, these bandit groups must have to be largely exterminated by the beginning of winter. The requirements are as follows:

1. Swift and vigorous attacks against these bands, involving all available and suitable elements of the army, SS, and military police.
2. Coordination of all propagandistic, economic, and political measures in the necessities of fighting the bands. [Technical details follow.]

While Hitler's summer offensive was making progress, the Allies had not remained idle.

As mentioned earlier, they had built up central and eastern Africa as a huge supply center.³⁶³ As early as July 1942, American troops had been stationed in Liberia. Allied landings in Brazzaville had followed. The French and Belgian colonies in central Africa had joined the Allies. In July, a "Headquarters for the American Armed Forces in the European Theater of War" had been set up in London under General Eisenhower. American troops had already occupied Greenland in 1941. Since January 1942, when the first Americans had landed in Northern Ireland, the number of troops stationed in Great Britain had constantly increased.³⁶⁴

Churchill had met with Roosevelt in Washington on June 18. In early August, he had reorganized the military high command in Egypt: he had named General Montgomery commander in chief of the British Eighth Army and General Alexander commander in chief Near and Middle East. Afterwards, he had flown via Teheran to Moscow, where he had consulted with Stalin from August 13 to 16.

August 20, 1942

On August 19, British commandos under Lord Mountbatten attempted a landing at Dieppe (northern France), the most ambitious venture of this type to date.³⁶⁵ British, Canadian, and de Gaulle troops participated in the assault, which lasted “nine hours.” Fighting took place on land—partly with tanks that had been landed—at sea, and in the air. The Germans captured about fifteen hundred men.³⁶⁶ The OKW report celebrated this event as the thwarting of an attempted invasion.³⁶⁷

Hitler was in a good mood due to the military successes in the east and west. At his headquarters, he again dedicated himself to domestic problems. On August 18, he signed a decree dealing with questions of municipal architecture in the Reichsgau Vienna.³⁶⁸

On August 20, he even named a new Reich minister of justice. Now that he himself was “Supreme Law Lord” and no longer bound by “existing regulations,”³⁶⁹ he no longer feared trusting a “jurist” with the exercise of this office. Of course, he also took care to maintain control of the justice system by conferring “special powers” on the new Reich minister in a simultaneous decree, which—according to Hitler’s “guidelines and directives”—empowered him to “depart from existing law.”

The following announcement on this topic was published:³⁷⁰

Führer Headquarters, August 20, 1942

Official communication: In view of the particular significance attributed to the tasks of the judiciary during the war, the Führer has decided to fill again the post of Reich minister of justice, which has been vacant since the death of Reich Minister Dr. Gürtner. The Führer has therefore appointed the president of the Volksgerichtshof, retired state minister Dr. Thierack, who served as justice minister of Saxony from the seizure of power until the nationalization of the administration of justice, to the post of Reich minister of justice.

At the same time, the Führer has relieved of his duties state secretary Professor Dr. Schlegelberger, who had been entrusted with the conduct of the affairs of the Reich minister of justice, and has approved his request for retirement. The Führer has thanked state secretary Dr. Schlegelberger in a handwritten letter for the excellent services rendered the German Reich during his decades of self-sacrificing work. Further, he has received him at the Führer headquarters to allow him personally to report off duty.

The Führer has appointed the president of the Hanseatic Oberlandesgericht Hamburg, Senator Dr. Rothenberger, to the post of state secretary in the Reich ministry of justice; and he has appointed the state secretary in the Reich ministry of justice Dr. Freisler, to the post of president of the Volksgerichtshof.

The Reich Press Bureau of the NSDAP announces the following:

August 20, 1942

The previous head of the National Socialist Rechtswahrerbund, president of the German Law Academy, and head of the NSDAP Reich legal office, Dr. Frank, has asked the Führer to relieve him of these duties so that he can dedicate himself fully to his work as governor-general. The Führer has granted this request. He has appointed the newly named Reich minister of justice, Dr. Thierack, to the posts of president of the German Law Academy and head of the National Socialist Rechtswahrerbund. The Führer has dissolved the Reich legal office and the Gau and Kreis legal offices. He has integrated the former leaders of the Gau and Kreis legal offices in the Gau and Kreis staff offices. Within the framework of these offices, the National Socialist legal counseling offices shall continue their work.

Official communication: The Führer has conferred special powers on the newly named Reich minister of justice in the following decree:³⁷¹

Führer Decree on the special powers of the Reich minister of justice:

A strong judiciary is necessary for the fulfillment of the Greater German Reich's mission. I order and empower the Reich minister of justice, in accordance with my guidelines and directives and in concurrence with the Reich minister and chief of the Reich chancellery and the head of the party chancellery, to build up a National Socialist judiciary and to take all necessary measures. In so doing, he may depart from the existing law.

The Führer Adolf Hitler

Besides Schlegelberger, Hitler had also received Thierack at the Werwolf headquarters.³⁷² It was interesting in this context that Frank was forced to relinquish his posts as jurist.³⁷³ Hitler again killed two birds with one stone—his old tactics.

At first, Thierack did serve Hitler well. In particular, the concentration camps were greatly expanded thanks to his measures. It was Thierack who coined the legal term *Vernichtung durch Arbeit* (extermination through work) and who regulated the corporal punishment ordered by Hitler.³⁷⁴

On August 20, Hitler sent Horthy the following congratulatory telegram:³⁷⁵

On the Hungarian national holiday, I express to Your Excellency my sincere best wishes. On this day, my thoughts turn with particularly heartfelt feelings to the allied Hungarian nation and its troops fighting together with us in the east.

Adolf Hitler

September 1, 1942

On the same day, Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to the regent. His eldest son Stephan, who had been Horthy's deputy since February 19, had died a "hero's death on the eastern front," where he had served as an officer with the Hungarian Air Force.³⁷⁶

There was progress being made in the southern part of the eastern front. General Jodl was even discussing the possibility of flying to Tbilisi (Tiflis) with Captain Baur, since the German troops were "soon about" to reach the Georgian capital.³⁷⁷ And on August 25, the Wehrmacht's report announced the following:

At 11:00 a.m. on August 21, an alpine unit hoisted the Reich war flag on the Elbrus at 5,630 meters, the highest summit in the Caucasus Mountains.

Militarily speaking, this hoisting of flags was completely insignificant. Nevertheless, it reflected Hitler's predilection for such displays, like the hoisting of the swastika on the Zugspitze in 1933, and on the Austrian Grossglockner in 1938.³⁷⁸ Both undertakings had also been celebrated as extraordinarily important ventures.

On August 22, Freiherr von Gablenz died in a "plane crash." According to official information, Gablenz had flown the plane himself on his way from Berlin to Munich. Hitler ordered a "state funeral." The ceremony took place on August 25 in the Haus der Flieger in Berlin. Field Marshal Milch presented the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross awarded by Hitler.³⁷⁹

Afterwards, Hitler sent Ribbentrop and Keitel, along with a "gigantic wreath," to Budapest, where they attended Stephan von Horthy's funeral on August 27.³⁸⁰

In late August, Hitler renamed the following SA groups by decree: *Bayerische Ostmark* was changed to *Bayernwald*, *Ostland* to *Tannenberg*, *Mitte* to *Elbe*, and *Südwest* to *Neckar*.³⁸¹ This was in line with the renaming of the Gau *Bayerische Ostmark* as *Bayreuth* on June 15. Since Russia was supposed to constitute the Greater German Reich's "Ostmark" or "Ostland" in the future, and, in the west, Burgundy and the Atlantic harbors would "return" to the Reich, Hitler found it difficult to reconcile himself with the old names.

On September 1, Hitler issued an appeal for the Kriegswinterhilfswerk 1942-1943 and announced an imminent "world-deciding victory of the have-nots."³⁸²

September 1, 1942

Führer Headquarters, September 1, 1942

At the beginning of the fourth year of a war in which the German Volk fights for its existence or nonexistence in the present and future, I appeal to the German Volk for the tenth time to make its voluntary sacrifice for the Winterhilfswerk.

The soldiers of our Wehrmacht fight globally at the risk of life and limb. They have been joined by the greater part of the European nations and people of the Far East in a loyal alliance, which will prevent our countries from falling to Bolshevik barbarity or Jewish, Anglo-American, capitalist exploitation. The enemies of the German Reich from long ago—when we fought for power at home—have again united against us today. The international Jew uses Bolshevism and plutocracy not only in order to destroy the European civilized states, but also to exterminate above all the representatives of an independent existence. American and English agents today claim that they want to build a new world—better than theirs used to be—where everyone will have work, clothes, and a home in the future. If that is so, then it would not have been necessary to attack the German Reich of all countries, since National Socialism has either long resolved these problems or was in the process of successfully resolving them. No, the intention of these international criminals is not the building of a better socialist world. Rather it is the brutal destruction of the National Socialist states of Europe opposed to capitalism. The goal is a type of enslavement like that which India has to suffer. That the Bolshevik Jew leads in the end, as the slave driver in both camps, is no different on a large scale from what it was on a small scale in Germany.

In a gigantic struggle without equal, the German and allied soldiers have mightily expanded the Lebensraum of the European people this year. The attempt by the international benefactors of humanity—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—to starve the European people can therefore already be regarded as having failed. If in this mightiest struggle of all time, the German soldier makes his difficult sacrifices and suffers from hardly imaginable deprivations, then the homeland is even more obligated this year to make the highest sacrifices, too. Even then, it will be able to accomplish only a fraction of what our Wehrmacht is accomplishing on land, at sea, and in the air.

Besides this, it is the purpose of our Winterhilfswerk, not only in peace but also and all the more so in war, to reinforce the German Volk's indissoluble community of fate with deeds—not with phrases as in England and America.

After all: the German Reich must and will return to peace from this international war as a National Socialist state through and through. It will be realized not only through the sacrifices of the front, but also through those of the homeland.

In the years 1939 and 1940, perhaps even still in the year 1941, our dull opponents may have thought that, as in 1918, the German Volk could be plunged by its internal disunion into an outward dependence and, thereby, into an enslavement through an even worse Dictate of Versailles. It is the task of the front and the working German Volk at home to destroy this hope of the international gold vultures and Bolshevik beasts more and more, and to make

September 1, 1942

clear to them that this war will not end with possible further exploitation by the have nations, but with a world-decisive victory of the have-nots.

Adolf Hitler

4

On September 2, Horthy's son-in-law Count Karolyi died in a "plane crash." Hitler sent a telegram of condolence to Horthy.³⁸³

It was September now. According to plan, following an end of fighting in the south, the time had come for Hitler to attack Leningrad and the Murmansk railroad (Operations Fireworks and Salmon Fishing). However, operations in the south had not progressed in accordance with his plans. While the Reich battle flag was flying on the Elbrus and the destroyed Maikop oil fields were in German hands, it seemed impossible to reach the oil fields at Grozny. There was also little progress at Stalingrad. While German troops had conquered the bend of the Don River quite swiftly, Stalingrad appeared to be a hard nut to crack.³⁸⁴

Therefore, not surprisingly, Hitler's enthusiasm soon yielded to increasing disenchantment with his generals. He simply couldn't believe that his prophecies refused to come true, even though his orders and instructions were being followed. He knew that the generals were also beginning to notice this. It drove him crazy that, while they continued to carry out his orders, they no longer had any confidence in his strategic genius. As long as Hitler could offer them promotions, medals, money, and glory, they had followed him in "blind obedience." However, they would do so only as long as he scored victories, even deceptive victories. Now that everything was slowly beginning to crumble, and the catastrophes to which Hitler's politics and strategy were destined to lead seemed imminent everywhere, they no longer wished to be too closely involved with this unfortunate development. However, Hitler was confusing cause and effect. He truly believed or deluded himself that the skepticism of the generals was to blame for the reverses, while actually it was Hitler's failures that made the generals skeptical.

September 7, 1942

Hitler's anger was directed primarily at those generals who had actually had a formal education with the general staff. During the month of September, a series of unpleasant scenes took place at the Werwolf headquarters. On August 30, the *War Diary of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff* noted the following:³⁸⁵

The Führer is very discontented with the situation of Army Group A [Caucasus]... His reprimands are not directed against the original deployment of the forces, but against the army group's failing to regroup them once it saw that it was going nowhere like this.

On September 7, Hitler felt that it was necessary to send Jodl, who was supposed "to fly to Tbilisi,"³⁸⁶ to Stalino instead for talks with the commander in chief of Army Group A, Field Marshal List.

Following Jodl's return, the previously mentioned scene took place. After Jodl declared that List had merely carried out the Führer's orders, Hitler shouted, "That is a lie!" and left the dining hall foaming with rage.³⁸⁷ That was the end of the common meals and Hitler's "Table Talk."³⁸⁸

The next morning, messages went out to Munich and Berlin by telex ordering the Reichstag stenographers to Vinnitsa. In the future, they would have to take down every word Hitler uttered in the course of the long discussions of the situation.

Hitler had not come up with this plan overnight.³⁸⁹ In all likelihood, he had already been upset at an earlier time by some general's referring him to his own statements. He wished to prevent such unpleasantness in the future. In view of the tremendous amount of paper produced in the course of the discussions of the situation, who would dare to quote any particular statement of his?³⁹⁰ Should anyone dare, he could literally stuff his mouth with paper!

It would be incorrect to conclude from all this that Hitler actually felt so confident that he was always right that he wished his every word to be recorded. He only asked everybody else to believe this of him.

Hitler was well aware that, in his discussions of the situation and public statements since 1939, he had contradicted himself and had made the most untenable prophesies, such as, for example, the following:

We will erase their cities!³⁹¹ Land taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!³⁹²

The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history.³⁹³

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I say this here and now because I can say that this opponent has already broken down and will never rise again!³⁹⁴

Just how aware Hitler was of his false prophecies is evidenced by his increasing reluctance to speak before his old party comrades, the Reichstag, and the public in general. Plagued by a bad conscience, he would indulge his desire to speak only with his immediate subordinates. On occasion, Hitler would argue that the shorthand record of the discussions would one day serve as evidence before “history” that he took responsibility for everything himself. Indeed, “history” was one of Hitler’s favorite arguments. His use of this word will be dealt with in detail at the end of this volume.

Halder recorded Hitler’s next clash with the military, which took place at a discussion of the situation at the Werwolf headquarters about the same time, in the following manner:³⁹⁵

When he [Hitler] was presented with a summary report based on sound documents, according to which Stalin would still be able to order the deployment of one million to one-and-a-half million men in the area north of Stalingrad and west of the Volga, and of at least half a million men in the eastern Caucasus and to its north, and finally evidence was presented that the Russian production of tanks for the front amounted to twelve hundred a month, foaming at the mouth and with clenched fists, he attacked the speaker and told him to stop this idiotic babble.

On September 10, Hitler received Italian militia officers at the Werwolf headquarters in Lutze’s presence. While he detested militias in general, he was nonetheless happy that this occasion allowed him again to publish a communiqué:³⁹⁶

On Thursday [September 15], the Führer, in the presence of Chief of Staff Viktor Lutze, received the chief of staff of the Italian militia, His Excellency Enzo Galbiati, and the commander of Special Formation “Mussolini,” General Giua, and General Romegialli. He had a lengthy discussion with the chief of the Fascist fighting units, which was conducted in the spirit of heartfelt friendship and comradeship in arms.

On September 15, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram “characterized by heartfelt words” to the Italian Crown Prince Umberto on his birthday. On the same day, he had the German envoy in Manchukuo congratulate the emperor of the Japanese puppet state “on the occasion of the official state celebration of the tenth anniversary of the empire of Manchukuo on September 15 and 16.”³⁹⁷ In addition, he

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addressed the leaders of the “European” youth movement in the following telegram:³⁹⁸

I thank you and the leaders of the European youth assembled in Vienna for the greetings relayed to me from the foundation conference of the European Youth Association and I reciprocate with my best wishes for the full success of the conference.

On September 18, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Chilean president, Rios Morales, on the country’s independence day.³⁹⁹

On September 20, the king of Thailand, Rama VIII, received a congratulatory telegram from Hitler on his birthday.⁴⁰⁰ On the same day, he had Envoy Hewel give a hospital aircraft to the Hungarian Red Cross as a gift.⁴⁰¹

Meanwhile, the SA counted a hundred bearers of the Knight’s Cross among its members. For this reason, Hitler issued the following “honorific decree” on September 23:⁴⁰²

In recognition of the SA’s deployment in the struggle for Greater Germany’s future, I award Infantry Regiment 271 the title Infantry Regiment “Feldherrnhalle.” On the left forearm, the Infantry Regiment “Feldherrnhalle” will wear a brown stripe with the inscription “Feldherrnhalle” embroidered in silver.

Hitler was as generous in distributing such awards as had been Napoleon, who had also awarded his troops numerous “honorific” names, standards, flags, and so on.

On September 23, Hitler received Mihai Antonescu at the Werwolf headquarters. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁰³

On Wednesday [September 23], the Führer received at his headquarters the Deputy Romanian prime minister Mihai Antonescu, who was staying at the Reich foreign minister’s field quarters for political talks, and held a lengthy and heartfelt discussion with him.

Pavelich visited on September 24. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁰⁴

Further on Thursday, the Führer received the head of state of the independent state of Croatia, Dr. Ante Pavelich, who was on his way to an inspection of the Croatian troops fighting on the eastern front. He held a discussion with the Poglavnik, which was characterized by its heartfelt and friendly spirit. In addition to the entourage of the Poglavnik, the reception was attended by the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel.

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On September 24 came a break between Hitler and Colonel General Halder, the army chief of staff. Actually, Hitler had no reason to complain about Halder. In the last four years, Halder had loyally and obediently done whatever Hitler had ordered. He even undertook the most risky ventures in violation of international law. Halder had always been most respectful, unlike Jodl, who poked fun at Hitler in his absence.⁴⁰⁵

But Halder knew too much. He had heard Hitler contradict himself too often. Besides, he was a staff man of the old school. While he did what Hitler told him to do, he did so only because of a sense of obedience that he often lamented himself⁴⁰⁶ and, in many instances, without being convinced of the correctness of Hitler's orders. Although Halder entrusted his opposition only to his diary and did not rebel openly, Hitler felt that Halder thought he was somewhat superior. What Hitler needed, however, was a chief of staff who, like Napoleon's marshal Berthier, did not act as a counselor to him, but instead executed his orders with a "trusting faith."

Halder noted the following on his last talk with Hitler:⁴⁰⁷

After the day's presentation: Dismissal by the Führer (my nerves used up, his are also no longer fresh). We must part ways. Necessity of educating the general staff in the zealous belief in an idea.⁴⁰⁸ (Determined to see his will through in the army, too).

Halder was replaced by Major General Kurt Zeitzler, who was promoted by Hitler through ranks to colonel general on the same day.⁴⁰⁹ Hitler believed he had found in Zeitzler the type of general who unconditionally agreed with everything he said. Indeed, Hitler was far more open with Zeitzler and, on occasion, he would even listen to Zeitzler's reasoned arguments which he would have immediately rejected had Halder made them. If someone proved to Hitler that he accepted Hitler without reservation, then Hitler could be dealt with in a remarkably reasonable manner. The other method was to shout him down, as Sir Nevile Henderson had done in 1939. However, there was nobody on the German side who dared to do so.

On September 24, Hitler presented Gauleiter Wahl of Augsburg his picture with a dedication on Wahl's fiftieth birthday. On September 25, he sent King Christian X of Denmark a congratulatory telegram on his birthday.⁴¹⁰

September 27, 1942

On the second anniversary of the Tripartite Pact on September 27, a flood of telegrams was exchanged between the respective heads of state, prime ministers, foreign ministers, and so on. Hitler sent four telegrams:⁴¹¹

To the King and Emperor Victor Emmanuel:

On the second anniversary of the Tripartite Pact's conclusion, I send Your Majesty my heartfelt greetings and those of the German Volk. Bound together in the closest friendship, Germany, Italy, and Japan will relentlessly and determinedly wage the struggle for a new order in Europe and East Asia, an order which will be based on justice and mutual understanding, to a joint final victory.

To the Duce:

The second anniversary of the Tripartite Pact's conclusion, in which Germany, Italy, and Japan have tied themselves together in the closest cooperation for the preservation and securing of their rights and vital interests, sees our two people and the Japanese people united in indissoluble loyalty in the victorious struggle for a new and just world order. By thinking of Fascist Italy and its soldiers marching together with us on this day, I relay to you, Duce, my sincere and heartfelt best wishes and those of the German Volk in loyal comradeship.

To the Japanese Emperor (Tenno):

I send Your Majesty my sincere best wishes and those of the German Volk on the second anniversary of signing the Tripartite Pact. I am certain that the three great nations united in the pact will lead to a victorious end the freedom fight forced on them in the awareness of their historic mission and that they will thereby realize the great ideal of the creation of a new world order in Europe and in East Asia.

To the Japanese prime minister Tojo:

On the second anniversary of the signing of the Tripartite Pact, my thoughts and those of the German Volk turn to the allied Japanese nation and its soldiers. In the unshakable belief in our joint final victory, I feel one with Your Excellency in the knowledge that the war forced on our countries and on Italy will lead to a prosperous future for our people and for all of Europe and Greater East Asia. In this spirit, I send you my heartfelt best wishes.

Also on September 27, the pianist Elly Ney received a telegram from Hitler's headquarters on her sixtieth birthday.⁴¹²

Hitler was in Berlin the next day. At the Sportpalast, he again spoke to officer candidates. Göring reported twelve thousand young officers from the army, navy, and Luftwaffe present, as well as "Junkers" from the Waffen SS.⁴¹³

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The German News Bureau rendered the following account:

In rousing words, the Führer afforded the young men an insight into the great history of Germany, which is being crowned in the mighty fateful struggle of our days. After referring to the high duties that are imparted to an officer as the head of the soldiers entrusted to him in this struggle, the Führer concluded his address by expressing his absolute certainty of victory and his unshakable trust in the superior fighting qualities of the German soldiers.

On September 30, Hitler delivered another speech at the Sportpalast, at a "Volk rally" opening the Kriegswinterhilfswerk. The setting was the same as one year before, when he had claimed that Moscow would be reached within one or two days and the Russian "opponent has already broken down and will never rise again."

At the beginning, he tried to explain why "regrettably" he spoke so little to the German Volk at this time. He admitted—hear, hear—that his speeches were getting "worse." That was true. However, it was not for a lack of practice, as Hitler claimed, but because the overly exuberant forecasts of his earlier talks had not come true and the external situation made it increasingly difficult for him to fill himself and his audience with similar enthusiasm.

He now had to resort to all sorts of excuses, although he could not resist making more exaggerated prophecies:

. . . we rush on Stalingrad and will take it—you can be assured of that!—And you can rest assured that no human being can remove us from there!—No matter which place [for an invasion] he [Churchill] chooses next, he can consider himself fortunate if he can stay on land for nine hours!

In 1941, he had offered the English evacuation of the areas in question in order to "spare [them] the difficulties of a landing."⁴¹⁴ Now, he was forced to limit himself to impotent tirades against "military silly boys" in the west, against these "lunatics and constant drunks," against the "blockhead Duff Cooper, Eden, or another of these fellows," against the Russian people "born in a morass," against the Russian, who "was a type of swamp-man and no European."

He scorned and derided his enemies abroad, as he once had his opponents within Germany, but still they were not intimidated! Applause at the Sportpalast was thin, Hitler's big talk embarrassing even this captive audience. He began his speech as follows:⁴¹⁵

My German Volksgenossen!

It was one year ago that I last spoke to you and the German Volk from this place. In many respects, this is regrettable. First, because I very much regret not being able to step before the nation more often and, second, because I fear that my speeches are not getting better but worse—because this also needs practice. Regrettably, my time is far more limited than that of my opponents. Someone who can travel around the world for weeks, in a white silk shirt, a wide sombrero on his head, can also attend to speeches more often.⁴¹⁶

During this time, I have had to concern myself more with actions and deeds. Besides, even otherwise, I cannot speak every week or every month, of course. What must be said today will be said by our soldiers! The topics on which I could speak are of course more difficult than my enemies' discourses, who sent their chats out to the world—at least in former times—more often from the fireside than anywhere else. I do not think it appropriate, for example, to concern myself with the design of what will be one day. Instead, I think it is more appropriate for us all to concern ourselves with what the present demands of us.

To concoct an "Atlantic Charter" is naturally quite simple. This stupidity will soon be rectified by hard facts. There is yet another reason why it is easier for our enemies to speak today: after long and futile efforts, they have suddenly discovered our party program. With astonishment, we see how they promise the world the same things we have already given our German Volk and for which we were in the end attacked by others.

It is also quite clever when, for example, a president says, "we want everyone to have the right in the future not to suffer misery," or something of the sort.⁴¹⁷ Here you can only say: it would perhaps have been easier had the president used the entire capacity for work of his country to build up useful production instead of jumping headlong into a war, and had he above all taken care that need and misery would be eliminated among his own people, who live in an area with only ten persons per square kilometer but have thirteen million unemployed. All this the gentlemen could well have done! Now, they suddenly make an appearance, portraying themselves to the world as saviors, and declaring, "we shall take care in the future that the need of the past does not return, that there will be no more unemployment, and that everyone gets an apartment."—But these owners of empires could have done this long before us in their own countries!

They are now suddenly discovering the principles of the National Socialist program. When I hear a man say—I think it was Mr. Eden, but it is hard to tell which zero is speaking over there—"the difference between the Germans and us is that the Germans believe something in which they do not believe, and that we believe something in which we do believe," then I can only say, if they really believe what they pretend to believe in, then they could have acknowledged this belief much earlier. Why then did they declare war on us when they are after all not that far away from us?

We did not merely believe something, we also did what we believed in. And now we believe that we have to fight the enemy until the final victory. This we believe and this we will do!

It is impossible for us to debate with these people about the term "belief." Who believes, for example, that Namsos was a victory, or Andalsnes, or who believes that Dunkirk was the greatest victory in world history or, for all I care, that some expedition lasting nine hours⁴¹⁸ was an equally astonishing and encouraging sign of a victorious nation—with something like this, of course, we naturally cannot compare our modest successes!

What are our successes by comparison! If we advance a thousand kilometers, then that is nothing but a "complete failure." For example, when we advance to the Don during the last few months—after all, it has been only a few months that war has been waged in this country—and when we move down the Don and reach the Volga, when we rush on Stalingrad and will take it—you can be assured of that!—then this amounts to nothing in their eyes! When we advance to the Caucasus, that amounts to nothing, just as when we occupy the Ukraine, take possession of the Donets coals, gain sixty-five to seventy percent of Russian iron, open up the greatest breadbasket in the world to the German Volk and Europe, and secure for ourselves the oil wells in the Caucasus. All that amounts to nothing! However, when Canadian advance parties with a small English tail in tow reach Dieppe and at great effort manage to hold the position for nine hours before they are finally destroyed, then that is an "encouraging, astonishing sign of the untiring victorious power that characterizes the British Empire."

By comparison, what is our Luftwaffe, our infantry, our panzer weapons? In the year 1939, they were nothing. At the time, Churchill had already appeared and said, "I am happy to inform you that the danger posed by the U-boats can be regarded as having been eliminated for good." No—wait a minute—perhaps that was not Churchill, but Duff Cooper; one of these swaggerers (*Schwadroneure*) is always bigger than the other, and you constantly mistake one for the other. At the time, they had already destroyed more U-boats than we owned! That we kicked them out of the Balkans, that we conquered Greece, that we occupied Crete, that we drove them back in North Africa—that amounted to nothing. However, if a few men land somewhere to take a lonely outpost of ours by surprise, then that is a deed, that is an accomplishment.

He who believes this will never understand our belief. Should the English seriously believe what they pretend to believe, then you can only worry about their senses.

In addition to these "deeds," they also have vouchers for the future, naturally. They say, "A second front will come. It is already advancing. You Germans, pay attention! About-face!" We did not pay attention and did not about-face. Instead, we calmly marched on. I am not saying that we are not preparing for a second front. Mr. Churchill now says, "We will leave it to the Germans to brood over in their fright where and when we will open it." I can only say, Mr. Churchill, you have never frightened me! But you are right in

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that we do have to brood over something. If I had an enemy of stature, then I could figure out where he would attack. However, if you are confronted by military silly boys (*Kindsköpfe*), then you can never know where they will attack, since it could be the craziest undertaking. And what is so unpleasant is that you never know with these lunatics and constant drunks what they will do next.

Whether or not Mr. Churchill has chosen the first location where he wants to start the second front appropriately and in a militarily clever way, opinions on this are divided even in England—and that is saying a lot. I can assure him: no matter which place he chooses next, he can consider himself fortunate if he stays on land for nine hours!

In my eyes, we have already passed the most fateful test for our Volk in the year 1942. It was the winter of 1941–1942. I may say that Providence weighed on the German Volk and especially its Wehrmacht in this winter. Worse cannot and will not come. That we conquered this winter, that the German fronts stood up, and that we could again line up in the early spring, this proved, so I believe, that Providence was satisfied with the German Volk. It was a very difficult and a very hard test—all of us know this. Nevertheless, we did not only survive this difficult time, but we also calmly managed to order and rearrange the divisions for the attack, as well as the motorized and panzer units which were earmarked to begin the next offensive. And this offensive has also developed differently from what our enemies had envisioned. After all, it is not necessary that we proceed in accordance with their method, since these methods have proved so unsuccessful.

I believe that, in looking back, we can be content with the past three years. The objective was always very sober; bold where it had to be bold, prudent where it could be prudent; unhurried where we had time, cautious where we believed that we had to be cautious under all circumstances. However, we were being daring where daring alone could help.

For this year, we have drawn up a very simple program. First: under all circumstances, to hold what must be held. That means that we will let the others get underway as long as they want to get underway where we do not intend to advance. To hold firm and to wait and see who will be the first to tire.

Second: It's absolutely imperative to attack where an attack is necessary under all circumstances. The objective is clear: the destruction of the right arm of this international conspiracy of capitalism, plutocracy, and Bolshevism, which is the greatest danger that has ever hovered above our German Volk and against which we have been in battle for a year now.

We have set ourselves several objectives here. I will briefly summarize in catchwords what has been accomplished in these few months in order to make you aware of it:

The first objective was the securing of our superior position at the Black Sea and the final clearing of the Crimean Peninsula. Two battles served this purpose: that of Kerch and that of Sevastopol. Let me say that had our enemies had at least one success in these three years of war, then it would surely be impossible to speak with them at all, since they would no longer float here on

earth, but in the clouds, bloated by conceit. After we had set things in order there, it appeared necessary to us to eliminate the bulge that had developed at Volkhov. It was cut off, and the enemy destroyed or captured.⁴¹⁹

Then came the next task: preparing the breakthrough to the Don. In the meantime, the enemy chose a great offensive objective, namely, to break through to the banks of the Dnieper from Kharkov in order to bring about the collapse of our entire southern front. Perhaps you recall our enemies' enthusiasm in following these operations. It ended in three battles and the complete destruction of more than seventy-five divisions of our Soviet enemy.

Thereupon, we lined up for our own great offensive. The first goal was to take from the enemy the last great breadbasket; second, to pull out from under him the last bit of coal that can be carbonized; third, to move up to his oil fields, either to take them or at least to shut him out of there; fourth, the attack was to be continued in order to cut off his last great arterial road, the Volga. The objective was an area between the bend of the Don and the Volga, and the town of Stalingrad—not because the town bears Stalin's name, which is unimportant⁴²⁰—but exclusively because it is a strategically important area, and we were aware that the elimination of the Dnieper, the Don, and the Volga as traffic routes would be as terrible or worse for the Soviet Union, as it would be for Germany if we lost the Rhine, the Elbe, the Oder, or the Danube. On the mighty Volga stream alone, thirty million tons of goods are transported in six months. That is just as much as in one year on the Rhine. It [the Volga] has now been cut off for some time. Now it is the taking of Stalingrad above all that will be brought to a conclusion—whereby this lock will gain in depth and strength. And you can rest assured that no human being can remove us from this place!

As to our further intentions, you will understand that I will not speak about them, as it is a question of objectives which are being pursued at this time. In my stead, Mr. Churchill speaks about them. But the time will come when the German nation will obtain clarity on these further goals.

I can tell you, however, that the next task that we will set for ourselves will naturally be the organization of this gigantic area which we are now occupying. We were not as interested in marching so many thousands of kilometers as we were in placing this gigantic area in the service of feeding our Volk, securing our raw materials, and, in a wider sense, sustaining all of Europe.

To this end, traffic had to be put in order. The English, too, have achievements in this area. For example, they built a railroad from Egypt to Tobruk, from which we greatly benefit right now. Even if they managed to finish pretty much on time, what is this compared with the railroads that we must build for our use and not that of the Russians? There are ten thousands and again ten thousands of kilometers of railroads that we either will repair or which we have already repaired a long time ago, thanks to the diligence, hard work, and dedication of many ten thousands of German soldiers, railroad engineers, men of the Todt organization and other organizations, the Reich labor service and so on. The huge traffic network, which today runs on German gauges for the most part, was completely destroyed. Not hundreds, but thousands of bridges had to be newly built, craters or mines had to be

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eliminated, crossings had to be newly set up. All this was accomplished in a few months or will be finished in a few weeks.

Now, my party comrades, you will understand one thing: when people on our enemies' side say, "Why did they stop all of a sudden?" then I can only reply, because we are careful. Because we do not run to Benghazi only to have to run back again, but because we stop somewhere until our supply lines are back in order. Of course, people who lack military schooling cannot understand this. That is why they do not have any successes. Anybody who has a little bit of military knowledge will admit that what we conquered in terms of space in a few months is unique in world history. I am also saying this because it is possible here, too, that there is some old reactionary Philistine (*Spiesser*), who says, "Yes, what does this amount to, they have already been standing there for eight days." Yes, my dear Philistine, you don't understand. You should go first and put traffic back in order.

I know that the German Volk in its entirety has had up to now such boundless faith in its military leaders and in the accomplishments of its soldiers that it knows that there is always a reason for stopping. Not only do we put traffic in order on the tracks, but we must also build roads since the "blessed land of proletarians and peasants" regrettably does not have any roads, but only fragments of roads. The first truly mighty roads are being built now by our organizations there. In some areas, roads must be built through swamps that in former times were held to be impassable. If someone says, "but the Russian managed to get through"—well, he is a type of swamp-man (*Sumpfmensch*) and no European, that we must admit. For us, it is more difficult to advance in this swamp than for this people born in a morass!

Behind this, we are also organizing agriculture. After all, the area is supposed to be developed, and that is not easy, since it is not a question of simply sowing and harvesting. Rather, it is a question of making use of, that is, transporting these products across vast distances to a railroad, where they can be loaded. Finally, we must restructure part of this economy: thousands of tractors which were either damaged or eliminated must be improved or replaced with other means. I can only tell you: what has been accomplished here is simply incredible! While the front is fighting, a few kilometers behind it the same soldiers work with sickle and scythe, cultivate the fields again, and behind them the operational staffs of our agricultural organizations move up. And, if some blockhead (*Schafskopf*)—I simply cannot call them anything else—like Duff Cooper, Eden, or some other fellow says, "Yes, it was a big mistake for the Germans to move into the Ukraine or the Kuban region,"—we will see whether it was a mistake for us to take these breadbaskets!⁴²¹

Luckily, we are already able to make accessible to the German Volk the first, modest gains from this action. Rest assured, we are only beginning. The whole of last year was a year of fighting, a gruesome winter followed, and now we are fighting again. As early as next year this area will be organized in a completely different manner. You can rest assured of this, we know how to put something like that in order.

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And finally, there is the organization of the economy in general. After all, the whole economy must be put into service. Thousands of enterprises, factories, mills, and so on, must get going again, since right now things are destroyed. Next, there is the mining industry. It must also be developed, as well as electrical energy. I can only repeat one thing: if you could see how we work there and what we create there; how we know that, according to plan, this mine will be ready on this day, and how it will be hooked up to electricity in this month; and on this day so many tons of coal will have been produced there, and so on; how we no longer need to transport coal from Germany to the east, how we are instead building an industrial base of our own there; then you would understand that, at a time when apparently nothing is happening, there is nonetheless tremendous work being done.

Moreover, the population is released from the pressures of a Bolshevik power that psychologically subjects millions of human beings there to despondency and, as one can well say, holds them in a type of fear of which nobody has an idea here in Germany or in other countries. It is the fear of the commissar, it is the fear of the GPU,⁴²² a fear of the entire regime, which still frightens millions of human beings. This must gradually be overcome and it will be overcome. Today, there are already vast areas in which the entire population works with us—millions of them—and there are other areas in which they already fight in our ranks and on our side.

The results of this gigantic activity, which I outlined to you in only a few sentences, are tremendous. As we are on the defensive in the north of Europe, in the west, and on all other fronts, we are fulfilling a gigantic prerequisite for the organization of Europe in the war and for victory.

You know, of course, that our enemies are continuously working miracles. There is not one tank that they are building which is not "the best in the world." No plane of which they do not claim the same. If they build a cannon, a very simple cannon, then it is the most amazing cannon in the world. If they make a new machine gun, then it is only natural that it is the very best. They say that the new Sten gun is the greatest invention in the world. If you look at this junk (*Gelumpe*), then you can only say that this is something which we would never place in the hand of a German soldier.

They are far superior to us in all things. They are superior in their matchless generals; they are superior in the valor of their individual soldiers. Any Englishman could take on at least three Germans.

However, history will put the great heroes of this war on our side! And history will thereby honor justice and truth.

In addition, there is on our side the further expansion of our alliances, the cooperation with our allies, at their head our oldest ally, Italy. We fight together not only along one front, but also along a number of fronts. And that is good because it proves that all the hopes of our enemies, who believed that they could dissolve this alliance, were crazy. Both of us know exactly what would become of our countries—we deduce this from crazy and stupid objectives of our enemies—we know what the fate of the German and Italian

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people would be, what the fate of Europe would be, if this outside world ever gained a victory.

If they say today, "Yes, of course, we will take on the protection of Europe against Bolshevism," then I can only reply that England should be careful to protect itself from Bolshevism! We do not need its protection. We have overcome Bolshevism at home, we will overcome it abroad, too! This we have proved!

If archbishops say Mass in a country with the Bolshevik flag on one side of their altars and the national flag on the other, then I fear for this country. We know what this leads to. The English will live to see it. Fate will perhaps punish them, as it once punished the former Germany, which believed it could make a pact with these people.⁴²³

Germany and Italy, just like Spain and a number of other European people like the Hungarians, Romanians, and so on, have overcome this problem. Whether or not the outside world will also do so it remains to be seen in this war.

That this outside world will not conquer us can be assured! If we add all our allies and those who fight on our side, Romanians, Hungarians, Croats, Slovaks, and Finns in the north, and Spaniards, and so on, then we can truly say: even today, this is a European crusade. In addition, there are the Germanic volunteers in our Waffen SS and legions from individual European states. It is truly Europe that has come together here, as in former times against attacks by the Huns or Mongols.

Since I spoke to you last time, Japan has entered the war. Of course, it has supposedly suffered defeat after defeat. Of course, Japanese generals amount to nothing at all compared with the matchless heroes and famous generals from England and America. MacArthur, what a general! What is such a little Japanese man by comparison. However, these Japanese have in the meantime taken Hong Kong. They have taken control of Singapore, and they have taken possession of the Philippines. They are in New Guinea and they will conquer all of New Guinea. They have occupied Java and Sumatra. Naturally, this all amounts to nothing at all compared with the endless victories that England and America have won there; land battles, sea battles, the like of which the world has never seen before. Roosevelt says, "I cannot comment on this, I cannot say anything about this and, anyway, I do not wish to say anything concrete or expand on this." We know these heroes only too well!

There is today truly a worldwide alliance not only of the have-nots, but also of all people who fight for honor and decency and who are determined to make a clean sweep of the vilest coalition the world has ever seen. On this matter, I wish to speak again of our U-boats. Their successes since 1939, supported by the heroic deployment of our Luftwaffe units, have become greater every month. Our enemies now declare, "We have tremendous defensive capabilities, we have new methods, the British and the American genius has invented completely new machines with which we will overcome this danger." I can only tell them one thing: the German genius is not resting either!⁴²⁴

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We have far surpassed all earlier accomplishments with our U-boats! And I can assure you that this will not change in the future. We keep on top of things; you can be convinced of this. Not only do we continue to build weapons, but also and above all we keep building new weapons. Until now, in any event, we have lined up every year with weapons that were superior to those of the enemy. That is how it will be in the future, too! As we look at the overall result, we can only say that the last months of this year have also been successful. And it will continue to be this way.

In the following part, Hitler again announced “retribution” for bomb attacks and that “the end [will be] more terrible for England than the beginning.” This time, however, he refrained from threatening that he would “strike back a hundred times in the future for every bomb.”⁴²⁵ He no longer spoke of retaliating “blow for blow,” as he had in his speech of April 26.⁴²⁶ The only type of effective “retaliation” he could think of still was the massacre of the Jews who were in his hands. He declared as follows:

In addition to the “second front,” there is yet another means. The man who invented bomb warfare against an innocent civilian population declared that this bomb warfare against Germany and so on will shortly be greatly stepped up. I would like to add one thing to this: in May 1940, Mr. Churchill sent the first bombers against the German civilian population. At the time, I kept warning him, for almost four months—in vain. Then, we struck. And we struck so thoroughly that he began to cry and declared that this was barbaric and terrible, and that England would seek revenge. The man on whose conscience all this weighs—not counting the great warmonger Roosevelt—and who is to blame for everything, this man then dared to claim that he was innocent. Today, he continues to wage this war.

I would like to say here: the hour will also come this time when we have to answer! May the two great criminals of this war and their Jewish masterminds not start whining and weeping if the end is more terrible for England than the beginning!

At the Reichstag session of September 1, 1939, I said two things:

First, since this war was forced on us, neither the power of arms nor time will defeat us. Second, should Jewry instigate an international world war in order to exterminate the Aryan people of Europe, then not the Aryan people will be exterminated, but the Jews.⁴²⁷ The wire-pullers of this insane man in the White House have managed to pull one nation after another into this war. Correspondingly, however, a wave of anti-Semitism swept over one nation after another. And it will continue to do so, taking hold of one state after another. Every state that enters this war will one day emerge from it as an anti-Semitic state. The Jews once laughed about my prophecies in Germany. I do not know whether they are still laughing today or whether they no longer feel

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like laughing. Today, too, I can assure you of one thing: they will soon not feel like laughing anymore anywhere. My prophecies will prove correct here, too.

These prophecies were to prove correct, at least as far as the Jews living within the German sphere of influence were concerned. His extermination machinery was running at top capacity. In the extermination camps at Auschwitz, Belcec, Chelmno, Sibibor, Treblinka, Wolcek, and so on, millions of Jews from Russia, Poland, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, and the Balkans were herded together, including women, children, and the elderly. There they were shot, massacred, or gassed with Zyclon B.⁴²⁸

These atrocities perpetrated by Hitler's henchmen were unprecedented in history, with regard both to their systematic nature and their technical detail. The persecution of Christians in antiquity, the slaughter of the Saxons by Charlemagne, the Jewish pogroms of the Middle Ages and modern times, the guillotining of the French Revolution, the murders committed by the Cheka in Bolshevik Russia, the extermination of the Armenians by the Turks—all these pale in comparison with the insane, completely senseless massacre of the Jews by Adolf Hitler and his accomplices.

Hitler dedicated the last part of his speech to the "successes of the last months and their impact on world history." He claimed that it was "impossible and out of the question" that Germany and its allies could ever be "defeated."

The successes of the last months and their impact on world history are so great that it is now necessary to think of those to whom we owe all these successes. They read in the newspapers about great victories, great battles of encirclement. For weeks, however, they read no more than: "the operations are progressing," or "the operations are progressing favorably," or "there is calm at this or that front," or "attacks at other fronts were repelled."

My Volksgenossen! You have no idea what is concealed by these simple words in the reports of the supreme Wehrmacht high command. The Wehrmacht report must remain modest. We must try to keep a balanced view in order to render justice to the actual events in accordance with their importance for the overall situation. This does not mean that the fight is any easier for the individual German soldier in those instances which appear insignificant compared with the great events, than for the soldier fighting for major decisions. It is always a human being who risks his life.

There are often hundreds of thousands of brave soldiers from all branches of the services—infantry, army, engineers, artillery, Waffen SS units, Luftwaffe units, naval units; our warships above and below the water—all of them must risk their lives in such a situation for many days only to read: "defensive

battles," or "breakthrough by the enemy thwarted," or "attacking enemy annihilated," or "breakthrough achieved," or "advances in this or that area," or "conquest of this or that pass," or "taking of this or that city." My Volksgenossen, you have no idea what human heroism is concealed by this, what human pain and suffering, and, we can say, what fear in many instances, what fear of death especially by those who face this trial by ordeal for the first time. This is easy to read about, but incredibly difficult to do.

It is similar to the First World War. Then, too, many soldiers returned home and were asked, "What is it actually like?" They then realized that you cannot explain this to someone who has not gone through it himself. Who has not gone through this once himself does not know and understand it, and you cannot explain it to him. And that is why some simply remain silent and do not say anything, because they feel that they cannot describe what it was really like, especially considering how barbaric the enemy is in the east. He is an enemy of whom we know that he does not recruit men but beasts.

Behind all these dry descriptions, there lies endless suffering, endless devotion, endless activity. When you read that someone has received the Knight's Cross, then there is a short report in the local press. However, the majority of our Volk cannot be made aware of what is concealed in the description of his individual accomplishments. It is impossible for the individual to know what it means when a pilot downs thirty, forty, or fifty planes or even eighty or a hundred. This does not mean one hundred battles; he risks his life a thousand times for this. And if he climbs to heights of, let us say, a hundred fifty, a hundred eighty, or two hundred downings, then this is

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However, this has never yet happened. Not even in the last war. Or, when U-boat commanders keep attacking time and again, when commanders of small motorized torpedo boats accomplish their missions time and again, mine-clearing details carry out their orders in incessant deployment, which can be mentioned with only one line in the Wehrmacht report—a continuous sacrifice of life over many weeks and months in contrast to one line printed in the paper! If we keep this in mind, then we have to realize that, considering everything the homeland does, it can never thank our soldiers enough.

And this applies not only to our soldiers but also to all the soldiers of our allied nations who fight on our side. Something else should be mentioned here: namely, that the German Wehrmacht does not act in its deployment as, for example, the English do. We do not send others where it is particularly dangerous. Instead, we regard it as our conscientious duty, as our honor, that we honestly assume our toll of blood ourselves. We have no Canadians or Australians to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for us. Instead, we fight [side by side] with our allies, all of them loyal and completely honorable.

We believe that this is necessary. Because only then will ultimately result from this most difficult struggle—perhaps the most difficult in our history—what we National Socialists envisioned when we came out of the First World War: the great Reich of a Volksgemeinschaft bound together by suffering and by joy. For there is a great, bright aspect to this war: namely, a great

comradeship. What our party always sought to achieve in peacetime is now being fortified: the building of a Volksgemeinschaft based on the experiences of the First World War. All German tribes are part of this; otherwise, the foundation of the Greater German Reich would merely have been a constitutional act. Instead, it became an eternal document signed with the blood of all. It is a document that nobody can erase anymore and against which our enemies' talk and babble will remain completely ineffective. Above all, it is a document that gives this state not only power but also inner meaning.⁴³⁰

You will notice this in reading the proposals for the Knight's Cross. You see the common man next to the private first class, the noncommissioned officer next to the sergeant, the second lieutenant next to the general. In looking at the promotion list for our young officers, you will see the beginning of the impact by our National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft to its full extent. There are no more privileges by birth certificate, none by former positions in life, none by so-called origin, none by so-called education in former times. There is only one criterion: the criterion of the brave, valiant, loyal man, the determined fighter, the daring man who is fit to be a leader of his Volk. Truly, the collapse of an old world has been brought about. From this war arises a blood-fortified Volksgemeinschaft, a stronger one than that we National Socialists were able to convey to the nation after the World War through our avowal of faith. And this will perhaps be the greatest blessing for our Volk in the future: that we will emerge from this war improved in our community, cleansed of many prejudices, that this war will prove all the more how correct the party program of our movement was, how correct our whole National Socialist attitude is. For there is one thing which is certain: no bourgeois state will survive this war.

Sooner or later, everybody has to put his cards on the table here. Only he who manages to forge his people into a unity not only as a state but also as a society will emerge as the victor from this war. That we National Socialists laid the foundations a long time ago, we and I owe to our experiences in the first war. That the Greater German Reich must now fight a second war—to this our movement will owe the reinforcement and additional depth of its program in the future. May all those be assured of this who perhaps still believe that maybe one day they will be able to witness the new rosy dawn of their class world through empty talk and faultfinding. These gentlemen will pitifully suffer shipwreck. World history will push them aside, as though they had never existed.

Returning from the Great War as a soldier, I once explained this *Weltanschauung* to the German Volk and created the foundations for the party. Do you believe that any German could offer the soldiers, who today are coming home victorious from the war, anything less than a National Socialist Germany—in the sense of the true fulfillment of our ideas of a true Volksgemeinschaft? That is impossible! And this will surely be the most beneficial blessing of this war in the future.

Not only is the expansion of territory decisive, but also decisive is the filling of this space with a united, strong Volk, which must avow as its essential

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principle: every soldier of this Volk carries the marshal's baton in his knapsack—not only in theory, but also in reality. After this war, the way will all the more be open for every individual Volksgenosse whose ingenuity, whose diligence, whose valor, whose fitness and willingness for deployment may open the way for him.

At this moment, I should not like to neglect mentioning in contrast to the front, the homeland, which has also had to suffer a lot. The German worker has slaved away. I have witnessed this spring, when it was a question of quickly producing new defensive weapons, that many workers not only worked ten or eleven hours, but also without Sundays off for many weeks in the one thought of giving the front weapons and helping it. I must point out that the German workers have done immense work and that they loyally stand behind today's state, their leadership, and, above all, their soldiers, their comrades, and their colleagues.

I must point out that the German rural population has also fulfilled its duty. Millions of German women have integrated themselves into the working process. A peasant woman today must often do the work of two men. And finally, I must point out that our professions that work with the mind and all their institutions work self-sacrificially; millions and millions give everything to think and work in order to arm the nation and never again to set the front an example as in 1918.

If I can today tell the homeland that it can rest completely reassured that in the east, in the west, in the north, in the south, the German front and our soldiers stand unshakably, then I can also tell the front: German soldier, rest assured, behind you stands a homeland which will never let you down.

That is not an empty phrase. Week after week, month after month, the best of our Volk from all walks of life are increasingly forged together into an indissoluble community. And this community will prove itself, especially in the great *Hilfswerk* which we have to make succeed this winter. I have often pointed out that it would have been possible to render assistance by some other means, but that we did not do it because of the simple realization that it is important to acquaint the individual Volksgenossen with the tasks which move the nation and which therefore touch every one of us. Above all, the blessed among men thereby become concerned with the plight of those less fortunate. Continuous propaganda shows them what still remains to be done so that we can speak of a community in the true sense of the word, so that it is not lip service, but instead so that every individual really contributes to the best of his abilities in rendering useful service to this community and, above all, so that nobody has the right to excuse himself from this work, especially not at a time when millions of others defend this community with their blood.

I direct this appeal to the entire German Volk in the name of all its soldiers and of all those who sacrifice themselves in armament factories, the countryside, or elsewhere.

Also I should not like to neglect telling you at this hour that we will mercilessly destroy every saboteur of this community. Only a few weeks ago, an English newspaper in an enlightened hour correctly remarked that one

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ought not to laugh about the German *Winterhilfswerk*. Above all, one thing is a fact: if someone in England enriches himself at the expense of somebody else, then he will receive a sentence—provided that he is apprehended—of perhaps a few hours of lessons, at worst a few weeks or months of jail, where he can live better than any soldier at the front. On the other hand, anyone who sins against the community in Germany is practically digging his own grave. This English newspaper is right: at a time when the best of our Volk have to be deployed at the front, where they risk their lives, at such a time there is no room for criminals and good-for-nothings who destroy the nation!

Whoever enriches himself on what was earmarked for our soldiers can count on being mercilessly eliminated! Whoever enriches himself on what so many hands of our Volk made in sacrifice for our soldiers should not expect to find mercy. Every German must know that what he gives his soldiers or the suffering homeland will actually benefit those who deserve it and for whom it was meant. Above all, no habitual offender should delude himself that a new crime will help him survive this war. We will take care that it is not the decent man alone who may possibly die at the front, but that the criminal and indecent man at home will certainly not survive this time!

I do not want a German woman who is on her way home from work at night to have to constantly pay fearful attention to falling victim to some good-for-nothing or criminal. We will exterminate these criminals, and we have exterminated them. And it is to this fact that the German Volk owes it that there are so few crimes happening today. I believe that I am working on behalf of the maintenance of our community, especially on behalf of our front, which has a right to demand that, while the soldiers are risking their lives out there, their families, their wives, and other family members at home are protected.

At this moment I must assure the front of something else, too: namely, how immensely bravely this German homeland accepts and suffers the war wherever it is most immediately and harshly affected by it. I know a city, a Frisian city, which I have long wanted to evacuate because it kept being attacked. I wished to remove the children and women from there to bring them into security. It was out of the question; they kept returning to their city. You could not get them to go away, although they had suffered so much there. There are many acts of heroism being done, not only by men, but also by women, and not only by women, but also by boys who are barely fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old. They risk their lives in the realization that, in this war, we are a single sworn community which knows that either we all survive this war victoriously or we will be exterminated together.

If the soldier did not know this, then you could not expect him to risk his life. Vice versa, the homeland must know that it will be judged in accordance with its performance. I therefore expect that the new *Winterhilfswerk* will strongly document this indissoluble community, that the nation will show to the whole world through its vote that this is not a phony poll, but a vote for sacrifice by declaring the following:

We stand behind our soldiers, just as our soldiers stand up for us! Together we stand for our Volk and our community and we will never capitulate. Our

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enemies can continue this war for as long as they are able to. What we can do to defeat them, we will do! That they will ever defeat us is impossible and out of the question. Only National Socialist Germany and its allied states, as young nations, true people and true people's states, will emerge from this war after a glorious victory!

October 2, 1942

5

On October 1, Hitler received Rommel at the Reich Chancellery, handed him the marshal's baton, and thanked him for his accomplishments.⁴³¹

Rommel had attempted a new offensive in the direction of the Suez Canal on August 31. After a few days, he had to discontinue the attack, because the British resistance at El Alamein was too strong. In the meantime, he had set up defensive positions, which were about fifteen to twenty kilometers in depth, before he went on leave for six weeks.

Before he left for his vacation residence at the Semmering Pass in Austria, Rommel gave a press conference in Berlin. Just like Hitler, who had talked big in his speech of September 30 about Stalingrad, Rommel bragged about the situation regarding Egypt. He told the journalists the following:⁴³²

Today we stand a hundred kilometers from Alexandria and Cairo. We control the gateway to Egypt. And we fully intend to act here, too! We did not go there only to allow ourselves to be thrown back sooner or later. You can rely on one thing: what we have, we will firmly hold on to! I am doing very well. I can assure you that I will always be at my post when necessary.

Rommel's chief of staff, Colonel Bayerlein, declared the following in October at a Hitler Youth rally in Würzburg: "The German position at El Alamein is unconquerable!"⁴³³ Rommel and Bayerlein were indeed so convinced of this that they went on leave. So they were completely taken by surprise on October 23 when Montgomery launched his great and decisive offensive at El Alamein.

On October 2, Hitler received the new Bulgarian Envoy Slavtcho Sagorov⁴³⁴ at the Reich Chancellery. On the same day, he sent Franco a congratulatory telegram on "the day of the Caudillo."⁴³⁵

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On October 3, a congratulatory telegram to King Boris followed, on the anniversary of his accession to the throne.⁴³⁶

This year, too, Hitler refrained from speaking at the Thanksgiving rally, which took place on October 4 at the Sportpalast in Berlin. He felt that it was better to let Göring speak. As mentioned earlier, nobody was as gifted as Göring in reiterating the Führer's ideas with the true ring of conviction. This time, he really surpassed himself by declaring the following:⁴³⁷

From now on, on crossing the border, every German soldier who goes on leave—from the common man to the sergeant—will receive a package in the name of the Führer with one kilogram of flour, one kilogram of peas or beans, one pound of butter, and a big hard smoked sausage. It makes absolutely no difference here whether the vacationer in question comes from up at Kirkenes or down at Stalingrad.

You know that the entire German grape harvest was killed by frost and is lost. However, in wise realization, the German soldier has captured those areas in Russia which can compensate for this, namely, the most fertile areas on the Kuban and Don, where for miles on end, as far as the eye can see, there is one sunflower field after the other.

Do not forget that it is the best areas that we have taken from the Russians! May the German Volk realize one thing: how necessary this fight has become! The terrible situation in which we lived was unbearable. We had to get out of this confinement, and we thank the Almighty, the Führer, and the brave soldiers for breaking out of this confinement and that this vast space is now open to the German Volk!

I would think it a crime to promise something to the German Volk today which I am not completely sure that I can keep. And, therefore, I can say: the worst is over, even with foodstuffs. From today on, it will get better steadily!

Well, there would yet be many foodstuff shortages for the German Volk until 1945, and things would rapidly worsen from that October on, both militarily and politically.

In early October, one of the "greats" from the Balkan states disappeared: Marshal Kvaternik, on whom Hitler had showered award upon award. The last that was heard of him was that the Marshal had taken an "extended vacation," and that his offices had been assumed by the Poglavnik.⁴³⁸

Back at the Werwolf headquarters, Hitler arrived at the conclusion that he had to do something about the British commandos in the west.⁴³⁹ Apparently, they were troubling him as much as the partisans in the east. Therefore, the method he had come up with for fighting them was the same: extermination. Of course, this represented a violation of

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international law, since a commando party is made up of regular soldiers. That meant little to Hitler. He felt that he had to strike terror at the hearts of the “senile” English. He took reports about some German soldiers who were temporarily put in chains while fighting was still ongoing, as a pretext for issuing the following orders in the OKW report of October 7:

1. From noon, October 8, all British officers and soldiers captured at Dieppe will be put in chains. This measure will remain effective for as long as the British war ministry gives proof that in the future it will put into effect declarations on the chaining of German prisoners of war or that it will obtain the authority to enforce its orders on its troops.⁴⁴⁰

2. In the future, all terror and sabotage parties (commandos) of the British and their conspirators who behave not as soldiers but as bandits will be treated by the German troops as such. Wherever they appear, they will be mercilessly massacred in combat.⁴⁴¹

On October 7, Hitler received the Fascist general secretary Vidussoni at his Werwolf headquarters in the Ukraine. The following communiqué was issued:⁴⁴²

The Führer received the general secretary of the Fascist Party, Aldo Vidussoni, on Wednesday [October 7]. He had a long and heartfelt conversation with him. The reception, which was attended by the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, Field Marshal Keitel, and the head of the NSDAP Party Chancellery, Reichsleiter Bormann, took place following a tour of the front, in the course of which the Italian guest visited the Italian troops deployed in the east.

In the weeks of October, Hitler distributed a multitude of awards.

On October 6, he awarded the Goethe Medal to the banker and councilor of state Dr. von Strauss on his sixty-fifth birthday.⁴⁴³ Congratulatory telegrams were received by the president of the National Chinese government, Wang-Tching-wei, on the national holiday on October 9;⁴⁴⁴ by Tiso on his birthday on October 13;⁴⁴⁵ by the king of Afghanistan on his birthday on October 15;⁴⁴⁶ by King Michael of Romania on his birthday on October 25.⁴⁴⁷

On October 15, Hitler forbade officers to challenge each other to duels. He abhorred this type of “honor custom,” which had already cost the lives of a number of his followers. Hitler’s struggle against duels followed the same line as that against speeding. Only he had the right to demand the sacrifice of blood and life. Any unnecessary death was at “his” expense, so to speak, since he could no longer dispose of the man

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in question.

Hitler's decree on the "Observance of Honor" for the officer corps read as follows:⁴⁴⁸

The measures and forms prescribed for the observance of honor contradict, in particular at the front, the necessary concentration of all expressions of will in the victory in this decisive final struggle of our Volk. A strengthening of the responsibilities of the commanders and a simplification of the forms are necessary here. For the duration of the war, I therefore repeal as of now all proceedings in the context of the regulations concerning the "Observance of Honor."

The offenses occurring in the army officer corps in the realm of honor are in the future to be prosecuted, according to the situation, manner, and difficulty of the case, by the responsible superior by disciplinary proceedings (instruction, caution, punishment), or, insofar as this is appropriate, by criminal proceedings. In difficult cases, a dismissal from active service because of unfitness in accordance with the Military Service Act, Paragraph 24, Section 2 b or c, is to be applied for.

Adolf Hitler

At the same time, Hitler concerned himself with the question of the marriage of members of the Wehrmacht. He decreed the following:⁴⁴⁹

The educational influence of the responsible disciplinary superior is still not as it ought to be. The disciplinary superior, who is supposed to be the adviser and educator of his men, should use his influence primarily to prevent relations with racially unworthy females or females of ill repute. In many cases, the emergency condition of the bride causes the man, who disregards his own reservations, to apply for a marriage licence.

While retaining the prescribed official channels, the Führer will therefore in the future apply stricter criteria than before to racial characteristics. Should the bride, according to the Führer's opinion, not conform with the racial and other requirements which are to be applied to the marriage of a member of the Wehrmacht with a German girl, then the Führer will refuse his assent for the time being.

The applicant should then be given home leave. The responsible party official there shall conduct a confidential discussion with him in order to determine whether his intentions for marriage are serious.

The leave of absence shall be arranged by the adjutancy of the Wehrmacht with the Führer and through official channels with the unit in question. Informing the responsible party officials will be undertaken by the head of the party Chancellery, Reichsleiter Bormann, who will be informed of the result of the discussion.

On October 18, Hitler issued the infamous *Kommandobefehl*. Contrary to the truth, he maintained that the use of commando parties

October 18, 1942

was prohibited by the “international agreements in Geneva.”⁴⁵⁰ The order read as follows:⁴⁵¹

1. Our enemies have long been using methods of warfare which are beyond the terms of the international Geneva agreements. Particularly brutal and insidious are members of the so-called “commandos,” who are known to be recruited even from criminal circles set at liberty [from prison] in the enemy countries. It has been concluded from their orders, which we captured, that they were given the task not only of chaining their prisoners, but also of killing the unarmed people without lengthy consideration, inasmuch as they believe that the latter would become a heavy burden as prisoners, preventing them from the further pursuit of their goals or would hinder them in any way. Finally, we came upon orders demanding that as a matter of principle prisoners of war should be killed.

2. For this reason, it was announced in an addendum to the report of the armed forces of October 7, 1942,⁴⁵² that in the future Germany will fight against those British sabotaging troops and their accomplices by their own methods, which means that they will be mercilessly exterminated by German troops wherever they should appear.

3. I therefore order the following:

From now on, all the so-called commando units in Europe or Africa who have been engaged by German troops will be fully exterminated to the last man, even if they are uniformed soldiers or members of demolition units, with or without weapons, fighting or fleeing. And it does not matter whether they are transported to the scene of their operations by ship or by aircraft or by jumping with parachutes. Even if these persons make efforts, when discovered, to give themselves up, they are to be given no pardon as a matter of principle. Besides, every single case must be reported in detail to OKW, to be submitted further in the armed-forces report.

4. If the members of such commando operations as agents, saboteurs, and so on, get into the hands of the Wehrmacht, in any other way, for example, through police forces in the counties occupied by us, they must be immediately transferred to our Security Service (SD). It is strictly forbidden to keep any of them under military supervision, for instance, in the camps for prisoners of war, even temporarily.

5. This order does not apply to those enemy soldiers who were captured or gave themselves up in the course of open combat, in normal warfare (major attacks, major landing operations and major airborne landing operations). This order does not apply, either, to those enemy soldiers who got into our hands after a naval engagement or who tried to save their lives by landing with a parachute after air combat.

6. I will have all those commanders and officers who will not inform the troops about this order, or who act contrary to this order, court-martialed for disobedience to this order.

Adolf Hitler

October 24, 1942

On October 23, Hitler founded an Efficient Driver's Badge for the Wehrmacht's drivers.⁴⁵³

On the evening of the same day, Montgomery began the great offensive at El Alamein with the British Eighth Army. The barrage from British artillery and the Royal Air Force's tremendous superiority in the air played havoc with the Germans within the first twenty-four hours. Panzer General Stumme, who had been substituting for Rommel since September 19, died of heart failure on October 24.

At the Führer headquarters, the situation was at first not judged to be serious. Nevertheless, Hitler phoned Rommel at his residence at the Semmering Pass on the evening of October 24. He asked him whether he could fly to Africa immediately.⁴⁵⁴ After Rommel agreed, Hitler said that he would call again, since Rommel was expected to fly out "only if the attack proved threatening."

Rommel returned to his home at Wiener Neustadt (Lower Austria). Shortly after midnight, Hitler phoned and asked him to take command in Africa in view of the difficult situation. The OKW report of October 25 noted that the enemy had deployed in Egypt for the "expected great attack."

Hitler was more interested in the coming twentieth anniversary of the "march on Rome" than in the situation in Africa. After all, he intended to make his presence felt at this great anniversary of Fascism. He dispatched a special "Delegation of the National Socialist Party," consisting of Ley, Reich youth leader Axmann, Reich leader of students Gauleiter Scheel, Gauleiter Hanke, and other dignitaries. Ley was charged with a handwritten letter for the Duce, which Ciano [on October 29] called "laudatory and sugarcoated."⁴⁵⁵ Equally heartfelt were the telegrams that Hitler sent to Victor Emmanuel and Mussolini on October 24:⁴⁵⁶

I send Your Majesty my heartfelt greetings on today's day of commemoration, along with my sincere best wishes for a glorious future for allied Italy and your personal welfare.

Adolf Hitler

October 29, 1942

Duce!

On the twentieth anniversary of the March on Rome, I think of you and your unique historic accomplishments in loyal friendship and solidarity. With me the entire National Socialist German Volk follows with profound inner sympathy the return of the Fascist revolution's day of triumph. What you, Duce, and your fighters have accomplished since has turned the uprising then into a turning point in the history of man. Today both our people's revolutions fight together in a close brotherhood in arms against the same forces that once unsuccessfully opposed Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany. Jewry, plutocracy, and Bolshevism will therefore lose this struggle, just as they lost it before. In this secure conviction, I greet you, Duce, in the most heartfelt manner and send you and your Black Shirts my own and the German Volk's comradely greetings.

Adolf Hitler

On October 29, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Ismet İnönü on the Turkish national holiday.⁴⁵⁷

During September and October, the OKW had constantly spread reports of German successes at Stalingrad. It was almost embarrassing to hear daily of a new victory at Stalingrad. The number of these victory reports proved only one thing: despite heavy fighting over many weeks and months, German troops were getting nowhere. It was no different from Moscow, Leningrad, and Murmansk. The Russians put up so determined a resistance that all the bravery of the German soldiers was in vain.

The "rush on Stalingrad," as Hitler called it,⁴⁵⁸ had become a question of prestige. The city, however, was pointedly unsuited for such experiments due to its topography and history. In 1918, the Russian White troops under General Denikin had taken a terrible beating there. Tsaritsyn, as the city was named at the time, became the city of the Red Army's triumph. Like many Soviet generals, Stalin made a name for himself there.⁴⁵⁹

In spite of all his references to Providence, Hitler had never paid any heed to its signs and omens, like history's warnings, portentous places, calamitous dates, connections, and "coincidences."⁴⁶⁰ Therefore, he had no intention of stopping the senseless battle for Stalingrad.

The German armies encountered unexpectedly strong Russian resistance not only at Stalingrad and in the Caucasus. A storm was also brewing north of the Don, where the Russian army leaders assembled a huge number of troops. While Hitler had called indications thereof "idiotic babble,"⁴⁶¹ he now felt that it would be advantageous for him to

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leave the Ukraine. On October 31, he returned to his safe headquarters in East Prussia.

On November 1, the Bavarian prime minister, SA Obergruppenführer Ludwig Siebert, suddenly died. Hitler ordered a “state funeral” and instructed state minister Gauleiter Giesler to assume the duties of the prime minister.⁴⁶²

In North Africa, British drumfire and ceaseless air bombardment continued. Obviously the German-Italian front there would soon collapse. It was time for Hitler to make a decision. A retreat was out of the question. After all, he had declared earlier: “Land taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!”⁴⁶³ If nothing could be done to save the position at El Alamein, then all soldiers, including Rommel, should at the very least die a hero’s death and furnish material for a new Germanic heroic epic. Hitler informed Rommel of this delightful prospect in a telegram on November 3:⁴⁶⁴

To Field Marshal Rommel:

With me, the entire German Volk follows the heroic defensive battle in Egypt with faithful trust in your leadership and the bravery of the German-Italian troops subordinate to you. In the position in which you find yourself, there can be no other thought than to hold out, not to retreat even one step, and to throw into battle every weapon and every fighter possible. Substantial reinforcements of airborne units will be provided to the commander in chief, south, in the coming days. Also the Duce and the *Comando Supremo*⁴⁶⁵ will exert themselves to the utmost in order to bring you the means for continuing the battle. Despite his superiority, the enemy must also be at the end of his rope. It would not be the first time in history that the stronger willpower triumphed over the stronger battalions of the enemy. You can show your troops no other way than that of victory or death.

Adolf Hitler

Upon receipt of this order, Rommel stopped the retreat, which was already underway. On November 4, the “unconquerable” position at El Alamein was broken up by the British. Rommel had to hurry in order to save at least part of the motorized units of the Africa Corps and to withdraw to a secure position in the west. He refused to sacrifice himself and his men, as ordered. Hitler would never forgive him for this!

In the meantime, a mighty armada of American troop transports and warships had left America for Africa. Not once was it hindered in crossing the Atlantic by German U-boats or planes.⁴⁶⁶

Nobody suspected anything at the Führer headquarters, although it would not have required great powers of deduction to guess that, since

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American troops had landed in Liberia and French West Africa in the course of the summer of 1942, the occupation of French North Africa would be the next step.

The Wolfsschanze headquarters did not notice anything amiss until a large convoy sailed from Gibraltar on November 5 and joined the Americans in the Mediterranean. On November 7, Hitler explained the suspected goal of the operation to the generals as follows:⁴⁶⁷

The Führer tends to believe that a big landing operation, consisting of about four or five divisions, is intended at Tripoli or Benghazi.

On the Führer's orders, the units earmarked for a contingent invasion of unoccupied France (Operation Anton)⁴⁶⁸ have been put on the alert by the commander in chief, west.

Come what may, Hitler was set on finishing the occupation of the remainder of France, an occupation which had been planned two years earlier.⁴⁶⁹

On the afternoon of November 7, Hitler took his special train to Munich, supposedly to attend the commemoration of the Putsch in 1923. Keitel and Jodl accompanied him. Only Zeitzler stayed behind.

At a time when Rommel's army was taking a terrible beating by the British in Egypt, when the Russians might at any minute launch their great offensive, when a large Anglo-American landing operation was in the offing in the Mediterranean, Hitler left his headquarters and took with him the most important experts!

The reason for this, however, was not the commemoration at Munich. This was merely a pretext, since Hitler had become pretty much indifferent to the "old marchers of 1923."⁴⁷⁰ The actual reason for his departure was that he had prescribed himself a fourteen-day vacation at the Berghof in female company, because of his "fragile health."⁴⁷¹ And he would not go back on that, no matter if the whole front went up in flames.

However, things did not proceed as smoothly as Hitler had planned. The Anglo-Americans made a contribution to the commemoration at Munich. Early on November 8, the Allied landing operation in Morocco and Algeria began. News of this hit the German public like a bombshell. Most Germans probably realized that this was only a prelude to a more active intervention by the Americans in the war.

Hitler's declaration of war on the United States was not even one year old, and already American troops stood on Germany's doorstep. News of the Allied landing in North Africa meant a great defeat for

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Hitler. It appeared much more consequential than the lost battle at El Alamein. Five days had sufficed completely to change the face of the war. In the Pacific, too, an about-face in the war had resulted from the battle at Guadalcanal.

On November 8, Hitler ordered the “commencement of movements in connection with Operation Anton.” The line of demarcation, however, should not be crossed. Still, the occupational troops on Crete should be reinforced, just in case.⁴⁷²

Normally, considering how catastrophic the effect of the Allied landing had been on public opinion in Germany, Hitler would never have given a speech. But what else could he do? After all, he had used the commemoration of November 8 as a pretext for his stay at the Berghof. He had no choice but to speak at the Löwenbräukeller in spite of everything.⁴⁷³ Not surprisingly, the speech was one of the most miserable he ever gave. The “old marchers of 1923” were so preoccupied with thoughts of the Allied landing that they even forgot at times to applaud the Führer’s most rousing proclamations.

Hitler, too, seemed rather confused. He barely mentioned the Putsch in 1923. By contrast, he spoke at great length of the year 1932 and its many crises, which had finally ended in victory for him. This was intended to prove that, despite the present crises, he was still able to secure the final victory. Most outrageous was his claim that he had taken power in Germany at the time by the use of force:

Only one thing remains and that is to fight! Just as, from a certain point on, I told my enemies at home: it is not possible to negotiate with you peacefully; you want to use force—therefore, you will get it now. And these enemies at home, they were eliminated!

Of course, Hitler impotently belittled his enemies in this speech, too. He called Roosevelt a “first-rate bum” and Eden a “snobbish, perfumed rascal.”

Regarding the decisive English breakthrough at El Alamein, Hitler stated the following:

And when they say today that they are advancing somewhere in the desert—well, they have advanced and retreated a few times already—what is decisive in this war is who lands the final blow. And you can be assured that we shall do that!

Regarding the Anglo-American landing in North Africa, Hitler said only one sentence:

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If Roosevelt is today attacking North Africa, saying that he must protect it from Germany and Italy, then there is no need to comment on this untruthful claim by this old gangster.

One year earlier, Hitler had rationalized the stalemate at Leningrad by arguing that he would “surely not sacrifice one man more than is absolutely necessary.”⁴⁷⁴ He repeated this pitiful rhetorical maneuver by claiming with regard to Stalingrad that he did not wish “a second Verdun” and that he preferred “to do it with very small assault parties.”

In reply to questions about Germany’s “retaliation” for Allied bombing attacks on its cities, Hitler could only offer a vague promise: “The hour will come when I will strike back and I will repay them with interest.” This was a far cry from earlier claims that he would return a “hundred times” each Allied bomb.⁴⁷⁵ The rhetorical climax of the speech undoubtedly was this assertion: “Germany back then laid down its arms at a quarter to twelve—as a matter of principle, I never quit until five minutes after twelve.”

Hitler began his speech with the following words:⁴⁷⁶

My German Volksgenossen! Party Comrades!

I believe that it is very rare when a man can step before his old followers after twenty years and that, in these twenty years, he has not had to make any changes in his program.

Following the usual “party narrative,” Hitler continued as follows:

The reason why we are fighting at such a great distance to protect our homeland is that we wish to keep the war as far away as possible from us. We wish to spare the homeland what otherwise would be its fate, and what now only a few German cities are experiencing and must experience. Therefore, it is better to hold a front at a distance of one thousand or, if necessary, two thousand kilometers from the homeland than to have a front at the Reich’s border and to be obliged to hold it.

The enemies are the same as before; the same enemies as in the past. It is no coincidence that the same state that sent one man to the fore in order to bring about Germany’s collapse through a wave of untruthful propaganda in the World War is today again trying to do it the same way. Back then, his name was Wilson; today, it is Roosevelt. The Germany of the time, without any type of education in government and national policy, without unity, without enlightenment about the Jewish question and its consequences, became the victim of this power. It is a great mistake for our enemies now to imagine that they can repeat this a second time. For at the time, we were the most miserable Volk in the world; today, we are undoubtedly the most disciplined Volk in the world. If anyone in the outside world today still imagines that he can shake up this Volk, then he does not know the present core of this Volk, the supporting

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force that today leads this Volk politically; he does not know the National Socialist Party and its mighty organization!

He also has no idea of what this movement has since accomplished; how it has taken hold of this Volk through its accomplishments, and how it has realized the socialist idea as no other state, freed of all international swindle and untruthful tirades.

I can direct the following question to any German fighting today in the east: look at our institutions, compare our homes, the settlements we are building, compare our National Socialist institutions with what you have seen over there; compare the fate of the German peasant with the fate of the Russian peasant, compare all this with one another, and then tell me what you think: who did it better and who meant it more honestly?

Surely, nobody has yet returned who would have expressed an opinion different from the following: if ever there was a socialist state anywhere that was in the process of being realized, then this is Germany alone.

However, that is the very reason why this outside world, insofar as it represents capitalist interests, is going against us. It is a collective that even today presumes to govern the world in accordance with its private, capitalist interests and, if necessary, to mistreat it.

When a few days ago, for example, a real snobbish, perfumed rascal (*snobistischer, parfümierter Bengel*) like this Mr. Eden declared: "We English have experience in government," then you could only say: in government?—in exploitation, in pillage!

What does "experience in government" mean when, in peacetime, there are two-and-a-half million unemployed in a country with forty-six million people ruling over forty million square kilometers of the earth? Is this the art of government, the art of leadership? This is only the unscrupulousness of exploitation.

And when the same man then says: "We have a fine instinct for idealistic and material values"—yes, that is true! They have destroyed idealistic values everywhere, and stolen the material values.

And they have always stolen them and converted them to their own use by brute force. During the last three hundred years, this Volk over there has subjugated and subjected state after state, people after people, tribe after tribe. If they are truly excellent rulers, then they could leave, now that the people of India have voiced their express wish that they leave, and then they could wait to see whether the Indians call them back. Strangely enough, they have not left, although they know how to govern so wonderfully well.

And they are all very much in agreement on this, these exploiters, whether they run around wearing Marxist caps or private, capitalist masks.

No, my friends, they do not know how to govern! They only know how to subjugate other people and to let them then become impoverished.

And when this first-rate bum (*Oberstrolch*)—I cannot call him anything else—Roosevelt comes and declares that he has to save Europe by American methods, then I can only say: the gentleman should have kindly saved his own country. Then there would have been no reason for him to start this war! It

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would have been more useful to eliminate his thirteen million unemployed. But he did not do this, since he was incapable of coping with his domestic problems and, just like his British ally, he was always on the prowl: not for idealistic values, but for material values; after all, he appreciates idealistic values even less than an Englishman.

Out of the art of government of our enemies and its ghastly consequences, the National Socialist movement was born in our democratic Germany. Had they made Germany truly happy at the time, then we would have had no occasion, and I would have had no reason, for dedicating ourselves to this work day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. After all, as all my old comrades in arms know: I did not take it easy back then, I did not appear here and there at some refined club to speak, I did not sit by the fireside to chat here and there. I started on a pilgrimage through the German lands, from top to bottom, from east to west. I toiled to release my Volk from the misery into which these rulers of international capitalism had plunged it. We wanted to eliminate this conspiracy of Jews, capitalists, and Bolsheviks, and we did eliminate it in the end. But barely had we toppled them in Germany that the other world immediately began to encircle us as in 1914. At the time, it was Imperial Germany; now it is the National Socialist Germany. At the time, it was the Kaiser; now it is me.

However, there is one difference: the Germany at the time was imperial in theory, while it was completely broken up in practice. The Kaiser at the time was a man who lacked the strength to resist the enemy; in me, they face an opponent who does not even think of the word capitulation! When I was a boy, I already had the habit—perhaps a bad habit at the time, but all in all still perhaps a virtue—of having the final say. And all our enemies may rest assured: Germany back then laid down its arms at a quarter to twelve—as a matter of principle, *I never quit until five minutes after twelve!*

My opponents at home experienced this ten years ago. Power was on their side, and I was only a single man with a small group of followers!⁴⁷⁷

Today, I must say that the belief of our enemies abroad that they can crush us with their power is almost ridiculous, because today we really are the stronger ones. When I add together all the human beings who work and fight for our side today, then this surpasses the number of those who have taken up position against us. You cannot compare this with the situation back then.

And there is something else yet. Today, this battle is being fought militarily. My party comrades, we are backed here by a mighty German history. The English say that they have never lost a war. They have lost many wars.⁴⁷⁸ They fought every war down to their last ally. That is correct, and in this the English manner of warfare differs from ours.

I need to take only one of the heroes of our past and compare his fate with ours. In his worst moments, Frederick the Great was indeed faced by a coalition of fifty-four million against his three point nine million. If I compare our position today with his and see the bastions of our troops far beyond of our borders, then I must say: they are truly quite stupid if they think that they can ever shatter Germany and, above all, that they could perhaps somehow impress

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me! I know well that this struggle is very difficult. Perhaps that is the difference between me and, let us say, a man like Churchill. Churchill says that we, the Reichsmarschall and I, have lately been giving speeches on the verge of tears. I do not know—if I hit somebody right and left, and he then tells me, “You are an absolute defeatist”—then you simply cannot talk with him.

Since 1939, I have never been on the verge of tears. Before that, however, I had been very sad since I had done everything to avoid war. Sven Hedin has recently published a book in which he quotes verbatim my offer to the Poles, which was transmitted to the English at the time. I am grateful to him for this. I felt a chill reading this offer again. I can only thank Providence that it caused everything to come out differently. I am grateful especially because of what I have learned since. Because had this offer been accepted at the time, then, although Danzig would still be German, everything else would have stayed the way it was. We would then have dedicated ourselves to our social works; we would have worked, beautified our cities, built apartments and streets, set up schools. We would have built a true National Socialist state⁴⁷⁹ and we would naturally have spent far less on the Wehrmacht.

And then one day, a storm would have broken in the east. It would have swept across Poland, and before we knew it, it would have been less than a hundred or fifty kilometers east of Berlin.

That this did not happen I owe to the gentlemen who refused my offer at the time. However, three years ago, I could not possibly have known this. Three years ago, as the Polish campaign ended, again I wanted to offer my hand for peace, which would not have cost these opponents anything. As you know, I was refused. I was forced to lead another and yet another campaign. In the year 1940, again I attempted to offer my hand for peace. Again, I was refused. That closed the matter for me!

Every peace offer was interpreted as weakness by our opponents and, therefore, exploited to the detriment of the German Reich. Thus, to attempt something similar would have meant to forget one's duty again. It was clear to me that there was only one thing left: somebody had to fall, either we or they!

We will not fall—therefore, the others will fall!

You will remember, my old comrades in arms, how often in the same way I offered my hand to our opponents at home, how long I courted them, how I tried to win them over. The things I did in order to bring about a reasonable understanding! Only after this had failed, did I decide to use resources that alone are capable of pushing something through in this world once reason has been silenced. These were the SA and the SS. And finally, the hour came when we dealt with these opponents, and how we did it! This fight at home perhaps only appears to have been easier than the fight abroad.

In truth, the men who once led the fight at home were also those who were the fighters abroad and who today again are the fighters at home and abroad.

My party comrades, this is a reason for us to be proud: as the bourgeois Germany made up of Marxists, bourgeois, men of the Center Party, and so on fought, only two Reichstag deputies fell in the course of the war compared to over two million dead, to cite only one example. Up to now, however, the

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National Socialist Reichstag has already left thirty-nine of its members on the field, I believe, compared to a total of three hundred fifty thousand dead.⁴⁸⁰ That is a very different ratio! And, if I consider the ratio of the party comrades, then I must say: wherever my SA men, wherever the party comrades, or wherever the SS men stand at the front, they fulfill their duty in an exemplary fashion.

In this respect, too, the Reich has changed. But we also fight inspired by a different realization. We know what type of fate we would have to expect if the outside world should be victorious. Because we know this fate very well, there is no thought of compromise here. If the gentlemen say from time to time that there is another peace offer from us on the way—then they are inventing this only to give a little courage to their own people.

There will be no more peace offers from us.

The last was made in the year 1940. Only one thing remains and that is to fight! Just as, from a certain point on, I told my enemies at home: it is not possible to negotiate with you peacefully; you want to use force—therefore, you will get it now. And these enemies at home, they were eliminated!

Yet another power which once made its presence felt in Germany has in the meantime noticed that National Socialist prophecies are not empty phrases. It was the main power to which we owe all our misfortunes: international Jewry. You will remember the Reichstag session in which I declared: should Jewry imagine itself to be able to bring about an international world war for the extermination of the European races, then the result will not be the extermination of the European races, but instead the extermination of Jewry in Europe. They laughed about me as a prophet. Countless numbers of those who laughed at the time no longer laugh today. Those who still laugh now will perhaps no longer be doing so in time. This realization has spread beyond Europe all over the world. International Jewry will be recognized as a demonic danger; we National Socialists will take care of this. This danger has been recognized in Europe, and state after state is adopting our laws.

Thus, there is only one possibility in this mighty struggle: that of complete success. There remains only the question of whether or not there are any reasons to doubt this success. If you look at the propaganda of our enemies, you can only describe it as “up one minute and down the next.” The smallest success anywhere—and they are virtually turning head over heels. They have already destroyed us. Then the tide turns, and they are again very distressed and downcast.

I may cite one example here: If you study the Soviet daily war bulletins following June 22, 1941, then you will read every day: “fights of insignificant character” or “of significant character.” They have always downed three times the number of German planes. The tonnage supposedly sunk by them in the Baltic Sea already exceeds the total tonnage that Germany possessed before the war. They have destroyed more of our divisions than we can activate. Above all, they are always fighting in the same location. After fourteen days, they will modestly say: “We have evacuated a city.” But, in general, they have been

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successfully fighting since June 22 in the same location. We are always forced to retreat—and this continuous retreat has now slowly got us to the Caucasus.

When I say “slowly,” I would like to say this for my opponents, not for our soldiers. Because the speed at which our soldiers cover the terrain is tremendous. And what was again covered this year was tremendous and unique in history.

I do not always do things as others would like me to—yes, I try to find out what the others probably think and, then, I do the opposite. As Mr. Stalin expected us to attack in the center—I did not want to attack in the center.

Not only because Mr. Stalin perhaps believed this, but also because I did not really care. I wanted to reach the Volga, and reach it at a certain location, in a certain city. By coincidence, the city bore Stalin’s name.⁴⁸¹ But you should not think that I marched there for this reason—it could have had any other name—I did it because it is an important place.

You can cut off traffic amounting to thirty millions tons there, nearly nine million tons of which are oil. All the wheat from the huge areas in the Ukraine and the Kuban region flows together there, so that it can be transported north. Manganese ore is brought there; it is a gigantic trade center. That center I wanted to take and, as you know, we are modest—we have it!

There are only a few small pockets left. Now the others say: “Then, why do they not fight more quickly?”—Because I do not want a second Verdun. I prefer to do it with very small assault parties. Time makes no difference here. No ship comes up the Volga anymore. That is what is decisive!

They reproached us for waiting so long at Sevastopol. Well, it was because I did not want to start a gigantic wholesale murder there. But Sevastopol fell into our hands, and the Crimea fell into our hands, and we have reached goal after goal through tenacity and obstinacy. And if the enemy now prepares to attack—you should not think that I wish to outdo him. We will let him attack if he wants to, since the defense is always cheaper. Let him attack, he will bleed himself to death. We have always made up for these breakthroughs. In any event, the Russians are not in the Pyrenees or in Seville—that is, after all, the same distance as for us today to Stalingrad or, let us say, to Terek. But we are nonetheless there. This cannot be denied, after all, since it is a fact.

If there is no other way, then of course they regroup and say that it was a grave mistake for the Germans to go to Kirkenes, Narvik, or Stalingrad, as now for example. They ought to wait and see whether or not this was a strategic mistake.⁴⁸² We already see many signs that tell us whether or not it was a mistake that we occupied the Ukraine, that we occupied the ore mines of Krivoy Rog, that we took control of the manganese ore. Was it truly such a great mistake that we occupied the Kuban region, which is perhaps the greatest breadbasket in the world? Was it also a mistake that we destroyed or captured about four fifths or five sixths of all refineries, that we took control of a production of nine to ten million tons of oil or brought it to a standstill, or that we prevented the further transport of perhaps seven, eight, or nine million tons up the Volga? I do not know whether or not all this was a mistake.

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We are already noticing it. If the English had managed to take the Ruhr area from us, the Rhine, the Danube, the Elbe, and then Upper Silesia—this is about the same as the Donetsk area and the ore mines of Krivoy Rog—and if they had got hold of a part of our oil wells and the fertile plain of Magdeburg, would they also have said that it had been a great mistake to take all these things from the Germans?

They might talk a few mentally retarded nations into believing this, nations which then either wish to believe part of this or not. They cannot talk us into believing it. And if they wish perhaps to talk me into believing this, then I can only say: I have never made my strategic plans in accordance with the prescriptions or views of others. It was surely also a mistake that I made the breakthrough in France and did not go around the top. But it was worth it. In any event, the English were kicked out of France. They had been so close to our border at the time. They had thirteen divisions, and, in addition, over a hundred thirty French divisions, about twenty-four Belgian divisions, and twenty Dutch divisions, close to our border at the Rhine, our Rhine. And where are they now?

And when they say today that they are advancing somewhere in the desert—well, they have advanced and retreated a few times already—what is decisive in this war is who lands the final blow. And you can be assured that it will be us!

It is the same with their production. They produce everything and, naturally, they do this much better than we do. A few days ago, I read that the Americans are constructing a new U-boat. As I read this, I immediately thought: Surely this will be the best one again!—and right underneath, it said, “The best U-boat in the world;” it is the fastest and, in all other respects, it is the best. By comparison, we are complete bunglers with our U-boats!

My German Volksgenossen, we are not sleeping, and neither are our designing engineers! In the winter of 1939–1940, a certain Mr. Churchill declared that the U-boat danger had been eliminated, simply eliminated. Every day, he destroyed two, three, five U-boats. He destroyed more than we possessed at the time. He did not destroy anything. Instead, I again made “a very great mistake” at the time. That mistake was that I allowed only a very few of our U-boats to fight and held back a large part for the training of the crews of newly launched U-boats.

At the time, such a small number of U-boats confronted the enemy that today I am still embarrassed to admit it. The majority, however, about ten times as many, remained in the homeland and continued training new crews. Then, from a certain point on, mass production began here, too.

Not only the Americans are able to mass-produce, even though they pretend that only they are capable of this. If they say, “We are building such and such a number of warships,”—well, if they count their corvettes, their herring boats, and what have you, and put a cannon on top, then this might truly be the case. If we also count all this, then I can guarantee that we are not building any less and, moreover, I believe that we are building more functional ships than they are. This has again proved to be the case.

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We have now sunk over twenty-four million tons⁴⁸³ which means twelve million tons more than the total of the World War. The number of U-boats today has significantly surpassed the number of U-boats in the World War. And we continue to build and construct, and this for all types of weapons.

And if the gentlemen over there say that they have a wonderful new weapon—well, they do not even know whether we have not already had a better one for ages. I usually issue a new weapon only when the old one is really no good anymore. Why expose new weapons ahead of time? This tactic has proved its worth again and again. Of course, our weapons were always worse. Our soldiers were always worse, clearly. Further, our organization was worse. That is no surprise! If you compare these organizing geniuses Churchill, Duff Cooper, Chamberlain, and all these people, or Roosevelt, this organizer par excellence—if you compare these folk with us, then we are simply bunglers in organization.

However, we have scored one success after another, and that is what matters. It was the same at home. We were always the worst at home, too. We did not know how to do anything right, we had no abilities—but, one day, we had power, and that was decisive.

It is understandable that in such a worldwide struggle as the present one you cannot expect to score a new success every week. That is impossible. After all, that is not decisive.

What is decisive is that you slowly take up positions that must destroy the enemy, and that you hold them, that you fortify them so that they cannot be taken from you. And you can certainly believe me: what we possess, we will hold so firmly that, wherever we happen to stand in this war,⁴⁸⁴ nobody else will ever stand.

Besides, this war has enormously expanded since then. In addition to our allies Italy, Romania, Hungary, Finland, and all the other European people, Slovaks, Croatians, Spaniards, and so on, who for their share sent volunteers, like the Nordic volunteers, yet another world power has joined us; a world power that is also constantly suffering defeats.

Since the beginning of their entry, the Japanese have had only failures. Everything the Japanese did was a mistake. If you add up all these mistakes, what you get is something decisive: they have got hold of about ninety-eight percent of the American rubber production; they have acquired the greatest tin production in the world, they have got huge oil wells, and so on. If you keep making such mistakes, then you can be content with this. And vice versa: the others have gained only victories, ingenious, valiant, heroic, well thought-out victories—with their great commanders, like MacArthur and Wavell,⁴⁸⁵ or some other one of these greats, the like of which the world has never seen before. These gangsters are already writing fat books about warlords of the past and, in spite of everything, the people who had no warlords have got further in this war than those so richly blessed with commanders.

Especially today, on this day of remembering the great collapse of our movement—a collapse that to many at the time seemed to mean the end of the party—I can only say: For us National Socialists, this memory must mean a

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tremendous strengthening. It gives us the strength to brave all dangers, never to waver, never to yield, to face need with courage, and to hold fast, no matter how much the enemy presses on. Then you have to place faith in Luther's word: "And if there were only devils in this world, we would still succeed!" Today more than ever, I look to the future with great confidence. After all, we survived the last winter, a winter which, at the time when I spoke to you here last year, had not yet revealed itself in all its terrible danger. At the time, many people were weighed down by the memory of Napoleon's fate in 1812. And now the winter of 1812 was only fifty percent as cold as the winter that we left behind us in the past year.⁴⁸⁶

We are prepared in a different manner this year. Perhaps, one soldier or another might lack something this winter. But, all in all, we are armed for this winter in a different manner. That I can say, even should it turn out to be as harsh as the last.

Not everything that happened to us last winter will happen to us this time. I said once before that a great philosopher once said that a man who is not knocked down by a blow is made stronger by the blow. The storm, which failed to knock us down last winter, has only made us stronger.

No matter where the fronts are, Germany will always parry and attack, and I do not doubt for a minute that our flags will in the end succeed.

If Roosevelt today is attacking North Africa, saying that he must protect it from Germany and Italy,⁴⁸⁷ then there is no need to comment on this untruthful claim by this old gangster. Undoubtedly, he is the most hypocritical one in this whole club that confronts us. But the decisive and final word will not be spoken by Mr. Roosevelt, he can rest assured of that.

We will prepare all our blows—as thoroughly as always—and they will come at the right time. None of the others' blows against us has yet led to success. At one time, there were cheers of triumph, as the first English landed at Boulogne and then advanced. Six months later, there were no more cheers of triumph. Things turned out differently and things will turn out differently here, too. You can be completely confident that the leaders and the Wehrmacht will do everything that must and can be done.

I am firmly convinced that the German homeland above all stands behind the leaders and the Wehrmacht and that, behind me, there is the entire National Socialist Party as a sworn community.

What distinguishes the present time from the past is that, at the time, there was no Volk behind the Kaiser, but that one of the greatest organizations which was ever built up on this earth stands behind me. It represents the German Volk. And what furthermore distinguishes the present time from the past is that there is nobody at the head of the Volk who would leave the country in the critical hour, but instead there is a man at the top who has only known struggle and the one principle: strike (*schlagen*), strike, and strike again!

And there is yet something else that distinguishes today's Germany from that in the past: at the time, it had leaders who did not have their roots in the Volk, since it was ultimately a class state. Today, we are in the midst of completing what grew out of the old war. As I returned from the war, I

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brought the experiences at the front to the homeland. Out of this experience at the front, I built up my National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft. Today, this National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft steps up to the front. You will have noticed from all this how the Wehrmacht is becoming more National Socialist every month, how it increasingly takes on the characteristic features of the new Germany, how all privileges, class prejudices, and so on are increasingly being eliminated, how the German Volksgemeinschaft is more successful here every month, and how, at the end of this war, the German Volksgemeinschaft will perhaps have experienced its greatest trial—this distinguishes today's Germany from that in the past. We owe to this spirit the immeasurable heroism at the front, a heroism of millions of individual soldiers, known and unknown, a heroism of tens of thousands of brave officers, who today increasingly feel themselves to be part of one community with their men. In part, they come from this community.

We have removed all obstacles. Just as anyone can reach any position in the party, insofar as he has the capabilities, just as any post in government, even the highest, is open to anyone, even the poorest of our Volk, since our party has taken the lead, so it is in the Wehrmacht. It is like this not only in theory, in a few exceptional cases here and there, but it is like this today in practice. Today, noncommissioned officers have Knight's Crosses and Oak Leaf awards. Countless officers come from among the men. In the midst of a war, we are building up an army, the like of which the world has never seen before.

And at home, the Volk is working. As I have already told the Reichstag, I must attest to the German homeland one thing: in the year 1917–1918, [there was a] strike in munitions factories—and today, [there is] overtime, hard work. Today, the German worker at home knows that he is forging the weapons for his comrades out there. What is being done in the countryside and the city, what is done by the men and, above all, by the women, that is indeed tremendous.

In one respect, we cannot compete with our opponents: just as the party was once the poorest and won only because of the idealism of its followers, so, naturally, the German Volk is today perhaps the poorest of all people in the world in matters of gold. We have no gold. But what we have is living manpower.

What we have is a sacred diligence and a sacred will. In such a struggle of life and death, this is in the end a thousand times more decisive than gold. Of what use are their vaults of gold now to the Americans, other than that you can use them for making dentures. If they had ten synthetic-rubber factories, then that would be worth more than their entire stock of gold. I have had other things built. However, we did not bring any gold into this war, but rather the prerequisites for leading this fight. In any event, we Germans do not have a tank without rubber tires, but the English do today.

We will survive this war in terms of materiel, and now more so than ever!

In our possession are the raw-material areas that are necessary to survive this war in any circumstance. And if somebody says, "Well, it is certainly hard to tell!"—But, no, it is very easy: do not think, my international critics, that, in

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the east, we stood with our hands in our pockets in front of destroyed railway bridges or tracks, destroyed hydroelectric power stations or ore mines, and just looked at them. No, we worked this year, and how! And this is beginning to pay off. And when the next year comes, then this work will bear fruit all the more.

I can say with pride that it was especially the party that proved its worth in this tremendously. Countless brave party comrades stand out there. As born National Socialist Kreisleiters or Ortsgruppenleiters, they organize huge areas, along with a handful of men. They open these areas up for our economy, for our war economy, for our feeding, and, in a broad sense, for the feeding and maintenance of Europe. After all, this is not a war that Germany is fighting for itself, it is instead a war that is being fought for Europe! And this is why, understandably, we have found so many friends from the north and from the south, who fight partly in our ranks and partly in the independent armies of our allies, which are integrated in this mightiest front in world history.

Therefore, it is our irrevocable decision that when peace comes, and it will come because it must come some day, then this will be a true peace for Europe, and without the tutelage of certain people with fine instincts for idealistic and material values.

For we do not know what type of instinct Mr. Eden has for idealistic values. He has never revealed this. The company he keeps does not speak for this. Above all, the civilization of his country is not of a nature that could perhaps impress us. I do not even wish to speak of the man across the ocean. Their instinct for idealistic values is certainly less than ours. We have in all likelihood given the world more idealistic values than that society frequented by Mr. Eden. The same applies to the countries that have tied themselves to us. In part, they look back onto civilizations in comparison with which the civilization of the Anglo-Saxon island-country is truly infinitely young, not to say infantile.

In regard to material values, I do believe that they indeed have a very fine instinct for this. But we also have it. There is, however, a difference: we will make sure, under all circumstances, that the material values of Europe will in the future benefit the European people instead of an extra-continental, small, international clique of financiers. That is our unshakable and merciless decision.

The people of Europe are not fighting so that, afterwards, a couple of folk can again come along with their "fine instincts," pillage mankind, and leave behind millions of unemployed, only so that they can fill their safes.

We had a good reason why we distanced ourselves from the gold standard. We wanted to eliminate one of the prerequisites for this type of economic outlook and enterprise. And this is certain: Europe will emerge from this war far more economically sound than before.

For a great part of the continent which has previously been organized against Europe will now be put into the service of the European nations.

If somebody now says, "So you want to transplant the Dutch"—I do not want to transplant anyone. However, I do believe that many people are happy

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when they have their own piece of soil that they can work, and when they do not have to labor and struggle so hard, as they have to right now because of the overpopulation of this continent. Above all, they will be happy when they and their people receive a salary for this labor, and it does not lie in some safe or, for all I care, in some bank in London or New York. I therefore believe that the end of this war will also bring about the end of this reign of gold and the end of the whole society that is to be blamed for this war.

The mission of the National Socialist Party is clear to us all. I expect from every party comrade that, just as in the time of struggle, he will support with utmost zealously the belief in victory and in success. This is perhaps easier today than it was in the past. I have to admire today every single one of my old party comrades, these many men who believed in the small, unknown soldier of the World War. Those men who followed me at the time put their lives on the line for me, gave their lives not only in the Old Reich, but also in the Ostmark, in the Sudetenland, and in other countries, too. I have to admire them.

Before us all stands today the shared mighty great Reich in its struggle of life and death for our entire Volk. Every National Socialist who believed in me in the past can today only be a zealot in the struggle abroad. He must force himself to the same zealous will that we already had at the time. With some enemies you cannot give any quarter. There is only one possibility: either we will fall or they will. We realize this and we are men enough to coolly (*eiskalt*) face this realization.

And this is what distinguishes me from these gentlemen in London and America: if I ask much of the German soldier, so I ask no more of him than I was always willing to do myself. If I ask much of the German Volk, so I do not ask for more work than I myself am willing to do. If I ask for overtime—in my life, I do not even know what overtime is. For every individual is fortunate enough to be able to distance himself from his work for a certain time and then be free.

My work is the fate of the Reich. I cannot distance myself from it. It follows me day and night, ever since I stepped to the head of the nation, ever since the days of drab misery, despair, worries, and collapse. Ever since then, a vacation for me would have been ridiculous. What is a vacation to me? ⁴⁸⁸ My work is Germany, my Volk, its future, and the future of its children. Therefore, I do not ask of anyone more than I am asking of myself and that I am myself willing to do.

I know that my old party comrades represent the core of this movement and that, in memory of the first blood sacrifice we made, they stride ahead of the nation to show the way in an exemplary fashion, and that they are joined by the hundreds of thousands and millions of National Socialist functionaries and members of the connected units, that all our men of the SA and SS march along, that the men of the Labor Front march along, that the men of the Reich Labor Service march along, and so on, in brief, the entire National Socialist German Volk.

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That is what is wonderful today: no longer do we talk into the wind as happened to me back then, but instead every word we call out to the Volk today echoes back at us a thousand times. And if the enemy believes that he can wear us out by some means, then he is mistaken. He cannot make me abandon my goal. The hour will come when I will strike back and I will repay them with interest!

You will remember the long period during which, as party comrades, we had to abide by the law. How often did party comrades approach me at the time and say: "Führer"—at the time, they called me "Chief" or said "Adolf Hitler"—why are we not allowed to strike back, why must we put up with this? I had to force them for years to abide by the law. With an aching heart, I had to exclude party comrades from the movement because they believed that they could no longer follow this order. Year after year, until the hour came when I could call on them again.

It is the same today. Again, I have to watch something happen somewhere for months. You should not think that my heart is not also consumed by fury when I hear about these air raids. You know, I did not do anything for a long time. In Paris, for example, I did not have a single bomb dropped on the city. Before we attacked Warsaw, I appealed five times to them to surrender. I asked them to evacuate the women and children. Not even a negotiator was received by them. Everything was refused, and only then did I decide to do what is permissible under the laws of war.

As England began to bomb our cities, I waited for three-and-a-half months. There were many at the time who asked me: "Why do we not respond, why are we not allowed to strike back? We are strong enough to do it." I waited in the conviction that reason would in the end return. It did not. Believe me, it is no different today. I see everything exactly as it is. Over there, they will see that the German spirit of invention has not been asleep and they will receive an answer that will take their breath away.⁴⁸⁹

I have said this many times before. If, on occasion, I did not speak for some time, then this did not mean that I had lost my voice, but instead that I did not think it useful to speak. And it is the same today. Why should I say a lot now?

Today, in the end, the front has the say. I will speak only on rare instances. For the front's language is so forceful and unique that, at any rate, it commits every individual German. Whoever reads the daily reports of our Wehrmacht and does not zealously avow his faith in his Volk as he hears time and again of these countless heroic acts cannot be helped by speeches.

I do not speak for the benefit of the enemy abroad, anyway. If Mr. Roosevelt says that he is not listening to my speeches—I am not speaking for the benefit of Mr. Roosevelt. I speak to him through that instrument through which it is only possible to speak now. And this instrument speaks loudly and clearly enough. I speak only on rare instances either to the movement or to my own German Volk. There is only one thing I can express in such a speech:

Without exception, man and woman, always remember that this war will decide life and death for our Volk. If you understand this, then every single one of your thoughts and acts will always be a prayer for our Germany!

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In his speech, Hitler had intimated “retaliation.” The only move, however, he could make to counter the Anglo-American landing in French North Africa was the occupation of the remainder of France, Corsica, and Tunis. It was obvious that, should he hesitate, Allied troops would soon stand in southern France.

The Allied landings in Morocco and Algeria had at first met with no opposition, or belated and ineffective efforts by the Axis powers. Surprisingly, only a few French coastal batteries and warships put up any resistance at all.

Hitler was not deluding himself on the duration of this resistance. His hatred and distrust of France had remained unchanged during his years in power. Never had he seriously considered granting France a peace treaty. Instead, he was always careful to put the French off so that he could later and for all time incorporate all of France into his territory.

Now, too, he primarily sought to keep the French from actively resisting the German invasion. He wished to prevent the French fleet from leaving Toulon for North Africa and joining the Allies.

Although the orders for the occupation of the remainder of France had long been issued and it had been only a question of giving the cue, Hitler invited Laval to Munich for a discussion of the situation, as though nothing had yet been resolved and a favorable outcome of the talks for France might still be possible. By using this trick, Hitler hoped to preserve an element of surprise for his southern attack on France on November 11, the anniversary of the Armistice of 1918.

The talks with Laval at the Führerbau in Munich on November 10 were only a farce.⁴⁹⁰ Ciano, who had come to Munich in the place of the indisposed Mussolini, noted the following:⁴⁹¹

Hitler, Göring, von Ribbentrop, and myself at the Führerbahn. Decisions have been made to move, especially because the position of Admiral Darlan at Algiers is quite ambiguous and leads one to suspect some understanding with the rebels. A conference with Laval is almost superfluous, because he will be told nothing, or almost nothing, of what has been decided.

Laval, with his white tie and middle-class French peasant attire, is very much out of place in the great salon among so many uniforms. He tries to speak in a familiar tone about his trip and his long sleep in the car, but his words go unheeded. Hitler treats him with frigid courtesy. The conversation is brief. The Führer is the first to speak and asks pointedly if France is in a position to assure us landing points in Tunisia. Laval, like a good Frenchman, would like to discuss it and take advantage of the opportunity to obtain concessions from

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Italy. I do not have time to interrupt because Hitler, with the firmest decision, declares that he does not intend to take up at this time a discussion of Italian claims, which are more than modest. Laval cannot take upon himself the responsibility of yielding Tunis and Bizerte to the Axis, and he requests that he be faced with a *fait accompli*; meaning that we draw up a note to Vichy in which it is stated what the Axis has decided to do.

The poor man couldn't even imagine the kind of *fait accompli* that the Germans were about to hand him. Not a word was said to Laval about the impending action—that the orders to occupy France were being given while he was smoking his cigarette and conversing with various people in the next room. Von Ribbentrop told me that Laval would be informed only the next morning at eight o'clock that on account of information received during the night Hitler had been obliged to proceed with the total occupation of the country.

This was the last occupation that Hitler would carry out in his lifetime. As always, he was convinced that his actions were not so much what mattered but his explanations for them.

He composed a long letter to Pétain and a long appeal to the French people. Hitler ought not to have taken the trouble. His windy remarks might have impressed Pétain, but nobody else in the world, not even in Germany. After all, his intentions were clear: by the occupation of southern France he wished to forestall an Anglo-American landing, at least for the time being.⁴⁹² Hitler's letter read as follows:⁴⁹³

Herr Marshal!

Since the day my destiny summoned me to become my people's leader, I have been trying honestly to create a better relationship with France, even seriously sacrificing Germany's interests. If these efforts remained ineffective, it was not my fault. The declaration of war made by France and England on September 3, 1939, hurt me and the German nation all the more deeply because neither England, nor France had the slightest reason to unleash the war. The campaign, so quick and so unfortunate for France, did not, however, make me give up the idea of leaving open the question of creating a better European solidarity, at least in the future. With this in mind, I have not included in the terms of the cease-fire any points that could contradict the goals set in my preamble or that were not absolutely necessary for that purpose.

The German Reich did not, therefore, make use of France's weakness in order to suppress her, but required only what the winner had to require in such a situation, namely, confidence in success, which implies a guaranty that the cease-fire is not a temporary phenomenon but an actual end of the war, and that, in the long run, this cease-fire shall not lead to deterioration of the military position of the Reich as a result of its [Reich's] mildness, in case this war should continue because of the intractability of France's former allies.

Germany has not set forth any demands upon the French navy and has not, even to the least degree, interfered with the sovereignty of the French

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government in its colonial empire.

Hoping to bring war over to [Continental] Europe, England and America have started to attack and occupy French territories in western and northern Africa. France, for its part, is unable to resist this attack for long. Germany and Italy can under no circumstances take a detached view of the cease-fire agreement's acquiring a sense that may in time turn against these two countries.

In more precise observations of the movements of the Anglo-American transportation units, and of a number of reports the authenticity of which is beyond doubt, the German and Italian governments found out that the next goal of the Anglo-American invasion must be Corsica and southern France itself. Thus it was not the fault of Germany and Italy that all the prerequisites and grounds for the cease-fire agreement were eliminated. Under such circumstances, the German and Italian governments came to an agreement to take urgent steps in order resist continuation of the Anglo-American attack.

Under these circumstances, Herr Marshal, I have the honor to inform you, with great regret, that, for the purpose of defense from the danger threatening us and with the approval of the Italian government, I have given orders to my army to occupy the Mediterranean coast by the shortest way through France, and, secondly to join in the defense of Corsica against the threat of attack by the Anglo-American troops.

I was forced to take this step particularly by the action of one French general, who, while in captivity, feigned illness and, taking advantage of the privileges granted to him, managed to escape, and who intended further to serve the Anglo-American invaders and to fight not only against Germany but even against his own country [General Giraud].

Therefore, at this point, Herr Marshal, I can inform you that the advance of the German troops is not aimed at you as head of state and respected leader of courageous French soldiers in the World War, or at the French government, or at all those Frenchmen who wish peace and who want, in the first place, to avoid anything that would make their beautiful country a theater of war.

In the same way, I would like to assure you that the advance of the allied troops in France is not aimed at the French military forces, and that I still cherish a hope that one day we will together defend Europe and Europe's African colonies from the Anglo-American robber-gang.

Lastly, this attack must not be directed against the French administration which, I hope, will pursue its duties as it has until now, because the only purpose of the German attack is to prevent the situation in North Africa from repeating on the southern coast of France. Against this, I feel responsible to my people, and before the whole of Europe at large, not to let it happen, because if this Continent should go up in a new war, it may bring about annihilation of all the European states and, above all, of our common European culture.

I would like herewith to assure you, Herr Marshal, at the moment the situation on the Mediterranean improves and no more threat exists to the interest of the Reich as described in the cease-fire agreement, I am fully determined to remove my troops immediately beyond the demarcation line.

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I would also like to assure you, Herr Marshal, that from now on you and your government can move about the whole of France freely and without any hindrance. Some time ago I was against the idea of moving the government to Versailles, because I feared that, as a result of hostile propaganda, you, Herr Marshal, and your government would have been robbed of freedom, and under such circumstances would not have been able to fulfill your duties. But now, in view of the above circumstances, after the Reich and Italy are forced to act in defense of the interests presented in the cease-fire agreement against the threat of Anglo-American intervention, and also to occupy the borders of the rest of France; there is no longer any reason for the French government to stay in Vichy.

I'd therefore like to take the occasion to inform you about cancellation of previous restrictions. I can understand, Herr Marshal, how difficult it is for you to accept the fate of your country; I can only beg you to think of the fate of my people, who have been obliged to go on making war for years and without guilt on their part, and who are also forced, under the burden of necessity, to make the abovementioned decision.

I am expressing hope that this will not give rise to any new bloodshed between France and Germany, and that, on the contrary, it will become a step forward against extra-Continental violators of peace, and, in this way, that the people of Europe will unite.

So, Germany is fully resolved to defend as much as possible, side-by-side with the French soldiers, the boundaries of your country, and at the same time, the boundaries of European culture and civilization. The German troops shall do everything that depends on them, through their actions and through their attitude to the French people and their soldiers, to serve this purpose. But I would also like to ask you, Herr Marshal, to ensure that the French government, at this hour, issues all the necessary orders, so as to remove tension and guaranty free implementation of this step, which is also urgent in the interest of France.

With expressions of my sincere respect to you, Herr Marshal

Your devoted, Adolf Hitler.

Hitler's appeal to the French people read as follows:⁴⁹⁴

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Frenchmen! Officers and Soldiers of the French Armed Forces!

On September 3, 1939, the British government declared war on Germany without reason or cause.

Regrettably, the instigators responsible for this war succeeded in moving the French government to join this English declaration of war. For Germany, this meant an incomprehensible challenge.

The German government has demanded nothing of France and has asked nothing. I have not made any unreasonable demands on France that could have insulted it.

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The German Volk, which with the blood of its men had to oppose this attack, had never harbored hatred for France. In spite of this, the war that was unleashed brought suffering and unhappiness to countless families in both countries.

Following the collapse of the French-English front, which led to a catastrophe and the flight of the English from Dunkirk, Germany received a request to grant an armistice.

The German Reich did not demand anything in this armistice treaty that could have offended the honor of the French army. However, care had to be taken that the fight would not sooner or later be begun anew by paid agents, in the interest of the British war inciters.

It was not the goal of Germany to humiliate or destroy France or the French Empire. Instead, the goal was the contrary: to bring about by a later, reasonable peace a general atmosphere of mutual understanding in Europe.

Since this time, England, and now also America, have attempted again to obtain a foothold on French territory in order to continue the war on foreign soil, as this has always been in their interest. Once these assaults had failed pitifully everywhere, the English-American attack on the colonies in west and North Africa took place. It was easier to fight there, because of the weakness of the French occupiers, than on the coasts in the west defended by Germany.

The German government has now known for twenty-four hours that, in expanding this operation, the next attack will be directed against Corsica, in order to occupy that island, and against the southern coast of France.

Under those circumstances, I was forced to decide to issue the German Wehrmacht orders for immediate passage through the previously unoccupied territory to positions earmarked for the English-American landings.

The German Wehrmacht does not come as the enemy of the French people or as the enemy of its soldiers. It does not intend to govern these territories. It has only one goal: together with its allies, to repulse any American-English attempt at a landing.

Marshal Pétain and his government are at complete liberty to pursue their responsibilities as before. Nothing stands in the way any longer of a realization of its former desire to move to Versailles in order to govern France from there. The German troops have received instruction to impose as little as possible on the French people by their attitude. However, the French people should consider that, through the attitude of its government in the year 1939, it plunged the German Volk into a difficult war, which has brought great suffering and woe to many hundreds of thousands of families.

It is the wish of the German government and its soldiers, insofar as possible, not only to assume the protection of the French borders jointly with members of the French armed forces, but also to help, above all, to guard the African possessions of the European people against armed attacks in the future.

Only in those instances where blind fanaticism or paid English agents put up resistance to the advance of our units will arms force a decision. I know that countless Frenchmen have the understandable desire to be relieved of the occupation.

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But let them be assured that the soldier would also prefer to be in his homeland, with his wife and children, or his parents, and to be allowed to live and work in peace there. Therefore, the quicker the power is defeated that in the past three hundred years has incited state against state and which has looted France so often in the past and is at present again in the process of looting, the earlier will the wishes of the occupied French territory and the occupying German soldiers be fulfilled together. All outstanding questions will be ordered and resolved in agreement with the French authorities.

Adolf Hitler

The occupation of southern France worked out excellently. French troops put up no resistance, and the French fleet also refrained from leaving port, on assurances of an unoccupied cordon around Toulon.⁴⁹⁵ On Hitler's orders, the Gestapo arrested General Weygand. General Giraud, whom Hitler also wished to place in safekeeping, had already joined the Allies in North Africa.⁴⁹⁶ Marshal Pétain played an inglorious role by allowing himself to be persuaded to remain France's "head of state." The Axis powers encountered no resistance in Corsica, Tunis, and Bizerte.

On occasion, the Allies have been blamed for not occupying Tunis completely that November. However, the English and Americans were different from Hitler and careful not to overdo it in the first flush of victory. For the time being, Morocco and Algeria were enough for them. They were certain of Tunis in any event, since Montgomery and his army were moving in from the east. Therefore, it was only in the Allies' interest that as many German-Italian troops as possible were packed into Tunis. And Hitler actually did them this favor.

In the meantime, Hitler and his staff at the Berghof were proud that things had gone so well with the surprise attack on France. On November 11, Hitler sent Victor Emmanuel the following telegram on his birthday:⁴⁹⁷

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt best wishes for your personal happiness and welfare on your birthday. In loyal remembrance of the Italian armed forces, which fight with us in close brotherhood-in-arms, I tie to this my sincere best wishes for the happy and glorious future of Italy.

Adolf Hitler

On November 15, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the famous author Gerhart Hauptmann on his eightieth birthday.⁴⁹⁸

On November 16, he awarded the pilot Hanna Reitsch the Iron Cross First Class for services "in the development of German flight instruments." She was the first woman to receive this award.⁴⁹⁹ In

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addition, Hitler presented the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross to the badly wounded General Bruno von Hauenschild at a Bavarian military hospital.⁵⁰⁰

After days of preparing their artillery, on November 19 the Russians started the large-scale assault on the Don, an assault which had long been threatening. The impact of the attack was so great that, already on the first day, the front began to waver at Serafinov. Supposedly, this was due to Romanian troops fighting on this section of the front. However, what difference would it have made had German troops put up a resistance of an additional one or two days there? With a front of this size, Hitler could not possibly operate with echeloned elite units everywhere. He had been happy that he could use Hungarians, Italians, and Romanians north of Stalingrad. Now, all of a sudden, he blamed them for the threatening catastrophe!

A second major attack by the Russians occurred south of Stalingrad at the same time. Obviously, it was connected to the first. News from the front at the Don now appeared so disquieting to Chief of Staff Zeitzler, the man who remained in charge at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, that he phoned Hitler at the Berghof on November 19.⁵⁰¹

The idyll on the Obersalzberg had to be given up. Together with Keitel and Jodl, Hitler returned to East Prussia on November 23. Before he did so, however, he provided encouraging radio messages to the Sixth Army, which was in danger of being cut off.

In spite of this, the Russians managed to unite both their assault armies at Kalach and Leginskaya, and, within five days, to encircle the German army at Stalingrad, following Hitler's example.

In the year 1941, German special reports had proclaimed the "greatest encirclement battles" in world history to have taken place at Belostok (Bialystok), Minsk, Kiev, Vyazma, and Bryansk. Now, it was the Russians who were encircling the Germans! They had learned their lesson well.

The events recalled Charles XII's invasion. At the time, Tsar Peter the Great is said to have told the Swedish king, who had just won the battle of Narva: "My dear brother⁵⁰² Charles! I thank you for the lesson that you have taught me. In three years, we will see each other again!" Three years later, the Russians took back Narva, and, in 1709, Charles XII was defeated at Poltava for good. This time, the Russian military leaders only needed about one-and-a-half years before they could reply to Hitler's "lesson."

November 24, 1942

However, at this time, the supreme commander of the German Wehrmacht did not yet know what awaited him. When General Paulus wired on November 23 that the Sixth Army faced destruction if Hitler did not immediately order “the withdrawal of all divisions from Stalingrad” and a “breakthrough to the southwest,” Hitler replied in a radio message the next day as follows:⁵⁰³

The Sixth Army is temporarily surrounded by Russian forces. I intend to concentrate the army in the area Stalingrad North—Kotluban—Height 137—Height 135—Height Marinovka—Tsybenko—Stalingrad South. The army can rest assured that I will do everything properly to supply it and relieve it in time. I know the brave Sixth Army and its commander in chief and know that they will do their duty.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler thought that he could proceed in the same manner as at Kholm the year before.⁵⁰⁴ Naturally, Göring, who admitted that every time he faced Hitler he “lost heart,”⁵⁰⁵ said yes to the stupid question whether or not it was possible to supply the Sixth Army by air.

On November 24, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to President Carmona of Portugal on his birthday.⁵⁰⁶

On November 25, he ordered Field Marshal von Manstein to take over a newly formed army group in the Don region and to relieve Stalingrad.

Despite the turbulence at the Eastern Front, Hitler did not forget about France. The fourteen days in which he had intended to lull the French Navy and Army to sleep were over. He applied an old principle here:⁵⁰⁷

It is not as though I wanted to force my adversary to fight. After all, I do not say yes to the fight because I want to fight him, but because I want to destroy him. And now come to my aid, ingenuity, so that I may maneuver him into a corner where he cannot strike me while I can strike straight at his heart!

Hitler used the escape of General Giraud and other officers as a pretext to disarm all the remaining French troops and to occupy the naval port at Toulon. The French navy managed to sink most of its ships in time.⁵⁰⁸ German bombers entered the airspace above Toulon at 3:00 a.m. on November 27, 1942. They dropped fluorescent rockets from the skies, laid magnetic mines, and bombed the harbor fortifications. At the same time, German panzer divisions penetrated into the harbor area and engaged in a street battle. The battleship *Strasbourg* was scuttled, and its example was followed by most of the

November 26, 1942

other French ships until less than a quarter of the fleet remained. The majority of captains chose to go down with their ships. The code name for the German offensive was "Operation Lila." Hitler had realized an old ambition here: there was no French military power left in Europe. Insofar as this applied to the west, these words of caution from *Mein Kampf* had been heeded:⁵⁰⁹

Regard every attempt to organize a second military force along German borders, even if it consists merely in the formation of a state with the potential of becoming a military power, as an act of aggression against Germany. Regard it not as your right, but as your duty, to employ all means at your disposal, including force of arms, in order to prevent the emergence of such a state or, if such a state has already emerged, to destroy it.

Since Hitler believed, however, that it was better to present a different rationale for his actions, he wrote a second letter to Pétain. He felt no shame in luring the senile marshal with the prospect of the rebuilding of a French army. His letter to Pétain of November 26 read as follows:⁵¹⁰

Herr Marshal!

On November 11, 1942, with the consent of Germany's allies and with the aim of ensuring the security of the Reich, I made the decision to occupy the southern coast of France in the war imposed on us by France and England. I hope that this will help clear up the situation in your country, in the interests of Germany and Italy as well as of France.

Looking back on the past, I ought to point out once again that it was not Germany that declared war on France and England in September of 1939; on the contrary, ever since I came to power, I have never missed any opportunity, despite the burden of the Versailles Treaty, to promote the development of genuinely friendly relations with France.

Germany has put forth only one requirement—do not reject the hand of friendship offered by us. Unfortunately, unscrupulous Anglo-American, and especially Jewish, bosses have succeeded behind the scenes in interpreting the New Reich's every gesture at reconciliation as Germany's weakness, and every appeal for peace as a sign of Germany's forthcoming collapse.

While neither the government nor the press of the German Reich ventured to set forth any demands which would be insulting to the honor of France, high-ranking trouble-makers in Paris stood up for splitting up the German Reich, enslaving the German people, abolishing the fundamentals of our social legislation, and, above all, restoring the unrestricted right of the Jewish race to plunder us, a right which had been duly restricted by law.

Herr Marshal! I know you didn't take part in this instigation of war. However, you may know that after the campaign in Poland I repeated my

November 26, 1942

previous declarations, and the German Reich, without making any claims for itself, offered the kind of peace that could contribute to cooperation in Europe.

In the first days of September 1939, after the campaign in Poland was over, the forces that stood for Europe's self-destruction and thus for their own war profits, out-shouted that call for peace and demanded that the war should continue at any price. In this way, the struggle foisted by your government upon the German Reich and upon Italy, allied with the German Reich, had to be settled by arms, rather than by reason.

Despite the victory, unique in world history, I did nothing that might have insulted the honor of France; the armistice agreement sought only to prevent under all circumstances the resumption of conflict. Nor was any subsequent requirement imposed contrary to this principle.

It is known to you, Herr Marshal, that all claims to the effect that Germany intends to take possession of the French fleet or has made explicit demands along those lines are pure inventions, or rather explicit lies spread abroad by English and American parties who are the ones chiefly interested in pushing for this war.

While the German Reich still must bear heavy sacrifices due to the war forced upon it partly by France, the French people have been able to live in conditions of peace, except when they are forced to shed blood by sea and air attacks launched against them by their own allies.

Meanwhile, out of 1.960.000 prisoners of war, the German Reich has gradually released 700.000, an action which, to my mind, is an unprecedented event in the history of warfare.⁵¹¹ The blame for hindering this process must be laid on the radical elements in your country, which have always managed to sabotage genuine cooperation.

It was your own wish, Herr Marshal, to consult once with me to determine and to fix in writing the conditions of such cooperation. I acceded to your wish, and negotiations were conducted in Montoire, which, as I strongly believed, can provide the basis for a general détente.

Unfortunately, only a few weeks later, those in France herself who favor the war succeeded in putting an end to this cooperation, on grounds that appeared infinitely painful to me personally. And I am obliged to mention the public declaration that I allegedly intended to bring [the body of] Napoleon's son to Paris with the sole purpose of inviting you there so that you should fall captive into the hands of the Germans.

I must point out that you, Herr Marshal, have more than once asked me for permission to move to Versailles, and every time I declined that request of yours proceeding from the consideration that the whole world might have misconstrued this, even though erroneously, and imagine that the French government was a puppet of the Germans.

Although this one fact [*sic*] was absolutely contrary to my stand on the peace agreement, I did not draw a corresponding conclusion from it, as I always understood and still understand that in France there are millions of diligent workers, farmers, and other citizens who have nothing in common with those schemes and who are aspiring to peace.

November 26, 1942

I would like to emphasize, Herr Marshal, that I more than once made attempts to invite a member of the French government to meet with me; besides, all our discussions that did take place were fully based on the wishes of the French government. Both talks with Admiral Darlan were also carried out as a result of his insistent request and on your behalf, Herr Marshal.

The landing of American and British troops on the French northwest and north coast of Africa undertaken, as it turned out later, as a consequence of agreements with numerous traitors—generals and officers—annulled the terms of the whole agreement as presented in the preamble of the cease-fire, and so Germany was forced, together with her allies, to take the necessary urgent measures to strengthen security.

Nevertheless, by November 11, I was still unaware of all those preliminaries, which led up to the Anglo-American action. Today I know just as you, Herr Marshal, do, that the invasion [of French Africa] was performed in accordance with insistent demands from those French elements who had once brought about the war and who have not yet disappeared from the social and, above all, the military sphere of France. Another regretful fact is that the French generals and admirals more than once broke their word of honor given to the German authorities.

Herr Marshal, you have to admit, too, that such generals and admirals broke their oath of loyalty to you. Consequently, I have to conclude that any agreement with such elements is absolutely senseless.

I am presenting to you only the proofs of the fact that after the invasion of November 11, 1942, new solemn oaths were sworn, even though only in the form of a word of honor, and they were broken on the same day, a fact which is confirmed in the recently discovered orders.

It is absolutely certain that the Admiral's assurance that the French Navy in Toulon would oppose any attack of the enemy also ended in disappointment for Germany and Italy. The point is that the above declaration was also made on November 11, but an order was issued on November 12 forbidding firing on the British and American troops under any circumstances, even in case of their possible landing. Many other instances of violations of the cease-fire agreement were revealed. Herr Marshal, I can bring to your attention the following:

1. I am sure that you personally, Herr Marshal, did not participate in all that treachery and that you are actually the most victimized party.

2. I have to represent the interests of the people upon whom the war was imposed and who, in their own interests, must fight against those who unleashed that war, and against those who are continuing it now with the aim of exterminating the whole of Europe in the interests of the European and partly non-European Jewish-Anglo-American clique.

3. I am forced to bring this war to an end in the name of those millions of people, not only in my country, who have freed themselves from the grip of ruthless capitalist exploitation and have no wish to remain victims to international exploitation and to the complete extermination of their nations.

November 26, 1942

4. The German people, on whose behalf I am appealing to you, Herr Marshal, have no hatred toward the French people. But being their Führer and representative, I shall not, under any circumstances, tolerate the manipulations of those elements who have brought about this war, thus exposing Germany and the whole of Europe to chaos.

I am therefore against those tendencies and, above all against those persons who wish to hinder any cooperation between the German and the French people, in the future as well, and who have on their conscience the murderous blame for kindling the war, and who apparently believe that the hour has come to create a bridgehead in the south of Europe in order to enable the invasion of forces from outside the continent of Europe.

5. Therefore, having learned about new violations of their word of honor by French officers, generals and admirals who are intending, as has now been proved, to open France and North Africa to the Anglo-Jewish military criminals, I gave orders to seize Toulon immediately, to prevent the ships from sailing to sea or [failing that] to exterminate them, and also to crush all resistance if there is any.

It is not a war against honest French soldiers and officers; it is a struggle against those military criminals who even now keep thinking that there isn't enough bloodshed, and who are seeking for new possibilities to continue and prolong the catastrophe. That is why I have given orders to demobilize all those units of the French army which were instigated by their officers to resist Germany, in defiance of the orders of the French government.

6. As I have already pointed out, these measures, which I was forced to take due to the treacherous behavior of your admirals and generals, are not directed either against France or against French soldiers.

I earnestly hope, in common with our allies, that there is a possibility to return to the French state those French forces whose officers will, at least, obey the head of their own state, to guarantee the conclusion of any further interstate treaties and agreements.

The more painful it may be for you at the present stage, Herr Marshal, the more hopeful and reassuring ought to be the awareness that it is impossible for a state to exist long without a disciplined and obedient army. So, the building of a new navy, army and air force that would blindly obey you, Herr Marshal, will be a great happiness for France and in no way an unhappiness.

I would not like to end this letter without assuring you once more that this step forced upon me does not, in the least, diminish my will to cooperate with France, and, probably, creates prerequisites for the practical realization of this cooperation. I firmly intend to help France, by every means available in the Reich, to regain her colonial territories which were taken away from her by the Anglo-Americans, regardless of some debatable statements to the contrary. Neither Germany nor Italy ever intended to destroy or annihilate the French colonial empire.

Now it is in the hands of the French state to accept the measures forced upon the Germans, so that further bloodshed should not arise and so that at last the prerequisites are created for a really successful cooperation by both parties.

December 4, 1942

Field Marshal von Rundstedt is authorized to give the required orders and conclude agreements in the course of this German action, and he will always be at your disposal, Herr Marshal.

I'm bringing this letter to an end with a hope that it will give a start to cooperation in the course of which we expect from France nothing but loyalty and understanding of the essence of Europe's general destiny.

Herr Marshal, please accept my assertion of my personal respect for you.

Yours

Adolf Hitler

On November 28, Hitler appointed two new state secretaries: Kritzinger in the Reich Chancellery and Klopfer in the Party Chancellery.⁵¹² In addition, he received Rommel and insulted him, as he declared that the African army was headed for destruction and that the German weapons were no match for "the effectiveness of the British bombers, tanks, and artillery."⁵¹³

On December 1, Hitler received the new Spanish ambassador Gines Vidal y Saura at his headquarters. Afterwards, he bade the recalled ambassador Count Mayalde farewell.⁵¹⁴

The surviving record of the discussion of the situation on the evening of December 1⁵¹⁵ contains no significant comments by Hitler on the situation on the eastern front, since it had been relatively calm there on this day.

On December 4, Hitler sent the following telegram to Francisco Franco, the Spanish head of state and generalissimo:⁵¹⁶

On your fiftieth birthday and in my own and the entire German Volk's name, I extend to Your Excellency heartfelt best wishes for your personal welfare and your future historic work. In a brave and difficult struggle, Caudillo, you have freed the Spanish people from the shackles of Bolshevism and have led it on the way from imminent complete annihilation to a new rise. I sincerely wish that you may be permitted to lead your country to a happy and secure future.

In comradely solidarity and with heartfelt greetings,

Your Adolf Hitler

As mentioned before, Hitler was as generous as Napoleon in distributing "honorific titles" and similar "distinctions." Recently, he had decided that the infantrymen would fight better if they were called "grenadiers" and the tank soldiers "panzer grenadiers." On December 4, he bestowed the title "SS panzer grenadier divisions" on the following SS divisions: *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, *Das Reich*, *Totenkopf*, and *Wiking*.⁵¹⁷

December 11, 1942

On December 5, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to state president Ryti and Marshal Mannerheim on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Finnish declaration of independence.⁵¹⁸

In addition, he awarded the governor of Libya, Marshal Bastico, the German Cross in Gold. This was a somewhat meager award, not surprisingly, since Hitler had apparently already written off Libya.

On December 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Field Marshal von Mackensen on his ninety-third birthday.⁵¹⁹

The director of the art gallery in Dresden, Hans Posse, died on December 8 at the age of sixty-three.⁵²⁰ Hitler ordered a "state funeral."

At the Wolfsschanze headquarters on December 10, Hitler received the head of the National Socialist movement in the Netherlands, A. A. Mussert, for a "long and confidential exchange."⁵²¹

On December 11, the first anniversary of the "German-Italian-Japanese Alliance" provided the occasion for several exchanges of telegrams. Hitler himself sent out four telegrams. It was remarkable in this respect that, in the order of these announcements, the Duce had slipped into last place. The telegrams read as follows:⁵²²

To the Japanese Emperor:

On the return of the day on which Germany, Japan, and Italy solemnly announced their decision that, in the closest brotherhood in arms, they would wage the war that the United States and Great Britain had forced on them to the final victory, I would like to convey my sincere greetings to Your Majesty. Herewith, I remember the glorious battles of our allied armed forces, which guarantee our victory and a happy future for our people.

To Victor Emmanuel:

On today's anniversary of the German-Italian-Japanese alliance, I ask Your Majesty to accept my best wishes for the struggle of the Italian arms, along with my sincere and heartfelt greetings. Filled with faith in the shared final victory, I also herewith express my conviction that our people, as well as the Japanese people, will be granted a happy future in peace following the victorious conclusion of this struggle.

To Prime Minister General Tojo:

On today's day of commemoration, which finds the forces of the Tripartite Pact united in the closest brotherhood in arms in the struggle for a new and just world order, I send Your Excellency my sincere greetings. The glorious successes that the allied armed forces secured against the common enemy last year are a sure guarantee that, in Europe and East Asia, the struggle against the Anglo-American challenge will be crowned by the final victory of the

December 12, 1942

Tripartite Pact. In this imperturbable knowledge, I send you my sincere best wishes on this day for the future success of Japanese arms.

To the Duce:

On this day, when the alliance of the Axis powers with the Japanese empire celebrates the first anniversary of its conclusion, I think of you and Fascist Italy in loyal comradeship and heartfelt solidarity. In history, victory has always been imparted to those people who risked everything in the fight for a just ideal against an obsolete world order. And this is how Germany, Italy, and Japan will emerge from the present decisive struggle as the victors. In this incontestable knowledge, I also send you, Duce, my heartfelt greetings on this occasion.

On December 12, Hitler signed a series of domestic ordinances. One decree established an advisory board for the German Reichsbahn, which was made up of eighteen members “to be named by the Reich government.”⁵²³ Another decree dealt with appointments to disciplinary courts.⁵²⁴

One important decree concerned the legal status of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. It had greatly lost in significance over the years. As was already apparent in the “Resolution of the Greater German Reichstag” of April 26,⁵²⁵ the military and police would now take center stage! Hitler’s NSDAP decree of December 12 was not intended to give the party a new lease on life. On the contrary, by becoming a corporation under public law, the NSDAP was even more at his mercy than before. The decree read as follows:⁵²⁶

I

The rights and duties of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party shall derive from the tasks that I shall set for it and its resulting organizational position.

II

Party law shall exclusively determine the inner organization of the party.

III

The party shall participate in legal relations in accordance with the regulations applying to the state, insofar as special arrangements have not been, or will not be, made for it.

December 12, 1942

IV

I rescind the provisions of Paragraph 1, Section 2, of the law on securing the unity of party and state of December 1, 1933 (Reich Law Gazette I, page 1016)⁵²⁷

V

The regulations necessary for the implementation of this decree will be issued by the head of my party chancellery in agreement with the Reich treasurer of the NSDAP, and the Reich minister and chief of the Reich chancellery.

The Führer Adolf Hitler

At a lunchtime discussion on December 12, Hitler spoke about Stalingrad in a characteristic manner.⁵²⁸ His stubborn insistence on holding the city was not merely a manifestation of his principle: "What we once possess we will never again surrender!"⁵²⁹ After all, he had had to abandon this maxim before, for example at Moscow and in North Africa. Rather, his attitude concerning Stalingrad had come from the realization that: "If we give it up, we will never win it back!" He told Chief of Staff Zeitzler the following:

All in all, I have made up my mind, Zeitzler. We must not under any circumstances give it [Stalingrad] up. We will never win it back. We know what this means. I cannot start any surprise operations. This time, regrettably, it is too late. Things would have gone faster if we had not stopped at Voronezh⁵³⁰ for so long. Perhaps, they could have slipped through at the very beginning. But to think that you can do it a second time by going back and leaving the materiel behind is ridiculous.

We cannot possibly replace what we have there.

If we abandon it, then we are actually abandoning the whole objective of this campaign. To think that I can get this far again next time is crazy. Now, in the winter, we can use the forces to build a deadlock position (*Riegelstellung*). The other side has the possibility of bringing up materiel by rail and, when the ice breaks, he has the Volga at his disposal for transportation. He knows that everything hinges on this. We will not come back here. Therefore, we must not leave here. Too much blood has already been spilled.

Actually, Hitler was planning to go on a few days of vacation in the later part of December. For this purpose, he arranged for one of the customary appeals to officer candidates at the Sportpalast in Berlin on December 18, where he would deliver a standard speech.⁵³¹ Since Christmas was approaching, he planned to spend some time at the Berghof and possibly also with Mussolini and Antonescu at Klessheim.

However, in view of the catastrophic military situation at Stalingrad and in North Africa, Hitler was afraid to speak before the officer

December 18, 1942

candidates—coward that he was. As usual in such situations, he decided to use Göring as a dummy and let him deliver this unpleasant speech.⁵³²

Instead of his vacation stay, Hitler decided to “sacrifice” himself and remain in unsurpassed “selflessness” at his headquarters in order to deal with this “business,” that is, the relief of Stalingrad. On December 12, Hitler told his generals the following:⁵³³

That is why I feel that it would be appropriate to lead a thrust from south to north first in order to break up this whole business and open it up individually, and only then to continue a thrust to the east. All that is still in the distant future. For right now, it is a question of trying to free the forces for this. Of course, it is decisive how things go for the Italians today. I do not know whether, in the circumstances, I can leave here at all, Jodl. Naturally, I can cancel everything.

If I deal with this business, then I shall call off Berlin. We will see today and tomorrow.

“Things” did not go well for the Italians on that day, that is, for the Italian troops at the Don. The Russians put them into retreat.

After initial successes, the relief operation pushing to the east, which had been started on December 12 by Manstein and his newly formed Army Group Don, got stuck.

On December 15, Hitler finally canceled his trip for good. He invited Ciano and Cavallero to his East Prussian headquarters. The Duce was in ill health and did not feel up to such a long journey.⁵³⁴

On December 18, the Italians arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, which was located in a “humid forest,” as Ciano remarked.⁵³⁵ For two days, Hitler talked insistently to them and claimed that he would be able to hold Stalingrad and North Africa while throwing new troops into Tunis. At the same time, he made advances to them regarding France. However, the Italians were already up to their necks in difficulties. If the Allies controlled North Africa, then the war would soon come to the Italian motherland.

On Mussolini’s orders, Ciano made an attempt to speak with Hitler about a peace settlement with the Soviet Union. It was all very well for Ciano to talk. Peace with the Soviet Union? It was highly unlikely that, following the experiences with Hitler in the years 1939–1941, the Soviet Union would be willing to negotiate with him. Hitler ignored Ciano’s arguments altogether. Instead he reproached him on the attitude of the Italian troops on the eastern front, whose lack of resistance had supposedly made possible the Russian breakthrough at Stalingrad.

December 21, 1942

On December 19, Laval arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. As the envoy Schmidt remarked, he again had to listen to "France's list of sins." Ciano noted:

After two days on the train they first set him [Laval] at a tea table, then at a dinner table, and did not let him open his mouth. The moment he tried to speak the Führer would interrupt him and deliver a long dissertation.⁵³⁶

Hitler issued this communiqué on the talks:⁵³⁷

On December 18, the Führer received the royal Italian foreign minister at the Führer headquarters. Together with the Italian chief of staff Marshal Cavallero, Count Ciano is in Germany for a short stay. On December 18 and 19, the Führer discussed with Count Ciano and Marshal Cavallero all questions regarding the joint conduct of the war by Germany and Italy. The political and military discussions at the Führer's were attended by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, and the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, Field Marshal Keitel. The meeting at the Führer headquarters was marked by the determined will of the Axis powers to deploy all forces to gain the final victory.

On all questions discussed there was a complete unanimity of views. The unshakable friendship and brotherhood-in-arms of the Führer and the Duce, and their two people, bestowed on the discussions with Count Ciano and Marshal Cavallero a particularly heartfelt feeling.

Count Ciano and Marshal Cavallero were accompanied on their visit to the Führer headquarters by the royal Italian ambassador in Berlin, Dino Alfieri; the German ambassador in Rome, von Mackensen; the political coworkers of Count Ciano, and officers from the Italian army, air force, and navy.

On December 19, the Führer received the French head of government, Pierre Laval, for a lengthy discussion of France's current problems at his headquarters in the presence of Italian foreign minister Count Ciano, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, and Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop.

On December 21, Manstein's relief operation, called *Wintergewitter* (Operation Winter Thunderstorm), had to be given up. While the Fourth Panzer Army under General Hoth had advanced within forty-five kilometers of Stalingrad, the Russian resistance had become so strong that new Russian breakthroughs had to be feared.⁵³⁸ There remained the possibility of a breakout to the west for the Sixth Army, but Hitler categorically refused to grant permission.

On November 8, Hitler had already reinforced the occupation forces on Crete. In his opinion, Crete would bear the brunt of the next Anglo-American attack. He was very much preoccupied with these

December 29, 1942

matters. On December 28, he issued Directive No. 47, which read as follows:⁵³⁹

I. The situation in the Mediterranean region makes an offensive possible in the foreseeable future against Crete, against the German and Italian bases on the Aegean and the Balkan Peninsula. It should be taken into account that the offensive will be supported by rebellions in the western Balkan countries.

An increased influence of Anglo-American forces upon Turkey demands an increased attention in this direction also.

The directive contained detailed instructions for the individual military commanders about the appropriate countermeasures.⁵⁴⁰ Actually, Hitler ought to have evacuated the areas in question, as he had once sarcastically proposed by claiming that he wished to spare the English "the difficulties of a landing."⁵⁴¹

On December 29, Hitler decided to unite Army Group A and Army Group Don under Manstein's command.

The year 1942 ended. The "decision" in Germany's favor had not come about, despite Hitler's prophesies. Instead, a number of countries had declared war on Germany, for instance Mexico on May 22, Brazil on August 22, and Ethiopia on December 14. The German Wehrmacht had been forced to go on the defensive along all fronts. The struggle in the south of the eastern front and in North Africa had become hopeless. Disastrous strikes by the Royal Air Force continued to rain down on major German cities, and the Luftwaffe was unable to prevent this. The oceans were no longer ruled by German U-boats but by the Allied fleets. Such was the situation at the beginning of the new year.⁵⁴²



LV Heydrich's funeral

Photo: Publisher's archives

THE YEAR 1943

Major Events in Summary

Three years earlier, Hitler had declared: “May the year 1940 bring about a decision.”¹ Twelve months later, he had still prophesied: “The year 1941 will bring about the completion of the greatest victory in our history.”² Another twelve months after that, he had still felt that a “decision” was imminent and had asked the Lord for His assistance in bringing it about.³

At the beginning of 1943, he was more modest in his prophecies. This was not a surprise in view of the catastrophic situation in Stalingrad and North Africa. Hitler stated only that National Socialist Germany was “determined to end this fight with a clear victory.”⁴

Following the destruction of the German armies in Stalingrad and Tunis, he hardly felt like launching any new offensive. After a number of delays, however, only Operation Citadel with the goal of Kursk was started on June 5. Because of strong Soviet resistance, the operation had to be called off after only one week. Hitler was content that he managed to maintain the front just as it was in the spring of 1942, at least until the fall of 1943.

Although Hitler had failed to secure the oil fields of Maikop and Grozny, he was not about “to liquidate the war.”⁵ Even though he was on the defensive along all fronts, he still intended to fight down to “the last battalion.”⁶ At home, too, Hitler was eager to remain in power. Therefore, he declined to summon the Reichstag, which had the legal power to demand his resignation. On two occasions in 1943, Hitler ought to have summoned the Reichstag:

1. The extension of the Reichstag’s legislative tenure. While the Reichstag had been elected for a four-year period on April 10, 1938, Hitler manipulated⁷ it so that its tenure did not officially begin until January 30, 1939. By January 30, 1943, a further extension of the tenure would have required a Reichstag decision with a two-thirds majority.

2. The extension of the Enabling Act, which expired on May 10, 1943.⁸

Hitler proceeded in complete disregard of the Constitution in both cases and, in an arbitrary act, he extended both the Reichstag's tenure and the duration of the Enabling Act by himself.⁹

Even the "Resolution of the Greater German Reichstag" of April 26, 1942,¹⁰ which had freed him from observing existing laws in personal affairs, did not give him the right to make such highhanded changes in the constitution, especially where the competence of the Reichstag itself was concerned.

However, neither the Reichstag president Göring nor any other Reichstag deputy seemed to be disturbed by this. Nevertheless, Hitler continued to be haunted by his fear of a possible Reichstag meeting. When he heard of the vote of no confidence against Mussolini in late July, he ordered Himmler to make sure that "such possibly surfacing dangers are to be prevented through the strictest measures by the police."¹¹ This meant that all Reichstag deputies were placed under continuous police surveillance.

Hitler was troubled not only by the Reichstag, but also by the existence of persons who might be considered to be his potential successors. There was good reason for his concern. Following the disaster at Stalingrad, Field Marshal von Manstein had publicly stated his intention to recommend that Hitler resign as supreme commander of the Wehrmacht.¹² At first, Hitler considered removing von Manstein. However, he did not dare to make a move against him at this time.

Instead, he tried to defame all his prospective successors in the military or political sphere: Göring, Schirach, and Rommel. He did so indirectly by measures that tended to humiliate them in public and directly by influencing Goebbels, who was responsible for focusing public opinion.¹³

Hitler slowly began to exclude Göring from the conduct of government affairs as "president of the ministerial council." On September 1, 1939, he had thoughtlessly named the Reichsmarschall as his successor, although only in the event of his death. Now Hitler took care of day-to-day business with the help of his complaisant secretaries: Lammers, Keitel, and Bormann. In spite of this, he still felt that Göring was a "dangerous man." As president of the Reichstag, Göring had the power to summon the Reichstag at any time. Therefore, Hitler sought to belittle him in the eyes of the public by blaming him for the "failure" of the Luftwaffe, which was actually due to the superiority of the Allied air forces.

At one point, Hitler had removed Schirach from Berlin because of his alleged ambitions to succeed him.¹⁴ Even with Schirach in Vienna, Hitler still felt that he represented a threat. He constantly criticized him, claiming that he had become "*verwienert*" (gone soft—Viennese style).¹⁵ and "unreliable." He tried to "force him aside" by suggesting a diplomatic career and even wanted him placed on trial by the Volksgerichtshof.¹⁶

In March, Rommel, whose popularity had been a thorn in Hitler's side from the start,¹⁷ was recalled from the front in Africa against his will. Hitler sent him on a vacation in order to create the impression with the soldiers and the public that Rommel had abandoned his troops in Tunis and run to safety.

Hitler kept himself busy with such tricks and precautionary measures in 1943 and was indifferent to the military catastrophes in Stalingrad and Tunis. He tried to appear in public as little as possible. Only three times did he speak on public occasions: on Heroes' Memorial Day (March 21), at Lutze's funeral (May 8), and at the commemoration of the Munich putsch (November 8). There was also one radio broadcast about the collapse of the Italian government on November 10, when Goebbels practically had to force him to go to the microphone. In addition, Hitler delivered addresses before Reichsleiters and Gauleiters in February, May, and October, before leaders of the economy in June, and before officer candidates in November.

Undoubtedly, the gravest event of 1943 for Hitler was the collapse of Mussolini and Fascism. His theory of 1919—friendship with England and Italy—broke down completely, even regarding his second ally. Of course, this could not be allowed to happen! Thus, Hitler had Mussolini kidnapped in Italy. He wanted to keep the weak Duce and the body of the Fascist Party alive artificially so that his alliance theory of 1919 would not die.

All in all, the year 1943 was a bleak one for Hitler. Since he wished to remain "steadfast in face of the impossible,"¹⁸ he was happy that he managed to hang on. In the meantime, the Allies were taking up the positions whence they would deal the decisive blows against Hitler's Reich in 1944 and 1945.

On January 14, Churchill and Roosevelt met in Casablanca to discuss future cooperation with Russia, China, and the representatives of "Free France," de Gaulle and Giraud. At a press conference, after ten

days of discussions at “Villa No. 2,” they emphasized their call for the “unconditional surrender” of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

After the war, there was a tendency, at least in Germany, to attribute too much importance to the Casablanca Conference.¹⁹ Especially the members of the German resistance movement claimed that the call for Germany’s “unconditional surrender” had made it impossible for them to move effectively against Hitler.

It is not the purpose of this work to investigate whether the German resistance movement ever had the necessary willpower and the opportunity of moving against Hitler. However, the reference to the Casablanca Conference is in much the same line as the claim that the outcome of the Munich Conference had prevented action by the German generals against Hitler.²⁰

As mentioned earlier,²¹ from the point of view of the defeated, any type of surrender is unconditional. It is not the defeated who puts up conditions, but the victor who dictates them. If the defeated refuses to accept them, then the fight continues until either he surrenders “unconditionally” or he is destroyed.

Following Germany’s capitulation in 1918, the Reich government of the Weimar Republic tolerated the official claim by German Nationalists and the military that the German Army had been close to securing the final victory in 1918, when the “November criminals” had committed treason by signing the armistice agreement without being forced to do so.

This belief, which virtually became Germany’s state doctrine from 1933 on, caused the western powers to insist on “unconditional surrender” from the start. This meant that at the end of the Second World War, the German Wehrmacht would publicly have to declare its defeat and place itself at the mercy of the victor.

This decision by the western powers did not come about as a result of the Casablanca Conference. From the start, the statements by Allied statesmen were clear on this point.

On October 3, 1939, Chamberlain [said] before the lower house [of Parliament] the following: “We are not willing to accept from the present German government even the slightest promise.”²²

In a broadcast on October 1, 1939, Churchill declared the following:²³

The Empire Crumbles

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough.

In another broadcast on June 22, 1941, Churchill stated the following:²⁴

But now I have to declare the decision of His Majesty's Government—and I feel sure it is a decision in which the great Dominions will, eventually, concur—for we must speak out now at once, without a day's delay. I have to make the declaration, but can you doubt what our policy will be? We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every trace of the Nazi régime. From this nothing will turn us away—nothing. We will never parley, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. We shall fight him by land, we shall fight him by sea, we shall fight him in the air, until with God's help we have rid the earth of his shadow and liberated the people from his yoke. Any man or state who fights against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe..

On December 11, 1941, President Roosevelt sent the United States Congress the following message:²⁵

The long known and the long expected has thus taken place. The forces endeavoring to enslave the entire world now are moving toward this hemisphere.

Never before has there been a greater challenge to life, liberty, and civilization.

On December 8, speaking expressly about Japan but implicitly about Japan's allies, Germany and Italy, President Roosevelt had said to Congress the following:²⁶

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

The call for unconditional surrender was not intended to mean that the victors were unwilling to respect the law or grant the defeated their rights or that they would arbitrarily treat the people of Germany, Italy, and Japan afterwards. This was also stated in no uncertain terms at Casablanca. The statement to the press there read as follows:²⁷

The President and the Prime Minister, after a complete survey of the world war situation, are more than ever determined that peace can come to the world only by a total elimination of German and Japanese war power. This involves the simple formula of placing their objective of this war in terms of an unconditional surrender by Germany, Italy and Japan. Unconditional

surrender by them means a reasonable assurance of world peace for generations. Unconditional surrender means not the destruction of the German populace, nor of the Italian or Japanese populace, but does mean the destruction of a philosophy in Germany, Italy and Japan which is based on the conquest and subjugation of other people.

The other claim, that, before Casablanca, there had never been an “unconditional surrender” in world history cannot be substantiated. There is, for example, Hitler’s treatment of the states which he conquered. The occupied territories in Poland and Russia were literally raped. They were not granted any life of their own. A completely arbitrary reign was instituted in Norway, Holland, and the Balkans, with the intention of incorporating these areas into the German Reich. In May 1940, it was Hitler who explicitly demanded an “unconditional surrender” by the Belgian king Leopold.²⁸ Keitel told the French intermediaries who came to the Forest of Compiègne in June 1940 that they had to accept “unconditionally” all German demands and sign the armistice.²⁹

The call for Germany’s and its allies’ unconditional surrender only repeated the goals that had been articulated earlier. It was not the only or most decisive outcome of the Casablanca Conference. Far more important was the solidarity demonstrated between the Anglo-American powers and the other states fighting against Germany, the Soviet Union and “Free France.”

In reality, Casablanca did not change anything, not even for the Germans. Hitler’s conduct of the war was not influenced by it. The German generals behaved no differently after Casablanca than they did before Casablanca. The German resistance movement grew more active in 1943 and 1944 and made several ill-fated attempts on Hitler’s life, even though Casablanca had supposedly tied their hands.

It would be more appropriate for members of the former German resistance movement if they simply admitted that they did not have any single man who dared to oppose Adolf Hitler openly.

In Germany, there were hundreds and thousands of people who had no influence, like the Scholl³⁰ siblings, and who, nonetheless, were ready to lay down their lives and to help in whatever way possible to free Germany of the tyrant. Many low-ranking officers likewise risked their lives in this cause. However, in Germany’s leading circles, there was nobody who was willing to place his life on the line, when he met the Führer face to face.

January 1, 1943

Report and Commentary

1

Hitler's New Year's Proclamation for 1943 began with the following words:³¹

Führer Headquarters, January 1, 1943

German Volk! National Socialists! Party Comrades!

For the fourth time, destiny forces me to direct my New Year's Proclamation to the German Volk at war. In these four years, it became clear to the German Volk that this fight, which was forced on us by our old greedy enemies, as so many times before in German history, is truly a question of life or death. When, in earlier centuries, dynastic disputes filled the world with the clamor of war, then the results and consequences of such a struggle were often quite limited for the victor and for the defeated.

In spite of this, after the decay of the first German Reich during many centuries, our Volk—because of its internal fragmentation and its resulting impotence—fell from its former position of commanding respect in Europe and, for a long time, became a cultural fertilizer for the outside world. Countless millions of Germans were forced to leave their homeland in order to earn their daily bread elsewhere. Although they were not conscious of this, they helped to build up that continent that now tries to invade Europe a second time.

That the United States was attempting “to invade” those parts of Europe occupied by the Germans was not all that surprising, since Hitler had declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941.

The following section of Hitler's appeal contained the usual “party narrative,”³² which pointed to the First World War, international Jewry, and Wilson's Fourteen Points. What was new was that Hitler now claimed that the German Volk had caused the present confrontation because it had believed “Wilson's untruthful, hypocritical phrases” in 1918 and thereby prevented the collapse of the “hostile environment.” Hitler declared as follows:

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Had the German Volk continued to wage the struggle with iron determination, instead of believing Wilson's untruthful, hypocritical phrases in the year 1918, then the hostile environment would already have collapsed at the time.

That this did not happen not only brought unspeakable economic misery over our Volk and tore millions of Germans from the homeland but it also was the cause of this present war. Because we know that in 1939 London and Paris thought that the German Volk would shortly lay down its arms again of its own accord, as it did once before. The German Volk and the rest of the world should know, however, that this event was unique in German history. If English and American Jews tell us that it is the intention of the Allies to take its children away from the German Volk, slaughter millions of young men, split up the German Reich, and make it the defenseless victim of its capitalist or Bolshevik environment for all time,³³ then they do not need to tell us this, because we already know it anyway. Now this outside world does not seem to realize that National Socialist Germany is not suited for such an experiment, that it will neither be defeated nor will it capitulate. Instead, filled with the spirit of the greatest times in our history, it is determined to end this fight with a clear victory. The strongest guarantor of these sentiments and the strength of will necessary for this is the National Socialist Party with its organizations and, above all, the Volk educated by it.

We have the right to believe in this victory, thanks to our own strength, the courage of our troops, the loyalty and work of our homeland, and thanks to the activities of the allied brave nations in Europe and Asia.

If the German Wehrmacht and the allied states have managed in the past year to drive back even further the Bolshevik fronts threatening Europe, then the German homeland, with its men and women in the cities and in the countryside, has by the same token accomplished something unique under the most difficult circumstances. The German and allied soldiers, as well as our German economy, have not only enormously expanded the Lebensraum of fighting Europe, but they have also already opened it up for themselves to a great extent.

It was possible to secure food for us, thanks above all to the work of the German peasant and the German peasant's wife. The millions who work for our industry have not only supplied our armies with the necessary materiel but they have also created the conditions for starting our armament as planned on a much larger scale. We have been informed often enough about what America plans to do in this respect through the windy babble of its main warmonger.³⁴ We are also aware of what it can actually do and has actually accomplished. What Germany and Europe will in the end accomplish will not remain concealed from our enemies in the coming year.

A review of this year of great successes and mighty battles obliges the German homeland to think of its soldiers first. Wherever they stand, they add new pages of honor to the annals of German history. The glorious battles they have fought are made public by special announcements and Wehrmacht reports. However, the homeland cannot fully appreciate what they have to

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suffer and bear. And to this front of fighters also belongs that front of men and women who work as helpers at the front or behind it. Especially in the east, unimaginable things are demanded of them and done by them. Alas, by taking upon themselves these worries, privations, sacrifices, and sufferings, they spare the Reich much greater misfortune. They protect it and guard it against the horrors of a war which the homeland has only begun to experience even during the heaviest bombardments.

The start of the New Year obliges me to thank the homeland and the front, in the name of the German Volk, for their heroism and the work that has been done. For I am only one of the many members of this Volk. What raises me above the throng of my Volksgenossen is only the honor to be allowed to be their Führer. For the rest, their suffering is my suffering, just as my pride and joy will one day be the pride and joy of the entire Volk. The individual must and will pass away, as in all times, but the Volk must live on. That we will dedicate all our forces to it in this coming year, this will be our pledge on January 1, 1943. Only then we may dare to ask our Lord, as always, that He continue to grant us His assistance. The winter may be difficult, but it cannot hit us any harder than it did last year. Afterwards, the hour will come when we will line up again and concentrate our forces to secure freedom, the future, and the life of our Volk. Some day, one power will be the first to fall in this struggle. We know that it will not be Germany. The German Volk will hold the battlefield this time. And then, finally, that long peace will come that we yearn for, for the great building up of our Volksgemeinschaft, which will be the only worthy expression of thanks to our dead heroes.

Adolf Hitler

The order of the day which Hitler issued to the soldiers of the German Wehrmacht at the beginning of the new year was again very long and listed all sorts of “decisive” victories. This was definitely a sign that something was amiss! Indeed, the German Volk had not been told about the encirclement of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. This order of the day read as follows:³⁵

Soldiers!

When I addressed my last New Year’s Proclamation to you, a winter had set in along our front in the east which resembled a natural disaster.

What you soldiers of the eastern front had to go through at the time, you know yourselves. At night, when I worried and lay awake, my thoughts were with you. That we managed to avoid the Napoleonic collapse that was meant for us, we owe as much to your bravery and soldierly expertise as to your loyalty and steadfastness.

My fighters of the eastern front, you have saved Germany and, beyond this, all of Europe during that winter—and, with you, the soldiers of our allies who fought at your side. While in an endless struggle against the forces of nature and the treacherousness of the enemy you doggedly held the European front in the

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east, preparations had already begun in the homeland for taking up the struggle in the spring.

You have accomplished great things in the year 1942. The Crimea was conquered and cleared. Dangerous breakthroughs by the enemy at countless locations along the front were thwarted. In the three battles of Kharkov, the threat to our southern flank was eliminated, and the enemy was crushed. A new offensive of mighty proportions took the last remnants of the Ukraine from him, as well as his coal areas along the Donets. In this huge area, which reaches up to the Volga, you now fight side by side with the troops of our allied nations. You know how difficult this struggle is and will be, and how often the scales will appear to tilt in favor of our enemy, but the German victory will stand at the end, because during this year the German homeland has forged new weapons, and more so than ever before. What was prepared in many years of work is now beginning to run at full capacity in order to provide you, my soldiers, not only with better but also with more weapons and ammunition. As fighters, you are already superior to every enemy. Nevertheless, not only as your supreme commander but also as a former soldier, I know how much bitterness, suffering, fear of death, and valor is connected with even the most glorious victory. For in the end, it is the man, as fighter and soldier, who decides the battle of arms. Even the best weapon is worthless in the hands of a coward.

While you, my soldiers of the eastern front, paid a heavy toll in blood, and with you all the men and women deployed by the organizations helping you, who were so often forced to take up a rifle or machine gun themselves, the German soldier along all fronts has done his duty to the utmost.

From northern Norway to the Spanish border, the German divisions await our enemies' attack. We can only guess whether they will come and when they will come. However, we know that they will be beaten no matter when or how they will come. In a few hours, Dieppe showed the English that a landing by the enemies on the continent will only lead to their lightning destruction. They will experience the same at any other location. While our allies are fighting a heroic struggle, especially in North Africa, traitorous French generals and admirals have broken the armistice. By violating solemn promises and words of honor even toward their own head of state, they have attempted to hand over the French colonial empire to our enemies, which, as the victor, we had left to France.

In agreement with the Duce, the remainder of France was thereupon occupied in a few days, the southern French Mediterranean coast was set up for the joint defense, the French army and fleet were disarmed, and we took possession of Tunis and Bizerte.

Thereby, we took up those new positions that are important, even decisive, for the conduct of the war in North Africa.

My Soldiers, by setting up and holding fronts so far away from Germany, you are not only protecting Europe together with our allies but also your own homeland, the German Reich. The accomplishments of our navy in this struggle are unique in history. Submarine and surface craft are destroying so

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many of the enemies' warships and merchant marine that they cannot build new ships fast enough. The Luftwaffe and all its units are doing their utmost, as you have experienced or seen yourselves in the course of countless missions in this war. You soldiers of the army and the Waffen SS who are directly subordinate to me —you remain the backbone of this entire gigantic struggle. Your bravery, loyalty, sense of duty, and steadfastness are the basis of the final victory. The grenadiers and riflemen of the regiments of the infantry and panzer divisions of the army and the units of the Waffen SS have not only suffered the greatest losses, they have also accomplished the most.

If, at the beginning of this new year, we firmly resolve never to retreat from our enemies, but instead to fight them until the final victory is ours, then we do so primarily in the memory of our dear comrades who have already given their lives for this victory. However, we do so also thinking of the German Volk, its present and future. Countless newspapers and public speeches announced what our enemies plan to do with our Volk. You know yourselves what the enemy in the east will do with us in case he wins. Our enemies will find out for themselves what we are determined to do in view of this. By thinking of our dead at the front, we also think of the bravery of the homeland. It is worthy of its soldiers. All attempts by the enemy, his heinous attacks on women and children, places of cultural significance, and peaceful homes, did not demoralize the German Volk. On the contrary, they were imbued with that hatred which is necessary in order to wage such a fight with prospects of success. Even as we were driven into this war, we did not know this hatred—especially insofar as our western enemies were concerned. We never demanded anything of them that could have offended or insulted them. We did not demand anything that belonged to them. Our only wish was to live in friendship with them. Our soldiers fought heroically after England and France declared war on us but this hatred was still not there in the German Volk. The ruins of our old cathedrals, numerous dead and wounded women and children, the well-planned attacks on our military hospitals, and so on, only they brought about this change of heart in the German Volk. Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill taught Germany how to hate. Thus, the German Volk today works with grim wrath in the countryside and in the cities in the single determination that, this time, the war will end in such a manner that Germany's enemies will no longer feel like attacking us again for the next hundred years.³⁶ And those nations which have tied their destiny to that of Germany face the same question of life or death. May God have mercy on Europe, if the Jewish-Bolshevik-capitalist conspiracy succeeds. Europe would be lost forever and in the middle of it is your homeland, my soldiers, the homeland for which you are fighting.

The year 1943 will perhaps be difficult, but it will surely be no more difficult than past years. If the Lord gave us the strength to survive the [last] winter, then we will survive this winter and the next year all the more. One thing is certain: at this point there will³⁷ be no more compromises in this struggle. What Europe and the rest of the world need is not a situation in which every twenty or twenty-five years the Jewish-capitalist vultures can turn against the peacefulness and, above all, social building of a new world, but instead a

January 4, 1943

long resting period of uninterrupted development. Above all, Germany needs the conditions for the building of a National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft that is no longer threatened from the outside. If this state and the rest of Europe then possess within their borders the basis for secure nutrition and possess those raw materials without which human civilization today is inconceivable, then your sufferings, my soldiers, will not have been in vain. One day, new generations will come to the graves of our fallen comrades to thank them for the sacrifices they made for the life of posterity.

Because we are fighting for the life and freedom of our nations, and not for money or business, we believe that we may again ask the Lord to grant us His blessings in the coming year, as in the past.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's wordy New Year's Proclamation was ill-suited to create enthusiasm in Germany or the allied states. Ciano wrote the following:³⁸

I did not like very much Hitler's message to the German people and the one he sent to the armed forces. They reveal a great deal of concern, which is logical, but it is not wise to announce it to a public which is already puzzled.

The official communiqué on Hitler's exchange of New Year's telegrams with other heads of state was as brief as it had been the year before.³⁹ The number of possible addressees for his telegrams had again decreased after Mexico and Brazil had declared war on Germany.

Hitler was still capable of seeing through a shakeup of diplomatic personnel on January 1:⁴⁰ he recalled Ambassador von Stohrer from Madrid, General Ott from Tokyo, and the envoy Prinz zu Wied from Stockholm. He appointed the following replacements: von Moltke as ambassador in Madrid; Stahmer as ambassador in Tokyo (he had previously been in Nanking); and Thommsen⁴¹ as envoy in Stockholm. Embassy Counselor Erich Kordt (first Bern, then Tokyo) was appointed chargé d'affaires in Nanking.

At the same time, the public was informed that Hitler had created a new military award: a white ribbon with the inscription "Crete." Veterans of the battles on Crete in May 1941 were to wear the ribbon on their lower left arms.⁴² In all likelihood, this was meant as an encouragement to the soldiers at Stalingrad, to whom Hitler might one day also award a ribbon with "Stalingrad" emblazoned on it.

On January 4, Hitler received Speer at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. They discussed the "Armament Drive 1943."⁴³ The Führer decided that it was no longer necessary to show special consideration to the French in the further recruitment of specialists and helpers in

January 10, 1943

France. The drive should be handled with vigor, and sharper measures to promote "recruitment" were permissible.

On January 7, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the queen and empress of Italy, Elena, on her seventieth birthday.⁴⁴

On January 8, Hitler received the Bulgarian war minister, General Richov, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The question discussed was Bulgaria's readiness for defense against Turkey.⁴⁵

On the same day, the Russians proposed an honorable surrender to the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. Colonel General Paulus forwarded the conditions to the Führer headquarters by radio. Naturally, Hitler categorically forbade their acceptance.⁴⁶

On January 10, the Russians, under the command of Colonel General Rokossovski and his chief of staff Lieutenant General Malinin, began a new offensive against the encircled German army. The artillery attack, which was of particular significance,⁴⁷ was led by Artillery Marshal Voronov.

That day, Hitler received Antonescu and his entourage at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The situation at the eastern front was becoming decidedly more worrisome for the Romanians than for the Germans. Should the Russians continue their advance, the Romanians would naturally be the first to see what the consequences of this advance would be. Not surprisingly, as Ciano noted in his diary, the Romanians were beginning to waver and suddenly seemed to be keen on reaching an understanding with the Hungarians.⁴⁸

Of course, Hitler did not forget to blame the Romanians for the situation at Stalingrad, but Antonescu was not about to put up with anything of the kind. Schmidt reported the following:⁴⁹

When Hitler tried to blame the Romanians, along with the Hungarians and Italians, for the Russian breakthrough of the front, which had led to the encirclement of the Stalingrad army, Antonescu energetically protested against this and strongly criticized the German leaders, that is, indirectly Hitler, and, as it appeared to me, with the very apt arguments of an old general-staff officer.

The following communiqué was published on the meeting:⁵⁰

On January 10, the Führer received the state leader⁵¹ of Romania, Marshal Antonescu, at his headquarters. The discussion, which was characterized by the spirit of friendship and the battle-tested brotherhood in arms of the two nations, was attended, on the German side, by Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop and, on the Romanian side, by deputy prime minister Mihai Antonescu, who accompanied the Romanian state leader.

January 15, 1943

For the German side, Field Marshal Keitel, chief of staff General Zeitzler, and General Jodl participated in the military talks, in which, for the Romanian side, war minister Division General Dobre and the Romanian chief of staff Division General Steflea took part. The talks touched on all questions of deployment by both nations and the determined continuation of the war against the common enemies to a total victory of our arms. A complete agreement of opinions on the further conduct of the war in the political, military, and economic realms was noted.

On January 9, the Japanese-puppet Chinese government declared war on England and America. Germany barely took note of this event. Not even the usual exchange of telegrams on such an occasion took place.

On January 12, Göring and Rosenberg celebrated their fiftieth birthdays. Through Keitel, Hitler presented Göring with a "skillfully crafted document on his nomination as Reichsmarschall." Schaub handed Rosenberg a handwritten letter from the Führer and conveyed his "heartfelt congratulations."⁵² On the same day, Hitler appointed Franz Hueber, who had previously served as undersecretary of state in the Reich ministry of justice, president of the Reich Administrative Court.⁵³

Ever since the end of November, Hitler had concealed the encirclement of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad from the German public. He had acted as though nothing had changed at Stalingrad. On January 10, he had the OKW report say: "In Stalingrad, local activities by assault parties."

On January 14, in view of the rapidly progressing Russian offensive, Hitler gave up this tactic. He decided to transform the Battle of Stalingrad into a "heroic epic." The OKW report of January 14 mentioned "heroic, heavy fighting in the Stalingrad area."

On January 15, Hitler tried to encourage the commander in chief of the Sixth Army to hold out. Since he had already promoted Paulus to colonel general on November 30, he now awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross, as the "178th soldier and commander of an army."⁵⁴ The German public was still not informed that the entire Sixth Army was encircled in Stalingrad and that its destruction was just a matter of time. Twenty German and two Romanian divisions, which had numbered from two hundred fifty thousand to three hundred thirty thousand men in November,⁵⁵ were cut off.

January 20, 1943

On January 19, Hitler received the Spanish party minister Arrese at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for a lengthy discussion in “the spirit of the sincere friendship between Germany and Spain.”⁵⁶

On January 20, the Führer headquarters made it public that Ribbentrop and Ambassador Oshima had signed an agreement on economic cooperation between Germany and Japan. A corresponding treaty between Italy and Japan had been concluded in Rome. The purpose of this treaty was simply to improve the mood in Germany and Italy. After all, what use were agreements on economic cooperation if one needed a submarine to establish routes for traffic between the parties to the treaty? Even this heartfelt final communiqué from the Führer headquarters could not change this fact:⁵⁷

Following the conclusion of the German-Japanese Economic Agreement, the Führer received the imperial Japanese ambassador, General Oshima, and entered into a heartfelt, lengthy discussion with him.

On January 21, Hitler had a wreath placed at the grave of Professor Troost in Munich. Furthermore, he sent a congratulatory telegram to the poet Wilhelm Schäfer of the Rhineland on his seventy-fifth birthday.⁵⁸

On January 20, the Russian defender of the city of Stalingrad, General Rodimtsev, had driven a wedge between the German troops, splitting them into two camps. On January 24, the Russians sent a negotiator under a flag of truce to Paulus with renewed demands for a surrender. The German general forwarded them by radio to Hitler, asking him to “approve immediately surrender in order to save the remaining lives.” Hitler replied as follows:⁵⁹

I forbid surrender. The army holds its position down to the last soldier and the last bullet. Through its heroic perseverance, it makes an unforgettable contribution to the erection of a defensive front and to the salvation of the occident.

The Sixth Army continued to receive this order of the day by radio from the Führer headquarters:⁶⁰

If the German soldier considers holding out further to be senseless, he should remember that the Führer knows best. The moment may come when the soldier believes that he is forced to continue the fight although resistance does not make sense any longer. In such a situation, the troops must know: the Führer knows what situation his soldiers are in. He will manage it. We must only obey. Ours is not to ask why; ours is to blindly obey.

January 27, 1943

This was the pure Hitlerian style known from his appeals to officer candidates. The Führer knows best! The Führer knows what situation his soldiers are in and the “difficulty” of the hour. He knew all this, as he had stated one year ago:

I went through the whole gamut of human responsibility myself: as a common soldier, as an unknown and nameless man who undertook to conquer a state, as the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, and, above all, as the commander in chief of the army. I know everything. I know how difficult it can be at times!⁶¹

It is another question whether it was any consolation to the starving, freezing, and bleeding soldiers at Stalingrad that the Führer knew all this!

Hitler was more interested in continued elimination of the Reichstag at this point than in Stalingrad. It was high time that he did something. The Reichstag’s tenure expired on January 30. On January 25, Hitler signed—with the term “Der Führer,”⁶²—the law on the extension of the tenure of the Greater German Reichstag, in violation of the constitution.⁶³

The Reich government has decided the following law, which is herewith made public:

I

The tenure of the presently existing Reichstag is extended until January 30, 1947.

II

The Reich minister of the interior decrees the legal and administrative regulations necessary to the implementation of this law.

On January 27, Sauckel ordered, “based on special authorization by the Führer,” that all men from sixteen to sixty-five years of age and all women from seventeen to forty-five years of age report to the employment office for work in the defense of the Reich.⁶⁴

Having attended to these affairs, Hitler again turned to the problem of Stalingrad. The complete destruction of the Sixth Army appeared more certain by the hour. It was mostly a question now of postponing its collapse until after the anniversary of the seizure of power on January 30. As mentioned earlier, Hitler wanted to make a modern heroic epic out of Stalingrad and hold up the fight of the king of Sparta, Leonidas, against the Persians as an example. In a conversation with the Italian ambassador Alfieri, he compared the German army at Stalingrad with the three hundred Spartans at the Pass of Thermopylae.⁶⁵ The army

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would show “the world the true spirit of National Socialist Germany and its loyalty to the Führer.”

It was not a very good idea to use Leonidas as an example. Contrary to a widespread belief in Germany, the sacrifice of Leonidas and his three hundred men at Thermopylae did not do any good. After they had been slaughtered, the Persians marched on as though nothing had happened. Had Leonidas and his men surrendered, the outcome would still have been the same. History teaches us that the outcome of such “battles to the last breath” is at best a heroic epic.

However, the “expert on history,” Hitler, was far from this realization. He told Göring all about Leonidas, because it was Göring, after all, who had to deliver the commemorative address in Berlin on January 30. Hitler was too great a coward by nature to show himself in public in view of the situation at Stalingrad. Göring had to step into the breach, just as in September 1939, when the inopportune declaration of war by England came in spite of Hitler’s prophecies. At the time, Hitler had preferred to “vanish” and go to the front rather than answer to the public.⁶⁶

On January 29, 1943, the Reich minister of the interior announced the following:⁶⁷

The usual flag ceremony on the day of the national uprising will not take place this year.

At 1:00 p.m. on January 30, Göring spoke in the Honors Hall of the Reich Ministry of Aviation on the tenth anniversary of the seizure of power. The speech was broadcast by all radio stations and was also heard in Stalingrad.⁶⁸ Göring said that “tired old men and sixteen-year-old boys” were fighting for the Soviet Union: “I am convinced that these are the last reserves which can be squeezed out, because this toughness is no longer any toughness but pure barbarity because a human life means nothing to the Bolsheviks.” Göring went on to analyze the struggle of “Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans” at the Pass of Thermopylae.

At that time, too, the invasion by the hordes was broken by the Nordic man. . . . And, one day, the history of our days will read: “If you come to Germany, tell [the Germans] that you saw us fighting at Stalingrad,⁶⁹ as the law for the security of our Volk commanded!”

At the end of his speech, Göring almost quoted verbatim what Hitler had already told so many officer candidates:⁷⁰

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There is a certain logic in world history. Do you believe, my comrades, that destiny—I mean Providence, the Almighty—lets an unknown man rise up, a man without a name and without wealth, a simple fighter from the World War, then guides him through endless confusion, lets him become greater and greater, and, all of a sudden, all this should be senseless?

That Providence sent the German Volk a man of such greatness in the Führer—and our ancestors addressed such great leaders by the correct name, “you heaven-sent man”—and that he managed to fashion the strongest nation in the world out of the German Volk, which once was fragmented and impotent, then these are guarantees which give us the right to believe in victory. And now, I turn to all soldiers, from the field marshal to the recruit: the situation can never become so bad for us that we do not have the strength to overcome it!

Göring was not to be envied in his task in this speech. While he was simply repeating Hitler’s ideas, he had to give them the true ring of conviction and act as though what he said was his own sacred faith. It was easier for Goebbels that afternoon, since he simply had to read out a proclamation at the Sportpalast in Berlin at 4:00 p.m. No matter how mediocre this proclamation was, there was no question who had authored it: Hitler.

The document was boring, without vim and vigor. Hitler simply listed all supposed and actual successes of the past. He used phrases and claims which the public had heard countless times before: any weakling could handle victory, but only the strong could deal with reverses of fortune. He barely mentioned Stalingrad. Only one sentence alluded to the tragedy unfolding there: “The heroic struggle of our soldiers at the Volga should serve as a reminder to everyone that he must do his utmost in Germany’s struggle for freedom, for the future of our Volk, and, in a broader sense, for the preservation of our entire continent.”

Hitler’s Proclamation began with these words:⁷¹

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For the tenth time, the day returns on which Reich president, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, entrusted me with the responsibility of leading the Reich. The fourteen-year-old struggle for power by the National Socialist movement, which had developed from a very small beginning and has now become by far the strongest party in the Reich with the legal right to form the government, thereby found its successful conclusion.

A “party narrative”⁷² followed, in which Hitler discussed Wilson’s Fourteen Points, fourteen years of Marxism, fourteen million unemployed, and the National Socialist Party’s domestic achievements

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from 1933 to 1939. He spoke in great detail about his numerous “peace offers”:

From the inner strength of our Volk that was gained through that [struggle] arose the first possibility of resolving tasks abroad. During these long years, I made practical offers to the world time and again on reasonable limits for armament and loyal cooperation. Future historians will one day reach the conclusion that never before were peaceful proposals by a man met with greater hatred than mine.

The capitalist and Bolshevik parties interested in the exploitation of people began to hate the new Germany in relation to the degree that it began to become an example for the peaceful resolution of existing conflicts, social and economic problems. International Jewry in particular heated up its campaign against the new Germany, which was not willing to bow to international stock-exchange interests, nor to be intimidated by Bolshevik threats. In spite of this animosity, we managed to make greater progress every year. We also obtained a peaceful revision of the Diktat of Versailles and a restoration of German vital rights. Only after the rejection of all my proposals for joint disarmament, did I order and carry out the creation of the new German Wehrmacht.

It is only today, on the tenth anniversary of the assumption of power, that we fully realize what might have become of Germany and Europe, had Providence not effected the transfer of power to National Socialism through the Reich president, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, on January 30, 1933.

After all, the Germany of the classes would not have remained as it was. Its political and economic decay would have led inevitably to an increasing impotence in contrast to the surrounding world. In the same period, Bolshevism had already been engaged for ten years in a planned armament of truly gigantic proportions in preparation for its attack on Europe. What would have become of the German Volk and Europe, had the German Wehrmacht not raised its shield before Europe at the last minute on June 22, 1941! Who believes that ridiculous guarantees or likewise irrelevant paper declarations by Anglo-American statesmen would have saved the world faced with an attack by a power which, as American correspondents plainly put it today, has for twenty years pursued the goal of attacking Europe, as in the times of the migration of the people and the Mongolian invasions, destroying its culture, and, above all, exterminating the European in order to win slaves for work in the Siberian tundra.

Aside from Germany, which state would have been capable of confronting this danger? If, since 1941, the greater part of Europe has rallied to Germany in the struggle against the threats from the east, then this was only possible because, in 1933, this Germany received the political, moral, and material prerequisites for waging this struggle, which today decides the fate of the world. Just as there used to be only two possibilities at home: either the victory of the National Socialist revolution and, therefore, the planned social rebuilding of the Reich, or the Bolshevik coup d'état and therefore the destruction and enslavement of all, there are only two alternatives today: either Germany, the

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German Wehrmacht, the allied countries, and, thereby, Europe will win, or a Central-Asian-Bolshevik wave from the east will sweep over the oldest civilized continent just as destructively as has already been the case in Russia. Only withdrawn dreamers can seriously believe the Jewish fibs that some sort of British or American paper declaration could have prevented such an international catastrophe.

When, in the year 1939, France and England declared war on Germany without any reason⁷³ and thus unleashed the Second World War, they unconsciously did good by unleashing this greatest conflict in history precisely at that moment when the Reich stood at the pinnacle of its power. As we know today, this war had long been decided on by the rulers in the Kremlin. With every new year, things would have become more difficult.

All other events pale in comparison with the greatness of this gigantic struggle. Should the new Central Asian rush on Europe succeed, then the present world would crack, just as the old one cracked when confronted by the Hun invasion. Mankind's work over thousands of years would again have been in vain. Chaos would take the place of the most thriving continent on earth. Its culture would be replaced by inconceivable barbarity.

What has been achieved since the year 1933 in the economic, cultural, and political realms pales, in spite of its greatness, in comparison with the task that we face today. Even if National Socialism had achieved no more than what lies behind it, it would already belong among the greatest phenomena in world history, but Europe would still be lost.

The wonderful development of our movement, from a few men in the beginning to the day of the seizure of power and from then until now, is conceivable and understandable only as the expression of the will of Providence. It wants to give the German Volk and, beyond this, all of Europe the opportunity to confront successfully this greatest danger of all time. It is therefore up to us to understand the meaning of this war, and to wage the fight which was forced on us with determination, until this continent can be regarded as saved for good.

The reverses of fortune which the individual might suffer are nothing compared with what all would have to suffer if the barbaric hordes of the east were allowed to sweep over our part of the earth. In earlier times, German knights set out for distant lands in order to fight for the ideals of their faith; today, our soldiers fight in the vastness of the east in order to save Europe from destruction. Every single human life that falls in this fight will give life to future generations.

For as long as I felt it was possible, I extended my hand to the rest of the world for peace, time and again. After the rejection of my last peace offer in July 1940, I realized that any repetition would be interpreted as weakness, since the responsible agitators in this war did not desire peace under any circumstances.

The conspiracy of international capitalism and Bolshevism is not an absurd phenomenon but a natural condition. The driving force in both cases is that race whose hatred has torn mankind to pieces time and again throughout the

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millennia, corrupted it inside, exploited it economically, and destroyed it politically. International Jewry is "the ferment of the decomposition of people and states" today as in antiquity. Things will remain this way, unless the people find the strength to rid themselves of this germ.

In this mightiest struggle of all time, we cannot expect that Providence give us victory as a present. Each and every people will be weighed, and what is judged too light will fall. On September 1, 1939, I declared that, come what may, neither time nor the force of arms will defeat the German nation.

The past ten years were therefore not only filled with tremendous accomplishments in peaceful work in all spheres, cultural progress, and social recovery, but also by military deeds of unique greatness. The victories that the German Wehrmacht and its allies have gained in this war are without equal in history. In view of the realization that there will not be victors and defeated in this war but only survivors and annihilated, the National Socialist state will continue the fight with the same zealotry that the movement has called its own from the moment when it began to take power in Germany. I have already said on January 30, 1942, that any weakling can bear victories, but it is fate that first tests the strong by its blows. Last winter, the Jewish leaders of the plutocracies already rejoiced about the collapse of the German Wehrmacht, which had become inevitable in their eyes. Things developed differently.

They may hope for the same again this winter. They will live to see that the force of the National Socialist idea is much stronger than their yearning. The longer the war lasts, the more this idea will unite this Volk, give it faith, and increase its achievements. This idea will inspire everybody to fulfill his duty. It will destroy whoever attempts to shirk his duties. It will wage this fight until a clear result is obtained, a new January 30, namely, the unambiguous victory.

When I look back today on the results of our work in peacetime during the past ten years, then I get a feeling of profound gratitude toward those who, as comrades in arms and colleagues, played so rich and decisive a part in this work. I must thank no less the millions of unknown German men and women who placed their diligence and abilities at our disposal in the factories, offices, farms, and in the countless institutions of our public and private life.

However, since September 1, 1939, we owe this gratitude primarily to our soldiers, marshals, admirals, generals, and officers, in particular to the hundreds of thousands and millions of unknown Unterführers and soldiers. The proud deeds of glory of our army, navy, and Luftwaffe will enter history crowned by the laurel wreath of immortality. Present and future are barely capable of estimating the sufferings of the unknown grenadier. From the north to the African desert, from the Atlantic Ocean to the expanses of the east, from the Aegean to Stalingrad resounds an epic song which will survive the millennia.

That the homeland remains worthy of these unique and particularly difficult deeds is a commandment of its honor. As up to now it made enormous contributions to the war effort in the city and in the countryside, so the total work of the nation must still be increased.

January 30, 1943

The heroic struggle of our soldiers at the Volga should serve as a reminder to everyone that he must do his utmost in Germany's struggle for freedom, for the future of our Volk, and, in a broader sense, for the preservation of our entire continent.

It is the duty of the National Socialist Party to be the leader of the homeland, as its members in all branches of our Wehrmacht compete with one another in exemplary bravery. It was the will of our enemies to threaten peaceful cities and villages with means of terrible destruction. It is already proved today that while they can destroy houses and men, they cannot break the spirit, which is only made stronger by this. What many German men and women were not aware of at the beginning of this war, they have in the meantime realized: the struggle, which was forced on us by the same enemies as in the year 1914, will decide whether our Volk will live or be destroyed.

The Almighty will be a just judge. It is our task to fulfill our duty in such a manner that we prove ourselves to Him as the Creator of the world, in accordance with His law on the struggle for existence. Without ever despairing, we will spare neither life nor work in order to preserve the life of our Volk for the future. Then, the great hour in this struggle will come, in which our Volk will be freed of its enemies on the outside. A new life will begin to bloom on the sacrifices of the dead and the ruins of our cities and villages. We will then continue to fashion that state in which we believe, for which we fight and work: the Germanic state of the German nation as the eternal and identical homeland of all men and women of our Volk, the National Socialist Greater German Reich.

It will have for all time the strength that is necessary in order to protect the European family of nations in the future against the dangers of the east. Beyond this, the Greater German Reich and the allied nations will have to secure jointly those Lebensräume that are indispensable to securing the material existence of these people.

Adolf Hitler

While the Sixth Army at Stalingrad continued to fight its desperate and hopeless battle on January 30, Hitler busied himself with the following matters on this day:

1. He named SS Gruppenführer Kaltenbrunner to succeed Heydrich as chief of the security police and the SD.⁷⁴

2. He dismissed Raeder as commander in chief of the navy and promoted him to the newly created, though unimportant, post of "inspector admiral." The communiqué on this move read as follows:⁷⁵

Today the Führer received the commander in chief of the war navy, Grand Admiral Raeder, at his headquarters. In recognition and appreciation of his historic service in the building of the new war navy and its conduct in the Greater German fight for freedom, he named him inspector admiral of the war navy of the Greater German Reich. Upon request of the Grand Admiral, the

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Führer arrived at this decision in order to relieve him of the day-to-day administration of the war navy, while retaining him as his senior adviser in questions of naval policy.

At the same time, the Führer promoted the commander of the U-boat fleet, Admiral Dönitz, to the rank of grand admiral and appointed him commander in chief of the war navy.

After this change in command, it was clear that the future expansion of the navy was a thing of the past. Hitler's main interest in the future obviously lay with the U-boats.

3. Effective February 1, Hitler promoted Colonel Generals von Kleist, von Weichs, and Busch to the rank of field marshal.⁷⁶

4. He sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Bulgaria on his birthday.⁷⁷

5. He sent the following telegram to Ley:⁷⁸

I reciprocate in a heartfelt manner the greetings sent to me by telegraph from the representatives of the working German Volk who were assembled at a conference of the Reich Labor Chamber in Berlin. I sincerely thank them for the untiring work they have done in the factories up to now. Together with all soldiers of the Wehrmacht, I am firmly convinced that, also in the future, we can rely on the dedicated and dutiful efforts of all working German men and women in the homeland.

Adolf Hitler

6. He sent this telegram to Victor Emmanuel:

My heartfelt thanks to Your Majesty for the congratulations relayed to the German Volk and to myself on this day's commemoration. I join to my thanks my sincere best wishes for Your Majesty's welfare and for the future of the friendly and allied Italian people.

Adolf Hitler

7. And finally, he sent this telegram to Mussolini:

For the warmhearted congratulations, which you have relayed to me in your own name as well as the name of Fascist Italy, on today's tenth anniversary of the National Socialist seizure of power in Germany, my heartfelt thanks to you, Duce. On this day, it is with particular gratitude that I think of the friendly and firm solidarity that unites the Italian and German people in their shared ideologies and in the concentrated force of their arms. In zealous determination and the unshakable belief in our victory in this shared fateful struggle, I send you my comradely greetings.

Adolf Hitler

Assuming that the tenth anniversary of the seizure of power would be as grandly celebrated as the twentieth anniversary of the March on

January 31, 1943

Rome, a special delegation of the Fascist Party had come to Germany, headed by the vice-secretary of the National Council, Tardini. They were sent on to the Wolfsschanze headquarters, where Hitler received them in the presence of Ribbentrop and Bormann on January 31.⁷⁹

On the same day, the following was made public:⁸⁰

The Führer has promoted Colonel General Paulus, the commander of the glorious Sixth Army and heroic defender of Stalingrad, to the rank of field marshal.

At the same time, the Führer promoted artillery general Heitz, the commanding general of an army corps fighting in the fortress Stalingrad, to the rank of colonel general.⁸¹

In addition, a long list of officers, whom Hitler had also promoted, was published. A number of them were also fighting in Stalingrad.

These promotions were not intended simply as comfort for those faced with death or a recommendation for Valhalla. Hitler was appealing to the family-minded officers: was it not easier to die, if you knew that your dependents would receive a higher pension?! As Rommel's example showed,⁸² Hitler speculated correctly. However, as events soon proved, he was mistaken in the case of Stalingrad.

While Paulus accepted by wire his promotion to field marshal, he allowed himself to be taken prisoner by a Soviet second lieutenant a few hours later, along with numerous generals and staff officers, in the cellar of the "Univermag 2" department store at Stalingrad's Red Square. Infantry General Strecker, who commanded the group of German soldiers in the north of Stalingrad, had his men continue the fight for two more days before he surrendered on February 2. In addition to Paulus, a total of twenty-four German and two Romanian generals⁸³ and hundreds of staff officers were captured in Stalingrad.

Undoubtedly, Hitler had expected the German generals in Stalingrad to behave like Admiral Lütjens at the sinking of the *Bismarck*.⁸⁴ He thought that if Stalingrad was lost, they would prefer to go down with the ship, bare their chest to receive the last bullet from the attacking enemy, or commit suicide. In this respect, however, Hitler was confusing the navy's code of honor with that of the army. While the commanders of warships "must" go down with their ship, the same rule did not apply to the army. Not since the creation of the modern German army in the seventeenth century had there ever been regulations forbidding the commander of an encircled combat group or fortress to go into captivity.

January 31, 1943

Although the German generals in Stalingrad were willing to let their soldiers fight to their last breath if necessary, they themselves, almost without exception,⁸⁵ decided to go into captivity. This was in keeping with military tradition. After all, there exists a type of solidarity between generals of all nations.⁸⁶ The German generals were treated with remarkable courtesy by their victorious colleagues, especially considering the conditions in Russia. In any event, they received far better treatment than the common soldiers captured at Stalingrad.⁸⁷

A great-grandson of Bismarck, Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, who had been shot down over Stalingrad on August 30, 1942, as an inmate of Camp No. 27 at Krasnogorsk, located twenty-five kilometers southwest of Moscow, witnessed from his hospital bed the arrival of the Stalingrad generals in the prisoner-of-war camp. He noted the following:⁸⁸

An orderly comes into our room and tells us of the arrival of the Stalingrad generals and of three hundred of the Sixth Army's officers in our camp. I have too little strength left to be disconcerted by news that I would have thought impossible only four weeks ago. One of my roommates takes a knife and carves a hole through a layer of ice on the window several centimeters thick. Some of my comrades help me sit up a bit and I manage to throw a glance out of the window to the main trodden path in the camp. What I see there is both grotesque and unreal at the same time: The officers are moving into their quarters—monocles and medals glitter—fur coats and walking sticks—the generals' cuffs in startling red—felt-lined leather boots on their feet—energetic gesturing—sweeping movements—undaunted laughter. A few gray spots mar this picture of colorful elegance: the bent figures of old campmates. Clad in ragged Russian cotton jackets or torn German uniforms with rags bound around their feet instead of proper shoes, they shuffle along, their eyes fixed on the ground, their haggard faces void of any sign of life.

We hear that the generals and the three hundred officers from Stalingrad journeyed to Krasnogorsk in a special train, sleeping on beds with white linen sheets. Eyes wide with incredulity and astonishment, we old campmates hear about the condensed milk, the butter, the caviar on white bread served to them on the transport. This notwithstanding, a few of the new arrivals have already been infected with typhoid.

I can make out heaps of enormous pieces of baggage, some of them obviously custom-made for the special Mercedes models furnished to only the most high-ranking of the military commanders. The pitiful scarecrow figures of those dragging the luggage into the generals' quarters nearly collapse under this weight.

Of course, Hitler was outraged by the capture of the generals at Stalingrad. At first, he even questioned the correctness of the news and the authenticity of the published photographs.⁸⁹

February 3, 1943

At a noontime discussion of the situation at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on February 1, he was no longer able to control his anger:⁹⁰

They surrendered a perfectly formal ceremony! Instead, they should have formed a circle and shot themselves dead with their last bullet. When the nerves give out, there is nothing left anyway except "I couldn't take any more" and shoot oneself. One can also say: A real man must be able to shoot himself, just as, in the past, officers used to throw themselves upon a sword, seeing that the matter was lost. This is quite understandable. Even Varus ordered his slave, "Kill me now!"

In this war, no one will become a field marshal any more.⁹¹ This will happen only after the war is over. One mustn't praise the day before the evening has come.

I feel such great pain to think that the heroism of so many soldiers can be wiped out by a deed of one spineless weakling—and now the man is going to do it. He comes to Moscow, and now imagine: a rattrap!⁹² He signs everything there. He will make confessions and declarations. You will see that they will take the way of spinelessness and go to the end, to the lowest depth.

What is life? Life is people. Some of them die, but those who survive are the people. But how can one fear that second which may free him from the sorrows of life, if only he is not held back by his sense of duty in this trouble?

He [Paulus] will be speaking on the radio in the nearest future. You will see for yourselves. Seydlitz and Schmidt will speak on the radio. They will be locked up in the rat cellars and will break down in a day or two and will speak up at once.

In spite of this, Hitler apparently attempted to exert influence on Paulus even in captivity and to silence him.⁹³ While radio broadcasts in the rest of the world reported on the capture of the German generals at Stalingrad, Hitler decided to conceal this fact from the German public. He preferred the version of their heroic death, "shoulder to shoulder with the officers, noncommissioned officers, and men of the Sixth Army." These tactics met with little success, however. Like wildfire, news of the capture of Paulus and twenty-four other generals spread through Germany. Not even party heads or policemen dared to try and stop those spreading the news. Obviously, they also had been listening to foreign radio stations. Hitler's final communiqué of February 3 succeeded only in completely discrediting him. It reads as follows:⁹⁴

Führer Headquarters, February 3, 1943

The High Command of the Wehrmacht announces:

Fighting in Stalingrad has ended. True to its oath of allegiance to fight to the last breath, the Sixth Army under the exemplary command of Field Marshal Paulus has succumbed to the superiority of the enemy and unfavorable

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circumstances. Its fate is shared by an antiaircraft division of the German Luftwaffe, two Romanian divisions, and one Croatian regiment, which fulfilled their duty to the utmost in loyal brotherhood in arms with their comrades of the German army.

It is not yet the time to describe the course of the operations that have led to this development. One thing can already be said today, however: the sacrifice of the Sixth Army was not in vain. As the bulwark of the historic European mission, it defied for many weeks the assault by six Soviet armies.⁹⁵ Completely surrounded by the enemy, it tied down strong enemy forces for several more weeks of heavy fighting and great privations. Thereby, it gave the German leaders time and opportunity to take countermeasures on whose success the fate of the entire eastern front depended.

Faced with this task, the Sixth Army held out even after the Luftwaffe was no longer capable, in spite of its great efforts and heavy losses, of furnishing sufficient supplies by air due to the duration of the encirclement and the development of the operations. The possibility of relief at that point had become increasingly unlikely and finally completely disappeared.

Surrender demanded twice by the enemy met with proud rejection. Beneath the swastika flag, which flew on top of Stalingrad's tallest ruins and could be seen from afar, the final battle took place. Generals, officers, noncommissioned officers, and men fought shoulder to shoulder down to the last bullet. They died so that Germany might live. Their example will do good far into the future, despite all untruthful Soviet propaganda. The divisions of the Sixth Army are already in the process of being formed anew.

Hitler's behavior in the case of Stalingrad had been unwise from the beginning. At first, he had boasted that the German troops would "rush on Stalingrad and will take the city." Only six weeks later, he had said that he did not want a second Verdun and would only deploy "very small assault parties."⁹⁶ After that, he had kept silent for months about the encirclement of the Sixth Army by the Russians. This had been followed by his ill-fated attempt to make a heroic exit out of the battle for Stalingrad.

While Stalingrad was no doubt a milestone in Hitler's decline, it was neither the first nor the decisive one. Ever since September 3, 1939, to be precise, Hitler had suffered one great diplomatic and military defeat after another.⁹⁷ What was new about the Stalingrad debacle was that Hitler no longer attempted to transform a defeat into a victory, as he had done on earlier occasions.

2

On February 3, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to the Finnish state president Ryti on his birthday⁹⁸ and to the Italian heir to the throne and his wife on the birth of their daughter Beatrice.⁹⁹

On February 5, a congratulatory telegram to the emperor of Manchukuo on his birthday followed.¹⁰⁰

On February 6, Field Marshal von Manstein was expected at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He had told his entourage that he intended, in view of the Stalingrad disaster, to suggest to Hitler that he lay down the high command of the army. Hitler was well informed about von Manstein's intention.¹⁰¹ However, this did not unduly upset him. In contrast to his fear of Obergruppenführers and the Reichstag, he did not fear marshals and generals. Instead, they were afraid of him. And they would heel if he remembered to grant them awards or bonuses from time to time. Not only were marshals extraordinarily well paid, they also received huge donatives on their birthdays,¹⁰² and so on. In addition, they were the recipients of a monthly bonus, payment of which could be suspended if they failed to perform satisfactorily. Later, when the marshals were back in line, they would again receive these financial rewards.

Hitler calmly expected von Manstein's visit. He knew how to handle marshals. He had dealt with von Hindenburg, Mackensen, Pilsudski, and Pétain, and so he did not think von Manstein was a challenge.

When the field marshal arrived at the Führer headquarters on February 6, Hitler received him with great politeness.¹⁰³ He immediately dominated the conversation and took the wind out of his visitor's sails by "generously" assuming responsibility for the disaster at the Volga.

February 7, 1943

I alone bear the responsibility for Stalingrad! I could perhaps say that Göring gave me an incorrect picture of the possibilities for the Luftwaffe's providing aerial supplies and, thus, roll off at least part of the responsibility onto him. But he is my successor, whom I have appointed myself, and that is why I cannot burden him with the responsibility for Stalingrad.

It was truly touching how Hitler tried to protect Göring. In view of such "soldierly decency," as he called it, von Manstein capitulated and no longer dared to mention his suggestion regarding the army command!

Hitler wished to "bear the responsibility" for Stalingrad? Who was going to hold him responsible: history or the German Volk? Since 1932, Hitler had constantly operated with such phrases as "bearing the responsibility."¹⁰⁴ In 1943, however, he had eliminated the only institution which could actually hold him responsible: the German Reichstag. He had seen to it that its deputies would never meet again.

Since von Manstein no longer felt like questioning Hitler's command of the army, he wanted at least to advise Hitler to appoint a new chief of staff with greater powers than before. Now that the Führer had gained an upper hand, von Manstein's proposal was ill-received. Hitler immediately began a lengthy tirade, talking about the "great disappointments" that he had suffered with Blomberg and Brauchitsch. Again Göring—as well as Blomberg—had to serve as explanations for Hitler's refusal to vest more authority in any general. Hitler declared that it would break his heart to appoint a chief of staff to a position where he would practically outrank Göring (!).

Von Manstein was relieved when Hitler finally dropped the topic of chief of staff in order to address the military situation of Army Group South. Nothing changed as a result of this conversation between Hitler and von Manstein, neither as regards the army command nor the general staff.

However, this meeting served as a good preparation for Hitler's talk before Reichsleiters and Gauleiters at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on February 7. He did not need to fear these party leaders who were permanently appointed as civil servants any more than the generals. Most of them had good incomes as Reich governors, Oberpräsidenten, ministers, or other state functionaries. The type of revolutionary, questioning spirit, which Hitler feared so much among the Obergruppenführers, was no longer to be found among the comfortably settled Reichsleiters and Gauleiters. No matter how ill-at-ease they were

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about Germany's deteriorating situation, they were not about to revolt against their employer, Adolf Hitler.

Following a two-day working conference,¹⁰⁵ the heads of the party came to the Führer headquarters in East Prussia, where they lined up to shake the Führer's hand. The following communiqué was published concerning Hitler's address:¹⁰⁶

Upon the Führer's invitation, the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters came to see the Führer, following their conference, at his headquarters, on February 7.

In the course of the get-together, the Führer spoke about the military and political situation before the assembled heads of the party. In his address, which was characterized by great determination and absolute confidence in victory, the Führer expressed his conviction that the difficulty of the times, and the spirit of the Volk which developed from it, would lend the German nation tremendous strength and make it invincible.

The visit to the Führer headquarters by the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters ended with the party heads' glowing declaration for the greatness of the task set the German nation in this most difficult struggle.

News of the formation of a new cabinet in Italy reached Germany. Ciano's removal from the foreign ministry and appointment as ambassador to the Holy See were its most salient features. At the Führer headquarters, these developments were assessed mainly in the context of foreign policy. However, they were actually signs of a serious internal crisis.¹⁰⁷

On February 8, Colonel General Kurt Haase, commander of an army, died in Berlin. Hitler ordered a state funeral,¹⁰⁸ which was preceded by a state ceremony at the Zeughaus in Berlin.

Furthermore, Hitler awarded the Goethe Medal to Kammersänger Heinrich Schlusnus on the baritone's twenty-fifth anniversary with the State Opera in Berlin.¹⁰⁹

The Finnish state president Ryti was reelected on February 15.¹¹⁰ Hitler sent him a congratulatory telegram.

The situation along the eastern front was becoming increasingly dangerous. This was especially true of the southern sector. The OKW report of February 15 admitted the "planned evacuation" of Rostov and Lugansk. After initial reservations, Hitler had finally agreed to the retreat from the Caucasus in the direction of the "Kuban bridgehead." For the time being, this prevented a new encirclement of German troops. In the meantime, the Russians had moved into the Donets area and had taken Kharkov.

February 19, 1943

Hitler now tried to convince himself and his entourage that possession of the Donets region was decisive and its reconquest a prerequisite for the final victory. After all, the Soviet Union could not exist without the industries there and would collapse. In Hitler's eyes, it was therefore imperative to goad Army Group South and Fourth Air Fleet to new great deeds. For this purpose, he pulled out all stops, summoning his powers of persuasion and control.

A prelude to this undertaking was the appointment of Colonel General Freiherr von Richthofen, the chief of the Fourth Air Fleet, to the rank of field marshal on February 16. While Hitler had said that he would not appoint any more field marshals in this war,¹¹¹ he apparently did not feel bound by this promise.

The next step was his three-day stay at the Army Group South's headquarters.¹¹² At 2:00 a.m. on February 17, he left the Rastenburg airport aboard his four-engine Condor plane. A few hours later, he landed at an airport east of Zaporozhye. Jodl and Zeitzler among others accompanied him. At the airport, Hitler was welcomed by von Manstein and the newly appointed field marshal, von Richthofen. Hitler and his entourage set up quarters in von Manstein's office building.

In the course of discussions of the situation during the next three days, Hitler insisted on the reconquest of the entire Donets region and the city of Kharkov. He wanted to deploy SS divisions under Sepp Dietrich in this undertaking. Finally, however, he had to admit that it was crucial to take and secure the Dnieper crossing in the south and Pavlograd first. On February 19, Field Marshal von Kleist and Colonel General Ruoff also attended these talks.

Hitler's undertaking culminated in a proclamation to the soldiers of Army Group South and the Fourth Air Fleet, which was issued at 11:20 a.m. on February 19 and read as follows:¹¹³

Soldiers of Army Group South and the Fourth Air Fleet!

The outcome of a battle of decisive importance to the world depends on you! Thousands of kilometers away from the borders of the Reich, the fate of the German present and future is being decided. You must bear the main burden of this struggle.

At the beginning of the winter, wide gaps developed in the front. You are aware of what allowed this to happen.¹¹⁴ Only because of that, the enemy whom you defeated in so many battles was able to oppose you temporarily with superior forces.

In spite of this, my soldiers, together with the comrades from Army Group A and Center, led by your self-sacrificing commanders and inspired by your

February 18, 1943

courage, you have accomplished things that are unheard of, faced with these Bolshevik masses and the inclemency of the winter. The German Volk follows your battles. All its thoughts are with you because it knows that you are its only protection. I know how difficult your struggle is, how great your sacrifices are. I feel with you and, through my work, I try to express my gratitude for your heroism.

The entire German homeland is being mobilized. Down to the last man and the last woman, everything is being placed in the service of your struggle. At the anti-aircraft weapon, our youth is defending our German cities and places of work. Ever new divisions are starting to move. Previously unknown, unique new weapons are on the way to your fronts.

I know that what I demand of you is very difficult. However you must doggedly defend every square meter of soil in order to give me time to deploy the units and new weapons. Even if the Russian is still advancing today, the time will come, like last winter [*sic*], when his advance will inevitably be slowed down by the dirt and mud, and he will be far away from his lines of communication.

That's why I have flown to you, so that all means are brought to bear in order to facilitate your defensive combat and to transform it into a victory in the end.

If every single one of you helps me to do so, then we will succeed this time also, as before, with the help of the Almighty.

Therefore I have confidence in your bravery, your persistence in the face of the enemy, and your sense of responsibility for the fate of our dear homeland and our Volk.

Adolf Hitler

For the first time since Stalingrad, Hitler was addressing the soldiers of a large section of the front in this proclamation. For the first time, he used different tactics here. By referring to "previously unknown, unique new weapons," he wished to increase the staying power of the troops in spite of a hopeless situation. He thought that this morale-boosting slogan would make them believe in a miracle: a last-minute intervention and a German victory.

Hitler left Zaporozhye after he had ordered Army Group South to launch new attacks. It was high time for his departure since the Russians had secured a breakthrough at the Zilzinikovo station. Their tanks were closing in on the airport so that they could almost have fired on him.

While Hitler was in Zaporozhye, Goebbels delivered his speech on "total war" at the Sportpalast in Berlin on February 18. He acted as though total war was only now beginning, whereas in reality the war had all along been fought as a total war.¹¹⁵ In this speech, Goebbels copied Hitler's often-rehearsed Punch-and-Judy-show questioning of the

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audience. He asked it a number of questions, to which they had to reply by shouting "Yes! (*Ja*)"¹¹⁶

On February 21, following his return to the Werwolf headquarters in Vinnitsa, Hitler named Colonel General Guderian inspector general of the panzer forces. Guderian was apparently again in Hitler's good graces and was made directly subordinate to him.¹¹⁷ His appointment was to underline Germany's determination in the fight.

Had Hitler wished to, he would have been able to attend the commemoration of the party's foundation in Munich on February 24. He could have flown there without any problem. However, as in the previous year, he was too great a coward to allow himself to be seen there in person, only three weeks after the Stalingrad tragedy. Instead of going to Munich, he wrote a rather poor proclamation. His slogan was: Just as in the days of struggle at home, the present crisis would in the end be transformed into victories for him. The proclamation read as follows:¹¹⁸

Party Comrades!

Party comrade Adolf Wagner, who conveyed my greetings to you in the past year, has been seriously ill for many months and is unable to attend the present rally. I have therefore asked party comrade Esser, who as one of my first comrades in arms attended the foundation assembly of the movement, to tell you in my name what I, because of the circumstances, am unable to tell you for the second time now.

The German Wehrmacht, which fought excellently this winter, as it has done since the beginning of this war, is involved in a bitter struggle against the danger to the world instigated by the banking houses of New York and London together with the Bolshevik Jews in Moscow.

I myself am in the east and therefore unable to join you on this day. Nevertheless, my thoughts are with you, more so this year than ever before. After all, what fate would have awaited our Volk and all of Europe, had not those theories of the National Socialist revolution been proclaimed in this hall on February 24, 1920, theories which took hold of the German Volk and gave it the necessary force not only to restrain the Jewish danger to the world today, but also to crush it in the end!

The *Sturmlied* of our unforgettable, dear old Dietrich Eckart is again proving to be a trumpet-call in these months. It can wake up people, open their eyes to the fate that would await all of us in the present and our children in the future—and beyond this, all European people—if we do not succeed in bringing about the failure of the devilish plan of the Jewish international criminals.

You are all aware of the circumstances,¹¹⁹ which allowed the enemy in the east, similar to the forces of nature last winter, to reverse in the course of this winter a part of those successes secured by the heroism of our soldiers in the

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summer. However, you also know that the path along which our party has traveled has likewise not been a secure or comfortable way to success. Instead, we suffered countless difficulties and setbacks, which the same enemies dealt to us and against whom we must fight today—against the whole world.

As I proclaimed the party program in this hall in the year 1920 and my resolution to destroy with zealousness the enemies of our Volk, I was a lonely and unknown man. Germany had suffered its most profound humiliation. The number of those who believed in its restoration was negligible, and there were even fewer who still hoped for this to happen in our generation.

The few followers who joined me at the time were opposed by the almost crushing superiority of the enemy. For every hundred National Socialists, there were millions of opponents, partly blinded, partly seething with hatred. And that is not to count those men of little faith who always wait first for the success in order to march then on the victorious side with a brave heart.

What a difference compared with the struggle of today! No matter how great the coalition of our enemies is, as a power it is less than the strength of the alliance of those people who oppose the Bolshevik-plutocratic destruction. The struggle of the National Socialist movement was often in a position in which only the most fanatical of its faithful could still believe in a victory, while its otherwise shrewd opponents were already firmly convinced that they had killed the idea and the party. Nevertheless, our movement was born again each time; it overcame every setback and emerged stronger than before from every crisis. The party was always upheld by the unbending decision not to capitulate under any circumstances and not to give up the fight in any case, until the conspiracy of our enemies at home was crushed and eliminated.

My party comrades! I taught you this fanaticism. Please rest assured that I am today inspired by the same fanaticism, which will never leave me as long as I live. You also received this faith from me, and rest assured that this faith is stronger in me today than ever before. We will break and crush the power of the Jewish international coalition. Mankind in its struggle for its freedom, life, and daily bread, will gain the final victory in this struggle.

Just as in the time of our struggle for power, every attack by our enemies and every one of their apparent successes made me more dogged in my determination not to stray from the path that sooner or later had to lead to the victory, so too I am today suffused by the same will to persevere to the bitter end in the task which destiny has given me.

I have a right to believe that Providence has chosen me to fulfill this task. For without its blessings, I, as an unknown man, would never have been able to set out on the path leading from this hall across so many hurdles and through so many attacks to the takeover of power and, finally, to this struggle which has been crowned by victories the like of which have never been seen in world history, but who has also been weighed down by many worries which would have broken many weaker characters.

However, I was blessed by Providence in having a sworn community around me in such hours, a community which in devoted faithfulness always

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regarded the common fate as its own and which always stood loyally by me, as its Führer in this struggle, and will always stand by me.

As I address this message to you, I do so out of the same profound gratitude as in the past year. In you, my dear party comrades, I have found not only the first representatives of the National Socialist ideology but also of the National Socialist attitude, an attitude which has proved its worth in such an unheard-of manner in particular in times of great trial. The bourgeois opportunists failed to understand this as did the masses of our old parties, indoctrinated by Jewry. Why should this be different today?

There is only one difference: today, the gigantic throng of the German Volk stands behind the new Reich. The Volk is unconditionally determined to accept the new Reich idea, which is inspired by the National Socialist world of thought. The party has become the unshakable incarnation of this power. Today it is the internal guarantor not only of victory, but also of the preservation of our Volk in the future. It must fulfill its second great historic task—especially during these months and perhaps in the coming years, too—which is to shake up the German nation constantly, make it aware of the magnitude of the danger, reinforce the sacred faith that will overcome, give strength to weaklings and mercilessly destroy saboteurs. It will work to enlighten in those cases where enlightenment is desired, break terror with ten-times-greater terror, exterminate traitors no matter who they might be and what disguise they are using to realize their intentions against the people (*volksfeindliche Absichten*).

Even if the elite of the National Socialist movement's men confronts the enemy today and fulfills its duty as soldiers in an exemplary fashion, the old fighters remain the strongest zealots in the assertion of the German will to life. Year after year, they are joined by a new age group from Germany's youth, totally educated in accordance with National Socialist principles, forged together by the ideas of our Volksgemeinschaft, and willing to move against anyone who should dare to sin against our fight for freedom. And just as in the time of the party's struggle for power, our female party comrades, our German women and girls, were the most reliable supports of the movement, so now again the multitude of our women and girls form the strongest element in the struggle for the preservation of our Volk.

After all, thank God, not only the Jews in London and New York but also those in Moscow made clear what fate might be in store for the German Volk. We are determined to be no less clear in our answer. This fight will not end with the planned annihilation of the Aryan but with the extermination of the Jew in Europe. Beyond this, thanks to this fight, our movement's world of thought will become the common heritage of all people, even of our enemies. State after state will be forced, in the course of its fight against us, to apply National Socialist theories in waging this war that was provoked by them. And in so doing, it will become aware of the curse that the criminal work of Jewry has laid over all people, especially through this war.

As our enemies thought in 1923 that the National Socialist Party was defeated for good and that I was finished with in the eyes of the German Volk

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because of my trial, so they actually helped National Socialist ideology to spread like wildfire through the entire German Volk and convey the essence of Jewry to so many million men, as we ourselves would never have been able to do under normal circumstances. In the same manner international Jewry, which instigated this new war, will find out that nation after nation engrosses itself more and more in this question to become finally aware of the great danger presented by this international problem.

Above all, this war proves the irrefutable identity of plutocracy and Bolshevism, and the common ambition of all Jews to exploit nations and make them the slaves of their international guild of criminals.

The same alliance we once faced as our common enemies in Germany, an alliance between the stock exchange in Frankfurt and the "Red Flag" in Berlin, now again exists between the Jewish banking houses in New York, the Jewish-plutocratic class of leaders in London, and the Jews in the Kremlin in Moscow.

Just as the German Volk successfully fought the Jewish enemy at home as a consequence of this realization and is now about to finish it off for good, the other nations will increasingly find themselves again in the course of this war. Together, they will make a stand against that race that is seeking to destroy all of them.

Just as the Jews rejoiced about each supposed setback that we suffered during our struggle within the Reich, and just as they confused their feverish hopes with the hard facts, so they believe today, just as they did last winter, that they will shortly reach their thousand-year-old goal. However, just as they did last year, they will also suffer a terrible disappointment this time. On the contrary, the German Volk will now all the more summon and deploy its forces to a degree never before seen for a war in the history of mankind.

We will not hesitate one second to ask for contributions in this fateful struggle from those countries responsible for the outbreak of this war.¹²⁰ We regard it as a matter of course that foreign lives cannot be spared at a time that demands so many difficult sacrifices of our own lives. In indissoluble, loyal association with our allies, we will carry out a mobilization of the spiritual and material values of Europe, the like of which our continent has never seen before in its millennia-old history. This is necessary in order to secure an independent ethnic life for all of Europe, a life which has been the basis not only for our great shared culture but also for the material existence of this continent.

My old party comrades, I greet you as always with an overflowing heart. I thank you for having made it possible for me at the time to start out successfully on the path that was a prerequisite for the salvation of the German Reich and for all of Europe. My thoughts are with you at this hour, just as they always are. During these months, weeks, and days, my duty forces me constantly to think and work, and prepare the coming turn of events for those who as the fighters of our Volk, together with our allies, are fashioning the fate of the world: our brothers and comrades, the German soldiers especially at the front in the east, where the future of Germany and Europe will be decided. The outcome must and will be our victory!

March 1, 1943

On February 24, Hitler issued Order No. 7.¹²¹ According to this order, military superiors were entitled to shoot “disobedient personnel on the spot.” He decreed as follows:

The harsher the times, the harsher the means by which a superior forces his will through. I therefore demand that every superior—officer, noncommissioned officer, and, in extraordinary situations, any brave man—force the carrying out of his orders and the maintenance of discipline and order, if need be by force of arms, and shoot disobedient personnel on the spot. That is not only his right but also his duty. Should the superior fail to do this, he risks placing himself in the same situation. It is wrong to await a later punishment by order of the court. Action must be immediate. I will at all times protect such energetic leaders against possible legal consequences¹²² of their actions and demand the same of all higher-ranking superiors. Therefore, I will mercilessly take action against all superiors who fail to protect their authority by all means and with the full force of their person. They will receive the same punishment as the guilty parties against whom they failed to take action. I want this to be made public as my strict order time and again, especially in difficult situations.

Adolf Hitler

On February 25, Hitler instructed von Ribbentrop to present a personal message to the Duce. While it was extraordinarily lengthy, the message contained no mention of Stalingrad.¹²³ Instead, it stressed supposed successes by the German U-boats and expressed his determination to continue the war in the east until the enemy was destroyed, because of “the will of Providence.”¹²⁴

I regard it as a blessing from Providence that I was chosen to lead my Volk in such a war.

On March 1, Hitler congratulated the emperor of Manchukuo in a telegram on the anniversary of his ascent to the throne¹²⁵

The next day, Hitler exchanged telegrams with King Boris. His telegram read as follows:¹²⁶

My sincere thanks to Your Majesty for the congratulations transmitted to me by wire on the anniversary of Bulgaria’s accession to the Tripartite Pact. Inspired by firm confidence in our final victory and a just new world order, I reciprocate your greetings and send you my heartfelt best wishes for the prosperity of the Bulgarian nation, which has been tied to us in friendship for many years, and for your personal welfare.

Adolf Hitler

In early March, Hitler came to the decision that his domestic opponents, even if they originated from within the Wehrmacht, should

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be disgracefully hanged. The ordinance of March 4 evidenced this decision:¹²⁷

I authorize the plenipotentiary empowered to confirm death sentences by court-martial to decide whether punishment shall be dealt out in the form of shooting, beheading, or hanging.

Adolf Hitler

On March 4, Goebbels announced at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Ufa film company in Berlin that Hitler had awarded the Eagle Shield of the German Reich to the company's founder, Hugenberg.¹²⁸

The surviving records of the discussions of the situation, which took place at the Werwolf headquarters¹²⁹ on March 4 and 5, do not contain anything remarkable, aside from Hitler's continual scolding of Rommel and Kesselring. He was angry with them because things continued to get worse at Tunis. Rommel in particular became a target. Hitler claimed that Rommel's recent, highly unfavorable assessment of the situation was "completely different from the one he had given earlier." Apparently, this tirade was intended to prepare the grounds for Rommel's dismissal.

On March 7, Hitler received Speer at the Werwolf headquarters.¹³⁰ He discussed the so-called "800,000-man program" with him.¹³¹ He made several derogatory remarks about the commander of the replacement army, General Fromm. He claimed that he was incapable of "generously" implementing the plan. He complained about the "lack of prominent heads in the Wehrmacht" in general.

On March 8, Goebbels arrived at headquarters. Hitler received him together with Speer at 2:00 p.m.¹³² Goebbels was naturally delighted to see the Führer again. He appeared to him "in excellent health," although "somewhat tired, but otherwise quite active."¹³³

Goebbels reported on the latest air raid in Berlin in great detail. This caused Hitler to attack Göring, which in turn brought him back to the topic of the generals. He launched a tirade, which Goebbels summarized as follows:

The Führer has nothing good to say about the generals. They deceived him whenever they could. Besides, they were uneducated and did not know anything about the trade of war, which was the least you could expect. You could not blame the generals for not possessing any type of higher culture, since they were not trained for this. However, that they were so ill-informed about purely material questions in the war did not speak in their favor. Their training had been wrong for generations.

March 8, 1943

In order to please Hitler, Goebbels contributed a few “examples from his own experiences” to this tirade. Afterwards, they discussed the eight-hundred-thousand-man program. Hitler then commented on the situation as follows:

The debacle of this winter must indeed be attributed to the complete failure of our allies. We have the front back in order now. The Führer does not want to see the allies on the eastern front any longer. It is clear to him that only our own soldiers can deal with Bolshevism.

Afterward, Hitler engaged Goebbels in a four-hour-long private conversation. At first, Goebbels tried coherently to present his “views on the air war in general.” This was not a good topic for Hitler. He promptly cut Goebbels short.

The Führer barely let me finish. He immediately declared that this was the care which haunted him even at night.

Actually, Hitler was no more preoccupied by the Allies’ air war against major German cities than by other emergencies. The only concern which caused him sleepless nights was how to remain in power at home for the longest time possible and how to keep his foreign enemies as far away as possible from his headquarters!

Hitler went on to attack the Luftwaffe generals, especially Göring, but also Bodenschatz and Sperrle.¹³⁴ He then turned to the topic of the Italians:

The Führer is very angry about the Italians because they have not really accomplished anything. They are not cut out for the eastern front, they are not cut out for North Africa, they are not cut out for U-boat warfare, they are not even cut out for their antiaircraft guns at home. The Führer asks, and rightly so, why they are waging war in the first place.

That was a question which the Italians were asking themselves by now. After all, they were doing so only because of Hitler’s alliance theory of 1919 and his “friend” Mussolini!

Hitler’s next targets were Sauckel and Governor General Frank. Only Goebbels himself as the only one present received compliments.

My measures regarding the total war receive the Führer’s full approval. In this respect, he talks about my last speech at the Sportpalast¹³⁵ in a manner most flattering to me. He calls it a psychological and propagandist masterpiece. He had carefully studied it from beginning to end and he had read the foreign commentaries on it. He had arrived at the conclusion that we had landed a major blow here. He was enthusiastic about its effectiveness.

March 8, 1943

The Führer fully approves of my anti-Bolshevik propaganda. This is our number-one act. He also approves of my tactics in letting Bolshevik victory reports be published abroad unchallenged. Let Europe get the creeps.

After Hitler had joked about Raeder's "sanctimonious Christianity," he began to complain about his state of health. Of course, this only meant that he intended to go on another vacation and was seeking to justify himself in front of Goebbels.

At the moment, he [the Führer] was truly worried only about his health. He does not know whether he will survive this war physically intact.

Understandably, under the circumstances, Hitler had to go rest for an hour. At dinner, he was obviously refreshed. He praised Sepp Dietrich, whom he called "one of our first-class troop leaders," and of whom he still expected "many wonderful things." In the event of a revolt, he would send him to the Reich's capital and set a warning example there. He tried to tone down this unexpected expression by saying that he feared a revolt by foreign workers in the city.

Should some of the foreign workers attempt to revolt in Berlin, then the Führer wants to send the Leibstandarte to the Reich's capital. It will set a warning example there so that whoever loves such excuses won't feel like it [revolting] anymore. The Führer then went on about the army generals, for whom he feels only contempt. He also agrees with the view: just imagine these gentlemen in civilian clothes and you lose all respect for them. Keitel wrings only a smile from the Führer.

These tirades were beginning to embarrass even Goebbels. He noted in his diary: "The experiences which the Führer had with the army generals have embittered him utterly. Sometimes he even becomes unfair now and condemns decent officers wholesale."

Late at night, news of a terrible air raid on Nuremberg reached the Führer headquarters.¹³⁶ Hitler made a big scene in front of Goebbels and Speer. He had General Bodenschatz dragged out of bed in order to reproach him for the failure of the Luftwaffe and the leaders of the air war. Goebbels noted the following:

This midnight talk ended in quite a row. Speer and I have a hard time trying to keep things down. Our new friendship with Göring is put to the test for the first time. In spite of everything, I felt that I had to defend him, since his authority must be maintained at any event. Bodenschatz is very grateful to me for this.

March 10, 1943

Once Hitler had calmed down following the theatrics, he engaged Goebbels in an “intimate discussion” until three o’clock the next morning. Goebbels noted the following on the March 9 early morning talk:

As I say goodbye to him, he is very touched. I have gained tremendous strength again and now I know again what I have to do.

On March 10, Hitler flew to see von Manstein at Zaporozhye.¹³⁷ The position of Army Group South had vastly improved in comparison with his first visit from February 17 to 19. Pavlograd had been taken, and the SS troops had rapidly advanced in the direction of Kharkov.

In the course of the talks, Hitler declared the following:

...giving up the Donets region to the enemy even temporarily is completely out of the question. If we lose this area, we will not be able to sustain our own war production. For the enemy, the loss of the Donets region would mean a twenty-five percent decrease in the production of steel. Beyond this, the significance of the manganese ore finds at Nikopol for us defied words. The loss of Nikopol [a city on the Dnieper River southeast of Zaporozhye] would mean the end of the war.¹³⁸ Furthermore, neither Nikopol nor the Donets region could do without the power plant at Zaporozhye.

When Goebbels heard about Hitler’s visit to Zaporozhye, he was not happy about it.¹³⁹

In the evening, I hear from the Führer headquarters that the Führer again traveled to the front. He is again visiting von Manstein in order to convey his appreciation for the conduct of the operation in the south up to now. I do not like this at all. The Führer does not seem to know how mean von Manstein was to him.¹⁴⁰ If he does know it, then he is again behaving too good-naturedly toward the military.

On the next day, Goebbels was told a different story by Hitler:¹⁴¹

The Führer made a visit to the southern front and was very favorably impressed. In comparison with his last visit, the mood there could be called truly fantastic with both the officers and the common soldiers.

When Hitler returned from Zaporozhye to his Werwolf headquarters on March 10, he met with Rommel, whom he had ordered back from Tunis, in the evening.¹⁴² Rommel was not ill in the least. On the contrary, he had come in the hope that he would be allowed to remain the commander in chief of the Army Group in North Africa. Should he be unable to hold the position at Tunis, he planned to retreat

March 12, 1943

with his troops to Sicily and Italy, whence he would lead the defense of the southern areas.

However, Hitler was keen on eliminating Rommel without eliciting public notice. Rommel's popularity had been a thorn in his side from the beginning.¹⁴³ He had had enough of Rommel, who had completely disregarded his telegram of November 4, 1942, in which he had demanded of him to lead his troops either to victory or to death. Hitler realized that North Africa and Tunis would ultimately be lost but he did not want another German field marshal captured by the enemy. No matter how hard Rommel tried to retain command over his Army Group, his arguments did not get him anywhere. Rommel himself described his conversation with Hitler as follows:

There was nothing to be done. I was supposed to go to a health resort. In the course of later operations in the direction of Casablanca, I would take command again.

Hitler's reference to a future conquest of Casablanca was truly ridiculous. He could just as well have promised Rommel the command in the taking of Washington.

On March 11, Hitler awarded Rommel the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds in order to assuage the pain of his dismissal. The public, however, was not informed of this.¹⁴⁴

On the same day, Göring arrived at the Werwolf headquarters. He had spent a few days in Rome, conferring with Mussolini and the high command. As usual, Göring did not dare give Hitler bad news and so he described the situation as far better than Rommel had. Hitler and Göring agreed that "Tunis could be held in any event."¹⁴⁵

On March 12, Hitler issued a decree on the postponement of Heroes' Memorial Day. Since the celebration had been scheduled for March 14, he did so rather late. He did not even feel that it was necessary to explain the postponement. Thus, this decree was possibly the shortest "of all time".¹⁴⁶

Führer Headquarters, March 12, 1943

Heroes' Memorial Day shall be celebrated this year on March 21.

Adolf Hitler

March 16, 1943

The reason for this delay was Hitler's intention to await the reconquest of Kharkov so that he could then speak "with a clear conscience" at the festivities in Berlin.¹⁴⁷

On March 13, Hitler flew from Vinnitsa to Rastenburg. On the way, he stopped over in Smolensk. There he visited the headquarters of Army Group Center and discussed the situation with Field Marshal von Kluge.¹⁴⁸ Afterwards, he joined the officers for lunch in the officers' mess before returning to his plane by car.

Colonel von Tresckow¹⁴⁹ took advantage of the occasion to place a British-made bomb in Hitler's plane. The fuse failed, however, and the Condor plane landed without any problems at Rastenburg.

This incident proved that the life of innocent people counted little in the Third Reich. This is not the place to discuss whether tyrannicide is morally justifiable or not. Theologians and philosophers may decide this. It is only a question of the following facts here:

Hitler felt himself perfectly justified in sacrificing millions of innocent persons for the sake of his ideas. At least in one respect tyrant and assassins agreed—they all wished to stay alive until five minutes after twelve. Not one of the assassins risked or sacrificed his own life in the concrete attempt on Hitler's life. Instead, those who sought to eliminate him did not hesitate to blow up innocent men. After all, the crew of the plane could certainly not be held responsible for Hitler's crimes. However, the resistance fighters obviously felt that, for the sake of the noble goal of eliminating Hitler, the crew's lives could well be sacrificed, since thousands of men were dying each day at the front. This was how far the confusion of terms on both sides had already been carried in the Third Reich by this time.

On March 14, SS troops under the command of Sepp Dietrich took Kharkov. In a very good mood, Hitler telephoned Goebbels from the Wolfsschanze headquarters.¹⁵⁰

On the same day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to Tiso on the Slovak national holiday and awarded him the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle in Gold.¹⁵¹

On March 16, the population in areas endangered by imminent air raids was informed about the following award that Hitler dedicated to it:¹⁵²

In appreciation of the brave behavior of the entire population during air raids in the homeland war zones, the Führer has ordered that the badge awarded to wounded soldiers for injuries and damage caused by enemy air raids

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can also be awarded to all German men, women, and children, in accordance with the same principles applying to soldiers deployed in the actual war zone.

On March 17, the public was informed that Hitler had awarded Professor Wilhelm Kreis, whom he called “one of the greatest master builders of the present,” the Eagle Shield of the German Reich on his seventy-fifth birthday in appreciation of his contributions to the new design of the Reich’s capital and the war cemeteries, the “heroes’ memorials of this war.”¹⁵³

On the evening of March 20, Hitler arrived in Berlin and immediately conferred with Goebbels.¹⁵⁴ He acted as though he “was mostly preoccupied right now by the air war.” He immediately began to rail against the Luftwaffe generals. With regard to the situation on the eastern front, he appeared to be content. Nevertheless, he made several nebulous statements on the situation, as Goebbels recalled:

Of course, the Führer does not know exactly how long the Soviet Union will still manage to hold out. But he is of the opinion that once this colossus begins to sway, he will witness a collapse of historic proportions.

The Führer is happy that, as I reported to him, most of the Jews have been evacuated from Berlin. In any event, the Jews will be the losers in this war, in one way or another.

At the end of the talk, Hitler again began to complain about his state of health, about which there “was regrettably not the best news” to report. He was trying to tell Goebbels that he absolutely needed to take another vacation at the Berghof.

On March 21, Hitler received Sepp Dietrich at the Reich Chancellery and presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords for the reconquest of Kharkov.¹⁵⁵

On the occasion of the celebration of Heroes’ Memorial Day that day, Hitler delivered a relatively short speech in the Lichthof of the Zeughaus in Berlin at 1:00 p.m. The tenor of the address was that “the danger is over now.”¹⁵⁶ It read as follows:

For the fourth time, we are celebrating our Volk’s Heroes’ Memorial Day in this hall. The postponement of the date took place because I believed that only now I would be able to leave my places of work¹⁵⁷ with my conscience at ease, having been tied down for many months. Thanks to the sacrifices and the heroism of our soldiers at the eastern front, it has now been finally possible to overcome the crisis into which the German army was plunged by an undeserved fate, to stabilize the front, and to initiate those measures which will secure success and final victory for us in the coming months.

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Under the circumstances, it was possible today to rescind the ban on vacations, which has been in force for many months, in order to allow our brave men to rejoin their loved ones in the homeland increasingly in the coming months. That makes it easier for me, in an emotional sense, to be here on this day.¹⁵⁸

Had it truly been necessary to explain to our Volk the seriousness of this gigantic confrontation of life and death on land, at sea, and in the air, then the past winter would have sufficed to eliminate the last lingering doubts. The steppes of the east have once more unleashed their millions on Europe. They were driven onward by that power that has always organized wars in order to profit from them and, especially in our times, thereby places capitalist interests and Bolshevik instincts in the service of the same goal.

To decide how great the danger was that this oldest civilized continent in the world would be overrun this winter will be left to later historical research. The unfading credit that this danger is over now goes to those soldiers whom we are commemorating today.

Only a glance at Bolshevism's gigantic preparations for the destruction of our world is sufficient to let us realize with horror what might have become of Germany and the rest of the Continent, had not the National Socialist movement taken power in this state ten years ago, and had it not begun the rebuilding of the German Wehrmacht with the determination that is so peculiar to it, following many fruitless efforts for disarmament. After all, the Germany of Weimar with its Centrist-Marxist-democratic party politics would have been swept away by this Central Asian invasion as a straw would be by a hurricane.

We realize with increasing clarity that the confrontation that has taken place in Europe since the First World War is slowly beginning to look like a struggle which can only be compared with the greatest historic events of the past. Eternal Jewry forced on us a pitiless and merciless war. Should we not be able to stop the elements of destruction at Europe's borders, then this continent will be transformed into a single field of ruins.

The gravest consequences of this war would then be not only the burned cities and destroyed cultural monuments, but also the bestially murdered multitudes, which would become the victim of this Central Asian flood, just as with the invasions by the Huns and Mongols.

What the German and allied soldiers today protect in the east is not the stony face of this continent or its social and intellectual character, but its eternal human substance, whence all values originated ages and ages ago and which gave expression to all human civilizations today, not only to those in Europe and America.

In addition to this world of barbarity threatening from the east, we are witnessing the satanic destructive frenzy of its ally, the so-called West. We know about our enemies' war objectives from countless publications, speeches, and open demands. The babble of the Atlantic Charter is worth as much as Wilson's Fourteen Points in contrast with the implemented actual design of the Diktat of Versailles.

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Just as in the English parliamentary democracy the warmonger Churchill pointed the way for later developments with his claim in 1936, when he was not yet the responsible leader of Great Britain, that Germany had to be destroyed again, so the elements behind the present demands for peace in the same democracies today are already planning the state to which they seek to reduce Europe after the war.

And their objectives totally correspond with the manifestations of their Bolshevik allies, which we have not only known about but also witnessed: the extermination of all continental people proudly conscious of their nationality and, at their head, the extermination of our own German people.

It makes no difference whether English or American papers, parliamentarians, stump orators, or men of letters demand the destruction of the Reich, the abduction of the children of our Volk, the sterilization of our male youth, and so on, as the primary war objective, or whether Bolshevism implements the slaughter of whole groups of people, men, women, and children, in practice.

After all, the driving force behind this remains the eternal hatred of that cursed race which, as a true scourge of God, chastised the nations for many thousands of years, until they began to defend themselves against their tormentors in times of reflection.

I am not saying this for the benefit of the German Volk. It does not need encouragement today in its moral attitude. For over a thousand days, the front has proved its silent heroism. At its side today stands the German homeland, with large parts of the Reich having become war zones themselves. Not only does it work to furnish our soldiers with weapons. No, it is forced to wage its own struggle. In tolerating and bearing the enemy's destructive frenzy, women and even children display a heroism that can often no longer be differentiated from that of the front.

As far as the so-called "neutral world" is concerned, the prerequisites for the arrogant, almost meditative, almost didactic contemplation of events, are so popular that there has been the willingness to sacrifice those who protect it from finding out what harsh reality is like. After all, one thing is certain: at such a time, nations can only exist in the long run if they take a clear stand. We should therefore be grateful to our enemies. With their own hands, they eliminate the spirit of false objectivity in the German Volk and put these natural instincts in its place: a glowing love for the homeland and our Volk, across all barriers of origin and birth, and a burning hatred of the enemy. The fires in our cities and villages will increasingly harden the determination of our Volk, which is no longer clouded by cosmopolitan sentiments, but nurtured by the recognition of a deadly threat and inspired by a grim fanaticism, willing to eliminate this threat once and for all in Europe and in our own Volk. And I will repeat my prophecy of long ago, that, at the end of this war, it will not be Germany and its allied states that will have become the victims of Bolshevism, but instead those countries and nations, which the Jews increasingly have in the hollow of their hands, that will one day collapse and meet their end by the Bolshevik poison to which they are the least immune because of their outdated

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social orders. It will not be the National Socialist and Fascist regimes that will have been torn to pieces, but an old empire that will have been unraveled into rags. The sin against your own and kindred blood will one day lead to misery and misfortune that will cry to heaven in these countries.

To commemorate the heroes has at all times been the right of him only who need not be ashamed in front of them. Not only has the winter this year failed to produce defeatism in the German Volk, it has led to an even greater mobilization of all its forces. They are constantly being deployed at present. The production of war matériel constantly increases. Millions of men stream to the front: young soldiers, freed men, and recovered soldiers. In addition, older men and young boys will operate the defensive weapons in the homeland; hundreds of thousands of women and girls¹⁵⁹ will assist them in this. And so the German Wehrmacht is being more and more transformed into a fighting nation. National Socialism which long ago defeated its enemies at home in a bitter struggle—without ever even considering compromise—will today and in the future deal with the enemies of the Reich abroad, as its leading force. The Reich is being supported in this by the allied nations, which from Europe to East Asia are also determined to defend the substance of their blood and the values of their cultures. Above all, it has comrades in arms in those nations which realize that their own future is possible only within the framework of an order which successfully opposes Bolshevism as a devilish instrument of destruction.

The more final this confrontation is and the more uncompromisingly it is waged, the longer will be the ensuing peace, which our continent in particular needs for the healing of its wounds. However, the essence of this new age will not be determined by those men who failed to recognize the worth of the past peace, who agitated for war in their spiritual blindness, who thereby brought ruin to their nations, but by those statesmen who already understood before the war how to secure for their nations a high degree of social and cultural accomplishment, despite their modest earthly possessions. Therefore, the future of the truly civilized nations will not be Jewish-Bolshevik nor Jewish-capitalist. Instead, it will increasingly strive to realize, in the service of the national interest everywhere, a true Volksgemeinschaft as the highest ideal. All the more so after the war, the German National Socialist state, which pursued this goal from the beginning, will tirelessly work for the realization of a program that will ultimately lead to a complete elimination of class differences and to the creation of a true socialist community.

Thus, the five hundred forty-two thousand dead that this Second World War has up to now claimed¹⁶⁰ will not have fallen in vain. Instead, they will live on eternally in our ranks as the undying heroes and pioneers of a better age. May the Almighty, who has not denied us His blessings throughout these trials and Who has thereby reinforced our inherent strength, also grant us His assistance in the fulfillment of what we must do for our Volk, what we owe it, until the victory. We again bow reverently before our dead comrades, their family members in mourning, the murdered men, women, and children in the homeland, and all the sacrifices of our allies.

March 29, 1943

After the speech, Hitler toured a special exhibition in the Zeughaus, where pictures and trophies from the central section of the eastern front were on display.

On this occasion, a member of the resistance movement allegedly intended to kill Hitler.¹⁶¹ Major Freiherr von Gersdorff, a staff officer with the Army Group Center, later claimed that he would have willingly sacrificed his own life by blowing himself up next to Hitler. It would surely have been easier to draw a gun and shoot him. Of course, the assassin would then have been killed by Hitler's escort.

However it was difficult in the first place to procure two English time bombs, which the assassin had in his coat pocket in order to blow himself up close to Hitler in the course of the tour. However, the fuse of the time bomb needed ten minutes, and Hitler stayed only eight minutes.¹⁶²

The usual ceremonies at Unter den Linden took place following the tour of the exhibition: the placing of a wreath at the monument, the reviewing of the guard, the talks with wounded men, and the parade. Afterwards, Hitler again vanished into the Berghof. In the course of the next few days, the military discussions of the situation began there anew.¹⁶³

On March 29, two of the "state funerals" ordered by Hitler took place. At the state ceremony for the German ambassador in Madrid, von Ribbentrop delivered a speech at the Landeshaus in Breslau and laid a wreath from the Führer. The ambassador, Hans Adolf von Moltke, had died at the age of sixty, as a result of "appendicitis." At the state ceremony for the Reich sport leader, SA Obergruppenführer (!) Hans von Tschammer und Osten, Goebbels delivered an address at the Reich Chancellery and laid a wreath from the Führer. The SA Obergruppenführer had died of "pneumonia" at the age of fifty-six.¹⁶⁴

Hitler had scheduled a series of receptions for statesmen from the German satellite states for the month of April. Some took place at the Berghof, others at Klessheim Castle near Salzburg. These receptions furnished him with an excuse for not being at his headquarters in East Prussia.

Naturally, the outcome of these talks was negligible. Schmidt aptly called them the "Salzburg shadow plays."¹⁶⁵ However, this did not bother Hitler in the least. After all, all he needed was an excuse for staying at the Berghof.

April 7, 1943

At this “headquarters” on April 1, Hitler received the commander of the Italian Eighth Army deployed on the eastern front, in the presence of Keitel. He awarded Colonel General Gariboldi the Knight’s Cross.¹⁶⁶

In the presence of von Ribbentrop on April 3, Hitler met King Boris at the Berghof. The heads of state had “a long and heartfelt discussion, which was characterized by the spirit of the traditional friendship between Germany and Bulgaria.”¹⁶⁷

On April 7, Hitler received Dönitz and presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross “in appreciation of his unique services in the waging of U-boat warfare.”¹⁶⁸

Mussolini and his entourage were Hitler’s guests at Klessheim Castle from August 7 to 10.¹⁶⁹ The Italians had grave worries. The fight for Tunis was almost over. Undoubtedly, the Allies would soon move to land in Italy. Mussolini felt that a quick peace in the east was the only way out. “It seems impossible to me to defeat Russia,” he said, “therefore, it is better to conclude a compromise peace in the east in order to get our hands free to fight the west.”

That was a good idea in theory. But how could Germany get a “compromise peace,” when the Russians had reason to fear that Hitler would only use it to attack the Soviet Union anew at the next opportunity?! At any rate, Hitler immediately cut his friend Mussolini short. He kept talking for a number of days until he felt that the Duce would toe the line again. He later told Goebbels about their meeting:¹⁷⁰

As the Führer told me, he made the Duce pull up his socks again in the four-day talks. The Führer made an all-out effort. By rallying all his mental energy, he managed to get Mussolini to toe the line again. He underwent a complete transformation during these four days, which was noted with astonishment by his entourage. When he got off the train, the Führer thought that he looked like a broken old man; when he went back, he was a man in high spirits and anxious for action. That his internal regeneration continues, we can tell from his present policy.

The official communiqué on the visit was wordy. No matter how long it was, it contained just words:¹⁷¹

The Führer and the Duce had a meeting from April 7 to 10, 1943. The Duce was accompanied by the chief of the Italian general staff, Army General Ambrosio, the state secretary for foreign affairs, Bastianini, officials from the Italian foreign ministry, and officers from the Italian high command.

Together with the Führer, the following persons attended the meeting: Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop, the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, Field Marshal Keitel, the commander

April 14, 1943

in chief of the navy, Grand Admiral Dönitz, and the chief of the army general staff, General Zeitzler.

The extensive discussions dealt with the general political situation and all questions regarding the joint conduct of the war. Complete agreement was reached on all measures to be taken.

The Führer and the Duce expressed anew their and their people's grim determination to wage this war by a supreme effort until the final victory and until the complete elimination of all future dangers threatening the European-African area from the west and the east.

The common objectives, pursued by the Axis powers in the defense of European civilization and for the right of nations to free development and cooperation, were again confirmed. The victory of the nations allied in the Tripartite Pact will secure a peace for Europe, which will guarantee cooperation among all nations based on their common interests and a just distribution of economic goods of the world.

The talks between the Führer and the Duce and the discussions of their assistants were characterized by a spirit of great warmth.

On April 10, Hitler sent congratulatory telegrams to the Bulgarian prime minister Filov on his sixtieth birthday and to Ante Pavelich on Croatia's national holiday.¹⁷²

On April 12, Antonescu arrived in Salzburg for two days of talks. Unlike Mussolini, he was convinced that the war against the Soviet Union had to be continued. "A supreme effort against the east," was what he asked for. His attitude was not surprising, since the Russians were beginning to move in on him, just as the Anglo-Americans were on Mussolini. The communiqué read as follows:¹⁷³

On April 12, the Führer received the state leader of Romania, Marshal Antonescu, for a two-day visit. The talks, which were attended by the Reich foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, and Field Marshal Keitel, concerned the general political situation and questions of the general fight against Bolshevism and the Anglo-American plutocracies allied to it.

The talks were conducted in the spirit of the German-Romanian friendship and the unshakable brotherhood in arms of the nations allied in the Tripartite Pact. The Führer and the state leader of Romania confirmed their firm determination to continue the fight against Europe's enemies by a supreme effort until a victory without compromise is gained. The Romanian people will fight side by side with the people of the Axis powers until final victory. By means of this historic contribution to the liberation of Europe, it will create the basis for the future of the Romanian nation.

On April 14, a big press campaign in the German media reported on the bodies found near Katyn¹⁷⁴ In early April, the remains of around ten thousand Polish officers were discovered in the forest of Katyn, close to

April 17, 1943

a highway connecting Vitebsk and Smolensk.¹⁷⁵ Upon Hitler's urging, Goebbels launched an anti-Russian campaign blaming them for the horrors of Katyn.¹⁷⁶ He confided in his diary, however, the following:¹⁷⁷

Regrettably, German ammunition was found during the unearthing of the remains at Katyn. An explanation has yet to be found. . . . In any event, as of now it is necessary to treat this information as strictly confidential. If our opponents get wind of this, then we can forget the whole Katyn affair.

On April 16 and 17, Horthy was Hitler's guest at Klessheim Castle. In addition to political and military matters, the talks mostly concerned the apprehension of Hungarian Jews and their transport to concentration camps, that is, extermination camps. Horthy did not want to deal with this problem, and so Hitler felt forced to explain to him the necessity of the extermination of the Jews in the following manner:¹⁷⁸

If the Jews do not want to work there, then they will be shot. If they cannot work, they will go to seed. They must be treated like the tuberculosis bacillus, which can infect a healthy body. This is not cruel if you consider that even innocent creatures of nature, like the rabbit and the deer, are shot so that they cannot do harm. Why should you be more kind to these beasts, which want to bring us Bolshevism? Nations which do not fight off the Jews go to seed. The decline of the once so proud Persian people is one of the most famous examples of this. Today, they lead as pitiful an existence as the Armenians.

Goebbels noted the following on Hitler's talks with Horthy:^{179, 180}

Horthy did not hear many kind words from the Führer. . . . The Hungarian state is completely infiltrated by Jews. In his talks with Horthy, the Führer did not succeed in convincing him of the necessity of stronger measures. Horthy himself and his family are very much tangled up with the Jews and he will continue to put up a fierce resistance against actively attacking the Jewish problem in the future. He lists quite valid humanitarian arguments, which do not, however, apply in this context. There can be no talk of humanitarianism regarding the Jews. Jewry must be thrown to the ground. The Führer made an all-out effort to convince Horthy of his views; however, he succeeded only partially in this.

The official communiqué was more upbeat:¹⁸¹

On April 16, the regent of the Hungarian kingdom, Nikolaus von Horthy, arrived for a two-day visit at the Führer headquarters. The Führer discussed questions with the regent regarding the general political situation and the fight against common enemies. The talks at the Führer's, which were also attended by Reich foreign minister von Ribbentrop, and the military discussions between Field Marshal Keitel and the Hungarian chief of staff, Colonel General

April 20, 1943

Vitez Ferenc Szombathelyi, were characterized by the spirit of the traditional German-Hungarian friendship and brotherhood in arms.

The Führer and the regent expressed their firm determination to wage the fight against Bolshevism and its Anglo-American allies unwaveringly until the final victory. The Hungarian people, who have already witnessed the horrors of Bolshevism once,¹⁸² will fight side by side with their allies in the Tripartite Pact until the complete elimination of the threat against our people and will make a supreme effort in liberating Europe and securing the Hungarian nation.

On April 18, Hitler decreed several changes in personnel in the diplomatic corps.¹⁸³ The former state secretary in the foreign ministry, Freiherr von Weizsäcker, became ambassador to the Holy See. The envoy Adolf von Steengracht replaced him as state secretary. Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff, who had been the last German ambassador in Washington, was appointed ambassador in Madrid. Undersecretary Ernst Woermann was reassigned to Nanking.

On April 19, Hitler received Vidkun Quisling at the Berghof. The communiqué read as follows:¹⁸⁴

In a long discussion, characterized by complete mutual trust, the questions of the struggle for Europe's future were discussed. There was mutual agreement that we should stand together in the fight for the continued existence of European culture, the freedom and independent life of the nations of the European continent, and the shared Greater Germanic (*grossgermanisch*) objectives. By a supreme effort, this fight should be waged until its victorious end and the complete elimination of the Bolshevik danger.

On the German side, the discussion was attended by Reichskommissar Terboven, senior department head Neumann, the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery Lammers, the head of the party Chancellery Reichsleiter Bormann, and Reichsführer SS Himmler.

The following communiqué was published on Hitler's birthday on April 20:¹⁸⁵

The Führer spent his birthday today without any ceremony or birthday receptions. The present members of the headquarters and the members of his closest personal staff congratulated the Führer.

A summary statement was published on the continuously shrinking list of foreign heads of state who still sent Hitler congratulations on his birthday. No names were listed. Only Hitler's exchange of telegrams with King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini was made public:¹⁸⁶

My heartfelt thanks to Your Majesty for the friendly congratulations transmitted to me on my birthday today. I tie to this my sincere best wishes for

April 25, 1943

the welfare of Your Majesty and for the happy future of the allied Italian nation.

Adolf Hitler

I truly rejoiced when I received your comradely congratulations on my birthday today, Duce. In the unshakable knowledge that Germany and its allies will gain the final victory and will thereby create the basis for a just new order, I send you my thanks and my heartfelt best wishes for yourself and for the Italian people led by you.

Adolf Hitler

On April 22, Hitler had this expression of thanks to the public published:¹⁸⁷

I have received so many congratulations on my birthday from all Gaus of the Reich and abroad that I cannot reply to them individually. I therefore express my sincere thanks to all who have thought of me in this manner.

On the same day, Hitler received Speer at the Berghof. He told him that he was “convinced more than ever that total war represented the great salvation.”¹⁸⁸ He would not allow himself “in any way to be pushed off the chosen track.” At the end of the conversation, Hitler spoke disparagingly of Schirach. He feared that he “had been caught by the tentacles of the Viennese reactionaries” and no longer had “a clear view of the interests of the Reich.” Of course, Hitler was simply trying to tell Speer that Schirach could no longer be considered as a possible successor to the Führer.

On April 23, Hitler received Tiso. The communiqué on their meeting at Klessheim Castle read as follows:¹⁸⁹

The Führer and Dr. Tiso had a discussion characterized by a spirit of warmth on the questions of the European fight for the freedom of our people against Bolshevism and against the Anglo-American plutocracies. In the talks, which were attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, and, on the Slovak side, by Prime Minister Dr. Tuka, Interior Minister Sano Mach, and General Catlos, the comradeship and friendship which have always characterized the relations between the Reich and the Slovak people was confirmed again. Slovakia fights with the brave units of its army at the side of the German armies and summons up all its strength, together with the Tripartite powers, for the final victory.

On April 24, Hitler warmly congratulated Raeder in a personal letter on his birthday.¹⁹⁰

On April 25, Hitler established the Demyansk Shield in “commemoration of the many-months-long heroic defense of the

April 30, 1943

combat zone of Demyansk against a numerically superior enemy.” Like other similar medals (Narvik Shield, Kholm Shield, Crimean Shield), it was to be worn on the left upper sleeve.¹⁹¹

On April 27, Hitler received Ante Pavelich at Klessheim Castle. The following communiqué was published on the talks:¹⁹²

The Führer had a discussion with the Poglavnik on the political and military situation in the joint fight of the Axis powers against Bolshevism and the Anglo-American plutocracies. The talks, which were attended by the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, the Croatian foreign minister Budak, Field Marshal Keitel, and General Begig, were conducted in the spirit of the heartfelt understanding and friendship of the Reich for the young Croatian state and its brave people. Dr. Pavelich expressed the determination of the Croat people to defend the freedom of independent Croatia on the side of the Axis powers and summon up all its strength for a victory without compromise by the Tripartite powers over the common enemies.

The meeting at the Führer headquarters was also attended by the German envoy in Zagreb, Kasche, and by the German plenipotentiary in Croatia, Glaise von Horstenau.

Goebbels confided the following sobering remark on the meeting to his diary:¹⁹³ “Things are going topsy-turvy in Croatia. Pavelich was indeed at the Führer’s: such a visit can, however, only strengthen his prestige abroad.”

Pierre Laval visited on April 29. Unlike the other communiqués on visits that April, this one made it perfectly clear that Laval had been treated like a simple subordinate who was receiving orders. It read as follows:¹⁹⁴

On April 29, the Führer received the French head of government, Pierre Laval, at the Führer headquarters in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the Italian state secretary for foreign affairs, Bastianini. In the course of the discussion, all participants demonstrated complete understanding of all the questions which arose between Germany and Italy on the one hand and France on the other. It was investigated with complete objectivity what part France would have to bear in the efforts and sacrifices that the Axis powers had taken upon themselves in their fight against Bolshevism and the allied Anglo-American plutocracies and for the building of a new Europe, and what type of advantages would result for France from this participation.

Still on the same day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese emperor on his birthday.¹⁹⁵

On April 30, Hitler congratulated von Ribbentrop on his birthday.¹⁹⁶

May 4, 1943

On May 1, Hitler received a telegram from Emperor Hirohito, who was still convinced of the significance of this so-called “national holiday of the German people.” Hitler replied in this telegram as follows:¹⁹⁷

I ask Your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for the best wishes transmitted to me on the national holiday of the German Volk. In complete agreement with Your Majesty on the unshakable determination to destroy the common enemy, create a new just order in the world through our victory, and secure a lasting peace, I respond with my sincere best wishes for the personal welfare of Your Majesty and a happy future for the brave Japanese nation.

Adolf Hitler

Hardly anybody in Germany took note of this “national holiday.” The only contribution which Hitler made was the appointment of a miner Konrad Grebe as “pioneer of labor.”¹⁹⁸

Now that the series of visits by statesmen from the satellite states was over, Hitler had no more excuses for staying at the Berghof any longer. However, he did not feel like leaving the comfortable, intimate atmosphere of the Berghof for his dreary headquarters in the Rastenburg Forest. In general, he took little interest in the going-on on the eastern front. He did not even feel up to launching the relatively limited offensive Operation Citadel, that is, the reconquest of Kursk. However, something had to happen. And so Hitler came up with the idea of inviting the generals involved in the operation (Field Marshals von Manstein, von Kluge, Colonel General Guderian as inspector general of the panzer troops, and Colonel General Jeschonnek as Luftwaffe chief of staff) for talks in Munich on May 4. This gave him the opportunity of suggesting a postponement of the operation until June 10.¹⁹⁹

Hitler referred to a presentation by Colonel General Model on the necessity of bringing up strong panzer forces to the attack sector. Although all of the generals present in Munich voiced reservations regarding the postponement, Hitler did not change his mind. He made only one concession, saying that he “would think it over again.” A week later, on May 11, he issued the formal order, which postponed Operation Citadel until the middle of June!

On May 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese-controlled Chinese president Wang Tching-wei on his birthday.²⁰⁰

SA chief of staff Lutze had been seriously injured in a car crash on May 2 and had died the following day.²⁰¹ Hitler ordered a “state funeral” for May 7. On this occasion, he moved his “headquarters” to the Reich

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Chancellery for a few days. On May 6, he had a first discussion with Goebbels there, on which Goebbels noted the following:²⁰²

The Führer regards the situation at Tunis as pretty hopeless. It is impossible to get supplies through. If we could manage to get supply transports through to Tunis at regular intervals, than it might be possible to hold the position for an at present unforeseeable length of time. However, this plan is frustrated by the vigilance of the English, who will not let our ships pass.

In the east, the Führer is thinking about launching a limited offensive soon in the direction of Kursk. However, he might want to wait and see whether the Bolsheviks will not try to beat us to it. Then, of course, the circumstances would be more favorable than if we take the initiative.

In this conversation, Hitler, as so often, attacked Göring and complained about his [Hitler's] state of health. This saddened Goebbels:

It is regrettable that the Führer must do everything himself, whenever a prominent man fails. Slowly the work load is becoming too much even for him so that he can barely bear up under it. He complains to me about his health being somewhat delicate; this is also something which cannot stand the pace in the long run.

The funeral ceremony for Lutze took place in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery at noon on May 7. Goebbels delivered the eulogy. Afterwards, Hitler himself spoke, saying that after all Lutze had been granted a death that put "a manly end" to his life. If you cannot die on the battlefield, then apparently the next best thing was to die in a car crash! Hitler completely forgot that eminent German authorities to whom he enjoyed referring all the time, such as Frederick the Great, von Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and so on, had died peacefully in their sleep.

Hitler's speech read as follows:²⁰³

In a time when the war demands of our Volk the painful sacrifice of so many men, women, and regrettably even children, it takes a particularly heavy toll of blood from our National Socialist Party. There are members and sympathizers of our movement in all formations of the army, navy, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS, and they fulfill their duty in an exemplary fashion. From the National Socialist Reichstag to the higher age groups of the Hitler Youth, the numbers of our movement's dead represent a far higher percentage of the total than the average of the rest of the Volk.

Alas, the war not only claims our men and women, it also brings truly saddening misfortune. It is particularly tragic for me to have to witness almost every year how the one or other irreplaceable fighter, coworker, and fellow designer of our new Reich is called to join the flock of those whom the poet of the National Socialist revolutionary song has accompany us in spirit. After the

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plane crash that took the unforgettable and irreplaceable party comrade Dr. Todt from us, it is a car crash this time that robs the SA of its chief of staff and me personally of a man who was always loyally attached to me.

What can be said about the life story of this old National Socialist fighter has been said by the speaker before me, who was one of his oldest friends. I met the SA Führer Viktor Lutze for the first time in Westphalia in 1925–1926. Since then I have become attached to him and his family not only through the common fight but also in a profound personal friendship. Nevertheless, on this day, I wish to commemorate primarily the man who unconditionally tied his own destiny to mine, who throughout the years was such a loyal and unshakable comrade in arms for me that, in a most bitter and painful hour, I felt I could entrust the leadership of my SA to him, as the most competent man.

As one of my most staunch supporters, he fulfilled his mission and developed the SA into an instrument which was capable of carrying out all the great tasks which I set for it in the course of the year.

My SA chief of staff, Viktor Lutze, was a soldier all his life. Because of this way of thinking, he had the fervent desire to be allowed to go to the front himself, a request which he made to me and which I was unable to grant. Nevertheless he has now died in a manner which puts a manly end to his life as a National Socialist.

I want to express my profound gratitude to you, my dear Lutze, before the movement, the SA, and the entire German Volk, for your loyal fight. From the mighty struggle, in the midst of which we find ourselves today and to which you so richly contributed through your life's work, will one day emerge the goal which once led us to each other and for which we fought over many decades in a sacred faith and with the greatest devotion: the Greater German Reich, secured by its own power against its enemies and supported by a true Volksgemeinschaft! In the annals of history, the name of Chief of Staff Viktor Lutze will live on eternally as one of the founders of the new Reich.

My dear Mrs. Lutze, you have my heartfelt sympathy on the death of your husband and your child. I wish both your sons a speedy recovery.

I believe that I cannot secure a worthier future significance for the highest medal that our party can award than by awarding it to the first pioneers of the new Reich and, thus, to the deceased. Through this, it is ennobled for all those who will one day have the honor of bearing it while alive.

Following the funeral ceremony, Hitler asked the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters to join him for lunch. Afterwards, he lectured all the party leaders, including those from the SA, SS, and Hitler Youth, on "speeding."²⁰⁴

The Führer voices sharp criticism and bitterly reproaches them [for speeding]. As a consequence of Lutze's car crash, he orders all party cars not to exceed speeds of eighty kilometers per hour.

May 7, 1943

In the afternoon, Hitler presented the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters with his view of the situation.²⁰⁵ He went far back, defending Charlemagne's policies at great length, recalling the conquests of Genghis Khan, and speaking about the Turkish wars. He praised Stalin for killing Tukhachevsky²⁰⁶ in 1937 and thereby having taken care of the opposition in the Red Army. You could tell from what Hitler said how much he would have loved to follow Stalin's example.

Hitler then raged against his allies, who were supposedly responsible for the unfavorable developments in the east. That is why he had decided "to let the war in the east be waged exclusively by German troops. The Romanians proved themselves to be the best; the Italians were second-best, and the Hungarians were the worst." And anyway, it was necessary "to liquidate as quickly as possible that junkyard of small states (*Kleinstaatengerümpel*) which still exist in Europe today."²⁰⁷

Hitler had used almost the same words in mocking the allies of Imperial Germany.²⁰⁸ Now he was forced to use them against his own allies! Hitler's speech was a repetition of his well-known theory: there had been a great crisis at home in the year 1932 and still the victory had been his in the end; things would be no different abroad, since the enemies were the same (with the English resembling the German Nationalists, and the Russians recalling the German Communists). Goebbels, of course, was enthusiastic about this speech and noted the following:

The Führer again went through the parallels between 1932 and today in great detail. They are indeed astonishing and quite convincing. Everything from back then is repeating itself today. Just as we gained the victory in the year 1932 only through a stubbornness, which, at times, looked like insanity, so this will be the case again today.

In addition, Hitler also dished up a new theory: the advantage of fighting "interior lines" (*innere Linie*). Germany would profit from this in its conduct of the war because the enemy had to attack "on exterior lines." German propaganda was forced to make the best of this theory during the following months. Goebbels noted as follows:

As far as the war itself is concerned, the Führer expressed his view that it is essentially a question of the transportation problem. Because of the impossibility of overcoming the problem of movement, we lost Stalingrad.²⁰⁹ Because of the impossibility of overcoming the problem of movement, we are now witnessing a serious military crisis in North Africa. Whoever has the organizational means of solving the problem of movement in this war will win.

May 7, 1943

We are superior to our enemies insofar as they must attack on exterior lines, while we defend ourselves on interior lines.

At the end of his speech, Hitler stressed that there was no danger of a revolt:

The Volk will never think of it. There are no Jewish leaders. Criminals will not be unleashed on the Volk in a difficult crisis, but instead they will be lined up against a wall.

This denial proved, on the contrary, that a possible revolt was on Hitler's mind.

May 10, 1943

3

On May 8 and 9, Hitler had a number of talks, mostly concerning questions of a personal nature, at the Reich Chancellery. He spoke with Goebbels, Bormann, Ley, Frick, Funk, Rust, and Frank. Then he also received Rommel.²¹⁰

Neither in his speech before the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters, nor in the course of his discussions with the above individuals, did Hitler make any mention of his intention to extend the Enabling Act secretly without summoning the Reichstag and announcing it in the press. In Berlin on May 10, Hitler signed this decree which represented a blatant violation of the constitution. It was published only in the *Reich Law Gazette*, under the innocent heading: "Decree by the Führer on Governmental Legislation." It read as follows:²¹¹

Führer Headquarters, May 10, 1943

In consideration of the formal expiry of the law of March 24, 1933 (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 141) on May 10, 1943, I order the following:

The Reich government will continue to exercise the powers bestowed on it by virtue of the law of March 24, 1933. I reserve for myself the obtaining of a confirmation of these powers of the Reich government by the Greater German Reichstag.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler included the mention of a possible confirmation by the Reichstag in order to silence potential critics, but he had no intention of allowing the Reichstag ever to convene again.

On May 10, he also issued the following appeal from Berlin for the fourth Winterhilfswerk of the German Red Cross:²¹²

Führer Headquarters, May 10, 1943

German Volk!

Another winter has passed which has imposed difficult battles and heavy burdens on our soldiers. And again it goes to the credit of our men in the east

May 10, 1943

that they have successfully overcome a crisis by which any other armed forces in the world would have been broken. How great the physical and spiritual demands on our soldiers were cannot be appreciated by the homeland. It is due only to their heroism that they not only stopped the attack by the enemy in the end, but also forced him back through heavy counterattacks. Much is being asked of the German homeland as well, in terms of labor duties and willingness to sacrifice. Alas, all these sacrifices pale in comparison with the privations and sufferings which our soldiers must bear for a second [*sic*] time in the east.

Such accomplishments are only conceivable due to the love for your own Volk, which will be saved, and for your own country, which will be spared the horrors of war. After all, it is the German Volk, its women and children, for whom our men risk their life time and again at all fronts of this mighty struggle. Alas, the German homeland has also become brave. The war has been carried to its cities, market towns, and villages. Still, its privations and sacrifices cannot be compared with the superhuman hardships that our soldiers face in fighting at the various fronts, especially in the east. Therefore it is the duty of the homeland, its debt of honor, to show them that, regardless of the difficulties which it must bear itself, it never for one second forgets its soldiers at the front. Above all, it will not neglect to undertake whatever is necessary for the healing of its fighters' wounds in order to harden in practice the National Socialist German Volksgemeinschaft through the activation of a common spirit of sacrifice.

Therefore, I call on the German Volk for the fourth time to reaffirm its common bonds through its readiness to sacrifice for the Kriegshilfswerk of the German Red Cross and thus to offer that type of thanks to our soldiers that they so richly deserve. Just as the German rose above himself as a soldier this winter, I expect that the homeland will surpass itself in the new Kriegshilfswerk of the Red Cross.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler awarded councilor of state Paul Pleiger, the general manager of the Hermann Göring Works, the War Service Medal's Knight's Cross.²¹³

Following the fall of Tunis and Bizerte, fighting in North Africa was now rapidly nearing its conclusion. On May 10, Hitler undertook a feeble attempt to encourage the German troops to put up a "heroic" fight to their last breath. However, he exercised far greater restraint in his telegram to Colonel General von Arnim, who commanded the German-Italian units, than in those to Rommel in November and to Paulus in January.²¹⁴ It read as follows:²¹⁵

I express my thanks and greatest appreciation to you and your heroically fighting troops, who in loyal brotherhood in arms with our Italian comrades are defending every foot of African soil. Together with me, the entire German

May 11, 1943

Volk is following the heroic battle of its soldiers in Tunisia with admiration. It is of supreme importance to the overall success of this war. Your all-out effort and the attitude of your troops will set an example for the entire Wehrmacht of the Greater German Reich and will enter as a special page of glory into the German history of war.

Adolf Hitler

This radio message from Hitler was very wisely not published until the surrender of the troops. After all, nobody in Germany knew that Arnim was now in command instead of Rommel. Where was the Desert Fox [Rommel], anyway?

On May 7, Goebbels had already noted the following in his diary with dismay:²¹⁶

It will naturally be difficult to explain to the Volk why Rommel is no longer in Africa. Rommel is placed in an extraordinarily awkward situation. He had the Oak Leaf with Diamonds, which the Volk does not know either. He has been at the Semmelring Pass for several weeks now, and nobody has any inkling of this. Everybody believes him to be in Africa. If the truth comes out now that catastrophe is near, then nobody will believe this anymore.

Rommel would undoubtedly be compromised. Hitler had labored to bring this about for many months. Therefore, he had no qualms about issuing the following notification by the high command of the Wehrmacht on May 11, shortly before the fall of Tunis:²¹⁷

Field Marshal Rommel was in Germany as the English launched their great offensive against the positions at El Alamein in October 1942. His long stay in Africa had proved so injurious to his health that medical treatment, which had been put off time and again, could no longer be postponed. Following the first news of the English attack, the Field Marshal immediately broke off the treatment, which he had barely begun, against the urging of his doctors, and returned to Africa.

After the landing of the Anglo-American armed forces in French North Africa, he prolonged his stay with his army, a stay which he had initially planned to be only temporary. By constantly attacking a far superior enemy, the field marshal led the army back to Tunisia in an evasive maneuver of a historically exemplary nature. Since the state of health of the field marshal had deteriorated, the Führer decided, in concurrence with the Duce's wishes, to order Field Marshal Rommel, after he had taken up position at Gabes, to return immediately to Germany for the restoration of his health.

On March 11, 1943, Field Marshal Rommel reported to the Führer headquarters. In appreciation of his unique services in the two-year campaign in North Africa, the Führer awarded him the Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. The health of Field Marshal

May 14, 1943

Rommel is presently improving. After his complete recovery, the Führer plans to entrust him with a new mission.

On May 13, Colonel General von Arnim surrendered. So did the commander of the First Italian Army, General Messe, who had been promoted to the rank of marshal shortly before. The Allies took two hundred fifty thousand soldiers prisoner, about half of whom were Germans, along with eleven generals.

The German final communiqué of May 13 read as follows:²¹⁸

The heroic struggle of the German and Italian units in Africa found an honorable end today. The last resistance groups in the area around Tunis, which had been without water and provisions for days, had to stop fighting after they had used up their entire supply of ammunition. They were defeated by the lack of supplies, not by the attack of the enemy, who often enough was forced to recognize the superiority of our arms in this theater of war also.

The Africa corps of Germany and Italy have, in spite of this, fulfilled to the utmost the mission assigned to them. Their resistance—which disputed the enemy every foot of ground in a many-month-long, bitter struggle—tied down strong enemy forces in North Africa and caused the enemy heavy losses in men and matériel. The relief of other fronts secured hereby and the time that was won greatly benefited the leaders of the Axis powers.

Hitler forbade this final communiqué to be broadcast by radio stations in Germany, in the hope that it would thus attract less attention. Goebbels criticized this in his diary as follows: “I really do not think that this was necessary. Faced with such a great military crisis, we ought not suddenly introduce new methods in our information policy which might tempt the Volk to regard our guilty conscience as the reason for this.”²¹⁹

On May 14, following the loss of North Africa, Hitler abandoned his plan to make a flanking movement across Spain and Portugal in order to attack the Anglo-American forces (Operation Gisela).²²⁰

During the next few days, Hitler issued a series of rather confusing decrees from Berlin. They were realized only in part. Goebbels enumerated and commented the following in his diary:²²¹

1. Hitler’s decision to have the English prisoners of war discreetly unchained; they had been kept in chains ever since October 1942.

“We can no longer risk a prestige fight with the English on the question of chains, since the English now have more German than we have English captives under lock and key.”²²²

May 20, 1943

2. Hitler's instruction "to form an anti-Bolshevik legion with the English prisoners."

3. Hitler's order to direct "evacuations from the air-war zone in the west for the time being to the occupied French territories, especially the province of Burgundy."²²³

4. Hitler's decree ordering all speeches intended for broadcast to be "presented in writing" to him before they were aired.²²⁴

On May 19, Hitler received the president of the Finnish women's organization *Lotta Spaerd*, Mrs. Fanni Luukkonen, at the Reich Chancellery. He awarded her "the Star of the Order of the German Eagle in appreciation of the excellent deployment of the Finnish Women's Organization in the common fight against Bolshevism."²²⁵

On the same day, Hitler met with Keitel and Generals Warlimont and Buhle at the Reich Chancellery. They discussed security measures to be taken against British landings on Mediterranean shores, especially in the Balkan region.²²⁶ The complicated and time-consuming measures, which were necessary in order to reinforce the German troops on the Peloponnese, made it clear how problematic Hitler's claim of the advantages of defending "interior lines" was.²²⁷

On May 20, Hitler had a discussion with Sonderführer (special leader) von Neurath²²⁸ on Germany's future attitude toward Italy. This topic was the reason for Rommel's presence at the talks, which were also attended by Keitel and other prominent persons. After all, Hitler planned to place Rommel in command in Italy "in case that a mess (*Schweinerei*) happened" there.²²⁹ Von Neurath reported on the unstable situation in Italy following the loss of North Africa. Hitler showered abuse on Italy, which he thought was to be blamed for everything.

After all, had Italy made a declaration at the time [1939], in which it declared its solidarity with Germany and to which it was obliged by treaty, then war would not have broken out; then the English would not have started it, and the French would not have started it.

I saw quite well what Fascism is in Rome. It could not prevail against the courtly world. A reception by the court—I would not even mention it anyway—is a nauseating sight by our standards. But also at the Duce's, and why? Because the whole courtly world figures in this. Ciano is like that, too. I was supposed to escort Countess Edda Ciano to the table. All of a sudden that Philip²³⁰ barges in with his Mafalda, and all of a sudden the whole program is upset. A great flurry of excitement. So I have to take Mafalda as my lady partner at table. What's Mafalda to me? As far as I am concerned, Mafalda is simply the wife of a German Oberpräsident—and that's it!

May 22, 1943

As far as I am concerned, the crucial question is: In what state of health is the Duce? That is what is decisive for a man who must make such difficult decisions. Second, what does he think are Italy's chances, let us say, in the event of a waning of the Fascist revolution or with the royal house? Those are the two problems. Either the royal house succeeds the Fascist revolution—what does he think are his people's chances then—or what does he think are their chances if the royal house takes over power by itself? All that is difficult to say. He said something at the table in Klessheim, when we were together. He suddenly said: "I do not have a successor to the Fascist revolution. I can find somebody as head of state, but there is no successor to the revolution." That is really very tragic.

As was evident from these statements, Hitler was quite aware of the course which events in Italy might take.

Hitler had not been seen at his two headquarters in the east, in Rastenburg (Wolfsschanze) and in Vinnitsa (Werwolf), for over two months. And he still did not feel like going back there. After the debacle at Tunis, he feared the reproachful glances of the generals. He preferred to return to Eva Braun at the Berghof.

Goebbels noted in his diary the following:

The Führer has . . . postponed his trip to Vinnitsa. Acting upon a sudden impulse, he returned to the Obersalzberg. For the time being, he wants to recuperate a little there in order to arm himself in terms of health for the coming weeks and months. That is the best thing he can do right now. The Führer intends to let the Bolsheviks attack first.²³¹

For Goebbels, Hitler's reference to his "health" sufficed to justify his return to the Berghof. However, the Führer needed to come up with a better excuse for the rest of his entourage. Before leaving Berlin, Hitler arranged for another discussion of the situation on either May 20 or May 21.²³² He claimed that Prince Philip of Hesse had recommended a new meeting with the Duce either at the Brenner Pass or at Klessheim Castle. Although Hitler headed south for the Berghof, this meeting naturally never took place.

On May 22, Hitler exchanged telegrams with King Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini on the fourth anniversary of the German-Italian alliance. This exchange was the last of its kind. Hitler's telegrams read as follows:²³³

On today's day of commemoration, the fourth anniversary of the solemn signing of the friendship and military treaty between our two people, I ask Your Majesty to accept, along with my heartfelt greetings, my and the German

June 1, 1943

Volk's best wishes for the happiness and future of Italy and the struggle of its arms.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

On the return of the day on which our two countries entered into an indissoluble community of struggle and fate by the conclusion of the Pact of Friendship and Alliance four years ago, I send you my most sincere and warm greetings and best wishes, also in the name of the entire German Volk. With a feeling of heartfelt solidarity, I on this occasion think of the heroic fight of the Italian armed forces in the great joint struggle for the freedom and the future of our people, and express my unshakable conviction that, at the end of this confrontation of great world-historical impact, the risks and the sacrifices which had to be made will find their greatest and final reward in the glorious victory of our just cause.

Adolf Hitler

On May 25, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram "to the president of the Argentinian nation," Ramón S. Castillo, on the country's national holiday.²³⁴

On May 27, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Japanese emperor on the death of Admiral Yamamoto:²³⁵

Your Majesty!

Profoundly impressed by the heroic fight of your commander of the fleet, Grand Admiral Isoroko Yamamoto, and in recognition of his historic service in the joint struggle of our arms, I have awarded the fallen hero the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaf and Swords.

Hitler also wanted to use this gesture as a lesson for the German Generals Paulus and von Arnim, who wished to continue to live in spite of their defeats at Stalingrad and Tunis. Had they committed suicide, Hitler would naturally have awarded them a medal, too.

On May 28, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Afghanistan on his country's national day.²³⁶

On June 1, Hitler awarded the newly formed Forty-Fourth Infantry Division the name "Reich Grenadier High and Mighty German Division." Schirach announced this decision at a celebration in the Concert House Hall. The decree read as follows:²³⁷

In recognition of the heroic deployment of the officers, noncommissioned officers, and men in the Greater German freedom fight, I award the name "Reich Grenadier High and Mighty German Division" to the Forty-Fourth Infantry Division. I connect with this the conviction that the members of the newly raised division will prove themselves worthy of their comrades who

June 10, 1943

remained behind in Stalingrad and will help all the more to bring Greater Germany's fight for its freedom and its future to a victorious conclusion.

Adolf Hitler

On June 2, Hitler attended a meeting of leaders of the German armament industry at the Platterhof on the Obersalzberg.²³⁸ First Speer gave a report on "increasing production figures." Then Hitler spoke.

The Führer expressed his heartfelt gratitude and total appreciation to the participants. He said that these outstanding successes had to be attributed primarily to German technology's being invigorated by the leadership of Reich Minister Albert Speer and by new ideas, as well as to industrial responsibility being energetically controlled by the Führer himself.

In appreciation of his "unique accomplishments," Hitler presented Speer with the newly created "Fritz Todt Ring."

On June 4, Marshal Mannerheim celebrated his seventy-sixth birthday. No congratulatory telegram by Hitler was published this time.

On June 8, Hitler met with Keitel and Zeitzler at the Berghof.²³⁹ They discussed the units of the renegade Russian general Vlassov and the Russians employed as "Hiwis" (*Hilfswillige*, volunteers, helpers) by the German armies. Hitler was opposed to all efforts to grant even minimal rights to subjugated populations or allowing them to carry arms. In the course of this discussion, he again referred to numerous real and imagined events during the First World War in order to substantiate his argument that Vlassov's people were unreliable and their deployment had to be limited. He declared the following:

We will never build up a Russian army—that is a first-rate phantom. Before we do that, it would be much easier to send the Russians as workers to Germany. After all, this is far more decisive. I do not need a Russian army that I must first interlace with German "corset bones." If I get Russian workers instead, then that is a service to me. Then I can free Germans and reeducate the Russians.

Since foreign helpers with the German armies, armed "eastern people," and SS "volunteers" already numbered in the hundreds of thousands, it was difficult for Hitler to do anything about this development. The deficit in available soldiers was already so grave that these assistants had become irreplaceable.

On June 10, Hitler received the Italian ambassador Dino Alfieri at the Berghof. The occasion was the anniversary of Italy's entry into the

June 20, 1943

war.²⁴⁰ Mussolini met with von Mackensen in Rome for the same reason.

In the middle of June, Hitler received the former state secretary von Weizsäcker, who now served as ambassador to the Vatican. Weizsäcker wanted general instructions for Rome and proposed a policy of “mutual nonintervention,” as he recalled.²⁴¹

Hitler agreed. He then spoke about Bismarck who had been defeated in the Kulturkampf [struggle between church and state] because, unlike the priests, he had not had the ear of the common man. After the war, Hitler intended to permit the continued existence of the church as an instrument of the state, but not in any other form. In passing, Hitler mentioned that there were only three men in Rome: the king, the Duce, and the pope. The last of the three was decidedly the strongest. Hitler portrayed the war situation in such rosy colors that he could not possibly have believed it himself.

At the end of the talk, Hitler remarked as follows:

Actually, I envy you. I must now return to my headquarters in the east. Three months in a cultural center like Rome, that would be all right with me.

On June 16, the Führer sent a congratulatory telegram to King Gustav V of Sweden on his eighty-fifth birthday.

On June 18, Horthy received a handwritten letter from Hitler on his seventy-fifth birthday.²⁴²

On June 20, the following decree was published on the occasion of a roll call for the newly raised Sixtieth Motorized Infantry Division:²⁴³

In recognition of the outstanding deployment of my SA in the struggle for the Greater German Reich, I award the Sixtieth Infantry Division (motorized) on the day of its integration with the SA regiment “Feldherrnhalle” the name “Panzer Grenadier Division Feldherrnhalle.”

I thereby also recognize the heroic struggle of the members of the Sixtieth Infantry Division (motorized) who remained behind at Stalingrad. I am certain that the officers, noncommissioned officers, and men of the Panzer Grenadier Division Feldherrnhalle will do everything, true to the example of their fallen comrades, in order to bring the struggle of the Reich for its freedom and its greatness to a victorious conclusion.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler was constantly thinking about how he could eliminate all active opposition by the German military and have his revenge on the culprits. On March 4, he had ordered that all death sentences for members of the Wehrmacht could be carried out by hanging.²⁴⁴ Now he ordered the creation of a special drumhead court-martial for the

June 20, 1943

Wehrmacht. The decree read as follows:²⁴⁵

The Führer and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht

Führer Headquarters, June 21, 1943

I

I order the creation of a central special drumhead court-martial for the Wehrmacht.

1. The special drumhead court-martial is permitted to sentence by summary trial political crimes that are directed against faith in the political or military leadership, and by application of the appropriate strict measures may pass a death or prison sentence. Execution will immediately follow upon the confirmation of the sentence.

The court shall have jurisdiction over every member of the Wehrmacht who has committed an offense in the home war-zone or whose whereabouts is there. The chief of the OKW shall be authorized beyond this to clarify the competence of the special drumhead court-martial for every member of the Wehrmacht.

2. I exercise the rights of the judge (*Gerichtsherr*), insofar as I do not confer them on the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht or order something else in the individual case. The president of the Reich court-martial will perform the duties of the judge.

The competent judge will be held responsible by me for reporting to the president of the Reich court-martial crimes of the above-mentioned nature in the most speedy manner.

3. The special drumhead court-martial will be linked to the Reich court-martial by a special senate. As judges will be nominated, insofar as this is possible, one member each from the army, navy, and Luftwaffe; the branches of the Wehrmacht will submit nominations.

II

Every judge to whom it is reported in whatever form that one of the officers in his jurisdiction is accused of a political crime must investigate this accusation in a judicial inquiry.

I order furthermore the following:

1. In *all* proceedings against officers involving political crimes that are not within the competence of the special drumhead court-martial, the court records must without exception be immediately forwarded to the president of the Reich court-martial, following the decision on the confirmation and execution of the sentence or following the suspension of proceedings. This applies to the entire war-zone.

2. Should the president judge the decision inappropriate to the offense, he will report this to the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht. Should he agree with the view of the president, he will seek my decision in cases of sentences or execution orders; in the case of a suspension of proceedings, he will instruct the judge to continue the inquiry or bring a charge.

III

July 1, 1943

I direct the chief of the OKW to issue the necessary supplementary and implementing regulations.

The requirements of the chief of the OKW in questions of the personnel and constitution of the special drumhead court-martial will prevail. Upon request, the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe shall place a plane at the disposal of the court.

Adolf Hitler

On June 22, Hitler awarded Envoy Rudolf Rahn the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross for his "outstanding achievements in the service of the Reich," along with the Iron Cross First Class for his "exceedingly brave personal service."²⁴⁶

On June 23, an announcement was made public that Hitler had appointed the deputy Gauleiter Albert Hoffmann as Gauleiter of South-Westphalia.²⁴⁷

On June 26, Hitler exchanged telegrams with the conference of the Union of National Journalists' Associations in Vienna.²⁴⁸

On June 29, he ordered a "party funeral" for the commissar general for the occupied Dutch territories, Fritz Schmidt, who had "died in a crash on an official trip in France."²⁴⁹

On June 30, there was a report that Hitler had awarded the Thai foreign minister, Vikhit-Vatakan, the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.²⁵⁰

There was still no sign of Operation Citadel (the assault on Kursk) on the eastern front. As mentioned before, Hitler had postponed the operation from May until the middle of June. Whether he liked it or not, he had to return to the Wolfsschanze headquarters in East Prussia.

On July 1, he received all commanders and commanding generals involved in the operation there. After a presentation, he informed them of his decision to launch Operation Citadel at this point. Manstein reported the following on this:²⁵¹

First, Hitler gave detailed reasons for the earlier postponement. It had been necessary in view of the regeneration and reinforcement of personnel and matériel for the units earmarked for the attack. Now, their personnel had been replenished. In terms of matériel, we are superior to the Soviets in tanks for the first time.

What was new and not very convincing in light of his earlier explanations was his claim that the postponement had above all been necessary because, if we had struck any earlier, then the calls for help by the Soviets would have resulted in immediate landings by the western powers in the Mediterranean area. At the time, we would not have had the means to counter this. We could not have

July 14, 1943

counted on resistance by the Italians. In the Balkans, the enemy would have found support with the local populations. Now, the critical phase was essentially over. We now had largely sufficient forces on Sardinia, Sicily, the Peloponnese, and Crete.

He correctly²⁵² justified his decision to carry out Citadel by saying that we could not wait until the enemy takes the offensive, which might not happen until the winter or the creation of a second front. In addition, a decisive and successful offensive as soon as possible was desirable in view of its influence on our allies and the homeland.

At the end of the discussion, Hitler repeated his claim that Italy's decision to remain neutral in 1939 "had made it possible for the British government to influence France to enter the war, too."

In Bucharest on July 3, Manstein presented Antonescu with the Crimean Shield in Gold. Hitler had awarded it to him on the anniversary of the conquest of Sevastopol.²⁵³

With the coming Operation Citadel in mind, Hitler issued a proclamation on July 4, an excerpt from which read as follows:²⁵⁴

The blow which the German armed forces will deal the enemy must be of decisive importance and must bring about a turn of events in the war. This blow must represent the last battle for the victory of the German arms.

On July 5, Army Groups South (Manstein) and Center (Kluge) started the attack. After initial successes, this last German offensive at the eastern front had to be discontinued after one week, because of strong Russian resistance. On July 17, the operation was given up for good.

On July 6, Hitler received a delegation of Turkish officers at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Surprisingly, Turkey had followed an invitation by Hitler and had sent several officers, headed by Colonel General Toydemir, to Germany on June 24. From June 25 to July 6, they had visited sectors of the German eastern front and the Channel coast.

Hitler received his guests, who appeared in full uniform, in the presence of Keitel.²⁵⁵ While the Führer looked quite solemn at the meeting, he was undoubtedly happy about this visit from a country that did not belong to Germany's satellite states.

On July 14, Hitler conveyed his "heartfelt best wishes" to Pavelich in a telegram on his birthday.²⁵⁶

On July 18, Hitler sent a "friendly congratulatory telegram" to Franco on the Spanish national holiday.²⁵⁷

July 19, 1943

Contrary to Hitler's expectations, the Anglo-Americans had landed on Sicily on July 10. The German forces had been unable to prevent this. Naturally, Hitler blamed the Italians for it and immediately arranged for a meeting with the Duce. The final conquest of Sicily would undoubtedly soon entail the military collapse of Italy—all the parties involved appeared to realize this.

The meeting between Hitler and Mussolini took place at Feltre, near Belluno in northern Italy, on July 19.²⁵⁸ As the envoy Dr. Schmidt reported, Hitler gave Mussolini a dressing-down in front of a large number of Italian generals. To make matters worse, exaggerated news of the first air raid on Rome, which occurred that morning, arrived. Mussolini was so agitated that he could barely follow the proceedings and later asked Schmidt for a copy of his notes.

Mussolini knew that Italy could not take it much longer. The Italian people would not put up a serious resistance to the Allied landings. While he tried to get weapons and ammunition deliveries from Hitler, the Führer offered him only German divisions. Uninterruptedly for over three hours, Hitler tried to convince Mussolini that there was only one way out for them: to fight and to keep on fighting on all fronts, in Russia as well as in Italy. What counted was the fanatical will to win. In Germany, fifteen-year-old boys were manning the anti-aircraft guns.

If anybody tells me that we can leave these tasks to later generations, then I tell him: this is not the case. Nobody can say whether the next generation will be a generation of giants. Germany needed thirty years in order to recover; Rome never rose again. That is the language of history.

After lunch, things continued in this manner. In spite of Hitler's torrent of words, the dictators could not agree on anything in the end. The official German communiqué made this perfectly clear, being of unprecedented brevity:²⁵⁹

The Führer and the Duce met on Monday, July 19, in a city in northern Italy. Military questions were discussed.

Unlike the communiqué following their meeting at Klessheim from April 7 to 10, 1943, there was no more talk here of "complete agreement" having been achieved, the "great warmth" of the talks, or the "grim determination to wage this war by a supreme effort until the final victory."

Hitler flew back to East Prussia from Feltre. Mussolini returned empty-handed to Rome. The next few days would decide his fate.

July 19, 1943

Not only the Italian people, the royal family, and the military men, but also the highest-ranking Fascist leaders were convinced that it was time to put an end to the war and to Mussolini's reign.

The members of the Great Fascist Council demanded that the council be summoned. Reluctantly, Mussolini gave in. The session in the Palazzo Venezia began at 6:00 p.m. on July 24.²⁶⁰ For one hour, the Duce was allowed to speak uninterruptedly about the government's activities, the situation in general, and the meeting at Feltre. Then, however, he was repeatedly interrupted by hecklers' shouts. In the end, the Palazzo sounded like a sailors' bar. The gentlemen rudely accused one another of all sorts of misdeeds. Marshal de Bono even pulled out his revolver, which he put down only after Mussolini reminded him of his own past sins.

After a number of incidents, Grandi managed to have his resolution put up for a vote. He demanded that the head of the government "request the king to take over the actual command of the armed forces and make the final decision on all orders in the interest of the welfare of the country." The result of the vote was catastrophic for Mussolini: nineteen members voted in favor of the resolution,²⁶¹ only eight voted against it, with one abstention.

After over twenty years in government, it took Mussolini a while to get used to the idea that he would no longer be prime minister. On July 25, he attended to a number of official tasks, among other things inspecting damage done to the city in the course of the air raid. In the afternoon, however, he received a summons from the king. After a while, the king finally told Mussolini that he had already appointed Marshal Badoglio²⁶² as the new prime minister. At the end, he cautioned the Duce not to do anything foolish. For twenty years, he had covered for the Fascist regime, but now that the welfare of the Italian nation was at risk, he could no longer do so.

As a precautionary measure, Mussolini was escorted to an ambulance upon leaving the palace and placed under arrest.²⁶³

Nobody in Italy lifted a finger to save Fascism. On the contrary, the people were happy and hoped that now peace would soon return. Even though the new head of government Badoglio announced that the war would be continued, nobody believed him. If the intention was to continue the war, then there would have been no reason for deposing Mussolini. Fascism, which had supposedly been made for eternity,

July 26, 1943

disappeared overnight, along with its party and militia, as though it had never existed.

In Germany, the majority of the people and soldiers welcomed Mussolini's downfall. They remembered that the collapse of the allies in the year 1918 had heralded the end of the war. One would have willingly sacrificed the "achievements" of National Socialism for peace now. Most people hoped that the avalanche that Mussolini's fall would set in motion would also soon sweep away Hitler and his regime. But Hitler was not about to give up!

Naturally, great confusion reigned at the Wolfsschanze headquarters following the arrival of the news from Italy. Even though many there had foreseen the collapse of Italy, the swiftness of the change of government did come as a surprise, especially considering the pitiful role played in it by Mussolini and the Fascist movement. News of a heavy air raid on Hamburg did nothing to improve the mood at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.

During a discussion of the situation on July 25,²⁶⁴ Hitler had already raged against the Luftwaffe and the supposed inability of German planes to find London.

These days, you have to be content if we manage to find London at all. They dare to tell me these days: We do hope to find London! It is a crying shame (*Affenschande*), and I will tell it exactly as it is to the Reichsmarschall. I call a spade a spade.

Most of the explanations which I keep hearing go like this: It is impossible to find it. Not to find London, isn't it a crying shame?! I have to let some blockhead tell me: "Yes, my Führer, when he [the British pilot] comes to Dortmund from England, then he is able, thanks to his present beam method, to drop his bombs on hangars five hundred meters in width and two hundred fifty meters in length." Blockhead! But *we* cannot find London, which is fifty kilometers across and at a distance of a hundred fifty kilometers from the coast.

The times had certainly changed since German planes had rained bombs on London in September 1940!

On the evenings of July 25 and 26, Hitler held a series of agitated conferences at his headquarters on the situation in Italy. Göring, Goebbels, and Himmler were ordered to attend them in part.²⁶⁵

What seemed most crucial to Hitler was to prevent at all costs a session like that of the Great Fascist Council in Germany! He wanted to place the Reichstag deputies under constant surveillance. Goebbels noted on this topic the following:²⁶⁶

July 30, 1943

Knowledge of these incidents [in Italy] could possibly lead subversive elements to believe that they also can bring about what Badoglio and his friends brought about in Rome. The Führer ordered Himmler to make sure that any such potentially surfacing dangers meet with the strictest measures by the police. Anyway, he does not think that too much was to be expected here. The German Volk hates the Italians too much.

Of course, Hitler would have loved to send a few paratroopers to Rome in order to arrest that “filthy swine” Badoglio, the king, and the crown prince—as well as to occupy the Vatican—and take out the entire “herd of pigs” (*Schweinepack*). However, these were merely spontaneous ideas, which he never dared to carry out in the end. What he lacked was a good excuse. If the Fascists had only managed a revolt somewhere, then he could have rushed to their “rescue.” Had Badoglio not been so clever as to promise “further cooperation” and “a continuation of the war,” then things would have been different. But as matters stood, what could he do?

Hitler’s insecurity was evident in the German government’s uncoordinated information policy regarding the events in Italy. It recalled the treatment of the Hess case by the press in 1941.

In order to deceive the German public as to the disastrous nature of the collapse of Hitler’s 1919 theory of friendship with Italy, the press treated the announcements and appeals by the new Badoglio government as though an insignificant change of government had taken place in Italy, which did not put into question the friendship between Germany and Italy. Even Mussolini’s departure from government was described as regrettable but understandable, especially considering that it was partly due to “the Duce’s bad health.”

There was a very curious news item, which reported that Hitler had presented the deposed Duce with a collection of Nietzsche’s works on his sixtieth birthday on July 29. Did this mean that Mussolini was supposed to spend the rest of his life studying philosophy, for example, the doctrine of the superman? The official announcement read as follows:²⁶⁷

Führer Headquarters, July 30, 1943

The Führer has sent the Duce, through Field Marshal Kesselring, the collected works of Nietzsche in a beautiful special edition with a heartfelt dedication, as a personal present on his sixtieth birthday.

The German people considered this announcement in detail. If Kesselring had brought the present to Mussolini, then the Duce could

July 26, 1943

not be held captive at a secret location or be dead, as some rumors claimed.

There was also the matter of a rather peculiar meeting between von Ribbentrop and the new Italian foreign minister Guariglia, which took place in Tarvisio on August 6.²⁶⁸ Again, “future cooperation” was stressed. While the participants were nearly the same as at earlier meetings, the Italians no longer offered the Fascist salute. Von Ribbentrop took an armed SS escort with him, as a precaution.

Even though something was obviously not quite right about the new German-Italian relations, Badoglio managed the impossible: his tactics succeeded in delaying Hitler’s active intervention in Italy for more than six weeks. Hitler did not yet dare allow Rommel to play the role he had reserved for him in the disarming of Italy. Instead, he sent him to Thessalonica.²⁶⁹ He was far more worried about the attitude which the twenty Italian divisions in the Balkans might take than about the actual situation in Italy. This was evidenced by Directive No. 48. Dated July 26, it read as follows:²⁷⁰

I. Enemy efforts in the eastern Mediterranean, connected with the attack against Sicily, make it seem likely that there will soon be landing operations against the blockaded Aegean front along the Peloponnesian-Crete-Rhodes line, and against the western coast of Greece and the neighboring Ionian Islands.

In case the enemy operations spread from Sicily into southern Italy, an attack should be expected against the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, north of the Straits of Otranto.

The enemy leaders also place reliance on their further plans for bandit movements deep inland in the southeast, for the most part systematically guided by themselves.

The neutral position of Turkey is beyond doubt at present, but will require attention in the future.

II. Owing to the current situation, in agreement with our ally Italy, a new command structure will be established in the southeast territory along the following lines: A. Army: 1) The [German] high command of the southeast takes command of the Italian Eleventh Army on July 27, 1943, at midnight. [Technical details follow.²⁷¹]

The persistence with which Hitler prepared for an Allied landing in the Balkans was astonishing. After the Allies had just taken Sicily, it was obvious that their next target would be the Italian mainland. It was far too risky to try to conquer Europe from the jagged Balkans. It would simply take too much time. The Balkans were a highly unlikely place for an attack, especially considering the far more favorable

August 15, 1943

circumstances in France and Italy. Furthermore, the Allies realized something that Hitler apparently did not: historically, Russia always regarded military operations in the Balkans as a threat.

Of course, Hitler had not completely abandoned his plan for occupying Italy. Directive No. 49 (Operation Alaric, later also called Axis), which dealt with these questions, was never formally issued;²⁷² studies on the occupation continued but in secret.

On August 2, Hitler had artillery general Wodrig lay a wreath at Hindenburg's sarcophagus at the Tannenberg Memorial.²⁷³

On August 3, Hitler awarded the city commander of Hamburg, Major General Wahle, the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross. He sent him this telegram:²⁷⁴

In recognition of your self-sacrificing personal service in the course of the relief campaign for Hamburg that was so terribly struck, I award you the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross with Swords.

Adolf Hitler

The situation on the eastern front was becoming increasingly critical. The Russians had not only thrown the German units involved in Operation Citadel back to their initial positions, but they also launched new strong offensives in the central and, above all, in the southern sectors along the Donetsk region.

Hitler was not much impressed. In the middle of August, he told Zeitzler that the south, that is, the Mediterranean, meant more to him than the east.²⁷⁵ The Balkans kept haunting him.

For this reason, he summoned the Bulgarian king Boris to Rastenburg on August 15.²⁷⁶ He wanted to feel him out on his stand regarding a possible Allied landing. He had long distrusted King Boris because of his refusal to declare war on the Russians. There was a new factor involved, too: King Boris was married to a daughter of the Italian king.²⁷⁷ This sufficed to make him highly suspicious in Hitler's eyes. The discussion with Hitler at the Wolfsschanze headquarters was probably not very pleasant for the Bulgarian king. In any event, the pilot Baur noted that Boris was downcast on the return flight to Sofia: "The king who had staked everything on Hitler could no longer ignore that this card would not win."

No communiqué was published on Hitler's talk with King Boris. While the brief note on the meeting with Mussolini at Feltre had

August 20, 1943

attracted general attention, the complete silence following King Boris' visit was even more revealing.

On August 17, the Allies completed their occupation of Sicily. The last German and Italian troops were forced to retreat across the Strait of Messina. The high command of the Wehrmacht announced on this day "the planned evacuation of the island."

On the night of August 18 to 19, the Luftwaffe chief of staff, Colonel General Hans Jeschonnek, committed suicide at Göring's headquarters. The public was informed that he had succumbed to a "severe illness." Hitler had Göring place a wreath in his name at Jeschonnek's funeral.²⁷⁸

With the Udet case,²⁷⁹ this was the second suicide among leading Luftwaffe generals. No matter what the precise reasons were, the suicides underlined the fact that Hitler had asked too much of the German Luftwaffe, and it was increasingly less able to carry out the tasks he set for it.

On August 19, it was made public that Hitler had charged Obergruppenführer Wilhelm Schepmann, the head of the SA Group Saxony, with the conduct of the affairs of the SA chief of staff.²⁸⁰

On August 20, Hitler decreed a series of domestic policy measures.²⁸¹ For a long time already, Hitler had distrusted the Reich minister of the interior Frick. In the period before and after the seizure of power, Frick had rendered him great services. In particular his skilful legal formulations had played a significant role in the establishment of Hitler's dictatorship. However, Frick's relations with Hitler had considerably cooled as the Führer began to institute his completely arbitrary reign in the course of the Second World War and, in doing so, constantly ignored his own National Socialist laws, the Reichstag, and so on. Hitler had grown especially angry with Frick as the Reich minister pressed for the creation of a senate that would deal with the question of succession to the Führer.²⁸² While Hitler himself had announced in his Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939, that he now intended to summon such a senate "by law," he actually had no intentions of having his freedom of action restricted by such a forum. Frick was a dangerous man for Hitler because he also was the president of the Reichstag parliamentary party.

Naturally, since Hitler was constantly preoccupied with questions of power politics, he was not happy that Frick, in his capacity as interior minister, was officially Himmler's superior and in charge of the police.

August 21, 1943

In addition, Frick headed the Reich Labor Service, which, in the course of the war, had taken on increasingly militaristic characteristics, with its members carrying arms. In case of a crisis, Frick would have the police and the Labor Service at his disposal and, hence, would be capable of turning against the Führer.

For this reason, Hitler dismissed Frick as Reich minister of the interior on August 20. He assigned him to the insignificant post of Reich protector in Prague. Neurath, who had not actually occupied this post since September 1941, was finally relieved of his duties in Prague for good. To prevent Frick from doing anything foolish in his new post, Hitler created the position of a “German state minister for Bohemia and Moravia,”²⁸³ to which he appointed the previous state secretary with the Reich protector, SS Brigadeführer Karl Hermann Frank. As Hitler’s obedient servant, Himmler naturally became the new Reich minister of the interior. The Führer placed himself directly in charge of the Labor Service in the following decree of August 20:²⁸⁴

As an amendment of the Reich Labor Service Law in the form of the announcement of September 9, 1939, (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 1747) and my decree of January 30, 1937, (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 95) I order the following:

I

Carrying the designation “Der Reichsarbeitsführer” (the Reich leader of labor), a high Reich office shall be established with its seat in Berlin.

II

1. The Reich leader of labor shall be in charge of the Reich Labor Service.
2. The privileges regarding the affairs of the Reich Labor Service to which the Reich minister of the interior is entitled in accordance with laws, decrees, and ordinances, will devolve on the Reich leader of labor. The consideration of action on affairs of the Reich Labor Service will no longer form part of the jurisdiction of the Reich minister of the interior.
3. The Reich leader of labor will be directly responsible to me.

On August 20, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Horthy on the Hungarian national holiday.²⁸⁵

On August 21, he received the minister for the Honvéd (Hungarian armed forces), Colonel General von Csatay, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁸⁶

On August 25, the public was informed that, on a suggestion by Speer, Hitler had decided to establish an educational grant for the families of fallen soldiers.²⁸⁷

August 28, 1943

On August 27, Hitler flew to his Werwolf headquarters. During what was his last visit in Vinnitsa, he met with von Manstein.²⁸⁸ In view of the heavy Russian attacks, the latter put it plainly to the Führer: either quickly bring up new forces, at least twelve divisions, or give up the Donets areas. Hitler chose the first option and promised von Manstein “all available units.” But naturally these “available units” did not exist any more. What mattered to Hitler was that Manstein would continue to defend the Donets region with the forces already at his disposal.

Then Hitler returned to Rastenburg. On the following day, he met with Kluge for a discussion of the situation at the central sector.²⁸⁹ Hitler declared that he would await developments in the Mediterranean before making any decisions regarding the eastern front.

On the same day, news of the death of the Bulgarian king arrived. Following his return from Hitler’s headquarters, King Boris spent a week in the Bulgarian retreat Tshankuria. He went on excursions there, talked with tourists, and went hunting.²⁹⁰ On August 23, he returned to Sofia, where he took ill the same evening. He suffered from a “clogging of the left cardiac artery.” Two outstanding specialists, Dr. Seitz of Berlin and Professor Eppinger of Vienna, were summoned and arrived in Sofia on August 24. However, the efforts of the doctors were in vain. Following complications from pneumonia, the King died on the afternoon of August 28. The unexpected death of the forty-nine-year-old monarch gave rise to speculations that he had been poisoned. Supposedly, following the unsuccessful secret talks at his headquarters, the Führer had ordered him to be poisoned. Instead, Hitler claimed that Princess Mafalda, the wife of Prince Philip of Hesse, who was visiting Sofia at the time, had poisoned him on behalf of the Italian royal house.²⁹¹

On the death of the king, Hitler sent the following telegrams of condolence:²⁹²

To Prince Kyrill of Bulgaria, the King’s brother:

The news of the demise of your brother, His Majesty King Boris, has profoundly shaken me. In thanking Your Royal Highness for the conveyance of this information, I ask you to accept this expression of my sincere heartfelt sympathy with you on this terrible loss.

Adolf Hitler

To the queen dowager:

August 30, 1943

The distressing news of the demise of His Majesty King Boris has moved me painfully. In King Boris, Bulgaria has lost a man who led the destiny of his people with admirable courage and prudent wisdom. In him, I lose a loyal friend and ally whose memory will always be highly honored by myself and the German Volk. I ask Your Majesty to accept my and the entire German Volk's profound, sincere sympathy with the royal house and with the Bulgarian nation.

Adolf Hitler

To Prime Minister Filov:

On the demise of His Majesty King Boris, I wish to convey to Your Excellency my and the German Volk's heartfelt sympathies. I know that you were closely tied to your sovereign, as his loyal adviser in his historic mission for the future of Bulgaria. Together with you, I keenly feel the terrible loss which Bulgaria has suffered. I ask you to express my sympathies to the royal Bulgarian ministerial council as well.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler sent Grand Admiral Raeder to attend the king's funeral in Sofia on September 5.

Assuming the name Simeon II, the six-year-old son of the king followed him on the throne. A regency council was created, consisting of Prince Kyrill, Prime Minister Filov, and war minister, Lieutenant General Mikhov.

On August 29, Hitler received the newly appointed envoy of the "Independent State of Croatia," Professor Stjepan Ratkovich, and the new Romanian envoy, Jon Georghe, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁹³

On the same day, the General Freiherr von Boineburg-Lengsfeld, the military governor of Paris, distributed 211 "Führer certificates of honor" to the families of members of the French Foreign Legion who had fallen in Russia.²⁹⁴

In Copenhagen at this time, the commander of the German troops proclaimed martial law in Denmark.²⁹⁵

In Berlin on August 30, Thierack presented the Bulgarian justice minister Partov with the Grand Cross of the German Order, which he had been awarded by Hitler.²⁹⁶

On August 31, Hitler allowed two armies to retreat from the Donets area, "if the situation absolutely necessitates this and if there is no other possibility left."²⁹⁷

On September 2, Hitler again concerned himself with questions of domestic policy. In two decrees, he expanded his own powers.

September 2, 1943

The first decree dealt with the “concentration of the war economy.” It began with these words:²⁹⁸

In consideration of the streamlined concentration and the uniform deployment of all economic forces required by the war, I order the following for the duration of the war:

I

The Reich minister for economic affairs will be responsible for all principal questions of economic policy in the German economy.

II

The responsibilities of the Reich ministry of economics regarding raw materials and production in industry and in craftsmen’s trades will devolve on the Reich minister for armament and munitions. In view of his expanded scope of duties, the Reich minister for armament and munitions will bear the designation “Reich minister for armament and war production.”

The second decree concerned the Todt organization. In general, its members did not bear arms, although they did wear uniforms. As Hitler feared, it was possible that they would fall into the hands of agitators. Based on this consideration, he placed this organization immediately under his supervision, too. The decree read as follows:²⁹⁹

I

1. The Todt organization will be an institution geared toward the implementation of all kinds of tasks involving construction and building, tasks of decisive impact on the war.

2. The chief of the Todt organization will be the Reich minister for armament and munitions. He will answer directly to me and will be responsible only to me.

II

The deployment of the Todt organization will take place in the Greater German Reich and in the annexed or occupied territories. Deployment will be ordered by the chief of the Todt organization.

III

Articles I and II will apply equally to the carriers employed by the Todt organization.

September 4, 1943

IV

Implementing regulations on the structure of the Todt organization will be issued by the chief of the Todt organization.

On September 3, Hitler met with von Manstein and Kluge at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Both of them again wanted new troops.³⁰⁰ However, Hitler was frank and told them the following:

. . . additional forces could not be taken away from other theaters of the war or from Army Group North. Hitler also totally rejected the idea of creating a unitary command by conferring responsibility for all theaters of the war on the chief of staff.

The latter rejection came as no surprise. The generals' proposal would have taken important privileges away from Hitler. And he was not ready to allow this. He much preferred increasing his power.

On the same day, Montgomery's Eighth Army landed in Calabria. On the fourth anniversary of Britain's declaration of war, the English set foot on the continent. Resistance in Italy would collapse within a matter of days; otherwise, the change in government of July 25 would have been senseless. However, Hitler apparently still believed that the unstable situation there would continue

On September 4, he sent Reich youth leader Arthur Axmann the following telegram:³⁰¹

On the day of premilitary training on September 4 and 5, the Hitler Youth in all areas of the Reich is bearing witness to its skills in premilitary training as preparation for military service with the Wehrmacht.

While, in an unprecedented heroic fight, the Wehrmacht is doing its utmost for the future of Greater Germany, the youth in the homeland is steeling its body and spirit. In the future, every new age-group will be trained in premilitary-training camps by battle-tested soldiers who largely were once Hitler Youth leaders themselves. Soldierly thought and action based on National Socialist ideas are the goal of this training.

The boys earlier trained by the Hitler Youth are already proving themselves in the ranks of the Wehrmacht. I thank the Reich youth leaders for this.

As the competitions of the Navy Hitler Youth and the Air Force Hitler Youth in Stralsund and Quedlinburg were devoted to the memory of the brave men at sea and in the air, so let us dedicate this day of premilitary training in all German Gaus to the silent heroism of the front-line soldiers, who so self-sacrificially fight in the divisions of the army and Waffen SS.

The front expects that—in this most difficult, fateful struggle—the Hitler Youth will continue to see its most noble mission in providing the fighting troops with the best soldierly recruits. National Socialist willpower and action

September 8, 1943

will increasingly be expressed by the attitude and appearance of the youth. Then that strong generation will grow up that will in the end successfully resolve all tasks that fate has set our Volk.

Adolf Hitler

On September 4, Hitler ordered the evacuation of the Kuban bridgehead, the so-called Krimhild movement (*Krimhildbewegung*).³⁰² The order opened with these words:

In order to free units for other tasks, I have decided to evacuate the Kuban bridgehead and to withdraw the Seventeenth Army across the straits of Kerch to the Crimea [technical details follow, regarding the evacuation movements, destruction of buildings, and the defense of the Crimea].

This personal order was truly surprising coming from a man who had publicly declared as follows:

What we once possess, we will never again surrender!³⁰³

Land taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!³⁰⁴

Now for the first time, Hitler himself gave orders to evacuate an area which he must have known he would never be able to retake.

On September 5, Hitler again increased the powers of his personal physician, Professor Brandt, whom he had already placed in charge of the medical and public health services earlier.³⁰⁵

On September 8, Hitler flew to Zaporozhye for talks with Army Group South. The situation on the eastern front was becoming critical. The Russians had recaptured Kharkov on August 22. The German efforts during February and March had been in vain.

In addition to von Manstein, Kleist (Army Group A) and Colonel General Ruoff of the Seventeenth Army attended the talks.³⁰⁶ While Hitler agreed to withdraw the right wing to the line Melitopol-Dnieper, he announced that he would provide new self-propelled assault-gun detachments which would make this unnecessary. Hitler was ever ready to make promises of assistance and, time and again, he managed to impress the generals with this. Saying goodbye to von Manstein at the airport, he even promised him an additional four divisions for the securing of the Dnieper crossings.

Following his return to Rastenburg, Hitler was given news of Italy's unconditional surrender. On September 8, Badoglio sent him a telegram, describing the hopelessness of Italy's situation. The telegram closed on this note:³⁰⁷

September 9, 1943

You cannot expect a people to continue a war in which all legitimate hope, I shall not say for victory, but for a successful defense, has vanished. In order to prevent its complete ruin, Italy has been forced to address a request for a ceasefire to the enemy.

Hitler's "Italian mule," as Churchill had called Germany's ally, had collapsed for good! Hitler acted as though he had been done a great injustice and Italy's surrender had come as a complete surprise for him. He telephoned Goebbels³⁰⁸ and asked him to come to the headquarters on the next day. He did likewise with Göring, Himmler, and several Austrian Gauleiters. In addition, he personally wrote a press statement on "Badoglio's treason," which concluded with these words:³⁰⁹

Badoglio is unconditionally abandoning Italy to the enemy. The German leaders were prepared to see this step. All necessary measures have been taken. Since the criminal attack on the Duce on July 25 and the elimination of the Fascist government, the German government has paid special attention to the developments in Italy. It will know how to counter these new developments.

Hitler ordered the occupation of Italy. Initially, he had intended to take these measures on July 26. He issued orders to Kesselring regarding southern and central Italy and to Rommel regarding northern Italy.

When Goebbels arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on September 9, Hitler put on a show. He claimed that, on the day before, he had suddenly been seized by "a strange unrest," which had "immediately driven him back to his headquarters."³¹⁰

On the general situation, Hitler commented that he believed that, "given some effort, he would master things. Of course, we cannot hold southern Italy. We will have to retreat beyond Rome. The old line of defense, as the Führer has always envisioned it, will be established now, namely, the Apennines line."

On this day, Hitler's assessment of the situation was even more pessimistic than the actual situation. He expected "an attempt by the Anglo-Americans to invade the Netherlands" and described the situation in the east as "extremely critical."

When Goebbels asked him whether he thought it would be possible to do something with Stalin in terms of peace negotiations, Hitler refused.

Anyway, the Führer thinks that it will be easier to do something with the English than with the Soviets. In the Führer's opinion, the English will listen to reason at a certain point.

September 9, 1943

Surely, the English will also take Sardinia and Corsica. If they come out of this war with this loot [in addition to Sicily], then they will have won a few things. The Führer thinks that this will make them more open to a possible arrangement.

Hitler's old theory of friendship with England! He wanted to act "generously" and leave them Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica.³¹¹

Goebbels "energetically" urged Hitler now to speak before the German Volk. Hitler usually shied away from speaking in public under such unfavorable circumstances. He much preferred to talk when there was some triumph to be reported. Finally, he agreed to work on a short radio address.³¹²

At dinner that night, Hitler discussed the value of medals.³¹³

The Führer thinks that the only medal which is being awarded fairly is the Mother's Cross; at least here there is a sharp delineation downward, although not upward. There is no bungling, and preferential treatment is not possible here.³¹⁴

On the next day, new reports from Italy arrived. "Things in northern and central Italy" had got off to an "extraordinarily favorable" start. However, German U-boats had arrived too late at the naval port of La Spezia, since the Italian fleet with over a hundred units had already gone to sea. In accordance with the terms of the armistice, it had passed on to Malta for internment.

All in all, things were not going so well in Italy that Hitler dared to speak publicly. He decided to postpone his speech. He felt that measures guaranteeing his own security were far more important than an address to "console the Volk." Following the news of Mussolini's removal from office, Hitler had placed the Reichstag deputies under police surveillance. Now that the power of the Italian royal house was becoming increasingly evident, Hitler took care to eliminate any role the former royal houses of Germany might play in power politics. He stated the following to Goebbels:

All German princes in the German Wehrmacht will now be eliminated.³¹⁵

4

During the lunch, news of the surrender of the Italian garrison in Rome to German troops arrived. Finally, Hitler felt more inclined to give a speech, even though he did not really feel up to it. Things would have been different, of course, had the Duce already been freed!

Nevertheless, Goebbels managed to get Hitler in front of the microphone and had him record the speech on a tape recorder. Hitler felt decidedly better once he had “got rid” of the speech, as Goebbels put it. He even promised to speak again soon, at the opening of the Winterhilfswerk in the Sportpalast in Berlin. However, he did not keep this promise.

Shortly after 8:00 p.m. on September 10, Hitler’s speech was broadcast in Germany:³¹⁶

My German Volksgenossen!

Freed from the heavy weight of the expectation which long haunted us, I now think the time has come that I am able to speak again to the German Volk, without having to take refuge in lies either to myself or to the public.

For a long time, the collapse of Italy which took place was foreseeable, not because of a lack of suitable possibilities in Italy for effective defense, and not because of the nonarrival of the necessary German help. Rather, it was the result of failure—or better the lack of desire—of those elements which have now caused the surrender in concluding their planned sabotage. What these men strove to achieve for many years has now been put into effect: the switching of the Italian government from the German Reich allied to Italy to the common enemy.

When England and France declared war on the German Reich in September 1939, Italy was obliged, by treaty, to declare its solidarity with Germany immediately. This solidarity was based not only on the agreements in the pact, but also on the fate which the enemies planned for Germany as well as for Italy in the future. It is known that Mussolini had firmly resolved to order an immediate mobilization. The same forces which today brought about the surrender succeeded in preventing Italy’s entry into the war in August 1939.

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As the Führer of the German Volk, I understood the extraordinary domestic difficulties that the Duce was experiencing. Therefore, neither at this time nor later, did I urge Italy to honor its obligations to the alliance. On the contrary, I completely left it to the Italian government's discretion either not to enter into the war at all or to do so at a point when it was felt suitable and it was at complete liberty to make the decision. By June 1940, Mussolini managed to create the domestic prerequisites for Italy to join the Reich's side.

The battles for Poland were already decided by this time, as were those for Norway, and those against France and its allied English armies on the continent. Nevertheless, I had to thank the Duce for his stand which, as I knew, he only managed to see through at home—not against the Italian people, but against certain circles—with the greatest difficulties. Since this time, the Reich and Italy fought together; in many theaters of the war, they spilled their blood together. Never for one second did the Duce or I doubt that the outcome of this battle would decide the existence or nonexistence of our people. Accordingly, Germany, even though it was itself immersed in a most difficult struggle, helped its ally to the utmost of its means.

Many offers of assistance were either completely rejected by the military rulers in Italy from the start or were accepted only under conditions which could not be met. At an appropriate time, documents will be submitted to the public that will reveal the extent of Germany's contribution to its ally in this fateful struggle and the extent of what it continued to be willing to contribute. The German soldier displayed an attitude in the common theaters of the war that distinguishes him everywhere. After all, without his intervention, North Africa would have already been lost for Italy in the winter of 1940–1941.

The name of Marshal Rommel shall remain eternally tied to this German achievement. When the Reich decided to help Italy in the Balkans in the spring of 1941, it did this not in order to realize its own ambitions, but simply in order to help the ally out and to eliminate a danger which arose due to his actions and which naturally also threatened Germany. Germany made this sacrifice at a moment when it had more than enough of its own worries, because of the feared large-scale Bolshevik attack on all of Europe, which was expected at any hour. The blood of numerous Volksgenossen sealed the German Volk's loyalty to the alliance.

The German Reich and I as its Führer could assume this stand only knowing that at the head of the Italian people stood one of the most important men of modern times, the greatest son of Italy since the end of antiquity. His unconditional loyalty was the prerequisite for the successful maintenance of the alliance. Future Italian generations will one day regard his overthrow as a profound disgrace, along with the dishonorable insults he suffered.

What ultimately triggered the long-decided coup d'état was the demand of the Duce for increased juridical powers for the successful conduct of the war. For this purpose, he wished to employ the strictest measures against open and secret saboteurs of the war, against reactionary enemies of social justice, and against the resistance movement within the Italian people. Until the last

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minute, Mussolini wished to neutralize the treacherous enemies of the Italian people in this struggle of life and death in order to secure Italy's future.

It is easy to understand the pain which I personally felt in view of the historically unprecedented injustice done to this man, his disgraceful treatment, which degraded him to the level of a common criminal, this man who had lived only for his people for over twenty years. I was, and am, happy to be allowed to call this great and loyal man my friend. Moreover, I do not change or deny my views whenever it seems opportune.³¹⁷ I believe that, in spite of views to the contrary, loyalty represents an irreplaceable value in international relations. Without it, all human society would begin to falter, and its organizations would sooner or later break apart. In spite of this, even after this humiliating event, the German troops on Sicily, the German pilots, men of the U-boats, motor torpedo boats, transporters of all types, and so on, on land, in the air, and at sea have fulfilled their duty to the utmost.

Although for reasons of tactical convenience the enemy today wishes to conceal this—posterity will one day find out that, with the exception of a few brave Italian units, it primarily were the German troops who defended with their blood not only the German Reich but also Italian soil.

If the leaders of the Italian state now decided to break the alliance, withdraw from the war, and, thereby, transform Italy itself into a theater of war, they may give whatever reasons for doing this. While they can portray this as a necessity, they will never find an excuse for the fact that this occurred without the ally's having been informed ahead of time.³¹⁸ Not only this: on the same day on which Marshal Badoglio signed the armistice, he asked the German chargé d'affaires in Rome to come see him and assured him that he, Marshal Badoglio, would never betray Germany, that we should trust him, and that he would prove this through his actions, that he was worthy of our trust, that Italy would above all never consider surrender.

On the day of the surrender, the king summoned the German chargé d'affaires and assured him in particular that Italy would never surrender, that it was bound to Germany for better or for worse, that it intended to stand loyally on our side. Yes, even one hour after the announcement of the betrayal, the Italian chief of staff Roatta told our military attaché that it was a filthy lie and an English propaganda hoax. At the same moment, the representative of the Italian foreign ministry stated that this information was only a typically British swindle and that he intended to issue a denial of it. Fifteen minutes later, he admitted that the information was indeed correct, and that Italy had withdrawn from the war.

In the eyes of the democratic warmongers as well as in those of the present Italian government, this behavior may seem an excellent example of tactically skillful statesmanship. History will one day come to a different conclusion. Future generations of Italians will be ashamed of the use of this tactic against an allied friend, who with his blood and sacrifices of all types fulfilled his duty to more than the letter of the treaty.

My Volksgenossen! Since I have had sufficient opportunity in the past two years to observe the increasing influence of these reactionary and anti-German

September 10, 1943

circles, which assumed an attitude hostile to the social tasks in Italy, there was no doubt, after the overthrow of the Duce, about the true intentions of this change in government.

In fulfillment of my duty, I have ordered all those measures which could be taken in such a case to spare the German Reich a fate which Marshal Badoglio and his men not only inflicted on the Duce and the Italian people, but into which they also intended to plunge Germany.³¹⁹

The interests of the German Volk in waging this war are for us as sacred as they are compelling. We all know that, in this merciless struggle, the loser will be annihilated, in accordance with the wishes of our enemies, while only the victor will retain the means for living. In cool determination, we are therefore willing to take those measures both great and small to destroy the hopes of our enemies. But also countless honorable Italians have now all the more declared themselves indissolubly tied to the struggle of the two people.

The loss of Italy means little militarily. After all, the struggle in this country was being fought primarily by German forces. We will now continue this fight freed from all encumbering burdens. The attempt of the international conspiracy of the plutocracies to break German resistance, like the Italian, by talk is childish. They must be mistaking the German Volk for another people. Their hope to find traitors here today as in Italy is based on complete ignorance of the essence of the National Socialist State. Their belief that they can bring about a July 25 in Germany, too, is based on a fundamental misconception of my position as well as of the attitude of my political comrades in arms, my field marshals, admirals, and generals.³²⁰

More than ever before, the German leaders oppose this ambition as a fanatically united community. Misery will only reinforce our determination. My private life has long ago ceased to belong exclusively to me. I work with the realization and the sense of duty that, by my contribution, I can secure the life of my Volk for future generations. That I have the right to believe unconditionally in this success is not only founded on my life, but also on the rise of our Volk.

Alone and abandoned, we had to accept the declarations of war from our enemies in the year 1939. We acted in accordance with Clausewitz's declaration that heroic resistance is at all times better than cowardly surrender. That is why I had already told the Reichstag on September 1, 1939, that neither time nor force of arms would ever defeat the German Volk. Since then, and primarily due to our own strength, we have forced the enemy's retreat from the German borders, in places to more than a thousand kilometers. Only by air is he still able to terrorize the German homeland. Here, too, the technological and organizational means are being developed not only to end his terror attacks for good, but also to retaliate by different and more effective measures.

While in this mighty and fateful struggle tactical necessities may at times force us to give up something at a front or to evade a particular threat, the ring of steel which protects the Reich will never break. It is forged by the German homeland and held up by the heroism and blood of our soldiers.

September 10, 1943

At this time in particular, I expect that the nation will all the more fulfill its duty with dogged persistency in all spheres of this mighty struggle. It has every reason to have confidence in itself.

The party must set an example in everything. The homeland can look with pride to its soldiers, who time and again do their duty at the heroic risk of life and under the most difficult circumstances. In the hours of suffering, in the course of many weeks and months of often superhuman efforts, may the front always remember the homeland which has today become a fighting front, too. Here the heroism of old men and boys, mothers, women, and girls is evident. Every soldier therefore has the sacred duty, more than ever before, to continue with the greatest perseverance and to do what must be done in this struggle. The German Volk never before had more right to be proud of itself in its history than in this mightiest struggle of all time. All attempts to subject Germany to the fate of an enslaved nation will fail because of this willpower and this achievement.

May every individual German, no matter where he stands, be aware that on him, on his effort and his willingness to sacrifice depends the preservation of our Volk, the fate and the future of many generations.

I can therefore not find the words to thank the German Volk, the men and women of the homeland, the soldiers at the front, for what they do, what they willingly bear, and patiently suffer. These words of thanks one day will be spoken by coming generations in the realization that their free and socially secure life has grown out of the sacrifice of our time. I myself am infinitely proud to be allowed to be the Führer of this Volk, and I am grateful to the Lord for every hour which He gives me to contribute through my work to making this greatest battle in our history successful.

The measures taken to protect German interests, in view of the developments in Italy, are very harsh. Insofar as they concern Italy, they are already progressing according to plan. The example of Yugoslavia's betrayal provided us with salutary insights and valuable realizations.³²¹

Italy's fate may serve as a lesson for all of us so that, in the hour of the most terrible distress and the most bitter need, we may never renounce national honor, that we loyally stand by our allies, and with a faithful heart fulfill what duty demands of us. The people which passes these trials by Providence will in the end receive as a reward from the Almighty the laurel wreath of the victor and therefore the prize of life. This victor must and will be Germany under any circumstances.

The speech was truly average. However, Goebbels was quite impressed by it. Proudly, he noted in his diary: "Even in England, they will have to admit that it is one of the strongest the Führer has given during the entire war." Goebbels had no more sense of irony than Hitler. Both were thrilled whenever the English had praised Hitler's accomplishments or those of the German soldiers!

September 12, 1943

After Hitler's speech, the high command of the Wehrmacht published an announcement on the disarmament of Italian troops in Italy, Albania, Croatia, Greece, and southern France. The report ended with these words:³²²

The Italian armed forces no longer exist. What will remain for eternity will be the contempt of the world for the traitor.

"The Italian armed forces no longer exist." Again, as with France in the previous year, one of Hitler's intentions voiced in *Mein Kampf* was fulfilled:

Never tolerate the emergence of two continental powers in Europe. Regard every attempt to organize a second military force along German borders, even if it consists merely in the formation of a state with the potential of becoming a military power, as an act of aggression against Germany. Regard it not as your right, but as your duty, to employ all means at your disposal, including force of arms, in hindering the emergence of such a state or, if such a state has already emerged, in its destruction.³²³

Now, however, he was forced to keep occupied by German troops Italy too.

On September 12, Hitler freed Mussolini in a *coup de main* at the Gran Sasso where the Duce had been interned at a mountain hotel, and brought him to Germany. SS Hauptsturmführer Otto Skorzeny led the foray by a special SS Kommando, including several parachutists. They landed on the mountain around 2:00 p.m. on September 12. A report published by the German News Bureau three days later listed at least one-third of the participants as missing or dead.³²⁴

Like nearly all other operations by Hitler, this theatrical coup took place on a weekend. He did not free Mussolini because he cared for him as a person or because he deluded himself on the Duce's future role. He primarily wanted to keep up the impression within the German Volk—and himself—that Fascist Italy with the Duce at its head still existed and that nothing at all had changed in his world.

Secondly, he felt the need to uphold his 1919 theory of alliance. Just as he managed to enter into an alliance with Italy and maintain it under any circumstances, he would still get the desired alliance with England arranged one day. A statement he made to his manservant Linge is revealing on this issue:³²⁵

Once this rescue becomes known, it will hit the world like a bomb—most of all the English. That will show the English that I never abandon a friend, that

September 12, 1943

I am a man of honor. Then, I will have kept my promise. England will say: "He is a true friend."

Although it seems incredible, Hitler apparently hoped that the English would be so touched by this rescue operation that they would try to win the friendship of such a true ally.

Mussolini was not thrilled in the least about his rescue. He was happy that the change of government had not cost his life and hoped not to be handed over to the Allies. The last thing he probably desired was to fall into Hitler's hands. Not without reason, he feared that the Führer would attempt to punish or kill him for his "failure" in the session of the Great Fascist Council. Contrary to Mussolini's claims broadcast later, films made of his liberation from the Grand Sasso show him to be exceedingly anxious and worried about the fate which awaited him as he took his seat in the "Fieseler Storch" airplane, which had landed in front of his hotel.

Mussolini's Italian guards did not resist in the least. It is possible that Badoglio's government had got wind of the operation. In accordance with the terms of the armistice, it would have been forced to surrender Mussolini, as a war criminal, to the Allies. However, Badoglio was as reluctant to do this as the German government was after the overthrow in 1918 when it rejected the Allies's request for the extradition of von Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and others. Badoglio did not mind Hitler's taking charge of Mussolini, since this meant that he no longer needed to concern himself with the Duce's fate.³²⁶

The German public was informed of Mussolini's liberation as though it were a question of a political and military victory without equal. But all the vociferous cheers and special reports did not deceive the public; Hitler's only victory in 1943 was rather odd. In the years 1940 and 1941, he himself would probably not have believed that he would one day broadcast the kidnapping of the deposed and powerless Mussolini as news of victory.

Mussolini was flown from the Gran Sasso to Vienna. From the Imperial Hotel, he telephoned Hitler, who was at his headquarters and had already been informed by Himmler that the *coup de main* had been a success. On the following day, Mussolini was brought to Munich, where his likewise "liberated" family already awaited him.³²⁷ Hitler telephoned Skorzeny, congratulated him, promoted him to SS

September 18, 1943

Sturmabführer, and awarded him the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.³²⁸

On September 14, Mussolini arrived at the Rastenburg airfield. He was still wearing a dark civilian suit and a black coat. Hitler welcomed him and hugged his "friend." On the same evening, a series of "confidential conversations" followed. A first result of the talks was the issuing of four brief "orders of the day" by Mussolini on September 15.³²⁹

On September 15, the governments of Germany and Japan issued this joint declaration:³³⁰

The breach of faith by the government of Marshal Badoglio does not affect in any manner the Tripartite Pact, which remains in force as before without reservation. The Reich government and the Japanese government are determined to continue waging the war together, with all means at their disposal, until the final victory.

On the same day, Hitler received von Manstein in Zeitzler's presence. Von Manstein again reported on the dangerous situation of Army Group South, whose northern wing was particularly endangered. He urgently requested assistance.³³¹ Hitler promised him four divisions from Army Group Center. However, it was likewise heavily pressed by the Russians, who had conquered Orël in August and Bryansk on September 14. The Russians were now advancing on Smolensk—Russia's holy city.

On September 18, Hitler received a new head of a satellite state at the Wolfsschanze headquarters: the Serbian prime minister Colonel General Nedich.³³²

On the same day, the talks with Mussolini ended.³³³ Hitler had resuscitated the weary Duce a bit, but all in all he was dissatisfied with him.³³⁴ He simply couldn't understand why Mussolini did not regard it as imperative to have his son-in-law Ciano executed as a "traitor."³³⁵ It had cost Hitler "great effort to convince him that at least Grandi was a conscious traitor to the Fascist Party and the Duce."

Mussolini was brought to the Prince Carl Palace in Munich, from where he addressed the Italian people in a radio address that evening. During Hitler's years of triumph in 1937 and 1938, Mussolini had always set up quarters at the Prince Carl Palace. But his speech now lacked the enthusiasm of earlier years. Mussolini cared about only one thing, his mistress Clara Petacci.³³⁶ He would not rest until Hitler finally had SS Obergruppenführer Sepp Dietrich bring her from Italy.

September 22, 1943

An exchange of telegrams took place between Hitler and the Japanese prime minister Tojo on the Duce's liberation.³³⁷ Tojo congratulated the Führer on the "success of a daring decision."

On September 20, Hitler established another medal, the Kuban Shield. Like other such awards, it was to be worn on the left upper sleeve.³³⁸ On the same day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Thailand, Rama VIII, on his birthday.³³⁹

On September 22, Hitler received Goebbels for "extensive talks" at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.³⁴⁰ He permitted the Reich minister to accompany him on his morning walk with his German shepherd Blondi. On that occasion, Hitler raved about a new type of magnetic torpedo.

Of course, they also discussed the Duce, the situation in Italy, and a number of personnel questions. Hitler was still haunted by the Duce's removal from office and the question of what type of punishment would be meted out in Germany in such a case:

A punishment which would for all time deter those who thought of treason even in the furthest corners of their heart.

Hitler was already dissatisfied with his new minister of justice.

No matter how much better Thierack may be than Gürtner, he is still not an ideal Reich minister of justice. At the end, he always sticks to legal eggshells.

All in all, Hitler seemed quite downcast in his discussion with Goebbels. He even mentioned that he was considering peace feelers. Goebbels asked him if he might be willing to negotiate with Churchill or if he was in principle against it.

The Führer gave me this answer: There is no such thing as principles in politics regarding public figures. However, he believes that negotiations with Churchill would not lead to anything, since he is too deeply involved in a contrary view and, besides, hatred and not reason served as his [Churchill's] advisors. The Führer would be more inclined to negotiate with Stalin. However, he does not think that this would lead to anything, because what he [Hitler] demands in the east cannot be surrendered by Stalin.³⁴¹

Moreover, Hitler again made derogatory remarks on the satellite states in the Balkans, which he himself had chosen as partners in his alliance.

Horthy would like to bail out, but the Führer has taken the proper precautions. Kallay, his prime minister, is a downright swine (*ausgemachtes Schwein*). But he does not betray himself; he is too careful to compromise

September 27, 1943

himself. As a result, we have to grin and bear it for now. [Johann] Antonescu is a reliable ally, insofar as you can say this about someone from the Balkans at all. However, he is also controlled by the corrupt and Anglophile Mihai Antonescu, who would rather bail out today than tomorrow.

On September 27, an exchange of telegrams on the anniversary of the Tripartite Pact took place. This time, however, King Victor Emmanuel III was missing from the list. Mussolini had suffered a great loss of prestige, even with his partners. Hitler's telegrams to the Duce, the Japanese emperor, and the Japanese prime minister read as follows:³⁴²

Duce!

On the third anniversary of the signature of the Tripartite Pact, I think of you and Fascist Italy, which rallies to you in loyal devotion, with a feeling of heartfelt solidarity and friendship. It is my unshakable conviction that, no matter how great the resistance, the mighty struggle, which has started for the freedom and future of the life of the people of Europe and East Asia, will be crowned by victory in the end. In this spirit, I send you, Duce, on today's occasion, my heartfelt and warmest best wishes for the happiness and future of Italy, to which Fascism has brought a freedom of honor.

Adolf Hitler

[To the Japanese Emperor]

On today's day of commemoration, on which the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact celebrates its third anniversary, I convey to Your Majesty my heartfelt greetings and best wishes, also in the name of the entire German Volk. It is my firm conviction that this freedom-fight forced on our countries will end with the triumph of our just cause and will therefore lead our people to a happy and secure future.

Adolf Hitler

[To Prime Minister Tojo]

On the third anniversary of the historical conclusion of the Pact, which in a solemn manner sealed the solidarity of our people and the common nature of their goals, I convey to Your Excellency, along with my most sincere greetings, my best wishes for the future struggle of the glorious Japanese arms. Filled with the unshakable belief in the final victory of our common struggle, I hereby also express my conviction that the ideal embodied in the Tripartite Pact, the creation of a new and just world order, will be realized in the interest of the well-being of the people of Europe and East Asia, following the successful conclusion of this confrontation.

Adolf Hitler

September 28, 1943

On September 27, a funeral ceremony for Gauleiter Kube took place in the Reich Chancellery. Kube had been area commissar for Minsk and had been assassinated with a bomb. Hitler had a wreath placed.³⁴³

On September 28, the constitutional assembly of the "Fascist-Republican" puppet regime took place in "a city in northern Italy." Hitler sent the following telegram addressed to "the chief of the Fascist republican government of Italy, Benito Mussolini, Rome," to the Duce, who was not in Rome at all:³⁴⁴

Duce!

With joy and satisfaction, I have received your message on the foundation of the Fascist Republican government of Italy. I have the privilege of informing you, Duce, that the government of the Greater German Reich recognizes the Fascist Republican government of Italy formed by you. The Reich government is determined to wage this war in loyal alliance with it, side by side, until the victorious end.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's system of alliances was starting to fall apart not only in the south, but also in the north. Talks between Finnish and English representatives had already taken place in Stockholm in August. At first, nothing had come of the talks. In September, however, the Finns declared that they were waging their own war and were not interested in the war of the great powers. Apparently, the Finns would seek a separate peace sooner or later. This was also evident in Hitler's Directive No. 50 of September 28, which read as follows:³⁴⁵

1. The position of Army Group North is fully fortified; the retreat of their front is not intended. The most hazardous operational sector at Velikiye Luki is substantially reinforced. Nevertheless, a second position has been built beyond Lake Peipus and Narva, in case of unfavorable developments within Finland.

2. We must also take into account the possibility for Finland to be cut off or to fall.

3. In such a case, the task of Geb. Army High Command 20 will be to hold the northern territory, which is vitally important for us for defensive and economic reasons, if the front line changes [technical details follow].

This cautious directive proved that Hitler was operating on a more "subdued note."

The Allies decided to take Italy from the south. Judging by historical experience, this could become a more protracted undertaking. During its long history, Italy had been repeatedly conquered, although usually

October 7, 1943

from the north, and very rarely from the south. On September 9, the American Fifth Army landed at Salerno. Soon, however, it ran into the danger of being forced back into the sea by German troops that had been brought up hurriedly. In such a perilous situation, as demonstrated frequently in the course of the Second World War, the English had to come to the rescue.⁵⁴⁶ Montgomery sent a Canadian division, without artillery, by sea from Calabria to the beachhead. Soon the situation became more stable and, on October 1, the Allies entered Naples.

On the same day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco on the "day of the Caudillo."³⁴⁷

On October 3, this year's [German] Thanksgiving Day, Hitler maintained silence. He refrained from issuing appeals and sending telegrams and asked Goebbels to speak in his stead at the Sportpalast. In addition, he sent Skorzeny there. The man who had freed Mussolini was instructed to present three Knight's Crosses of the War Service Cross to the recipients in Hitler's name.³⁴⁸

The partially preserved shorthand reports on Hitler's discussions of the situation at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on October 3 and 4 contain nothing new, aside from the recall of a Spanish division from the eastern front.³⁴⁹ This event also shows how much Hitler's star was already on the decline.

On October 7, Hitler gave a speech before Reichsleiters and Gauleiters, who met at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for a conference. The communiqué read as follows:³⁵⁰

In the course of the gathering, the Führer gave the assembled party leaders a comprehensive overview of the course of the war up to now, and the present military and political situation. The Führer concluded that, next to the strength of the weapons, the intention and perseverance of their bearers was crucial to the victory in this historical confrontation whose course demonstrated its own rhythm of climaxes and tensions as do all great historic decisions. Weapons alone meant nothing if the intention of the human being did not stand behind them. Irrespective of the military situation, the intention and attitude, the constant pertinacity in the pursuit of the goals must always be the same. The embodiment of this intention is the nation.

For the present fateful struggle of the German Volk, its struggle for power serves as an example. Never did it allow setbacks to discourage it. Its fighting spirit, its energy, its firm determination and extreme self-reliance again stiffen the German Volk's backbone today and give it strength in spite of the weight of the air war. If we keep up this spirit, which is evident on the battlefield as well as in the homeland, then this war could never be lost. Instead, it must and will gain us a great German victory. The entire German Volk knows that it is

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a question of life and death. It has burned its bridges. There is only the way ahead. It must therefore remain hard and persevere until the final victory—as long as this may take and as difficult as this may be at times. The Führer concluded:

“We will fight everywhere and will never be worn out until we have reached our goal. Take with you in your hearts the unshakable and firm belief that, if our will does not falter, this war will end with a great German victory.”

On this occasion, Hitler congratulated Himmler on his forty-third birthday.

On October 10, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Wang Ching-wei on the Chinese national holiday.³⁵¹

The more the situation in the various theaters of war deteriorated, the less Hitler cared to concern himself with the war. He preferred to think of the times which would follow upon the victorious conclusion of the war. He enjoyed making plans for the rebuilding of the destroyed cities. This is evidenced by his decree of October 11 on “Preparations for a Reconstruction of Cities Damaged by Bombs”:³⁵²

I

The repair of damage in the cities affected by enemy terror attacks will take place after the war in the framework of a comprehensive reorganization. The reconstruction will already be prepared during the war, insofar as this will be possible, by the drawing up of urban development plans. I alone will decide which of the reconstruction cities (*Wiederaufbaustädte*) will receive priority in the planning. I charge Reich Minister Speer in his capacity as inspector general for the Reich Capital with the supervision of the urban-development planning in the cities designated by me.

II

Reich Minister Speer will attend in particular to the following tasks:

1. For the reconstruction cities, he will lay down the limits of the future design, as far as possible.
2. He will decide which office will be entrusted with the preparation of the plans and will assign suitable workers to it.

III.

1. Instead of the Reich minister of labor, Reich Minister Speer shall decide all questions of urban development in the reconstruction cities.

2. The ordinance on the reorganization measures for repairing war damage of December 2, 1940 (*Reich Law Gazette*, I, p. 1575), and its supplementary regulations remain unaffected by this.

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IV

The legal and administrative regulations necessary for the implementation of this decree will be issued jointly by Reich Minister Speer and the Reich minister of the interior.

On October 12, Hitler awarded Professor Sauerbruch the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross with Swords.³⁵³ In addition, he received Lieutenant General Emilio Esteban-Infantes, the commander of the recalled Spanish division, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters and presented him with the Knight's Cross.³⁵⁴

On October 13, the Badoglio government declared war on Germany. This made little difference to Hitler. On the same day, he received Marshal Graziani, who had joined Mussolini.³⁵⁵ Now Hitler had his own Italian Marshal!

Also on the same day, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Tiso on his birthday. On October 15, another congratulatory telegram followed on the birthday of the king of Afghanistan.³⁵⁶

On October 16, Hitler congratulated Epp on his seventy-fifth birthday in a handwritten letter.

On October 18, Horthy also turned seventy-five. Hitler presented a yacht to the regent as a birthday gift and sent Raeder to Budapest.³⁵⁷

Also on October 18, Hitler received the members of the Bulgarian regency council at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. In endless monologues, he demonstrated his rhetoric, which usually never failed to impress politicians from the Balkans. Prince Kyrill also seemed to succumb to it, as the interpreter Schmidt remarked.³⁵⁸ However, the whole structure of Hitler's wishful thinking began to fall apart on the Prince's return trip. The official communiqué read as follows:³⁵⁹

On October 18, the Führer received the members of the Bulgarian regency council, Prince Kyrill and Professor Filov. The Führer discussed the general situation with Prince Kyrill and Professor Filov, as well as questions of common interest. On the German side, the meeting was attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, and General Jodl. The discussion at the Führer's was characterized by a spirit of heartfelt agreement and of the proved traditional friendship between the Reich and Bulgaria.

It was remarkable that the third member of the regency council, General Mikhov, did not attend the talks. In addition, there was no mention of the German-Bulgarian "brotherhood in arms," which existed, however, exclusively against the Anglo-Americans.

October 30, 1943

On October 19, Hitler spoke at an OKW conference at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The communiqué read as follows:³⁶⁰

At the end of a conference organized by the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, at which leading men in state and party made presentations on ideology and domestic policy, the Führer received the participants in the conference and spoke to them about the political and military situation. The commanders of the defense districts, the commanders in chief of the navy high command, commanding admirals, as well as the commanding generals of the district air commands, along with their chief physicians, and chief deputies took part in the conference, in addition to a number of high-ranking officers and officials from the high command.

On October 19, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to King Michael of Romania on his birthday.³⁶¹

In the course of the evening discussion of the situation at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on October 26, the topics discussed included the dangerous situation in the Crimea, the German-English exchange of wounded prisoners of war and medical personnel organized by the Swedish Red Cross, and the deployment of Italian war loot and production.³⁶²

On October 30, Hitler made an appeal to the public on behalf of the War Vocational Competition for the Youth, which was scheduled for January 15, 1944. The appeal read as follows:³⁶³

Working German Youth!

We take as our example the heroism of the German soldier. It is our duty to show that the deployment of the homeland is worthy of this heroism. Vocational achievements form part of this deployment. In peacetime, vocational competitions were already an expression of the working German youth's will to work and produce. Today, I make a new appeal to you on behalf of the Reich Vocational Competitions. Substantiate your avowal of faith to our soldiers through your deeds in the workplace. The battle at the front is waged by the bravest. May the battle of vocations reveal to us the most diligent who will be put in the lead through education and financial assistance for the gifted. Your action in the Reich Vocational Competitions will be proof of your unshakable belief in victory.

Adolf Hitler

From October 19 to October 30, the foreign ministers of Great Britain (Eden), the United States (Hull), and the Soviet Union (Molotov) had met for a conference in Moscow. The joint communiqué³⁶⁴ again stressed that the Allies would continue the war against the Axis powers until they "laid down their arms." The

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declaration also dealt with the establishment of a European commission for consultations, the restoration of democracy to Italy, the independence of Austria, and the prosecution of German war criminals.

On November 3, Hitler issued Directive No. 51.³⁶⁵ It revealed the increasing problems for the Germans in the west. The directive read as follows:

The hard struggle against Bolshevism, which has caused us great losses during the past two-and-a-half years, has demanded exceedingly great military forces and extremely great effort. This corresponded to the extent of the danger and to the general situation, which in the meantime has changed. The danger in the east is still present, but a greater danger is taking shape in the west: the Anglo-American landing operation. Owing to the huge size of the territory in the east, the loss of even quite a large land area will hardly have a lethal affect on Germany's life nerve. The west is different! If the enemy manages to break into our defense on a broad front, the consequences will become boundless in a short time. There is every evidence to prove that the enemy will start the invasion of the western European front no later than the spring, maybe even earlier.

Proceeding from all this, I cannot be responsible for the west's becoming weaker, giving way to other theatres of war operations. I have decided to reinforce its defense, especially where we shall start the fight against England, for it is the area where the enemy should and will invade, and it is the area where, unless everything is deceptive, the most decisive landing operations will begin.

Distracting and deceptive offensives on other front lines ought to be expected as well. But quite a heavy offensive is possible against Denmark. It is hard to support her from the sea, and support from the air will be less effective. But in terms of political and operational effectiveness its success offers the greatest promise.

At the beginning of the battle, the enemy's common offensive forces will be inevitably directed toward occupation of the coast. The only way to strengthen our defense on the coast within the short time which we may still have left is to build a most powerful fortification which must be erected by way of concentrating all the available human and material forces of our native land and of the occupied areas.

The land weapons (stationary tanks dug into the ground, coastline artillery, defensive anti-landing weapons, mines and others), recently drawn up in Denmark and the western occupied areas, must be strictly concentrated in the most hazardous sectors of the coast. It should be taken into account that the defense potential in less hazardous sectors cannot be increased in the nearest future.

If the enemy should nevertheless manage a land operation by concentrating their own forces, they must be fought back by our most powerful counterattack. It is very important to ensure an ample and urgent supply of

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forces and materials and, by intensive training of the available major units, to increase their skills and turn them into an attacking and absolutely flexible reserve that will counterattack the landing operations, hinder their advance, and throw them back into the sea.

Consequently, by means of accurately and meticulously prepared operations, everything must be supplied from the coastline front that is not subject to the attack, and from our native country, against the enemy who have landed and all this must go into action at high speed. The air and naval forces must use all their strength to resist a heavy offensive expected from the air and from the sea. With this in view, I order the following:

A) The Army

1) The chief of the general staff of the Army and the inspector general of the tank units shall submit to me, urgently, a plan to distribute weapons, tanks, storm weapons, trucks, and ammunition within the next three months on the western front and in Denmark, in accordance with the new situation.

[Technical details follow].³⁶⁶

On November 5, Hitler received the representatives of the new Bulgarian government at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The communiqué read as follows:³⁶⁷

On November 5, the Führer received the Bulgarian prime minister Bozhilov and the Bulgarian foreign minister Shikhmanov for a comprehensive exchange of views on all questions of interest to the Reich and Bulgaria. The discussion, which was attended on the German side by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, and General Jodl, was characterized by a spirit of heartfelt agreement and proven traditional friendship. Afterwards, Bulgaria's prime minister and foreign minister were the guests of the Reich foreign minister, where the friendly exchange of views continued and ended that evening.

The Russians continued to advance steadily in the east. They had conquered Smolensk in September, and Zaporozhye and Dnepropetrovsk in October. On November 6, the Germans even lost Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, to the Russians. The battle at the great Dnieper bend continued with unabated fierceness.

On November 7, Hitler received von Manstein at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.³⁶⁸ Von Manstein wanted to save the position at Kiev, but Hitler declared that he was not willing to let the "one and only chance" to salvage the Crimea pass him by. Regarding Kiev, he said, "we will not meet with any breakthrough success anyway." On the other hand, he felt that he could chalk up "the success offering itself at the lower Dnieper."

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It is imperative that the army remains certain that it can still land successful blows. In addition, war production necessitates that we stay in control of the manganese-ore reserves at Nikopol. Moreover, we cannot allow the enemy to take possession of the Crimea and use it for air strikes against the Romanian oil fields.

Hitler again declared himself willing to answer for the “greatness of the risk.”

On the afternoon of November 7, he boarded his special train in order to travel to Munich for the commemorative festivities. Goebbels had not thought it possible that he would be willing to leave his headquarters in view of the catastrophic situation at the front.³⁶⁹ He certainly did not know his Führer all that well! In the previous year, Hitler had already made it perfectly clear that even the most disastrous situations at the front could not keep him from attending the reunion in Munich. This was not because he could not do without the company of the “Old Fighters.” He cared no more for them than for the participants in the annual anniversary celebration of the party’s foundation, which he had not attended since February 1942, under a variety of pretexts. He stuck to the meeting on November 8 because it was a suitable excuse for his vacation with Eva Braun.

At least twice a year, Hitler was in need of such a vacation. Every April, numerous politicians from the German satellite states had to come together in Salzburg or at the Berghof, as well as every November, when the commemoration in Munich provided him with another excuse for a vacation. And he stuck to this program to the end!³⁷⁰

On November 8, Hitler arrived in Munich. That afternoon, he gave a speech at the Löwenbräukeller, which was broadcast that evening. It began with these words:³⁷¹

My Party Comrades! German Volksgenossen!

Almost one-third of a human being’s lifetime has passed since the day that we commemorate today and in celebration of which I have returned for a few hours to your midst. And still, hardly an epoch in the history of mankind covers twenty years of such mighty, world-shaking, and decisive events fashioning the destinies of nations.

It is appropriate to review the past events in broad outlines.

The obligatory “party narrative” followed. Hitler again recalled the statement falsely attributed to Clemenceau about the “twenty million Germans too many.”

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The prognosis Clemenceau made on Germany having twenty million men too many was just as candidly brutal as the present undisguised threat by English politicians that there are one hundred or two hundred million men too many moving about in India.³⁷²

The “party narrative” culminated in the following assertion:

If historiography in coming centuries will one day critically review the years of the National Socialist rebirth, uninfluenced by the pros and cons of an era of warfare, then it will not be able to avoid the conclusion that it was a question of the most wonderful victory of faith over the supposed elements of the materially possible.

Hitler again told his horror stories in the service of anti-Bolshevik propaganda. He meant to prove to the English that only Germany could stem the tide of the “Bolshevik-Asian colossus.” He declared the following:

The second thought which takes hold of us today can be only this one: What would have become of Germany and Europe had there not been a November 8 and 9, 1923, and had the National Socialist world of thought not conquered Germany?

After all, the seizure of power in the year 1933 is indivisibly bound up with November 8, 1923. On this day, the young movement underwent its first process of selection; the weak were removed, and those who remained were filled with an even greater fanaticism. Then a period followed in which National Socialist thought took hold of people far more easily than before. The party became the germ cell for the realization of our world of thought. Long before 1933, the National Socialist state possessed millions of followers in the Volksgemeinschaft of our party. Alas, what would have become of Europe and, above all, our German Reich and our beloved homeland, had there not been the faith and the willingness of the individual to risk everything for the movement? Germany would still be what it was at the time: the democratic and impotent state of Weimarian origin. To ask this question makes every thinking man today shudder. After all, it makes no difference what Germany would have ended up looking like; the Eastern European, Central Asian, Bolshevik colossus would have completed his armament program and would never have let his goal of destroying Europe out of sight. The German Volk, however, with its completely insufficient Reichswehr of a hundred thousand men and its lack of internal political strength and material weapons, would have faced this world power with the power of only a few weeks of military resistance.

There is no need to substantiate today just how decrepit the idea was to have Europe defended by the Poles against Bolshevik Russia. Just as foolish was the widespread belief that it might have been possible to appease the Bolshevik colossus by renouncing all ideas of power; or that its plans of world conquest could have been eliminated by a peaceful Europe which increasingly disarmed. My party comrades! This appears to me as though chicken and geese will one

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day make a solemn declaration to the foxes that they no longer intend to attack them, in the hope that the foxes will then become vegetarians. The Bolshevik-Asian colossus will assail Europe until it is finally broken and defeated.

Or does anybody want to claim that Finland threatened world peace? It was nonetheless attacked, however. Without Germany's intervention, its existence would already have been exposed to a terrible new trial in the year 1941. We need not say a word about the outcome of this new Bolshevik action.

Nobody will seriously believe that the Estonians, Latvians, or Lithuanians really wished to conquer the Ural Mountains. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union decided to chase these people out of their countries and cart them off to Siberia. And Romania surely didn't intend to take the Caucasus or the oil wells of Baku. But Russia obstinately pursued the goal of occupying not only the mouth of the Danube, but also the Romanian oil fields, and, beyond that, the entire Balkans, in order to use them as a steppingstone for further expansion. There is only one state capable of successfully opposing this attack which has threatened Europe time and again from the east for the last two thousand years, and that is Germany.

Even if this struggle is also an infinitely difficult one for our Volk, this just proves that no state is capable of withstanding this misery without Germany — and certainly not against it. It proves that the hope of the European people to obtain leniency from the Moscovites through good behavior or mental caresses is at best childish stupidity or pitiful cowardice. Above all, the idea that some other power, perhaps from outside Europe, could take over the defense of the continent, is not only harebrained, but also reveals an actual moral weakness. It is due above all to bourgeois politicians not having the foggiest idea about things, when in so many countries people act as though they believed that the Jewish-plutocratic west would defeat the Jewish-Bolshevik east. On the contrary, the Jewish-Bolshevik east will one day relieve Jewry in the west of the necessity of continuing to be hypocritical. With complete candor, it can then announce its actual objectives. The Jewish democracy of the west will sooner or later lead to Bolshevism. The same naive men who today believe that they have found in Stalin the genius who will pull their chestnuts out of the fire for them, will live to see, perhaps sooner than they anticipate, how the spirits summoned from the underworld will strangle them, and that in their own countries.

One thing is certain, my party comrades: without a November 9, 1923, the National Socialist movement would not have become what it became. Without the National Socialist movement, there would not be a strong German Reich today. Without this German Reich, which is undoubtedly the militarily most effective state in Europe, there would not be a future for Europe now.

After this long-winded exposition, Hitler finally turned to more current problems:

The fact that England was again the driving force in this war, that it is was responsible together with the Jews, for the cause, outbreak, and waging of this war, is only a repetition of the events in the First World War. That such mighty

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historic events cannot lead to the same results twice must be assumed, whenever the forces of the past cannot be compared with those of the present. Nobody can fail to notice that the present Germany is a different state than the Germany of 1914–1918, just as November 8, 1943, is not the same as November 9, 1918.

The struggle in which we have been involved since 1939 is too mighty and too unique to measure against small differences of opinion between states. We are fighting the fifth year of the greatest war of all time. As it began, the enemy in the east was barely a hundred fifty kilometers away from Berlin. In the west, his fortresses threatened the Rhine; the Saar region was under fire from his artillery. At the Belgian-Dutch border, the treaty bound satellites of England and France lay in wait, barely a hundred kilometers from our greatest industrial areas, while the democratic government of Norway confirmed those agreements which would one day lead it into our enemies' camp. In the Balkans, there was the latent danger of the most terrible surprise to come. Italy was forced into nonbelligerent status by its king and his clique. Thus, Germany was completely on its own.

And now, my party comrades, this National Socialist state has crushed this ring of encirclement in historically unique blows. The heroism of its soldiers pushed the fronts nearly everywhere over a thousand kilometers from the borders of the Reich. Our enemies have become modest. What they call victories today, they once portrayed as completely insignificant operations. But through these insignificant operations, they created the mighty battlefield on which the present struggle of nations is taking place. After our great allies in East Asia,³⁷³ the European nations have also recognized the greatness of the historic task and made their sacrifices accordingly. If the sacrifices of the greatest European state allied with us have in the end been more or less in vain, then this must be attributed to the planned sabotage of a pitiful clique which, after years of wavering, finally pulled itself together for one single action. However, their deed can surely claim the glory of having been unique in history in its shamelessness.

I am happy that we were able to rescue from the hands of the most miserable figures of an otherwise great age the man who did everything not only to make his nation great, strong, and happy, but also to let it participate in the historic conflict which will in the end determine the fate and the culture of this continent. It is self-evident that the consequences of the Italian collapse will affect the war in general. But the hopes of our enemies will be in vain here, too. What they hoped for from the beginning has not happened. What they expected from the future will likewise not come about. They had hoped to cut off and destroy the German divisions in Italy with one blow. They thought that the Germans would give up the occupation of the islands, that the Balkans would drop into their lap like ripe fruit, and that they could bring the war to the German borders with one blow.

The assault on the Brenner Pass became an offensive at a snail's pace far south of Rome. It will now demand its toll in blood, and this not according to the estimates of our enemies, but, on the whole, according to our plans.

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Every new landing will force them to provide more and more space in their ships. This will dissipate the forces of our enemies and open up new venues for the deployment of our arms. Wherever such a landing takes place, we will be prepared. Then, they will experience, as Churchill put it, that "it is one thing to land against Italy on Sicily and another to land against the Germans on the Channel coast, in France, Denmark, or Norway."³⁷⁴ It will then become apparent whether our restraint in some areas was due to weakness or cool reason.

The struggle in the east is the most difficult that the German Volk has ever had to fight. What our men bear here cannot be compared with what our enemies achieve. Not only will it not be possible to reach the final objective, namely, to bring about the collapse of the German front, but also, as always in world history, the final battle alone will bring about the decision. That nation that will resolve this battle in its favor is the one that has the greatest intrinsic value and seizes the decisive hour with the greatest perseverance and the greatest fanaticism. What I demand of the German soldier is therefore tremendous. It is the task of the front to make the apparently impossible possible in the end; it is the task of the homeland to support and reinforce the front in its struggle against the apparently impossible or what is apparently impossible to bear. It must recognize with complete clarity that the fate of our entire Volk, our women and children, our entire future depends on forcing the decision in our favor by a supreme effort. Every sacrifice which we make today stands in no relation to the sacrifices that will be demanded of us if we do not win this war. Therefore, there can be no thought other than that of mercilessly fighting with the unshakable goal of gaining the victory, no matter what the situation may be and no matter where we may have to fight.

When the betrayal by the king of Italy, the crown prince, and his military clique became more and more apparent, our position was not good and, in the eyes of some people, it was even desperate. The two dictators in the democracies³⁷⁵ already hoped that they would be able to celebrate together the destruction of the German armies and the extradition of my friend as a delightful spectacle in Washington. However, what appeared nearly impossible was made possible within a few weeks. A nearly unavoidable catastrophe was transformed practically overnight into a series of glorious actions, which completely restored our position, and in some respects even improved it. Once this war is over, the greatest credit will therefore go to our faith and our persistence rather than to the unique initiatives and the individual actions.

Besides, every German should appreciate that, even if this battle had taken place on German soil from the beginning, we do not doubt for one second that it would have also been waged with the greatest fanaticism. Someone as decorated with so many laurels as the German Wehrmacht will sometimes be tired and stop to rest. But when the bell tolls, then every front-line fighter, every man and woman at home, must face the battle anew in order to defend what Providence has given them in terms of what makes life worth living.

In view of this, our enemies' propaganda must and will fail. Just as in the First World War, they are counting not so much on a victory of arms, but on

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the effect of their slogans, threats, and bluffs. First, they believed in the threats regarding time, hunger, winter, and so on. Then, they thought their bomb terror would suffice to wear down the German Volk at home.

While in the First World War the German Volk went to pieces at home almost without enemy action, it will not lose the power of its resistance even under the most difficult circumstances today. In this respect, it is the task of the National Socialist Party to set examples through its leaders, *Unterführers*, and members.

The burden of the fight in the homeland, as at the front, must be borne in an exemplary fashion primarily by the party comrades, and they will then, no matter whether man or woman, constitute elements of an unbending resistance. They must help the weak and support the dejected, but instill reason in the unworthy and—if necessary—destroy them. There must be no doubt about one thing: this war is merciless. The objectives of our adversaries are correspondingly satanic. When a British paper writes that the German Volk will be turned over to the Russian Bolsheviks for so and so many years so that they can carry out their plans regarding it, or when English bishops pray that the Bolsheviks may one day succeed in devastating and completely annihilating the German Volk, then there is only one response possible: a no less great fanaticism which forces the individual to fulfill his duties. Too many sacrifices have already been made. Nobody has the right to exclude himself from these sacrifices in the future.

Every one of our brave soldiers who fought somewhere in Russia and did not return to the homeland has a right to demand that others be as brave as he was. For he did not die so that others would give up what he fought for. Instead, he fell so that his sacrifice and the sacrifice of his comrades and all Volksgenossen at the front and in the homeland would save the future of the homeland and the future of our Volk.

I have already mentioned that our adversaries today believe themselves to be able to wear down the German Volk primarily through bluff and propaganda, by acting as though they had already gained the victory. If this were not so serious, you would have to laugh about this tactic at times. At the same time when they chase from one conference to the other in order to reconcile their disagreements and find the possibility of some type of joint approach, they act as though they were already the victors. They establish commissions for the “design of the world after the victory.” It would be more useful if they concerned themselves with the design of their own world. They establish commissions that have the task of seeing to it that the world is provided with foodstuffs after the war. It would be better if they provided foodstuffs to their nations right now, where millions are threatened by a famine at this time.

It is truly British-Jewish impudence and impertinence when they now act as though they were in a position to solve the problems of the world. They have not even been able to work out their own problems. They needed a war in order to avoid rendering account for their domestic failures, which otherwise their own nations would have forced them to do.

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A country like America, for example, has thirteen million unemployed. The leaders of this country, who failed to cope with this problem, act as though they could resolve the employment problems of the entire world. Of course, they could organize their capitalist exploitation. It is an entirely different matter that this same exploitation has ruined their own people. This interests them only little, of course.

Their propaganda measures are in line with those we encountered in the World War. First, in a flood of papers they try to create the impression among the German Volk and even more so among the people of our allies that they have not only already won the war and the future is essentially determined, but also that the majority of the people desire such a development. I would like to reply to this at this point.

I do not know whether there are people in the German Volk who truly have anything to hope for in an Allied victory. They could only be people who think exclusively of themselves: criminals who would be willing to be the hangmen of their own people. Any person who is tied to his people knows exactly what a victory of our adversaries would mean. Therefore, there are no social classes in Germany hoping for victory. At the most, there might be some criminals who perhaps believe that their own fate would be improved in this case. However, let nobody doubt this or delude himself: we will deal with these criminals! What happened in the year 1918 will not repeat itself in Germany a second time. At a time which demands so many difficult sacrifices from hundreds of thousands of the bravest soldiers, at such a time, we will not shrink from bringing such people as are unwilling to make these sacrifices back to reason. If tens of thousands of our best men, our dearest Volksgenossen, fall at the front, then we will not shrink from killing a few hundred criminals at home without much ado.

In the World War, however, things were different. In the World War, the sacrifice of the soldiers was regarded as only natural. But equally as natural were the profiteering racketeer, the war profiteer, deserter, or finally the man who demoralized the entire nation and received money for this from abroad. These elements were untouchable. They were spared at the time, while the soldier had to give his life. However, things are different today.

My old fighters, you will remember how we were outraged by this situation in the World War, how we said at the time: It is a crying shame that it is even possible for brave men to fall at the front while rascals do their foul work at home.

These rascals existed, and exist even today in a few instances. But they have only one chance, namely, not to betray themselves, because if we catch one, he will lose his head. Rest assured, it is much more difficult for me to order a small operation at the front in the realization that perhaps hundreds or thousands of men will fall, than to sign a sentence that will result in the execution of a few dozen rascals, criminals, or gangsters. These hopes will therefore be in vain. Moreover, the present state is so organized that these elements cannot work at all. The conditions for their work do not exist.

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No matter how self-confident these declarations about a “few dozen rascals” sounded, they made perfectly clear how much Hitler was preoccupied by the thought of a possible rebellion. A few minutes later, he would return to this topic.

At first, however, he discussed the Allied bomb warfare and claimed that the “hundreds of thousands of the bombed-out are the vanguard of revenge.” He said, “We will rebuild our German cities to be more beautiful than ever before, and this within the shortest time.” Two or three years after the war, the “two to three million apartments” would be “completely there again, even if they destroy as many as they like.” Naturally, Hitler announced “retribution.” He declared the following:

The second instrument on which they count is the bomb warfare. What the German homeland has to endure here, we all are aware of. What I personally feel in this respect, you can imagine. When this war began, the American president hypocritically approached me with the request not to wage bomb warfare. We did not do this. However, this request only served as a means to give our enemies time to prepare the war and to get it underway at the appropriate time.

I would like to say two things here: what pains me exclusively are the sacrifices of the homeland, especially the sacrifices of the women and children. What hurts me is that these people lose all their possessions. By contrast, the damage done to our industry is largely insignificant. It does not in the least prevent the constant increases in our armament production. Moreover, one thing should be realized: we will rebuild our German cities to be more beautiful than ever before, and this within the shortest time.

If a nation is capable of waging a fight against the rest of the world, if a nation is capable of turning six, eight, or ten million cubic meters of concrete into fortresses in one year, if a nation is capable of producing thousands of armament factories out of nothing, then such a nation will also be capable of building two to three million apartments. In about two to three years after the war, these apartments will be completely there again, even if they destroy as many as they like.

The Americans and the English are right now planning the rebuilding of the world. I am right now planning the rebuilding of Germany!

There will, however, be a difference: while the rebuilding of the world through the Americans and the English will not take place, the rebuilding of Germany through National Socialism will be carried out with precision and according to plan!

Our mass organizations, from the Todt organization to the Reich labor service embracing the entire German economy, will be roped in for the job, along with the war criminals. For the first time in their lives, the war criminals will do something useful there. This is the first thing I have to say. The second

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thing is this: whether or not the gentlemen believe it, the hour of retribution will come!

If we cannot reach America at the moment, one state is within our reach, thank God, and we will hold on to it.

And I would like to add a third item: the opinion of our adversaries that their air terror can decrease the intensity of the German military resolve is based on a fallacy. After all, whoever has already lost all his belongings can only have one desire: that the war will never be lost, since only a victorious war can help him get his things back. And so the hundreds of thousands of the bombed-out are the vanguard of revenge.

And there is something else with which our adversaries still operate, even though less forcefully than before. It is the slogan that time is on their side. When the war started, in response to an announcement by Chamberlain that the war would have to last at least three years—an announcement which was understandable because of the capitalist view of the English that you need at least this long in order to amortize a capital investment—I immediately had us set up a program for five years. I have had this program extended since then. Just as we worked with extended periods before, we did this here, too. Certainly, we do not enjoy waging war. We have, of course, programs of peace, in contrast to our adversaries, who did not even know what to do in peacetime. I am very sorry that I was not able to continue my work of peace and create more useful things in this period. However, since this has not been possible, we will never give up the fight too early, but rather regard time as our ally.

Let the war last as long as it wants to, Germany will never capitulate. Never will we repeat the mistake of 1918, namely, to lay down our arms at a quarter to twelve. You can rest assured of this: the very last party to lay down its arms will be Germany, and this at five minutes after twelve.

They may hope to wear us out by heavy blood sacrifice. This time, however, the blood sacrifice will consist of two, three, or four enemy sacrifices for every German one. No matter how hard it is for us to bear these sacrifices, they simply oblige us to go further. Never again will it come to pass—as in the World War, when we lost two million and this loss was pointless in the end—that we will today pointlessly sacrifice even a single human being. When he emerges from the rage of a battle of matériel and regains consciousness following the greatest exertions the soldier at the front will understand that our sacrifices must not be in vain, our Volk must benefit from them, and not only our Volk, but also, in the end, all of Europe.

And in conclusion, one more thing: every week I read at least three or four times that I have either suffered a nervous breakdown, or I have dismissed my friend Göring and Göring has left for Sweden, or again Göring has dismissed me, or the Wehrmacht has dismissed the party, or the party has by contrast dismissed the Wehrmacht—in this case, they suddenly say Reichswehr [Reich defense] instead of Wehrmacht [defense force]—and then again, the generals have revolted against me, and then again, I have arrested the generals and have had them locked up. You can rest assured: everything is possible, but that I lose my nerve is completely out of the question!

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Well, if “everything” was possible, then it would also have been possible for the generals to “revolt,” and for him to “dismiss” his “friend” Göring. On September 10, he had still maintained that his “political comrades in arms, field marshals, admirals, and generals” formed a “fanatically united community.”

My party comrades! Twenty years ago, we were face-to-face with ruin. For four years, I worked with a burning heart and had only one thought: the success of our movement for the sake of the fatherland’s salvation! At one blow, everything was destroyed. For three to four weeks, it seemed as though I really would lose my nerve. Yes, a vile creature³⁷⁶ even agreed to accuse me of having broken my word. When my adversaries believed they could drag me in front of a drumhead court-martial in order to break me by sentencing me to confinement in a fortress, I did not lose heart or despair; instead, I wrote *Mein Kampf* during those months. I had studied history too thoroughly not to realize that great victories have never been gained without the most severe setbacks. The greatest heroes in world history have always had to remain steadfast even under the greatest strains.

Anybody can bear sunshine. But when the weather is bad and a storm is raging, then it will show who is a strong character and who is a weakling. When things get difficult, then you can tell who is truly a man, who does not lose his nerve in such hours, but instead remains determined and steadfast, and never thinks of capitulation.

Finally, I would like to say something to those people who keep talking to me about religion: I am also religious, profoundly religious on the inside, and I believe that Providence weighs human beings. Those who do not pass the trials imposed by Providence, who are broken by them, are not destined by Providence for greater things. It is a natural necessity that only the strong remain after this selection. Thank God, the German Volk, as I have come to know it in its mass of different individuals, is strong and thoroughly healthy. Believe me, had I been a member of the Democratic Party in 1918, I would also have despaired of Germany. But I was a member of the German Wehrmacht, a front-line soldier among millions of others, and that gave me my faith. My dogged struggle in the movement for the soul of the German Volk and the masses, the millions of workers and farmers—this struggle made me all the stronger. Because it introduced me to the most precious thing there is, the unspoiled power of the masses, the millions of Volksgenossen. From this finally developed the idea of the National Socialist state. We have received countless blessings from Providence—the successes it imparted to us, the magnificent victories it allowed us to gain! How completely did we change, within a few years, the nearly desperate situation of our country and our Reich! How Providence led our armies far beyond the borders of the Reich! How it helped us to overcome nearly hopeless positions, such as the Italian collapse! And then should we be so wretched as to lose heart and despair of this Providence?!

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I bow in gratitude before the Almighty. I thank Him that He blessed us so, and that He has not sent us a more difficult trial, namely, a fight on German soil; but instead, against a world of superior numbers, He permitted us to take this fight successfully far beyond the borders of the Reich.

I am proud to be the Führer of this nation, not only in happy days, but all the more in difficult ones. I am happy that I can give the nation strength and confidence during such days and that I can say to them: German Volk, be completely calm; come what may, we will overcome it. In the end, there will be victory!

When the World War was over, and I spoke to you for the first time, my comrades, I said something like the following: "We must not quarrel with our fate. For many years, fortune was on our side, as it is only on the side of God's chosen ones. We gained victories in the west, east, south, everywhere in Europe! And then our Volk became ungrateful. In spite of these victories, it lost its morale and its faith, and it became weak. Therefore, it no longer deserved the Lord's blessings." And I often said—you surely remember this—that Providence struck us down and that it struck us down rightly. It only dealt us what we deserved.

Today, we shall make a vow: this will never be repeated. We shall never again become arrogant in days of great happiness, and we shall never despair when Providence sends us trials. After all, what is it other than a trial, if the necessities of war force us to give up a hundred kilometers somewhere, while we are still in a position to defend the homeland at such a great distance from it.³⁷⁷

It is the mission of the party and of the National Socialist leaders to be the bearers of the faith for the nation. It is your mission, my party comrades, and above all yours, my ladies.

Not long ago, an American magazine wrote that what was worst about National Socialism was its women. They said that National Socialism did more for women than any other nation. It improved their social position. It began to bring them together in tremendous organizations. It sent the women of the educated classes into the factories so that female workers could go on vacation, and so on. The paper concluded that the democracies could not imitate this. And because they could not imitate this, they would have to exterminate National Socialist women in the future, since they were fanatical and incorrigible.

That is correct! I know that, throughout the years, my most fanatical followers were the Volk's women. This must remain so all the more in the future! Together with the men, the women must give support to the movement even in difficult times.

If there are bomb attacks, it is primarily the party which sees to the maintenance of order, that everything is done that possibly can be done. Can you imagine, my party comrades and ladies, that we would have been able to bear in the World War for only one month what we now have borne for years? Can you imagine that? The credit for this goes to the manly education of our Volk; the credit goes to the National Socialist faith.

November 9, 1943

As long as this force remains with us, we need not despair. On the contrary, we can look to the future with proud confidence.

I have come here for a few hours in order to speak to you, my old followers. I am going back tomorrow and I will take with me the beautiful memory of my old comrades in arms and our time of struggle together.

You shall also leave here with fanatical confidence and the fanatical faith that there can be nothing other than our victory. We fight for this. Many have already fallen for this, and many will still have to make the same sacrifice. Generations will live because of this, not only now, but also in the future. The blood we spill will one day bring rich rewards for our Volk. Millions of human beings will be granted an existence in new homes.

Thus, we commemorate all our comrades who, as National Socialist fighters, led the way, which can only be a way toward greatness for our fatherland, greatness for our German Volk.

Our National Socialist Party, our German Reich: *Sieg Heil!*

Hitler's speech was recorded on a tape recorder and broadcast at 8:15 p.m. It was his last public speech which was broadcast, although not in its entirety, since Goebbels edited the speech. He deleted some passages for the following reason: "Very few, somewhat awkward wordings, I crossed out with permission from the Führer."³⁷⁸

On November 9, an exchange of telegrams with the Poglavnik took place on the day of commemoration. Hitler replied as follows:³⁷⁹

My sincere thanks for the words of commemoration for the victims of November 9, 1923, which you, Poglavnik, conveyed personally to me in a telegram in the name of the Croatian people. Just as the blood of these fighters was not spilled in vain, the sacrifices which we and our allies made in our common struggle for the freedom and future of Europe will not have been in vain. In the unshakable conviction that we will be granted the final victory at the end of this difficult struggle, I think of you and send you my heartfelt best wishes for the brave Croatian people and for their future.

In addition, Hitler received Gauleiter Bohle in Munich. The following communiqué was made public on this "memorable" visit:³⁸⁰

The Führer received Gauleiter Bohle, the head of the foreign department of the NSDAP, for a report on questions concerning his sphere of duties. The Führer expressed his appreciation for the loyalty to the Reich persistently demonstrated by the Germans living abroad, and for the exemplary conduct of the Germans living abroad and the German sailors in the fateful struggle of the nation.

On November 12, Hitler signed a series of decrees dealing with domestic policy. One decree concerned "Compensation for strategic space requirements."³⁸¹ Another decree dealt with the "Appointment of

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officials in Lower Styria and in the occupied territories of Carinthia and Carniola.”³⁸² These territories had been occupied by German troops following the capitulation of Italy and earmarked for annexation to the Reich.

The most remarkable of these decrees dealt with the family-owned enterprise of Friedrich Krupp. It was astonishing that, in view of the advanced stage of the war, the company still cared for such an ordinance from the Führer. The decree read as follows:³⁸³

Führer Headquarters, November 12, 1943

For a hundred thirty-two years, the Friedrich Krupp Company, as a family-owned enterprise, has rendered outstanding, unique services to the military power of the German Volk. It therefore is my will that the firm will be preserved as a family-owned enterprise. To this end, I order the following:

I

The owner of the Krupp family fortune will be authorized to use this fortune in order to establish a family-owned enterprise with a special system of succession.

II

The establishment of the family-owned enterprise and its statutes will require judicial or notary certification. The statutes will require my approval, which will be obtained through the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery.

III

The current owner of the enterprise will bear the name Krupp before his surname.

IV

In conjunction with the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery, the Reich minister of finance will be authorized to lay down rules for the fees connected with the foundation of the family-owned enterprise, the future taxing of the enterprise, the inheritance tax falling due on the death of the owner or on the transfer of ownership to another owner, subject to this decree.

V

The Reich minister of justice and the Reich minister of economics together with the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery, will be entitled either individually, insofar as this concerns their respective portfolios or together, if necessary, to issue implementing and supplementary regulations through administrative channels.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

On November 17, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Prince Kyrill of Bulgaria on his birthday.³⁸⁴

November 20, 1943

On the same day, Hitler received von Papen at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, where he had returned in the meantime. Von Papen reported on the situation in Turkey.³⁸⁵

Eden and the Turkish foreign minister Menemencioglu met in Cairo on November 5. It was obvious that British pressure on Turkey was increasing, and its consequences would one day not be advantageous to Germany. It is highly questionable whether von Papen made this sufficiently clear to Hitler. Goebbels noted in his diary: "Von Papen assesses our chances [with Turkey] very optimistically. The Turks are not about to give up their neutrality; there is no chance that they will yield to the English-Soviet pressures in the foreseeable future."³⁸⁶ At the headquarters, von Papen attended one of Hitler's "discussions of the situation."

The surviving shorthand transcript of the discussion of the situation at noon on November 19³⁸⁷ reflects the difficult position on the central and southern sector of the eastern front. Most remarkable is a report on secret negotiations of the Romanians and Hungarians with the Allies in Portugal. However, Hitler mostly concerned himself with the possible use of the German "Panther" tanks as a stationary tank force in fortified positions.

On November 20, Hitler spoke for the last time to officer candidates. Berlin had become too dangerous because of the air raids, and so the site of this year's appeal was not the Sportpalast but the Jahrhunderthalle in Breslau. Undoubtedly, Hitler had chosen this city because the Prussian king, Frederick William III, had issued his appeals for the German wars of liberation from here and established the "Order of the Iron Cross" in this city in 1813.

A report on Hitler's speech before a group of young cadets supposedly numbering twenty thousand³⁸⁸ was given in the following communiqué:³⁸⁹

The Führer spoke before approximately twenty thousand young officer candidates who have been deemed worthy of the great responsibility of leading the sons of our Volk as soldiers. In front of the new generation of officers in the army, navy, and Luftwaffe, the Führer explained the reasons for the mighty struggle which has been forced on us—a battle of life and death, for the freedom and life of our Volk. He explained that it had always been the goal of the Jewish forces, which stood behind the British policy, primarily to exterminate Germany by unleashing a war in alliance with the Soviet Union in order to hand over all of Europe to Bolshevism. If Germany did not win this war for itself and for Europe, the Führer explained, then the barbarity of the steppe

November 20, 1943

would take hold of our continent and would annihilate it as the bearer and source of human civilization. Today, those who started the war and who bear the blame for it no longer leave any doubt that this is ultimately their intention. Through this war, England believed that it could force through by the effusion of blood its old theory of the balance of power in Europe. In reality, however, Great Britain itself is, this time, only an instrument in the hands of an alien phenomenon which has been fighting for control for over a hundred fifty years: international Jewry. It makes use in shrewd disguise of supposed British state interests in order to facilitate the spread of the plague of Jewish-Bolshevik revolution in England, as well as in the rest of Europe.

The Führer opposes our enemies' plans of destruction, which are dictated by Jewish hatred, with the unshakable determination of the German Volk to prove itself victorious in this historical struggle by the greatest perseverance and the full extent of all its forces. He pointed out to the young officers that to the courage and firmness of the soldier today belongs the avowal of faith of the politically educated man who knows what is at stake in the fight. Especially in this terrible struggle, everyone must realize that it is not simply a question of a military confrontation between individual states, but rather a gigantic struggle between nations and races, in which one ideology will win and the other will be mercilessly destroyed. This means that the nation that loses will cease to exist. It is insane to expect anything other than victory or ruin in this fight. Even the last German soldier must therefore realize that this cruel struggle, which our enemies wanted, caused, and forced on us, can only end in a German victory. In terms of personnel and matériel, we are under any circumstances in a position to assert ourselves against the coalition of our enemies, and it is therefore understandable that we will win this war in the end.

With the use of the great and memorable periods of German history, the Führer explained to the young officers that victory had always crowned our flags whenever we had been filled with the one and unshakable belief in our eternal Germany. As so often in the past, Providence will not make gifts to our Volk today in its struggle for its freedom and future. Put to a severe test, everything has to be fought for with the toughness of our sons at the front and in the homeland. Even in the bitter hours of trial, what matters is that the men who are called on to lead derive their faith in the victory from their ideology and, by their example and conduct, know how to instill it in their followers. The officer must therefore be the bearer of the political will within the Wehrmacht. Every officer must always realize that wherever he stands and fights, the fate of the German Volk and Reich is in his hands.

Field Marshal Keitel concluded the appeal with an avowal of faith in the Führer.

As after every speech by Hitler, Goebbels noted that this address in Breslau had been "very good." Above all, the Führer "emphasized the political education of the officer corps in particular. The young officers

December 4, 1943

gave the Führer stormy ovations. The Führer is very happy again to have spoken before such a great assembly of men.”

On November 23 and 24, Berlin witnessed two powerful air raids. The Reich Chancellery sustained heavy damage.

On November 25, Hitler had a wreath laid at the party funeral for Graf [Count] Reventlow in Potsdam. The count had been a National Socialist writer and Reichstag deputy.³⁹⁰

On November 30, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Háchá on the fifth anniversary of his election as state president.³⁹¹

In Teheran from November 27 to December 2, the first conference between Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin took place. During a solemn ceremony on November 29, Churchill presented Stalin with the “Sword of Stalingrad.” The British had ordered the award to commemorate the defense of the city. Churchill declared the following:³⁹²

Marshal Stalin—I am commanded by His Majesty King George VI to present to you to be forwarded to the city of Stalingrad the Sword of Honour of which His Majesty himself has approved the design. This blade bears upon it the inscription “To the steely-hearted citizens of Stalingrad. A gift of King George VI, as a sign of the homage of the British people.”

In a low voice, Stalin thanked him, raised the Sword “in a most expressive gesture to his lips, and kissed the blade. He then handed it to [General] Voroshilov.”³⁹³

On December 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco on his birthday. The next day, he sent one to Ryti on the Finnish national holiday.³⁹⁴

It would soon be Christmas, and Hitler felt that the mood in Germany needed improvement. New reports of victory would surely help to make the holidays more pleasant. On December 6, a new offensive on the eastern front was launched on Hitler’s orders. Its objective was the reconquest of Zhitomir and, potentially, Kiev. However, its main purpose was to liven things up for the public in Germany.³⁹⁵

On December 7, Hitler received at the Wolfsschanze headquarters A. A. Mussert, the head of the National Socialist movement in the Netherlands (Nationalsozialistische Bewegung, NSB). They had a long exchange “in the spirit of trusting and heartfelt cooperation.”³⁹⁶

On the same day, Hitler signed a decree on the “Simplification of the Bavarian land administration,” which read as follows³⁹⁷

December 11, 1943

Führer Headquarters, December 7, 1943

I

1. I authorize the Bavarian prime minister to delineate anew the jurisdictions of the Bavarian land authorities, if this is necessary for the simplification of the administration in Bavaria.

2. The abolition of public authorities will require the assent of the responsible Reich minister. With the Reich minister's consent, he will be entitled to transfer jurisdictions that previously had belonged to a Bavarian land authority to a Reich authority.

3. I reserve for myself the abolition of Bavarian state ministries.

II

In the course of the implementation of these measures, the Bavarian prime minister will be permitted to deviate, in agreement with the Reich ministers involved, from existing law.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

On December 9, Hitler appointed Envoy Rudolf Rahn as his ambassador to the Republican-Fascist government.³⁹⁸

On December 11, another exchange of telegrams with the Japanese emperor, with Mussolini, and with the Japanese prime minister Tojo took place. Hitler's telegrams read as follows:³⁹⁹

On the second anniversary of the alliance between Germany, Japan, and Italy, I ask Your Majesty to accept my sincere best wishes for the continued success of the victorious Japanese arms. At the same time, I again express my firm conviction that the freedom fight of our people for a just reorganization of Europe and East Asia will be crowned by the final victory of our allied armed forces.

Adolf Hitler

Duce!

On the second anniversary of the day on which National Socialist Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Japanese empire came together in an indissoluble community of struggle and fate, I convey to you my heartfelt greetings and best wishes. I think of your untiring deployment in the battle against our common enemies and add to this an expression of my unshakable conviction that the final victory of the Tripartite Pact powers will secure for our nations a happy and free future.

In comradely solidarity,

Adolf Hitler

It is two years ago today that Germany, Japan, and Italy together decided to fight the war forced on them, against the United States and England, until the final victory. In commemoration of this historic hour, I convey to Your Excellency my sincere best wishes. I would like to take this opportunity again to express my conviction that the bravery of our troops and the strong

December 18, 1943

determination of our nations to fight until the common enemies are defeated are a secure guarantee for the creation of a new Europe and a new East Asia.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, the German Zhitomir offensive had resulted in territorial gains. The German OKW reports, together with radio and press commentaries, attempted to attribute decisive importance to this operation, just in time before Christmas. The OKW report of December 14 contained the following victory announcement:

In the sector northeast of Zhitomir, our troops cleared the west bank of the Teterev of dispersed enemy forces. From December 6 to 13, the enemy lost four thousand four hundred prisoners and around eleven thousand dead there. Nine hundred twenty-seven guns, two hundred fifty-four tanks, and a great number of light and heavy infantry weapons were captured or destroyed.

Of course, the objective observer realized that the Zhitomir offensive was a modest operation. It could not bring about a change in the war. On the contrary, it would simply contribute to dissipating the German forces more quickly. Barely two weeks later, the Russians launched a counteroffensive. By early January, the situation in this sector was worse than before the Zhitomir offensive. However, Christmas was over by then. One year later, this Christmas magic would be repeated on a far larger scale in the form of Hitler's offensive in the Ardennes.

On December 18, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Ley on the tenth anniversary of the *Kraft durch Freude* organization. Hitler's telegram read as follows:⁴⁰⁰

Dear Party Comrade Ley!

For the greetings which you conveyed to me from the commemoration ceremony of the tenth anniversary of our great social work *Kraft durch Freude*, I say special thanks to you, its creator and designer. I hereby honor with great appreciation the exemplary achievements of the National Socialist community *Kraft durch Freude* in the course of these ten years in the social and cultural realm for the working German Volk. I am convinced that you and your coworkers will perform the work increased by the heavy tasks of war with the same dedication and energy.

Your Adolf Hitler

It became clear in the course of the discussion of the situation on the evening of December 20,⁴⁰¹ that Hitler was greatly disconcerted by the threat of a landing by the Allies in western Europe. No more did he

December 20, 1943

vainly propose to “evacuate” the area in question in order to spare the Allies “the difficulties of a landing.”⁴⁰² Now he declared the following:

There is no doubt that the attack in the west will come in the spring.

You have to count on a landing in Norway, also as well as on a diversionary attack in the Bay of Biscay and perhaps in the Balkans.

It would be highly unpleasant if the swine gains a foothold and lures our Luftwaffe out.

If he gains a foothold there in Norway, then that would be disastrous for our entire northern army. Then, the transports will not be possible any more. We know what it means in the south, when the swine sits on an island.

There is no doubt about it: they have committed themselves. From mid-February, early March on, the attack will take place in the west. I do not have the feeling that, let us say, the English really have their heart in this attack.

If they attack in the west, then this attack will decide the war.⁴⁰³ If this attack is parried, then the whole story is over.

The impending Allied landing was an unpleasant prospect for Hitler. But what could he do about it? He had an idea: flamethrowers were all that he needed! Immediately, he began trying to convince himself and his audience that this was the solution. As he explained:

Can't we arrange for a special allocation of flamethrowers for the west? Flamethrowers are the best thing for the defense; after all, they are terrifying weapons. But also battery flamethrowers. In the worst case, you would have to use force on (with) Speer. He has workers available because of the destroyed factories. You could stick them in somewhere and have them make flamethrowers. Especially in defense, the flamethrower is the most terrifying thing there is.

That will take the pluck out of the attacking infantry, I should say, before it starts hand-to-hand fighting. It will lose its pluck when it suddenly gets the feeling that there are flamethrowers on all sides.

Also in battery positions, there must be flamethrowers. Everywhere there should be flamethrowers. I also thought about using them against low-level flights, but that cannot be done.

Then Hitler telephoned Saur:⁴⁰⁴

Saur, how many flamethrowers are you making per month now?—I need three times as many as you are making now and that in two months. You have to stick workers in there as quickly as possible. So in all of January/February three times as many as you are doing now! That is the minimum requirement. That makes only twelve hundred? I thought twenty-four hundred. I want three times as many. You already noticed that the

December 22, 1943

numbers come out. So, fast, more, more! We need it really urgently. Thank you! Heil! Happy Holidays!

He said that he had increased it production to twelve hundred. He said that he thinks he can increase it even further. He can increase it, because this is a type of production where you do not need many primary products. And, because of the bomb attacks, he has workers available whom he can stick in there. We can never be taken by surprise, if there are twenty to thirty thousand flamethrowers in the west.

From where on earth was he going to get the thousands of flamethrowers that he needed for an endless front at the coast all the way from Spain to northern Norway, in southern France, and in the Balkans? Who would operate them? And what would the flamethrowers do against the heavy naval artillery of the Allied fleet and the thousand kilogram to five thousand kilogram bombs of the Royal Air Force?

Hitler was getting nervous thinking of where the Allies might land. He had no idea where. Not surprisingly, he declared: "I am convinced that the moment it starts will be a relief."⁴⁰⁵

On December 21 it was made public that Hitler had appointed Seyss-Inquart as president of the German Academy, to replace the dead Bavarian prime minister Siebert.⁴⁰⁶

In Kharkov on December 18, three Germans had been sentenced to death as war criminals by a Russian court-martial. They were publicly hanged the following day, in front of forty thousand spectators.⁴⁰⁷ This was the first concrete effect of the resolutions of the foreign ministers' conference in Moscow. Hitler was greatly annoyed. He announced reprisals in the course of the discussions of the situation on December 21 and 22:⁴⁰⁸

We will not punish prisoners of war but the war criminals in our hands.

Hitler was referring to members of the British commando troops,⁴⁰⁹ but not to members of the Allied air forces, who had been taken captive in the course of "terror attacks."⁴¹⁰

Hitler spent the Christmas holidays at his Wolfsschanze headquarters. He awarded the Regiment "List" a "high distinction" in the form of a stripe. The communiqué read as follows:⁴¹¹

High distinction for the Grenadier Regiment "List." The Führer has awarded the Grenadier Regiment No. 199 and the Grenadier Reserve Battalion No. 199 a stripe with the inscription "Infantry Regiment List." The

December 26, 1943

presentation of the stripe to the regiment deployed in the east took place on December 25, in a worthy manner appropriate to the field.

However, the awarding of medals and stripes failed to change the situation. On December 24, the Russians began an offensive for the reconquest of Zhitomir, which they took on the last day of the year 1943.

On December 26, the battleship *Scharnhorst* left the safety of a Norwegian fjord. Near the North Pole, it attempted to sink a British escort for Murmansk in a suicidal attack. The British battleship *Duke of York* and the cruiser *Jamaica* promptly sank the ship with its crew of fifteen hundred men.

In the course of a discussion of the situation on December 27,⁴¹² Hitler announced the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union, in spite of much evidence to the contrary:

You should not assume that it is a giant from antiquity,⁴¹³ who every time he falls to the ground becomes stronger. At one point, he will run out of breath.

Moreover, he again compared the crisis before the seizure of power with the situation he was now facing.

Zeitler, I want to tell you something. I am a man who has personally built up and led perhaps the greatest organization there is on earth. I still lead it today. During this time, I received news from local groups (Ortsgruppen): here Social Democracy cannot be beaten. Or: Communism simply cannot be beaten here, this is completely out of the question, you cannot get it out of here. One thing was remarkable: it was always the leader [of the specific Ortsgruppe]. If it were a general judgment, then it would be in order. If somebody tells me that the exertion of moral influence on the infantry is useless—then I can only say that I once heard a major talk, and I said to myself, there is no sense in talking to the troops, I heard this a thousand times, there is no sense to it. Of course, if an officer tells me that it is simply of no use with the men, then I can only say, that only proves that your influence was of no use. For if I put another team next to yours, the people are all well-behaved in the hands of their leaders.

After all, looking at a unit is looking in a mirror. Or I think of my Ortsgruppen. In every election, I used to have Gaus where I knew on the eve of the election that there would be a success. Why? I cannot say: Yes, that was Franconia, or that was Cologne—Cologne was the black-red Cologne, after all. Or East Prussia? What did East Prussia mean? It was completely reactionary, against us. Or Mecklenburg or Thuringia. Thuringia was bright red. But, in the one case, I had Koch; in the other, Sauckel, then Ley and so on.

These eternal comparisons between domestic and foreign policy in Hitler's tirades were as boring as they were wrong. The English were

December 27, 1943

simply not German Nationalists, and the Russians not German Communists!

Even if one accepted this comparison, the result was not in Hitler's favor. After all, he had carefully avoided the application of force in his struggle at home (except for 1923), but he had used force consistently abroad after 1939. This spelled ruin for Hitler. Undoubtedly, he would have failed in Germany, too, had he used force to seize power at the time. After all, even the most brilliant speeches before Gauleiters or Ortsgruppenleiter would not have had much effect in the face of the machine guns of the Reichswehr or of the police, just as they did not have much effect in the face of the bombs and grenades of the Allied and Soviet troops.

On December 27, Hitler indulged in his favorite sport, the design of new medals and their statutes. He decreed new bylaws for the "Service Medal of the German Eagle."⁴¹⁴ One year later, he would devote himself at about the same time to drawing up new statutes for the Iron Cross medal.⁴¹⁵

On December 27, Hitler issued a supplementary directive for Directive No. 51.⁴¹⁶ It read as follows.

I. The enemy's deployment in South England is coming to an end. It should be expected that it will be over in the middle of February; after the middle of February a massive landing operation of the enemy can be expected at any time. As it will take a long time to move all the forces to particularly hazardous sections of the coast, and as the enemy air forces will certainly hinder our road network by damaging it, it is urgent to start deployment before the landing of the enemy's decisive forces.

II. Hence, the Führer has ordered:

Due to a particular menace to the front of AOK. 15 and to the right wing of OAK. 7 (Cotentin Peninsula),⁴¹⁷ the available mass of the forces must be concentrated at these fronts. The units involved must be well trained and must put up anti-fragmentation structures.

III. The deployment must start on January 1, 1944. [Technical details follow.]

It was evident in the discussions of December 28, 29, and 30 at the Führer headquarters,⁴¹⁸ that Hitler attempted to portray the situation in rosy colors for the benefit of the generals. However, he succeeded only in robbing Peter to pay Paul; that is, he withdrew troops from the northern front in order to throw them into a newly created gap in the south.

December 30, 1943

The situation at the end of 1943 was even more catastrophic than it had been in the beginning. Since Stalingrad, the German troops in the east had been on the retreat. Slowly but surely, this retreat led them back to their initial positions of 1941. The Allies had taken possession of North Africa. There had been some slow advances in Italy, but this was a peripheral theater of war. Montgomery's recall to England had made this clear. From England, a landing during the following months threatened to bring about a decision in the west.

The following additions to the states already at war with Germany had been made in the year 1943: Iraq (declaration of war on January 16), Denmark (August 29), Iran (September 9), Italy (October 10), Colombia (November 29), and Bolivia (December 9). No less than forty-three states were now at war with the Greater German Reich.

The Year 1944

Major Events in Summary

Whereas Hitler's prognoses for 1943 had already been more modest than in earlier years, his forecasts for 1944 were downright gloomy. On the one hand, he still proclaimed: "In this struggle of life and death, Germany will win in the end!"¹ On the other hand, he also said that "the year 1944 will make heavy and difficult demands on all Germans. The tremendous developments in the war will reach a crisis point this year. We are completely confident that we will successfully ride it out."²

Hitler desired to "ride out" the year 1944 "successfully"! It was more like scraping by if possible! In the east, he still had some room for avoiding contact with the enemy. However, if a landing in the west succeeded, then the "crisis," that is, Germany's collapse, would be a question of only months. Hitler probably realized this, although he still boasted: "No matter where the plutocratic world will undertake the threatened attempt to land in the west, it will fail!"³ Hitler charged Rommel with an inspection of the coasts in question along the Atlantic, the North Sea, and the Mediterranean. Since the autumn of 1943, Rommel had constantly been on the go: first in the Balkans, then at the Riviera, later in Denmark and France. In the winter of 1943-1944, the German newsreels often presented Rommel on the screen, inspecting the fortifications of the so-called "Atlantic Wall." His otherwise inscrutable face revealed what he thought: if the Allies really undertook a landing, then all measures would have been in vain.

On November 28, 1942, Rommel had already candidly told Hitler, who was greatly angered by this, that the German weapons were not up to the "effectiveness of the British bombers, tanks, and artillery."⁴

On December 20, 1943, Hitler had declared: "From mid-February, early March on, the attack will take place in the west."⁵ Since this period passed and nothing happened, Hitler felt that he could take his annual spring vacation at the Berghof. Again, all sorts of representatives from

the satellite states had to make an appearance either there or at Klessheim Castle. Hitler enjoyed himself so much that it was not until mid-July that he finally returned to the Wolfsschanze headquarters. In the meantime, the war continued: the Germans lost the Crimea in May and were forced to give up Rome on June 4. The Allies landed in northern France on June 6 and gained a foothold there, even though Hitler had prophesied that they should consider themselves fortunate if they managed to stay “on land for nine hours.”⁶

Hitler’s “V-1” rocket bombs, which targeted the British Isles and later Belgium from mid-June on, and even the improved “V-2” gained no successes.⁷ Given the state of the technology at the time, their military significance was negligible. They served as an instrument of terror, but terror like propaganda works only against an inferior nation, never against one of equal or superior strength.

On June 22, the third anniversary of Hitler’s attack on the Soviet Union, the Russians launched a major offensive along the central sector of the eastern front. Within a few weeks, the entire German Army Group Center, consisting of twenty-five divisions, was destroyed. Romania collapsed in the south of the eastern front, followed by Bulgaria. Brute force kept Hungary in line. Finland laid down its arms in the north.

On July 20, a few days after Hitler’s return to the Wolfsschanze headquarters, an attempt on his life was made. Hitler survived with barely a scratch, while a number of innocent men were killed or seriously injured in the explosion. It furnished Hitler with a pretext for hanging thousands of Germans who were suspicious anyway, or sending them to concentration camps. He also launched a propaganda campaign on his “miraculous rescue” and “the warning finger of God,” which had supposedly become apparent here. But all that could not change the fact that the end was drawing nearer and nearer, the closer the Allies came to the borders of the Reich.

By September, the Russians were at the border of East Prussia and the Allies were in front of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). While Hitler himself had stated, “if they attack in the west, then this attack will (decide) the war,”⁸ he was nonetheless not about to capitulate after the landing of the Anglo-Americans. After all, he had announced earlier that he intended to “remain steadfast in the face of the impossible”⁹ and fight down to the “last battalion”¹⁰ in order to stay alive. He hoped that, by some miracle or through his new “wonder weapons,” Providence could

still bestow the palm of victory on him, if only he “persisted.” He did not yield. Instead, he issued an appeal for the “Volkssturm,” a type of “*levée en masse*,”¹¹ the very idea of which he had belittled not that many years before. While speaking before a group of Kreisleiters gathered at the Vogelsang Ordensburg, he had expressed the following conviction:¹²

I do not believe, you know, in this so-called *levée en masse*. I do not believe that by mobilizing their enthusiasm, let us say, [you make soldiers].

Now twelve-year old boys and women were being trained for defensive battle. The Germans on the western and eastern borders of the Reich had to dig antitank ditches in order to document the “German will to resist.”

In order to improve the public’s mood in Germany, Hitler launched an offensive in the Ardennes shortly before Christmas. However, the victory reports he presented to the German public at Christmas were rather meager. It was obvious that this injection of courage would hardly outlast the holidays.

January 1, 1944

Report and Commentary

1

Hitler's New Year's proclamation was rather long and contained little new. By the strangest arguments, he tried to prove that Germany would simply have to win the war. Europe would otherwise become the victim not only of Bolshevism, but also of English famine: "Wherever the British rule today, hunger and misery are the concomitants of life."¹³

Hitler then turned to the setbacks of the previous year, claiming that they had occurred because the French officers and the Italian king had broken their word. He did not say a word about Stalingrad. In a sentimental tone, he spoke about the bomb warfare and again said that the "hour of retribution will come." At the same time, he announced a large-scale rebuilding of the destroyed cities in Germany and claimed: "Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, Kassel, and all the other big or small cities will be barely recognizable only a few years after the war."

In conclusion, he tried to convince himself and the German Volk that all setbacks were simply trials imposed by the "Lord," who was reviewing its bravery, diligence, and willingness to sacrifice. Hitler declared as follows:

During this year, my Volksgenossen, bitter and difficult decisions had to be made. After the Allies succeeded in landing in French North Africa, which was made possible by the breach of word and loyalty of the French admirals, generals, and other officers, I had to try to win time under any circumstances. We needed time not only to carry out the mobilization of the absolutely necessary new German armies, but also to prepare measures for countering the impending defection of Italy's King Victor Emmanuel [III], which could no longer be overlooked. The history of this war will one day decide who conducted themselves wisely in this period: our enemies or we. I do not believe that, had Providence ever offered us such an opportunity, we would have failed so pitifully to take advantage of it as our enemies did.

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We should thank Providence that, despite these hard trials, it gave us the opportunity time and again to overcome difficult crises by swift action, to set right apparently hopeless situations, and, in so doing, to carry out the expansion of our military forces according to plan. The shameful betrayal of the Duce, to whom Italy owed everything, suddenly placed in front of the German Reich and its leadership the most difficult decisions. It was a matter of course that the resulting consequences would influence the facts of the war. The German leadership was forced to weigh mercilessly the necessary against the less than absolutely necessary. It had to make very harsh decisions, which were very difficult to understand for the individual soldier, who might have been told to retreat over a hundred kilometers without having been attacked.

In spite of this, every German can be sure that no more than was absolutely necessary happened or will happen in order to render justice to the new great and mighty tasks. This task now is to win the war in any event! The building of new mighty lines of communication, the taking possession of great railway lines, their securing and operation, compelled us to limit ourselves at other fronts. The adjustment of forces, which we sought, can today already be regarded as a success.

If thus right now there is an attempt, by trips, conferences, new appointments of commanders in chief, and other such maneuvers—in view of the lack of other means to support the Russian offensive—to burden Germany, the German Volk, and its leaders with a war of nerves, then they are not only mistaking the German Volk, but also the German leaders for those of the former Italian kingdom. It is no news to us that the English intend to undertake a landing in the west or in the Balkans; not to mention that they have already been at most of these locations before. That they want to see these landings through by all means at their disposal is a matter of course.

That they appoint special commanders in chief for these landings is nothing new in the history of war. It was no different even during the pitiful coalition wars of the past. That they finally plan to defeat us in doing this has been their intention from the start, of course. I can therefore only assure the German Volk that we took account of all these intentions from the start and prepared ourselves, not only in terms of personnel and matériel but also by an reinforcement of those points that to us seemed to be crucial or important for such a landing. We did so to an extent which will probably surprise our enemies more than their landing can surprise us. They assure us that the new invasion can no longer be compared with the attempted landing at Dieppe. Well, we expect nothing different, since our defense has also changed in the meantime. Above all, the English who landed at Dieppe did not have any direct contact with the German defense at the time. I am speaking before the German Volk completely confident that wherever the Allies carry out their landing, they will be given an appropriate welcome. The German soldier will do his duty there, too, realizing the fateful significance of this struggle.

In such a worldwide, mighty, and dreadful struggle, it cannot be avoided that the psychological stress for the individual sometimes reaches the limit of what is bearable, even surpassing it at times. In spite of this, on the whole, every

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German unit has time and again done justice to its duties, after the necessary recovery. The heroism of our soldiers in the army, navy, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS is without precedent in history. While before the front was always held up to the homeland as a glorious example of sacrifice, today the homeland can be held up to the front as an example of a no less great heroism and sense of sacrifice. The bomb warfare against German cities profoundly moves all our hearts. It is not so much the cities themselves, their houses, and public buildings but rather the loss for good of our artistic monuments that we lament; but we will rebuild our cities to be more beautiful than they were before. The organized National Socialist Volksstaat will have eliminated within a few years all traces of this war. From the ruins, a new splendor of German cities will burst into bloom. Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, Kassel, and all the other big or small cities will be barely recognizable only a few years after the war. Wherever historic values can be replaced, we will reproduce them faithfully. If the National Socialist state succeeded in peacetime in building over three hundred eighty thousand apartments per year, then it should not be a problem for our cooperative effort to produce two to three million apartments after the war. What pains all of us and me in particular is the sacrifice of life, especially of women and children, and the loss of so many personal belongings and small remembrances, which, in spite of their lack of material worth, mean so much for the life of the person who either inherited them from his father, saved up the money for them himself, and for whom they are irreplaceable souvenirs of times past.

By the way, the hour of retribution will come!

However, there is another side of this bomb warfare. The man who has lost everything knows that only victory will return his belongings to him. Only the success of this war will again transform our German cities from heaps of rubble into blossoming communities. Only success will again give millions of men space to work and live. Success alone can create a situation which, above all, renders impossible the attempt of these international criminals to bring such suffering upon mankind once again. When millions of men have nothing they can call their own anymore, when they have nothing they can lose, then they can only win something.

The National Socialist state leadership is therefore determined to wage this war with the utmost fanaticism to the bitter end. In this, it will differ from the weak and cowardly leadership of the German nation in the World War. The party, whose members sacrifice their blood disproportionately at the front—with its organizations for the youth, the elderly, women and girls—carries out the work of responsibility not only in the education, but also and above all in the conduct of our Volksgenossen in the most difficult and bitter hours. War once brought forth the National Socialist movement and, therefore, it must and will hold its own all the more in the war today.

The achievements of the fighting soldiers at the front and the fighting Germans in the homeland are complemented by the work of our Volksgenossen and those Europeans who are in our ranks. The German peasant, that is, primarily the German peasant's wife—they are contributing to

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the feeding of our Volk. They also know that the collapse of the German Reich would mean the end of the German peasantry. Therefore, they can have only one goal, namely, to secure for our Volk what is absolutely necessary in terms of foodstuffs in order to get through this most difficult fight successfully.

The achievements of German agriculture are correspondingly unique. They are supplemented by the activities of millions of our workers, who deliver weapons and ammunition to our soldiers. In contrast to the World War, when we were opposed by thirty-five hundred tanks and had barely a dozen of our own and no antitank defenses whatsoever, the quality and number of our production of tanks increase constantly, like that of the weapons of defense. Germany is perhaps the only state in the world that has not lowered its production of coal but has increased it and, by throttling private consumption, has subordinated everything to waging the war. Thanks to the huge Lebensraum and great number of people deployed in Europe for the fighting of our war, and also to our glorious allies in East Asia and the nations fighting together with us in Europe, which are likewise defending their homelands and the European continent, we represent a powerful factor in terms of people no less powerful than that of our enemy, especially if you consider not only numbers but also productively employable manpower as the actual value.

These enormous events are made possible by the achievements of our transport, our general administration, and the unpaid work of millions of men, who dedicate every free hour to the care and assistance of others. The deployment of this Volk is perfected by the unique achievements of the German woman and girl, and today already by a brave German youth.

It is the mighty rhythm of life of the National Socialist Volksstaat which makes the war possible for us. It created the material and ideological prerequisites for this struggle of survival not only of the German Reich, but also of the entire continent. However, this socialist Volksstaat is also the target of the hatred of the Bolshevik-plutocratic international conspirators and their Jewish wire-pullers. It will also be the reason for the decline of this coalition!

The year 1944 will make heavy and difficult demands on all Germans. The tremendous developments in the war will reach a crisis point this year. We are completely confident that we will successfully ride it out.

Let us pray to the Lord for the victory not as a gift, but let us ask Him to weigh justly our bravery, our diligence, and our sacrifices. The objective of our struggle is well-known. It is none other than to preserve the existence of our Volk, which He has created. Our willingness to sacrifice and our diligence will not remain a secret to Him. We are ready to give and do everything in the service of this goal. With fairness, He will examine us until He can pronounce a sentence. It is our duty to appear not too light before Him, so that we shall be accorded the merciful judgment which calls itself "victory" and means life.

Hitler's order of the day to the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and [in particular of] the army was likewise long. He even mentioned the "heroic struggle of Stalingrad," although he claimed that this "crisis" had

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been caused by the “complete failure of the Italian ally in the east.” The “betrayal by the Italian king,” the “traitorous French generals in North Africa,” and the “Badoglio creatures” had forced him to “protect the rest of the European Lebensraum . . . at the expense of the east.” At the center of the order of the day stood this prophecy: “No matter where the plutocratic world of the west undertakes the landing it threatens, it will fail!” Hitler declared the following:¹⁴

History will be forced to record the year 1943 as the second year of a great crisis.

The long-standing sabotage by the Italian royal house, its attendant camarilla, and the plutocratic-capitalist cliques have finally led to the betrayal by the French generals, admirals, and officers in North Africa. This resulted in the slackening of all means of resistance in this area.

Through a systematic, passive resistance of the responsible Italian offices, traffic to North Africa was paralyzed so that, because of the lack of material instruments of power and provisions, our units could no longer hold the North African area. The complete failure of the Italian ally in the east led to a further crisis, which ended in the heroic struggle of Stalingrad.

Finally, the underground activity of these traitors—at the time already paid by England —began to undermine the Balkans and threatened to cheat the German soldier out of the rewards of his blood sacrifice. The arrest of the Duce led to a shamelessly frank treason, which is perhaps unique in history in its profligacy. The consequences were very hard for us.¹⁵ In a few weeks, Germany had first to defeat the troops of the traitors and then disarm them. More than a million men met this fate. In part, they had threatened to cut off the rearward communications of the German troops in Italy and the Balkans. We occupied countless islands. Some had to be reconquered after heavy fighting against the troops of the Italian king. In other instances, we were forced to evacuate islands because of the impossibility of securing contact. In southern Italy, it became immediately necessary to improvise a new front and consolidate it. In the Balkans, the Italians and bandits of all sorts had to be defeated and disarmed. Numerous divisions had to be brought up into these areas for this purpose and new armies had to be assembled, but at the same time the expansion of our fortifications and the continued training of their crews could not be neglected.

In the same period it also became necessary to erase at all costs the impending offensive by the Russians [while it was] still in the summer, so as to use up their forces as much as possible before the onset of winter. In the homeland, measures to fend off enemy bomb attacks had to be reexamined and improved. New offensive and defensive weapons had to be developed, their methods of application studied, and finally [they had to be] practically tested.

During this year, my comrades, the German leaders were weighed down by the greatest task which could ever be set to anybody. Thanks to the bravery, dedication, and spirit of sacrifice of the front and the homeland, thanks to the diligence of our workers, we managed with the support of our allies in East

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Asia and our comrades in arms in Europe, to resolve these enormous questions. In Europe, the German Volk and the German soldiers bore the main burden.

All the problems presented to us by the treason of the Italian king are now basically resolved. The front stands south of Rome and is constantly being reinforced in order to fend off the Anglo-American units. The rush on the Brenner Pass has become an offensive at a snail's pace. The Allied warlords are today happy if they report the "conquest" of the ruins of one or two peasant villages per week. The Balkans are in our hands; all the islands are occupied by German troops. The landing of Allied units, no matter where it should take place, will run into German resistance, which will look completely different from the welcome of the Americans by the traitorous French generals in North Africa or the characterless Badoglio creatures in Sicily.

These positive points are opposed by negative ones. The mighty new tasks can be accomplished only by renunciations elsewhere. The taking up of positions essential to the defense of Europe in the south necessitates an adjustment of duties to the rear and supply lines at the expense of the east. Many new deployments earmarked for the east are now tied down and must help to protect the rest of the European Lebensraum. This is the cause of many of your cares and needs, my comrades at the eastern front.

In spite of this, there is no doubt that this greatest year of crisis in our history, which the English and the Bolsheviks were firmly convinced would end in our complete collapse, has become a great historic success. No matter how difficult the fighting was and will continue to be in the east, Bolshevism has not reached its goal. No matter where the plutocratic world undertakes the threatened attempt to land in the west, it will fail!

The attempt to wear down the German homeland will result in its opposite! Their intention of eliminating the German war production will be foiled. Our resistance will not diminish; instead, it will become even more successful in the year 1944.

Even if the scales of technological progress have tipped temporarily in favor of our enemies in the year 1943, we will catch up again. After all, the German spirit of invention has not been asleep but active. The products of its achievements will reestablish the balance of technological weapons.

It is a hard fact that our enemies, who unleashed this war hoping for a completely certain victory, have been forced back almost everywhere. After four years of struggle, Germany, which had a Lebensraum of six hundred thirty-four thousand square kilometers at the beginning of the war, today occupies two million six hundred fifty thousand square kilometers in Europe. And it is a fact that the smashing of the German Reich has not taken place for a fourth year. They did not manage to exterminate our Volk or break its vital force. Instead, we continue with great confidence to defend the Reich and, therefore, Europe, in the fifth year of the war.

This goes to the credit of the leadership and the soldiers of the entire Wehrmacht.

The accomplishments of the army with all its formations in this year have earned it the greatest glory. Even if it appeared to the brave grenadier to surpass

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by far what is humanly possible, he had time and again found the strength to assert himself. In this bloody struggle, the front in the east stands in defiance of all enemy forces. The Bolshevik attempt to invade Europe will again fail, for good this time, in one way or another. I know what I demand of you, my soldiers of the army. Still, even the greatest sacrifice you make today is no greater than the sacrifice demanded even of women and children in Germany. They must and do make this sacrifice everywhere with a faithful heart. No less are the accomplishments of the navy, which, through its fight, gets a grip on the tasks which are set for the Wehrmacht in general. The apparent subsiding of the U-boat warfare is caused by a single technical invention on the side of our enemies. We are not only in the process of eliminating it, but we are also convinced that we will succeed in this shortly.

Like the army, the Luftwaffe has made tremendous accomplishments while fighting on all fronts. In addition, it faces the task of defending the homeland's soil. Its heroism rises above everything.

The heroic divisions and units of the Waffen SS, which fight within the framework of the army, feel tied to the army for better or for worse.

All other institutions and units which are deployed at the front and in action likewise deserve the greatest praise: the men and women of the Red Cross, the Reich Labor Service, the NSKK, and the OT.

The accomplishments of the German railroad men are also matchless.

The year 1943 is now over. It has not only refused our adversaries what they had hoped for, but, on the contrary, it has dealt them perhaps their severest disappointment.

The year 1944 will be very difficult. It is our joint task to transcend the purely defensive in its course and deal the adversary such heavy blows that finally the hour will come in which Providence can grant the victory to that nation which deserves it most. When I look at you, my German soldiers, your heroism, bravery, and courage, and when I consider the sacrifices and accomplishments of the homeland, then my confidence is transformed into an unshakable certainty: more a nation cannot do, suffer, and bear. Thus, if Providence gives the prize of life to whoever fights for and defends it most bravely, then our Volk will be received graciously by Him who as a just judge has at all times granted the victory to those most deserving of it.

In this struggle of life and death, Germany will win in the end!

The official note on the exchange of telegrams at the beginning of the year was again quite brief. This was no surprise, since the number of heads of state and politicians who still cared to send their greetings to Hitler had greatly diminished. The public was not even told what the Duce stated in his telegram. The communiqué read as follows:¹⁶

At the turn of the year, an exchange of season's greetings by telegram took place between the Führer and numerous foreign heads of state and government.

The ambassadors, envoys, and *chargés d'affaires* present in Berlin expressed their own greetings to the Führer and those of the heads of state, governments,

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and nations that they represent by entry in the guest book at the Presidential Chancellery.

On January 4, von Manstein arrived at the Wolfsschanze headquarters to tell Hitler that the bend of the Dnieper could simply not be held.¹⁷ However, Hitler cut him off and gave a speech himself. He categorically declined to withdraw from the bend of the Dnieper and to give up Nikopol.

On this topic, Hitler said that the unavoidable loss of the Crimea would then lead to the collapse of Turkey followed by that of Bulgaria and Romania. He further explained that he was not in a position to bring up additional forces to the army group for its northern wing. At best, he could take them from Army Group North, but only if it withdrew to Lake Peipus. As a result, Finland could possibly break away. We would lose control over the entire eastern Baltic Sea, and ore transports from Sweden would no longer be possible. In addition, we would lose essential training waters for our U-boats.

From the west, he could only give us forces after a landing by the enemy had been driven off or the British—as he believed—had settled in Portugal. He had to fight to win time right now, until things were cleared up in the west and our activated formations were ready for deployment. From May on, the U-boat warfare would again gain momentum.

By the way, there are so many disagreements among our enemies that they will one day fall apart. To win time means everything.

It was true that to win time meant everything to Hitler. After all, he believed in a miracle! He clung to the idea that the alliance of the western powers with the Russians would “fall apart” before the war was over. He tried to convince not only his generals of the correctness of this utopian wishful thinking in the next fifteen months but also his entourage. Goebbels constantly had to “drive home” this point with the German public.

After the discussion of the situation on that day, another talk between Hitler and von Manstein followed. Zeitzler was the only other person present. Von Manstein made another feeble attempt to get Hitler to change the command and suggest a “truly responsible chief of the general staff.” While von Manstein spoke, Hitler looked at him very sharply, almost putting him off. Then Hitler took over and said the following:

Only he who controlled all the resources of the Reich was capable of waging this war militarily. Only he was in a position to decide which forces were available for the individual theaters of war and how operations there

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should therefore proceed. Also, Göring would never comply with anybody else's orders.

On the question of the appointment of a commander in chief for the eastern theater of war, nobody else would have the same authority as he.

"The field marshals never ever obey me! Do you think that they would listen any better to you? I can dismiss them, if need be, but nobody else would have this type of authority!"

This put an end for good to such suggestions! It was surprising that von Manstein went this far, considering Hitler's repeated hints that this would not get him anywhere. It would have been easier to take a bone from a dog than to get Hitler to give up an inch of his immense power voluntarily!

Another "private" military discussion followed in January 1944 between Hitler and Guderian.¹⁸ Hitler invited Guderian to breakfast, saying: "I have received a teal as a gift. You know I am a vegetarian. Would you like to join me for breakfast and eat the teal?" Guderian felt that this was a good opportunity for suggesting to Hitler the construction of defensive installations in the east. He was wrong. He stirred up a hornets' nest. Hitler shouted:

Believe me, I am the greatest builder of fortifications of all time. I built the West Wall; I built the Atlantic Wall. I used so and so many tons of concrete. I know what it means to build fortifications. There is not enough manpower, matériel, or means of transportation for the east. The railroads do not even suffice today for supplying the front. In view of this, I simply cannot bring trains with building materials up to the front.

A detailed list of figures followed, which Guderian was unable to counter on the spot. In spite of this, he again tried to make clear to Hitler that it was necessary to build defensive fortifications in the east. But Hitler replied that the generals in the east "would think only of retreat" if he built fortified positions or fortresses behind their fronts.¹⁹

Like von Manstein, Guderian then broached the question of the appointment of a Wehrmacht chief of staff. However, the reply he got was no different than the one von Manstein had received. Hitler rejected all proposals and refused to dismiss Keitel. He knew quite well that the generals were seeking to curtail his own powers and against this he would fight to his last breath!

On January 8, Hitler signed an order concerning the ideological indoctrination of soldiers. It read as follows:²⁰

January 10, 1944

Führer Headquarters, January 8, 1944

On the occasion of assuming direct command over the army, I said that it was a question of decisive importance to the fate of the German Volk that there is unconditional agreement between the state leaders and the officer corps not only in all military aspects but also with respect to ideology.

This war is being fought so bitterly and mercilessly because it represents the decisive struggle between two completely different ideologies. The German Volk today struggles for the freedom of its existence, the fashioning of its life, and its Lebensraum.

The fifth year of the war finds us and our enemies at the height of military armament. However, what remains decisive for success is always the man, the soldier, the fighter. Whoever is able to dedicate himself to the fight with the purest will, the bravest faith, and the most fanatical determination, will win the victory.

The soldier and especially the officer is therefore not only the bearer of arms of the nation, but he is by the same token also the bearer of the political will of his people.

An officer who is unable to educate and lead his troops ideologically is as misplaced in this battle as the officer who fails in the training of his troops or in their tactical leadership. The most valuable forces would waste away if the moral fighting strength of the army were based only on blind obedience, instead of the determination to fight in the realization of the "how come" and "what for."

The book *Wofür kämpfen wir?* (What are we fighting for?) will serve the officer as a guide for his own ideological orientation and as a mental tool for the political education and training of the officer. The officer must also be an active pioneer in the ideological realm. He must be able to educate his soldiers to become convinced and invincible fighters for our great Germanic-German Reich in the spirit of our National Socialist ideology.

I therefore order that the ideological thoughts contained in this book will be integrated into regular lessons for the soldiers in a convincing and emphatic manner. This political training is as decisive for the war as is weapons training. The commanders will arrange for these political lessons to play a worthy role in the framework of training and deployment.

Adolf Hitler

On January 9, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Austrian field marshal Czappon von Birkenstetten on his eightieth birthday. He granted him the privilege of wearing the uniform of the new Wehrmacht.²¹

On January 10, Hitler witnessed a belated triumph. He had finally managed to arrange that a special court in Verona sentenced to death, in "the name of the Duce," all members of the Great Fascist Council who had approved of Grandi's motion on July 24, 1943. Cianetti was an

January 17, 1944

exception. Five members of the Council were arrested and shot at 9:00 a.m. on January 11: Marshal de Bono, Ciano, Pareschi, Marinelli, and Gottardi. Mussolini had not hesitated to sacrifice Ciano, his own son-in-law, to Hitler, who had demanded his execution. Ciano certainly had been no angel, but his education and character placed him far above Mussolini. The Duce remained unmoved in his decision in spite of the curse placed on him by his favorite daughter Edda.

On January 17, Hitler issued his decree on the formation of “combat zones” along the Belgian and French coasts. Directive No. 51 (c) read as follows:²²

1. I authorize Commander in Chief West to declare areas of the Belgian and French coast fortified by him in whole or in part a “combat zone” [Items 2 and 3 below contain technical details.]

4. At the same time as Commander in Chief West declares certain areas a “combat zone,” the general powers of the governments of France and Monaco in this zone of the Mediterranean coast shall pass to Commander in Chief West, to the extent he considers necessary for the place and other circumstances. As for the rest, the regulations in items 2 and 3 ought to be considered logically applicable.

In the course of the following months, Hitler would repeatedly issue similar, highly detailed directives. No matter how well formulated and drawn up they were, they could not change the balance of power of the two sides: the German troops were hopelessly inferior to the Anglo-American armies. Hitler ought not to have bothered issuing all these directives. However, he appeared to enjoy doing this as much as composing proclamations and diplomatic congratulatory addresses. He would indulge in this until the end at the Führerbunker.

On January 17, the Russians started an offensive at Oranienbaum on the Gulf of Finland. It led to the relief of Leningrad.²³ Again, the outstanding Russian artillery played a decisive role in these operations.

In spite of all his efforts, Hitler had not been able to take Leningrad in 1941. In impotent fury, he had decided to “starve out” the city and have it “swallowed up by the earth.”²⁴ For three years, he had tortured its population in an inhumane manner. He had denied the citizens foodstuffs, had them shelled daily by bombers and heavy artillery, but could not break their heroic resistance. Finally, they were rescued. Ten days later, there was no German soldier to be seen within fifty kilometers of the city.

January 28, 1944

On January 21, as he did every year, Hitler had a wreath placed at the grave of Professor Troost in Munich by Gauleiter Giesler.²⁵

On January 23 in Nuremberg, Deputy Gauleiter Holz laid a wreath from the Führer at the grave of the SA Obergruppenführer von Obernitz, who had died in an accident while serving with the Luftwaffe.²⁶

On the same day, Hitler received the Norwegian prime minister Vidkun Quisling at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Afterwards, he received the Norwegian ministers Fugglesan, Lie, and Whist.²⁷

On January 25, Hitler signed an insignificant decree on the right of pardon of the Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia.²⁸

On January 27, Hitler assembled his field marshals and commanders in chief at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in order to deliver a speech to them. Up to now, he had ensured their compliance by enormous appropriations of funds, special bonuses, and endowments amounting to hundreds of thousands of Reichsmarks.²⁹ Now, however, he was no longer content in assuring their obedience by financial means. He made clear to them that they owed him certain heroic duties. His speech culminated in this passage:³⁰

Gentlemen, if ever there comes a final hour, then I hope that you, my generals, will stand together on the barricades and that you, my field marshals, stand next to me with your swords drawn!

On hearing this, von Manstein exclaimed: "That will be the case, my Führer!" Hitler looked up in surprise: a heckler! He could not stand heckling, no matter what type.³¹ Only if there was complete silence, could he fully exercise his rhetorical power. This time, however, he swiftly regained his composure and replied: "I thank you, Field Marshal von Manstein!" Nevertheless, he had lost his place and abruptly ended his speech. Later, he gave von Manstein a dressing-down in Keitel's presence as follows:

Field Marshal, I won't stand for your interrupting me during an address which I deliver to the generals. After all, you would not put up with this from your subordinates either.

In the course of the discussion of the situation on January 28,³² it became clear just how critical things had become at different front sectors. Army Group North had been forced to retreat quite far following the successful Soviet offensive at Leningrad.³³ The Russians

January 28, 1944

had again attacked Army Group South and had encircled two German corps around Cherkessk.

On January 22, Allied troops under the command of General Clark³⁴ landed at Anzio and Nettuno (south of Rome) in Italy.

On January 27, additional strong units landed. This threatened the so-called "Gustav line," a defensive line built by Field Marshal Kesselring from the Gulf of Gaeta via Monte Cassino to the Adriatic. Even Rome was endangered.

On January 28, Hitler sent the commander in chief, southwest, Kesselring, the following telex message:³⁵

In the next days, the "Battle for Rome" will start. It will decide the defense of central Italy and the fate of the Tenth Army. The significance of this battle goes beyond this, however, because with the landing at Nettuno the invasion of Europe, planned for the year 1944, has started. As far as possible from the base in England, where the majority of the invasion troops stand ready, strong German forces will be tied down, used up, and experience for future operations collected.

Therefore, every single one of your soldiers must realize the significance of the battle, which will have to be fought by the Fourteenth Army. It is not enough to give tactically correct and clear orders. The army, the air fleet, and the armed forces of the navy, its leaders and soldiers, must be filled with the fanatical will to end this battle victoriously and not to slow down until the last enemy has been destroyed or forced out to sea. The battle must be fought with the sacred hatred of an enemy who wages a pitiless war of annihilation against the German Volk. The enemy will use every means for this. He pursues no other goal than the destruction of German and European culture.

The fight must be hard and merciless, not only against the enemy, but also against any leader and any group which fails in this decisive hour.

As in the battles in Sicily, at the Rapido River, and near Ortona, the enemy must realize that the German fighting strength is unbroken and that the great invasion of 1944 is an undertaking which will suffocate in the blood of the Anglo-American soldiers.

Adolf Hitler

Thanks to rapidly brought up forces, Kesselring was able to seal off the allied beachhead at Anzio-Nettuno.³⁶ He continued to hold the Cassino front. On this mountainous, desolate front, he ruthlessly flung division after division into the battle. The positional warfare which ensued, even according to Allied records, bore great similarity to the trench warfare of the First World War and its terrible losses.

January 30, 1944

In the long run, no matter how much blood Kesselring spilled, the Allies' advance proceeded, even though only gradually. The "Gustav line" was pierced in May 1944.

On January 30, Hitler preferred to stay at the Wolfsschanze headquarters rather than venturing out in public and giving a speech, especially in bombed Berlin. Instead, he stepped up to the microphone in order to avoid facing his audience. He delivered a relatively short radio address, which was directed at his English opponents rather than at the German Volk. He tried to convince them that, in the event of a German defeat, Europe and England would become Bolshevik. He argued that it was therefore in England's interest to let Germany win. After all, "a victory by Germany means the preservation of Europe, a victory by the Soviet Union means its destruction."

Hitler still thought that he could impress the English with such worn phrases, even in the fifth year of the war. What he told the German public was also an old thing: "The step from the vision of a half-blind soldier in the year 1918 to the reality of the National Socialist state in the year 1944 was more tremendous and difficult than the step from the present Reich to the final victory will be." Hitler's speech of January 30 read as follows:³⁷

In the fifth year of this the greatest war, no one can remain ignorant of the causes and, hence, the meaning and purpose, of this international war. After all, the time has long passed when it still appeared as though this war was one of those European confrontations instigated by England in order to render impotent (*Verohnmachtung*) the continent and maintain a balance of power to the advantage of the British empire. Those forces which agitated for war in London ever since 1936 have today been transformed from the drivers to the driven. The minds that they sought to summon in accordance with old British tradition have got beyond the control of their masters.

Remarks disseminated by certain English newspapers that, following a defeat of Germany, Russia would have no more reason to advance any further in Europe and, therefore, that Russia would be content to concern itself with the education, that is, extermination of the German Volk, are just as much a Jewish impertinence geared to European fools as the other view, namely, that before this war ends England would in any event immediately take the lead in a new fight against the Soviet Union.

First of all, whoever wins this international war will not allow British newspaper scribblers to determine his objectives. And, second, in the case of a victory of Bolshevism, the sad remainder of Europe would hardly continue to fight under England's leadership against the European-Asian colossus which would then rule Europe, especially since only a complete blockhead could think the military prospects of such a war are promising. In addition, every

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Europeans know that, in such a case, the remaining European remnant states would have the privilege—as would the Empire troops of the Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, or South Africans—only of bearing by themselves the burden of the blood sacrifice in the struggle for the preservation of British rule so that England's own men are spared.

One thing is certain: there can be only one victor in this fight, and this will either be Germany or the Soviet Union! A victory by Germany means the preservation of Europe; a victory by the Soviet Union means its destruction.

That is so very clear that every not completely crazy Englishman should know this quite well. If in spite of this they act as though things could be different, with true British hypocrisy, then this must be attributed to the responsible war criminals in London who no longer see any possibility of escaping their involvement. Above all, their escape route to the rear has been cut off at home by their Jewish wire-pullers and slave drivers. It is therefore no longer a question for England and the United States of America whether or not they want and are able to fight Bolshevism on their own after this war, but how they can fight Bolshevism in their own countries.

What Europe can in reality expect from the British promises of assistance has best been proved by the Anglo-American stand on the fate of the Poles, Finns, and Baltic states, as well as all of southeast Europe.

The unscrupulous promise of a guarantee to help Poland once drove this state into a war against Germany. By the untruthful claim that other states had to be saved from Germany, mutual assistance pacts were forced on them. Today, by the same untruthful slogans, these countries are being abandoned and sacrificed. They must be surrendered, but not because every single Englishman wants this, but because England will be incapable of preventing this development in case of a victory by Bolshevism. Yes, not only this; it is because they are not even able to stand up for a different policy against their own opposition contaminated by Bolshevism, let alone successfully implementing such a policy. By the way, anyone who sold to Jewry as England did will sooner or later die of this plague, unless he manages to pull himself together at the last minute and remove these bacteria from his body by force. The view that it is possible to live together peacefully or obtain a reconciliation between your own interests and those of this ferment of the decomposition of nations is like hoping that the human body will be capable of assimilating the plague bacillus in the long run.

The question of saving the European states and thereby saving Europe is therefore a question which can only be decided by the German Volk, its Wehrmacht, and the states allied to it. However, should the Reich break, then no other state in Europe will be capable of mounting an effective resistance against this new invasion by the Huns.

And they know this in the Kremlin.

Therefore, in the case of their victory, just as a precautionary measure for the future, the fate of the German nation would be its complete extermination through Bolshevism. And this goal is also the openly admitted intention of international Jewry.

January 30, 1944

It is of no matter whatsoever whether the Jewish defenders of this goal sit in England or America, or whether they direct their central office in Moscow. It makes no difference whether European or non-European statesmen realize this fact, or whether they do not wish to believe it. It is all the more irrelevant whether they believe in one country or the other that, by submissive petting, they can perhaps detoxify the Jewish bacteria, which they bred themselves. If Germany does not win, the fate of the states in North, Central, and South America will be decided within a few months. The west would shortly follow. Ten years later, the oldest civilized continent would have lost the characteristic features of its life. The picture so dear to all of us of a more than twenty-five-hundred-year-old cultural and material development would have been erased, the nations as bearers of this culture, while the representatives of the spiritual leadership of these nations would lead a miserable existence somewhere in the forests and swamps of Siberia, provided they were not liquidated by a shot in the neck. Meanwhile, the devastating Jewish Ahasuerus [Xerxes] could celebrate the destruction of Europe in a second triumphant Purim festival.

That the German Volk is today capable of waging this decisive fateful struggle for its own and the European continent's preservation, it owes to the merciful dispensation of God, who allowed National Socialism to reach its goal victoriously eleven years ago, after a long struggle for power.

Without January 30, 1933, and without the National Socialist revolution, without the tremendous domestic cleansing and construction efforts, there would be no factor today that could oppose the Bolshevik colossus. After all, Germany was itself so ill at the time, so weakened by the spreading Jewish infection, that it could hardly think of overcoming the Bolshevik danger at home, not to mention abroad. The economic ruin brought about by the Jews as in other countries, the unemployment of millions of Germans, the destruction of peasantry, trade, and industry only prepared the way for the planned internal collapse. This was furthered by support for the continued existence of a senseless state of classes, which could only serve to transform the reason of the masses into hatred in order to make them the willing instrument of the Bolshevik revolution. By mobilizing the proletarian slaves, the Jews hoped that, following the destruction of the national intelligentsia, they could all the more reduce them for good to coolies. But even if this process of the Bolshevik revolt in the interior of Germany had not led to complete success, the state with its democratic Weimar constitution would have been reduced to something ridiculously helpless in view of the great tasks of current world politics. In order to be armed for this confrontation, not only the problems of political power but also the social and economic problems had to be resolved.

When National Socialism undertook the realization of its program eleven years ago, it managed just in time to build up a state that did not only have the strength at home but also the power abroad to fulfill the same European mission which first Greece fulfilled in antiquity by opposing the Persians, then Rome [by opposing] the Carthaginians, and the Occident in later centuries by opposing the invasions from the east.

January 30, 1944

Therefore, in the year 1933, we set ourselves four great tasks among many others. On their resolution depended not only the future of the Reich but also the rescue of Europe, perhaps even of the entire human civilization:

1. The Reich had to regain the internal social peace that it had lost by resolving the social questions. That meant that the elements of a division into classes—bourgeoisie and proletariat—had to be eliminated in their various manifestations and be replaced by a Volksgemeinschaft. The appeal to reason had to be supplemented by the merciless eradication of the base elements of resistance in all camps.

2. The social and political unification of the nation had to be supplemented by a national, political one. This meant that the body of the Reich, which was not only politically, but also governmentally divided, had to be replaced by a unified National Socialist state, the construction and leadership of which were suited to oppose and withstand even the heaviest attacks and severest tests of the future.

3. The nationally and politically coherent centralized state had the mission of immediately creating a Wehrmacht, whose ideology, moral attitude, numerical strength, and material equipment could serve as an instrument of self-assertion. After the outside world had rejected all German offers for a limitation of armament, the Reich had to fashion its own armament accordingly.

4. In order to secure its continued existence in Europe with the prospect of actual success, it was necessary to integrate all those countries which were inhabited by Germans, or were areas which had belonged to the German Reich for over a thousand years and which, in terms of their national substance and economy, were indispensable to the preservation of the Reich, that is, for its political and military defense.

Only the resolution of all these tasks could result in the creation of that state which was capable, at home and abroad, of waging the fight for its defense and for the preservation of the European family of nations.

When, eleven years ago, the National Socialist movement gained power in the state, after a long struggle by lawful means, the main conditions for the successful resolution of these tasks had already been created. The German Volksgemeinschaft had become embodied in the movement itself. It was therefore not the state which fashioned the movement in the course of the following years. Instead, the movement molded the state. While many great things have been accomplished since that time, the building of the German Volksgemeinschaft undoubtedly stands at the top of the accomplishments of the National Socialist revolution. It was the gentle as well as dogged conversion of the former state of classes into a new socialist organism, a Volksstaat, which alone made it possible for the German Reich to become immune to all attempts at Bolshevik infection. One decisive accomplishment of the National Socialist revolution is that, in this state today, every young German, irrespective of his birth, origin, wealth, the position of his parents, so-called education, and so on, can become whatever he likes, in accordance with his merits.

January 30, 1944

It is most evident in the war today just how rapidly the socialist organization of the body politic took place. After all, the Wehrmacht also plays a role in this development. More than sixty percent of the young officer corps comes from among the enlisted men and, thereby, bridges the gap to the hundreds of thousands of laborers or members of the lower middle-classes.

History will one day record it as one of our greatest accomplishments that we succeeded in beginning and carrying out the National Socialist revolution in this great state, without destroying national wealth, and without restricting the creative powers of the old classes, and, in so doing, obtained a complete equality of rights for all. This process will be continued by National Socialism with staunch determination and consequence. This will rob international Jewry of all chances for an internal hollowing out of our body politic.

Thus, the National Socialist community can already today be regarded as the unassailable center of European self-assertion. After all, only a state which is completely free of all antisocial focuses of infection at home can securely oppose Bolshevism abroad. Jewry itself has lost all power in our great Reich. By unleashing this war against National Socialist Germany, it helped to spread the ideas of the National Socialist revolution and teach other nations to appreciate the elements of a scientific realization and objective resolution of this question. The World War of the year 1939 will one day enter history as a gigantic repetition of the internal struggle against our party in the year 1924. Just as in the past, the attack which sought the destruction of the movement spread its ideas throughout Germany with the force of an exposition, this present struggle will in a few years open the eyes of others on the Jewish question. It will make the National Socialist solution of this question and the measures for its elimination appear just as worthy of imitation as self-evident. The greatness of the confrontation with its impact on world history will train the eyes and the minds of the nations for thinking and acting in tremendous historic dimensions. Millions of soldiers and prisoners of war will one day propagandize this realization.

That the National Socialist revolution has beyond this given the German Volk the weapons for self-assertion of its interior organization, economics, and power is nowhere better documented than in this gigantic fight which has raged for more than five years now. This struggle will not follow a course different from that of all previous great wars on this earth. The ups and downs of the events can only depress the man who has not learned to see and think in historical terms.

The step from the vision of a half-blind soldier in the year 1918³⁸ to the reality of the National Socialist state in the year 1944 was more tremendous and difficult than the step from the present Reich to the final victory will be. That Germany's and Europe's victory over the criminal attackers from the west and the east will stand at the end of this struggle has not only become an expression of faith for every National Socialist, but also, at the end of this entire fight up to now, his inner conviction.

The guarantors of this victory are today not only the soldiers at the front but also the fighters in the homeland. Just as National Socialism was born out

February 8, 1944

of the First World War, so it will receive its exterior strengthening and reinforcement in the Second. No matter how difficult it may be, the homeland will never despair in the end because it knows its fate and sees its sons fighting at the front for it. The front will never lose heart. Even in the hardest days, it will get hold of itself again because in its hand it holds not only the working but also the equally brave, fighting homeland. The attempt of our enemies to bring about the collapse of the German Volk and Reich through high-explosive and fire bombs will in the end only result in reinforcing its socialist unity even more and create that hard state which Providence has destined to fashion the history of Europe in the coming centuries. That this tremendous, world-shaking process is taking place by causing suffering and pain corresponds to an eternal law of destiny, which states not only that everything great is gained by fighting but also that every mortal comes into this world by causing pain.

The twelfth year of the reorganization of our Volk will make the harshest demands on front and homeland. No matter how much the storm rages outside the walls of our fortress, it will one day subside like every tempest. From behind the dark clouds, the sun will come out again and shine on those who remained steadfast and unshakable and who, true to their faith, fulfilled their duty. The greater our worries are today, the greater our accomplishments will seem to the Almighty, who will one day weigh, judge, and reward those who faced a world of enemies, loyally held on to their flag, and carried it onward without losing heart.

Therefore, despite all the devilry by our enemies, this fight will in the end lead to the greatest victory of the German Reich.

On January 30, the eleventh anniversary of the seizure of power, Hitler promoted Generals Jodl and Zeitzler to colonel generals.³⁹

In addition, he established another medal, called the "Roll of Honor Clasp." Hitler's decree read as follows:⁴⁰

Führer Headquarters, January 30, 1944

The soldiers named in the German army's Roll of Honor will receive as an outward distinction the "Roll of Honor Clasp." This badge will consist of a swastika inside an oak wreath in gold. It will be worn on the ribbon of the Iron Cross of 1939. Implementing regulations will be issued on my behalf by the chief of the army personnel office.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler also established a "Guerilla War Badge." It would be granted by the Reichsführer SS in bronze, silver, and gold for twenty, fifty, and one hundred days of fighting against partisans.⁴¹

On February 6, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the emperor of Manchukuo on his birthday.⁴²

On February 8, the anniversary of Todt's death, Hitler established an award "for inventive work of outstanding importance to the

February 10, 1944

Volksgemeinschaft,” which meant “for the improvement of weapons” exclusively! His decree read as follows:⁴³

I decree: particularly inventive work will in the future receive visible recognition as an expression of the creative power of the German Volk. I therefore establish the Dr. Fritz Todt Prize.

The Dr. Fritz Todt Prize will be awarded to Germans for inventive work of outstanding importance to the Volksgemeinschaft that furthers the improvement of weapons, ammunition, and Wehrmacht equipment and saves manpower, raw materials, and energy. Above all, the degree of the invention will be considered, as well as the personal dedication of the potential award-recipient, and the value of the invention for the Wehrmacht and the economy.

The Dr. Fritz Todt Prize will be awarded in the form of a button of honor in gold, silver, and steel, accompanied by a certificate and a monetary prize.

The golden button of honor will be awarded by me, upon a joint nomination by the head of the German labor front and the head of the NSDAP central technical office.

The silver and steel buttons of honor will be awarded by the relevant Gauleiter upon a joint nomination by the Gau representative of the German labor front and the head of the NSDAP Gau technical office.

The award of the prizes will regularly take place on September 4, Reich Minister Dr. Todt’s birthday, and on February 8, the anniversary of his death.

Implementing regulations will be issued jointly by the head of the German labor front and the head of the NSDAP central technical office, in agreement with the head of the Party chancellery.

Adolf Hitler

On February 10, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Seyss-Inquart on his inauguration as new president of the German Academy in Munich.⁴⁴ On the same day, he received Graf Helldorf—who was police chief of Berlin, SA Obergruppenführer, and general of the police at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He awarded him the Knight’s Cross of the War Service Cross with Swords. The head of the Gau staff office in Berlin, Gerhard Schach, also received this award.⁴⁵

On February 14, German intelligence and counterespionage activities were centralized. Himmler, then Kaltenbrunner were placed in charge of the “Abwehr” office at the OKW.⁴⁶

In the meantime, the Russians had taken Nikopol at the south of the eastern front. Although, on March 10, 1943, Hitler had still said, “The loss of Nikopol would mean the end of the war,” he was not about to end the war. Instead, he portrayed the loss of Nikopol as a great success and announced the following in the Wehrmacht report of February 18:

February 20, 1944

In heavy fighting around Nikopol, divisions from the Ostmark, Bavaria, Rhenish Westphalia, Saxony, Mecklenburg, Pomerania, and East Prussia, under the command of the General of Mountain Troops Schörner and Generals Brandenberger, Mieth, and Kreysing, have thwarted with cold steel strong attempts at breakthrough by the Bolsheviks in offensive and defensive fighting in the period from November 5, 1943, to February 15, 1944, and have dealt them heavy losses. They captured or destroyed seventeen hundred fifty-four tanks, five hundred thirty-three pieces of artillery, numerous other weapons and war matériel, and downed fifty-six enemy airplanes with infantry guns. Our Luftwaffe made an outstanding contribution to these successes through the deployment of strong combat aircraft and fighter formations.

On February 18, the army corps that had been cut off at Cherkessk was finally relieved, sparing it the fate of the Sixth Army. Reluctantly, Hitler had allowed the attempt to break out.

On February 20, Hitler received a few of its commanders at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁷

Following the breakout of the German combat troops cut off west of Cherkessk, the Führer received at his headquarters on Sunday [February 20] the following commanders of the units which had been encircled there: the commander of the advance guard, Lieutenant General Lieb, who led the spearhead during the breakout through the ring of encirclement; the commander of the SS Panzer Division *Wiking*, SS Gruppenführer and Lieutenant General of the Waffen SS Gille, whose division, made up of Germanic volunteers, proved itself to the utmost in the heaviest fighting; and the leader of the SS Volunteer Brigade *Wallonien*, SS Hauptsturmführer Léon Degrelle, who took charge of the brigade following the heroic death of its commander and who distinguished himself outstandingly in the decisive battles of the breakout.

The Führer personally presented the above commanders with high distinctions for their excellent personal services and the heroic struggle of their troops. Lieutenant General Lieb received the Oak Leaves of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross from the Führer's hands; SS Gruppenführer and lieutenant general of the Waffen SS, Gille, received the Swords to the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross; SS Hauptsturmführer Léon Degrelle received the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

While in 1942 and 1943, the Führer had not attended the celebration of the party's foundation in Munich on February 24 and had instead sent proclamations, he simply canceled the entire reunion in the year 1944. In its place, a conference of Reichsleiters and Gauleiters was scheduled, at which Goebbels, Backe, Ley, and Jodl gave speeches.⁴⁸

March 8, 1944

On February 28, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Goebbels and Hilgenfeldt on the tenth anniversary of the relief organization "Mother and Child." Hitler's telegram read as follows:⁴⁹

Führer Headquarters, February 28, 1944

The progress report conveyed to me on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the relief organization "Mother and Child" again proves what accomplishments the homeland is capable of, especially now in the war. I express my gratitude and appreciation to all those, especially the many nameless workers of the relief organization "Mother and Child," who have helped with the beneficial work in the service of our youth.

Adolf Hitler

On March 1, the third anniversary of the accession of Bulgaria to the Tripartite Pact, Hitler and the Bulgarian rulers failed to exchange telegrams. Only von Ribbentrop sent a telegram to his colleague Shikhmanov. However, Hitler received Croatian statesmen at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on this day. The communiqué read as follows:⁵⁰

On March 1, the Führer received the prime minister of the independent state of Croatia Mandich and the Croatian foreign minister Perich. The reception at the Führer's was attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel. The Führer had a friendly discussion with the statesmen on all common and current Croatian questions.

On March 8, Hitler issued "Führer Order No. 11" which read as follows:⁵¹

In view of various incidents, I order the following:

1) A distinction is to be made between "fortified posts," each under command of "fortified-post commandants," and "local bases," each under command of "battle commandants."

The "fortified posts" must function like the fortresses of old. They must prevent the enemy from occupying these operationally important posts. They must allow themselves to be encircled in order to tie up the strongest possible enemy forces. This will create a prerequisite for a successful counteroperation.

The "local bases" must be defensive base points in the deep zone of the battle area in case of enemy breakthrough. By their inclusion in HKL, these bases must create a defensive rear; they must become the keystone and crucial points in case of enemy invasion and the starting points for a counterattack.

2) The commandant of a fortified post must be a carefully selected strong-willed soldier, with the rank of general, if possible. He must be appointed by the respective army group. The commandant of the fortified post is personally sworn in by the commander of the army group. The commandant shall

March 15, 1944

guarantee fulfillment of his task to the very utmost on his personal soldier's honor. [Technical details follow.].

Hitler truly believed that such orders could change the military situation in Germany's favor. The Second World War again showed, however, that such morale-boosting orders can at best prolong the war. They do not influence the course of events.⁵² Events bypassed Hitler, no matter how many guidelines on how to persevere he issued.

Hitler made himself conspicuous by his absence at the Heroes' Memorial Day celebrations in Berlin on March 12. Whereas, up to now, he had only failed to appear at the February 24 festivities in Munich, he now did not even have the courage anymore to speak at the Heroes' Memorial Day celebrations. Grand Admiral Dönitz had to give a speech, which was broadcast on radio, and place a wreath at the Unter den Linden memorial.⁵³

On March 14, Hitler sent "his best wishes in a telegram of heartfelt words" to State President Tiso on the Slovak national holiday.⁵⁴

On March 15, Hitler had Frick present a handwritten letter to State President Háchá:⁵⁵

Herr Staatspräsident!

On March 14, 1944, we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the day on which the thousand-year-old connection between the Reich and Bohemia and Moravia was restored in a peaceful settlement, thanks to your statesman-like vision. The first five years of the protectorate have been almost entirely marked by the fateful struggle in Europe. Therefore, they represent a test of the new political situation in Bohemia and Moravia, which is more conclusive than the experiences during the many decades of peacetime. To be able to state at the end of this period that the new order has proved successful for the Reich, and especially for Bohemia and Moravia, suffices for my sincere satisfaction.

Whereas other European nations that allowed themselves to be driven into a war unleashed by our enemies against the Reich had to make the most terrible sacrifice of blood and today see themselves as unscrupulously surrendered to Bolshevism by their former friends, the Czech people have been able to preserve without injury, under the protection of the fighting German Wehrmacht, its continued existence and all that makes life worth living. By its demonstration of loyalty and its achievements in the framework of the new order during what will soon be five years of war, the population of the protectorate has revealed that it is aware of this situation. Thereby, it has in the best possible manner proved wrong all the untruthful rumors spread abroad. May the Czech people's conviction continue to deepen that the thwarting of the Bolshevik threat, the preservation of its traditional forms of life, and its central European living standard depend solely on the victory of the Reich! If

March 18, 1944

the Czech people fulfills its duty in this spirit for homeland, Reich, and Europe, then it will also participate in the triumph of our victory.

I thank you, Herr Staatspräsident, for your responsible conduct of office and wish you good health and the strength to continue to exercise the powers of your office at the head of your people for the benefit of the protectorate.

Yours sincerely,

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler also received the president of the government of the protectorate, Minister Krejci,⁵⁶ in the presence of Lammers, Bormann, and State Minister Karl Hermann Frank.

Since Hitler had already used this "important" state visit as an excuse for not attending the Heroes' Memorial Day celebrations in Berlin, he needed another pretext for departing for another extended vacation at the Berghof. For this reason, he invited the Hungarian regent to Klessheim Castle for March 18.

He had long been angry with Horthy because the Hungarian regent opposed a massacre of the Jews in his country. In addition, Horthy had written him a letter in early March, requesting the withdrawal of Hungarian troops from the eastern front. Hitler believed that it was high time to bring pressure to bear on Horthy. After all, had he not succeeded in intimidating Schuschnigg at the Berghof⁵⁷ at the time?

On March 18, Horthy arrived at Klessheim, accompanied by his foreign minister Chyzy, war minister Csatay-Tutzenthaler, and chief of staff Szombathelyi-Knaus.⁵⁸ Horthy had taken along his military advisers because Hitler had lured him to the castle with the prospect of discussing the return of the Hungarian troops from the front. However, Hitler did not mention this topic at all. Instead, he bitterly blamed Hungary and claimed the following:

. . . that, according to information obtained by the German secret service, the Hungarian government was negotiating with the Anglo-Americans and the Soviets. Instead of intensifying its contributions to the war, it sought to withdraw Hungary from the war. Full of indignation, Hitler objected to the nearly one million Jews who lived free and nearly without any restrictions in Hungary. Germany was forced to regard this as a threat to its front in the east and in the Balkans. In view of the circumstances, the German leaders had to fear that a second Badoglio case might come about.

Because of this, Hitler had decided on the military occupation of Hungary. He demanded the regent's consent. With these words, he placed an already-prepared declaration in front of Horthy, in which the Führer of the Greater German Reich and the regent of the Hungarian kingdom jointly declared that

March 19, 1944

a military occupation had occurred in the interest of the fight against Bolshevism and was based on mutual agreement and consent.

Up to this point, Hitler had pulled everything off according to plan. However, there were some unexpected complications: Horthy refused to sign. He said that his signature would represent a violation of the Hungarian constitution. Hitler replied that, in this case, the occupation would proceed without his consent. Horthy then stated that this would meet with armed resistance by the Hungarian Honved troops. Hitler pointed out that Croat, Slovak, and Romanian troops would also march into Hungary. Finally, Horthy threatened to announce his resignation. Hitler parried by saying that, in this case, he would not be able to guarantee the safety of his person, family, and grandson.⁵⁹ Horthy had reached the end of his patience. He jumped up, agitated, and shouted: "If everything has already been decided here, then there is no sense in my staying any longer. I will depart immediately!" He raced for the door, pulled it open, and headed down the flight of steps, his face crimson. Downstairs, the chief of protocol Freiherr von Dörnberg, who was two meters tall, stepped in his path and engaged him in a diplomatic conversation. That gave Hitler time to catch up with him. He had also appeared on the stairs, somewhat embarrassed but at the same time angry. He accompanied Horthy back to his rooms.

While the regent did calm down, he still demanded his special train on the spot. Now things were not at all going as Hitler had planned. That night, German troops would occupy Hungary, even before Horthy returned home. What was to be done? Hastily, an enemy air raid was staged, with an air-raid warning, a smoke screen laid over Klessheim Castle, and similar such "props." There was even an announcement that, supposedly, the telephone lines to Budapest had been "heavily hit" so that Horthy would not be able to make any calls.

During this forced intermission, a new meeting between Hitler and Horthy was arranged. Hitler demanded that Horthy stay in office and appoint a prime minister in accordance with the German government's wishes. Then it would be possible to withdraw the German troops from Hungary. Horthy finally agreed to this proposal.

In the meantime, the German troops were already on the march. At 2:00 a.m. on March 19, they crossed the border. Of course, it was Sunday.⁶⁰ There was some shooting in isolated instances, as in Oedenburg, Pecs, and Neusatz. At 2:30 a.m., Prime Minister Kallay

March 19, 1944

requested clarification from the German military attaché in Budapest, who claimed that the occupation was taking place with the approval of the regent. The deputy chief of staff, Bajnoczy, thereupon ordered the cessation of fire.⁶¹

It was not until noon on March 19 that Horthy returned to Budapest. In Germany, no mention of his visit was made. This was a sure sign that things had not gone well. Altogether, there had been three meetings up to now which had been so unsuccessful that they received absolutely no mention in the press: the meeting with Mussolini at Feltre on July 19, 1943; with King Boris at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on August 15, 1943; and with Horthy at Klessheim Castle on March 18, 1944.

That Horthy had by no means agreed to the occupation of Hungary was evident in the official German communiqué on the events, which contained this passage:⁶²

The German side has repeatedly pointed out lately that the war appears to be heading toward a dramatic climax and perhaps a decisive turning point. Under the circumstances, it was not possible to answer for disregarding a security measure that contributed to the final victory. Not only the German nation which wages the European freedom fight but also its comrades in arms which face the same task have a right to a farsighted and precautionary plan for situations which might result from the menace of the east. In the place of a utopian *cordon sanitaire*,⁶³ the constructive forces of the new Europe have put their *cordon militaire*. The latest measures are to be seen in this context, since they are part of the larger framework of the security of Europe. Hungary is joining the front line, which is lining up for the decisive battle from the Baltics to the Mediterranean.

Remarkable were the words "from the Baltics to the Mediterranean." Obviously, Hitler had already written off Finland. In August 1943, the Finns had made peace overtures via Stockholm. In early March 1944, the Finns had been informed about the Russians' conditions through their legation in Stockholm. In essence, the Russians agreed to restore the status of the Peace Treaty of 1940. However, they insisted on breaking off relations with Germany and internment of the German troops and warships in Finland.⁶⁴

It was clear that Finland would accept the Soviet terms sooner or later. The question of the internment of the German troops, however, remained an unresolved issue. Hitler was not in a position to force a resolution in Finland, as he had done with Hungary. He could not prevent the conclusion of a peace settlement. In spite of this, he made

March 19, 1944

several attempts to keep the Finns from taking this step. For instance, he granted an interview to the Berlin correspondents of the Swedish newspaper *Stockholm Tidningen*, which was published on March 19. The last interview of Hitler's life read as follows:⁶⁵

Question: Foreign news items claim that the Führer has attempted to approach King Gustav of Sweden because the Swedish king offered to mediate with Finland. Is this correct?

Answer: No, this is not correct. I do not know why I should have undertaken such a step. I am not aware whether or not King Gustav has tried to bring his influence to bear on Finland in this matter and, above all, when this supposedly took place. Should this be true, however, then it is a question of a purely Swedish affair.

Question: In this context, may I ask you how you assess the situation based on the terms of the armistice?

Answer: I assess the armistice terms announced by the Soviets exactly as they were meant. Of course, their objective is to bring about a situation in Finland in which further resistance would be impossible, so that they can carry out with the Finnish people what Molotov demanded in Berlin at the time. It makes absolutely no difference whatever slogans or pretexts accompany the announcement of the Soviet terms. It is a question of placing the noose around the victim's neck in order to be able to tighten it at the right time. That the Soviet Union feels compelled to undertake such a step proves how skeptically it assesses its own military potential. Nobody can doubt the final goal of Bolshevism: the extermination of the non-Russian, non-Bolshevik nations of Europe. In this case, it is the extermination of the Finns. In order to reach this goal, they unleashed a war of nerves against Finland, as our enemies openly admit.

Question: Repeatedly, the question of a guarantee for Finland on the part of England and the United States of America has been raised. What do you think of such guarantees for Finland?

Answer: The question of guarantees for Finland on the part of England and the United States of America only served the end of making submission more palatable to the Finns. In practical terms, any guarantee by the English or the Americans would be utopian. Neither England nor the United States of America would be in a position to dictate final objectives to a victorious Soviet Union, even if they should want to do this. In reality, however, neither England nor America is in the least willing to intervene honestly in this manner. In both countries, the same powers rule—even though from behind the bourgeois mask—which openly abuse power through violence. As regards American guarantees, Germany already had its own experiences with them following the end of the World War. The solemn Fourteen Points promised by Wilson were forgotten after Germany laid down its arms. In reality, every individual point led to the opposite of what the German Volk had been solemnly promised. The case of Poland is a striking illustration of the value of British guarantees. Moreover, England and America themselves face grave

March 19, 1944

internal crises. The question is not whether they will be in a position to dictate to Bolshevism, but how long they will be able to avoid a Bolshevik revolution in their own countries. As always in the life of nations, a country's own strength is the only guarantee for continued existence.

On March 19, Hitler received the German field marshals and commanders in chief at the Berghof.⁶⁶ They had taken to heart the warning their supreme commander had given them at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on January 27.⁶⁷ They had attempted to satisfy him by providing him with a written declaration of loyalty. In all likelihood, his temporary denial of further bonuses had speeded along their decision to do so.

Field Marshal von Rundstedt, as the senior officer, presented Hitler with the Declaration of Unconditional Allegiance, which was signed by all field marshals in the course of a ceremonial act. Even though Model was not yet a field marshal—he was slated to become one—he also signed the document.

Hitler seemed to be satisfied for the moment. He even ate lunch with his field marshals. He discussed the situation at the southern section of the eastern front with von Manstein and Kleist. However, he refused to hear about a retreat behind the Dniester.

To Hitler's surprise, Imredy declined his request to form a new government in Hungary.⁶⁸ So Hitler demanded that the appointment of a man he felt was reliable—the Hungarian envoy in Berlin Sztójay—as the new prime minister take place by 6:00 p.m. on March 22. After this appointment had been safely executed, Hitler finally allowed the publication of this official announcement:⁶⁹

According to official information from the Hungarian News Agency, a new government has been formed in Hungary. The new prime minister and foreign minister is Döme Sztójay.

At the same time, it was announced that, within the framework of the joint conduct of the war and based on mutual agreement, German troops have arrived in Hungary to stand by the side of the Hungarians in the fight against Bolshevism.

Dr. Edmund Veesenmeyer was named as the Greater German Reich's new envoy to Hungary.

There was no mention of the reasons for the recall of the previous envoy, SA Obergruppenführer von Jagow, who only recently had accompanied Horthy to the Obersalzberg. Soon, however, it became apparent that Hitler had authorized the new envoy Veesenmeyer,

March 27, 1944

whom he had appointed without Hungary's agreement, to avail himself of the office of Reichskommissar for Hungary.

The events in Hungary showed that Hitler had virtually begun to wage war against his own allies. It was easier to gain victories here than against the great powers at the actual front.

On March 23, Hitler sent a "congratulatory telegram of heartfelt words" to the Duce "on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Fascist combat units (*Fasci di Combattimento*)."⁷⁰

On the same day, he exchanged telegrams with the new Hungarian prime minister Sztojaj.⁷¹

In addition, he awarded the title "General Seyffardt" to a regiment of the SS Volunteer Panzer Grenadier Brigade *Nederland*.⁷²

At noon on March 25, Hitler again received von Manstein at the Berghof.⁷³ There was another crisis at the southern section of the eastern front. The First Panzer Army under Colonel General Hube was encircled at Kamenets-Podolsk. If it wished to make a breakthrough to the west, then other units would first have to push through in its direction. Hitler declined to bring up additional units and severely reproached von Manstein. The discussion came to nothing.

In the course of a second talk that evening, Hitler appeared more calm and declared the following:⁷⁴

I have thought about things again. I agree with your idea regarding the breakthrough of the First Panzer Army to the west. With a heavy heart, I have decided to bring up a newly activated SS panzer corps from the west and the 367th Infantry Division of the Fourth Panzer Army for the requested assault.

In view of this surprising concession, von Manstein dared to speak about his ideas on stabilizing the front in the east. He recommended a German chief of staff for Antonescu. Hitler declined because of "political considerations."

On March 27, Hitler received Kleist at the Berghof. Kleist saw himself forced to withdraw his Army Group A to the lower Dniester and had come to request the supreme commander's approval of this operation. Hitler was slowly getting fed up with field marshals who kept wanting to retreat. He decided to relieve both von Manstein and Kleist of their duties and summoned them to the Berghof on March 30. There, he received one after the other and told them about their dismissal. As a consolation, he presented each of them with the Oak

March 30, 1944

Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords. Von Manstein entered the following in his diary on March 30:⁷⁵

Evening at the Führer's. After award of the Swords, he tells me that he has decided to head the army group with somebody else (Model). In the east, the time for operations on a large scale, for which I had been particularly well suited, was over. The new style of leadership had to be introduced together with a new name and a new slogan. Thus, the change in command of the army group, the name of which he also intended to change.

He wished to stress that, unlike as had been the case previously with other field marshals (whom he named,⁷⁶ no crisis of confidence stood between us. He continued to have complete confidence in me.

Von Manstein agreed to the change in command and to the new commander in chief Model.

The Führer heartily agreed that Model was particularly suited for this. He would "whizz around" the divisions and get the utmost out of the troops.

Kleist was dismissed in a similar manner. As the two field marshals left the Berghof, their successors, Model and Schörner, were already on the doorsteps. Hitler placed them in charge of the two army groups and promoted Model to field marshal and Schörner to colonel general. Schörner had attracted his attention in the defense of Nikopol.

On April 1, Hitler issued a series of decrees relating to domestic policy. The most important of them concerned Goebbels' appointment as city president of Berlin. Goebbels now exercised executive power in the Reich capital.⁷⁷ The decree read as follows:⁷⁸

In deviation from the provisions of the law on the constitution and administration of the Reich capital Berlin on December 1, 1936 (RGBl. I, p. 957), I charge the Gauleiter of Berlin, Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels, with the administration of the Reich capital. He will bear the title "city president." The position and jurisdiction of the high Reich and Prussian land authorities in relation to the Reich capital shall not be affected by this.

In accordance with the personal guidelines and directives of the city president, the mayor will head the municipal authorities, and the vice president, on whom will devolve the tasks and authorities of the previous city president, will head the administration of the Reich capital, according to the provisions of the law on the administration of the Reich capital Berlin.

The Reich minister of the interior will issue the legal and administrative regulations necessary for the implementation of this decree.

Hitler's other decrees also dealt with measures for a greater concentration of executive power in the various Prussian provinces (Hesse-Nassau, Saxony, and Hanover), in which the responsible

April 6, 1944

Gauleiters had not yet been Oberpräsidenten.⁷⁹ The most remarkable of these decrees ordered the division of the province Hesse-Nassau into two independent provinces “Kurhessen” and “Nassau.” The Oberpräsident of Hesse-Nassau had been Prince Philip of Hesse, who had been arrested in September 1943. Now his duties passed to the Gauleiters of Kurhessen and of Nassau.

“New names” and a “new slogan” were what Hitler had said he wanted for the southern sector of the eastern front on March 25.⁸⁰ By appointing Model and Schörner, he had got his “new names.”

Hitler announced his “new slogan” in Directive No. 54, also known as “Operational Order No. 7,” on April 2. Actually, as it turned out, his new slogan was the old one:

The Russian offensive has passed its peak. Russia has exhausted its troops.

Hitler had already prophesied as much on October 3, 1941, when he had said that this “opponent has already broken down and will never rise again!”⁸¹ Directive No. 54 read as follows:⁸²

Directions for further conduct of the struggle by Army Group A, South and Center.

1) The Russian offensive in the south of the eastern front has passed its peak. Russia has exhausted and dispersed troops. The moment has come to block the Russian advance conclusively.

With this in mind, I have taken various measures. While holding the Crimea, it is absolutely necessary to keep, or to be precise, to win back the following line: northeastwards, Kishinev-Iasi-Targul Neamt-eastern spurs of the Carpathians between Targul Neamt and Kolomea-Tarnopol-Brody-Kovel. [Technical details follow].

Hitler’s directives increasingly stood in striking contrast to reality. The Russian offensive had by no means passed its zenith. The Crimea could not be held. It was lost on May 13, as the OKW report admitted for the record.

On April 6, Hitler formally appointed state secretary Backe as Reich minister for nutrition and agriculture.⁸³

During the noon discussion of the situation on the same day,⁸⁴ the topics—in addition to the military situation in the east, west, and Italy—included rumors about a gift from Hitler to Franco. Some old Spanish cannons from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been taken as booty in France, and there was talk about their return to Spain. Hitler energetically denied this:

April 20, 1944

I have no idea. As a matter of principle, I never give away historical things. I give away cars. I was supposed to give away Nefertiti⁸⁵—they took Göring in on this—to improve our relations with Egypt. Then they proved that she came here because of some vile action. A Jew had taken her out of the country fraudulently. Then I said: All right, I will extradite the Jew. But they rejected this. We could have lost Nefertiti that way. You just cannot give away art treasures like that. Besides, is it in our interest to be caressed by these rogues (*Schlawiner*) [the Spaniards]?

On April 10, the day Odessa had to be given up, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Pavelich on the Croatian state holiday. He sent another one to Filov, a member of the Bulgarian regency council, on his birthday.⁸⁶

On April 17, Hitler attended the funeral ceremony for Gauleiter Adolf Wagner at the Congress Hall of the German Museum in Munich. He awarded him the Golden Cross with Oak Leaves of the German Order and laid a wreath. Goebbels delivered the eulogy.⁸⁷ Another wreath from the Führer was laid for the “commander of the guard on duty at the Eternal Guard”⁸⁸ at the northern pantheon at the Königlicher Platz, where Wagner was buried on Hitler’s orders. Hitler appointed Wagner’s successor Giesler as Bavarian prime minister, which made him the successor of Ludwig Siebert, too. In a solemn ceremony at the Führerbau on the Königlicher Platz, Hitler personally presented Giesler with his certificates of appointment.⁸⁹

On April 20, Hitler named Albert Hoffmann, who had only substituted for Giesler in the Gau Southern Westphalia, as Gauleiter.⁹⁰

At the Berghof on the same day, he accepted the congratulations from the Wehrmacht on his fifty-fifth birthday, which were conveyed by Keitel, Dönitz, Milch, and Himmler. In addition, Hitler received a delegation of the Waffen SS, which presented him with a donation for the Kriegswinterhilfswerk in the amount of nearly two-and-a-half-million Reichsmarks, made by the SS Panzer Corps *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*.⁹¹ As in 1943, in view of the dwindling number of foreign dignitaries who extended their congratulations, the following summary communiqué was published. It did not contain any names:⁹²

This year again, the Führer received a great number of congratulations on his birthday not only from various people of the German Volk, but also from abroad. Numerous foreign heads of state and statesmen expressed their best wishes in telegrams, and many other leading persons at home and abroad marked this day.

April 26, 1944

The foreign heads of missions accredited in Berlin expressed their own best wishes—as did other heads of state, governments, and nations they represent—to the Führer by entering their names into the guest book at the Presidential Chancellery.

On the afternoon of April 20, Hitler received Colonel General Hube at the Berghof. Hube had succeeded in breaking out of the encirclement at Kamenets-Podolsk with the First Panzer Army. Hitler awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds.⁹³

The celebration afterwards lasted past midnight. At 4:00 a.m. on April 21, Hube took off in his plane. It took the wrong course, however, and crashed into a mountain shortly after takeoff. With the exception of Ambassador Hewel, who was also on board, all passengers were killed.

This incident gave rise to rumors that Hitler had had Hube killed. The high award received on the day before would not suffice to disprove this. The cause of these rumors was the strange information policy adopted in the Hube case. On April 23, when Hube had long been dead, the German papers were forced to publish this official announcement:⁹⁴

The Führer awarded the Oak Leaves with Swords and Diamonds to Colonel General Hans Hube, commander in chief of an army, as the twelfth officer of the Wehrmacht.

An order of the day by Hitler⁹⁵ was published on April 26. It stated that Hube had been killed in a plane crash on April 21.

On April 22 and 23, Mussolini visited Klessheim Castle. On the talks between Hitler and the Duce, the following communiqué was published:⁹⁶

The Führer and the Duce met on April 22 and 23. In the course of the discussions, which were characterized by the spirit of the long-standing friendship between the Führer and the Duce, all political, military, and economic problems were discussed concerning the two countries and their common goals. The Duce informed the Führer of the resolution by the Republican-Fascist government to continue its deployment actively on the side of the allies of the Tripartite Pact.

On April 25, Hitler signed a decree on the military duty and duties with the Reich labor service of stateless persons.⁹⁷ From now on, they could be drafted just like German citizens.

On April 26, Hitler issued this order of the day on the death of Colonel General Hube:⁹⁸

On April 21, 1944, following his promotion to colonel general and his receipt of the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds awarded in

April 29, 1944

recognition of his outstanding bravery and the conduct of his army, Colonel General Hube died in a plane accident. He gave a shining example of bravery and the unshakable belief in the final victory to his soldiers in the heaviest fighting; he was the fatherland's shield and sword on all fronts. On the battlefields of this war, his panzer army had an outstanding part in the most decisive victories. His enthusiastic faith in our National Socialist soldiership was reflected in the power and strength of his men, who regarded him as the embodiment of the unity of soldiership and National Socialism. Always exclusively deployed at the focal points in the most difficult missions, Colonel General Hube has earned undying glory in the army and among the German Volk. Following the award of the highest German medal of bravery, a sudden death tore him from the fight for our Greater German Reich. The army lowers the Reich war flag before this great soldier, who lived only for the Volk and the future of Greater Germany. His name will never be forgotten by his brave army, our army, and the entire German Volk.

Adolf Hitler

On the same day, Hitler attended the state ceremony for Hube in the Mosaic Hall of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. After Göring's eulogy, Hitler laid a wreath on Hube's coffin.

On April 27, Hitler had this expression of thanks published:⁹⁹

I have received so many congratulations on my birthday that it is impossible for me to reply to them individually. I ask all those who sent me congratulations on my birthday to accept my heartfelt thanks.

Adolf Hitler

This was the last such announcement. On the same day, the public was informed that Hitler had retired state secretary Leopold Gutterer, who worked for the Reich ministry for public enlightenment and propaganda, "on his request, because of health reasons." He appointed the previous head of the ministerial office, Dr. Werner Naumann, as state secretary.¹⁰⁰

On April 29, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Japanese emperor on his birthday.¹⁰¹ There was no mention in the press of an exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Hirohito on the "national holiday of the German Volk," as in previous years. Apparently, the Japanese emperor now had understood that this holiday had only symbolic meaning.

The only contribution which Hitler made to the May Day celebrations was the appointment of several "Pioneers of Labor." Among them were the Reich minister of transportation, Dorpmüller,

May 2, 1944

the Saarland councilor of commerce Röchling, the aircraft designer and manufacturer Professor Dornier, and the industrialist Albert Vogler.¹⁰²

On May 2, a news item from Radio Budapest was published, according to which a “resettlement of Jews in ghettos” was taking place in Budapest and other major cities in Hungary. This made more clear than anything else that it was no longer Horthy who exercised power in Hungary, but Veessenmeyer and the SS.¹⁰³

2

On May 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the president of the Chinese Japanese-dominated government, Wang Ching-wei, on his birthday.¹⁰⁴

On the same day, Hitler expressed his condolences in a telegram to Riga on the “heroic” death of the Latvian Voldemar Weiss, who had earlier been awarded the Knight’s Cross.¹⁰⁵

On May 9, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the composer Professor Hans Pfitzner on his seventy-fifth birthday.¹⁰⁶

The next day, King Michael of Romania and state leader Marshal Antonescu received congratulatory telegrams from Hitler on the Romanian national holiday.¹⁰⁷

On May 12, Hitler sent this telegram to the Japanese emperor:¹⁰⁸

Your Majesty!

Under the profound impression of the heroic risk of life of your fleet commander, Admiral Mineichi Koga, and in recognition of his historic services in the joint struggle of our arms, I have awarded the fallen hero the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross.

Adolf Hitler

Also on May 12, Hitler received the Slovaks Tiso, Tuka, Catlos, and Tidogaspar at Klessheim Castle. The following communiqué was published on the talks:¹⁰⁹

The Führer received the Slovak state president Dr. Tiso, who arrived for a visit on May 12, together with the Slovak prime minister Tuka, War Minister Catlos, and propaganda chief Tidogaspar.

The Führer and the Slovak state president had a heartfelt exchange of views on the relations between the Reich and Slovakia, which are characterized by the spirit of friendship. In the course of the discussions with the Slovak state president and the Slovak prime minister, which were attended by the Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Field Marshal Keitel, the Führer expressed his determination to fight his way uncompromisingly through this war—forced on us by the enemies of the Reich and their allies in the east and

May 16, 1944

west—until its victorious end. Then he wishes to realize those principles that will guarantee the great and small nations a decent and secure life, free of the Jewish exploiters of the Volk and free of capitalist and Bolshevik oppression.

Hitler's words were obviously meant to parody the principles of the Atlantic Charter.¹¹⁰

On May 13, Hitler had to admit the loss of the Crimea. The OKW report read as follows:¹¹¹

The last German-Romanian troops have been transferred from the Crimea to the mainland on May 13.

In a unique withdrawal, units of the German-Romanian war [*sic*] and navy formations, as well as transport units of the Luftwaffe, have, in spite of heavy enemy resistance, guided the allied troops deployed in the Crimea back to the mainland.

This was remarkable because Hitler had still called the possession of the Crimea crucial to the war effort, since its loss might lead to the “caving in” of Bulgaria and Romania.¹¹² Still in Operational Order No. 7 of April 2, he had demanded the retention of the Crimea at all costs.¹¹³

Now Hitler celebrated the loss of the Crimea as a “unique withdrawal,” even though it had been forced on him by the Russian attack.

On May 16, Hitler ordered the beginning of rocket fire directed against the British Isles for mid-June. The Führer's order on the deployment of long-distance weapons against England read as follows:¹¹⁴

The Führer has ordered the following:

1. To open long-distance fire at England in the middle of June. The exact time will be indicated by Commander in Chief [Oberbefehlshaber] West, who will be assisted by the general command of the Sixty-Fifth Army Corps and the Third Air Force Fleet to manage the long-distance firing.

2. Use: a) air torpedoes of type 76;¹¹⁵ b) Henkel 111¹¹⁶ for launching of air torpedoes of type 76; c) long-range artillery; d) fighting units of Third Air Fleet.

3. Execution

a) Against the main target—London.

After the lightning-fast opening of fire launched at night by means of air torpedoes type 76, whose devices, together with the bombs (mainly incendiaries) of fighting units, will hit the target, and the air raids [take place] upon the towns within the action area of the long-range artillery, go on to launch continuous night fire at London.

In favorable weather conditions, making enemy air activity impossible, the firing can be continued in the daytime. Harassing fire, combined with strikes of various duration and intensity, must be measured so that the supply of ammunition will be kept in harmony with production and delivery.

May 22, 1944

Therefore, six hundred air torpedoes of type 76 must be held in reserve for OKW and may be fired only with permission of OKW.

B) An order to change to other targets will be given in due time.

4. It is important to envisage cooperation of the fighting units of the air force and to put off other tasks of the air force, at least at the time of the initial strike. Before launching the fire attack, defense of the antiaircraft artillery and of the ammunition depots must be provided for and organized by means of fighter and bomber aircraft. All preparations must be made, taking into account that the roads leading to the antiaircraft guns will be exposed to enemy attack and destruction in the strongest way.

To keep secrecy in force, item 71 of order No. 663 082/43 of December 25, 1943, g. Kdos chefs.

On May 17, Hitler exchanged telegrams with Chief of Staff Schepmann on the occasion of a conference of high-ranking SA leaders. In his reply, Hitler thanked Schepmann and stressed:¹¹⁷ "The SA will always have my full support in the fulfillment of the tasks I set for it."

The military situation in Italy had in the meantime become critical. On May 11, the Anglo-Americans had launched their large-scale offensive, which led to breakthroughs in the German "Gustav line" (Cassino position) on May 15 and 16. The heavy losses of Kesselring's divisions over many months had been in vain. Step by step, the Allies advanced to the north and forced the German armies back.

At the evening discussion of the situation on May 18,¹¹⁸ Hitler had no alternative but to face up to the situation, which was quite depressing for him. Nevertheless, he still delivered a "funeral sermon" and declared the following:

If he [the enemy] nonetheless loses fifty percent of the attacking infantry, then this is proof of how miserably he is going about it. After all, the method he is employing is quite a cheap procedure, at least given the present positions: with a great waste of matériel, he shoots our nonexistent shelters to pieces. There is nothing there. Those few shelters in the rock are ridiculous. They would never have got Monte Cassino, if there had not been the breakthrough in the south.

If ifs and ands were pots and pans, there would have been no losses for Hitler, only victories.

On May 22, Hitler and Mussolini exchanged telegrams on the fifth anniversary of the conclusion of the German-Italian treaty of friendship and alliance. It was the last time that Hitler would send a telegram on this occasion.¹¹⁹

June 4, 1944

Duce!

In the treaty of friendship and alliance concluded five years ago, our two nations avowed their intention to stand together in friendship and concord for the preservation and the securing of their vital rights. In commemoration of this historic hour, I convey to you, also in the name of the entire German Volk, my sincere and heartfelt greetings and best wishes. At the same time, I express to you my staunch conviction that, irrespective of all the difficulties which must be overcome, the victory of the Tripartite Pact powers will stand at the end of this fateful struggle as the most certain guarantee of the happy and free future of our people.

Adolf Hitler

On May 27, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Afghanistan on the country's independence day.¹²⁰

On the same day, Hitler received the imperial Japanese ambassador Oshima at the Berghof. They entered into "a lengthy exchange of views on current questions of German-Japanese cooperation in the joint conduct of the war by the two nations."¹²¹

In spite of the wording of the communiqué, there could be no talk about "German-Japanese cooperation" or a "joint conduct of the war" in reality. What both countries shared were the severe military setbacks they had to suffer from the Anglo-Americans.

On June 2, a new government was formed in Bulgaria, under Ivan Bagrianov.¹²² This was a sign that the situation there was also becoming critical in view of the Russian advances.

On June 3, the German defense of the Alban Mountains in Italy collapsed. The Italian capital could no longer be held. Hitler made a virtue of necessity and ordered the evacuation of Rome. The high command of the Wehrmacht announced the following on June 4:¹²³

Since the front has come ever closer to the city of Rome in the course of the fighting, there was the danger that this oldest center of culture in the world might become involved in the immediate fighting. To avoid this, the Führer has ordered the withdrawal of German troops northwest of Rome.

In spite of Hitler's announcement, the loss of Rome meant a great military and political defeat for the German leadership. However, the attention of the international community would soon be drawn away from this secondary theater of war to the main theater in the west.

On June 4, Hitler received the new Croatian envoy, Vladimir Kosak, at the Berghof.

June 4, 1944

The next day, the new Romanian envoy, Alexander Hoffmann von Magysösetag, visited him there.¹²⁴

Early on June 6, the Anglo-American invasion armies, from bases in England, started to land along the coast of Normandy.¹²⁵ Montgomery was in command (of the ground troops; Eisenhower was in command of the entire invasion). Since the days of Napoleon, the world had seen nothing like it. Heavy naval-artillery bombardment and attacks by the Royal Air Force had preceded the invasion. While the first decisive fighting on the ground was taking place, Allied naval and air forces pinned down the German bases behind the front and made bringing up reinforcements impossible. Parachutes and transport gliders landed great numbers of Allied airborne troops. Within a few hours, the first beachheads were fortified and secured. The German troops were no longer in a position to score any lasting successes.

Hitler was having breakfast at the Berghof when news of the beginning of the invasion arrived.¹²⁶ Keitel and Jodl rushed to him from their quarters to inform the supreme commander of the latest developments. Hitler acted as though they were bringing him news of a great victory. He immediately stepped up to a map of the French coast and had Keitel outline the situation for him. He then said: "The news could not be any better! As long as they were in England, we could not get hold of them. Now, we finally have them somewhere where we can beat them." When Göring arrived, Hitler immediately took him to the map table and told him: "They are landing here—they are landing there: exactly where we expected them."

It was true that, on December 27, Hitler had called the front of the Fifteenth and Seventh German Armies on the Cotentin Peninsula "... especially dangerous."¹²⁷

Later, he also repeatedly mentioned Normandy. However, this was not any "bright idea" by Hitler but reflected a sober assessment of the situation, which had also led the Allies to decide on this operation. Normandy was just across the Channel from southern England, and the crossing was the shortest here, since the area of Dover-Calais was under fire from German long-range artillery.

It is therefore out of place to speak about Hitler's "uncanny intuition" in the context of the Allied invasion of Normandy.¹²⁸ It is remarkable, however, that he was unable to put up serious opposition to the

June 6, 1944

invasion at this “expected” location for even a day. After all, Hitler had many times declared in earlier years:

A place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!¹²⁹

We had provided for every eventuality from the start.¹³⁰

Nothing is impossible for the German soldier!¹³¹

I have read several times now that the English intend to launch a big offensive somewhere. I would like to ask that they tell me beforehand. I then would like to have the area evacuated. I would like to spare them the difficulties of a landing. And then we could introduce ourselves once again and discuss matters—and this in a language they alone understand!¹³²

I can assure him: no matter which place he chooses next, he can consider himself lucky if he stays on land for nine hours!¹³³

On January 1, 1944, he could still exclaim:

No matter where the plutocratic world will undertake the threatened attempt to land in the west, it will fail!¹³⁴

It is an open question whether Hitler’s optimism on June 6 was real or whether he was just trying to impress his “unshakable certainty of victory” on his entourage. In any event, on the afternoon of June 6 he still acted as though the beachheads would be destroyed within a matter of hours.

In order to remind the German troops at the invasion front of their duty in this regard, he ordered the commander in chief, west, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, to force the Allies back to sea on the same day. This order was relayed to the Seventh Army at the coast, as follows:¹³⁵

The commander in chief, west, as instructed by the OKW, emphasizes that the enemy beachheads are to be destroyed on the evening of June 6, since there are fears of reinforced airborne landings and further naval landings. The invasion there must be cleared up before day’s end.

In spite of Hitler’s orders, the “invasion” was not “cleared up” on June 6 or on any of the following days. No matter how bravely the German troops fought, they were hopelessly inferior to the Anglo-American army, navy, and air force.

Hitler had said that the Allies ought to “consider themselves fortunate” if they managed to stay ashore for nine hours. Indeed, these were the most critical hours. However, once they were over, and the Allies were still on the beaches and continued to advance, it was clear that the landing had been a success, and the most decisive battle of the Second World War had begun. Not only did the German generals realize this

June 16, 1944

but so did the public in Germany. After all, Hitler had said as much himself: "If they attack in the west, then this attack will decide the war."¹³⁶

On June 7, Hitler received the new Hungarian prime minister Sztójay at the Berghof. The communiqué read as follows:¹³⁷

Führer Headquarters, June 8, 1944

The Führer received the royal Hungarian prime minister Döme Sztójay, who arrived for a visit together with the royal Hungarian chief of staff, Colonel General Vörös, on June 6. In a heartfelt exchange of views, the relations between the Reich and Hungary, which are characterized by the spirit of friendship, were discussed, as well as current questions of German-Hungarian cooperation in the joint conduct of the war by the two nations. The various talks were attended by the Reich Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, and by Field Marshal Keitel.

Hitler again made a big scene in front of the Hungarians and declared that all he had ever wished had come true, thanks to the invasion: "Now I finally stand face-to-face with my real enemies!"¹³⁸

On June 11, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the composer Richard Strauss on his eightieth birthday. On June 15, he sent further telegrams to Marshal Antonescu on his birthday and to Prince Cyril of Bulgaria on the birthday of King Simeon II.¹³⁹

Hitler's boast that the invasion would be repelled within nine hours had proved an embarrassment. Of course, he did not admit this. He had an idea on how to postpone the final catastrophe: with the help of his new *V-Waffen* (*Vergeltungswaffen*; retaliatory weapons).

As mentioned before, Hitler had ordered the bombardment of England with long-range rockets to begin in mid-June.¹⁴⁰ This proved to be a timely choice insofar as it diverted attention from the invasion front. It would instill new hope in his generals that a miraculous turn of events might still come about in the war, a last-minute rescue. Even though he had ordered this months ago, he acted as though it represented his response to the invasion and would soon make it disappear.

The OKW report of June 16 read as follows:

Last night and this morning, southern England and the city of London were bombed with a new type of high explosives.

In view of this, Hitler believed that he could risk facing the generals in the west. On June 17, he departed from Berchtesgaden by plane and

June 16, 1944

flew to Metz, then drove to Margival north of Soissons.¹⁴¹ There he discussed the situation with von Rundstedt, Rommel, and several other generals from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.¹⁴² Rommel had taken over command of Army Group B (i.e., northern France, Belgium, Holland), in addition to his role as inspector of the coastal fortifications.

According to Speidel, Hitler looked sallow and as if he had not had enough sleep. He was nervous, playing with his glasses and all sorts of color pencils, which he held in his hand. While the field marshals were standing, he sat hunched over on a stool. His earlier power of suggestion appeared to have vanished. After a brief and cool welcome, the Führer expressed his displeasure, speaking about the successful landing of the Allies with his voice raised and full of bitterness. He tried to put the blame on the local commanders.

In November 1942, after the disaster at El Alamein, Rommel had already told Hitler that, in his opinion, no army would in the long run be able to withstand the Allies.¹⁴³ Now, he reasserted that he felt that the struggle was hopeless in view of the enemy's enormous superiority on land, at sea, and in the air. Hitler simply ignored him. He would one day show this defeatist!

Then Hitler took control of the discussion again. He began an enthusiastic lecture on the new rockets. He said that this "V-1 weapon" would have an "effect that would decide the war" and would make the English "ready for peace." The senile English would certainly collapse in face of this.

The generals were impressed with Hitler's exposition. They demanded the deployment of the new weapon against the Allied beachheads. However, the general responsible for the V-weapons, Heinemann, warned them about "unpredictable scattering" of the rockets. He claimed that they could go "fifteen to eighteen kilometers" off course, although up to two hundred kilometers would have been a more realistic figure. The generals began to complain about the failure of the Luftwaffe. Hitler quickly calmed them by saying that soon "masses of jet fighters" would chase the English and American aircraft from the skies.¹⁴⁴

The mid-day meal had to be relocated inside a bunker because of the threat of an air raid. Another situation briefing took place. Rommel again repeated his negative assessment of the prospects of the war in the west and alluded to the necessity of drawing the political consequences. Hitler immediately cut him off and said: "Do not concern

June 19, 1944

yourself with the future course of the war but with your own invasion front.”

It would certainly have been nice had Hitler also shown a bit more concern for it. The generals invited him to the headquarters of Army Group B at La Roche-Guyon. Hitler pretended to accept this invitation for June 19. However, he did not feel like risking his own precious life. Hurriedly, he left France on the next day.

On that June 18, he went by plane from Metz to Berchtesgaden.¹⁴⁵ The evening discussion of the situation revealed to Hitler that the Americans had broken through to the western part of the Cotentin Peninsula (near Barneville) that morning. The decisive words exchanged during this discussion were laconically brief:¹⁴⁶

Hitler: “You reported that the Americans broke through. Now, are they through or are they not?”

Jodl: “They are through.”

The Americans had really broken “through,” and this meant that the Allies would shortly take Cherbourg. Additional landings would then be possible on a much larger scale.

However, Hitler continued his ostrich-like policy and remained at the Berghof. He sent out diplomatic congratulatory telegrams, like the one to Horthy on his birthday on June 18.¹⁴⁷

For the rest, he staked his hopes on the psychological effect of the new German “wonder weapons,” the *V-Waffen*. As revolutionary as they were, one could not speak of a great military significance of these rocket bombs at the time, given the status of the technology. The V-1 was an unmanned monoplane carrying a bomb, powered by a simple kind of jet engine (i.e., pulse jet). Agile British fighters and anti-aircraft equipment were largely capable of intercepting the V-1 missiles prior to impact. This was no longer the case with V-2 bombs, which were deployed from September 1944 on. Unlike its predecessor, the V-2 was not merely an improved bomb with wings, but an advanced model of rocket technology. Designed as a rocket bomb with a preset guidance system, the V-2 was the first long-range ballistic missile in the world. The V-2 was fourteen meters (forty-seven feet) long, weighed twelve point six tons, traveled at a maximum speed of fifty-five hundred kilometers per hour (thirty-four hundred miles per hour), carried a one-ton warhead, and had a range of three hundred twenty kilometers to four hundred kilometers.

June 20, 1944

In the period up to March 1945, a total of nine thousand V-1 rockets hit England, a number augmented by approximately eleven hundred to fifteen hundred V-2 models fired. While little is known on the precise effects this bombardment had in England, various detailed studies of the period between October 1944 and March 1945 show the magnitude of bomb strikes in Belgium.

Having lost the rocket launching ramps located in northern France and Belgium to the Allied advance, Hitler decided to use the remaining V-rocket capacity to terrorize the Belgian civilian population. Rumors quickly spread that the harbor of Antwerp was the main target of this undertaking, and numerous hits in the surrounding area substantiate this hypothesis. A veritable shower of V bombs came down over nearly two-thirds of Belgium at the same time, a fact indicative of the V weapons' inability to reach a precise target.¹⁴⁸

From a military point of view, neither of the missile models could be aimed at precise targets: a missile was liable to miss by up to two hundred kilometers—too great a risk for military strategists to take. Therefore, the new V weapons could only serve as an instrument of terror. However, Hitler's terrorization of the English civilian population by his rocket-fire brought no success. On the contrary, it merely induced the Allies to speed up their advance and increase their bombardment.

On June 22, the Russians launched a major offensive in the area Vitebsk-Bobruisk. It was the third anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union. Within two weeks, twenty-five German divisions and the entire Army Group Center were destroyed. Many German generals were taken captive.

In the east and in the west, the end was rapidly nearing. Even within Germany, signs of crisis were becoming more evident. During the second part of June, there was an increasing number of reports by the German press on inexplicable deaths: party leaders, high-ranking officials, and generals in particular suddenly died either of heart disease or in accidents.

On June 20, the mayor of Cologne, Winkelkemper, died of "heart failure" at the age of thirty-eight. Hitler had Gauleiter Grohé place a wreath at his funeral.¹⁴⁹

In the City Hall of Bremen on June 21, a funeral ceremony ordered by Hitler for SA Obergruppenführer Böhmcker took place. The mayor of the Hanseatic town had died of "heart failure." Hitler awarded him

June 28, 1944

the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross and had Gauleiter Paul Wegener lay a wreath.¹⁵⁰

On June 23, the former commissar general of Dnepropetrovsk, Claus Selzner, who was a close colleague of Ley, died "following a short illness" at the age of forty-five.¹⁵¹ At his burial in the Gau Westmark on June 25, Bürckel conveyed the Führer's last greetings in the form of the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross. Bürckel surely did not expect that he would also be dead only three months later.¹⁵²

On June 23, General of Mountain Troops Karl Eglseer "died in a tragic accident."¹⁵³ On the same day, General Emil von Wickedede also became the victim of "an accident."¹⁵⁴

Also on this day, Colonel General Dietl had a "plane accident" and died.¹⁵⁵ Of the three accidents which took place on June 23, the last was undoubtedly the most suspicious. Besides Rommel, Dietl was the only German general who had become very popular with the people. In his eulogy for Dietl,¹⁵⁶ Hitler did not in any way mention Dietl's activities in Finland during the last three years. He only spoke about Dietl's service in peacetime and his mission to Narvik. It was highly likely that Dietl had to die at a time when the threat of a separate peace between Finland and Russia was becoming quite real.¹⁵⁷ The day before his death, Dietl visited Hitler at the Berghof. It seemed entirely possible that whatever Dietl said about Finland and the possibilities there did not please Hitler. Most conspicuously, Dietl's death was not made public until June 30, one week after his crash at the Semmering Pass.¹⁵⁸

The next peculiar death occurred on June 27. The man in question was none other than Colonel General Dollmann, the commander in chief of the Seventh Army fighting on the invasion front. Three days later, the public was informed that he had "suddenly died."¹⁵⁹

On June 28, Hitler named the Reich students leader Gauleiter Scheel to the post of leader of Reich lecturers.¹⁶⁰

At the Berghof on June 29, Hitler met for a discussion of the situation on the western front with the commanders in chief and several other generals.¹⁶¹ Among others, Göring, von Rundstedt, Rommel, Sperrle, and Guderian attended the conference.

Again von Rundstedt and Rommel tried to make Hitler understand how fruitless further resistance in the west would be. Sperrle said that the necessary plane crews would simply not be available, even if Göring managed to add eight hundred fighters to the existing formations, as he said he would.

July 1, 1944

Hitler was very upset about this lack of crews. Then, however, he again spoke of his new “wonder weapons,” which would win the war for him. Just as the death of the Russian empress in the Seven Years’ War had done for Frederick the Great, so these new weapons would bring about the “miracle of a turn in the war.” During the last days of the Führer, his opponent Roosevelt would indeed die; but even this coincidence, regarded as a “miracle of Providence,”¹⁶² could change the situation no more than the V weapons could.

Speidel reported that the rest of Hitler’s talk contained some rather “wild notions.” However, these “wild notions” did not prevent Hitler from drawing the “proper conclusions” from this meeting by dismissing a number of generals, among them von Rundstedt and Sperrle.

On June 30, Hitler issued the following order of the day on Dollmann’s death:¹⁶³

On June 27, Colonel General Dollmann was torn by a sudden death from the midst of his brave army, which is fighting a difficult defensive battle. In the struggle for our Greater German Reich, Colonel General Dollmann has earned particular merit on all battlefields in France through his outstanding personal conduct and his untiring efforts. Colonel General Dollmann successfully carried out the daring feat that our enemies considered impossible: by attacking from across the Rhine the supposedly invincible Maginot Line, he achieved a breakthrough there, in the firm belief in the spirit of sacrifice, bravery, and expertise of his army. His intrepidity and his great sense of responsibility led his soldiers from victory to victory. By the outstanding conduct of an army at the Atlantic coast, he helped to create the prerequisites for the defense against the invasion, frustrate the long-range plans of our enemies, and deny the enemy the goal of the landing. A sudden death has torn him, the best and the bravest soldier of his army, whose belief in our National Socialist Greater German Reich will always be an example for his soldiers of this struggle for our Fatherland. His name shall remain unforgotten by his army and by the entire German Volk. The army lowers the Reich war flag in proud mourning before the dead commander in chief of a brave army.

Adolf Hitler

In addition, Hitler awarded Dollmann the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross on July 1. Von Rundstedt received the same award on this day.¹⁶⁴ This was meant as a consolation for his imminent dismissal.

On July 1, Hitler issued the following order of the day on Dietl’s death:¹⁶⁵

On June 23, 1944, Colonel General Dietl died in a plane accident. As an outstanding soldier in the struggle for our National Socialist Greater Germany, Colonel General Dietl stood out for his fight in Norway and Finland. He led

July 1, 1944

his men from victory to victory. His battle for Narvik will remain unforgotten. He fought against a greatly superior enemy and under the harshest conditions. Colonel General Dietl will remain an embodiment of the belief in our National Socialist Germany and its victory for all our soldiers and the entire German Volk. He is an example of unyielding harshness and never-ending loyalty until death.

As the bravest of the brave, he was decorated with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, as the first soldier of our proud Wehrmacht, on July 19, 1940. As a fanatical National Socialist, Colonel General Dietl personally dedicated himself to our movement for the Greater German Reich from the beginning, in unswerving loyalty and passionate faith. I therefore lose in him one of my most loyal comrades of a long, shared time of struggle. His name will live on in his proud mountain army and, beyond this, be tied with that of our brave Finnish ally. It will be regarded as a symbol of this brotherhood in arms.

His army bears his stamp in its spirit of sacrifice and unconditional belief in the final victory. In recognition of his constant heroic services, I award Colonel General Dietl the Oak Leaves with Swords to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. In proud mourning, the army lowers the Reich war ensign in honor of its "Hero of Narvik."

On that afternoon, Hitler delivered this eulogy for Dietl at the official ceremony in Berlin:¹⁶⁶

It is very hard for me to speak on an occasion that has taken from me not only one of my best soldiers but also one of my most loyal friends. The military accomplishments of Colonel General Dietl will go down into history. His personality can be fully be appreciated only by a man who was so fortunate as to know him over many years.

When I faced this man for the first time, he made it possible for me in his company to influence a German regiment for the first time. As the first officer of the German Wehrmacht, he placed his unit at my disposal in order to exercise political influence upon it. One hour after I had spoken to the third company of his regiment, this man gave me his hand and said that he would from then on be my follower. And this he stayed, year after year. First, in the bitter years of our struggle, in which, as a completely unknown man, I faced a mountain of difficulties which could hardly be overcome. Our relationship remained the same, as he later became a member of the new Wehrmacht, and, in particular, when he was called on to play a leading role, which I had reserved for him at the time, based on my personal knowledge of the man and the soldier. Because, in questions of soldiership, you can never separate the man from his purely soldierly expertise. In the end, it is always the man and his mental attitude which lead his soldierly abilities to success.

As I personally made the decision at the time to put General Dietl in charge of the expedition to Narvik, I did so because I believed that I recognized the man in him who would be able to win an apparently lost cause by his faithful confidence. If today, in the fifth year of the war, we often face difficult

July 1, 1944

situations, none of these situations can be compared with the mission that I gave this previously unknown German general. His mission was to take a handful of soldiers and advance to a harbor, through the middle of a superior enemy fleet. It was a harbor that seemed so very far away to the German Volk. There, he would be completely on his own and would have to try not only to hold this harbor perhaps for weeks or months, but also to build up a position there so that later other units would be able to move up. Later joined by two thousand shipwrecked sailors and naval officers who had barely saved themselves, cut off from supplies, without provisions, ammunition, heavy weaponry, this man and twenty-five hundred soldiers, his mountain infantrymen, faced a far superior enemy on their own.

It is a miracle how he achieved all that at the time, and how he finally brought about a reversal of the situation in Germany's favor. It is a miracle not only in terms of the deployment of great soldierly abilities, but also of a man's personality. The quality of the man was made up by his rare ability to combine the love of the soldier, the attention to the individual with a merciless toughness—whenever necessary—in making demands. Colonel General Dietl achieved, perhaps most clearly, a synthesis in his person of being relentlessly tough in making demands on the one hand, and living the concern for his men on the other. And, for this reason, these men, from whom he had demanded and continued to demand the nearly impossible, were attached to him in boundless admiration and love.

Herewith, he created the stereotype of the National Socialist officer. He was an officer who was not soft when asking and demanding, not weak when deploying his men. Instead, he knew that no sacrifice was too great or too dear to be made for this struggle. On the one hand, an officer must make the toughest and harshest demands, while, on the other, he must make the fate of his subordinates his own, as their true friend and father. He was a National Socialist, not according to the cliché, but in will, mind, and heart. This is how I appraised him from the beginning. I believed I could expect this of him, and he later fulfilled this promise.

It was a matter of course that I had a close personal relationship with this officer for this reason. In my opinion, he was the first officer of the German Wehrmacht who penetrated my world of thought and declared himself for it blindly and uncompromisingly. Later, at a time when I was forced to make difficult and hard decisions, I came to respect him all the more.

Especially in the years from 1933 to 1936, when, with a view to the German future, I had to take endless risks, this man stood unshakably behind me. And he continued to do so to his last days.

When he visited me the last time—because of the new military situation in Finland—you could feel in his words the same unconditional confidence to be able to deal with any situation also in the future, no matter under what circumstances, and, if need be, to master even the most difficult tasks. He was inspired by the conviction that, of course, in the end there would be our joint victory. Yes, he was inspired by the knowledge that no great success has ever been scored on this earth that was not gained by the greatest sacrifices and

July 3, 1944

pains, and that you must reject the views of those who imagine that the great men of world history and the success of their deeds had been predetermined as a matter of course. Colonel General Dietl belonged among those who felt deep down that the greatness of a feat grows in proportion to its difficulty. So he fashioned his life accordingly and fought for the German Volk and its future.

For me, this brave and loyal friend has been a support, a support above all in the German officer corps. He belonged to those who, in hard times, helped to radiate confidence and to make others firm and tough. I can never thank him enough for this. May his example inspire and fill many German officers and generals with enthusiasm.

May they all learn to become likewise tough and kind in individual instances, likewise merciless in their demands and understanding in their relations with the men and their cares. Above all, may they learn under any circumstances to radiate confidence, especially in times of crisis, in order to uplift the individual man and repel all thoughts that a struggle, behind which stands the entire fanaticism of a nation, could end in anything other than victory, no matter how the situation might look at the moment.

The most wonderful thing about him was that, in his own life and in his later struggle as a soldier, he successfully managed so many situations that almost made you and many other men despair. He did not teach us how to do this as a theoretician but, as one of the greatest practitioners in our recent German history, he exemplified it to us through his own life.

My personal friendship with him makes it especially painful for me to commemorate him. When I today take leave of this friend, I do so with the most bitter sentiments of a badly hit man, but, on the other hand, I do so with unbending zeal, so that this sacrifice on the altar of the fatherland will be a new obligation to all of us.

On July 2, Colonel General Dollmann was buried in the military cemetery in Paris. Von Rundstedt, Rommel, and Sperrle attended the funeral. Von Rundstedt laid a wreath from Hitler.¹⁶⁷

On the same day, Hitler congratulated Professor Albrecht Schmidt on his eightieth birthday and expressed "recognition of his services in defense chemistry."¹⁶⁸

On July 3, Hitler informed von Rundstedt of his dismissal in a handwritten letter. He appointed Field Marshal von Kluge as commander in chief, west. Von Kluge had reported back to him after an extended vacation. This communiqué was published:¹⁶⁹

In the place of Field Marshal von Rundstedt, who is handicapped by his health, Field Marshal von Kluge has taken over command in the west. The Führer has expressed his particular thanks in a handwritten letter to Field Marshal von Rundstedt, who has highly proved himself in the most difficult situations, and also held out the prospect of his deployment for special tasks.

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In Hitler's eyes, the appointment of a new man had once more saved the situation.

On July 4, Hitler delivered a speech at the Platterhof in the course of a meeting at the Obersalzberg with leaders of the war economy which Speer had arranged.¹⁷⁰ It was the last address which Hitler delivered in front of civilians. About two hundred of Speer's coworkers and specialists from the armament industry were gathered. The "Reich equalizer of burdens" (*Reichslastenverteiler*), Dr. Fischer; the "commissar general for special production tasks," Langenohl; general director Kessel; and the "head of the main committee for electrical engineering," Dr. Lüschen, were present among others.

Four weeks had passed since the invasion. It was unlikely that anybody in Hitler's audience ignored the fact that the war had been lost. Nevertheless, Hitler apparently felt that it was opportune to deliver another long lecture on National Socialist economic policy. He went far back, repeating old ideas which, eleven or twelve years ago, had impressed German industrialists. He spoke about manpower and production, covering the currency by labor, and the communist ideal of equality. He used old clichés, like the history of windowpane, which "four hundred years ago had rarity value and eight hundred years ago was an unheard-of luxury."

No matter how much Hitler raised his voice and how often he repeated the once so effective punch lines—nobody applauded. What a striking contrast to his talk at the Industry Club in Düsseldorf twelve years ago!¹⁷¹ At the time, the leaders of the economy had first displayed great restraint, then increasingly begun to applaud him during the speech, and, in the end, they had enthusiastically approved of Hitler's ideas and forecasts. Now, the atmosphere was frosty from beginning to end.

Hitler could still force his listeners to attend his speeches, but he could no longer persuade them to believe what he told them. Only in one instance did Hitler receive twenty seconds of applause during his speech. It was somewhat embarrassing since his listeners clapped after the following statement:

I am of the conviction that no other man could have done what I have done. Somebody else would not have had the nerves.

Hitler's listeners were somewhat amused as he began to speak about new inventions which he had allegedly closely scrutinized. If, for

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example, someone approached him with a new corset with new “alloy whalebone socket,” he would reply as follows:

Sir! I will not have any corsets made in Germany because I do not want to ruin the German woman!

Even though the war had blown Hitler’s currency theories sky-high, he attempted to make his audience believe that they were still correct in the war, or at least not detrimental to the war effort.

Gentlemen! In this case, the war provides advanced financing for later accomplishments, later work, later basis for nutrition, and at the same time a tremendous training for the accomplishing of those tasks, with which we would have been confronted in the future anyway.

In this context, Hitler spoke of mass production, for which the war represented a great training ground. The war necessitated “mass-produced articles, millions of guns, hundreds of thousands of machine guns.”

It leads by necessity to a clear separation between, on the one side, the purely military orderer, and, on the other side, the technical designer in connection with the production engineer—that is, whoever is charged with mass production will be the one to furnish the best designs. Weapons are only of use wherever they appear in masses.

After Hitler had pointed out the “gigantic work” of the new Reich Minister Speer, he expressed his fear that peace production would one day suffer because of the concentration on war production. He warned as follows:

It is a matter of course that there must be constant intervention right now so that we do not miss out on any innovations on the one hand and do not lose our footing in production on the other so that—should peace break out tomorrow—we will not have oriented and organized our entire economy with just one goal in mind and therefore not be in a position to take up peace products like that.

Gentlemen! I do not care about peace today, I only care about victory! If we win this war, the German economy will receive such gigantic orders that it will be able to continue mass production in any event.

The steel that will be needed in peacetime for construction alone cannot be provided solely by our present steelworks!

If we lose the war, gentlemen, no readjustment will be necessary. It will only be necessary that everybody thinks about his own readjustment from this life into the next, whether he wants to do it himself, whether he wants to let himself be hanged, whether he wants to get a shot through the base of the skull,

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whether he wants to starve or go work in Siberia. Those are the only choices which the individual will then have to make.

I am not considering any bad compromise!

Once our victory has decided this war, private initiative in the German economy will enter its greatest epoch.

My efforts must always be directed to choose and select the most competent heads. I keep sniffing around all the time, and I have “agents” who always watch out: is there talent here, is there a genius here?

Hitler did mention the present difficulties and tried to console his listeners by saying that they would be overcome. He again told the anecdote—which was already strange enough when he mentioned it for the first time in 1938—about the man who had supposedly said to him that if he [the Führer] kept things up, Germany would collapse.¹⁷²

I told the big financier: You know, the German Volk has lived for, let us say, hundreds of thousands of years. . . . The German Volk survived the Romans, it survived the invasions by the Huns, countless wars, the Thirty Years’ War, the Seven Years’ War, the War of the Spanish Succession, the World War. It will survive this, too.

In view of this consolation, Hitler felt that his troubles were not too great:

Difficulties are there to be overcome!

The war in the air meant simply “to find ever new alternatives, in spite of the constant evasions.” All these difficulties were merely trials. However, this time Hitler said that it was not the “Lord God,”¹⁷³ but the “Devil” who was trying the German Volk.

We will survive this time. It often seems to me as though we have to go through all the trials of the Devil, Satan, and Hell, until we finally gain the final victory. This is not the first time this has happened in German history. Whoever does not have a hard time in life cannot really rejoice in what he has accomplished. The birth certificate of a new empire is always best written in blood, in blood and misery. We know from experience that this is the most sturdy, the most durable. We will manage all this.

In what followed, Hitler admitted a few “setbacks in technical respects.” By using electric radiation-detecting devices, the enemy had succeeded in “eliminating the U-boat warfare, you could say.” Moreover, he had started the “mass production of airplanes and tanks.”

Hitler’s statements were truisms, as any German could have told him by this time. But what could be done about these problems?

Hitler offered only empty phrases:

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The German soldier is the best! The restoration of a complete technological balance will create the conditions for swinging around the wheel of the war.

But how did Hitler intend to restore “technological balance” when things were getting worse and worse by the day? Hitler knew no other way out than to refer to the year 1939 and claim that things had been much worse at the time.

At the time, when Italy, in spite of its obligations, did not enter the war, we faced a great crisis! But all of us had the courage at the time not to retreat.

I was fifty years old at the time. I know what tremendous strain on the nerves such decisions represent. I do not know whether, in the next ten or twenty years, a man stronger than I am will succeed me!

Hitler also discussed the situation in France. He claimed that the Allies would “get the surprise of their lives” there.

The war can therefore not be measured in terms of current events. In such a mighty struggle of impact on world history, somebody can tell me: “Yes, you have now lost the tip¹⁷⁴ of Cherbourg.” I can only say [in reply]: they [the Allies] stood at the Rhine once!”¹⁷⁵

They say, they [the Allies] will conquer all of France, and I say, we forced them back there!

Let us wait and see whether they will conquer France.¹⁷⁶ Yes, only . . .¹⁷⁷ get the surprise of their lives! Our spirit of invention will help us shortly to issue those weapons that are necessary to restore the technological balance.

Of course, Hitler had to make several references to numbers and to questions of race. He tried to get his listeners to forget how critical the situation actually was.

We have over a hundred thirty million people within the territory of the Reich. All of Europe, which must work for us today, amounts to over two hundred fifty million. And we shall not accomplish anything with that? That’s ridiculous! The American engineers are mostly of German origin. It is Swabian-Alemannian blood that these people have. And I have the same crowd of Alemanni. They work for us. It would be sad if we couldn’t do anything with that. Superiority of the enemy? You can tell how little they are superior to us!

At the end of the speech, Hitler again brought up the idea that the gods loved him because he demanded the impossible. In the end, they would grant him their blessings. He declared the following:

The tasks which I set are tremendous. But always think of the old saying: the gods love him who demands the impossible of them. If we accomplish the impossible, then we will surely receive the approval of Providence.

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Perhaps I am not what they call a sanctimonious hypocrite or pious. I am not that. But deep in my heart, I am a religious man; that is, I believe that the man who, in accordance with the natural laws created by God, bravely fights and never capitulates in this world—that *this man will not be abandoned by the Lawgiver*.¹⁷⁸ Instead, he will in the end receive the blessings of Providence.

When Hitler had ended, half a minute of dutiful applause followed. Speer said a few words of thanks and exclaimed *Sieg Heil*.

And so Hitler's last public appearance ended on the stage of rhetoric where he had earlier celebrated such great triumphs. His farewell performance was pitiful, sad, and eerie.

On July 7, a few soldiers, especially detailed for this duty, paraded new army uniforms and pieces of field equipment in front of Hitler at the Berghof, in the presence of Speer and Major General Helmut Stieff. Allegedly, there was a plan to hide a bomb in the field pack of one of the soldiers and blow him up along with Hitler.¹⁷⁹

Regardless of whether this assassination attempt was supposed to be carried out on July 7 or at another opportunity, it underlined the fact that the assassins did not dare to face Hitler themselves. They preferred to kill innocent people along with Hitler, since they wished to stay alive themselves. The excuse that it was not possible to shoot Hitler with a pistol because he was constantly guarded by SS men is not compelling.¹⁸⁰ Many of Hitler's entourage agreed that it would have been quite possible to shoot him on numerous occasions, without his servants or guards being able to prevent this.¹⁸¹

Hitler had not been at his headquarters in East Prussia for four months. He preferred the more private and comfortable atmosphere of the Berghof. It was likewise understandable that the men at the Wolfsschanze headquarters thought that it was a good idea to relocate to safer zones, at least insofar as the high command of the army was concerned. After all, the Russians had not only taken Minsk in the course of their great offensive in the central sector, but they had also begun to advance on Vilnius. It was only a question of months or weeks until they would reach the borders of East Prussia.

In early July, Chief of Staff Zeitzler began transferring the army high command from Rastenburg to Zossen.¹⁸² Hitler was outraged when he heard of this. He ordered an immediate return to East Prussia. However, this meant that he also had to return to Rastenburg, whether he liked it or not. He scheduled his arrival for July 15.

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Before he left, however, a series of situation briefings took place at the Berghof, like those of July 6 and 11. They dealt mostly with the mobilization of the home army (*Heimatheer*). Colonel Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg among others attended these meetings. Since July 1, he had been serving as chief of staff to Colonel General Fromm, the commander of the replacement army.¹⁸³

The resistance movement felt it had finally found its man in von Stauffenberg. The Count would carry through on the attempt on Hitler's life. The leading heads of the resistance movement had great plans on what they would do, whom they would appoint as ministers, what appeals they would issue, and so on, but all these plans presupposed that Hitler was dead. However, not one of these men dared to kill him or obtain his dismissal from office through the Reichstag. They were greatly relieved when Graf von Stauffenberg offered to take care of Hitler.

It was sad that the heads of the resistance movement had to turn to the Count in this matter. After all, von Stauffenberg had been seriously injured in the campaign in Africa. He had lost his left eye, his lower right arm, and two fingers of his left hand. Moreover, he still carried shrapnel in his skull, and it had to be removed.¹⁸⁴ In every respect, the Count cut a tragic figure; he was physically weakened and nervous, although undoubtedly ambitious. His method was no different from those of the other would-be assassins who had previously tried to kill Hitler. He was also prepared to answer for innocent people being killed along with Hitler. But he wanted to stay alive since he counted on an appointment as state secretary with the war ministry in the planned Goerdeler cabinet.¹⁸⁵

An assassin who is not prepared to sacrifice his own life in the attempt is ill-suited to such an undertaking. Normally, his life is over after the attack: if the attempt fails, then he will either be shot on the spot or put on trial shortly afterward and executed. If the attack succeeds, then the followers of the victim will try to kill him or, in many cases, his fellow conspirators will seek to eliminate him later. As far as it is humanly possible to tell, Graf von Stauffenberg was destined to die. He deserves to have his memory honored as a man who dared more than the other members of the German resistance movement, and as one of Hitler's victims, like so many million people of all nations, who suffered a horrible death.

July 13, 1944

At the talks at the Berghof, von Stauffenberg did not activate the bomb which he had brought along. He claimed that he failed to do so because Himmler was not present.¹⁸⁶

On July 12, Hitler issued a directive on the tightened concentration of all questions regarding naval transports within the Wehrmacht.¹⁸⁷

On July 13, before leaving the Obersalzberg, Hitler issued a series of decrees concerning domestic policy. They served the goal of augmenting the deployment of civilians in the war.¹⁸⁸

The decree on the "Listing and Processing of Stocks for the Armament Industry and the War Economy" began with these words:¹⁸⁹

The military situation demands the increased deployment of all goods for the purposes of the armament industry. It necessitates in particular the increased listing and processing of all stocks consisting of commercial raw materials, half-finished and finished products, for urgent tasks in the war. In the interest of securing uniform measures, I order the following:

[Technical details follow.]

Even though "total war" had repeatedly been proclaimed before, and everything had already been enlisted in the war, every little bit of what remained of goods was now supposed to be scratched together.

A second decree by Hitler dealt with the reinforced concentration of means of road transportation. In other words, the Reich minister of transport was supposed to comb through the few remaining civilian vehicles. The decree stipulated the following:¹⁹⁰

In the interest of an augmented concentration and uniform conduct of civilian road traffic by the Reich minister of transportation, I order for the duration of the war and in suspension of regulations to the contrary:

§ 1

1. The Reich minister of transportation will be authorized to issue ordinances for the deployment of civilian means of road transportation (streetcars, motor vehicles, sidecar combinations) and give orders made necessary by the conduct of the war.

[Technical details follow.]

Hitler's decree on the "Replacement of the Previous Military Government in Belgium and Norway by a Civilian Administration" was also seen as domestic policy. Hitler had refrained from doing so out of consideration for the Belgian king. Now, however, he felt that it was high time for annexing Belgium and northern France to the Reich. For this reason, he appointed Grohé, the Gauleiter of Cologne-Aix-la-Chapelle, as Reichskommissar for the occupied territories in Belgium

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and northern France on July 13.¹⁹¹ He proceeded in a similar manner as with Norway and the Netherlands at the time. It was grotesque that he did so, however, at a time when Belgium and northern France were again being transformed into front sectors. A few weeks later, the Allies would occupy this "Reichskommissariat."

It was remarkable that, in two of the decrees issued on July 13, Hitler concerned himself with the possibility of "Enemy Advances into German Reich Territory" and ordered certain measures to be taken. The decree on the "Authority of Command" read as follows:¹⁹²

In the event of enemy advances into German Reich territory, I order the following:

I

The civilian offices of the national and local governments will continue their activities in the theater of operations,

II

1. The military commander in chief on whom I shall confer the exercise of executive power will direct his requests, resulting from the military necessities in civilian affairs, to the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations.

2. In the immediate combat zones, whose borders will be determined by the military commander in chief in concurrence with the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations, the high military command offices will be authorized to issue directly to the offices of the national and local governments those directives necessary for the carrying out of their combat mission. Should unexpected events necessitate immediate action, and should it not be possible to reach the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations, then the military commander in chief will have the same authority in the entire theater of operations. The Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations will be notified of the measures taken in the most speedy manner.

3. I shall appoint the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations.¹⁹³

III

1. The Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations will advise the military commander in chief in all questions concerning the civilian administration and the economy. He will be entitled to issue the necessary directives to the civilian offices of the national and local governments.

2. Should the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations make requests, he should direct them to the responsible high-ranking SS and police leader in all affairs of the police, to the plenipotentiary of the Reich minister for transportation in all affairs of the Reichsbahn and inland navigation, to the plenipotentiary of the Reichskommissar for ocean navigation in all questions of ocean navigation, to the responsible chairman of the armament committee with the Reich minister for armament and war production in all questions of armament and war production.

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IV

The Reich defense commissars, whose administrative districts belong partly or totally to the theater of operations, shall appoint a liaison who will serve as adviser to the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations.¹⁹⁴

[Technical details follow.]

The decree on “Cooperation between Party and Wehrmacht” read as follows:¹⁹⁵

In the event of enemy advances into German Reich territory, I order the following:

I

The offices of the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations shall continue their activities in the theater of operations.

II

1. The military commander in chief on whom I shall confer the exercise of executive power shall direct his requests, resulting from the military necessities in affairs of the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations, to the Gauleiter for the theater of operations.

2. In the immediate combat zones, whose borders will be determined by the military commander in chief in concurrence with the Reich defense commissar for the theater of operations, the above-named military command offices will be authorized directly to issue to the offices of the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations, those directives which will be necessary for the carrying out of their combat mission. Should unexpected events necessitate immediate action, and should it not be possible to reach the Gauleiter for the theater of operations, then the military commander in chief will have the same authority in the entire theater of operations. The Gauleiter for the theater of operations will be notified of the measures taken in the most speedy manner.

3. I shall appoint the Gauleiter for the theater of operations.

[Technical details follow.]

On July 13, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Pavelich on his birthday.¹⁹⁶

On July 14, he left the Berghof for the Wolfsschanze headquarters in East Prussia. It was a last good-bye, since he would never return to the Obersalzberg.

On July 15, Hitler discussed reinforcing the home army and activating Volk grenadier divisions at the headquarters in East Prussia.¹⁹⁷ Von Stauffenberg attended the meetings, but again hesitated to activate the bomb, even though Himmler was present this time.

Also on July 15, Rommel sent a telex message to Hitler. He informed him that the “situation in Normandy is becoming more

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difficult by the day.” The message ended on this note:¹⁹⁸ “The troops are fighting heroically everywhere, but the unequal battle is nearing its end. I must ask you immediately to draw the conclusions from this situation. As the commander in chief of the army group, I feel obliged to put this plainly.”

What type of “conclusion” was Hitler supposed to draw from the situation: step down and renounce the throne? Certainly, Rommel did not believe that Hitler would be ready to do this. Experience had shown that Hitler normally reacted to such situations by dismissing old generals and appointing new ones. Did Rommel want this?

According to Speidel, Rommel said the following after he sent out the telex to Hitler: “I gave him a last chance. If he does not draw the conclusions, we will take action.”

What type of “action” was Rommel talking about? Would he lead a revolt? Would he arrest Hitler? Rommel was a military man, and the last man who would have arrested Hitler. The Führer was the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. How could one expect a German general to arrest his supreme commander? Indeed, not one of the more than three thousand German generals and admirals¹⁹⁹ dared to do this or face Hitler with a pistol in his hand. Even the generals who appeared on the scene on July 20 acted in the belief that Hitler was dead.

Admittedly, there were many generals who discussed what they would do once Hitler was dead, that is, once the legitimate national authority no longer existed and they had a free hand. But the problem was that he was not dead. It would still take months until he was finally ready to put a bullet through his brain himself.

Following July 17, Rommel no longer had to worry about what type of “action” was expected of him. On the road between Livrot and Vimoutiers, his car was hit by fire from Allied fighter-bombers. His driver died, and Rommel suffered a concussion.

On July 18, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco on the Spanish national holiday.²⁰⁰

On July 19, Hitler received Kesselring at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds and congratulated him on his fortieth service anniversary.²⁰¹ Hitler was very impressed with Kesselring’s ruthlessness in deploying the German soldiers in the fight against the Allies in Italy, although the heavy German losses only delayed the advance of the Anglo-Americans but did not prevent it.

July 20, 1944

For the afternoon of July 20, Hitler planned a reception for Mussolini at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁰² For this reason, he rescheduled the noon discussion of the situation for 12:30 p.m. instead of 1:00 p.m. as was the usual time. The bunker where the briefings normally took place had been closed for some time because of construction work to reinforce the concrete floor. A barracks which usually housed guests now served as a temporary room for the meeting. This change was not favorable for the assassination attempt, because the windows and walls of the barracks—in contrast with the massive concrete of the bunker—naturally diminished the effect of the explosion. Von Stauffenberg was again summoned to attend the meeting; he was to report on the mobilization of the home army.

First, however, General Heusinger made a presentation on the situation at the eastern front. In the meantime, von Stauffenberg put the briefcase with the bomb beneath the table where Hitler was sitting. Saying that he had to make a telephone call, he left the barracks.

Just when Hitler was trying to locate something on a map and leaning over the heavy oak table at 12:40 p.m. or 12:42 p.m., the bomb went off. Hitler was catapulted up along with the tabletop. He suffered bruises on his right arm and back, and some scratches on his left hand. His ear drums were hurt, and his hair was singed, but other than that he was fine, even though his pants were in shreds.

Many of the other participants in the conference were so seriously injured that they later died: Reichstag stenographer and senior executive officer Heinrich Berger, who had been detailed along with other Reichstag stenographers to attend the situation briefings and could hardly be blamed for Hitler's politics; Hitler's chief Wehrmacht adjutant Lieutenant General Rudolf Schmundt, Luftwaffe chief of staff General Günther Korten, and Colonel (G.S.) Heinz Brandt. The following suffered serious injuries: Air Force General Karl Bodenschatz, Rear Admiral Karl-Jesko von Puttkammer, Major General Walter Scherff, Lieutenant Colonel (G.S.) Heinrich Borgmann, and Captain Heinz Assmann.

The following men were only slightly injured: Keitel, Jodl, Infantry General Walter Buhle, Lieutenant General Adolf Heusinger, Rear Admiral Hans-Erich Voss, SS Gruppenführer Hermann Fegelein, Colonel Nicolaus von Below, Lieutenant Colonel Heinz Waizenegger,

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Major (G.S.) Herbert Büchs, Major von Jahn, and SS Hauptsturmführer Otto Günsche.

Undeniably, Hitler was lucky to survive the explosion with barely any injuries. This was due less to a “miraculous rescue” than to a chain of certain coincidences, since most of those present sustained only slight injuries.

Von Stauffenberg had waited at a signal bunker, about eighty meters away, until he saw the explosion and the barracks collapse. Convinced that Hitler was dead, he headed for the exit. Even though the gate was already closed, he managed to persuade the guards to let him out, after some discussion. It was 12:44 p.m.

The Count had a car take him to the airfield as quickly as possible. After all, he intended to play a leading role in the revolution which would now begin in Berlin. On the way, his chauffeur noticed that he threw a small package containing explosives no longer needed out of the window.

In the meantime, Hitler had himself treated by his physician Dr. Morell. His servant Linge brought him a new uniform. Hitler remained admirably calm. He ordered Linge to look for additional explosives, because he initially thought that construction workers had hidden the bomb beneath the floor. All the construction workers at the headquarters were kept in custody for the time being.

Soon, however, it was discovered that the actual assassin had been von Stauffenberg. His departure just before the explosion had attracted notice. And, hastily, he had departed by plane at 1:00 p.m. The package with the remaining explosive which he had thrown away was recovered. Immediately, Hitler ordered von Stauffenberg’s arrest in Berlin, in the event that he had not escaped behind the Russian lines, as some suspected.

In the meantime, von Ribbentrop, Göring, and Himmler had arrived at the headquarters in order to prepare for Mussolini’s reception. The interpreter, Envoy Schmidt, had also arrived.

The Duce was scheduled to arrive at a nearby station at 2:30 p.m. However, his train ran one hour late. Hitler personally went to the station to pick up his guest. He was in complete control of himself. He was only experiencing some problems in using his right arm so that he had to extend his left hand in greeting. Mussolini had quite a fright when he heard that there had just been an assassination attempt at the headquarters. Since it was beginning to rain a little, Hitler put on his

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black cape, and the entire company, including Göring, Himmler, von Ribbentrop, Bormann, and so on, returned to the headquarters by foot.

As they reached the site of the explosion, Hitler, Mussolini, and Schmidt entered the heavily damaged barracks. Hitler coolly described the explosion to his friend as follows:²⁰³

It happened here. I stood here, at this table. I was leaning on the table with my right arm like this in order to look at something on the map, when suddenly the tabletop came flying at me and threw my arm upward. Here, directly at my feet, the bomb exploded.²⁰⁴

For some time, none of them said anything. Then Hitler sat down on a box, and Schmidt had to bring up one of the few usable chairs for Mussolini. As they sat face-to-face in the rubble, Hitler began to speak again in a low voice:

As I let things pass again before my mind, my miraculous rescue proves that, while others present in the room sustained serious injuries, and one²⁰⁵ was even catapulted out of the window by the air pressure, nothing happened to me—fate spared me—especially since this wasn't the first time that I escaped death in such a miraculous fashion.

After my rescue from certain death today, I am more convinced than ever before that I am destined to bring to a happy conclusion our great common cause!

Hitler's "miraculous rescue" by Providence meant one thing: triumph of the god-man over all earthly challenges and "trials of the Devil, Satan, and Hell."²⁰⁶ Hitler found the new attitude he would strike, the new slogan he would use. Now, at a time when the opposition of his inner circle was becoming clear, he felt that he could again speak to the public, armed with this new catchword.

Hitler had not spoken to the German Volksgenossen since January 30, because he faced a constantly deteriorating situation. Even then, he had addressed them only on the radio. This time, he was not ready to do much more, but he did want to speak. He would personally inform the Germans of his "miraculous rescue" and show his opponents that divine Providence stood by him. It did so because he was steadfast; he refused to capitulate; he was ready to fight on to "the last battalion," even until "five minutes past twelve."

Mussolini was much impressed with Hitler's poise and his remarkable coolness. He declared: "After what I have seen here, I agree with you completely. This was a sign from Heaven!"

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The two dictators rose in order to continue their conversation in the bunker. The tone was subdued on this day. Schmidt reported that he felt there was “an aura of farewell” in the air at their relatively inconsequential talks. Indeed, it was the last time that Hitler and Mussolini would meet face-to-face. In the course of the past decade, they had met seventeen times. The circumstances at their last meeting presaged the violent death they would each meet only months later at nearly the same time, though in different locations—the one in Berlin, the other south of the Alps.

The following communiqué was published on the talks:²⁰⁷

The talks between the Führer and the Duce were marked by a spirit of great warmth. The Führer and the Duce examined the situation and, among other things, discussed the question of the Italian prisoners of war.²⁰⁸ They set guidelines for the resolution of this question in the spirit of the moral and material obligations of the two countries. This solution provides for the prisoners of war to be granted the status of free laborers or deployed as helpers within the German Wehrmacht.

The discussions at the Führer headquarters were attended by Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring, Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, and Field Marshal Keitel. On the Italian side, Marshal Grazini and under state secretary in the foreign ministry, Count Mazzolini, attended.

The talks between Hitler and Mussolini had repeatedly been interrupted as new information arrived from Berlin. Upon the false news of Hitler’s death, several generals had gathered at the Reichswehr ministry located at Bendlerstrasse. The following men had planned to take power: Field Marshal von Witzleben; the former chief of the general staff, Colonel General Beck; Colonel General Hoepfner, a former panzer commander who, in front of Moscow, had been demoted by Hitler and dismissed from the Wehrmacht; and Infantry General Olbricht.²⁰⁹

Olbricht, together with Colonel Graf Stauffenberg who in the meantime had arrived in Berlin, undertook to persuade the commander of the replacement army, Colonel General Fromm, to side with the new “government.” However, Fromm was a cautious man and wanted to know first whether Hitler was really dead or not. At 4:00 p.m. he telephoned the Führer headquarters. He spoke with Keitel, who told him that, while there had been an assassination attempt, Hitler had sustained only minor injuries.

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That was enough for Fromm. He knew what he owed the legal government and recommended that von Stauffenberg shoot himself right away. But neither von Stauffenberg nor Olbricht agreed to this. They were cornered and so they decided to arrest Fromm. They placed him under house arrest at his apartment, which was located in the same building, and requested his “word of honor” that he stay there.

Now the events of November 8, 1923, repeated themselves. At the time, Hitler and his comrades had detained the commander of the Reichswehr in Munich, von Lussow, on his “word of honor.” Both generals—von Lussow as well as Fromm—were opponents of Hitler but both could think only of proving their loyalty to the legal government authority. In 1923, Hitler had been a putschist. In 1944, he was the head of state and government, as well as supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. Fromm’s decision was clear.

Once Witzleben found out that the assassination attempt had failed, he became quite indignant, got into his Mercedes, and drove home. The other generals were not as quickly informed of the true facts, since the putschists had given the code word “*Walküre*” (Valkyrie), which sounded the alarm for the replacement army in the case of domestic unrest, and had proclaimed “the Führer’s death.”

The military commander of Paris, General Heinrich von Stülpnagel, had all high-ranking SS and SD officers in the city arrested. They did not put up any resistance and submitted to the arrest in a “collegial” manner, so to speak.

The commandant of Berlin, Lieutenant General Paul von Hase, ordered the guards battalion *Grossdeutschland* to occupy the governmental district. However, at the urging of Lieutenant Colonel Hans Hagen, a Nazi Party security officer, the commander of the battalion, Major Otto Remer, first inquired of Goebbels personally whether or not Hitler was really dead. At 5:00 p.m., the major went to the propaganda ministry. Goebbels had just spoken on the telephone with Hitler, who had told him all about the assassination attempt. Immediately, he put another call through and handed the receiver to Remer, who clearly heard Hitler say the following:²¹⁰

Major Remer, can you hear my voice? Major Remer, they tried to kill me, but I am alive. Major Remer, I am speaking to you as the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. Only my orders are to be obeyed. You must secure Berlin for me. Deploy every means of force that you feel necessary. Shoot any person who tries to disobey my orders.

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This telephone call was the end of the “revolution.” There was no need for Remer to deploy “means of force.” The troops returned to their quarters. Lieutenant General Hase surrendered his pistol to Goebbels. A few putschists still held out at the Reich War Ministry in the Benderstrasse, but Fromm, though under arrest, had secretly sent three generals out to help.

However, Fromm had nevertheless become suspicious in Hitler’s eyes. After all, his chief of staff von Stauffenberg had carried out the assassination attempt. The replacement army in Berlin had been put on alert. Hitler felt that Fromm had to have been involved in the conspiracy in some manner.

On the spot, Hitler decided to set an example and put a civilian in command of the renegade generals. So he appointed Himmler as the new commander of the replacement army.

In addition, Hitler dismissed Zeitzler, who had dared to relocate the headquarters from Rastenburg to Zossen, without asking his approval. He considered giving the position to Guderian. At 6:00 p.m., he telephoned Guderian’s chief of staff, General Thomale, in order to ask Guderian to the headquarters on the following day.

Hitler stated his contempt for the putschists in a conversation with his manservant Linge:

They are no revolutionaries, these conspirators, they are not even rebels. If Stauffenberg had pulled out a gun and shot me, he would have been a man. What he did was cowardly.

Göring, Dönitz, von Ribbentrop, and Hitler’s Unterführers who gathered at the headquarters were somewhat depressed by the assassination attempt. They were nervous and blamed one another for the bad military and political situation.²¹¹ Hitler listened to their verbal exchanges for a while and then struck a pose: if anybody had a right to shout in this case, it was he! And he began to launch a tirade against the conspirators. He shouted that he would exterminate them. Their wives and children would be brought to concentration camps, and nobody would be spared.

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3

Hitler was especially angry with the House of Hohenzollern and with the crown prince, whom he mistakenly believed to be behind the assassination attempt, as in Italy, where the royal house represented a stabilizing influence to which the people turned in the midst of chaos. However, Hitler greatly overestimated the importance of the former ruling house in Germany and its influence on the public.²¹²

As Hitler accompanied the Duce to the station, he stopped where the construction workers were arrested and told them:

I knew from the start that it was not you. It is my profound belief that my enemies are the “vons” who call themselves aristocrats. You are free now.

At 6:30 p.m., Hitler had Goebbels disseminate the following official statement on the radio:²¹³

A bomb attack was made on the Führer today. The following members of his entourage were seriously injured: Lieutenant General Schmundt, Colonel Brandt, coworker Berger. Slight injuries were sustained by the following: Colonel General Jodl; Generals Korten, Buhle, Bodenschatz, Heusinger, and Scherff; Admirals Voss and von Puttkammer; Captain Assmann, and Lieutenant Colonel Borgmann. The Führer sustained no injuries other than some minor burns and bruises. He immediately resumed his work and, as planned, he received the Duce for a lengthy exchange of views. Shortly after the attack, the Reichsmarschall arrived at the Führer's.

In the course of the evening, an announcement stated that Hitler would personally deliver an address. From Königsberg (Kaliningrad), it was aired shortly after midnight by all German radio stations. It was relatively short. Hitler repeatedly maintained that “a very small clique,” “a very small coterie,” had been involved in the assassination attempt. It would become clear over time that this had not been the case. One field marshal, numerous generals, and even a SA Obergruppenführer²¹⁴ had

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participated. Nearly five thousand persons were executed. Hitler made it clear on July 20, that such terrible reprisals had to be expected: "This time, we shall settle accounts in the way we are used to as National Socialists."

Hitler's radio address read as follows:²¹⁵

German Volksgenossen!

I do not know how many times an assassination attempt on me was planned and carried out. I speak to you today for two reasons:

1. so that you can hear my voice and know that I was not injured and am in good health;

2. so that you learn about the details of this crime, which is without equal in German history.

A very small clique of ambitious, unscrupulous, and at the same time criminal, stupid officers hatched a plot in order to eliminate me as well as exterminate the staff of the German Wehrmacht leadership. The bomb that was placed by Colonel Graf von Stauffenberg went off two meters to my right. It seriously hurt several coworkers precious to me; one of them died. I am not injured, with the exception of a few very small bruises and burns. I regard this as confirmation of my mission by Providence to continue pursuing the goal of my life, as I have done up to now. Let me solemnly avow before the entire nation that since the day I moved into Wilhelmstrasse I have had only one thought: to fulfill my duty to the best of my knowledge and belief. Ever since I realized that this war was unavoidable and could no longer be delayed, I knew nothing but worries and work and, in countless days and nights that I stayed up, I lived only for my Volk!

In an hour in which the German armies stand in the midst of a most difficult struggle, a very small group was found in Germany, as in Italy, that believed it could carry through a stab in the back as in the year 1918. However, it was terribly mistaken this time. The claim of these usurpers that I am no longer alive is being contradicted at this moment, as I speak to you, my dear Volksgenossen. This circle made up of these usurpers is a very small one. It has nothing to do with the German Wehrmacht and, above all, with the German Army. It is a very small coterie (*Klüngel*) of criminal elements which will be mercilessly exterminated. I therefore order at this moment the following:

1. That no civilian office is to accept any orders from any office appropriated by the usurpers.

2. That no military office, no leader of troops, no soldier is to comply with any type of order by these usurpers. On the contrary, everybody has the duty either to arrest the person forwarding or issuing such an order immediately or, in the case of resistance, to gun him down at once.

So as finally to assure order, I have appointed Reich Minister Himmler as commander of the replacement army. I have asked General Guderian to join the general staff in order to replace the chief of the general staff, presently

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unavailable due to an illness, and appointed a second battle-tested leader from the eastern front as his assistant.

Nothing changes in any other office in the Reich. I am convinced that by crushing this very small clique of traitors and conspirators, we finally create an atmosphere back in the homeland of the type which the fighters at the front need. After all, it is impossible that hundreds of thousands and millions of brave men give everything, while a very small coterie of ambitious, pitiful creatures at home constantly tries to undermine this attitude. This time we will settle accounts in the way we are used to as National Socialists.

I am convinced that every decent officer, every brave soldier will understand this at this hour.

Germany's fate, had this attempt today succeeded, can be imagined by only a very few people. I am grateful to Providence and my Creator not because He preserved my life—my life is nothing other than care and work for my Volk—but because He gave me the opportunity to continue bearing these cares and too persevere in my work, as best as I can before my conscience.

Every German, no matter who he might be, has the duty to oppose these elements mercilessly, either to arrest them at once or—if they should resist—to gun them down without further ado. Orders have gone out to all troops. They will execute them in blind faith and in accordance with the type of obedience which the German Army knows.

I may joyfully greet you once more in particular, my old comrades in arms, since I again had the privilege to escape a fate that did not mean anything horrible to me, but would have meant something horrible for the German Volk.

I also regard this as the warning finger of Providence that I must continue my work and, therefore, I shall continue my work!

On the night of July 20–21, Hitler issued this order of the day to the army:²¹⁶

Führer Headquarters, July 21, 1944

Soldiers of the Army!

A small circle of unscrupulous saboteurs has made an attempt on my life and on the staff of the Wehrmacht leadership in order to seize government authority. Providence has made this crime fail. The immediate energetic intervention by loyal officers and soldiers of the army in the homeland eliminated or arrested the clique of traitors within a few hours. I had expected nothing different. I know that you will continue to fight bravely in exemplary obedience and loyal fulfillment of your duties as before, until the victory will in the end be ours in spite of everything.

Adolf Hitler

Having finished this proclamation, Hitler finally went to sleep.

In Berlin, in the meantime, Fromm had again taken control of the war ministry and arrested the leading conspirators. He was eager to

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summon a drumhead court-martial so that the persons arrested could be sentenced to death and executed on the spot.²¹⁷ Fromm was trying to save his own skin: by taking swift action, he hoped to eliminate those who knew about his ambiguous stand and curry favor with Hitler. However, he was mistaken in this. Whoever issued death sentences without Hitler's approval committed a sacrilege by appropriating a privilege of power which Hitler considered his very own. Whoever dared to do this had to die.²¹⁸

The consequences of the failed assassination attempt were grave. Undoubtedly it resulted in a deterioration of the domestic situation in Germany.

A veritable psychosis took hold of the military and political Unterführers of the Third Reich. They competed with one another in proving their devotion to Hitler and sending him telegrams that paid homage to him.

Himmler was compelled to launch a relentless campaign of persecution of all opponents of the regime. Up to this point, he had pretty much let the reins go slack and not done anything about the activities of the resistance circles around Beck, Goerdeler, Canaris, and others, even though he was aware of them.

Although Himmler was devoted to Hitler, he was not so stupid that he had not long ago realized that Hitler's policies were bringing ruin to all Germans. The old fighters around Hitler had had greater opportunity to observe him up close than the military men and the bourgeois. Consequently, they had seen what was coming for some time already, even though not one of them dared to make a move against Hitler.

By 1944, the leading SS men would also have been happy to get rid of Hitler and his fateful policies somehow. In the beginning, the SS had attempted to emulate the ideals of the Prussian officer corps and form an elite. They had chosen the uniform which recalled that of the Death's Head Hussars around Mackensen and Crown Prince William. However, Hitler had used the SS for his own ends. And this had led slowly but surely to the SS being stamped a criminal organization in the eyes of the world and of the German Volk.

The Italians noticed already in 1942 that Himmler was beginning to distance himself from Hitler's politics.²¹⁹ Himmler's Finnish physician Kersten made similar observations.²²⁰ Other SS leaders were also becoming increasingly unhappy about Hitler's leadership. Of course,

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they had no plans to kill him, but they would not have been too unhappy about his death. This became clear in the course of the arrests of the SS leaders in Paris on July 20, after the supposed death of the Führer. The SS leaders did not put up any resistance. Both parties in the arrests were somewhat embarrassed when the order was canceled only hours later.

After the failure of the assassination attempt, it was clear that Himmler had to move without mercy against the resistance movement in order to please Hitler. And the men of the resistance deserved no mercy in his eyes because they had shown themselves incapable of taking successful action. In addition, the manner in which von Stauffenberg had proceeded in his assassination attempt, that is, killing or injuring high-ranking Wehrmacht members, was not suited to gaining new friends for the resistance movement within the Wehrmacht.²²¹

Hitler waited a few days before he issued orders on how to deal with the arrested individuals. He stayed in bed on July 21 but replied to the congratulations he received from the satellite states on his escape. The following sent him telegrams: Laval, Quisling, Tiso, Neditsch, Hácha, and the prime minister of Manchuria, Chang Teng-hai. The Japanese emperor inquired about Hitler's state of health at the German embassy.²²²

Hitler received Guderian around noon to appoint him chief of the general staff.²²³ On this occasion, he already called the present commander in chief, west, von Kluge, "an accessory in the assassination attempt," even though von Kluge had sent him a telegram of loyalty. The arrest of the SS men in Paris had led Hitler to this conclusion. In his eyes, von Kluge was no better than Fromm.

Hitler was determined to eliminate the reactionary spirit in the Wehrmacht. Symbolically, the military salute that was used within the Wehrmacht was to be replaced at this late date by the Fascist or so-called "German salute."²²⁴ Göring, Keitel, and Dönitz anticipated this wish. The following official announcement was published:²²⁵

The Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich, as the senior officer in the German Wehrmacht, has reported to the Führer, in the name of Field Marshal Keitel and Grand Admiral Dönitz as well, that all branches of the Wehrmacht have requested on the occasion of his rescue to be allowed to introduce to the Wehrmacht the German salute as a sign of unswerving loyalty

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to the Führer and of the close solidarity between the Wehrmacht and the party. The Führer has granted the Wehrmacht this wish and has given his approval.

Effective immediately, the salute which consisted of raising the right hand to the headgear will be replaced by the German salute.

On July 23, Hitler composed this general note of thanks:²²⁶

On the occasion of the attack directed against me and my coworkers, I have received so many congratulations and demonstrations of loyalty from all parts of the German Volk, especially the party and the Wehrmacht, that I would like to express in this manner my heartfelt thanks, also on behalf of my comrades, to all those who thought of me in the course of these days.

Adolf Hitler

In the past ten days, the Russians had started the offensive in the northern sector as well, crossed the Daugava, and were now advancing in the direction of the Gulf of Riga. There was danger for the entire Army Group North of being cut off.

Hitler again solved this problem in his own fashion, that is, he named a new commander in chief: Colonel General Schörner. Nevertheless, Directive No. 59 of July 23, clearly showed that he was up to his neck in difficulties. It read as follows:²²⁷

I appoint Colonel General (Generaloberst) Schörner commander in chief of Army Group North, and I authorize him to command all the available fighting forces and equipment of the Wehrmacht units and SS forces, other units and groups, party and civil offices, with the aim of resisting the enemy's offensives and of maintaining the eastern territories.

All who bear arms, no matter to which unit or group they belong, must be uniformly engaged for this purpose.

At the same time, Hitler ordered measures to be taken in order to prepare for a potential reuse of the German West Wall.²²⁸

On July 24, Hitler sent a handwritten letter to the Reich minister for transportation, Julius Dörpmüller, on his seventy-fifth birthday. He awarded him the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross.²²⁹

On July 24 and 25, Goebbels was Hitler's guest at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²³⁰ The result of the talks, which were attended at times by Göring, was a renewed emphasis on deployment for a total war, even though a "total war" had already existed since 1942/1943, at the very latest since 1943. Hitler named Goebbels his "Reich plenipotentiary for total-war deployment." He signed the following decree:²³¹

July 25, 1944

Führer Headquarters, July 25, 1944

The military situation forces us to see to a full utilization of all forces for the Wehrmacht and armament industry. I therefore order:

I

1. The president of the ministerial council for the defense of the Reich, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, has to adapt public life to the necessities of waging a total war in every respect. For the implementation of this task, he will suggest to me a "Reich plenipotentiary for total-war deployment." He will make sure that all public events correspond to the objective of total war and do not deny forces to the Wehrmacht and armament industry. He will review the entire state apparatus, including Reichsbahn, Reich postal service, and all public institutions, organizations, and firms, with the goal of freeing a maximum of forces for the Wehrmacht and armament industry by a completely rational deployment of men and means, by suspension or restriction of tasks less important to the war, and by a simplification of organization and procedure. For these purposes, he will be entitled to request information from the high Reich offices and issue directives to them.

2. The legal regulations and administrative directives in principle, which will be decreed by the appropriate supreme Reich offices, will be issued in concurrence with the Reich minister and chief of the Reich chancellery, the head of the party chancellery, and the plenipotentiary for the administration of the Reich.

II

The head of the party chancellery will actively support the measures ordered by me in the deployment of the party based on the authority vested in him.

III

Objections to the directives of the Reich plenipotentiary for total-war deployment will be directed to him. Should an agreement not be obtained, then a decision by me will be sought through the offices of the Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery.

IV

Insofar as earlier issued powers and missions contradict the spirit of this decree, they are rescinded.

V

This decree applies to the territory of the Greater German Reich and, correspondingly, the annexed and occupied territories.

The Führer, Adolf Hitler

This bombastic decree basically meant only that all theaters, concert halls, and cabarets were to be closed, and the artists called up for military service or work in the armament industry.

Also on July 25, Hitler signed a "Decree on Self-Defense (*Selbstschutz*) and the Reich Air-Raid Protection League (*Reichsluft-*

July 31, 1944

schutzbund)"²³² which was placed directly under Goebbels' control. He apparently hoped that this would augment its combat effectiveness. In reality, nothing changed.

On July 26, Hitler had a wreath placed at the funeral of Reichsleiter Wilhelm Grimm in Schliersee. Supposedly, he had died in an "accident" in the course of an official trip.²³³

On July 29, Hitler sent this congratulatory telegram to his friend Mussolini on his birthday:²³⁴

Duce!

On your birthday today, in old loyal comradeship, I send you my own and the German Volk's heartfelt congratulations. I tie to them my warmest best wishes for your personal welfare and the happy future of the Italian people, which after so many terrible reverses of fortune in the past is now ready, in this hour of historic decision, to fight side by side with the German soldiers for its own homeland.

Adolf Hitler

On July 31, a state ceremony at the Tannenberg Memorial took place in honor of the chief of the Luftwaffe general staff, Günter Korten. He had been seriously injured in the assassination attempt of July 20 and had died on July 23. Hitler promoted him to the rank of colonel general and had Göring place a wreath.²³⁵

On July 30, the Allies had taken the city of Avranches at the southern end of Normandy. This had opened up the rest of France for them. In response to this development, Hitler issued this order to Army Group B on July 31:²³⁶

The enemy must not, under any circumstances, have free access for operations. Army Group B prepares with all panzer units for a counterattack in order to push through to Avranches, cut off the enemy breakthrough, and destroy him. All available panzer units must therefore be freed from their present engagement without replacement. . . . The outcome of the campaign in France depends on this attack.

This order did not change the hard fact of the Allied superiority. Hitler was beginning to face the same situation as Napoleon at the end of his rule in 1814 and 1815, when his proclamations contrasted oddly with the reality of the distribution of military power.

Late on the evening of July 31, a long discussion of the situation took place at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²³⁷ The tenor of this meeting with Jodl and other military men was pretty dismal, but Hitler

July 31, 1944

tried to encourage himself and his entourage. There was still enough room "to make life possible," he said. It was a question of winning time. The "traitors," who had now become visible due to the assassination attempt, were responsible for all the setbacks. Apparently, they had been betraying everything to the enemy for years.

Hitler would try to use this new propaganda trick throughout the remaining months of his life. Not only had the generals made a mess of the ingenious campaign plans of the Führer, as Goebbels had put it,²³⁸ but had also made possible the enemy's successes through their repeated treason!

In contrast to this obvious propaganda claim by Hitler, the history of war of all nations at all times conclusively proves that the betrayal of military secrets *does not determine* the outcome of a war. Treason may in individual instances temporarily influence the outcome of a particular operation. However, the outcome of a war is largely determined by the war potential, which depends on the number and quality of the available troops, and on the supplies of raw materials, armament, and foodstuffs.²³⁹ It was not the cowardice or treason of the generals that caused Hitler's military failures. Instead, the reasons were his own policies. Despite all warnings by the western powers, he had decided to attack Poland, and this had led to England's declaration of war on September 3, 1939. Everything that happened afterwards was the result of this declaration of war, which Hitler had provoked and for which he alone was responsible. Events ran their course, slow at first and then ever faster. At the end stood the inevitable destruction of Hitler and the Third Reich. The generals had willingly followed Hitler, as long as things went well. It was not until 1944, when it had become obvious that the war would end in chaos, that they tried to save what could be saved.

Among other things, Hitler declared the following on July 31:

Jodl, if I look at the great worries of today, there is first of all the problem of the stabilization of the eastern front—there is not time for more at the moment—and I ask myself, in view of the overall situation, whether it is truly so terrible that we are relatively tightly squeezed together. There are not only disadvantages here, there are advantages, too. If we hold the area we now possess, then this is an area that makes life possible for us at least, and we do not have these huge distances.²⁴⁰

What can you expect, after all, from the top leadership of an overall front, when the most important positions in the rear are occupied, as we see now, by absolute destroyers—not defeatists, but destroyers of, and traitors to, their own

August 1, 1944

country. Since it is like this: when the intelligence sector and the billeting offices are occupied by traitors²⁴¹—nobody knows for how long they have already been conspiring with the enemy or the people over there—then you cannot expect that from there the spirit will come up that is necessary to stop such a thing.

It is probably not Russian insight but constant treason that was continuously committed by this cursed small clique.

If, in the top positions . . . these idiots think that they can get a better situation because this revolution is led by generals and not by soldiers as in 1918, then that's it! It is obvious then that the army is slowly but surely being corrupted.²⁴²

There must be an end to this. This cannot happen. You have to get rid of and drive out these vilest creatures that ever wore the uniform, these scoundrels (*Gesinde*) who managed to survive. That is the supreme duty.

Hitler was also greatly worried about the Balkans, and the attitude of the Turks, Bulgarians, and Hungarians.

As far as the Hungarians are concerned, we should not be surprised: if even we have such twits (*Deppen*) or criminals over here who say, "Even if the Russians come, we will conclude peace; if we have the Russians on our side, nothing much will happen to us," then what right do we have to get upset when such a Hungarian blockhead or magnate says, "We will let ourselves be occupied by the English; surely it will be in their interest not to swallow us up, and everything will be all right."

No matter how much Hitler scolded, he did have to admit that the situation in the west would soon become untenable. He already considered what lines he would be able to hold in France and even at the West Wall, after having laid waste the abandoned areas.

Perhaps this is the most important thing: the destruction of all locomotives, along with all railway installations, all pumps, all things, which is more important than just destroying the tracks. This is perhaps even more important. These are the only things that will give us time ultimately. I cannot operate myself, but I can make it tremendously difficult for the enemy to operate in the vastness of the terrain. I lead him into a war of—let me say of scorched earth that is not German earth. This must, however, be executed in reality without mercy.

On August 1, Hitler promoted Sepp Dietrich and SS General Hausser to the ranks of SS Oberstgruppenführers and colonel generals of the Waffen SS.²⁴³

On the following day, this official announcement was made public:²⁴⁴

August 2, 1944

The Führer has promoted the commander of the Guards Battalion *Grossdeutschland* in Berlin, bearer of the Oak Leaves, Major Remer, to the rank of colonel, because of the determination that he demonstrated on July 20.

On August 2, the policy that Hitler had pursued over many years toward Turkey, and which von Papen had executed, collapsed. The Turkish national assembly resolved to break off relations with Germany, a first step in the direction of a declaration of war.²⁴⁵ Hitler and von Papen had been chasing a specter: the memory of the former German-Turkish brotherhood in arms during the First World War. In reality, the new Turkey under [Mustafa] Kemal [Atatürk] Pasha had always been pro-England.²⁴⁶

On August 2, Hitler had Lieutenant General Gerhard place a wreath at von Hindenburg's sarcophagus in Tannenberg.²⁴⁷

On the same day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to state president Ba Mah on Burma's independence day.²⁴⁸

In the meantime, Hitler had decided how he would deal with the participants in the military putsch of July 20. For years, he had considered how he could best put down attempted rebellions by the generals. Whoever rose against him would suffer an ignominious death. On March 4, 1943, he had already authorized courts-martial to execute death sentences by hanging.²⁴⁹ On June 21, 1943, he had decreed the establishment of a central special drumhead court martial for the Wehrmacht in order to deal with offenses against the leaders of the state and Wehrmacht.²⁵⁰

However, all these preparations now appeared to him to have been tactically unwise. It would be better not to leave the sentencing of the offenders up to a military court at all!

Hitler knew the caste mentality of the military well. He would certainly run into difficulties if he tried to get a field marshal sentenced to be hanged. He did not wish to repeat Groener's mistake. In 1930, Reichswehr Minister Groener had caused a virtual palace revolution by having three Reichswehr lieutenants, who were accused of subversive National Socialist activities, arrested by the police, in disregard of the military code of conduct.²⁵¹ Hitler wished to proceed as he had in the Röhm case. At the time, the Officers' League had expelled Captain Ernst Röhm from its ranks on his request and, thereby, had made it possible for Hitler to have the SA chief of staff killed three days later.²⁵²

Hitler planned to proceed in the same manner with the arrested generals of the German Wehrmacht: the Wehrmacht should simply

August 3, 1944

expel them from its ranks. For this reason, Hitler summoned an army court of honor, whose members (Keitel, Guderian, and other generals) surrendered their own comrades to the highly questionable Volksgerichtshof and to a disgraceful death by strangulation. The members of this court of honor would not have to trouble their consciences any more than the officers who had expelled Röhm from the Officers' League. By virtue of their resolutions, Röhm, Witzleben, and the others no longer belonged to the officer corps, and Hitler could do what he wanted with them!

After Hitler had summoned the court of honor for August 4, he visited the officers injured in the explosion.²⁵³ Hypocritically, he played the role of the devoted supreme commander who had considered all aspects of the assassination attempt and was concerned only for the welfare of the German Volk and the "terribly struggling eastern front." All this weighed naturally more heavily than his own life in his considerations! He told the injured General Bodenschatz the following:²⁵⁴

Well, you know, Bodenschatz, I am being asked a lot these days what I say to the assassination attempt, what I think about political murder. I do not reject it one hundred percent! I can also understand that it may be necessary to remove a statesman if the situation of the nation demands it and a people can have a better future after the elimination of a ruler.

I know that von Stauffenberg, Goerdeler, and Witzleben believed that they could save the German Volk through killing me. However, up to now, only one thing has been ascertained: these people had no concrete plan of what they wanted to do afterwards.²⁵⁵ They had no idea what army supported their putsch, what defense district command would help them. They had not even managed the obvious, to establish communications with the enemy.²⁵⁶ Yes, I even found out that the enemy had rejected offers of negotiation. Think about it, Bodenschatz. There are German soldiers in the midst of a bitter battle at the eastern front. Nearly nine million.²⁵⁷ And now imagine the effect! It would have become a war of everybody against everybody, a civil war in the German army. The Russians would have been the real winners and have taken terrible toll. You see, Bodenschatz, this and only this was the crime of the assassins in my eyes!

On August 3, Hitler received a delegation of leading National Socialist officers at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in the presence of Keitel and General Ritter von Hengel.²⁵⁸ This communiqué was published on the convening of the "Court of Honor of the German army":²⁵⁹

August 4, 1944

Führer Headquarters, August 4

The army has submitted a request to the Führer for the immediate restoration of its honor in the quickest manner through a merciless purge of the last of the criminals involved in the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944. It would like to surrender the guilty persons to civil justice.

The Führer has granted this request all the more since the speedy and energetic action of the army itself nipped the assassination attempt in the bud. The Führer has ordered the following: a court of honor by field marshals and generals will examine who was involved in whatever form in the assassination attempt and hence should be expelled from the army, and who must be regarded as suspicious and will be temporarily suspended.

The Führer has appointed to this court of honor the following: Field Marshal Keitel, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, Colonel General Guderian, Infantry General Schroth, Lieutenant General Specht. As substitutes: Infantry General Kriebel, Lieutenant General Kirchheim. The Führer has reserved for himself the right to decide about the petitions of the court of honor.

Soldiers expelled by the Führer no longer have anything in common with the millions of honorable soldiers of the Greater German Reich who wear the army uniform and with the hundreds of thousands who sealed their loyalty with death. They will not be placed before a Wehrmacht court but will be sentenced together with other offenders by the Volksgerichtshof. The same applies to all soldiers who are for the time being suspended from the Wehrmacht.

The army court of honor summoned by the Führer convened on August 4 and, based on the results of its investigations, submitted the following recommendations to the Führer:

The following are dismissed from the Wehrmacht:

1. Persons in custody: Field Marshal von Witzleben, General of the Signal Corps Fellgiebel, Lieutenant General von Hase, Major General Stieff, Major General von Tresckow, Colonel (G.S.) Hansen, Lieutenant Colonel (G.S.) Bernardis, Major (G.S.) Hayessen, Captain Klausung, Lieutenant Colonel (Res) Graf von der Schulenburg, Lieutenant Colonel (Res) von Hagen, Lieutenant (Res) Graf Zorck von Wartenburg.

Persons shot by sentence of a court-martial on July 20: Infantry General Olbricht, Colonel (G.S.) Graf von Stauffenberg, Colonel (G.S.) Quirnheim, First Lieutenant (Res) von Haefen.

2. The traitors who acknowledged their guilt by committing suicide: Colonel General (retired) Beck, Artillery General Wagner, Colonel (G.S.) Freytag-Loringhoven, Lieutenant Colonel Schrader.

3. The deserters: Artillery General Lindemann,²⁶⁰ Major (G.S.) Kuhn (defected to the Bolsheviks).

A recommendation for the expulsion of the former Colonel General Hoeppner is unnecessary since Hoeppner—already expelled from the Wehrmacht in the year 1942—no longer belongs to the army. The Führer has approved of these petitions. Those expelled will be surrendered to the Volksgerichtshof for

August 4, 1944

sentencing. The trial of the guilty parties will shortly be held before the Volksgerichtshof.

On this day of “triumph,” on which the army court of honor fulfilled all his requests, Hitler gathered his Reichsleiters and Gauleiters around him at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. The Reichsleiters General von Epp and Major General Hierl paid homage to him on behalf of those assembled. He shook hands with everyone, using his left hand, since he still wanted to spare his right hand.²⁶¹

The following communiqué was published on Hitler’s speech before the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters:²⁶²

The Führer spoke to his top political leaders. He illuminated the background and context of July 20. In assessing this crime, it should not be forgotten that these traitors have in fact not only since 1941 but ever since the National Socialist seizure of power, continuously sabotaged the efforts and struggles of the nation.

The clique, the Führer declared, had been limited in numbers but had had significant influence. The Führer described in detail how permanent resistance by these circles was directed against all measures by the leadership. It culminated in open betrayal of the fighting troops and direct sabotage of supplies for the front. The overwhelming majority, hundreds of thousands of brave German officers, had nothing in common with this clique of criminals and turned away from it with outrage and disgust. The Führer himself felt that it was an act of Providence and a relief for him personally that this previously intangible internal resistance had finally been uncovered and the clique of criminals eliminated. Now it was a question of drawing one’s conclusions from these events. In the end, it would one day be realized that this presently very painful act may perhaps have been beneficial for the entire future of Germany.

“I do not shy away from the battle against these enemies,” the Führer declared, “we will in the end deal with them in spite of everything. I just need to know that absolute security, faithful confidence, and loyal assistance back me up. This is the prerequisite. We could not have undertaken the mobilization of all forces of our Volk, as is presently taking place, if the criminal activities of the now eliminated saboteurs had continued. By deploying the complete military and inner strength of the nation, we will overcome all difficulties.

I am grateful to Providence for sparing my life, only because I can now continue this battle. I believe that the nation needs me, that it needs a man who will under no circumstances capitulate, and who instead holds high the banner of faith and confidence, and because I believe that no other could do this better than I am doing it. Whatever blows of fortune may come, I will always stand straight as the bearer of this banner! Through the events of July 20 in particular, I have received a new confidence, the likes of which I have never before experienced in my life. We will, therefore, victoriously survive this war in the end!”

August 8, 1944

At Nuremberg, Speer expanded on this official excerpt from Hitler's speech.²⁶³ By calling on Schirach as another witness, he recalled the following passage:

Should the German Volk be overpowered in this struggle, then it will have been too weak, it will not have passed its test before history, and it will therefore be doomed.

On August 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Norwegian poet Knut Hamsun on his eighty-fifth birthday.²⁶⁴

On August 5, Hitler received Antonescu for the last time at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. No communiqué was published on this visit, a sure sign that things had not gone well. In addition to Antonescu, the Romanian deputy prime minister Mikhai Antonescu, von Ribbentrop, Keitel, Guderian, the German envoy von Killinger, and the interpreter, Envoy Schmidt, attended the talks.²⁶⁵

Hitler told Antonescu that he should not count on German help for the time being, since Army Group Center needed to be restored first. Antonescu pretended to be understanding and replied that he would therefore have to evacuate the Moldavia region and concentrate on the defense of the Carpathian range. This announcement angered Hitler, who felt this was a sign that Romania intended to withdraw from the war. He smelled treason in the air. However, had he not himself declared that the loss of the Crimea would lead to the fall of Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania?²⁶⁶ The Crimea had been lost in May. Why should a crisis in Romania come as a surprise to him in August?

Captain Baur brought Antonescu back to Bucharest. He saw how disappointed and discontented the Romanian generals looked who had come to the airport to welcome Antonescu back and heard his report on the talks at the Führer headquarters.

There was another crisis, in Finland, as well. State President Ryti had stepped down on August 2 in order to "make possible the concentration of the highest military and civilian powers in one hand in this fateful period." On August 4, the Finnish parliament elected Marshal Mannerheim as head of state. All Finns rallied to him, because they knew that he was ready to conclude peace, even though he would do so with a heavy heart. Hitler sent him a congratulatory telegram on his election,²⁶⁷ acting as though he did not realize what this meant.

On August 7 and 8, the Volksgerichtshof in Berlin put Field Marshal von Witzleben and other arrested generals on trial. Of course, they were

August 13, 1944

without exception sentenced to be hanged. Freisler presided over this “trial.” Since he knew that the trial would be recorded on film and radio, he acted like a madman, shouted the accused down, and put on a hysterical show of sympathy for Hitler.²⁶⁸

On August 10, Hitler presented Sepp Dietrich with the Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁶⁹

On August 12, Hitler founded the Oak Leaf in Gold for Loyal Service Badge, which would be awarded for fifty or forty years of public service, or service with the police or fire department, respectively.²⁷⁰

On August 13, Hitler received von Papen, who had returned from Ankara after relations had been broken off.²⁷¹ Von Papen had declined various offers to remain in Turkey as a private person, and had the courage to return to the Reich even after the events of July 20. On the other hand, he had a clean conscience with regard to Hitler. Even though some of his actions in Ankara had not been entirely in Hitler’s spirit, he had never left any doubt about his complete loyalty to the German head of state.

Hitler was well aware of this. In his eyes, von Papen was a representative of the senile German nationalist class of gentlemen who might resent National Socialism but would immediately subordinate themselves to him, if he appealed to their nationalist and anti-Bolshevik sentiments. Moreover, von Papen had been the only one to welcome his plans for war against Russia. As long as he had von Papen on his side, Hitler did not give up his hopes that the senile English, whom he considered to be cast in the same mold as von Papen and the German nationalists, would one day submit to him.

Hitler was exquisitely polite when von Papen came in. He calmly listened to his report on Ankara. He did not scold him. To von Papen’s great surprise, Hitler told him that he had counted on “Turkey’s desertion, ever since the loss of the Crimea.” He went to get a box, handed von Papen the Knight’s Cross of the War Service Cross, and said:

You have rendered many good services to your country, and it is certainly not your fault that your mission in Turkey has now ended. You also stood at the front there; the Russian attempt on your life proves this.²⁷²

However, when von Papen, who was pleasantly surprised, offered his good service to “put out feelers to the western Allies” by way of Spain, Hitler emphatically rejected this. He had always wanted to

August 17, 1944

compel his enemies into submission by means of force and terror, but not by making any concessions whatsoever. He declared the following:

This war must be fought to the end without compromise. When the new weapons are ready, we will show the Americans what they are in Europe for. There's no compromise possible with these people.

In reality, Hitler would have liked to make a compromise in order to save his life and parts of his power, but who on earth was still be willing to negotiate with him? Ever since 11:00 a.m. on September 3, 1939, the English were only prepared to accept his surrender. In the meantime, nearly all other nations in the world had realized that there was only one way of dealing with Hitler.

On August 15, the Allied troops under the command of General Jacob Devers landed on the southern coast of France, near St. Tropez. Following the earlier heavy naval-artillery and air bombardments, they did not encounter much German resistance. On the same day, Hitler received the chief of the Romanian general staff, Ilia Steflea, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters.²⁷³

Afterwards, he received Field Marshal Model. Following the great Russian offensive in the central sector, Model commanded Army Group Center, or what remained of it. Hitler awarded him the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds and ordered him to take over Army Group West immediately; it had previously been under Kluge's command. Hitler felt that it was better not to inform Kluge of this change in command. He feared that Kluge might seek a separate peace with the Allies.²⁷⁴ So he handed Model a handwritten letter addressed to Kluge, which contained his removal from command along with the explanation that, "following the strains of the preceding weeks," he was "healthwise no longer up to the demands of leadership."

On August 17, Kluge handed over the Army Group to Model at La Roche-Guyon. He wrote a letter to the Führer the next day.²⁷⁵ On August 18, Kluge took poison on his return drive between Metz and Verdun. That was the end of the marshal whom Hitler had once called the "*kluge Hans*."²⁷⁶

Hitler had again seen through a change in command along an agitated sector of the front and, thereby, made himself and others believe that things would go better now. However, the situation did not change. From the west and the south, Allied troops poured into France. Even though a few ports along the coast were still being held by

August 20, 1944

encircled German troops, this was hardly an obstacle to the Allies. In several radio messages, Hitler tried to rouse his commanders to further resistance.

On August 17, he wired this message to the commander of St. Malo, Colonel von Aulock:²⁷⁷

You and your occupation troops are fighting a heroic battle in St. Malo, a battle which inspires great admiration even in your enemies. I express my great appreciation to you and your brave soldiers. Every day that you manage to hold out longer is beneficial to the waging of the war.

Adolf Hitler

However, such appeals could no longer work wonders. At noon on August 18, von Aulock replied as follows:²⁷⁸

Mein Führer!

The battle for St. Malo will end today or tomorrow. Under heavy fire, one work after another collapses in ruins. If we lose, we will fight to the bitter end. May the Lord protect you! Long live the Führer!

Colonel von Aulock

Hitler sent this wire in response:

To the Commander of the St. Malo Fortress, Colonel von Aulock

I thank you and your heroic men in my own and the German Volk's name. Your name will be recorded in history for all time.

Adolf Hitler

On August 20, Hitler ordered the consolidation of the German positions in the west.²⁷⁹ Recently, he had issued a number of such orders for the construction of field fortifications. He had started with this in northern Italy,²⁸⁰ continued in East Prussia, and now it was the turn of the German territories in the west. Hitler's order began like this:

I order the development of the German west position by means of a *Volksaufgebot* (general enlistment) in the following sectors. . . .

Hitler listed the areas controlled by Gauleiters Grohé, Simon, Bürckel, and Robert Wagner, a total area reaching from the Albert-Canal via Aachen-Trier-Metz to Belfort.

The enlistment of civilian laborers and their deployment shall be the task of the Gauleiters.

On the same day, Hitler sent Horthy a congratulatory telegram on the Hungarian national holiday.²⁸¹

August 23, 1944

In addition, he tried one last time to keep Mannerheim in line. He sent Keitel to Helsinki by plane and had him present Mannerheim with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross. The communiqué read as follows:²⁸²

The Führer has awarded the commander in chief of the Finnish armed forces and marshal of Finland, Carl Gustav Baron von Mannerheim, the Oak Leaf to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. In the same manner, the Führer has awarded the chief of the general staff of the Finnish armed forces, Infantry General Acel Erich Heinrichs, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

These high distinctions were personally presented to the marshal of Finland and his chief of the general staff by the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, Field Marshal Keitel, on his visit to the Finnish headquarters and on behalf of the Führer. The award of these medals also means a great honor for the Finnish armed forces which, under the command of their marshal, have recently parried a seven-week-long attack by the Soviets and victoriously held their own in difficult defensive combat.

Mannerheim was not impressed by Hitler's gesture. Two weeks later, he ordered the cessation of hostilities.

Recently, Hitler had had bad luck with marshals from the satellite states. On August 24, Antonescu was summoned by King Michael. Their talk was not very pleasant.²⁸³ The King demanded that Antonescu end the war by sending a telegram to the United Nations [League of Nations] and driving the Germans out of Romania. When Antonescu refused, the king had him arrested. Within a few hours, things changed completely to Hitler's disadvantage. Even though the Germans attempted to exert pressure on the Romanian troops by attacking the Bucharest airport and other undertakings, they did not succeed anywhere. The Romanian and advancing Russian troops soon took control of the situation. The German units had to surrender; sixteen German divisions no longer existed.

The battle was nearing its conclusion in France, too. It mattered little that, on August 23, Hitler had ordered the following:²⁸⁴

The defense of the Paris bridgehead is of decisive military and political significance. Its loss will tear open the entire coastal front north of the Seine and will rob us of a basis for the long-distance fight against England. In history up to now, the loss of Paris has always meant the fall of all of France.

The Führer therefore repeats his order that Paris must be defended in fortified lines in front of the city and refers in this context to the reinforcements promised to the commander in chief, west. Within the city, at the first signs of unrest, an intervention by the most extreme means must follow, for example, dynamiting blocks of houses, public execution of

August 28, 1944

ringleaders, evacuation of the involved quarter, since this is the best way of preventing its further spread.

The bridges across the Seine are to be prepared for dynamiting. Paris must not, or only as a field of ruins, fall into the hands of the enemy.

But Hitler's orders could not work wonders. On August 24, troops of the Second French Tank Division under General Leclerc entered Paris. The German military governor of Paris, General von Choltitz, surrendered and was taken prisoner on August 25.

In contrast to Rome and Florence,²⁸⁵ Hitler had not cared to declare Paris an open city and thus secure a type of honorary title for himself to go down into history. On the other hand, Hitler refrained from tormenting Paris with continued rocket fire.²⁸⁶ As usual, he preferred to harass smaller nations and fire missiles on Antwerp and all of Belgium.

On August 24, Hitler signed a decree on the "deployment of the building administration," which conferred the relevant powers on Speer.²⁸⁷

On August 25, Hitler named his personal physician, Professor Brandt, "Reichskommissar for the medical and public-health services."²⁸⁸ It was the third time that Hitler apparently felt that a special decree was necessary in order to underline the position of this man in the German public-health services.²⁸⁹ However, he decided to do without the services of this man himself and turned instead to Dr. Morell.

On August 27, Hitler received fourteen soldiers of the army and Waffen SS at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. He personally handed each the Close Combat Bar in Gold.²⁹⁰ He spoke a long time about "this unique war medal, whose true significance will be appreciated only after the war."

On August 28, it was announced that Florence had been declared an open city by virtue of a Führer order and that even after the Allied occupation the German troops would continue to regard it as such.²⁹¹

On the same day, Hitler also ordered the construction of field fortifications for the north of Germany. His order for development of the Bay of Heligoland began with these words:²⁹²

1. I order for the reinforcement of the defense of the *Deutsche Bucht* (Bay of Heligoland) the following:

a) the development of the entire coast from the Danish to the Dutch border, as well as the previously undeveloped north and east Frisian islands (Program A); those islands presently under constant development will be brought up to full defense capability;

August 31, 1944

b) the exploration and preparation of measures for the short-term development of a second position, which will run from the Danish border at a distance of about ten kilometers from the coast.

A list of several “switch-line positions” which Hitler wanted to set up in Schleswig-Holstein followed. Gauleiter Kaufmann of Hamburg was supposed to be “responsible for their development.” The only problem that remained was where the necessary concrete, steel, guns, and laborers would come from.

On August 30, Hitler issued another order on the construction of fortified positions at the West Wall.²⁹³ It began with these words:

1. To bring about the preparation for defense at the West Wall, I order the following:

a) the reinforcement of the position (including the incorporated parts of the Maginot Line) through field development;

b) the field and perhaps constant development of the already explored prolongation of the West Wall to Lake IJssel.

2. The entire development is to be undertaken by means of a Volk force, and the responsibility is to be conferred upon: [a listing followed of the involved Gauleiters, including Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart, who would be responsible insofar as the Netherlands was involved in this].

While Hitler was busy attending to defensive measures in the west, a new crisis began to emerge in Hungary. On August 30, Prime Minister Sztojaj stepped down, and Colonel General Geisa Lakatos formed a new government.

On August 31, Hitler vented his anger on Marshals Kluge and Rommel and on the English at a discussion with three generals at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. Among other things, he said the following:²⁹⁴

You know that Field Marshal Kluge committed suicide. There is reason for serious suspicion that, had he not committed suicide, he would have been arrested right away in any event.

Hitler then claimed that Kluge had attempted to begin negotiations with the English for surrender on August 15 and had tried

. . . to bring about a fateful turn of events by perhaps first surrendering to the English and then joining the English against Russia—a completely idiotic idea.²⁹⁵ Above all, this would have led to an almost criminal sacrifice of the German lands in the east. They assumed that you would have (to sacrifice) . . . up to the (Vistula) anyway, perhaps up to the Oder . . . up to the Elbe river.

August 31, 1944

August 15 was the worst day in my life. We owe it only to coincidence that this plan was not carried out.

That I am capable of achieving political successes is something which I believe I have sufficiently proved in my life. That I will not let such an opportunity pass me by, I need not tell anybody. But to hope at a moment of grave military defeats for a favorable political moment in order to do something is of course childish and naive.²⁹⁶ There will be such moments, if you are successful. That I (have done) everything in order to come to terms with the English, (I) have proved. Still in the year 1940, after the campaign in France, I offered my hand to the English and renounced everything.

I did not want anything from them. On September 1, 1939, (I) still made a proposal to the English, that is, I repeated a proposal that [von] Ribbentrop had already conveyed (to them in 1936): the proposal of (an) alliance by which Germany would (have been willing to recognize the British) Empire.²⁹⁷

However, there will be moments when the tensions between the Allies [the western and the eastern allies] are become so great that there will be a rupture in spite of everything. Now, you just have to wait for this moment, even if this is very difficult. It has been my task (especially since the year 1941) not to lose nerve under any circumstances.

Hitler continued in this manner for a while. That Hitler staked his hopes on the disunity of the Allies was understandable, but it could not and did not come true. Of course, the alliance between them was not the product of their love for each other, but a question of common interest. It was clearly in the common interest of west and east to destroy Hitler—and Germany.

After Hitler had stopped speaking about England for the time being, he again began to lament the disloyalty of his generals, especially Kluge:

I personally promoted him twice, I awarded him the highest distinctions, I gave him a big donative to make him settle down,²⁹⁸ I gave him a big bonus in addition to his salary as field marshal.²⁹⁹ For me, it is the most bitter and disappointing thing that ever happened.

Hitler felt exceedingly sorry for himself and was much like Napoleon in this respect, too. It was one of the “coincidental” parallels in the lives of the two conquerors that, at the end of his rule in 1815, Napoleon had borne a grudge of a similar nature against his generals whom he accused of treason.³⁰⁰ Later, reminiscing in exile on Saint Helena, he complained about them in the same way as Hitler would in 1944:

I was betrayed by Marmont whom I could have called my child, my pupil, to whom I had entrusted my destiny. I was betrayed by Murat, out of whom I had made a king when he was a mere soldier. I was betrayed by

September 1, 1944

Berthier, out of whom I had made an eagle when he was a mere goose. Berthier, Marmont—I showered them with my generosity—and what did they do?

At the end of the talk at the Wolfsschanze, Hitler again shouted the following rallying-cry:

We will fight, if necessary even at the Rhine. It makes absolutely no difference. We will wage this struggle under any circumstances until, as Frederick the Great said, one of our damned enemies gets tired of continuing to fight,³⁰¹ and until we get a peace that will secure the life of the German nation for the next fifty or (100) years.³⁰² Above all, this peace will not violate our honor a second time, as in the year 1918, because this time we could not remain (silent. At the time,) they remained silent. Fate could have followed a different course. Had (my life) been ended, then this would have meant—that (I may say)—a relief of all the worries, sleepless (nights, and a terrible) nervous disorder. It takes only (a fraction) of a second, and you are relieved of all that and you can have some quiet and eternal piece. I am grateful to Providence that I (stayed alive).

On September 1, the Customs Frontier Guard, an armed unit which had previously been subordinate to the Reich finance minister, was incorporated into Himmler's Reich central security office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA).³⁰³

The discussion of the situation on September 1,³⁰⁴ reflected the catastrophic situation everywhere: in Romania, the Balkans, France, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, at sea, and in the air, German troops were being defeated everywhere. Either they were in dire straits or in a flight-like retreat. Nevertheless, Hitler tried to convince his audience that all this actually meant that troops and artillery were being freed up. He even spoke about a new German offensive, a *Grossangriff* (large-scale attack).

The situation in Bulgaria had become untenable following the occupation of Bucharest by the Russians. The Bulgarians wanted to withdraw from the war as quickly as possible. Konstantin Muravyev formed a new government on September 2. The Bulgarians now believed that they would soon conclude peace with the western powers and be recognized as a neutral state. However, considering their earlier involvement, this was rather naive. On September 5, Russia put an end to these pipe dreams and declared war. Two days later, Bulgaria was forced to capitulate. On September 8, it declared war on Germany.

On September 2, Finland decided to accept the Russo-English terms of peace. It broke off its relations with Germany and demanded that the

September 4, 1944

German troops leave the country by September 15. Of course, Hitler refused to comply with this request. On September 15, Finland declared war on Germany. The Führer's opportunistic policy toward Finland had collapsed in spite of all his "friendliness" toward Mannerheim.

Hitler was angry and declared in a comment by the OKW on September 16 the following:³⁰⁵

When, during the night of September 2 to 3, Finland suddenly requested Germany to withdraw its troops from Finland by September 15, German divisions which had previously defended central Finland were at a distance of nearly four hundred kilometers from the ports of the Gulf of Bothnia and over six hundred kilometers from the northern Finnish-Norwegian border. The duration of the march alone, without enemy interference, would have taken twenty days to the Gulf of Bothnia and at least thirty to thirty-five days to the Norwegian border. The enemy who made this demand and the Finnish high command which accepted it knew that it could not be fulfilled. The fulfillment of this demand was further complicated by the enemy's constant attacks, which prevented the withdrawal of our units. The German army in Finland will therefore be guided in its movements and measures only by consideration for its own security against every attacker, also after September 15.

On September 2, Hitler was forced to issue a new directive for the "continuation of the war in the west." It read as follows:³⁰⁶

1. Severe exhaustion of our own forces and our inability to provide timely reinforcement in sufficient amounts make it impossible for us to define the line that must be maintained and can be maintained with certainty. We must therefore play for time as much as possible, in order to distribute and put into field new units and to build western positions and exterminate hostile forces by partial strikes.

2. I herewith order the following for conducting the struggle: [Technical details follow.]

At the same time, Hitler appointed von Rundstedt as commander in chief, west, and empowered him to "take every measure necessary" on September 7.³⁰⁷ He conferred on him "as of September 11, command over the German positions in the west, including the West Wall, with all armed forces therein."³⁰⁸

On September 4, Hitler received Oshima at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. This communiqué was published on the meeting:³⁰⁹

On Monday [September 4], the Führer received the Japanese ambassador, Oshima, for an extensive exchange of views on current questions of the two nations' common waging of the war. The discussions at the Führer's were

September 12, 1944

attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, who had already engaged in a long, warm exchange of views with the ambassador.

According to Speer's testimony after the war in Nuremberg,³¹⁰ Hitler alluded in a mysterious manner to this meeting when speaking with his entourage and acted as though important questions "that would decide the war" had been discussed there. Apparently, he wanted to improve the mood of his coworkers, who at the time indulged in the hope that the Japanese would mediate a German-Russian separate peace.

In the meantime, the population of East and West Prussia had been called up to dig tank ditches and, under the command of party leaders, had to dig entrenchments with pickax and spade.

On September 5, Colonel General Guderian sent a telegram to the Gauleiters in these areas. He informed them that the "Führer has noted with particular satisfaction the outstanding achievements of our Volksgenossen in the construction of fortified positions in the east."³¹¹

On September 9 and 10, wounded soldiers who had been exchanged with [those of] the western powers through Sweden landed at Sassnitz. The soldiers were read the following telegram, a word of greeting from Hitler:³¹²

My Comrades!

In the name of the German Volk, I warmly welcome you to the homeland. Our joy mingles with yours that you, as seriously injured German soldiers, have finally come home out of captivity. As your supreme commander, I thank you on this day for your brave deployment in the freedom fight of our Volk and for all the sacrifice which you brave men had to make.

The homeland is worthy of you. It also had to undergo terrible suffering in the fateful fight of life and death of our Volk. The attitude with which it bears this is worthy of that of the frontline soldier. It will do everything in order to alleviate your physical suffering, now that you are being uplifted emotionally. I likewise greet the returning members of the medical service and express to them my appreciation of their dutiful deployment in the care of our injured comrades.

Adolf Hitler

On September 12, Hitler ordered the construction of fortified positions for the southeast. He decreed the following:³¹³

1. I order the development of a border position in the Gaus Carinthia and Styria on German Reich territory along the following line: Tolmin (here connection with the blue line)—north of Lyublyana—along the course of the Sava to northwest of Gurkfeld—from there to the northeast until west of Varazdin.

September 12, 1944

2. The development will be carried out by a Volk force, and responsibility shall be conferred on: [a listing of the titles of Gauleiters Dr. Rainer (Graz) and Uiberreither (Klagenfurt) followed].

4

On September 16, the Allies took the harbor of Brest. The German occupying forces, under Lieutenant General of Paratroops Bernhard Ramcke, surrendered. Shortly before, Hitler had awarded the “heroic defender of Brest” the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds,³¹⁴ but such a medal was of no use against Allied bombs and shells.

On September 17, Bologne fell into the hands of the Allies. Other German “hedgehog positions,” like Lorient, St. Nazaire, La Rochelle, south Gironde, north Gironde, managed to hold out until the war was over, because the Allies felt that these towns were unimportant.

On September 17, the English carried through a large airborne operation at Arnhem in order to establish a bridgehead on the right bank of the Rhine. However, they did not manage to establish a connection quickly enough with the landing area from the south. The British operation failed at great cost of life.³¹⁵

Hitler was preoccupied with the unexpected British airborne operation during the discussion of the situation on September 17. He was so worried about it because he feared that the enemy would attempt something of the sort in East Prussia and crack down on him and his staff. He said the following:³¹⁶

We must absolutely face the possibility—we should not be careless anymore—that they will try a similar dirty trick (*Schweinerei*) here.

The thing is so dangerous that you have to realize: If some dirty trick happens—I sit here, my whole High Command sits here, the Reichsmarschall sits here, the army high command sits here, the Reichsführer SS sits here, the Reich foreign minister sits here! That is a catch that is the most worth trying for, that is clear. I would certainly risk two paratrooper divisions if, at one blow, I could get hold of the entire Russian leadership.³¹⁷

September 24, 1944

On September 18, Hitler received Pavelich at the Wolfsschanze headquarters. This communiqué was published:³¹⁸

On September 18, the Führer received the head of state of the independent state of Croatia, Dr. Ante Pavelich, at his headquarters.

The Führer had a long discussion with the Poglavnik on the common fight against the Bolsheviks and their Anglo-American helpers, and on questions regarding the security of the Croatian space. Loyal to the alliance of the Tripartite Pact, the German Wehrmacht will defend the freedom and independence of Croatia, fighting side by side with the Croatian soldiers and the Ustaša.

The discussion at the Führer's, which was attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Field Marshal Keitel and, on the Croatian side, by Foreign Minister Alaybegovich and General Gruich, was characterized by the spirit of the sincere and loyal friendship between the two nations.

On September 19 and 20, Hitler again concerned himself with the possibility of an "enemy advance into Reich territory" and slightly revised the decrees of July 13,³¹⁹ which dealt with the cooperation of party and Wehrmacht and the command in the theater of operations.³²⁰ It was mostly a question of the competence of the Gauleiter or rather Reich defense commissar in the theater of operations. However, no Reich defense commissar was ever appointed.³²¹

On September 20, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the regent of Thailand, Pridi Phanomyong, on the king's birthday.³²²

On the same day, Hitler extended Göring's powers as plenipotentiary for the four-year plan "until the end of the war."³²³

On September 20 and 24, Hitler signed the last laws of his life. He did not use the title "Reich Chancellor" to which he had once attached such great importance.

The law on the change of the regulations against high treason of September 20, contained this new provision:³²⁴

§ 92 b [Reich Penal Code]

Whoever violates with premeditation or by negligence a law or prohibition decreed by the Reich government will be sentenced to imprisonment or a fine.

This law and others that increased penalties should "also be applied to offenses committed before this can take effect."

On September 24, the "Law on the Modification and Supplementation of the Military Service Act" allowed soldiers the acquisition of membership in the NSDAP. The previous prohibition of political activity had already been largely undermined in 1937. At the

September 25, 1944

time, Hitler had awarded the Golden Party Badge to leading members of the Wehrmacht. This award had entailed automatic membership in the party.³²⁵

Hitler's law of September 24 read as follows:³²⁶

Article I

The Military Service Act of May 21, 1935 (RGBl. I, p. 609), will be modified and supplemented as follows:

Paragraph 26, including its heading will be amended as follows:

The Political Position of Members of the Wehrmacht

§ 26

1. Members of the Wehrmacht have the duty to be active in the spirit of the National Socialist ideology, both on duty and off duty, and support it at all times. It is one of the essential tasks of all officers, noncommissioned officers, and Wehrmacht officials to educate and lead their subordinates in the National Socialist spirit.

2. Membership in the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations will remain in force for the duration of active military service.

3. The assumption and exercise of an office in the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations requires permission by the superior. It must be granted, as long as the exercise of the office does not detrimentally affect the missions of the Wehrmacht.

4. Soldiers need the permission of their superior for the acquisition of membership in associations of all types, as well as for the formation of associations within and outside the Wehrmacht. The acquisition of membership in the NSDAP, its organizations, and connected associations does not require permission.

5. The right of the soldiers to vote and participate in elections will in the individual case be reserved for a separate arrangement by decree of the Führer.

Article II

1. This law will go into force as of October 1, 1944.

2. The implementing regulations will be issued by the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht in concurrence with the head of the party chancellery.

On September 25, Hitler called for the "total deployment of all German human beings." He signed the decree on the formation of the German Volkssturm. Many years before, he had declared that he did not think much of a so-called "levée en masse," a general mobilization of the public.³²⁷ Apparently, now that it was a question of prolonging his rule for a few months, it was good enough for him.

In his decree, he maintained that the disastrous military situation had come about "as a result of the failure of all our European allies."

September 25, 1944

This was not a very nice thing to say about the Slovaks, for instance, who had been loyal to him ever since 1939, and Pavelich, who had only recently visited him. Up to this time, Hitler had spoken about the “failure” of only the Italians, Romanians, Finns, and Bulgarians. At this point, the Hungarians had not even withdrawn from the war.

However, if all of them had indeed failed, who had chosen them as his allies in the first place? Had he not been prepared for everything from the start?³²⁸ Moreover, according to his own words, a statesman could not simply declare in retrospect that he had not noticed something.³²⁹

There is no excuse in the eyes of history for an error; no excuse, for instance, for explaining afterwards: I didn’t notice that or I didn’t take it seriously.

Hitler’s decree of September 25, read as follows:³³⁰

Führer Headquarters, September 25, 1944

After a five-year-long and most difficult struggle, as a result of the failure of all our European allies, the enemy stands at a few fronts close to or at the German borders. He is exerting himself in order to smash our Reich to pieces and destroy the German Volk and its social order. His final goal is the extermination of the Germans.

As in the autumn of 1939, we alone face the front of our enemies. At the time, we succeeded within a few years in solving the major military problems by the first large-scale deployment of our German Volkskraft and in securing the existence of the Reich and Europe throughout several years. Whereas the adversary now believes he can get ready for the finishing blow, we are determined to execute the second large-scale deployment of our Volk. We must and will succeed, as in the years from 1939 to 1941, by relying solely on our own powers, not only in breaking the destructive will of our enemy, but also in forcing him back and keeping him from the Reich, until a peace is guaranteed that will secure the future of Germany, its allies, and Europe.

We oppose the total destructive will of our Jewish-international enemies with the total deployment of all German human beings (*totaler Einsatz aller deutschen Menschen*).

For the reinforcement of the active forces of our Wehrmacht and, in particular, for the waging of a merciless fight wherever the enemy seeks to step on German soil, I call for the deployment of all German men capable of bearing arms.

I order the following:

1. The German Volkssturm will be formed in the Gaus of the Greater German Reich from among all men capable of bearing arms between the ages of sixteen and sixty years. The German Volkssturm will defend the soil of the homeland with all weapons and means suitable.

September 27, 1944

2. The activation and leadership of the German Volkssturm shall be taken over by the Gauleiters in their Gaus. By so doing, they shall make use of the most capable organizers and leaders of the time-proven institutions of the party, SA, SS, NSKK, and Hitler Youth.

3. I appoint the SA Chief of Staff Schepmann as inspector for rifle training and the corps leader of the NSKK as inspector for motorized training of the Volkssturm.

4. Members of the German Volkssturm will be regarded as soldiers according to the Military Service Act for the duration of their deployment.

5. Membership in extraprofessional organizations will not be affected hereby. Service with the German Volkssturm shall have priority over service with any other organization.

6. The Reichsführer SS, as the commander of the replacement army, will be responsible for the military organization, training, armament, and equipment of the German Volkssturm.

7. The deployment in battle of the German Volkssturm will be ordered, in accordance with my directives, by the Reichsführer SS as commander of the replacement army.

8. The military regulations will be issued by the commander of the replacement army, Reichsführer SS Himmler, the political and organizational regulations by Reichsleiter Bormann, who acts on my behalf.

9. The National Socialist Party will, before the German Volk, fulfill its greatest duty of honor by deploying its organizations in the front lines, as the bearers of the major burden in this battle.

Adolf Hitler

On September 27, a last exchange of telegrams took place on the anniversary of the Tripartite Pact. Hitler's telegrams read as follows:³³¹

To Mussolini:

Duce!

On the fourth anniversary of the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, I send you my heartfelt greetings. This historic day gives me a new occasion to reaffirm my unshakable confidence in the final victory over our enemies. Only our victory can and will stand at the end of this fateful struggle. It will give our nations a happy and free future.

Adolf Hitler

To the Japanese Emperor:

On the fourth anniversary of the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, I ask Your Majesty to accept my own and the German Volk's heartfelt greetings and best wishes. In these fateful days, I know that Your Majesty will agree with me in the calm and unerring confidence that our nations, in spite of temporary setbacks, will in the end emerge honorable and victorious from this struggle against our enemies.

Adolf Hitler

September 29, 1944

To the Japanese prime minister Koiso:³³²

The fourth anniversary of the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact sees our nations engaged in difficult defensive battle against the common enemies. In the firm conviction that the German and Japanese nations will continue this heroic struggle in indissoluble brotherhood in arms until its victorious end, I send Your Excellency my sincere greetings.

Adolf Hitler

On September 29, the public was informed that Gauleiter Josef Bürckel had died allegedly “from complications of pneumonia” in Neustadt (Weinstrasse). Therefore, the Führer had appointed the former departmental head of the party chancellery, Willi Stöhr, as deputy Gauleiter and placed him in charge of the conduct of affairs of the Gau Westmark.³³³

In the meantime, the Allies had occupied Belgium, reached the German border in the Eifel Mountains north of Trier, and shortly afterwards entered the old German imperial city of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). In the east, the Russians had forced their way up close to the East Prussian border and entered the Praga suburb of Warsaw on the eastern bank of the Vistula. The Poles in Warsaw had rebelled under the leadership of General Bor-Komorowski. The Polish guerillas tried to join up with the Russians. After weeks of fighting, they were forced to surrender to the German SS and police troops on October 2. The Russians carried out their campaign plans, unaffected by the events in Warsaw.

From October on, a lull in the fighting set in both in the east and the west. The Allies stopped short at the eastern and western borders of the Reich. In the eyes of the German generals, this was a terrible mistake.³³⁴ According to the opinions expressed in their memoirs, the Allies should have pushed through to Berlin before the winter and ended the war. However, the Allies were apparently not as taken with the idea of advances ad infinitum, which the German Wehrmacht had practiced in the years 1941 and 1942. For the time being, they were content to stop, bring up supplies, and reorganize their units.

For the rest, it was their prerogative to wage this war as they saw fit. In any event, Churchill felt that it was better to let the Germans “stew in their own juice for a bit,” as he had proposed in 1943 with regard to the Italians.³³⁵ By the spring of 1945, the Germans would be all the more weary and inflict less terrible losses on the Allies. Success proved him right!

October 8, 1944

On October 5, the English landed in Greece. They entered Athens on October 12.

On October 6, a state ceremony took place at the Reich Tannenberg Monument in honor of Hitler's chief adjutant Schmundt, who had died of the injuries sustained on July 20. Hitler promoted him to infantry general and had Field Marshal Busch lay a wreath on his coffin.³³⁶

On October 8, a so-called "day of premilitary training" for the Hitler Youth took place throughout the Reich. Axmann, the leader of the Reich Youth, reported in a telegram to Hitler that, supposedly, seventy percent of those born in 1928 had signed up as "war volunteers." Hitler expressed his thanks in the following telegram:³³⁷

My Hitler Youth!

With pride and joy I have noted your enlistment as war volunteers of the 1928 age-group. In this hour in which the Reich is threatened by our enemies who are filled with hatred, you set a shining example of fighting spirit and fanatical readiness for action and sacrifice.

The youth of our National Socialist movement fulfilled at the front and in the homeland what the nation expected of it. In an exemplary fashion, your war volunteers in the divisions named Hitler Youth and Grossdeutschland, in the Volk grenadier divisions, and as individual fighters in all branches of the Wehrmacht have by action demonstrated their loyalty, hardness, and unshakable will to win. Today, the realization of the necessity of our fight fills the entire German Volk, above all its youth. We know our enemies' merciless plans of annihilation. For this reason, we will all the more fanatically wage this war for a Reich in which you will one day be able to work and live in self-respect. However, as young National Socialist fighters, you have to outdo our entire Volk in steadfastness, dogged perseverance, and unbending hardness.

Through the victory, the reward for the sacrifice of our heroic young generation will be the proud and free future of our Volk and the National Socialist Reich.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, the new "West Wall operation" had got underway in the west.³³⁸ While in 1938 and 1939, regular construction workers had been deployed there as conscript laborers within the framework of the Todt organization, now the civilian population in this area was called on to dig the antitank ditches. Not only the inhabitants of the border areas were recruited for this purpose, but also citizens of the neighboring Gaus in Hesse, Rhineland, Baden-Württemberg, and Bavaria. From a military point of view, this operation—for which men and boys from fourteen to sixty years of age were conscripted—was completely

October 10, 1944

useless.³³⁹ It served primarily propaganda purposes and was supposed to demonstrate to the enemy the “determined will to resist” of the German people.

In order to make some type of contribution to the work on the West Wall himself, Hitler ordered the awarding of the German Bulwark Badge of Honor to be resumed.³⁴⁰ His decree read as follows:³⁴¹

Führer Headquarters, October 10, 1944

1. In recognition of the services in the construction of the frontier fortifications at the climax of the struggle for existence of the German Volk, I order the resumption of the award of the German Bulwark Badge of Honor.

2. The statutes of the German Bulwark Badge of Honor of August 2, 1939 (RGBl. I, p. 1366) Articles I, II, and V will be applied. Furthermore, the necessary regulations for the conferral of the award and rules of procedure will be issued by the state minister and chief of the presidential chancellery in agreement with the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht.

Adolf Hitler

On October 10, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Wang Ching-wei on the Chinese national holiday. On October 13, Tiso likewise received a congratulatory telegram on his birthday.³⁴²

In the meantime, Hitler had arrived at the conclusion that it was finally high time to get rid of Rommel. For years, he had restrained himself and put up with this man whom he disliked because of his popularity. At El Alamein in November 1942, Rommel had disregarded his order to win or die.³⁴³

In justifying his behavior, Rommel had dared to refer to the English superiority.³⁴⁴ He had been in favor of giving up Tunis in 1943. At Margival on June 17, 1944, he had again spoken about the superiority of the Allies and had dared to put his views in writing on July 15.³⁴⁵ And, to top it all off, it had become obvious that the resistance movement had planned to appoint Rommel, following Hitler's death, as commander in chief of the armed forces.

Now it was inevitable that Rommel would have to die. However, it would be preferable if this occurred in an inconspicuous manner so that neither the Wehrmacht nor the German public would think about it too much.

As with Röhm, Rommel would be granted an opportunity to commit suicide. For this purpose, Hitler sent his new chief adjutant General Burgdorf and Lieutenant General Ernst Maisel to Rommel's

October 15, 1944

home in Herrlingen near Ulm.³⁴⁶ As with nearly all his coups, Hitler chose a weekend for his move: Saturday, October 14.

For Burgdorf, who had succeeded Schmudt on October 12, this was the first mission in which he was supposed to win his spurs. Both generals showed up at Rommel's home at noon. Burgdorf informed him that Hitler regarded him as a member of the generals' conspiracy and his life as over. In view of his earlier meritorious services, the Führer offered him the opportunity to kill himself.

It was exactly as with Röhm, when the SS Führers Eicke and Lippert came into his cell and placed a pistol on the table.³⁴⁷ Röhm refused and had to be killed by Hitler's henchmen. However, he did not have a family to take care of. In Rommel's case, there was Hitler's promise of a state funeral and a nice pension for his family, if he behaved and took care of matters himself. Should he refuse, he would be brought before the Volksgerichtshof. Of course, this would entail highly unpleasant consequences for his family.

Rommel hesitated at first and said that he was not yet able to handle a pistol with accuracy, because of his recent accident. But Burgdorf had foreseen this and brought poison along. So Rommel decided to accept the Führer's proposal and not to force the two generals to kill him. After all, this was undoubtedly their mission, as it had been that of the SS men with Röhm. Hitler would never have risked a trial of the popular Desert Fox before the Volksgerichtshof, and Rommel's family would have received a pension in any event. Rommel was apparently incapable of seeing through Hitler's tactics. He said goodbye to his wife and son and drove away with the two generals. A quarter of an hour later, Rommel was pronounced dead on arrival at the Wagner-Schale Hospital in Ulm as the result of a "brain embolism." In reality, he had taken poison.

The public was informed of this as follows:³⁴⁸

Field Marshal Rommel has died as a result of the serious head injuries that he sustained in an automobile accident while in command of an army group in the west. The Führer has ordered a state funeral.

On October 15, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the king of Afghanistan on his birthday.³⁴⁹

On the same day, he committed another act of violence. In Hungary, Horthy was considering putting an end to a hopeless situation, following the example of Romania and Bulgaria, and seeking

October 15, 1944

a truce with the Soviets. Speed was imperative, and so Hitler resorted to gangster methods.³⁵⁰ On Hitler's orders, Skorzeny, who had earlier liberated Mussolini, kidnapped Horthy's son Nikolaus shortly after 10:00 a.m. on October 15. He bundled him off into an airplane, with his hands and feet tied. At 2:00 p.m., Horthy announced on the air in Hungary that relations with Germany had been broken off and that armistice negotiations were beginning.³⁵¹ After the war, Horthy made this statement on the events in his testimony at Nuremberg:³⁵²

After his son had been lured into a trap, arrested, beaten, and brought by plane to Vienna, dripping with blood and with a sack over his head, and from there on to the concentration camp Mauthausen, he, Horthy, had gone to see the German envoy Veessenmeyer. The envoy had explained to him that his son had allegedly sought contact with the Allies and had to bear the consequences of this. Horthy had told Veessenmeyer that he would request an armistice from the Soviet Union. Veessenmeyer had then brought him to his headquarters and informed him that he would from there on be placed under "Hitler's protection." He and his family were brought to Weilheim in Upper Bavaria, where Veessenmeyer forced him to sign a letter of resignation by threatening him with the death of his son.

The following public announcement informed the German people about Hitler's latest coup:³⁵³

On Sunday [October 15], an official statement in the name of Regent von Horthy was disseminated on the air. It contained untruthful claims regarding the German-Hungarian relations and brotherhood in arms, defeatist appeals to the Hungarian army, and ingratiating of Hungary's enemies. The background to this is not entirely clear. Regent von Horthy declared this statement null and void. He further dismissed from office the previous Lakatos government and charged the leader of the *Pfeilkreuzlerbewegung* (Arrow Cross Movement) Szalasi with the formation of a new government.³⁵⁴ He could not help facing the grave fact that this event has revealed a creeping crisis in the previous regime. In the interest of a clarification of the situation and a concentration of all national forces in the total deployment of Hungary in this fateful struggle, Regent von Horthy decided to place the leadership of the state in younger and more determined hands.

Horthy's letter of resignation read as follows:³⁵⁵

To the Presidents of both Houses [of Hungary]!

I herewith declare that, in this critical hour in Hungarian history and in the interest of the preservation of the conditions for a successful conduct of the war, the inner unity, and solidarity of the nation, I have decided to resign from the office of regent and renounce all legal rights connected with it. I have charged Dr. Szalasi with the formation of a new government of national unity.

October 18, 1944

Nikolaus von Horthy

Only two-and-a-half months later, Hitler would have forgotten that these official statements made it appear as though Horthy had nothing to do with this “betrayal.” In his New Year’s proclamation for 1945, he openly spoke about the “disgraceful behavior of the former Hungarian regent.”³⁵⁶

On October 18, the day on which Rommel was buried, Hitler issued this order of the day:³⁵⁷

On October 14, 1944, Field Marshal Rommel died as a result of the serious injuries that he sustained as commander in chief of an army group in the west in an automobile accident during a drive along the front. One of our best army commanders has passed away. In the present fateful struggle of the German Volk, his name has become a synonym for outstanding bravery and fearless daredevilry. The two-year-long heroic fight of the German Africa Corps against a power many times superior, under his nimble-minded and imaginative leadership, received outward recognition in the award of the Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds in addition to the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross, as the first soldier in the army.

As commander of an army group, until his serious injury, he again rendered decisive services to the reinforcement of our defenses in the west. In proud mourning, the army lowers the Reich war flag before this great soldier. His name will go down in the history of the German Volk.

Adolf Hitler

These lies made it once more clear what Hitler’s statements were worth in reality. He had composed many such “inspiring” obituary notes and orations, many of which covered a murder. In Rommel’s case, the true circumstances became known over time, but in many other cases, the truth will probably never be known.

In Hitler’s stead, von Rundstedt attended the state ceremony for Rommel in Ulm.³⁵⁸ In his eulogy, the field marshal said that Rommel’s “heart belonged to the Führer.” Moreover, he declared: “My dear Rommel, our Führer and supreme commander conveys his gratitude and greetings to you through me.” Gratitude—what for? The execution of an ordered suicide?

On the evening of October 18, the anniversary of the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig,³⁵⁹ Hitler had his decree of September 25 on the formation of the German Volkssturm read on the air. Afterwards, Himmler gave a speech in his capacity as commander of the replacement army and the Volkssturm.

October 27, 1944

On October 21, Szalasi sent a telegram of devotion to Hitler, whose reply read as follows:³⁶⁰

I sincerely thank Your Excellency for the telegram of October 21 in which you, as the responsible prime minister, informed me of the takeover of the Hungarian state leadership. At the same time, you expressed [your promise] that, in its unshakable belief in the ideals of a new and just Europe and in consideration of the traditional German-Romanian brotherhood in arms, the Hungarian nation will deploy all its forces on the side of the Greater German Reich against the common enemy.

Please note, Mr. Prime Minister, that the German Reich will also never abandon Hungary. I am convinced that we will in the end emerge victorious from this fateful struggle, despite all temporary setbacks, which are common to all historic struggles on this scale. I convey to you my warmest greetings on the takeover of this office of great responsibility and tie to this my best wishes for you and the Hungarian people.

Adolf Hitler

After Hitler had successfully set up the puppet government under Szalasi, he began to establish a similar one for France. However, it was a government without a country.

Before the Allies conquered the rest of France, Hitler had managed to have Marshal Pétain, Laval, and a number of other collaborators brought to Sigmaringen.³⁶¹ Jacques Doriot, an extreme right-wing politician and former Communist, was slated to become the new “prime minister” of Hitler’s “French government.”³⁶² How to fill the various ministerial posts was the topic of discussion at the Wolfsschanze headquarters for a whole week.

When the Frenchmen had finally reached an agreement among themselves with much effort, Hitler received the new “French government” led by Doriot. The envoy Schmidt recalled that Hitler gave them “his patronizing blessings, after he had completely hoodwinked them on Calais and Dunkirk.”

In the meantime, the Russians under Marshal Malinowski had penetrated eastern Slovakia and established contact with the insurgent Slovaks and Czechs. Four German divisions launched a counterattack. On October 27, they reconquered Banská Bystrica. Hitler and Tiso exchanged telegrams on this occasion. Hitler’s telegram read as follows:³⁶³

I thank Your Excellency for your telegram of October 27, in which you expressed your joy at the successful combat of the German and Slovak troops against the Czech and Bolshevik gangs that have penetrated Slovak state

October 28, 1944

territory. The greater the danger appears to be, the more determined and merciless our resistance against the common enemies will be. Despite the temporary setbacks we have suffered, I do not doubt for one moment that the victory will go to the side of justice and, therefore, to our side.

Adolf Hitler

On October 28, Hitler exchanged telegrams with his friend Mussolini on the twenty-second anniversary of the march on Rome.³⁶⁴ In his telegram, he expressed “the unshakable belief that the National Socialist and the Fascist revolutions will overcome the common enemies in the fight against the plutocratic, Jewish, and Bolshevik systems, and will gain the final victory.”

On the same day, Hitler received Colonel General Blaskowitz, who had led the Nineteenth German Army in southern France and had been forced to retreat to Alsace. Hitler personally presented him with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.³⁶⁵

On November 1, Hitler awarded Reich postal minister Ohnesorge the Knight's Cross of the War Service Cross with Swords, “in recognition of his special services to the conduct of the war.” The president of the Research Institute of the German Reich Postal Service, Heinrich Gerwitz, received the same distinction.³⁶⁶

In the course of the discussion of the situation at the Wolfsschanze headquarters on November 6,³⁶⁷ Hitler also dealt with the situation in Finland. He was worried about the retreat to Norway of the German troops previously stationed there since the Germans were being pursued by the Finns. In this context, Hitler also spoke about the German battleship *Tirpitz*,³⁶⁸ as though help could be expected from it.

On the other hand, Hitler was thinking about whether or not he could win a few Finns over to help with the defense of the Reich. He said:

One would indeed have to assemble a Finnish freedom-fighter corps over here and have it issue an appeal; I am not saying that we do it, but that they do it themselves.

Hitler of all people had to say this. For years, he had used the Finns for his own egotistical ends. Now that he was in dire straits himself, he hoped that at least some of them would help him.

But Hitler had run out of luck with his con games. This bothered him quite a lot. He was most angry about the “impudence of Mr. Franco,”³⁶⁹ who told an agent of the United Press in an interview on

November 4, that Spain had never been allied to the Axis powers in any manner whatsoever.³⁷⁰ However, Hitler did not let this show and kept on wiring Franco diplomatic greetings.³⁷¹

It would soon be November 8, and normally high time for Hitler to prepare for his annual November vacation at the Berghof. As mentioned before, he had always used the commemoration of the Munich Putsch of 1923 as an excuse for taking this vacation. However, since the last anniversary celebration in 1943, the overall situation had deteriorated so rapidly that Hitler no longer dared to speak publicly.

This year, he decided to cancel the event in Munich. In its place, appeals for the Volkssturm were scheduled to take place throughout the Reich on November 15, the following Sunday, and Heinrich Himmler was supposed to read a "public announcement by the Führer" on the air. In order for the German Volk to enjoy the day of commemoration of November 8 and 9 and gather fresh hope, Hitler made public on this day the deployment of the V-2 rockets, which had actually begun in September. The OKW report of November 8, stated the following:

Now that since June 15 the Greater London area has been under fire from the V-1 with only brief interruptions and changing intensity, this bombardment has for a few weeks been reinforced by the deployment of a far more effective explosive device, the V-2.

Hitler did not mention for the time being that this "V-2 explosive device" had also been fired at Antwerp and all [the rest] of Belgium. Furthermore, he had shot his wad with the V-2 rocket. He did not have any other "wonder weapons," even though the German public was supposed to think so until the end.

On November 11, Hitler sent telegrams of condolence on the death of the National Chinese state president Wang Ching-wei to his widow and to Vice President Chen Kiung-po.³⁷²

Hitler's proclamation on November 9, or rather 12, was read by Himmler at a rally at the circus building at the Marsfeld in Munich. It contained little new. In the beginning, Hitler claimed that "work" prevented him from leaving his headquarters "even for a few days." However, had he truly wished to do so, it would have been possible. The military situation in East Prussia even made leaving the Wolfsschanze headquarters seem particularly opportune at this time. In fact, Hitler transferred his headquarters to the Reich Chancellery in Berlin only a few days later.

November 12, 1944

Hitler's proclamation was full of clumsy attempts to justify himself and of accusations of the alleged "traitors" whom he blamed for everything. Since 1942, he had suffered "betrayal after betrayal." Hitler apparently did not realize that he was confessing either faults or incompetence by saying so. He, the omniscient Führer, who "had provided for every eventuality from the start,"³⁷³ was now hiding behind his allies and coworkers, and claimed to have become the victim of "betrayal after betrayal."³⁷⁴ The proclamation read as follows:³⁷⁵

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

The requirements for waging total war have compelled me to postpone the commemoration from November 9 to the next available Sunday. Likewise, work at the headquarters does not allow me to leave it even for a few days at this time. Besides, I regard it less as my task today to give speeches than to prepare and implement those measures that are necessary to force our way through this fight. After all, as in the time of crisis in the year 1923, I am today moved by only one dominating thought: now really to risk everything for the necessary success! And just as the dead comrades were rightly told ten years later that the victory was theirs in the end, so the victory must and will belong in the end to the fighting front and the no less heroically fighting homeland in the great struggle of to be or not to be.

In the past, I repeatedly pointed out that it is necessary for a nation to appreciate and honor its great men. Especially in grave times, a despairing nation can gather courage and strength for the present from its behavior in the past. How much more does this apply to a nation that behaves as boundlessly bravely as the German one! It will be able to learn the only correct lesson for the present from the struggle of its great men, namely, that Providence in the end helps only him who does not despair and takes up the struggle against the adversities of the time and, therefore, in the end decides his own destiny. Insofar as the Almighty opened our eyes in order to grant us insight into the laws of His rule, in accordance with the limited capabilities of us human beings, we recognize the incorruptible justice which gives life as a final reward only to those who are willing and ready to give a life for a life. Whether man agrees to or rejects this harsh law makes absolutely no difference. Man cannot change it; whoever tries to withdraw from this struggle for life does not erase the law but only the basis of his own existence.

As the National Socialist movement began its struggle to win over the German human beings, every insightful person realized the impending internal collapse of the Volk and nation. The inevitable consequence of this was an increasing threat to our national existence, a slow decline in our birthrates, together with a slow national death many times the number of the dead of the World War. After all, this corresponded to the objective of our enemies. By economic strangulation of the Reich, they intended to destroy the basis for the material existence of the German nation. Thereby, they hoped to realize Clemenceau's demand for the reduction of the German Volk by twenty million

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people.³⁷⁶ The struggle of the years 1914 through 1918 cost two million people their lives, but there were twenty million that had to be taken out of our Volk according to the wishes of the democratic benefactors of mankind. Today, this demand has gone up to forty million. However, since it is not up to people themselves to stop backward movements in the life of a nation whenever there is a need for it, nobody could say when this process of shrinking the substance of our Volk would come to an end. In the same matter, another natural realization forces itself on us: the world does not know any empty spaces! Nations which are numerically or biologically too weak and no longer able satisfactorily to fill their Lebensraum will in the most favorable scenario be put on a reservation that corresponds to their value and size. Other life will flow into the now empty spaces. In accordance with Providence's law, other nations—and, regrettably, often primitive races—will then take up the fight for existence in an area that an aging nation has lost due to cowardice and weakness, that is, unfitness for life. So, in the year 1919, we faced the realization that only a reform of our Volk from head to foot would in the long run enable it to resume successfully this struggle for existence. Only a complete turning away from the phraseology of the democratic corruption of nations and the Bolshevik destruction of nations could return to our Volk its natural vitality and thus secure the conditions for a successful defense of life in the future.

According to this realization, the National Socialist movement entered the fight. Confronted with these great objectives, the proletarian as well as the bourgeois state of classes had to pale in insignificance. What still appears as the ideal to the existing classes had, in the eyes of the young movement, already proven to be insanity, a deadly poison for our Volk. The intention to erect, for the first time in our history, a Volksstaat encompassing all Germans could be realized only by the mobilization of the entire strength of the nation. By so doing, the synthesis between nationalist and socialist ideas was best able to produce that strength necessary as a prerequisite for such a fight. The proclamation of the young nationalist and socialist Volksstaat immediately elicited the hatred of all those opponents at home and abroad who had represented the earlier system of Germany's fragmentation and impotence: the parties, small parties, groups, ranks, professions, organizations, classes, and finally creeds as the main beneficiaries of the inner-German divisions, and abroad, the democratic-Marxist world hostile to us as the main party interested in Germany's impotence. The hatred of this conspiracy of our enemies at home and abroad has since then loyally followed the movement throughout the years of fighting, before and after the seizure of power. It has persecuted us with the refinement and brutality of which that system was capable at the time. Since the march on the Feldherrnhalle, thousands of murdered National Socialists³⁷⁷ and tens of thousands of wounded have become the victims of this only true aggression.

Since the day of the seizure of power, the old enemies all the more refused to change. Instead, their hatred increased. At the most, they adapted their methods to the new situation. As the ultimate inspiring and driving force, Jewry has not allowed any opportunity to pass since the year 1933, as at the

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time of the struggle for power, in order to express its satanic will to persecute and destroy this new concept of a state as such and its young state. It regarded them as the first dawn of a general realization of its destructive work against the nations and as an eminent danger. Perhaps times have changed, but the essence of the fight forced on us has remained the same. What has remained is, first, our own objective: the preservation of our Volk and the securing of its future by all means; and, second, the objective of our enemies: the annihilation of our Volk, its extermination, and the ending of its existence.

That this was not nor is it now a slogan of National Socialist propaganda was proved by the fact of Germany's decline at home and, today, is proved by the proclamations of our enemies. No National Socialist propaganda minister could put the objectives of our enemies more plainly than the Jewish press has done for decades and does so in particular today. Beyond this, the enemy statesmen above all do this publicly through their ministers. The objective of our enemies has likewise remained the same. Promoted by the democracies, Bolshevism at one time tried to destroy our movement by terror at home. Supported by the democracies, the Soviet Union strives to destroy the Reich and exterminate our Volk. That the bourgeois world, which at the time consciously or unconsciously acted as the accomplice of Bolshevism at home, was struck with blindness by God and headed for its own downfall does not change its behavior. The fact that today's democracies would be dead with the victory of Bolshevism, which would smash the democratic states with all their ideas against a wall, does not change the reality of their present procedure. You can explain the incomprehensible absurdity of their actions at the moment you realize that the Jew is always behind the stupidity and weakness of man, his lack of character on the one hand, and his deficiencies on the other. The Jew is the wire-puller in the democracies, as well as the creator and driving force of the Bolshevik international beast of the world (*Weltbestie*).

Even before National Socialism, many at home already had an idea of this danger. However, an effective fight against it only began after this anemic insight became a confession of flesh and blood, which found an organization of combat strength in the National Socialist Party. An understanding of the necessity of rescuing Europe from the Bolshevik monster today also exists on the part of numerous foreign statesmen, parliamentarians, party politicians, and economists. This understanding will only lead to a practical result if a strong European power manages [to succeed], beyond these theoretical hopes, in successfully organizing and fighting through this common struggle of life and death of all. Only the National Socialist German Reich can and will do this. Almost always, Europe consisted of a multitude of competing nations and states. In spite of this, Europe most of the time meant just one state or a community of related nations. There was certainly a great advantage in the eternal conflict among the European nations. Like any competition, it challenged the fitness and striking power of the individual nations. However, in times of fateful struggle of life and death for all, there was the great danger of a dissipation of the forces of this continent confronted with the impending attack of the Central Asian east, this eternally latent danger to Europe. In long

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periods of European history, the thesis of the European balance of power was all too often regarded by the obtuse west as a licence for allying itself with the impending danger, contrary to the commandment of European solidarity, in order more easily to strangle one unpleasant competitor or another. For centuries, the old Reich was forced to wage its fight against Mongols and Turks alone, or with a few allies, in order to spare Europe a fate whose consequences would have been as unthinkable as realizing a Bolshevization would be today.

Even though this struggle in the past centuries was accompanied by many setbacks and demanded the greatest sacrifices of our Volk, it led to success in the end. It alone made possible the development and existence, as well as the prosperity, of the European family of nations. Besides, in confrontations of world-historical impact, it is not likely that the outcome of the fight should be decided in months or years, but rather over long periods, with perseverance. In these periods, divine Providence has men line up to try them for what they are worth. It thereby decides whether they deserve life or death. That our National Socialist state will today pass this historic trial is already guaranteed by the stand of our movement up to now. Which bourgeois party would have been able to survive the collapse of November 9, 1923? Which party would have been capable, following such a complete collapse, of reaching a total victory by an unprecedentedly hard fight? Even though this fight may today appear to the superficial observer to have been minimal compared with the present events, this only reveals his failure to understand decisive values. After all, the struggle for the movement at the time was just as much a fight for Germany as the fight of the present Reich is today. It was a fight for our Volk and its future, which had first to be decided at home before it could face our foreign enemies' will to exterminate us. How hopeless the fight of the party appeared to our adversaries was revealed by their statements that, following November 9, 1923, National Socialism could be regarded as dead and, herewith, the danger for the enemies of our Volk as eliminated. In spite of this, only a few years later, this party, which was thought to have been eliminated at the time, stood in the midst of the decisive struggle for power. For nearly a decade, it waged this fight by the reckless deployment of numerous men and women, suffered only passing setbacks, and brought it to a victorious conclusion in the end. During this time, the movement developed its mental attitude. It has proved that it is today capable of leading the nation and having the Reich lead Europe. And just as we witnessed at the time that the whole world of the bourgeois democratic party, corrupted by its compromises and cowardly renunciations, slowly began to fall apart on its own, and then finally to die, we today observe the same drama on a large scale.

Nations and, above all, their statesmen, generals, and soldiers always find it easy to tolerate days of happiness and visible successes. What is remarkable about the great men of world history, as well as nations destined for great things, is their steadfastness in days of trouble, their confidence at times when their situation appears hopeless, their defiance and courage when they suffer setbacks. As National Socialists, we were always happy about the short or long periods of prosecution in our fight, because they rid the party of all that light

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ballast: fellow travelers who surely would have boasted the loudest on the day of victory. Likewise, in this mightiest struggle of nations of all time, we see those elements desert us that are cowardly and unfit for life. That monarchs lose their courage, in complete ignorance of their position, which today can only be regarded as prehistoric, and that they thereby become traitors is the result of their mental and moral incapacity produced by centuries of inbreeding. At such times, nations need leaders different from these dynasties that have become ill and morbid. That even so-called statesmen and generals are deluded by the view that such a confrontation of life and death, and its impact on world history, can be decided in their favor by cowardly capitulation likewise only proves the experience of the ages that not too many great men live at the same time. Wherever such a capitulation took place, or was considered, or may be considered today, the result will not be a cheap slipping away from this crisis with its impact on world history, but the inevitable and certain extermination of the nations in question and the annihilation of its leading men.

After all, a first consequence of this will be Bolshevik chaos and civil war in the interior of these states. Second, there will be an extradition of the so-called war criminals, in other words, first the most valuable men, then endless columns of men who will set out for the Siberian tundra to fade away, all a result of the weakness of the leaders of their states. Even though from the beginning the consequences of these betrayals have, from a military point of view, been very grave for Germany as the bearer of the main burden in this war, they have not succeeded, neither in unbending the structure of the Reich nor in eliminating its spirit of resistance. On the contrary, the nation hardened in its willingness to fight and became all the more fanatical.

We are happy that in a number of the nations which have shown signs of decay a number of elements of resistance could be found: in Italy, they gather around the creator of the new state, the Duce Benito Mussolini; in Hungary, around Szalasi; in Slovakia, around the leadership of state president Tiso; in Croatia, around the Poglavnik Ante Pavelich. All these men are the leaders of young nations.

We know that committees and governments were likewise formed by other nations that have decided not to recognize the capitulation and not to accept the extermination of nations simply because a few spineless weaklings failed their honor and sense of duty, or because some blockheads allowed themselves to be deluded by opportunities in which they themselves no longer believe today. From the first day, our greatest ally, Japan, recognized this fight for what it is: a decisive confrontation of life and death. From this day on, it waged it with the bravery of a true nation of heroes.

My party comrades! Volksgenossen! Since the breakthrough of the Russians at the Romanian Don front in November 1942, since the ensuing complete disintegration of the Italian and Hungarian units with all its terrible consequences for our waging of the war, betrayal after betrayal hit our Volk hard. In spite of this, the hopes of our enemies were not realized. Again and again, we managed to cushion our fronts and halt the enemies. Only one hope

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remained for them: the stab in the back. As always when they are otherwise unable to succeed against Germany, they try to bring about a decision by stabbing us in the back from the inside. Spineless creatures, a mixture of feudal arrogance, bourgeois deficiency, and former parliamentary corruption came together—in the hope that they would immediately receive a reward for this act of perjury (*Meineidstat*)—in order to cut the German resistance off at its root. They were right in one respect: as long as I live, Germany will not submit to the fate of the European states swept away by Bolshevism; as long as I have not breathed my last breath, my body and soul will serve only one goal: to make my Volk strong in the defense, for the attack on the deadly danger threatening it.

While wars used to be fought out of dynastic or economic interests, the war we are fighting today is a fight for the preservation of our Volk itself. Therefore, all the sacrifices in this war will lead, as a logical consequence, to the strengthening of the German Volksstaat. If some outdated individuals are offended by this, I cannot help them. The Volksstaat will pass over them and resume its agenda. If individual subjects of outdated parties, classes, or other splinters in our Volk think that the time has come for their resurrection, they will face their total extermination at exactly this moment. The day after the seizure of power, National Socialism, which was the victim of bloody persecution before, treated its political opponents not only in a conciliatory manner, but generously. Countless men who once persecuted me received pensions from me in this state, or were appointed to new and higher offices: the justice minister of a land where I spent thirteen months locked up in a fortress was nonetheless appointed German Reich minister of justice by me.³⁷⁸ Prussian ministers and Reich ministers who earlier were our cruelest persecutors received from me high pensions of charity although I was not obliged to do so. I felt that it was beneath me to subject Social Democrats to hardship, just because they had opposed me as ministers. Judges who had sentenced us were not hindered in their careers because of this and often were even promoted. Only those who threw down the gauntlet to the new state in word and deed were treated by it according to the law. Through the manner in which I took over power, I have moreover made it easy for every German, especially every state official and officer, to do his duty without throwing them into an inner conflict. For over a year and a half, the departed Reich president was my superior and was accordingly treated by me with admiration and great respect. Whoever now believes that he can throw others into inner conflicts, without ever having been forced into one by me, should know that this means his end is dead certain. As long as these people only persecuted me, I was able to magnanimously ignore and forget about this persecution.³⁷⁹ Today, however, whoever raises the sword or bomb against Germany will be ruthlessly and mercilessly annihilated. A few hours sufficed in order to suffocate the attempted putsch of July 20. It took only a few months to round up and completely eliminate this coterie of dishonorable Catilinarian³⁸⁰ characters.

Just as I took the occasion to cleanse the movement in the year 1934, after the revolt of a small group within,³⁸¹ this new revolt likewise started a thorough

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overhaul of the entire state apparatus. The time for compromises and reservations is over for good. These days the Reich war flag becomes the regimental flag of the German Wehrmacht, as a symbol of the National Socialist idea of revolution and state. The German salute is now in use in the Wehrmacht. The Volk grenadier division and the German youth will help the National Socialist world of thought achieve a completely victorious breakthrough. What most profoundly moved and rejoiced me after the events of July 20 was the realization that the army, the navy, and the Luftwaffe as a whole—the Waffen SS need not be considered here—had already adopted the National Socialist spirit, even though this was regrettably not outwardly visible before, so that hardly anything remained to be done other than to expel the unworthy from party, state, and Wehrmacht in order to bring about a complete agreement of opinions and will in party, Volk, state, and Wehrmacht.

In spite of this, the consequences of this day were bitter. In a fit of hope, our enemies gathered their entire strength, filled with the belief that shortly they would be able to overrun Germany. That they have not succeeded in this, I owe to the brave behavior of the Wehrmacht and, above all, the brave behavior of the German homeland, which is most worthy of praise. The response to the appeal for the expansion of the Reich's defense and the Volkssturm was only a symbol of the increasingly evidenced German Volksgemeinschaft in this fateful struggle for the future of the nation. Thus, next to the old grenadiers of the army, the soldiers of the navy and Luftwaffe, the soldiers of the homeland step up in complete equality of rank; not only its men, old men, and boys, but also its women and girls. As I consider the total sum of all the unspeakable sacrifices that our Volk makes today, all the suffering that the millions in our cities must bear, the sweat of our men and women laborers, and our people in the countryside, I would like to ask the criminals of July 20 only one question: with what right can you demand these sacrifices if you do not have the sacred resolve, before your conscience, to strengthen the Volksstaat at the end of this fight, develop it ever the more, so that this greatest epoch of our Volk culminates in the birth of a Reich that not only encompasses all Germans at the outside but also makes them happy at home? By fighting for the National Socialist German Volksstaat, I give the only possible moral and ethical meaning to this greatest struggle in our history. Whoever thinks of the interests only of his class at such an hour, acts not only as a criminal but also as an insane egotist. He must be insane because it takes incredible narrow-mindedness to imagine that you can rally a nation for a fight of life and death for over half a decade on behalf of a medieval feudal state.

My party comrades! As the year 1923 ended I wrote *Mein Kampf* in prison. I incessantly had in mind the realization of the National Socialist Volksstaat. For years after the seizure of power, we fought for this idea and worked for it. Rage and envy filled our enemies in view of the accomplishments in all areas of our economic and social life, the increasing culture and satisfaction of our classes. If so-called social plans for the future are today published in other countries, then this is only a pale imitation of what National Socialist Germany has already achieved. So today I can only again pledge the continuation of this

November 20, 1944

work. As an old National Socialist, I will not waver in this fight for one second in the fulfillment of the duties incumbent upon me. I did not choose this duty. Providence imposes it on every German: to do everything and not to neglect anything that can secure the future of our Volk and make its existence possible. We will respond to the most severe blows of fortune with a defiant fury, incessantly filled with the conviction that Providence often loves only those whom it chastises; and that it tries human beings and must try them in order to arrive at a just appraisal of their value. I have the unshakable will to set posterity a no less praiseworthy example in this fight than the great Germans did ages ago.

My own life does not play a role in this, which means that I will not spare my health or my life in any manner in the fulfillment of this duty conferred to me as the first German. If, at this time, I speak little and not very often to you, my party comrades and the German Volk, then I do this because I work; I work to fulfill the tasks with which time has burdened me and which must be fulfilled in order to bring about a turn of events. After all, since I have this will and see the loyal following of the German Volk, I do not doubt for a minute that, in the end, we will successfully survive this time of trial and that the hour will come when the Almighty again grants us His blessings as before. At the time, we gained the greatest victories in world history but did not become arrogant. At a time of setbacks, we will never bend and will thereby reaffirm in a positive sense the portrayal of the character of the present German Volk for posterity. I therefore believe with imperturbable confidence that, through our work and sacrifice, the moment will one day come when our efforts will finally be crowned by success. The goal of our struggle is no different from what we fought for in the year 1923, and for which the first sixteen martyrs of our movement died: our Volk's rescue from misery and danger, the securing of life for our children, grandchildren, and distant generations!

In the shadow of our nation, a Europe marches which feels that not only Germany's fate is being decided today but also the future of all nations that count themselves part of Europe and are consciously disgusted by Bolshevik barbarism. So I greet you from afar, my old party comrades, through the person who will speak this confession of my faith, in dogged determination, with my old unbending fighting morale and my unshakable confidence. On this occasion, I again thank the fighters of twenty-five years ago, who also have set us an example for the future of our Volk and the Greater German Reich!

On November 15, Hitler had a wreath placed by Colonel General Dessloch at the funeral ceremony for the fallen Air Force Major Walter Novotny at the Hofburg in Vienna.³⁸²

On November 20, Hitler left the Wolfsschanze headquarters for good. He had spent nearly three-and-a-half years there, with interruptions, and returned to the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. He again underwent surgery on his vocal cords in the city.³⁸³

November 30, 1944

On November 24, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the Portuguese state president Carmona on his seventy-fifth birthday.³⁸⁴

On November 25, Hitler issued a special order that dealt with the command of units which were cut off or had to “fend for” themselves. He ordered that the command could be conferred on a common soldier in the event of a surrender by the commander. There is no indication that this order was ever followed in practice. Hitler’s order read as follows:³⁸⁵

The war decides life and death of the German Volk. It demands the ruthless deployment of every individual. Death-defying bravery of the troops, steadfast endurance of all ranks, and unbending, superior leadership have carried us even through situations that appeared hopeless.

A leader of German soldiers can be only the man who daily deploys all his strength of spirit, soul, and body and is a living example to his men of the demands he must make on them. Energy, initiative, firmness of character, strength of faith, and hard, absolute readiness for deployment are imperatives for this fight. He who does not possess them cannot be a leader and must step down. I therefore order the following:

Whenever a leader of troops who has to fend for himself believes that he has to give up the fight, he must first ask his officers, then his noncommissioned officers, and then his men, whether or not one of them is ready to carry out the mission and continue the fight. If this is the case, then he shall confer command on this man, irrespective of his rank, and enlist himself. The new leader then takes over the command with all its rights and duties.³⁸⁶

Adolf Hitler

On November 26, the anniversary of the foundation of the *Kraft durch Freude* organization, Hitler exchanged greetings with Ley and sent him this telegram:³⁸⁷

I accept with joyful satisfaction the pledge of fidelity of the German worker conveyed to me on the anniversary of the National Socialist association *Kraft durch Freude*. I know what accomplishments in the armament industry and production, under the harshest conditions, have been made possible by the brave attitude of the German male and female workers. The cultural and social rise of Germany, which has elicited the envy and ill will of the enemies, was abruptly interrupted by the war. After the victorious conclusion of this fateful struggle, we will resolutely complete the socialist building of the Reich. After all, only the goal of a truly socialist future justifies the fight and the sacrifices of this struggle, to which we dedicate all our efforts.

Adolf Hitler

On November 30, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Hácha on the sixth anniversary of his election as Czech state president.³⁸⁸

December 4, 1944

On December 3, a decree by Hitler on the new military tasks of the Reich labor service was published. It read as follows:³⁸⁹

In recognition of its political and militant worthiness in all situations, the Führer ordered the Reich labor service to take over a part of the military training, previously carried out by the replacement army. He charged the Reich leader of labor with the responsibility for the immediate implementation in concurrence with the Reichsführer SS and commander of the Heimatheer /Ersatzheer [home army/replacement army].

On December 4, Hitler staged a reception for diplomats at the Reich Chancellery. In the presence of von Ribbentrop, he first received the newly appointed Slovak envoy Bodhan Galvanek and the new Hungarian envoy Vitez Andras Mecser, who presented their credentials to him.³⁹⁰ The main attraction, however, was the reception of the new Hungarian "state leader" Szalasi, who appeared dressed in the fantastic "Arrow Cross" uniform, which his movement had made up, along with a striped armband. The communiqué mentioned a "Magyar movement":³⁹¹

On December 4, the Führer received the Hungarian state leader Franz Szalasi, who is presently visiting Germany.

The Führer and the state leader Franz Szalasi had a long discussion on all questions concerning the political, military, and economic cooperation between Germany and the Hungarian nation, unified by the revolutionary Magyar movement. The firm determination of the German and Hungarian people to continue this defensive fight with all means at their disposal and create the conditions for it was the main topic of the talks, which were characterized by the spirit of the old traditional and time-tested brotherhood in arms and friendship of the two nations.

The talks at the Führer's were attended by Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, and Colonel General Guderian on the German side, and Foreign Minister Baron Kemeny and Honved minister, Colonel General Beregffy, on the Hungarian side.

On December 4, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Franco on his fifty-second birthday.³⁹²

Two days later, Hitler paid tribute to Field Marshal von Mackensen in several ways on his ninety-fifth birthday. The following communiqué was published:³⁹³

The Führer has conveyed the best wishes of the German Volk and its Wehrmacht, as well as his own sincere and heartfelt best wishes, to Field Marshal von Mackensen upon completion of his ninety-fifth year.

December 10, 1944

In a personal handwritten letter, the Führer recognized the aged Field Marshal as a man who had rendered inestimable services to his fatherland as soldier and general in two wars, and who today, at an age which only few live to see, uniquely represents German manly pride and old Prussian soldiery.

As a special tribute to Field Marshal von Mackensen, the Führer has at the same time awarded the stripe "Field Marshal von Mackensen" to the Cavalry Regiment No. 5, led by the Field Marshal.

On behalf of the Führer, the chief of the high command of the Wehrmacht, Field Marshal Keitel, has today personally presented the handwritten letter to Field Marshal von Mackensen, along with the official documents concerning the award of the stripe.

The decree of the Führer on the award of the stripe reads as follows:

"In grateful appreciation of the feats of arms accomplished under the leadership of Field Marshal von Mackensen, whose glory will live on in Volk and Wehrmacht for all time, I award the Cavalry Regiment No. 5 the stripe 'Field Marshal von Mackensen' on his ninety-fifth birthday. I thereby honor the great field marshal of the First World War. May this serve as an inspiration to the Cavalry Regiment at all time to prove itself worthy of its chief."

This "generous" honor also constituted Hitler's thanks for an appeal von Mackensen had addressed to the German youth which should, "by the deployment of all instruments of war and all weapons in battle, force success and victoriously hold its own."³⁹⁴

On December 7, the "day of the German railroad worker 1944," Hitler exchanged telegrams with the Reich Minister for Transportation Dorpmüller and State Secretary Ganzenmüller. Hitler's telegram read as follows:³⁹⁵

I thank all German railroad workers for their pledge of fidelity. Your accomplishments up to now give me the certainty that you will in the future continue to fulfill the unique tasks which have been assigned to you, in spite of all difficulties.

Adolf Hitler

On December 10, Hitler founded a "Warsaw Shield" for the participants in the quelling of the Polish revolt in Warsaw, which had lasted from August 1 until October 2, 1944.³⁹⁶

On the same day, the creation of a stripe "Hitler Youth" for the First Assault Boat Flotilla was made public. Hitler's decree read as follows:³⁹⁷

In recognition of the outstanding accomplishments of the young single combat fighters of the navy, I award the name "Hitler Youth" with the rights to wear a corresponding stripe to the First Assault Boat Flotilla of the

December 10, 1944

commando of the small fighting units, which has distinguished itself through particular dash and youthful daredevilry.

In the same manner, this recognition goes out to the Hitler Youth, whose voluntary enlistments for military service prove that it is ready for action and military-minded. The combat deployment of the youth is a guarantee for the final victory and for Germany's happy future.

Christmas was nearing. Hitler felt that a new offensive was called for in order to improve the general atmosphere in Germany. Like the Zhitomir offensive of the previous year,³⁹⁸ the offensive in the Ardennes was meant to reinforce confidence in victory for the holidays—even if there was a hangover later, as with Zhitomir Hitler would be content if only the morale of the German public could be improved during the holidays.

He had already spoken about a new offensive in the west in September.³⁹⁹ In the following months, he had concentrated all available troops and panzers in order to land a surprise strike against the First American Army in the Ardennes in mid-December.

There was hardly any fuel for the German attack divisions, but Hitler did not care: after all, they could get fuel from the Allies. There were also hardly any planes available for this offensive, but Hitler hoped that bad weather would complicate enemy operations. How times had changed! "Hitler weather" once used to mean "good weather,"⁴⁰⁰ now it meant "bad weather."

Hitler again wanted to command this new offensive in the west personally. This time, he did not set up quarters at the "Felsenest" near Münstereifel, even though it was still habitable. Instead, he moved into the Ziegenberg headquarters⁴⁰¹

The German generals were not thrilled with Hitler's plans for an offensive. They knew that there was no chance of repeating the 1940 campaign and breaking through to the Channel coast in one daring surprise attack. Von Runstedt later said that he was horrified because "the available forces were far too little for such a long-range plan."⁴⁰²

Chief of staff Guderian wanted to point out the trouble in which the eastern front already found itself, but Hitler snapped at him:⁴⁰³

There is no need for you to lecture me! I have been leading the German army in the field for five years now and I have gathered more practical experiences than the gentlemen of the general staff ever will. I studied Clausewitz and Moltke and read all of Schlieffen's operational plans. I am much better informed than you are!

December 12, 1944

On December 11 and 12, Hitler summoned the generals in groups of twenty to thirty to the Ziegenberg headquarters in order to discuss the plans for the new operation with them. Most of the shorthand record of Hitler's speech on December 12 has been preserved.⁴⁰⁴ His rhetorical techniques and tactics had not changed since the time of his seizure of power. Even on this occasion and despite the desperate situation of the Reich, he went far back in endless "party narratives"⁴⁰⁵ and tried to tire his listeners by pseudo-historical and pseudo-philosophical explanations. He finally addressed the current situation and again claimed that Germany had as many men as its opponents.

You should not forget that the total number of men deployed on our side is, after all, as great as that on the side of our enemies.

Hitler added to this statement that it was time to start the offensive again. Being on the defensive for too long used up too many resources.

In spite of this, you must realize that overly long periods of a merely defensive steadfastness eat you up in the long run. In any event, they must alternate with successful strikes. It was, therefore, my intention from the start to wage this war, if possible, offensively, to wage it strategically, not to let us be maneuvered into a situation as in the World War. Since that still happened, then there was a simple connection with the desertion of our allies, which of course had strategic consequences. . . .

Wars are decided in the end by the realization by one side or the other that the war as such cannot any longer be won. To get this realization across to the enemy is therefore the most important task. This realization is made clear to him in the speediest manner by destroying his vital energy, by occupying his territory. If you are forced to defend yourself, to go on the defensive, then it is all the more your task to make it clear to the enemy from time to time by ruthless blows that he has not won anything in spite of this, and that the war will incessantly continue to be waged. It is likewise important to reinforce these psychological moments by never letting an opportunity pass to make it clear to the enemy that, no matter what he does, he can never count on a capitulation—never, never.⁴⁰⁶

Then Hitler described the situation in the Seven Years' War and the "miracle" Frederick the Great had supposedly experienced.

The steadfastness of the man had made it possible that this war was fought out and, in spite of everything, a miraculous turn of events came about in the end.

Germany would now also witness such a "miracle." It was only a question of "biding one's time" until the enemy coalition fell apart on its own.

December 13, 1944

The enemies we have today are the greatest extremes conceivable on earth: ultra-capitalist states on the one hand, and ultra-Marxist states on the other; on the one hand, a dying empire, Great Britain, on the other hand, a colony out for the inheritance, the United States of America. These are states whose objectives today clash more and more by the day. And whoever follows this development—let me say, like a spider sitting in his web—can see how these conflicts develop by the hour. Should a few bad blows ensue here, then it can happen at any minute that this artificially sustained joint front suddenly collapses in a gigantic thunderbolt.⁴⁰⁷

Hitler wanted to land a “few bad blows” on the Allies in the west. He recalled the campaign in France in 1940 and claimed that the chances were as good now as they had been then.

Now, you could object to me that (in one respect) there is a big difference between 1940 and the present: at the time, we faced an enemy army which had not yet been tried in battle; and today, it is an army we know well, which has been in the war for some time. That is correct, gentlemen. But in terms of strength, little has changed, if we leave the Luftwaffe side.

We have many battle-weary troops, and the enemy also has battle-weary troops and has suffered heavy losses in blood. We now have the first official information from the Americans that, within a period of barely three weeks, they lost about two hundred forty thousand men.⁴⁰⁸ These are figures that are simply gigantic, that are far above what we ourselves believed that they might have lost. So they are battle-weary, too. Technically speaking, both sides are about the same. Regarding the tank weapon, the enemy might have more tanks at his disposal, but we have the better tanks with our latest models.

With such a smoke screen, Hitler believed he could make the new offensive more palatable to the generals. It is still an open question whether they left the headquarters in better spirits. In any event, Hitler need not have troubled himself. In principle, the generals were always ready to comply with the orders of their supreme commander, if this was technically possible.

Even though he was busy preparing the offensive, Hitler did not forget to write diplomatic greetings. On December 11, he exchanged telegrams with Mussolini, the Japanese emperor, and the Japanese prime minister Koiso on the third anniversary of the military alliance between Germany, Japan, and Italy.⁴⁰⁹ The texts of his telegrams were not published.

On December 13, Hitler sent this telegram to the Union of National Journalists' Associations, which was meeting for a congress in Vienna:⁴¹⁰

December 15, 1944

Führer Headquarters, December 13, 1944

I thank the national journalists assembled for their annual congress for their greetings. At a time of the greatest military deployment in the fateful struggle of Europe, it is with great interest that I follow your publishing work, which supports this struggle of impact on world history by enlightening the people. I therefore wish complete success to your work in the interests of your nations and the future of Europe.

Adolf Hitler

On December 15, Hitler appointed the deputy Gauleiter of Kassel, Karl Oerland, as Gauleiter of Kurhessen.⁴¹¹

On the morning of December 16, the German offensive in the direction of Bastogne and the Meuse River began. The weather was bad, just as Hitler had wanted it. The four divisions of the First American Army stationed in the Ardennes were at first confused by the surprise attack of the Germans, but the Allied headquarters quickly came up with countermeasures. Montgomery, who had been promoted to the rank of field marshal on September 1, was the most experienced and successful general on the Allied side. He personally took over the command of the endangered American front sector. The German offensive got bogged down after only a few days. The Germans did not even manage to take Bastogne, which they cut off for some time, not to mention advancing to the Meuse or the Channel. The adventurous Greif operation, with which Hitler again entrusted Otto Skorzeny, also proved a failure. Dressed in American uniforms and riding in Jeeps which had earlier been taken as booty, Skorzeny's men were captured or forced to return without having reached the bridges across the Meuse.⁴¹² By giving incorrect information and removing road signs, their mission succeeded only in confusing American troop movements temporarily.

During the discussion of the situation on December 24, Hitler listened to a presentation by Guderian on the situation on the eastern front. When Guderian gave an overview on the assembly of Russian armies in the east, Hitler exclaimed:⁴¹³

This is the greatest bluff since Genghis Khan! Who came up with this nonsense?

He claimed that the Russian rifle divisions were at most "seven thousand men" strong and Russian tank divisions had "no tanks." He continued as follows:

December 28, 1944

You know, my dear Colonel General, I do not believe that the Russians will attack at all. All that is just a gigantic bluff. The figures from your department "Foreign Armies East" are terribly exaggerated. You worry too much. I am convinced that nothing will happen in the east.

Well, for the next two weeks, nothing happened in the east. In the west, however, the Americans moved up for a counteroffensive on December 24, just as the Russians had done at Zhitomir the year before.⁴¹⁴ Hitler's Christmas offensive in the west (also called the "Ardennes Offensive" or "Rundstedt Offensive") collapsed. By early January, the situation on the western front was decidedly worse than it had been before the offensive began, just as with Zhitomir. However, Hitler had managed to liven up the public for a few days.

Hitler had not yet had enough, in spite of the failed Christmas offensive in the Ardennes. He had plans for a New Year's offensive in the Vosges! For this reason, he assembled his generals at the Ziegenberg headquarters on the evening of December 28. He again gave a long speech, which began with these words:⁴¹⁵

Gentlemen! I have asked you here prior to a campaign on whose success further strikes in the west depend. First I would like to shed light briefly on the true significance of this individual campaign. I would like to place it in the context of the overall situation in which we find ourselves.

What followed were pseudo-historic reflections on the wars of the 17th and 18th centuries and the Battle of Cannae, Hannibal's victory over the Romans in 216 B.C. Then Hitler claimed that Frederick the Great had "fought with three-and-a-half million Prussians against fifty-two million Europeans."⁴¹⁶ He did not forget about the English either. He said that they were not

. . . in a position anywhere to put up effective resistance to Bolshevism.
[—]

In these hours, in which Mr. Churchill is pulling off a pitiful fiasco in Athens⁴¹⁷ and is not in a position to oppose Bolshevism even within a limited framework, at this moment, the man wants to make it appear as though he would be capable of stopping Bolshevik's advance into Europe at any point.

This is a ridiculous fantasy. America cannot do it, England cannot do it. The only state, for the sake of whose fate this war is being waged, is Germany, which will either save itself or be ruined, should it lose this war.

The old trick of the Red scare! Hitler still hoped that the English would ask his help against the Bolsheviks. In the further course of his

December 28, 1944

speech, Hitler tried to convince his generals that the disastrous Ardennes Offensive had led to success in certain respects. He declared:

Even the present first act in the offensive in the west [Ardennes] had led to the Americans having to bring up everything from other fronts, all in all, about fifty percent.

I would like to stress right away: the objective of all these offensives, which will happen quite fast—I am already preparing a third blow right now⁴¹⁸—is for the time being to eliminate the American units at the southern point of penetration [in the Ardennes] completely, destroy them piece by piece, exterminate division after division.

This second attack also has a clear objective: annihilation of the enemy forces. It is not a question of prestige here. It is not a question of winning terrain for us. It is exclusively a question of annihilating and erasing the enemy forces wherever we encounter them.

Hitler continued to speak for some time about what “question” this was all really about, before he finally continued as follows:

There is something, gentlemen, that I still must emphasize. I have been in this business for eleven years now, and, in these eleven years, I have never heard anybody report to me: “We are completely ready.”—You are never completely ready.

I must therefore say this: we do not have time forever, life goes on. If I do not act quickly here, then, in the meantime, a situation might arise there in which I am forced to pull out.

Things had to go quickly! For this reason, Hitler tried hard to allay the doubts of his generals. Ammunition? Fuel?

We will get all these things done. There is no doubt about this.

The only thing that is not to our advantage this time is the situation in the air. It forces us to take advantage of the bad weather, the winter.

What was most important to Hitler was to improve the morale of the German public. He declared the following:

The German Volk breathed a sigh of relief during these days. We must avoid that lethargy—lethargy is the wrong word, let us say sadness—again follow this sigh of relief. It has breathed a sigh of relief. The idea that we are again on the offensive has already had a positive effect on the German Volk.

And if this offensive is continued, then the first great successes will ensue—and they will ensue.

Wait until the German Volk sees this development—you can be confident that it will make all the sacrifices that are humanly possible.

The German Volk caused quite some trouble for Hitler! He was constantly trying to liven things up for it. However, given the mood the

December 31, 1944

German public was in at the time, it was not receptive of Hitler's powers of persuasion. People did not want new propaganda slogans or delusions, they wanted to put an end to the war, to the war and Hitler.

Even the most horrifying descriptions of impending Bolshevik atrocities, of the American Morgenthau Plan,⁴¹⁹ and similar projects, no longer impressed the public. At a moment when the German industry became the target of enemy bomb attacks and sank into ruins, when the German people were close to starvation, the Morgenthau Plan could at best elicit this response: "Well, at least we will have potatoes to eat!"

Hitler spent the Christmas holidays at his headquarters. In addition to preparing new offensives, he indulged himself, just as in the previous year, by designing new medals and their statutes. In 1943, he dealt with the German Eagle medal,⁴²⁰ now he turned his attention to the Iron Cross. He issued an ordinance of several pages, which specified its classes, the manner in which it was to be worn, and so on. He had it bound in a special edition.⁴²¹ Moreover, on December 29, Hitler signed a decree on the creation of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with the Golden Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds. It read as follows:⁴²²

Führer Headquarters, December 29, 1944

As the highest award for bravery, I create the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with the Golden Oak Leaf with Swords and Diamonds. This award will be issued only twelve times in order to honor in a special way before the German Volk battle-tested individual fighters who have already received all categories of the Knight's Cross. My decree of September 1, 1939, on the renewal of the Iron Cross will be correspondingly supplemented.

Adolf Hitler

On the night from December 29 to 30, Hitler again discussed the upcoming New Year's offensive at great length with General Thomale, a specialist in the panzer forces.⁴²³ Thomale was almost as good as Hitler in juggling figures. And so they conjured up a nice little pipe dream of German offensive strength.

On December 31, Guderian appeared at the Ziegenberg headquarters and requested troops for the eastern front.⁴²⁴ He received a total of four divisions. However, these divisions ended up in Hungary, because Hitler had ordered an offensive in order to relieve Budapest for New Year's Day.

Before the year 1944 was over, another declaration of war landed on Hitler's table. On December 30, the Hungarian opposition government,

December 31, 1944

which had been formed by General Miklos in Debrecen in the Russian-occupied part of Hungary, declared war on Germany.

After Liberia (January 16), Romania (August 25), Bulgaria (September 8), and Finland (September 15), Hungary was the fifth country to take up arms against Germany in 1944. A total of forty-eight states were now at war with Hitler. In the course of the next months, the following states would follow suit: Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Uruguay, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Argentina. Under Hitler, Germany was at war with fifty-eight states. Fourteen other states confiscated German possessions without declaration of war.

In the First World War, Germany had faced a total of thirty-three enemy powers.⁴²⁵ So Hitler, who had always mocked the politics of Imperial Germany as unwise and undiplomatic, called far more enemies into action than William II's Germany. Even in this superlative, Hitler had finally surpassed the Kaiser.

The Year 1945

Major Events in Summary

At the beginning of 1945, the world and Germany felt that this year would put an end to Hitler, in one way or another.

He had four months left; four months, in which the Allies smashed his Reich piece by piece. A flood of enemy armies swept across Germany. At the end of April, only three islands remained above water: Schleswig-Holstein, Berlin, and the Alps.

In the midst of the wrecked capital, Hitler dwelled in the bunker beneath his Reich Chancellery, wanting to remain “steadfast in face of the impossible.”¹ For nearly these four months, he managed to delude himself that everything was still as in former times and that he was still the head of state, chief of the government, and chief military commander of a functioning powerful state.

It was true that one heard his voice only twice on the radio: once, when he read his New Year’s Proclamation to the German Volk and, second, when he delivered, on January 30, before the microphone a commemorative address on the anniversary of the seizure of power. Yet Hitler composed more proclamations in 1945 than he had in the same period of the previous year.

As though the situation were completely normal, as though no Russian troops stood at the Oder, and as though no Anglo-American soldiers stood at the Rhine, Hitler issued two proclamations, besides the New Year’s Proclamations to the Volk and to the Wehrmacht, and he did so even on two dates which he had canceled in 1944: the commemoration of the party’s foundation on February 24 and Heroes’ Memorial Day.

Even when in March and April the enemy troops in the west and the east engaged the Germans in a last battle, he issued another proclamation to the soldiers on April 15. He announced: “Berlin will remain German, Vienna will again become German.”² Incessantly, he

sent telegrams and diplomatic greetings to the few statesmen in the satellite states who were still in office; the last one he sent to Mussolini on April 21.

It was not until enemy shells literally exploded on the doorstep of the Reich Chancellery that he realized that the end had irrevocably come. On April 29, he wrote his last proclamation: his political testament.

Even in this last statement, he refused to acknowledge authorship of the unheard-of catastrophe into which he had plunged Germany and the entire world. On the contrary, he continued to claim, as always, the Jews were guilty of everything, together with the German officers and, yes, even Reichsmarschall Göring and Reichsführer SS Himmler.

The reader searches in vain for an official admission by Hitler of the collapse of his foreign policy and military conceptions. All his theories and ideas with which he had operated since 1919 had been wrong without exception: the idea of the Lebensraum in the east, which he intended to conquer for the German Volk; the idea of waging war against Russia while preserving the friendship of England and Italy; his thesis concerning the identity of domestic and foreign policy; the conception of the English as senile German Nationalists against whom it was not worth fighting, since they would collapse by themselves; the idea of the primitive Bolshevik Russians with whom you could deal as with the German Communists, namely by using brute force; his thesis concerning the secret Jewish world government which ruled London, Washington, and Moscow, and which could be intimidated by terrorizing and exterminating the Jews; his theory of unity, according to which the German Volk was invincible as long as it was united, and finally his thesis of perseverance, according to which Providence would give the victory to the man who would never capitulate.

With these ideas Hitler had for decades thrown dust into the eyes of his followers. Not one of these ideas had turned out to be correct in the end. With each of them he had suffered catastrophic shipwreck.

He now faced an unprecedented expanse of ruins, but still he was not about to admit responsibility, no matter how often he had earlier declared that he wished to "bear the entire responsibility,"³ that he would "vouch with [his] life"⁴ for his actions, that he would "calmly stand firm" should the Volk one day be dissatisfied with him and wish to execute him.⁵

But when had Hitler ever kept a promise he had made?

Annihilation

Coward that he had always been, he now dodged responsibility again. On April 30, 1945, he reached for his pistol to end his life.

It takes only a fraction of a second, and you are relieved of all that, and you can have some quiet and eternal peace.⁶

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Report and Commentary

1

Hitler's last New Year's Proclamation to the German Volk was nothing out of the ordinary. Remarkable, however, was its heading: "German Volk! National Socialists! My Volksgenossen!" In earlier years, it had always read: "National Socialists! Party Comrades!" That Hitler preferred not to address his party comrades in 1945 was no coincidence but symptomatic. The party had already begun to dissolve into thin air at this point. Its leading men, from the Gauleiters down, had eagerly seized the opportunity of putting on Volksturm uniforms in order to be no longer recognizable as important party figures.⁷

At the last session of the Reichstag in 1942, Hitler had already revealed that the party ranked for him as the very last. All he needed were soldiers and policemen.⁸

His New Year's Proclamation in 1945 left nothing to be desired in terms of arrogance and impudence. According to him, the governments of "Italy, Finland, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria" were responsible for the disastrous situation Germany faced, along with the "small coterie of [German] drawing-room politicians and drawing-room generals."

Hitler's claim that the bombardment of German cities hit him the hardest was the most impertinent of all: "Not only did I become infinitely close to all the German cities that are now being wrecked in terms of their history but I also did so in terms of my personal life. For decades I was tied to them not only by the love of their history and culture and by human feelings, but I was also most strongly involved in the fate of their future development. It is exactly this which makes this suffering somewhat easier for me to bear."

In this context, Hitler announced: "Within a few years, the National Socialist state with its energy and initiative will rebuild all that is being destroyed today."

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Naturally, he did not forget to say “thanks to the Lord,” especially for sparing his life, but only because he could therefore “continue dedicating” it “to the service of the Volk.”

Hitler’s last New Year’s Proclamation in its entirety read as follows:⁹

German Volk! National Socialists! My Volksgenossen!

Only the turn of the year causes me to speak to you today, my German Volksgenossen. The times had demanded more than speeches from me. The events of the past twelve months, in particular the incident on July 20, forced me to devote my attention and my capacity for work to a single task, for which I had lived for many years: the fateful struggle of my Volk. Although our enemies had proclaimed our collapse every New Year, they placed particular hopes on the year 1944. Never before did victory seem so close to them, as in those days of August of last year when one catastrophe had followed another. Now that we have managed, as so many times before, to bring about a turn of events, credit is due not only to the struggle and work of all my Volksgenossen in the homeland and at the front, but also to my own work and my own commitment. By so doing, I have only acted in the spirit of a statement that I made at the memorable Reichstag session of September 1, 1939, declaring that Germany would never be defeated by the force of arms or time, and that a day like November 9 would never repeat itself in the German Reich.

Whoever knew Germany only from this time of decline could perhaps hope that this state would not be granted a resurrection nor the strength to hold its own against a world of enemies.

That is how the Jewish-international conspiracy has lived on hopes from the first day. Every time when the nations began to become suspicious, these hopes were transformed into prophecies. With a certain rabble-rousing audacity, they were portrayed to the masses as certainties, as matters of course. This propaganda used two methods, even though it has short wings as all lies do. On the one hand, it set dates by which the German collapse was certainly to be expected, in order to calm the impatient masses. On the other hand, it dealt with questions whose solution would become necessary for the Allies following this collapse. Before the war ever started, the first English statement was already published, declaring that the joint Anglo-French declaration of war would lead within seven to eight days, at the latest, to an internal revolution and thereby to the collapse of the German Reich. With nearly astronomical regularity, this was followed by ever new assurances every winter, spring, autumn, and sometimes even between the seasons [*sic*], that the unconditional German collapse and surrender—both would mean the same thing—was imminent. Already in the autumn of 1939, one such assurance followed hot on the heels of the other. One minute it was “General Mud,” the next “General Hunger,” and then again “General Winter” who were supposed to defeat us. Particularly the beginning of 1940 witnessed such Allied declarations galore. After the campaign in France, new prophecies were made, namely that if

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Germany was not be able to end the war in two months, by September at the latest, then the German collapse would inevitably come in the spring of 1941. Spring had barely passed when new goals were set for the summer, and new deadlines for our certain destruction were finally set for the winter of 1941. Since this time, the game has repeated itself every year. At one time it was said that the war would be over before the leaves fall; another time that Germany would be ready to capitulate before the next winter. With the assuredness of a sleepwalker, they called August 1944 the deadline for the unconditional surrender and, shortly afterwards, they planned to arrange a joint meeting of the leading [Allied] statesmen in Berlin just before Christmas. Not long ago, it was rescheduled for January and then March 1945. Right now, they are cautiously declaring that, in view of the rapidly approaching two months, it would be August. In July, they will surely talk about the winter of 1946, provided that the war does not actually end in the meantime, not with a German capitulation, which will never come, but with a German victory!

Parallel to these prophecies—in order to stress the correctness of these assumptions psychologically—followed the theoretical appointment of ever new commissions for the treatment of European questions after the war, the foundation of societies for the regulation of food supplies after the German collapse, in other words the resurrection of those profiteer institutions (*Schieberinstitutionen*) that we know from the World War, the proclamation of economic agreements, the setting up of traffic networks and air bases, as well as the drafting and promulgation of sometimes truly idiotic laws on the treatment of the German Volk. They always acted as though they had already won the war, as though they could now already consider at their leisure all the measures necessary for ruling Europe for those who have themselves set a sorry example of how not to rule people. Of course, you can practice this propagandistic maneuver with the unenlightened masses in the democratic states for a surprisingly long time, but even there it will one day become obvious that this is nothing other than the usual swindle in these countries. Should one or the other of the leading men in these western democratic states nevertheless truly believe all that is told the people, then there are only three possible explanations for this:

1. They do not know the German Volk at all. Above all, they do not realize that the past three hundred years of German history did not give an accurate picture of the essence of the German Volk, but reflected only the consequences of its inner conflicts at home. Since this German Volk made its appearance in history, it has not only been one of the decisive factors in European and world history but even the most decisive one. It remains so today and will continue to be so even more in the future.

2. They are ignorant about the National Socialist state. They do not have an inkling of the essence of this *Volksidee*. The accomplishments that the National Socialist regime secured under the most difficult conditions have remained concealed from most of the people in the countries surrounding us. Perhaps they had to be concealed from them because public life and opinion there is informed by the Jews, that is, everything is distorted and reported

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wrongly. They are apparently not yet aware that neither Bolshevism nor the democratic-plutocratic world of ideas—insofar as you can speak of one—can replace the National Socialist state, since both have proved themselves to be unfit for Germany in terms of their achievements, and the results of their activities in their own countries serve only as the most deterrent example.

3. In these countries they have known something that the majority of the masses of the healthy German Volk are not aware of, namely a small coterie of drawing-room politicians and drawing-room generals who, in complete ignorance of their own mental, political, and military insignificance, have tried to convince the world that they will one day seize power in a coup and will then be in a position to offer capitulation without further notice, much as in Italy, Finland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The less our enemies were familiar with the German Volk, the less they were aware of the essence of the National Socialist state, the more readily they placed their hopes in the assurances of these spineless characters, believed their fantastic chains of reasoning and outpourings to be true, and rewarded them not only with a strong faith but also with ready cash.

In opposition to that, at the turn of a year which has given us ample opportunity to prove that this Volk, this state, and its leading men are unshakable in their will and staunch in their fanatical determination to fight this war out under any circumstances, even putting up with setbacks imposed on us by the fickleness of fate, I would like to state again what arises for us from the past and present, and what is necessary for the world to know in the future.

1. We know the objectives of our enemies from the past and the present. We are aware of what the Anglo-American statesmen plan to do with the German Reich, what measures the Bolshevik rulers and the international Jews, who in the end are behind them, plan to take against the German Volk. Their successful implementation would not only lead to the German Reich's being torn to pieces, the transport of fifteen to twenty million Germans to foreign countries, the enslavement of the remnants of our Volk, the corruption of our German youth, but it would also and above all bring with it the starvation of our masses of millions. Aside from this, you either live in freedom or die in slavery.

In opposition to that, we are determined to do anything necessary. The world should realize that this state will therefore never capitulate. The present German Reich, like all great states of the past, may meet with setbacks on its path, but it will never stray from this path. The world should realize that the present leadership of the state shares the worries and sufferings of its people, but it will never capitulate under these worries and sufferings. On the contrary, it is determined to make the utmost effort to face every crisis, make up for what was lost through carelessness with reinforced eagerness to work, so that it will be able not only to express its great appreciation to every individual German who does his duty, but also to assure him that his contribution to the existence of our Volk will one day be rewarded. On the other hand, it will destroy anybody who tries to escape making his contribution or lowers himself to becoming a tool of foreign powers. Since we know the objectives of our

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enemies—because they themselves offer the necessary enlightenment thanks to their propagandistic garrulousness from the mouths of their statesmen and journalists—the entire German Volk knows what its fate would be if it lost this war. It will therefore not lose this war. It must and will win it. After all, what our enemies are fighting for, they do not know themselves, aside from their Jews. Yet what we are fighting for is clear to all of us. It is the preservation of the German human being, it is our homeland, it is our two-thousand-year-old culture, it is the children and grandchildren of our Volk. It is, in short, everything that makes life worth living for us. For this reason, the Volk has developed the spirit and attitude that justify its belief in its own future and its request for a merciful appreciation of its struggle by Providence.

That this struggle is so endlessly difficult is the result of the essence of the abovementioned objectives of our enemies. After all, since they intend to exterminate our Volk, they are already applying this method in the war by means that civilized mankind has not known hitherto. By wrecking our cities, they hope not only to kill German women and children but also and above all to eliminate the documents of our thousand-year-old culture, to which they have nothing to compare of equal quality. That was also the idea behind the war of annihilation against the cultural sites in Italy, the actual intention behind the continuation of the present fight in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Alas, like a phoenix from the ashes, so the strong German will all the more rise up anew from the ruins of our cities. It has taken hold not only of millions of our soldiers, but also of millions of male and female workers, of women, even of children. The suffering inflicted on them individually is immeasurable, but equally immeasurable is the greatness of their attitude. Once this time of suffering is over, every German will be incredibly proud of being allowed to be a member of such a Volk. Likewise, the day will come when our enemies will regard the defilement of culture, which they are presently undertaking and which will continue to burn in our memories, as shameful.

I know, my dear Volksgenossen, the demands this war makes on you. There may be no man in any large country of the world who knows his people and their homeland better than I know Germany. Not only did I become infinitely close to all the German cities that are now being wrecked in whatever concerns their life and their history but also in whatever concerns my personal life. For decades I was tied to them not only by the love of their history and culture and of their human feelings, but I was also the most strongly involved in the fate of their future development. This alone makes this suffering somewhat easier for me to bear, because I know better than anybody else that, with its will, the German Volk as such not only always rose up from the most profound misery, but also that this time will end with the German cities again rising up from the debris as new sites attesting to the magnificence of our German cities.

Within a few years, the National Socialist state with its energy and initiative will rebuild all that is being destroyed today. The outward appearance of our cities will be mightier and more beautiful than ever before. Healthier homes for the German human beings will take the place of the destroyed

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tenement barracks. Our social and cultural demands will then receive greater consideration than was possible before.

However, we will neither possess many of the unfading documents of art and culture nor be able to restore them. More importantly, we cannot replace the sacrifice of countless precious human beings and the loss of their collected souvenirs which became dear to them in the course of a long life. All these great treasures and small remembrances will in the end be compensated for—even if they cannot be replaced—by our Volk's shared memory of a time of the hardest fateful struggle that a nation ever had to bear and one that it bore with so much heroism.

The year 1944 was the year of the greatest burdens in this mighty struggle. It was a year that again proved conclusively that the bourgeois social order is no longer capable of braving the storms of the present or of the coming age. State after state that does not find its way to a truly social reorganization will go down the path to chaos. The liberal age is a thing of the past. The belief that you can counter this invasion of the people (*Völkersturm*) by parliamentary-democratic half-measures is childish and just as naive as Metternich's¹⁰ methods when the national drives for unification were making their way through the nineteenth century. The lack of a truly social, new form of life results in the lack of the mental will to resist not only in the nations but also in the lack of the moral power of resistance of their leaders. In all countries we see that the attempted renaissance of a democracy has proved fruitless. The confused tangle of political dilettantes and military politicians of a bygone bourgeois world who order each other around is, with deadly certainty, preparing for a plunge into chaos and, insofar as Europe is concerned, into an economic and ethnic catastrophe. And, after all, one thing has already been proved: this most densely populated continent in the world will either have to live with an order that gives the greatest consideration to individual abilities, guarantees the greatest accomplishments, and, by taming all egotistical drives, prevents their excesses, or states such as we have in central and western Europe will prove unfit for life, which means that their nations are thereby doomed to perish!

In this manner—following the example of royal Italy—Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary collapsed during this year. This collapse is primarily the result of the cowardice and lack of resolve of their leaders. They and their actions can be understood only in light of the corrupt and socially amoral atmosphere of the bourgeois world. The hatred which many statesmen, especially in these countries, express for the present German Reich is nothing other than the voice of a guilty conscience, an expression of an inferiority complex in view of our organization of a human community that is suspicious to them because we successfully pursue goals that again do not correspond to their own narrow economic egotism and their resulting political shortsightedness.

For us, my German Volksgenossen, this, however, represents a new obligation to recognize ever more clearly that the existence or nonexistence of a German future depends on the uncompromising organization of our Volksstaat, that all the sacrifices which our Volk must make are conceivable

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only under the condition of a social order which clears away all privileges and thereby makes the entire Volk not only bear the same duties but also possess the same vital rights. Above all, it must mercilessly destroy the social phantoms of a bygone era. In their stead, it must place the most valuable reality there is, namely the Volk, the masses which, tied together by the same blood, essence, and experiences of a long history, owe their origin as an individual existence not to an earthly arbitrariness but to the inscrutable will of the Almighty. The insight into the moral value of our conviction and the resulting objectives of our struggle for life give us and, above all, give me the strength to continue to wage this fight in the most difficult hours with the strongest faith and with an unshakable confidence. In such hours, this conviction also ties the Volk to its leadership. It assured the unanimous approval of the appeal that I was forced to direct to the German Volk in a particularly urgent way this year.

Millions of Germans of all professions and ranks, men and women, boys and girls, even children, took up the spade and the shovel. Thousands of Volkssturm battalions were created or are in the process of being created. Divisions were newly formed; Volk artillery corps, mortar brigades, self-propelled assault-gun brigades, as well as fighter groups were conjured up out of nothing and provided with new equipment. Above all, our German factories showed singular achievements with the help of both male and female German workers. They, I may say so today, are being joined by more and more thoughtful people from other nations who, as workers in Germany, understand the essence of our social community. And so what our enemies shattered was rebuilt with superhuman diligence and unequalled heroism. This rebuilding will continue until what our enemies began will end one day. The German spirit and the German will shall bring this about by force!

This, my Volksgenossen, will one day go down in history as the miracle of the twentieth century! A Volk that accomplishes, suffers, and endures so many incredible things at the front and in the homeland can therefore never perish. On the contrary: it will emerge from this furnace of trials stronger and firmer than ever before in its history. However, the power to which we owe all this—the Jewish-international enemy of the world—will not only fail in this attempt to destroy Europe and exterminate its nations but will also end by annihilating itself.

At the end of this year, as the spokesman of the nation and, at this moment, also as the Führer of its fate, I would like to thank the countless millions of my Volksgenossen with an overflowing heart for all they have suffered, endured, done, and accomplished, men and women, down to the level of our children in the Hitler Youth, in the cities and small market towns, in the villages and in the countryside. I would like to ask them not to let up in the future either, to trust the leadership of the movement, and to fight this most difficult struggle for the future of our Volk with the greatest fanaticism. What I can do to promote this success, I will do in the future as I did in the past. I am speaking less these days, not because I do not wish to or cannot speak, but because my work leaves me little time for speaking, and because I believe that I am now obliged every hour to think about and seek to increase the power of resistance of our armies,

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introduce better weapons, form new units, and assemble whatever forces can be mobilized from among my Volk. My enemies are perhaps now seeing the light already and are realizing that I have not been asleep all this time!

For the rest, I wish to assure you, my Volksgenossen, again today, as in the many years of the struggle for power, that my faith in the future of our Volk is unshakable. Whomever Providence subjects to so many trials, it has destined for the greatest things! It is therefore my only concern to do my utmost to lead the German Volk through this time of misery and open the gate for it to that future in which we all believe, for which we fight and work.

I cannot close this appeal without thanking the Lord for the help that He always allowed the leadership and the Volk to find, as well as for the power He gave us to be stronger than misery and danger. If I also thank Him for my rescue, then I do so only because through it I am happy to be able to continue dedicating my life to the service of the Volk. In this hour, as the spokesman of Greater Germany, I therefore wish to make the solemn avowal before the Almighty that we will loyally and unshakably fulfill our duty also in the new year, in the firm belief that the hour will come when the victory will favor for good the one who is most worthy of it, the Greater German Reich!

Hitler's New Year's Proclamation to the German Wehrmacht was again extraordinarily long, a sign that things were not going well. Naturally, he again blamed in this proclamation the "European allies" for the "setbacks". Hitler's order of the day read as follows:¹¹

Führer Headquarters, January 1, 1945

Soldiers!

The decisive significance for the world of the war that we are fighting today is clear to the German Volk: a merciless struggle for existence or nonexistence, that is, a struggle for life or death! Because the goal of the Jewish-international world conspiracy opposing us is the extermination of our Volk.

As I pronounced this realization in the year 1939, some among you may have thought it was an exaggeration. Because of its constant repetition in the course of the following years, it may have appeared to be "noisy propaganda." Today, nobody can doubt the intention of our enemies. It is not only proved by the activities of subordinate organs, the public media, but also confirmed by the enemy statesmen opposing us. It is further evidenced by the way the war has been waged, as well as by the political preparations which our enemies are making for the postwar period. The Jewish-eastern Bolshevism reflects in its exterminationist tendencies the goals of Jewish-western capitalism. In any event, the plan is to enslave all free nations. Mr. Churchill declares that all of eastern Germany shall be ceded at least to Poland—in truth, that means to the Soviet Union—namely, not only East Prussia and Danzig but even Pomerania and Silesia. He dismisses the potential population problems by expressing the hope that he will be able to kill another six or more million Germans, that is, women and children, through bomb warfare. His protégé de Gaulle again demands that western Germany be placed under French control and the

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remainder of Germany dissolved. This exactly corresponds to the program and statements of the Stalinist house Jew (*Hausjude*) Ehrenburg,¹² who goes further and announces that the German Volk must be smashed and exterminated. And this again is the same goal that is being pursued in the plans for the future by the American cabinet member and Jew Morgenthau.¹³

These thoughts do not come as a surprise for me. They always existed with our enemies. Only in order to prevent their implementation did I strive to make the German Volk strong and resistant. Internally and externally, it should have the strength that is necessary to defend its life. We have been fighting this struggle of life and death for over five years now. Perhaps it will even be harsher in its demands in the sixth year of war. It has, however, passed its zenith.

Up to the present day, the German Volk and its Wehrmacht have successfully resisted our enemies' attempts to strangle us, despite numerous crises and many setbacks. In the coming year also, we will succeed in parrying the enemy's offensive operations and in finally breaking them through counterblows. If we have not been spared great setbacks in this mighty struggle, which is not only being fought for Germany but also for the future of all of Europe, then the reason for that does not lie with the German Volk and its Wehrmacht but on the side of our European allies. Starting with the collapse of the Romanian-Italian-Hungarian front at the Don River and their later complete dissolution, to the sabotage of the joint conduct of the war by the Italian royal house and the putsch against the Duce's Fascist Italy, which was on our side, there is a straight line of treason. It has found its prolongation in the pitiful capitulation of the Finnish state leadership, the breach of faith of the Romanian king and his entourage, the giving up of Bulgaria, as well as in the disgraceful behavior of the former Hungarian regent.¹⁴ The consequences for the political and military conduct of the war were grave.

In addition, there was the perfidious attack at home in the last year, committed by dishonorable criminals who were however defeated within a few hours and, since that time, have been relentlessly dealt with. Although July 20 had especially depressing military consequences at the fronts and, regrettably, helped to shake the faith in the German power of resistance with friend and enemy, it must be seen as a turning point of the German fate. After all, this attempt to destroy the social German Volksstaat at the time of its most bitter fight through a plot at home and to surrender Germany to the international conspiracy has failed once and for all. I can assure you that this was the last attempt of its kind. Thereby, however, my declaration of September 1, 1939, is reconfirmed, namely, that the German Volk cannot be defeated by force of arms or time in this war, and that, above all, a November 1918 will never be repeated.

This resolve, my soldiers, means heavy sacrifices for the entire German Volk and, in the first place, for you. It alone will save the nation in the future! A nation would surely be doomed by the misery that Germany has to endure today, if it gives itself up for lost, because this giving up means at the same time a renunciation of any claim to life in the future.

January 1, 1945

My soldiers!

I know your sufferings and your sacrifices. I know what I had to ask of you and what is being asked of you. Fate has set me—who at one time wanted to build up Germany as a first-rate social and cultural state—the most difficult task conceivable for a human being. I bear my fate and realize that I owe gratitude to Providence, which has found me worthy enough to take on such hard work in the history of our Volk, a work which will decide its future. All the more after July 20, I lived only for the preparations which would sooner or later allow us to go from the purely defensive to the offensive. We are aware that the fortress of Europe cannot be defended by German forces alone to the extent that this was possible earlier. We were therefore forced, as the victims of the treason of our allies, to pull in entire fronts and shorten others. However, I did not take any step backward without putting up the fiercest resistance. Our enemies must know that every kilometer in the direction of Germany will demand more blood of them and that they cannot ever count on a relaxation or giving up of this resistance. What you, my soldiers, accomplished on so many fronts, on the ground, above or below water, and in the air, is superhuman. The sacrifices made by the German homeland, especially its women, old men, and children, are no less so. Finally, what we owe to the German male and female worker, to the German male peasant and especially to the German female peasant, is for all of us all the more a sacred obligation to do as soldiers everything possible, so that these joint sacrifices are not in vain. In this spirit, I have gone through endless worries for years, worked, tortured myself with decisions, and am today more than ever convinced that at the end of this struggle will stand a glorious success, unique in our history.

Whoever gained such victories as you, my soldiers, who was not broken by such terrible setbacks, who so heroically endured and suffered as our homeland did, who worked so diligently as our entire Volk, cannot be preordained to perish, but is destined to live! Therefore, my confidence is today stronger than ever before. In the end, we survived with success this worst year of setbacks in which we were virtually abandoned by all our allies in Europe. World powers have been trying for years now to bring about the collapse of the German Reich. In the formerly allied, yet today betrayed countries, people are beginning to realize that this struggle is a conflict of life and death and that no nation can avoid a clear decision. Everywhere the hollowness and meaninglessness of the assurances of our enemies reveal themselves. As soon as they occupy a territory, order collapses and chaos ensues. Democracy is unfit to solve even the smallest task on this continent. Its political anarchy is followed by economic chaos, and with these two comes misery. The “liberated” areas of Europe at most lose their German order and gain instead international unemployment with the usual hunger and need. After all, this most densely populated continent in the world can live only through a planned utilization of all its individual energies, and at the same time through a strict taming of its egotistical drives. Only two leaderships in Europe have honestly tried to deal with this problem: the National Socialist one in Germany and the Fascist one in Italy. To what extent the solution of these questions succeeded in particular

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in Germany is best proved by the discipline that we still have even in spite of the heaviest burdens in the sixth year of the war. I will try to see to it, my soldiers, that, at home, the leadership and initiative of the party supports your fight, that the nation is provided with life's necessities, and that all destructive forces, no matter who they are and what posts they occupy, will be destroyed.

However, I also expect of you, more than ever before, that you will do your duty especially in this sixth year of the fight of life and death; that the officers and men of the entire Wehrmacht, army, navy, Luftwaffe, and Waffen SS realize that the existence or nonexistence of our Volk depends on their deployment; that all the other organizations—at their head the newly-born Volkssturm—the Reich labor service, and all the other formations of our movement in the Wehrmacht's service, as well as the women and girls at the fighting or defending front, will follow your example. The year 1945 will demand of us the utmost in courage and initiative. At the same time, it will be the year of the historic turn of events. The soldiers of the allied European governments and nations¹⁵ who march on our side represent the cells for a rebuilding of this continent, which is our shared homeland, in which our ancestors lived, in which they struggled with fate throughout the millennia, and which today they defend unto death.

The Almighty, who has led our Volk in its previous fight for life and weighed, rewarded, and judged it in accordance with its merits, will this time encounter a generation worthy of His blessings. You were the unfading witnesses for this in the past years, my German soldiers, and you will be that all the more in the coming year!

On New Year's Day, Hitler received Göring, Keitel, Jodl, Guderian, and other prominent persons at the Ziegenberg headquarters and accepted their best wishes for the new year.¹⁶

On the same day, a special celebration was the presentation of the Golden Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds to Lieutenant Colonel Rudel at the Führer headquarters. Hitler promoted him to the rank of Colonel "in appreciation of his incessantly proved great heroism, his singular flying and fighting successes."¹⁷ It was the first and last time Hitler could award his newest medal, which was limited to twelve recipients.

There was hardly any mention of Hitler's New Year's offensive in Alsace in the OKW reports. Even though the Rhine was crossed north and south of Strasbourg, the military did not achieve any noteworthy successes. Guderian spoke about "playing with battalions in the Vosges."¹⁸

The New Year's offensive in the direction of Budapest, led by Generals Wöhler and Balck, together with SS Gruppenführer and Lieutenant General of the Waffen SS Gille, met with initial successes.

January 10, 1945

However, as the Russians launched a counteroffensive, it quickly deteriorated into a terrible disaster.

On January 9, Guderian returned to the Ziegenberg headquarters to report on the impending major Russian attack. He requested additional forces, which Hitler denied him:¹⁹

The east [eastern front] must help itself and make do with what it has.

Hitler called Guderian's documentation of Russian troop strengths "completely idiotic." In spite of all the big talk by Hitler, the discussions of the situation on January 9 and 10 with Göring, Keitel, Jodel, Guderian and others²⁰ revealed the catastrophic situation on all German fronts. For hours, Hitler and his generals debated what should have been done and what could have been done to augment the strength of the German Luftwaffe, reinforce anti-aircraft artillery, improve the equipment of the panzers, and so on.

However, all these reflections were a waste of time. Even if Hitler and his generals had waged the war differently, the outcome would still have been the same. The German war potential was simply not up to the task. All efforts and strategies were in vain.

During the catastrophic winter of 1941–1942 (the defeat of the German army in front of Moscow), Hitler had supported the collection of winter clothes by opportunistic decrees.²¹ However, the clothes had reached the front much too late or not at all. The winter of 1944–1945 proved to be another catastrophe, and Hitler again ordered a clothing collection for the Wehrmacht and the German Volkssturm. Therefore on January 10 he signed the following decree on the "protection of the collection of clothes and pieces of equipment for the Wehrmacht and the German Volkssturm":²²

Führer Headquarters, January 10, 1945

The collection of clothes and pieces of equipment represents a renewed sacrifice by the German Volk for its soldiers. I therefore order the following:

Whoever enriches himself by collected items or those designated for collection by authorized personnel, or withdraws such items from their use, will be punished by death.

This decree will come into force with its announcement on the air. It will apply to the Greater German Reich, the General Government, and the areas occupied by German troops.

Adolf Hitler

January 16, 1945

On January 12, Hitler created a new medal: a “Badge for the Destruction of Low-Flying Aircraft.” It was his last medal and a rather sad one, too: it was to be awarded for shooting down airplanes with “hand weapons or small-calibre automatic weapons.” Hitler’s decree read as follows:²³

Führer Headquarters, January 12, 1945

The downing of enemy low-flying aircraft by all available means is especially important. I therefore order the introduction of a Badge for the Destruction of Low-Flying Aircraft for the downing of airplanes by hand weapons or small-calibre automatic weapons. The implementing regulations will be decreed by the chief of the Wehrmacht high command.

Adolf Hitler²⁴

On this day Hitler also personally congratulated Göring on his fifty-second birthday.²⁵

On the same day the major Russian offensive under Marshal Konev began on the central sector of the eastern front. Within two weeks the Russians reached Upper Silesia and the Oder River. On the first day they had already broken through the German lines at Baranov. Two days later, the Russian armies were threatening Kielce.

At the Ziegenberg headquarters, Hitler was beginning to liven up. On January 15, he ordered the immediate transfer of the Panzer Corps *Grossdeutschland* to the vicinity of Kielce in East Prussia. A look at the map revealed the technical impossibility of carrying out this order, not to mention the surprising speed of the Russian advances. Guderian recalled that he refused to pass this order on.²⁶ Hitler was furious and, on the same day, he decided to leave the Ziegenberg headquarters and return to Berlin. His plans for an offensive in the west had once and for all come to an end.

On January 16, Hitler showed up in Berlin. In the somewhat wrecked but still habitable Reich Chancellery, Guderian informed him in a presentation of how precarious the situation was.²⁷ As always, Hitler knew what to do: he simply had to attack Hungary in order to confuse the Russians! He ordered the Sixth Panzer Army to Hungary. Supposedly the maintenance of the Hungarian oil fields was important.

Guderian was not convinced of the necessity and possible success of this operation. He tried to persuade Hitler at least to order an evacuation of Kurland, where the German Army Group North was cut off on land. This proved just as useless as his earlier attempt to get Hitler

January 21, 1945

to give him troops from the west. Hitler now named Schörner as the commander in chief of Army Group Center.

From this time on, Guderian would make daily presentations to Hitler at the Reich Chancellery. Guderian's headquarters were located only thirty kilometers away at Zossen.

On January 17, Hitler received news that Warsaw could not be defended by the weak [German] forces there. He was beside himself with anger and ordered that Warsaw must be held at all costs. Nevertheless, a day later, Warsaw fell. Hitler then ordered Guderian to prepare the responsible officers of the general staff for an interrogation. When Guderian tried to protect his subordinates, Hitler said the following:²⁸

No, I do not want to hit you but the general staff. I cannot tolerate it that a group of intellectuals presumes to talk their superiors into buying their views. However, that is the system of the general staff, and I want to put an end to this system.

The following night, Hitler ordered Lieutenant General Maisel, who had already helped him eliminate Rommel, to arrest the general staff officers von Bonin, von dem Knesebeck, and von Christen at the point of a submachine gun.²⁹

On January 19, Kaltenbrunner and Gestapo chief Müller interrogated Guderian for hours on the Warsaw affair. Events at the eastern front, however, followed in such rapid succession that the whole Warsaw matter stepped into the background.

On January 21, Hitler sent a telex to all military commanders, down to divisional commanders, and again prohibited them from taking any action on their own and from retreating. It read as follows:³⁰

January 21, 1945

High Command of the Armed Forces (Operations Staff)

I order as follows:

1. The commanders in chief, commanding generals, and divisional commanders are personally responsible to me for reporting in good time:

- (a) every decision to carry out an operational movement;
- (b) every attack planned at divisional level and upwards which does not conform with the general directives laid down by the high command;
- (c) every offensive action in quiet sectors of the front, over and above normal shock-troop activities, which is calculated to draw the enemy's attention to the sector;
- (d) every plan for disengaging or withdrawing forces;
- (e) every plan for surrendering a position, a local strongpoint, or a fortress;

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They must ensure that I have time to intervene in this decision if I think fit, and that my counterorders can reach the frontline troops in time.

2. Commanders in chief, commanding generals, and divisional commanders, the chiefs of the general staffs, and each individual officer of the general staff, or officers employed on the general staffs, are responsible to me that every report made to me either directly or through the normal channels should contain nothing but the unvarnished truth. In the future, I shall impose draconian punishment on any attempt at concealment, whether deliberate or arising from carelessness or oversight.

3. I must point out that the maintenance of signals communications, particularly in heavy fighting and critical situations, is a prerequisite for the conduct of battle. Each officer commanding troops is responsible to me for ensuring that these communications, both to higher headquarters and to subordinate commanders, are not broken, and for seeing that, by exhausting every means and engaging himself personally, permanent communication in every case is ensured with the commanders above and below.

Adolf Hitler

How little effect such morale-boosting orders had at this time was evidenced by the capitulation without a fight of the Fortress Lötzen in East Prussia on January 23. The superiority of the Russians on the one hand, and the battle-weariness of the German troops on the other hand, were more compelling than Hitler's orders. Of course, he would never admit this. Instead, he wanted to court-martial the responsible officers, Colonel General Reinhardt and Lieutenant General von Hossbach, because they were allegedly "hand in glove with Seydlitz."³¹

On January 23, the following official statement was published:³²

According to the OKW report, the enemy penetrated Allenstein yesterday after heavy fighting. So as not to allow the national memorial at Tannenberg to fall into the hands of the Bolsheviks, it was dynamited by German troops. The coffins of Field Marshal von Hindenburg and his wife, as well as the flags of the glorious East and West Prussian regiments, had earlier been brought to safety.³³ The enemy found only ruins at the monument's site. As soon as this area is again liberated by German troops, the Tannenberg memorial will be rebuilt at the same location.

On January 24, Hitler addressed a telegram to five thousand exchanged, wounded soldiers in Upper Bavaria. It was read to them in two Upper Bavarian district towns by Gauleiter Giesler:³⁴

My Comrades!

In the name of the German Volk, I most cordially welcome you to the homeland. Our joy is tied to yours that, as seriously wounded German soldiers, you were finally able to return home from war captivity.

January 24, 1945

As your supreme commander, I thank you on this day for your brave deployment in the freedom fight of our Volk and for all the sacrifices that you had to make for it.

The homeland is worthy of you. It has endured great suffering in our Volk's fateful struggle of life and death. It bears this with an attitude that is worthy of a frontline soldier. It will do everything to help you, who are now spiritually restored, lessen the physical suffering caused by your wounds.

I also greet the returning members of the medical services and express to them my appreciation of their dutiful frontline deployment for the care of their wounded comrades.

Adolf Hitler

On January 25, a reshuffling of the following high SA posts was announced:³⁵

Upon the suggestion of the SA chief of staff, the Führer has newly appointed the following SA leaders as leaders of SA groups: as leader of the SA Group Südmark, SA Obergruppenführer Brennecke, previously leader of the SA Group Pomerania; as leader of the SA Group Pomerania, SA Obergruppenführer Nibbe, previously leader of the SA Group Südmark; as leader of the SA Group Saxony, SA Gruppenführer Ivers, previously leader of the SA Group Vistula; as leader of the SA Group Vistula, SA Obergruppenführer Orth, previously bureau chief of the SA high command.

The previous acting leader of the Group Saxony, Brigadeführer Rabe, has taken over the post of the Gau chief of staff in the German Volkssturm.

The reorganization of the SA groups surrounding the Reich capital proved anew how suspicious Hitler was of the SA. It was characteristic that he could not bring himself to appoint a new leader of the SA Group Berlin-Brandenburg. This position had been vacant since the hanging of SA Obergruppenführer Graf Helldorff.

On January 24, Guderian called on von Ribbentrop in order to discuss the initiation of peace negotiations with him, in view of the catastrophic military situation. Von Ribbentrop was appalled and refused to discuss it. When Guderian arrived at the Reich Chancellery for the evening discussion of the situation, Hitler greeted him with these words:³⁶

When the chief of staff of the general staff goes to see the Reich foreign minister and informs him of the situation in the east with the objective of achieving an armistice with the western powers, then he is committing high treason.

Hitler said this only to frighten Guderian. He never took any concrete steps against him.

January 27, 1945

Hitler, Guderian, Göring, and Jodl, among others, met again for a discussion of the situation on January 27, which took place at the Reich Chancellery at 4:00 p.m.³⁷ They engaged in endless talk about what could be done to improve the situation. Hitler, with his head in the clouds, claimed the following:

The Americans lost eighty-five thousand men this month. That amounts to fifty percent of their total losses in the [First] World War.³⁸

At the same time, he announced a “great armament program.” More than nine hundred thousand Sturmpistolen (machine pistols) would be produced every month, he claimed, not to mention the new Volksgewehr.³⁹

When a suggestion was made to move six thousand SS men from the Lichtenfelde barracks to the eastern front, Hitler quickly returned to reality and refused this transfer categorically. While he did not state his reasons for doing so, it was sufficiently clear that he needed those men for his own personal security in the event of a revolt in Berlin.

In the course of the conversation, Hitler, Göring, and Jodl discussed Generals Student, Hausser, Blankowitz, and others. Oddly enough, they hoped that an offer to accept a surrender would come from the English. After all, they had to be frightened out of their wits in view of the Russian advances, the men at Hitler’s headquarters believed.

Hitler: I don’t really know. Do you think that the English are still following all Russian developments with the same inner enthusiasm?

Jodl: No, certainly not. The plans were entirely different. Perhaps the full extent of this will become visible only later.

Göring: That we hold on over there and let the Russians conquer all of Germany in the meantime is certainly not what they want. If things go on like this, we will get a telegram in a few days [i.e., saying that “the English want to join the Germans”]. There is nothing to the view that we do not let them in at all and that, according to the present view of the enemy, we are holding out like crazy in the west while the Russians keep moving into Germany and occupying practically all of Germany.

Hitler: In that respect, the national committee, this organization of traitors, could be of a certain significance. If the Russians really proclaim a national government, then fear will take hold of England.

Jodl: Yes, the English have always regarded the Russians with suspicion.

Hitler: I have arranged for something to fall into their hands, namely, the report that the Russians are deploying two hundred thousand of our men under the command of German officers completely infected by

January 28, 1945

Communism, and that they want to let them go on the march. I asked that this report be dropped into English hands. I gave it to the foreign minister [von Ribbentrop]. That is something that will have an effect on them, as if you stick them with a needle.

Göring: They entered the war so that we wouldn't get to the east but not so that the east would get all the way to the Atlantic.

Hitler: That is perfectly clear. It would be unnatural. English papers are already asking with bitterness: Does the war make any sense?

This was Hitler's old favorite theory that he would gain England's friendship by preventing a Russian expansion to the Atlantic. In reality, the English had always, at least in the twentieth century, considered German expansionism much more dangerous than Russian expansionism.

On January 28, Hitler received Quisling at the Reich Chancellery. It was his last reception of a diplomat. The communiqué read as follows:⁴⁰

At his headquarters, the Führer received the Norwegian prime minister Vidkun Quisling for a trusting and heartfelt exchange of views. . . . The Führer again confirmed his resolve, as already conveyed by Reichskommissar Terboven to the Norwegian public in September 1943, that, following the victorious conclusion of the European fateful struggle, Norway would be restored to complete freedom and independence,⁴¹ upon assumption of those obligations that result from the joint assurance of the security of the European community of nations.

The talks at the Führer's were attended by the Reich foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Reich minister and chief of the Reich Chancellery Dr. Lammers, the head of the party chancellery, Martin Bormann, and Reichskommissar Terboven. Prime Minister Quisling was accompanied by his Norwegian ambassador Stören and his adjutant Captain Sundberg.

On January 28, Hitler sent out the following telex regarding the Volkssturm:⁴²

Subject: Employment of the Volkssturm

Experience in the east has shown that Volkssturm, emergency (Alarm),⁴³ and reserve units have little fighting value when left to themselves, and can be quickly destroyed. The fighting value of these units, which are for the most part strong in numbers but weak in the equipment required for modern battle, is immeasurably higher when they go into action with troops of the regular army in the field.

I therefore order: where Volkssturm, emergency, and reserve units are available, together with regular units, in any battle sector, mixed battle groups

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(brigades) will be formed under unified command, so as to stiffen and support the Volkssturm, emergency, and reserve units.

Adolf Hitler

In late January, Hitler made an excursion to Goebbels's apartment in Schwanenwerder near Berlin and had tea with the Goebbels family. Yet, fearing an assassination attempt, he had his servant Linge bring along his own thermos of tea and also a packet of cookies. They talked about the old days. The Goebbels family was much impressed by the honor of Hitler's visit, the only one of its kind in five years.⁴⁴

That Goebbels was ready to do everything Hitler wanted in the fight to the bitter end was evidenced by his order on the securing of frontline deployments, an order which he issued on January 26 in his capacity as "Reich plenipotentiary for total war deployment." It began with the following words:⁴⁵

The Führer has ordered a review of the Wehrmacht, Waffen SS, and police in the war zones in the homeland with the objective of freeing a maximum number of soldiers for transfer to the front. It is the duty of the officers of the Wehrmacht, Waffen SS, and police to furnish all required information and documents to the commissioner carrying out this review. By virtue of special legal authorization, the following is ordered: [a list of punishments in case of violation of this law followed, including prison sentences and the death penalty].

On January 30, Hitler spoke to the public from the Reich Chancellery in commemoration of his seizure of power for the last time.

After the "party narrative," Hitler again proclaimed his "unchanging will not to shrink from anything in this struggle in order to rescue our Volk from this most gruesome fate of all time." He once more tried to frighten the English with the specter of Bolshevism and prophesied: "Not only will England not be in a position to tame Bolshevism, but its own development will increasingly follow the inevitable course of this degenerative disease."

Hitler again claimed that he ruled by divine right. That his life had been spared on July 20, he regarded as a "confirmation" of his mission.

Hitler's radio address read as follows:⁴⁶

German Volksgenossen! National Socialists!

When, twelve years ago, the now deceased Reich president von Hindenburg entrusted me, as the leader of the strongest party, with the chancellorship, Germany faced the same situation at home as it does today abroad with regard to international politics. Initiated and carried out according

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to plan through the Treaty of Versailles, the process of the economic destruction and annihilation of the democratic republic led to a situation that was slowly being regarded as permanent: nearly seven million unemployed, seven million part-time workers, ruined peasants, destroyed trade, and a corresponding breakdown of commerce. The German ports were only ship cemeteries. The financial situation of the Reich threatened at any moment to lead to the collapse not only of the nation, but also of the *Länder* [provinces] and the [local] communities. However, what was decisive was the following: behind this systematic economic destruction of Germany was the specter of Asian Bolshevism, just as today. And just as on a large scale today, the bourgeois world on a much smaller scale was completely incapable, in the years before our seizure of power, of effectively opposing this development.

Even after the collapse of the year 1918, it was still not recognized that an old world was passing away and a new world was being born. It was not a question of supporting by all means what had become decayed or rotten and artificially preserving it, but a question of the necessity of replacing it with something visibly healthy. A bygone social order had broken down, and any attempt to maintain it was bound to fail. Thus, it was no different from what is happening now on a large scale, when likewise the bourgeois states are doomed and only *Volksgemeinschaften* which possess a clear orientation and are ideologically fortified have a chance of surviving this gravest European crisis in many centuries.

We were granted only six years of peace after January 30, 1933. In these six years, we secured so many tremendous accomplishments and planned even greater ones; so many and such great things that we all the more elicited the envy of our democratic, good-for-nothing surrounding world.

What was decisive, however, was that we succeeded with superhuman efforts in these six years in reorganizing the defense of the German *Volkskörper*, which meant not so much giving it the material military strength as the spiritual power of resistance necessary for self-assertion.

The gruesome fate which is today overwhelming the east and which exterminates tens and hundreds of thousands of human beings in villages and market towns, in the countryside and in the cities, will, with the utmost effort, be parried and overcome by us, despite all setbacks and severe trials. If this is at all possible, then it is because, since the year 1933, an inner change has taken place in the German *Volk*. If a Germany of the Treaty of Versailles still existed today, Europe would long have been swept away by the Central Asian floods. There is no need to discuss this with blockheads who will never die out and who are of the opinion that a defenseless Germany would not have become the victim of this Jewish-international world conspiracy because of its impotence.

That is nothing other than turning the laws of nature upside down! Since when does the fox not kill the defenseless goose just because the goose is not aggressive by nature, and since when does a wolf become a pacifist because sheep do not wear armor? That—as I said earlier—there are bourgeois sheep who believe that nonsense in all earnestness just proves how necessary it was to eliminate an era whose educational system was capable of breeding such

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personalities, sustaining them, and granting them political influence. Long before National Socialism came to power, a merciless fight against this Jewish-Asiatic Bolshevism was already raging. If it did not invade Europe as early as the years 1919–1920, it failed only because it was too weak at the time and too poorly armed. Its attempt to eliminate Poland was not abandoned because of compassion for the Polish, but because of the lost battle of Warsaw.⁴⁷ Its intention to destroy Hungary was never realized, not because it reconsidered but because the Bolshevik force could not be sustained militarily. Likewise the attempt to shatter Germany was not abandoned because its success was no longer desired, but because it was not possible to eliminate the rest of our Volk's natural will to resist. Jewry then immediately started the systematic breakdown of our Volk. By so doing, it found the best allies in those stubborn citizens who did not wish to admit that the age of the bourgeois world was over and would never return, that the epoch of unrestrained economic liberalism belonged to the past and could only lead to collapse, that the great tasks of the present can only be managed by the authoritarian, concentrated strength of the nation based on the law of equal rights for all and resulting equal duties, which, in turn, means that the fulfillment of these equal duties will inevitably lead to equal rights.

Thus, National Socialism, in the midst of a gigantic economic, social, and cultural reconstruction, gave the German Volk an armament, particularly in terms of education, that alone was suited to be transformed into military values. The power of resistance of our nation has grown so tremendously since January 30, 1933, that it can no longer be compared with the earlier epoch. To maintain this inner power of resistance is therefore the surest guarantor of the final victory!

If today Europe is the victim of a serious illness, then the affected states will either have to overcome it by summoning their entire and utmost power of resistance, or they will be doomed. But the convalescent, that is the survivor, overcomes the climaxes of such an illness only in a crisis that greatly weakens him. It is therefore all the more our unchanging will not to shrink from anything in this struggle to rescue our Volk from this most gruesome fate of all time, and to obey steadfastly and loyally the commandment of the preservation of our nation. The Almighty has created our Volk. By defending its existence, we defend His creation. That this defense is connected with nameless misfortune, suffering, and pain without equal, lets us become all the more attached to this Volk. However, it also lets us gain that hardness which is necessary for doing our duty even at the worst crisis points. This means not only our duty toward the decent, eternal Germany, but also our duty toward those few men without honor who divorce themselves from their Volk. Therefore, there is only one commandment for us in this fateful struggle: Who fights honorably can save his own life and that of his loved ones; who attacks the nation from behind, as a spineless coward, will under any circumstances die a shameful death. That National Socialism has awakened and reinforced this spirit in our German Volk is its greatest accomplishment. Once the bells of peace ringing out after this mighty international drama has subsided, then

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people will realize what the German Volk owes to this spiritual rebirth: it is no less than its existence in this world.

A few months and weeks ago, the Allied statesmen still spoke openly about Germany's fate. Then a few papers admonished them that it would be wiser if they would rather make promises, even though there was no intention of keeping these promises. As a relentless National Socialist and fighter for my Volk, I would like to assure these other statesmen once and for all at this hour that any attempt to impress National Socialist Germany with phrases of Wilson's type assumes a naiveté that the present Germany does not know. However, it is not at all important that in the democracies political activities and lies go hand in hand. What is important is that any promise these statesmen give a nation is completely insignificant today, because they are no longer in a position to follow through on any such assurance. That is no different from one sheep's assuring another that it will protect it against the tiger. In opposition to that I repeat my prophesy: Not only will England not be in a position to tame Bolshevism, but its own development will follow the inevitable course of this degenerative disease. The democracies can no longer get rid of the spirits they themselves have summoned up from the steppes of Asia.

All the small European nations which capitulated trusting in the Allied assurances are heading for their complete extermination. Whether they meet this fate earlier or later is—in view of its inevitability—completely without significance. The Kremlin Jews are moved exclusively by tactical considerations in their decisions to proceed with brute force in one case and temporary restraint in the other. The end will always be the same.

Germany will never suffer this fate! The victory gained twelve years ago in the interior of our country guarantees this. Whatever our enemies may come up with, whatever suffering they may cause the German cities, the German landscapes, and above all our people, pales in comparison with the incorrigible misery and misfortune that would hit all of us, should the plutocratic-Bolshevik conspiracy win. It is, therefore, all the more necessary on the twelfth anniversary of the seizure of power to make one's heart stronger than ever before, and to harden oneself in the sacred resolve to take up arms, no matter where, no matter under what circumstances, until victory finally crowns our efforts. On this day, I would like to leave no doubt about one other thing: in spite of a hostile environment, at one time in the past I chose my way in the depth of my being, and I followed this path as an unknown, nameless man, up to the final victory. Often proclaimed dead and always wished dead, at long last I was the victor! My present life is likewise being exclusively determined by the duties incumbent on me.

Together, they amount to only one duty, namely, to work for my Volk and to fight for it. Only He can absolve me from this duty who has called on me to take it on.⁴⁸ It was in Providence's hands to eliminate me through the bomb that went off only one-and-a-half meters away from me on July 20 and, thereby, to end my life's work. That the Almighty protected me on that day is something I regard as a confirmation of the mission I was assigned. I will therefore continue in the coming years to follow the path of the

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uncompromising representation of the interests of my Volk, ignoring all need and danger, and filled with the sacred conviction that the Almighty will in the end not abandon him who wanted nothing other all his life than to spare his Volk a fate it never deserved in terms of its numbers and significance.

I therefore appeal in this hour to the entire German Volk, but especially to my old comrades in arms and all soldiers who are at its head, to arm themselves with an even greater, hardened spirit of resistance, until, as once before, we can lay on the grave of the dead of this mighty struggle a wreath with a bow inscribed: But you have triumphed in the end!⁴⁹

I expect every German therefore to fulfill his duty to the utmost, and to take on every sacrifice that will be and must be demanded of him. I expect of every healthy man that he risk life and limb in this battle. I expect every ill, infirm, or otherwise indispensable [*sic*] man to work with the utmost effort. I expect the inhabitants of the cities to forge the weapons for this fight, and I expect every farmer to give bread to the soldiers and workers of this fight by limiting his own consumption as much as possible. I expect all women and girls to support this fight with the utmost zeal, as they have done up to now. I turn to the German youth with particular confidence. By forming such a committed community, we have the right to step before the Almighty and ask Him for His mercy and blessings. After all, a nation cannot do more than this: those who can fight, fight; those who can work, work; and all come together to sacrifice with only one thought in mind: to secure freedom, national honor, and a future for life.

No matter how grave the crisis may be at this moment, we will overcome it in the end, in spite of everything, thanks to our unchangeable will, our readiness to sacrifice, and our abilities. We will survive this misery. In this fight, too, it is not Central Asia that will win but Europe! And at its head will be the one nation which, for one-and-a-half millennia, has represented Europe as its hegemonic power against the east and will represent it in the future: our Greater German Reich, the German nation!

On January 30, Hitler awarded Oak Leaf Knight's Crosses to the following SS commanders in the Budapest area:⁵⁰ SS Obergruppenführer and General of the Waffen SS Pfeffer-Wildenbruch (Ninth SS Army Corps); SS Brigadeführer and Major General of the Waffen SS Rumohr (Eighth SS Cavalry Division "Florian Geyer"); and SS Brigadeführer and Major General of the Waffen SS Zehender (Twenty-Second SS Volunteer Cavalry Division). SS Oberführer and Colonel General of the Waffen SS Dörner received the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds.

No special festivities in commemoration of January 30 took place. On the other hand, money was collected in cutoff "fortresses," significantly not for the Winterhilfswerk, but for the Red Cross. As mentioned before, the party and its organizations had lost their

February 4, 1945

significance. The commander of the Fortress Schneidemühl (West Prussia), Lieutenant Colonel Remlinger, received the following telegram from Himmler:⁵¹

Accept my appreciation of, and gratitude to, you and your courageous soldiers at the fortress Schneidemühl for your attitude in the battle and your willingness to sacrifice, as evident in your donation of a thousand Reichsmarks to the German Red Cross on January 30. Continue to hold the Schneidemühl!

Heil Hitler!

Yours,

H. Himmler, Reichsführer SS

On January 31, Hitler issued several orders which were sent out in the form of telexes. One, for example, dealt with the expansion of field fortifications, another with the housing and deployment of V weapons.⁵²

On February 4, Hitler signed this order on the transfer of refugees from the east to Denmark:⁵³

In order to relieve the transport situation in the Reich immediately, I order as follows:

Our compatriots temporarily moved back from the eastern part of the Reich will be accommodated in Denmark as well as in the Reich. In particular, those civilians will be evacuated to Denmark who

(1) can be moved by the navy, without impinging upon the day-to-day movement of troops and supplies by sea, or who

(2) have been landed in western Baltic ports, including Stettin and Swinemünde, and must be moved from there by rail.

The Reich plenipotentiary will cooperate with the local Danish authorities in arranging suitable accommodation for evacuated civilians. The armed forces will afford all possible assistance in this respect.

Adolf Hitler

Hitler's discussions of the situation in February 1945 were done in style. His huge office in the Reich Chancellery was still intact and formed a splendid frame for the meetings, especially in contrast to the conference bunkers and barracks at his headquarters in East Prussia, the Ukraine, or the Ziegenberg. The number of participants in these conferences had also greatly increased. Sometimes repeatedly during the day and in the middle of the night, he summoned his great military experts, Göring, Dönitz, Keitel, Jodl, and Guderian, to his office. It did not concern Hitler that it took many of these men a long time to reach and leave the Reich Chancellery, and that it was quite dangerous for them because of the air raids.

February 12, 1945

These discussions of the situation hardly seemed to differ from the grandiose meetings at the beginning of the war. Almost all the same men still attended them. One thing, however, had greatly changed: the number of soldiers fighting at the front was rapidly decreasing.

A young cavalry captain with the headquarters of the general staff, Gerhard Boldt, vividly described two of these discussions of the situation in February.⁵⁴

The topic discussed at the first discussion was the evacuation of Kurland, something Guderian had already demanded repeatedly.⁵⁵ On this occasion, it was Dönitz who brought up the subject. Hitler was almost screaming when he replied as follows:

I have already said once before that a retreat by the Kurland troops is out of the question. I cannot do without this material. Besides, I must take Sweden into consideration.⁵⁶ We can withdraw one division. Guderian, draw up a corresponding proposal for me by tomorrow.

That same night, Guderian and Boldt were forced to make their way back again to the Reich Chancellery from Zossen. The second discussion began at 1:00 a.m., thirty-seven steps below the earth in the Führerbunker because of the danger of air raids.

Guderian gave a presentation on the situation at the eastern front and gave details of the strength of the Russian units. This time Hitler did not call these figures “completely idiotic”.⁵⁷ He made no reply at all, probably because he did not know what to reply. Nevertheless, he still wanted to make a scene for the benefit of the participants in the conference, who looked expectantly at him. For some time, he quietly sat in his chair and did not move. Then, he slowly got up, took a few shuffling steps, and stared ahead. Suddenly, he stopped and dismissed the officers “very quickly and very coolly.”

On February 12, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin issued a joint declaration at the end of their conference in Yalta, which had lasted from February 4 to 11. At the Soviet holiday resort in the Crimea, the Allied leaders expressed their determination to destroy Hitler’s Reich for good and to divide up Germany into zones of occupation. A further result of the Yalta Conference was the plan for the foundation of the United Nations.

Oddly, it was precisely at this time that the German foreign ministry put out peace-feelers through its representatives in Stockholm. This move even had Hitler’s approval!⁵⁸

February 13, 1945

Of course, Hitler would have liked to conclude peace in view of the disastrous situation. However, he was not ready to make any compromises. He permitted the peace-feelers but continued to display his haughty disdain for this move to his entourage:

Nothing will come out of it, but if you really insist, go ahead and try.

Nevertheless, he secretly hoped that something might “come out of it” after all. He was very disappointed when he heard that the enemies insisted on an unconditional surrender and his departure from office. Even though this demand was self-evident after all that had happened, its effect on the power-hungry German Führer was like that of the red cape on the bull. The idea that anybody besides him would have a say in Germany drove him wild!

When the state secretary with the foreign ministry, von Steengracht, and Bormann’s brother explained to him, “The English will reject all agreements until you are deposed,” he acted like a madman. Even his servant Linge, who was present on this occasion, did not recall ever having witnessed such a fit of rage.⁵⁹ Hitler jumped up, hit the table, and screamed the following:

No negotiations must take place! If there are to be negotiations, then it is I who will lead them!

In those weeks of February, Hitler was very much predisposed to making scenes. Guderian, who had never personally witnessed any of Hitler’s outbursts, was to get a first taste of Hitler’s acting talents on February 13.⁶⁰

At the discussion of the situation on this day, the topic discussed was a limited German offensive along the Oder. The objective was to establish a land connection with West Prussia. The attack was supposed to start on February 15. Guderian demanded that Hitler have army general Wenck assist “superior commander” Himmler. Hitler would not hear of it. A two-hour argument between Guderian and Hitler followed. Then Hitler decided to make a big scene. He raised his fists, his cheeks colored, he was beside himself with rage—at least Guderian thought he was. After his outburst, Hitler walked up and down the edge of the carpet, then stopped right in front of Guderian and hurled the next accusation at him. He shouted and shouted, his eyes bulged from their sockets, and the veins at his temples swelled. Guderian remained unshaken, even though it cost him great effort. As always when faced

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with such behavior, Hitler finally gave in. All of a sudden, he stopped right in front of Himmler and said:

Well, Himmler, General Wenck joins your staff this very night and leads the attack.

Then, he turned to Guderian with his most engaging smile and said the following:

Please continue your presentation. Tonight, the general staff has won a battle.

Well, the battles Hitler allowed the general staff to win were truly unusual!⁶¹

On the night of February 13 to 14, the metropolis of Dresden experienced heavy bombardment by the Royal Air Force. This air raid enraged the National Socialist rulers, who, strangely enough, had assumed that Dresden, as an old center of culture, would be spared.

The Royal Air Force's strategic air-raid squadrons paid little attention to the cultural or historic importance of the cities on which they dropped their bombs. The British government had elected the targets of the various missions in accordance with population statistics. All sites with a population over one hundred thousand inhabitants on September 1, 1939, became targets for the air raids. The government in London and the BBC repeatedly announced this intention. The broadcasts specifically mentioned cities such as Würzburg and Dresden. The German government knew this or at the very least should have known. It was sheer madness and utterly irresponsible of the German civilian administration to direct thousands of refugees from the eastern and western outreaches of the Reich to these areas. Even dislocated Berlin bureaucrats and their office staffs headed for these two cities as late as 1945. Arguments that these sites would be spared because of humanitarian or cultural considerations were completely unfounded. Had not German propaganda claimed that the Royal Air Force particularly bombed targets where German hospitals or cultural monuments were located?

The only argument to be made in defense of the administrative officers for their false assessment was that, up to this point, the two cities had been spared for no apparent reason. However, the two population centers had escaped bombardment for now because of a technical shortcoming of the British radar equipment. From across the

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Channel British radar was unable to chart the planes' approach to Dresden and Würzburg. Once hastily constructed radar installations were operational on the continent, the day for a fatal air strike against the cities had come. Bombers set out from the newly constructed radar base in the Vosges Mountains for the attack on Dresden on the night of February 13, and nearly half of Dresden was destroyed.⁶²

After the air raid, many National Socialists called for retribution in the form of lynching or executing Allied flyers who had been downed or made emergency landings, and by withdrawing from the Geneva Convention. Goebbels in particular was adamant in that kind of demand.⁶³ Hitler himself was aware that the Allies' air raids did not constitute a violation of international law. Because of its novelty, regulations on the conduct of aerial warfare were not in force before the war, in contrast to war on land and at sea, which were subject to numerous international conventions. Hitler had had such air raids flown on a number of English population centers in the years 1940 and 1941 and declared: "We will erase their cities." Accordingly, in 1943, he had refused to adopt the methods of the Japanese, who had executed American pilots following an air raid on Tokyo.⁶⁴

Now, in February 1945, a withdrawal from the Geneva Convention would have been what Hitler wanted, not so much because of the Allies' air attacks, but because of the behavior of German soldiers in the west. They appeared to him to be far too willing to surrender, since they counted on decent treatment in captivity. In the east, the German troops fought more doggedly because they feared that the Russians would treat them as Hitler had treated the Russian prisoners of war, whom he had denied all rights based on the untruthful claim that the Soviet Union was not a signatory of the Geneva Convention.⁶⁵

In Hitler's view, an abrogation of the Geneva Convention would lead the German soldiers in the west to put up a greater resistance and fight as doggedly as those in the east. Hitler explained:⁶⁶

That [surrender without a fight] is the product of our humanitarian convention, the Geneva Convention, which we uphold at all costs, because it offers us "colossal advantages." All that is over. This is what is decisive. If I explain to somebody that I will not show consideration to prisoners, but that I will instead treat the enemy prisoners mercilessly regardless of reprisals, then one or the other will think twice about desertion.

Hitler told Guderian the following:⁶⁷

February 24, 1945

Our men fight much better at the eastern front. That they capitulate so quickly in the west is the result of this stupid Geneva Convention, which assures them of mild treatment following their capture We must abrogate this stupid convention.

However, nothing ever came of these theoretical discussions.⁶⁸ Hitler hoped that the English would soon ask his help against the Russians and he did not wish to provoke them needlessly by abrogating the Geneva Convention.

On February 19, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram “with heartfelt content” to Sven Hedin on his eightieth birthday.⁶⁹ On the same day, Hitler awarded von Rundstedt the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords.⁷⁰

On February 24, Hitler made a proclamation on the anniversary of the party’s foundation. It was read publicly by Hermann Esser in Munich.⁷¹ In his message, Hitler neglected to mention that he was back at the Reich Chancellery and acted as though he was writing from his military headquarters in the east or west. Of course, he could have gone to Munich himself, but he feared that his old party comrades would boo him or look at him with silent reproach in their eyes.

In his appeal, he repeated the old phrases, which had long ago been disproved by reality. In addition, he indulged in sentimental reflections on his life: “My own life is only given value by what it means for the nation.” He almost regretted that his Berghof had not been destroyed yet, because he wished “to bear everything, down to the last detail . . . that others must bear.” He continued: “The only thing that I would not be able to bear right now would be a sign of weakness from my Volk.”

Hitler’s proclamation read as follows:⁷²

Führer Headquarters, February 24, 1945

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

A sense of duty and my work prohibit my leaving headquarters at this time, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the day on which the principal program of our movement was proclaimed and accepted in Munich. The evening of February 24 was marked by the anticipation of a development whose terrible significance is perhaps clear to many people in its full extent only today.

At the time, the same coalition of irreconcilable enemies as today had already joined forces in the fight against the German Volk. The unnatural alliance of exploiting capitalism and misanthropic Bolshevism that today attempts to suffocate the world was the enemy to whom we sounded the battle cry on February 24, 1920, for the preservation of the nation. Just as today, the

February 24, 1945

apparent contradiction of terms in the cooperation of extremist forces was only an expression of the unified will of a joint agitator and beneficiary. For a long time already, international Jewry has made use of both forms in the destruction of the freedom and social happiness of the nations.

When we met for the first time in Munich on February 24, 1920, we already had a clear idea of the tendencies and consequences of the strategy of both attackers. Capitalism and Bolshevism once divided our Volk internally and disarmed it, in order to exploit and destroy it in the end. In contrast to the lesson which history teaches us today, that was only a preliminary exercise. This vilest conspiracy and bloodiest tyranny of all times against the freedom of all people tries to rise up to strike down the thousands of years of development of civilization in Europe.

There is a tremendous difference between the Germany of 1920 and that of 1945. Back then, it was a nation completely paralyzed—today, it is a military Volk fighting with the utmost fanaticism. Back then, it had an antiquated, disintegrating social order—today, it has an unshakable Volksgemeinschaft which is in the process of building things up. Had the old Germany had only a fraction of the power of resistance of the present one, then it would never have collapsed. Had the Germany of today had only a fraction of the weaknesses of back then, it would have died long ago! It is because of this that February 24, 1920, will one day go down in history as one of the great turning points in the evolution of mankind. Nameless and unknown men—with myself at their head—turned to a nation in the process of disintegration, and proclaimed a program whose theses were not understood by countless others and whose tendencies were rejected by the overwhelming majority. Today, we know the following: without this program, a new socialist German Volk and state would never have happened. Without this creation of the National Socialist German state, neither a German Reich nor a German Volk would exist today! After all, the substance of states, that is, the people themselves, are not eternal; they are born, they grow, and they pass away, according to what they are worth.

Providence does not show mercy to the weak. Instead, it only recognizes the right to live for the healthy and strong! That the National Socialist movement, which came out of nothing, was, after a long struggle, able to seize power in the year 1933 by legal means was the result of a dogged and fanatical struggle which at times almost appeared hopeless. Whoever admires the miracle of today's resistance or fails to understand it, should consider what it meant for me at the time to begin as an unknown and nameless man to wage the struggle for an idea and, thereby, the struggle for power, facing a united world of enemies. Who among our later critics would have been able, under similar conditions and starting out from nothing, to begin and complete such a work? What an incredible amount of work, will to fight, and strength of faith characterized those years of the struggle for power! What hurdles and setbacks had to be overcome! Only our doggedness and our unshakable will gained the victory in the end. Even though the framework of the struggle at the time may appear limited to us today, the objective in this fight and its course were the same as they are today. The stake was and is the existence of our German Volk!

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And that is why this fight was as sacred for us at the time as it is today. After all, on its success depended and still depends our race's existence or nonexistence in the future. Who can still doubt today that, without the National Socialist revolution and its reorganization of the German Volkskörper—seen only in domestic terms—Germany would never have been in a position to face the present crisis? Who can deny that, without the material armament of the German Volk achieved by the National Socialist revolution, even the strongest will would not have sufficed to defy the devilish coalition which threatens us today!

Only a bourgeois blockhead can delude himself into thinking that the flood from the east would not have come, had Germany opposed it with international laws on paper instead of with cannons, panzers, and airplanes! This century and our own age will weigh us in accordance with whether we were steadfast enough to oppose this invasion by Central Asia, the like of which the world has repeatedly witnessed since the turn of the era. As the invasion of the Huns was not repelled with pious wishes and admonitions, as the century-long invasions of our Reich from the southeast were not thwarted by diplomatic artistry, as the Mongol invasion did not stop at the borders of ancient cultures, so this danger cannot be eliminated by right alone, but by the strength which stands behind this right. Right means the duty to defend the life given to us by the Creator. It is the sacred right of self-preservation. The success of this self-preservation depends exclusively on the greatness of our risk and the willingness to take on every sacrifice in order to preserve this life for the future. By so doing, we are not doing anything different from what the Germanic and Latin races had to do in the age of the migration of the people; it is no different from what our ancestors had to do in the long years of the Turkish Wars and what eventually kept the Mongol invasion from transforming our continent into a desert. No League of Nations' assembly but the Battle on the Catalaunian Fields broke Attila the Hun's power. No chatter at Geneva or any type of convention will drive back Asian Bolshevism but only the will to win of our resistance and the force of our arms.

We all know how difficult the fight is. Whatever we may lose in it stands in no relation to what we will lose if it is not now nearing its victorious end. Individual areas in the east of our Reich are now experiencing what Bolshevism is in reality. What this Jewish plague does to our women, children, and men in these areas represents the cruelest fate that a human brain is capable of concocting. There is only one way of opposing these Jewish-Bolshevik annihilators of mankind and their west European and American pimps: the deployment with utmost zeal and dogged steadfastness of all the strength a merciful God allows man to find in the most difficult times in the defense of his life. Whatever becomes weak in this will fall, must and will fade away. Just as the cowardly bourgeois parties of compromise first were cornered by the Bolshevik wave and then swept away, so today those bourgeois states disappear whose narrow-minded representatives believed they could enter into an alliance with the devil in the hope of being more cunning than he is satanic. A horrifying repetition of the domestic events is taking place today in the mighty

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international political sphere of the present events. But just as in the end we struck the Bolshevik enemy to the ground by defeating the narrow-minded small-party particularism and founded the National Socialist Volksstaat, so we will today achieve victory by defeating the jumble of bourgeois-democratic views of the state, and we will crown it with the annihilation of Bolshevism. When Rome faced its most difficult hour after the Battle of Cannae, it won not through the attempt of a cowardly compromise but through the uncompromising decision to continue the struggle for its existence by summoning the remaining strength of its people. Even though the Second Punic War failed to arrest the African advances once and for all, the Third [Punic War] put an end to them!

When the greatest king in our history, Frederick II, seemed likely to succumb to an overwhelming world coalition in his Seven Years War, it was likewise only because of his heroic soul that the germ cell and the core of a coming Reich remained victorious in the end.

What we have so often preached at home about the essence of the enemy coalition has now been confirmed: it is a devilish pact between democratic capitalism and Jewish Bolshevism. All nations whose statesmen have signed this pact will sooner or later become the victims of the demonic spirits they have summoned. Let there be no doubt that National Socialist Germany will wage this fight for as long as it takes for this historic turn of events to come about here, too, and this will happen still this year.

No power on earth will make us weak at heart. They have destroyed so many of our beautiful, magnificent, and sacred things that there remains only one mission in our lives: to create a state that will rebuild what they have destroyed. Therefore, it is our duty to preserve the freedom of the German nation for the future and not allow German manpower to be abducted to Siberia, but to deploy it for the rebuilding and dedicate it to the service of our own Volk. They have taught us so many horrible things that there is no more horror for us. What the homeland must endure is dreadful, what the front must accomplish is superhuman. Yet when, in the face of such pain, a whole nation proves itself as reliable as the German Volk, then Providence cannot and will not deny its right to live in the end. As always in history, it will reward its steadfastness with the prize of earthly existence. Since so many of our possessions have been destroyed, this can only reinforce us in our fanatical determination to see our enemies a thousand times over as what they truly are: destroyers of an eternal civilization and annihilators of mankind! And out of this hatred will grow a sacred will: to oppose these annihilators of our existence with all the strength God has given us and defeat them in the end.

Our Volk has survived so many terrible times in its two-thousand-year-old history that we have no right to doubt that we shall also overcome the present times of need! If the homeland continues to do its duty as it does now, even increases its will to do its utmost, if the frontline soldier follows the example of the brave homeland and risks his life for his homeland, then the whole world will be shattered when it runs up against us! If front and homeland continue in their joint determination to destroy him who dares to fail when he confronts

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the commandment of preservation, who reveals himself to be cowardly, or who sabotages the fight, then they will jointly prevent the destruction of the nation.

Then the German victory will stand at the end of this confrontation! And here we feel pride and joy: when the World War was nearing its end what we feared most was the corruption of our youth. When this war is over, we will place the victory in the hands of a young generation that has been steeled by thousandfold suffering and fire and is the best Germany has ever called its own. It will set an example in the cities and in the countryside for countless coming generations. This, too, is an accomplishment of the National Socialist education and a result of the challenge to fight which came out of Munich twenty-five years ago.

My own life is given value only by what it means for the nation. I therefore work incessantly for the resurrection and strengthening of our fronts for the defensive and the offensive, the production of old and new weapons, their deployment, the reinforcement of the spirit of our resistance, and if necessary—as in former times—for the elimination of the vermin that does not wish to join the preservation of our Volk but wish to oppose it.

My dear party comrades! These days I read in British papers that there is a plan to destroy my Berghof. I almost regret that this has not yet happened. After all, whatever I call my own is not worth more than what belongs to my Volksgenossen. I would be happy to bear everything, down to the last detail and as far as humanly possible, that others must bear. The only thing that I would not be able to bear right now would be a sign of weakness from my Volk. What therefore makes me the happiest and the proudest man is the belief that the German Volk demonstrates its strong character precisely in the hour of greatest despair. May every German in the coming weeks and months remember that he is obliged to place everything into the service of our joint preservation for the coming millennia. Whoever is in a bad situation should and must know that many Germans have lost far more than he has. The life which remains for us can be dedicated to only one commandment, namely, to make up for what the international Jewish criminals and their helpers have done to our Volk.

Just as twenty-five years ago we set out, as a community, to obtain compensation for the injustice done to our Volk, so today we again fight as a community to obtain compensation for the suffering which they once more inflicted upon us, the oppression which they brought to us, the damage which they caused here. Therefore, it must be our unshakable will to think of Germany even when we draw our last breath. We must do so at a time when men and women in the cities and in the countryside, down to our youth, live in compliance with the commandment to risk everything in order to free our Volk from this misery, to restore after the war its culture in the cities and in the countryside, and its National Socialist communal life. Above all, they must never again abandon the path to the establishment of a true Volksstaat, one far away from every ideology and [all] classes; a state which rises above the conceit of the individual social strata, which is inspired by the conviction that the eternal values of a people find expression in its best sons and daughters, who

February 24, 1945

must be searched for, educated, and deployed as a merciful God gave them to us, regardless of their birth or origin.

My party comrades! Twenty-five years ago I announced the victory of the movement. Today, I prophesy—as always inspired by my faith in our Volk—the final victory of the German Reich!

Adolf Hitler

While Hitler was afraid of speaking before his ordinary old party comrades in Munich, he had no reservations about speaking before the servile Reichsleiters and Gauleiters at the Reich Chancellery on the same day. About this meeting, the following communiqué was published:⁷³

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth return of the anniversary of the announcement of the party program on February 24, the Führer received the Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, and unit leaders of the NSDAP at his headquarters, in order to give them guidelines for the successful continuation of the fight, the extensive organization of all powers of resistance, and the unreserved deployment of the party in the fateful struggle of the German Volk.

Another official statement read as follows:⁷⁴

In the circle of the assembled party leadership, the Führer awarded Reich leader of labor Hierl the Golden Cross of the German Order with Oak Leaf and Swords on his seventieth birthday, making him the first living German to receive this highest German distinction.

The encirclement of Breslau by the Russians was at the center of the discussion of the situation on the evening of February 24.⁷⁵ Breslau had been cut off since February 16. Hitler was very pleased by the ruthless procedure of Gauleiter Hanke, who had already made a name for himself in January by issuing propagandistic death sentences.⁷⁶ He personally read out the Gauleiter's telex and was full of praise for him, as well as for the operational commander at Breslau, Major General von Ahlfen.⁷⁷

The combat commander further believes that a second powerful battalion is necessary. I take the view: we must do this. We must bring up something, that is clear. Hanke is a devil of a fellow. He is a Silesian.

Hitler's enthusiasm for Hanke had already been evident in a telegram that he had sent him earlier on the same day. In Königsberg (Kaliningrad), Gauleiter Koch, who had likewise been cut off by the Russians, had received the same telegram. It read as follows:⁷⁸

Together with the party leadership, which has gathered around me at the headquarters on the anniversary of the party's foundation, I think of you in

February 28, 1945

insoluble solidarity. May our confidence in victory lend strength to you and your men so that you may endure in your difficult post until the final victory.

Adolf Hitler

On February 26, Hitler expressed his condolences in a telegram on the death of the Norwegian finance minister.⁷⁹ In addition, he awarded Kesselring the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross and sent him this letter:⁸⁰

In grateful appreciation of your untiring brave deployment in the fight for the future of our Volk, I award you, Field Marshal, the Oak Leaf to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, as the seventy-eighth soldier of the German Wehrmacht. I join to this award my best wishes for you personally and for your troops.

Your Adolf Hitler

On February 28, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to the emperor of Manchukuo on the anniversary of his state's foundation.⁸¹

In the course of February, Hitler had repeatedly discussed his views on the causes of Germany's unfavorable military situation. Bormann felt obliged to have these reflections written down,⁸² even though they contained nothing new. Of course, Hitler was not to blame for the catastrophic turn of events in the war. His allies were at fault. The Kaiser had once said exactly the same thing by explaining his own failure after the First World War:⁸³ "The collapse of Hungary and Austria brought about this crisis for us."

Hitler had already officially stated this view on September 25, 1944:⁸⁴

After a five-year-long and most difficult struggle, the enemy stands on a few fronts close to or at the German borders as the result of the failure of all our European allies.

The essence of Hitler's reflections in February 1945 was summarized in the grotesque claim that the campaign in Russia had failed because Mussolini had attacked Greece without asking his permission. This had forced him to conduct first of all the Balkans campaign in the spring of 1941 and to postpone the attack on Russia until June 22, instead of going ahead in mid-May. Hitler blamed this delay or all military setbacks. In February 1945, he declared the following:

The alliance with Italy has quite obviously helped our enemies more than it benefited us. While I was on my way to Montoire, Mussolini took advantage of my absence to start his ill-starred Greek campaign. Against our will, we were forced to take up arms and intervene in the events in the Balkans,

February 28, 1945

which inevitably resulted in the fateful delay of the deployment against Russia. Had we started the attack on Russia from May 15 on, things would have developed differently.

The constant repetition of such claims by Hitler did not make them any more true. Mussolini had moved into Greece on October 28 1940. Hitler had not decided to attack Russia until after Molotov's visit in Berlin from November 12 to 14. He had issued the principal directives for the campaign on December 18, 1940, and supplemented them in the following months. Mussolini's Greek adventure had had no effect on the timetable for Operation Barbarossa (Russian campaign). The only unexpected factor had been the putsch in Belgrade on March 27, 1941, which had forced Hitler to expand to Yugoslavia the campaign in the Balkans in order to lend support to Mussolini in Greece. However, the campaign, which had started on April 6, had ended so quickly that both Greece and Yugoslavia had been conquered by late April, and Hitler had been able to deliver a triumphant speech in the Reichstag on May 4, 1941.⁸⁵ Therefore had he wished to attack Russia in the middle or at the end of May, it would have been possible.

In truth, the deferment of the beginning of the attack on Russia to June 22 had its cause in Russia's ground conditions, which permit large-scale military operations during the summer half-year only at this time. Napoleon was also forced to wait until June 22 to launch his campaign in 1812. The German offensive of 1942 began on June 28, that of the year 1943 on July 5. The major Russian summer offensive was launched at the central sector on June 22, 1944. Hard facts disproved Hitler's attempts at rationalizing and explaining his behavior in February 1945!

Besides, it ill became Hitler to speak badly about Mussolini's failed campaign in Greece. After all, he had at one time expressed his gratitude to him for this step and publicly declared the following on November 8, 1941:⁸⁶

After all we know today, I can only say that we owe gratitude to Mussolini for sticking the needle into this festering sore [Greece] in the year 1940.

The discussions of the situation on March 1 and 2⁸⁷ showed that the German troops were barely able to hold on in the west, and many were being forced to surrender. Hitler was very angry about this because he felt that the capitulation was in many instances caused only by the prospect of good treatment in captivity, assured by the humane Geneva Convention. However, Hitler had to admit that the hurriedly assembled

March 2, 1945

German troops were not really fit for combat. For this reason, he was in search of a military leader who could “do something with this dung heap (*Misthaufen*),” as he put it. Hitler felt that Skorzeny was his best man, but he was off fighting at the Oder front. The Generals Feuchtinger and Hanneken also seemed suited to this task, but they had been arrested for personal enrichment. Hitler refused to consider generals who had formerly belonged to the Free Corps. He had still not got over his distrust for members of militia units.

As usual, Hitler likewise stuck to his contempt and disregard for money as a matter of principle. When it came to money, he was never stingy, no matter whether he spent it on bribing generals or rewarding inventions. When, during the discussion of the situation on March 2, he heard of an improvement of the Panzerfaust (antitank rocket launcher), he declared the following:

You have to reward people who do something like that. You should not approach this from a small, bureaucratic point of view. You have to give any such man two hundred thousand or three hundred thousand marks. There must be an incentive. You should not be petty in this. If you get explosives for one million field howitzer grenades, then you cannot pay the man nearly enough. The new Panzerfaust flies an additional hundred kilometers and has greater penetration power. For that, I get one million field howitzer grenades.

By early March, the Allies had broken through the “impenetrable” West Wall⁸⁸. They had conquered the whole extent of the West Wall from Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) to the Palatinate. On March 6, they took Cologne and afterwards secured the left bank of the Rhine. The next day, they even managed to cross the Rhine at Remagen. Their rapid advance came as such a surprise to the German troops that no time was left to blow up the local railroad bridge. Hitler had the allegedly responsible five officers sentenced and shot by a “flying drumhead court-martial.”⁸⁹

This “reprisal” did not change the facts. Even without the bridge at Remagen, the Allies would have crossed the Rhine. The failure to blow up the bridge merely allowed them to gain a foothold on the right bank of the Rhine a few days earlier than it would have happened otherwise.

Nevertheless, Hitler’s main objective in pronouncing these death sentences was to deter other officers. He was successful. In the following weeks, the German troops on the retreat blew up all bridges they were forced to abandon, even if they had little or no military significance.

March 10, 1945

Hitler felt it was time again for a change in command in the west so as to inspire hope in the troops, according to his maxim of 1943 “new names, new slogans.”⁹⁰

On March 9, he dismissed von Rundstedt for the third time and named Kesselring as the new commander in chief west.⁹¹ The name Kesselring was still tied to the bloody and senseless German resistance at the Cassino front. Hitler intended for Kesselring to continue in this manner in the west. However, this hope was not fulfilled.

The discussion of the situation on March 10⁹² dealt with the question of transferring the Führer headquarters from the Reich Chancellery to the bunker of the Air Fleet “Reich” at Wannsee or camp “Zeppelin” at Zossen. Hitler’s entourage questioned the security of the Reich Chancellery, which had been hit during the most recent air raids. However, Hitler did not agree to their plans and mockingly commented on the supposed advantages of the bunkers at Wannsee and at Zossen.

As before, he still pretended confidence and concerned himself with the need for more laborers, since “everything has to be employed.”

No matter how bad the laborers are, I need eight hundred thousand additional workers for the railroads alone.⁹³ We cannot afford this, it is sheer madness. People come and say: we want to get started. If I don’t get it done, I’ll drop everything here and now. Ultimately, manpower is today one of the most decisive factors; whether girls or women, I don’t give a damn (*ist ganz Wurscht*): everything has to be employed.

Heroes’ Memorial Day was scheduled for March 11. In the previous year, Hitler had successfully managed to get out of attending the traditional festivities in Berlin and had not even issued a proclamation. Claiming that he was needed at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, he had had Dönitz speak on his behalf.⁹⁴ Shortly afterwards, he had left for the Berghof for his annual spring vacation with Eva Braun.

He had already spent several weeks in Berlin this year. Therefore it would be difficult for him to remain in the Führerbunker while wreaths were being laid at the Unter den Linden memorial and a parade was taking place. Excuses like his “bad state of health,” his “dragging” left leg, and so forth,⁹⁵ would hardly be persuasive, since Hitler was quite capable of walking without difficulty and assuming the old poses, greeting and smiling, whenever he wished. This was evidenced by the *Wochenschau* films (the week in review) of March 1945.

However, Hitler did not at all feel like appearing before the public in Berlin on Heroes’ Memorial Day and personally laying a wreath at

March 11, 1945

the memorial in honor of the millions of men whose death he had caused. Cowardly as he was, he sought a way out. In fact, he even came up with one: for the sole purpose of explaining his failure to attend the festivities in Berlin, a frontline trip was arranged along the Oder River.⁹⁶ Hitler visited the headquarters of an army corps at the Oder front. Smiling and self-confident, wearing his gray leather coat, he greeted the soldiers he met while stopping over at a few divisional headquarters. Carefully groomed, he appeared in front of the assembled generals at the headquarters of the army corps. He took a seat at the map table and developed operational plans for the future, while the generals stood around him and listened with reverent attention.

In Berlin in the meantime, as usual in difficult situations Göring had to jump into the breach and “substitute” for Hitler in public. He laid the Führer’s wreath at the Unter den Linden memorial during the official celebrations and afterwards reviewed the parade.⁹⁷

Hitler had arranged the Heroes’ Memorial Day affair cleverly. So that he would not remain completely in the background, he made a proclamation on this occasion. The citizens of Berlin were supposed to believe that he was at the “front” and personally keeping the Russians away from the German homeland.

In his proclamation, Hitler recalled the introduction of general conscription ten years earlier and stated, with some justification, that this had given Germany those instruments of power that were necessary for its “self-assertion,” that is, expansion.

Hitler’s proclamation to the Wehrmacht read as follows:⁹⁸

Führer Headquarters, March 11, 1945

Soldiers!

In the Treaty of Versailles, the same enemies as today made it a condition that Germany totally disarm and maintain a ridiculous professional army instead of popular armed forces. They solemnly promised that this disarmament would only be a prerequisite for the general disarmament of the world. That was all swindle and fraud!

Barely had Germany laid down its arms for good when an age of blackmail and exploitation began. The Reich was hacked to pieces in the peace treaty. The enemy powers armed as never before, at their head the Soviet Union. Concealed from the eyes of the rest of the world, this state built up gigantic armed forces, never denying their goal of suddenly attacking from the east a Europe made defenseless by Jewry. How well they were armed, my soldiers in the east, you know best yourselves. Had Germany remained in this state of military impotence, then today Europe would already have become the victim

March 11, 1945

of Bolshevism, that is, the war of extermination against the European people would long ago have got underway.

Realizing that the impending future lies beyond our continent, I ordered immediately after the seizure of power that the Reich be prepared for its defense to the extent that at least a light attack no longer needed to be feared. I did so only after my countless proposals for general disarmament—the limitation of the air force, the elimination of bomb warfare, the abolishment of heavy artillery and tanks, the restriction of troop strength to a minimum—had been rejected by our adversaries. This rejection at the same time revealed the aggressive intentions of our enemies.

Ten years have now passed since those days in March 1935, when I announced my general conscription and thereby obtained for Germany those instruments of power that were necessary for its self-assertion. Without this action, there would be no Germany today.

The Jewish alliance between capitalism and Bolshevism, which today threatens Europe, had in the meantime lifted the veil from the gigantic armament for the destruction of our continent. In spite of this, the German Reich, which has been dishonorably betrayed by most of its allies, has put up military resistance for nearly six years now, and has gained successes of unparalleled greatness. Even if everything now appears to be going against us, we still do not doubt that, with steadfastness, courage, perseverance, and zeal, we will overcome these setbacks again, as so often before.

There is no great historic state of the past that did not face similar situations: Rome in the Second Punic War against the Carthaginians, Prussia in the Seven Years' War against Europe. These are only two examples among many.

Therefore, it is my unalterable decision, and it must be our general and unyielding will, to set no worse example for posterity than earlier ages have set for us. Thus, the year 1918 will not be repeated. We all know what Germany's fate would otherwise be. Intoxicated with victory, our adversaries have made it clear: extermination of the German nation!

On this day, on which the introduction of general conscription returns for the tenth time, there is only one commandment: to do with grim determination everything in order to defy the dangers; to bring about a turn of events and, to this end, to reinforce materially and spiritually the power of resistance of our Volk and its Wehrmacht. No less great should our zeal be in the destruction of those who try to put up resistance to that. If a great nation like the German one, with a history of nearly two thousand years, never allows the belief in success to be taken from it, but instead fanatically does its duty, no matter whether the times ahead are good or bad, then the Lord Almighty will in the end not deny it His blessings.

In history, that alone falls which is judged to be too light. The Lord of the worlds will help only him who is determined to help himself.

What is impending for our Volk we already see in large sections of the east and in many areas in the west. What we must therefore do is clear to everybody: to put up resistance and pound our enemies until they become

March 18, 1945

weary in the end and nevertheless break down! Therefore, let every man do his duty!

Adolf Hitler

On March 14, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to Tiso on the Slovak national holiday.⁹⁹

The next day, he sent a congratulatory telegram to Hácha on the sixth anniversary of the “reunification of Bohemia and Moravia with the Reich.”¹⁰⁰

On March 16, a major new Russian attack began in the vicinity of Stuhlweissenburg in Hungary. This time, Sepp Dietrich and his SS troops in the Sixth Panzer Army were also forced to retreat. Hitler was angry and ordered that the *Leibstandarte* “Adolf Hitler” hand in its sleeve stripes.¹⁰¹

It will be left open to question whether the members of the *Leibstandarte*, whom Hitler had chased from one theater of the war to the next in the past years, still felt the removal of their sleeve stripes to be a “disgrace” in March 1945.¹⁰² Their idealism had been placed under too much strain. It was mostly Hitler who regarded sleeve stripes as a “distinction” and spent much of his time designing such “badges of honor.”¹⁰³

On the evening of March 18, Hitler received Speer, who handed him a memorandum.¹⁰⁴ Speer knew just as well as Hitler and his *Unterführers* that the war was lost. However, he was not willing to carry out the measures of destruction on Reich territory that Hitler had ordered for all military retreats in enemy country and which had either been carried out or were supposed to have been carried out. Such destruction would mean the “elimination of all possibilities for the future life of the German Volk,” Speer declared.

After the war, a document was presented to the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg that Speer claimed to have sent Hitler on March 29. Excerpts from it read as follows:¹⁰⁵

From the explanations you gave me on the evening [of March 18]—if I did not misunderstand you—it was clear and unequivocal: if the war is lost, then the Volk will also be lost. This fate is unavoidable. It is not necessary to take into consideration the bases the Volk needs for the continuation of its most primitive existence. On the contrary, it is better to destroy these things yourself. After all, the Volk would then have proved the weaker nation, and the future would exclusively belong to the strongest nation of the east. What would remain after this fight would in any event be inferior subjects, since all the good ones would have fallen.

March 19, 1945

The above statements by Hitler were rendered in this manner only by Speer. Therefore, they cannot be regarded as completely authentic.¹⁰⁶ First, the reference to Russia as the “strongest nation of the east” appears odd, since Hitler always spoke of the “primitive” Soviets. Second, he seemed eager, during the last months of his life as well as before, to be recognized and treated by the German Volk as a hero.

There is no doubt about his indifference to the fate of the German people. They served only as an instrument for him to satisfy his lust for power and to achieve his political and military goals. In the past, Hitler had spoken disparagingly about the German Volk on several occasions, in particular to threaten them in the case of their potential “failure.”¹⁰⁷ However, while he scolded the intellectuals, officers, and other leading personalities, he spared the so-called “Volk” to the end and showered it with praises. Even in his last proclamation, his political testament of April 29, 1945, he prophesied “the shining rebirth of the National Socialist movement and the realization of the true Volksgemeinschaft.”¹⁰⁸

Even the often cited and condemned *Zerstörungsbefehl* (Destruction Order) of March 19 was in keeping with this line of thought. All destructive measures were supposed to harm only the advancing enemy. They were supposed to be necessary to win this “fight for the life of the Volk.” It would be the enemy who, forced to retreat, would “leave behind only scorched earth and abandon all consideration for the population.” Hitler’s order of March 19 read as follows:¹⁰⁹

High Command of the Armed Forces (Operations Staff)

Subject: Demolitions on Reich territory

The Führer issued the following order on March 19, 1945:

The struggle for the existence of our people compels us, even within the territory of the Reich, to exploit every means of weakening the fighting strength of our enemy and impeding his further advance. Every opportunity must be taken of inflicting, directly or indirectly, the utmost lasting damage on the striking power of the enemy. It is a mistake to think that transport and communication facilities, industrial establishments and supply depots, which have not been destroyed or have only been temporarily put out of action, can be used again for our own ends when the lost territory has been recovered. The enemy will leave us nothing but scorched earth when he withdraws, without paying the lightest regard to the population.

I therefore order:

1. All military transport communication facilities, industrial establishments and supply depots, as well as anything else of value within Reich territory, which could in any way be used by the enemy immediately or within the foreseeable future for the continuation of the war, be destroyed.

March 21, 1945

2. The following are responsible for carrying out these demolitions:

The military commanders for all military establishments, including the transport and communications networks, the Gauleiters and Reichskommissars for defense for all industrial establishments and supply depots and anything else of value. The troops are to give to Gauleiters and Reichskommissars for defense such help as they require to carry out their tasks.

3. This order will be made known to all officers commanding troops as quickly as possible. Directives to the contrary are invalid.

Adolf Hitler

On March 20, Hitler welcomed twenty “battle-tested Hitler boys,” that is, members of the Hitler Youth, in the garden of the Reich Chancellery. They lined up in front of him as he slowly approached in the company of Reich youth leader Axmann and other prominent persons. He had the collar of his coat turned up and his cap pulled down over his eyes. He had the boys make a report, reviewed the lineup, and patted some boys on the shoulder and cheek. The youngest of the boys—Hitler gave him a pinch on the ear—was twelve years old. His name was Alfred Czech and he had received an Iron Cross for the “rescue of twelve wounded men and the arrest of a Russian spy” in the Oppeln area. The communiqué read as follows:¹¹⁰

The Führer shook hands with every single one of the Hitler Youth boys and had them describe their experiences. “You know the battle from your own experience,” the Führer exclaimed to the boys in the end, “and you know that we are in a struggle of life and death for the German Volk. In spite of the gravity of the times, I am convinced that we will achieve victory in this fight, with our German youth and particularly with you, my boys.”

The *Wochenschau* filmed the scene.¹¹¹ This was the last time that Hitler was filmed.

At a rally in Görlitz, Goebbels shared a similar statement by Hitler with the audience:¹¹²

It was only yesterday that he [the Führer] said to me: I remain firmly convinced that one day the banners will signal our victory.

On March 21, Hitler informed Guderian of another change in the command of the general staff. Following the discussion of the situation, he told him:¹¹³

I can see that your heart problems have become worse. You must immediately take four weeks of convalescent leave.

March 23, 1945

Guderian replied that he felt he could not leave his post, since he had no “substitute.” Hitler was content for the time being. He would see to providing Guderian with a deputy in the next few days!

While the two men were still talking, Hitler received a request for an audience by Speer. Hitler sent a message back, saying that he was unable to see anybody on this day.

Every time somebody wants to speak to me privately, he has something unpleasant to say. I cannot bear any more bad news. His memoranda always open with this sentence: “The war is lost!” He just wants to repeat that to me. I just keep putting his memoranda in the safe, without ever reading them.

Hitler’s reaction was understandable. However, it was remarkable that he allowed people he liked to tell him that the war was lost without punishing them.

On March 23, or rather the previous night, the Allied troops under Montgomery crossed the Rhine at Vesel and those under General Patton near Oppenheim. Additional crossings would soon take place near Worms and Mannheim. The war had entered its final phase.

Hitler was greatly preoccupied by the Allied crossings of the Rhine at the late night discussion of the situation.¹¹⁴ Other matters were also discussed, which likewise showed how serious the situation had become. For instance, there was talk about setting up the east-west axis in Berlin (from the Brandenburg Gate to the Siegessäule) as a runway for airplanes by removing the lampposts. The situation in the air above the Berghof was also a topic of discussion. Hitler had declared on February 24 that he almost regretted that the destruction of his Berghof “has not yet happened.”¹¹⁵ However, when someone at the meeting suggested that the Berghof should no longer be covered with a smoke screen at every air-raid alert (acid for making the smoke was running out!), Hitler was hesitant. He replied as follows:

Yes, but then everything will be gone, you have to realize that. That is one of the last ways out we have. Nothing will happen to the bunker [on the Obersalzberg]. It is not a question of my house, but the whole installation will be gone. If they smash up Zossen here [in the Berlin area] one day, then where do we go?

Hitler grumbled about the bad “army concrete” that he said had been used in Zossen, and stated that he felt the Reich Chancellery bunker was safer. For the rest, the main topic of this discussion was where new troops could be obtained, what, for example, “still existed of

March 23, 1945

the mobilization of foreigners.” Up to this point, Hitler had always ridiculed the idea of Ukrainian, Russian, or Indian “legions.” This time, too, he called the Indian legion, certainly not without justification, a “joke,” but then he said the following:

Of course, I do not want to claim here that you cannot do anything with these exotic people. Something can surely be done. But you need time for that.

It was sad but true what things had come to with Hitler: he was now ready to place his hopes on foreign legions, which he despised and would have liked to see disarmed.

On the eastern front, a period of relative calm was nearing its end. In all likelihood, the next Russian advance would be directed against Danzig. The concentration of tanks in this area suggested as much. It was for this reason that the Gauleiter of Danzig, Albert Forster, appeared in despair at the Reich Chancellery, declaring that four thousand Russian tanks were headed for the city. Only a small number of German panzers confronted them. He went to see Hitler and came back a changed man. “He told me,” Forster exclaimed, “that he will save Danzig. There is no doubting it.”¹¹⁶

Russian troops under Marshal Rokossovski conquered Zappot on March 23. The next day, the marshal demanded the surrender of the garrisons at Danzig and Gdynia.¹¹⁷ Hitler forbade a surrender and ordered the following on the night of March 24 to 25:¹¹⁸

Every square meter of the area Danzig-Gotenhafen is to be decisively defended.

This order naturally did not change the situation. A few days later, the Russians took Danzig and Gdynia.

As Speer told the court in Nuremberg,¹¹⁹ he had decided to join the ranks of the “assassins” in the meantime. He claimed that he had planned to poison Hitler by introducing gas into the Reich Chancellery bunker from the outside. In this case, Speer would have been no different from other “would-be assassins” who tried to kill Hitler over the years: he too readily accepted the death of innocent bystanders,¹²⁰ he too wanted to stay alive himself.

In February and March, Speer went to see Hitler repeatedly, even talked with him in private. He could have stabbed, shot, strangled, or beaten him to death¹²¹—but he could simply not get himself to do it. He preferred the plan of letting poison stream into the fresh-air vent at the

March 29, 1945

entry of the Reich Chancellery. By the time he concluded his preparations, Hitler had had a four-meter high chimney built around the opening!¹²² It was hard to believe how “unlucky” Hitler’s assassins were.

Speer was undoubtedly one of the more harmless among Hitler’s staff. He deserved credit for trying to undermine or circumvent Hitler’s destructive orders. However, he would have done well to remain silent on his alleged “assassination attempt.”

On March 28 Hitler finally dismissed Guderian as chief of the general staff. The official reason for the dismissal, which Hitler had already planned for a long time, was an argument about accusations directed against General Busse in the course of the noon discussion of the situation.¹²³ Hitler turned to those present: “I ask all gentlemen to leave the lecture hall, with the exception of the field marshal [Keitel] and the colonel general [Guderian].” When the others had left, Hitler said, “Colonel General Guderian! The state of your health demands an immediate convalescent leave of six weeks.” As Guderian turned around to leave, Hitler called him back: “Please, why don’t you stay until the end of the presentation.” This polite request was in accordance with Hitler’s old method of keeping the person he had reprimanded from open opposition and of avoiding a scene in front of the others.

Thus, the discussion of the situation continued as though nothing had happened. Hitler refrained from any further attacks on General Busse. Two or three times, he politely asked Guderian for his opinion on a subject. After the discussion, Hitler was even nicer to Guderian and told the former chief of the general staff:

Please take care to restore your health. In six weeks, the situation will have become very critical. Then I will urgently need you.

On March 29, Guderian handed over the affairs of the general staff to his successor, General Krebs.¹²⁴

April had begun, the last month of Hitler’s life. In early April, he appointed another field marshal, even though he had sworn in 1943 that Paulus had been his last.¹²⁵ This time, Schörner was the lucky man. The official announcement of his appointment read as follows:¹²⁶

The Führer has promoted Colonel General Ferdinand Schörner, commander in chief of an army group, to field marshal on April 5. By granting this promotion, the Führer has distinguished an army leader who has, unlike

April 12, 1945

almost any other German general, become a symbol of the unshakable steadfastness of the German power of resistance in the east.

The overall situation had continued to deteriorate because of the rapid advances of the Allies. Montgomery's Twenty-First Army Group was in the process of taking northwestern Germany, while the Seventh American Army had moved across Baden and reached Würzburg and Crailsheim. As usual, Hitler attempted to overcome the situation by reorganizing and reshuffling the command posts. On April 6, he issued this order:¹²⁷

The development of the position in the west and the loss of many operational communication links make it necessary to adjust the organization of command in the western theater of war to conform with changed conditions. I therefore order the following reorganization of command in the west:

[A series of technical details follow.]

On April 12, Hitler sent a congratulatory telegram to state leader Ante Pavelich on the Croatian Independence Day.¹²⁸ On the same day, he awarded Gauleiter Hanke, who was holding out in Breslau, which had been cut off, the highest order of merit. With the exception of Hierl,¹²⁹ only dead men had received this distinction up to now. Hitler sent Hanke this telegram:¹³⁰

In grateful appreciation of your great services in the fight for the future of our Volk, I award you the Golden Cross of the German Order.

Adolf Hitler

In the meantime, Eva Braun had arrived at the Reich Chancellery without having been summoned by Hitler. She had stayed at the Reich Chancellery in January and February, following his return from Ziegenberg, but had then left for Munich. In view of the dangerous situation, which made it likely that Berlin would soon be cut off, she had returned to Berlin on her own, fully realizing that this decision would be her last one.

Hitler did not agree to her staying in Berlin and called his photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. He asked him to take her back to Munich.¹³¹ Hoffmann tried to persuade her to leave, but she remained adamant:

Perhaps no one knows better than you do, Mr. Hoffmann, what Hitler is to me. What would people say if I left him now, at this time of need? If it is a question of the Führer, then I also draw the ultimate conclusion.

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Hoffmann told Hitler what she had said. Hitler listened in silence. He accepted her decision. One last time, Hitler and his photographer and friend shook hands, and then Hoffmann left Berlin in the car of the Reich postal minister.

Here a few remarks on Hitler's relationship to the opposite sex are perhaps appropriate. The English journalist Ward Price reports that Hitler replied as follows to a reference to his luck:¹³²

In my political life, I have always been lucky, but in my private life I have been more unfortunate than anyone I have ever known.

While with such remarks Hitler was always quick to become sentimental and pity himself, in this instance he was in all likelihood referring to his "unfortunate" relations with women.

In his early years, when he lived at a homeless shelter in Vienna, he was not a very attractive man. Nevertheless, there are many examples of men who do not look very good and are still successful with women. The reasons for his bad luck with women of his age probably lay rather in his contradictory nature. On the one hand, he was maladroit, shy, and clumsy with women, afraid of doing something wrong and embarrassing himself. Moreover, he greatly feared contracting venereal diseases.¹³³

On the other hand, Hitler wished to dominate in the sphere of love, as in all others.¹³⁴ He demanded unconditional admiration and submission. Women were not ready to provide this, particularly since Hitler's main strength lay in talking, something that for ages has always been considered the domain of women. It is therefore not surprising that Hitler's advances to the female sex failed at first. Only when he got older and could play the patronizing uncle did he score several successes. It is revealing that Hitler's great love was his niece Geli Raubal, a daughter of his half-sister Angela. Like her, the other women who loved Hitler, for example, Eva Braun and Maria Reiter, or Unity Mitford, too, were twenty years or more younger than he, and so a type of "uncle-niece" relationship existed from the beginning: the effusive love of the young woman to the admired mighty and mature man. After all, Hitler's charisma together with his political importance afforded him the element of submission in these relations. It is conspicuous that all four women mentioned above seriously attempted suicide (Geli Raubal succeeded) within a few years after meeting Hitler.

Angela Maria Raubal,¹³⁵ nicknamed "Geli", was born on June 4, 1908 in Linz (Austria). She was the daughter of the deputy head of the

April 12, 1945

tax department, Raubal, and his wife Angela, born Hitler (from the second marriage of Hitler's father, Alois). She studied singing in Munich, although her voice was only average. When Hitler took up residence at Prinzregentenplatz No. 16 in 1929, she got her own room in the huge but sinister apartment of her uncle. She committed suicide there on September 18, 1931. By the time Hitler returned from an engagement in Nuremberg, her corpse had already been removed. Hitler did not attend the funeral in Vienna but instead retreated to the home of his publisher Müller at the Tegernsee. He spent several days there in seclusion. His court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann was the only one allowed to accompany him. Many feared the shock of Geli's unexpected death might lead him to commit suicide, too. On the anniversary of his niece's death on September 18, 1932, Hitler secretly visited her grave in Vienna. Goebbels noted in his diary: "Führer gone to Vienna for private visit. Nobody knows about it so that there won't be any crowds." News of Hitler's presence in Vienna leaked, however, and led to many political rumors. On Hitler's orders, Geli's room remained untouched. Before the war, he spent every Christmas Eve there in sentimental reflection.

Eva Braun¹³⁶ was born on February 6, 1912, in Munich. She was the daughter of a teacher (later student counselor) at a trade school, Friedrich Braun, and his wife, Franziska, born Kranburger. Eva received her education at a boarding school in Simbach am Inn. In 1929, she began working at Heinrich Hoffmann's photography studio in Munich. There she first met Hitler and entered into a more intimate relationship with him in the course of 1931 and 1932. Still living with her parents in their apartment at Hohenzollernstrasse No. 93, she attempted to commit suicide in 1932 by shooting herself in the chest. After that, Hitler became closer to her. Hitler's physician Morell as well as his valet Linge testified to the non-platonic nature of this relationship. After his half-sister Angela Raubal had left the Berghof and several restructuring projects had taken place, Eva Braun assumed the role of quasi-official mistress of the house. At the dinner table, she would sit to the left of Hitler, who nevertheless insisted that he alone took care of setting arrangements and other household concerns. Hitler ordered a small house built for Eva Braun in Munich. It was located at Wasserburger Strasse No. 12 (today Delphstrasse) and was within walking distance of his Munich apartment at Prinzregentenplatz. The official Munich address book listed the residence as that of "Eva Braun, private

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secretary.” From 1936, Eva Braun lived at the Obersalzberg. She was finally accorded her wish to marry Hitler on April 29, 1945, and died the next day.

Maria Reiter, nicknamed “Mimi,” or “Mizzi,” also “Mizzerl,” was born on December 23, 1909, in Berchtesgaden, where her father was one of the founding members of the local Social Democratic Party of Germany [SPD] branch and where her mother ran a fashion shop. Her sister Anni introduced her to Hitler in the Berchtesgaden park (*Kurgarten*) in late 1926. A year later, as Hitler paid increasingly less attention to her, she attempted to hang herself. In 1930, she married a hotel owner in Innsbruck and moved to Seeld with him. They were divorced in 1934. Contact between her and Hitler was renewed in the years 1931 through 1934, and also in 1938. In 1935, she married SS Hauptsturmführer Kubisch. He died in the west in 1940. There is no doubt of the intimate character of the relationship between Maria Reiter and Adolf Hitler.¹³⁷

Very little is known about Hitler’s affair with the Englishwoman Unity Mitford. Obviously, political considerations played a role in this. Born the daughter of Lord Redesdale in London on August 8, 1918, Unity Valkyrie Mitford was the sister-in-law of the British Fascist Leader Sir Oswald Mosley. She spent the years 1934 to 1939 as an art student in Munich. In 1934, she became a regular at a little restaurant Hitler also frequented, the “Osteria Bavaria” (today “Osteria Italiana”) at Schellingstrasse No. 62. Ward Price described her with these words: “No one could sit for long in the same room as Miss Unity Mitford without noticing her. Her golden hair, fair skin, and blue eyes attain the highest standards of that Nordic beauty which Germans especially admire.”¹³⁸ On one occasion, Hitler sent his adjutant Brückner to her in the “Osteria Bavaria” to convey the chancellor’s compliments. This marked the beginning of a friendship, which soon was to be platonically extended to her sister, Mrs. Diana Guinness. Shortly after the war broke out, Unity Mitford attempted to end her life by shooting herself in the temple in Munich’s “Englischer Garten.” Hitler ordered the best doctors to her side. After her health was restored, Hitler’s personal physician Morell brought her to Switzerland. From there, she returned to England where she died in 1948, as a patient in the Oban Hospital.

In May 1939, Count Ciano mentioned another pretty woman in his diaries:¹³⁹

April 12, 1945

For the first time I hear hints, in the inner circles, of the Führer's tender feelings for a beautiful girl. She is twenty years old with beautiful quiet eyes, regular features, and a magnificent body. Her name is Sigrid von Lappus.¹⁴⁰ They see each other frequently and intimately.

The woman who is meant here is Sigrid von Laffert, born December 28, 1916, in Damaretz, Mecklenburg, as the daughter of Oskar von Laffert auf Damaretz and Erika von Pressentin.

In his report, Hitler's court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann further mentioned a woman who later married somebody else and whose name he did not wish to reveal. Hoffmann recalled that this affair had already taken place in 1921. It had ended when the girl attempted to hang herself in a hotel room, but she was discovered in time.¹⁴¹ Apparently, attempted or successful suicides were a required ingredient in Hitler's amorous escapades.

Hitler was also very fond of seeing Ley's wife, Inga,¹⁴² whom he granted a privileged position in his Berlin household for some time. She committed suicide in 1943.

It may remain an open question whether this list of women around Hitler is complete or not. There are rumors of affairs with Mrs. Winifred Wagner and Leni Riefenstahl, a photographer and film director. However, there is no evidence in support of them.

It was known that, as long as he was the Führer of the German Volk, Hitler did not wish to get married. He felt that marriage was incompatible with his divine mission, his status as a god-man or a Messiah like Jesus Christ. The German public was supposed to believe that his love belonged to his Volk alone, not to women. After all, as some kind of superstar, he wanted to appear theoretically free for all women.¹⁴³

Nor did Hitler want a woman to tell him what to do¹⁴⁴ or share his power in any manner, even if this was only in matters of representation. Moreover, it was a well-known fact that Hitler was hostile to all legal norms. He wished to exercise an arbitrary reign in all realms, even in personal affairs. As a result, he despised marriage because it could entail uncomfortable obligations. As mentioned in the "Table Talk," he once told his entourage:¹⁴⁵

What is most terrible about marriage is this: it creates legal claims! It is much better to have a mistress. There is no burden, everything is a gift. Of course, this applies only to the outstanding man.

April 12, 1945

2

On April 12, 1945, President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt died. He had been in office since 1933, like the German Führer and Reich Chancellor. A real psychosis took hold of Hitler's entourage when the news of his death arrived. For instance, Goebbels, who had internalized Hitler's idea of the "miracle of Providence,"¹⁴⁶ truly believed that it signaled a turning point in the war and that Germany would now have a chance of winning it. He and his National Socialist Unterführers became the victims of a delusion. This "Fredericus complex," the historically inaccurate myth that Frederick the Great was saved in the Seven Years' War by the death of the empress Elizabeth [of Russia], had captured their imagination. The legend attributed this death to an act of God, to an intervention by Providence to change the war. This Fredericus complex now deluded them into believing that Hitler would also be saved by such a last-minute miracle. Of course, Hitler had done his part to further this hallucination.

It is doubtful that the Führer himself earnestly believed that Roosevelt's death was the "miracle" for which he was waiting. After all, it was sheer madness to think that a change of presidents in the United States would bring about a complete reversal in American foreign policy. Not all madness of the time can be blamed on Hitler.

Moreover, he was not all that concerned about America. What he was waiting for was a telegram from the senile English. He still hoped that they would come around and pay tribute to him as their rescuer from Bolshevism, just as von Papen, von Hindenburg, and Hugenberg had at one time subordinated themselves to him for fear of Communism. That was the last-minute miracle that Hitler was waiting for: the savior of Germany would become the savior of the world! He clung to this obsessive idea to the last minute!

April 13, 1945

On April 13, the armies of Marshal Tolbukhin took Vienna. A major Russian offensive was expected at any moment at the Oder front. Undoubtedly, the goal of this operation was Berlin. Under this impression of an impending attack, Hitler issued an order on April 15 concerning the structure of command in case the Allies from the west and the east should join in central Germany. This Führer order read as follows:¹⁴⁷

In case communications on land in central Germany are broken, I order as follows:

1. In the separate area in which I am not present myself, a commander in chief appointed by me will conduct all military operations and will, in the area concerned, take command of all forces of the three branches of the Wehrmacht on all fronts, of the reserve army, the Waffen SS, the police, and other organizations attached to them.

2. If I myself should be south of the interrupted communications, Admiral Dönitz will be appointed commander in chief in the northern area. An army general staff (commander, Lieutenant General Kinzel), which will be kept as small as possible, will be attached to him as operations staff. The following will come under his command:

(a) commander in chief of the Army Group Vistula, who will command the eastern front;

(b) commander in chief northwest, who will command the western front;

(c) commander of the armed forces Denmark;

(d) commander of the armed forces Norway;

(e) commander in chief of the air fleet, Reich, for the air forces engaged.

3. If I myself should be north of the interrupted communications, Field Marshal Kesselring will be appointed commander in chief in the southern area. The following will come under his command:

(a) commanders in chief of Army Groups South and Center, for the eastern front;

(b) commander in chief Army of Group G, for the whole of the western front;

(c) commander in chief, southeast;

(d) commander in chief, southwest;

(e) commander in chief of the air fleet, for the air forces engaged.

4. The commanders in chief appointed for separate areas in paragraphs 2 and 3 will conduct the overall defense of the Reich in their areas, if necessary independently, should my orders and decisions, even by wireless, not reach them in time in view of the communications situation.

They are personally responsible to me for the entire employment of their entire war potential, in closest cooperation with the Reichskommissar for defense of the separated area. Apart from this, as far as communications allow, the unified control of operations by myself personally, as hitherto, will not be altered. In particular, the duty of supplying day-to-day reports is not affected.

April 13, 1945

The high command of the Luftwaffe and the Reichsführer SS, as the superior officer responsible for the military duties of the Waffen SS, will be kept informed of decisions as quickly as the technical possibilities of communications allow.

5. The commander in chief in an area which is temporarily cut off will also avail himself of the services of the local representatives of the supply, transport, communications, and armaments organizations as laid down in the order issued on April 11, 1945.

6. The headquarters of the proposed commander in chief of a separated area will be identified and prepared forthwith, in agreement with the chief of armed forces communications, General of the Signal Corps Praun, and in accordance with the order by the chief of the high command of the armed forces dated April 11, 1945, "Establishment of subsidiary headquarters."

7. The activity of the commander in chief of a separated area will be initiated only on special orders from me. These will also define the army groups under whose command each army will come.

8. Similarly, I shall appoint a supreme Reich commissar for defense for a separated area under whom all authorities of the party and the state will be coordinated, and who must cooperate closely with the commander in chief of the separated area.

9. The chief of the high command of the armed forces will issue operational orders.

The following supplementary order is for the commander in chief of the navy:

I entrust the commander in chief of the navy with immediate preparations for the total utilization of all possible sources of manpower and matériel for defending the northern area, should land communications in central Germany be interrupted. I delegate to him plenipotentiary powers to issue the orders necessary for this purpose to all authorities of the state, the party, and the armed forces in this area.

Hitler's order revealed that, at this time, he had not yet definitely decided to remain in Berlin and that he favored Dönitz and Kesselring among his commanders because of what he believed was their determination to hold out to their last breath.

At the time of the order to the commands in the northern and southern areas, Hitler issued a proclamation for the soldiers at the eastern front that was to be given to them once the Russian attack on Berlin had got underway.¹⁴⁸

Like Napoleon at one time,¹⁴⁹ Hitler tried to portray the fight for the capital as a desirable outcome which would, against all realistic considerations, lead to a decisive defeat of the enemy. "Berlin will remain German. Vienna will again become German, and Europe will never become Russian." At a time when Providence had "removed

April 16, 1945

Roosevelt, the greatest war criminal of all time, from this earth," he felt certain that "the turning point of this war is being decided."

Hitler's proclamation was written in his usual demagogic style as follows:¹⁵⁰

Soldiers of the German Eastern Front!

For the last time, our deadly Jewish-Bolshevik enemy has lined up his masses for the attack. He is trying to smash Germany and exterminate our Volk. To a great degree, you soldiers of the east know yourselves what fate is threatening all German women, girls, and children. While the old men and children will be murdered, women and girls will be degraded to barrack whores. The rest will march off to Siberia.

We have anticipated this hour. Since January, everything possible has been done in order to erect a strong front. Our mighty artillery greets the enemy. Our infantry's losses have been made good by countless new units. Units on the alert, newly activated units, and the Volkssturm reinforce our front. The Bolshevik will this time meet the old fate of Asia, that is, he must and will bleed to death in front of the capital of the German Reich.

He who fails to do his duty at this time commits treason against our Volk. Any regiment or division that abandons its position acts so disgracefully that it should be ashamed before the women and children who are enduring the terror bombing against our cities.

Above all, watch out for the few treacherous officers and soldiers who, in order to save their own lives, will fight against us, paid by the Russians, perhaps even wearing German uniforms. Whoever orders you to retreat must be immediately arrested and, if necessary, killed on the spot, no matter what his rank may be.

If, in the coming days and weeks, every soldier does his duty at the eastern front, then the last Asian attack will be broken, just as the invasion of our enemies in the west will be broken in spite of everything.

Berlin will remain German. Vienna will again become German, and Europe will never become Russian.

Form a sworn community not with upon the empty concept of a "fatherland" but for the defense of your homeland, your women, your children, and thereby our future.

In this hour, the entire German Volk looks to you, my fighters in the east, and hopes that, through your steadfastness, zeal, arms, and leadership, the Bolshevik attack will drown in a bloodbath. At this moment, in which Providence has removed the greatest war criminal of all time¹⁵¹ from this earth, the turning point of this war is being decided.

Adolf Hitler

On April 16, the major Russian offensive began, both on the Oder front (Marshal Zhukov) and in Silesia (Marshal Konev). The attack progressed quickly.

April 16, 1945

In the Ruhr area, Army Group B surrendered to the English on April 18. Field Marshal Model committed suicide. American troops had reached Halle and Nuremberg.

As Hitler's loyal servant, Martin Bormann had ordered "victory or death" for the Gauleiters.

Obviously inspired by Frederick the Great's style, Bormann had issued the following resounding proclamation on April 2, Easter Monday, 1945:¹⁵²

National Socialists! Party Comrades!

It was the collapse of 1918 that led us to dedicate ourselves, body and soul, to the struggle for our Volk's right to exist. Now the hour of our greatest trial has come: our Volk is faced with the real possibility of a renewed enslavement. This demands of us a last great rallying of our forces. From now on, our motto shall be to lead the struggle relentlessly and unyieldingly everywhere against the enemy forces penetrating the Reich. Gauleiters and Kreisleiters, other political leaders or heads of the subdivisions are fighting in their area or Kreis, until either victory or death.

Whoever leaves his Gau under attack without permission of the Führer is a scoundrel. Whoever does not fight down to his last breath shall be regarded and treated as absent without leave. Take heart and overcome your weaknesses. There is only one rallying cry: Victory or Death!

Long live Germany! Long live Adolf Hitler!

However, only a few of them were inclined to carry out the suicide order and defend their Gau to their last breath. Following the conquest of their Gaus, many of the Gauleiters preferred to put on Volkssturm uniforms, escape to the interior of the Reich, or go south. At the time, this was referred to as "making off" (*sich absetzen*) in the official language.

In Nuremberg, Deputy Gauleiter Holz, who had been acting Gauleiter of the Gau Franconia since Streicher's elimination, was one of the few men who really wished to die fighting on the streets of his Gau capital. Hitler sent him this telegram on April 16:¹⁵³

I thank you for your exemplary behavior. Your actions not only uplift the Volksgenossen in your Gau, all of whom know you, but also millions of other Germans. Now a fanatical fight begins, which recalls our own struggle for power[!]. However great the superiority of our enemies may be at this moment, it will in the end break, just as it did once before. I appreciate your heroic work with heartfelt gratitude and award you the Golden Cross of the German Order.

Adolf Hitler

April 20, 1945

Gauleiter Eggeling of the Gau Halle-Merseburg was apparently less ready to put up a fight. His deputy Tesche telephoned the Reich Chancellery and suggested that "party comrade Eggeling be ordered to make off."

Hitler replied to this "impertinence" by telegram:¹⁵⁴

Because of the cowardly character evidenced by your telephone call yesterday, I strip you of your rank and, because of cowardice in the face of the enemy, I expel you from the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Only by the utmost proof of worth in the immediate frontline deployment can you regain your honor.

On April 19, the eve of Hitler's birthday, Goebbels spoke on the air, as he had in each of the preceding twelve years, and ended his speech with the passionate cry: "Our Hitler!"¹⁵⁵ One has to grant it to Goebbels: he was truly the only National Socialist Unterführer who staunchly stood by Hitler and even now still defended him in public. In his speech, Goebbels attempted to explain the discrepancy between Hitler's prophesies and the outcome of his politics by coming up with irrational explanations: the work of the devil, of satanic powers; madness; the perverse coalition between plutocracy and Bolshevism, which was, however, in the process of breaking apart. Lucifer would soon be sent to hell again. Moreover, he said that he could discern the workings of a pro-German Providence: "The head of the enemy conspiracy [Roosevelt] has been smashed by Fate. It is this same Fate that allowed the Führer to stand upright and without any injuries among the dead, the seriously injured, and the ruins of July 20, so that he would be able to conclude his work."

On April 20, his last birthday reception took place at the Reich Chancellery.¹⁵⁶ One last time, the heads of the state and the Wehrmacht assembled to congratulate the Führer and supreme commander on his birthday: Göring, von Ribbentrop, Bormann, Keitel, Dönitz, Jodl, Himmler, Goebbels, Speer, Krebs, Koller, and others. A congratulatory telegram from Mussolini also arrived.

It was the last relatively normal day at the Reich Chancellery. In spite of the disastrous situation, even Hitler felt that his birthday was not going badly and seriously considered heading for the Berghof.¹⁵⁷ It was April, after all, a month he usually spent with Eva Braun at the Obersalzberg under all sorts of pretexts. He surely could have thought of something this time, too. Maybe a meeting with statesmen from the

April 21, 1945

satellite states could have been arranged at Klessheim Castle, with Mussolini, Pavelich, or Tiso, for instance.

On April 21, Hitler was rudely awakened from his daydreams: the first Russian shells hit the center of Berlin. Hitler was outraged. He personally put a call through to General Koller, the chief of the Luftwaffe general staff, who was at the Luftwaffe high command Wildpark-Werder headquarters west of Potsdam:¹⁵⁸

Do you know that Berlin is under artillery fire? The city center? It is probably a rail battery of a large caliber. The Russians probably have a railroad bridge across the Oder. The Luftwaffe must immediately locate this battery and fight it.

Koller rightly doubted that the fire came from a long-range rail battery.¹⁵⁹ However, Hitler tried to convince himself and others in the hope that the Russians were still as far away from Berlin as the Germans had been from Paris in 1918.¹⁶⁰

On the same day, Hitler again telephoned Koller several times, said that SS Obergruppenführer Steiner would soon lead an attack, and ordered the following:

Every available man from the Luftwaffe in the area between Berlin and the coast up to Stettin and Hamburg is to be mobilized for the attack ordered by me in the northeast of Berlin.

Do you still doubt my orders? I believe I have expressed myself clearly enough. All forces of the Luftwaffe in the north sector that can be made available for deployment on the ground must immediately be brought up to Steiner. Any commander who withholds his forces will be dead within five hours. The commanders must be informed of this. You will be responsible to me with your head for every last man being deployed.

Even at 11:50 p.m. Hitler did not give Koller any rest. He lectured him on the situation during another telephone call and finally declared the following:

You will see, the Russians will suffer their greatest defeat, the bloodiest defeat in their history, in front of the gates of Berlin.

In the same spirit, he sent this telegram of thanks to Mussolini:¹⁶¹

My thanks to you, Duce, for congratulating me on my birthday. The battle we are now waging for our bare existence has reached its climax. By the unrestricted deployment of matériel, Bolshevism and the troops of Jewry are sparing no effort in order to unite their destructive forces in Germany and are plunging our continent into chaos. In the spirit of dogged defiance of death, the German Volk and all who are of one spirit with it will put a stop to this attack,

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no matter how difficult the fight may be, and by their unique heroism they will change the course of the war. In this historic moment, in which the fate of Europe is being decided for the next centuries, I send you my heartfelt greetings.

Adolf Hitler

In spite of this displayed confidence in victory, it was obvious that the shelling of Berlin by the Russians, which began on April 21, had made Hitler nervous. When his physician Morell wanted to give him a caffeine injection, he screamed:¹⁶²

What do you think I am—crazy? You are probably trying to give me a morphine injection!

Hitler immediately fired Morell and demanded that he take off his uniform, telling him that he was not his personal physician any longer.

On April 22, telephone calls between the Reich Chancellery and Koller continued. Hitler again asked how things were going with Steiner's attack. He wanted to have airplanes deployed for observing the attack. There was a flurry of excitement at the Führerbunker, Luftwaffe Adjutant Colonel von Below said on the telephone. Hitler had ordered the attack to begin in the morning. He had counted on it before noon at the latest. He wanted to get a clear picture immediately of how things were going. Koller made a few calls himself, but all he could find out was that Steiner had not yet begun the attack, since the troops from the army and SS had not yet been brought up.

This information and the increased shelling by the Russians was all Hitler needed. On this day, the Germanic god was probably not very content with him. Hitler despaired, even though only for a few hours, about the future and said he no longer wanted to remain "steadfast in the face of the impossible." He said that the war was lost and that he would commit suicide.

After his return from the Führerbunker at 8:45 p.m., General Christian told Koller about the dramatic discussion of the situation on April 22:¹⁶³

The Führer has broken down. He thinks the fight has now become hopeless. He does not want to leave Berlin, however. Instead, he wants to stay in the bunker and defend Berlin. If the Russians come, he will draw the conclusions and shoot himself. Keitel, Jodl, Bormann, Dönitz, Himmler—the last two on the telephone—have tried to change his mind and get him to leave Berlin—all in vain. The Führer had his files, documents, and papers taken from his rooms to the yard in order to be burned. This [the burning] is taking place

April 22, 1945

right now. The foreign minister also came, but Hitler did not want to see him. He asked for Goebbels, his wife, and the six children, and now they are sitting around him at the bunker.

The Führer said that he will stay there, the others should leave Berlin, they could go wherever they wanted to go.

Koller drove to Jodl, who had gone to the Kramnitz barracks. Shortly after midnight, Jodl told him a nearly identical story:

Hitler has given up. He has decided to stay in Berlin, lead its defense, and shoot himself at the last moment. He said that he could not fight for physical reasons; he would not fight because he could not risk falling wounded into enemy hands. We all tried our utmost to dissuade him and suggested deploying troops from west to east in the battle. He responded that everything would still fall apart; he could not do it, the Reichsmarschal should do it instead.

When somebody remarked that no soldiers would fight for the Reichsmarschal, Hitler said the following: "What do you mean fight? There is not much fighting left to be done. And if it's a question of negotiation, the Reichsmarschal is better at that than I am." The most recent development of the situation has made a great impression on him. He keeps talking about treason and failure, corruption of the commanders and the troops. Even the SS is lying to him now: Sepp Dietrich [for example !]; Steiner [also] did not do his job.

In spite of his depression, Hitler sent a telex to Dönitz, who received it at 7:15 p.m. on April 22.¹⁶⁴ In it, he called the fight for Berlin "Germany's fateful battle"—dwarfing all other tasks in comparison. He ordered Dönitz to support the fighting and temporarily disregard all other missions of the navy by bringing troops "into the city by air, and by land and sea to the fronts fighting on the outskirts of Berlin."

The German people were informed about the developments at the Reich Chancellery through two appeals from Goebbels to the citizens of Berlin. In the first appeal, dated April 22, the public was told that Lieutenant General Reimann had been charged with the military defense of Berlin.¹⁶⁵ Goebbels further declared the following:

Of course, I will stay in Berlin, together with my staff. My wife and children are also here and will stay here. In the event that agents, provocateurs, and criminal elements attempt to stir up the citizens by running up white flags or other cowardly behavior and paralyze the resistance, it must be met by immediate intervention by all means.

The second appeal, issued on the following day, informed the public that the Führer was in the Reich capital and had taken command of "all

April 23, 1945

forces deployed for the defense of Berlin.”¹⁶⁶ Goebbels continued as follows:

It is a question of a decision of supreme importance, not only for us, but also for Europe. That is why the Führer has deployed all military forces available in Germany, to throw them immediately against Bolshevism.

By April 23, Hitler had recovered from his depression. Perhaps all this was just one last trial, the final “hammer blow of Providence.”¹⁶⁷ Perhaps a turn of events would soon come about. He could not allow himself to lose heart at the last moment. This would only elicit the fury of the Almighty, who demanded that he “remain steadfast in face of the impossible.”

More importantly, Hitler was cheered up by a radio message from Göring, who asked if he would now be allowed to take over the Reich. After Koller’s report on the desperate situation of the Reich capital, Göring wired his superior as follows:¹⁶⁸

Mein Führer!

In view of your decision to remain in the fortress of Berlin, do you agree that I should take over the leadership of the whole Reich as your deputy with complete liberty of action at home and abroad, in accordance with your decree of April 29, 1941? If I receive no reply by 22 [22:00 hours or 10 p.m.], I shall assume that your freedom of action has been curtailed. I shall then regard the conditions of the decree as fulfilled. I shall act in the best interest of Volk and Fatherland. You are aware of my feelings for you in this darkest of hours of my life, as words fail me. May the Lord protect you and allow you, despite everything, to come here as soon as possible.

Your loyal Hermann Göring.

This was tantamount to treason! This man wished to claim power while he, Hitler, was still alive!

Immediately, Hitler again struck the pose of the ruler. How could anyone claim that the Führer no longer possessed “freedom of action” or was indisposed by illness?! He was in excellent condition, his health was perfect, and he enjoyed complete possession of his freedom of action. He would show Göring and those like him who had the say in Germany: he, Adolf Hitler, and nobody else! Immediately, he sent this radio message to Göring:

The Führer decree of June 29, 1941, is herewith declared null and void. Your behavior and your measures constitute a betrayal of my person and the National Socialist cause. I am in complete possession of my freedom of action and forbid any further measures.

Adolf Hitler

April 25, 1945

Also on April 23, Speer returned to Berlin by plane in order to “place himself at the disposal” of Hitler, as he put it. He witnessed the arrival of Göring’s radio message and Hitler’s reaction to it. He told the following to the military tribunal at Nuremberg:¹⁶⁹

Hitler was very upset about the content of the telegram. He unequivocally stated his opinion of Göring. He said that he had known for a long time that Göring was corrupt and a morphine addict.

It was characteristic of Hitler when he finally declared: “But let him handle the negotiations for surrender anyway. It will make no difference then who does it.”

Speer said goodbye to Hitler and left Berlin. On Hitler’s orders, Bormann instructed the SS to arrest Göring in Berchtesgaden.¹⁷⁰ Göring was told that, legally speaking, his life was over, and that he owed his pardon only to the “generosity” of the Führer.

Hitler wanted to name the commander of the Sixth Air Fleet, Colonel General Ritter von Greim, as his new Luftwaffe commander in chief. He sent him a telegram, ordering him to come to Berlin from Munich at once.¹⁷¹

The following announcement by Hitler informed the public of the recent events:¹⁷²

Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring has become acutely ill due to a chronic heart problem which has long troubled him. He himself has requested to be relieved of the command of the Luftwaffe and the connected tasks in view of the current situation, which demands the deployment of all forces. The Führer has granted this request. He has appointed Colonel General Ritter von Greim as the new commander in chief of the Luftwaffe and promoted him to field marshal.

On April 25, this official communiqué on Hitler’s activities in Berlin was handed to the press:¹⁷³

The Führer in the Fortress Berlin

In the defense of the Reich capital against the Bolshevik attack, the Führer himself makes the decisions on the deployment of the forces and the bringing up of reinforcements. In nearly hourly discussions, the men responsible for the defense of Berlin report the situation to the Führer.

The Führer directly summons the officers and men who have proved themselves outstanding in battle from their place of deployment and personally hands them their medals. In this manner, Captain Jaschke, the commander of an assault gun unit, received the Knight’s Cross from the Führer’s hands, as did the noncommissioned officer Paul.

April 26, 1945

According to Boldt's report,¹⁷⁴ the discussions of the situation and the award ceremonies continued until April 29. Hitler Youth boys, who took part in the street fighting and were brought to the Führerbunker by Axmann, were especially frequently decorated.

On April 25, the Sixty-Ninth American Infantry Division and the Thirty-Eighth Russian Infantry Division deployed near Torgau. Royal Air Force squadrons dropped bombs on the Obersalzberg.

On this day, Hitler called in his servant Linge to see him. He gave him several orders on how to proceed in the event he committed suicide.¹⁷⁵ He instructed him carefully to burn his body and that of Eva Braun. He told him to destroy everything in the bunker reminiscent of him, with the exception of the "Frederick the Great" painting by Lenbach, which he was supposed to hand over to the chief pilot Baur.

At 12:26 a.m. on April 26, Jodl received this telex from Hitler:¹⁷⁶

The most immediate implementation of all relief attacks in the directions previously ordered is urgently necessary. The Twelfth Army [Wenck] has to deploy on the line Beelitz-Ferch and immediately continue the attack in an easterly direction until it meets up with the Ninth Army [Busse]. The Ninth Army attacks along the shortest route in the west and establishes contact with the Twelfth Army. After the meeting of the two armies, everything hinges on destroying the enemy forces in the southern sector of Berlin, by swinging north, and establishing broad contact with Berlin.

Undeniably, Hitler was a master in writing orders. However, that alone was not enough. As in so many other respects, Hitler resembled Napoleon in this, too, who exclaimed in November 1813: "What can I do? I give orders, but nobody listens to me!"¹⁷⁷

Between six and seven o'clock on the evening of April 26, Colonel General Ritter von Greim arrived at the Reich Chancellery after an adventurous trip. Accompanied by the pilot Hanna Reitsch, he had first flown to Rechlin, then had been brought to the Gatow airfield in another plane, and from there had taken a training plane to the center of the Reich capital. Above Berlin, his plane was hit by fire and his right foot was injured. Nevertheless, with the help of his pilot he managed to land the small plane on the east-west axis. In a requisitioned car, they finally reached the Reich Chancellery.

After Greim's injuries had been treated, Hitler received him and told him that Göring was a traitor. He gave him Göring's telegram of April 23 to read. Finally, he made a scene and shouted the following, full of self-pity:¹⁷⁸

April 27, 1945

An ultimatum! A crass ultimatum! There is nothing else left. I am not spared anything! Nobody stays loyal, nobody lives up to his honor! There is no bitterness, no treason, that has not yet been heaped on me; and now this! This is the end. I am not spared any insult!

Hitler's sentimental outburst was greatly exaggerated. After all, Göring had had the decency of asking him for his approval. Soon, he would have far more reason to be angry with Himmler, who acted in a far more highhanded manner.

Hitler finished his outburst before Greim with the announcement that he had had Göring arrested and dismissed from office. Then he portrayed the general situation in rosy colors to Greim, named him commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, and promoted him to field marshal. It was the twenty-ninth promotion to field marshal (or grand admiral) Hitler carried out, more than the number Napoleon had achieved (twenty-six).

Greim, who had arrived very depressed after his long flight over the an occupied land that was spilt into two parts, literally blossomed during Hitler's fantastic report on the situation, forgot about every pain, and said the final victory lay within his reach.

When Koller, who had returned from Berchtesgaden, phoned Greim from the high-command headquarters in Fürstenberg on the next day, Greim told him: "Just wait and see, don't lose your faith, everything will go well in the end. I was extraordinarily invigorated by the meeting with the Führer and by his strength. This is like a fountain of youth for me here!"¹⁷⁹

How worried Hitler actually was became evident in his conversation with Hanna Reitsch on the same day. He gave her two poison capsules to use in her discretion in case of an emergency and said the following:

I do not want us to fall into the hands of the Russians alive, or for them to find our bodies. The body of Eva and my own will be consigned to the flames. Choose your own way of departing from this world.

However, he added, there was still a well-founded hope of General Wenck's relieving Berlin.

On April 27, Hitler ordered that "Attack Group Oranienburg with the Forty-First Panzer Corps (instead of Steiner's corps) be placed under General of Panzer Troops Wenck."¹⁸⁰

On the afternoon of April 27, Hitler said that he wished to see his liaison man with Himmler, SS Gruppenführer Fegelein, but Eva Braun's

April 27, 1945

brother-in-law was nowhere to be found. Finally, he was discovered at his apartment in Charlottenburg. Apparently, he was fed up with life at the bunker. He was even wearing civilian clothes.

Hitler ordered him back by telephone and had him arrested and locked up in the Gestapo's bunker.¹⁸¹

On the evening of April 27, the Reich Chancellery came under heavy fire from Russian artillery. Hitler still hoped that Wenck's army or Attack Group Oranienburg would come to his rescue.

At 3:00 a.m. on April 28, Hitler ordered General Krebs to call Keitel:¹⁸²

The Führer is interested mostly in the attack west of Oranienburg. How are things going there? Is the attack making progress? The Führer does not want Steiner as a commander there. Has Holste¹⁸³ taken over the command? If we do not get help in the next thirty-six to forty-eight hours, then it will be too late!!

The Führer is expecting help as quickly as possible; we have forty-eight hours at most. If we do not get help by then, it will be too late!!! The Führer wants me to say this again!!

A new order came out of the Reich Chancellery at 12:30 p.m.:¹⁸⁴

The task of all units fighting in the area between the Elbe and the Oder: for the relief of the Reich capital to bring the sweeping assault to a victorious end with all means and with the utmost speed; with regard to this decisive task, the fighting against the enemy breakthrough toward Mecklenburg is of secondary importance.

What arrived at the Führerbunker instead of the anticipated reports on the advances of Wenck's army¹⁸⁵ or other relief units, however, turned out to be depressing news.

That afternoon, British radio broadcast a sensational report. Himmler had met with Count Bernadotte of Sweden in Hamburg on April 24. He had made an offer of surrender to the western powers.¹⁸⁶ In order to convince them of his authority, he had said that Hitler was ill and perhaps even dead. In any event, he would not live another forty-eight hours.¹⁸⁷

Hitler was shocked by the news. He raged like a madman. "His face became purple," Hanna Reitsch reported, "and it was barely recognizable." This was the worst betrayal of all time, Hitler finally told Axmann.

However, that was not the last bad news of the day. Shortly thereafter a report arrived that the Russians were approaching the

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Potsdam Square. Machine-gun fire was already to be heard. The end of the fighting in Berlin appeared to be at hand.¹⁸⁸

Now Hitler finally had to admit that there was no way out. The “miracle” he had counted on was not going to come about, although he had remained “steadfast in the face of the impossible.” His belief in a “divine Providence” collapsed.¹⁸⁹ The “final blow” would, after all, not be landed by him¹⁹⁰ but instead by his enemies abroad whom he had provoked in his crazy blindness. Hitler withdrew for a consultation with Goebbels and Bormann in order to discuss his last instructions.

In addition, he summoned a drumhead court-martial and had Fegelein sentenced to death, in Himmler’s place, so to speak. Supposedly Fegelein had known about the secret negotiations. Immediately after the sentence was passed, Fegelein was executed.

Greim and Hanna Reitsch were ordered to leave Berlin, so that the new commander in chief of the Luftwaffe could intervene in the final battle for the Reich Chancellery by bringing in airplanes. In addition, he was to arrest Himmler.¹⁹¹

Never may a traitor succeed me as the Führer. You must go and see to it that this does not happen!

Hanna Reitsch managed to get Greim and their plane out of burning Berlin and land in Rechlin.¹⁹²

At 11:02 p.m. on April 28, a radio message went out to the “fortresses in the west,”¹⁹³ informing them that “the Führer thinks of them and expects that they will continue to fulfill their duty in an exemplary soldierly manner. There are to be no highhanded actions.”

Hitler’s most significant decision was, however, to marry Eva Braun. She was described as a nice girl and of a positive character by almost everybody who met her.¹⁹⁴ Eva Braun had been depressed by the news of Hitler’s appointment as Reich Chancellor, since this seemed to rob her of all hope of ever marrying the man she loved.¹⁹⁵ In his pose as a heaven-sent Führer, as superman or god-man, Hitler balked at every marriage proposal. Nevertheless, Eva Braun apparently made him promise that, should his political and military mission fail and his ideas prove wrong, he would marry her. Heaven knew that hour had come. For the first time in decades, Hitler behaved like a normal human being at least in this matter, and fulfilled the last wish of the woman who would die with him. Hitler’s marriage on the day before he died

April 29, 1945

represents his only, even if indirect, admission of his complete political and military failure.

The wedding ceremony took place at 1:00 a.m. on April 29 in the map room of the Führerbunker, with all the necessary bureaucratic formalities. Goebbels had called a registered civil magistrate and city councilor of Berlin, the head of the Gau office Walter Wagner. It took Wagner, wearing his Volkssturm uniform, some time to reach the Reich Chancellery.

Hitler's marriage license was found, together with his last will and testament and a letter by Bormann, in the luggage of SS Standartenführer Wilhelm Zander, who was Bormann's adjutant, and who had taken them with him as he attempted to escape. He was found in the village Tegernsee close to Bad Tölz. The marriage license read as follows:¹⁹⁶

Berlin, April 29, 1945

The Mayor of the Reich Capital

For the purpose of the solemnization of a marriage, there appear before Walter Wagner, alderman and civil magistrate in the Reich Capital:

1. Adolf Hitler, born on April 20, 1889, in Braunau; Address: The Reich Chancellery, Berlin; Father: [blank]; Mother: [blank]; Parents' date of marriage: [blank] Proof of identity: personally known.

2. Miss Eva Braun, born on February 6, 1912, in Munich; Address: Munich, Wasserburger Strasse 12; Father: Friedrich Braun; Mother: Franziska Braun (maiden name: Kranburger); Parents' date of marriage: [blank]; Proof of identity: special identity card, dated April 4, 1939, issued by the chief of the German police.

3. Witness: Reich Minister Dr. Joseph Goebbels, born on October 26, 1897, in Rheydt; Address: Berlin, Hermann-Göring-Strasse 20; Proof of identity: personally known.

4. Witness: Martin Bormann, born June 17, 1900, in Halberstadt; Address: Obersalzberg; Proof of identity: personally known.

The persons named under 1 and 2 state that they are of purely Aryan descent and that they have no hereditary diseases which would stand in the way of their marriage. In consideration of the state of war and the special circumstances which concern the solemnization of a marriage under the special laws of war, they request that a verbal notice of an intended marriage is accepted and that all legal delays are disregarded. This request is considered and found to be in order. I now advance to the formal act of the solemnization of a marriage.

In the presence of the witnesses named under 3 and 4, I ask you, my Führer, Adolf Hitler, are you willing to take Miss Eva Braun as your lawful wedded wife? If you are willing, so reply by saying yes. Now I ask you Miss Eva Braun,

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are you willing to take the Führer Adolf Hitler as you lawful husband? If you are willing, so reply by saying yes.

Now that the two fiancés have declared their willingness to enter into the marriage, I declare this marriage contracted before the law.

Read and signed:

1. Husband:	Adolf Hitler
2. Wife:	Eva B. Hitler, born Braun
3. Witness for 1:	Dr. Joseph Goebels
4. Witness for 2:	Martin Bormann
5. Civil Magistrate:	Wagner

At the signing of the marriage licence, two of those involved made mistakes because of the great excitement: Eva Braun was about to sign her maiden name and started with a "B," then crossed it out and wrote "Hitler, born Braun;" the civil magistrate signed "Waagner" instead of Wagner.

After the formalities were done, the wedding couple stepped out into the hallway to accept the best wishes of the entourage. A small festive dinner in their private rooms followed. Goebbels, his wife, Bormann, Hitler's secretaries Mrs. Christian and Mrs. Junge, and later the Generals Krebs and Burgdorf, and Colonel von Below attended, as well as Adjutant Günsche and Hitler's dietary cook, Miss Manzialy. Champagne was offered, only Hitler had tea. They spoke about the good old times, especially about Goebbels' wedding, at which Hitler had been witness.

After some time, Hitler retired in order to dictate to Mrs. Junge his political and private last will and testament.

Hitler had previously made a political testament, at the end of the second volume of *Mein Kampf*. At the time, he had written the following:¹⁹⁷

The political testament of the German nation concerning its actions toward others should and must always be as follows: never tolerate the emergence of two continental powers in Europe. Regard every attempt to organize a second military force along German borders, even if it consists merely in the formation of a state with the potential of becoming a military power, as an act of aggression against Germany. Regard it not as your right, but as your duty, to employ all means at your disposal, including force of arms, to hinder the emergence of such a state or, if such a state has already emerged, to destroy it.

Take care that the strength of our Volk is not derived from colonies, but from the soil of the homeland in Europe. Never think the security of the Reich assured, unless it is able, for centuries to come, to give every scion of our Volk

April 29, 1945

his own piece of property. Never forget that the most sacred right in this world is the right to the soil you want to cultivate yourself, and the most sacred sacrifice is the blood you shed for this earth.

This political testament of 1928 was supposed to come into force as soon as Hitler had established the German continental empire which he envisioned and which would encompass all of central and eastern Europe up to the Urals, and as soon as he had destroyed all “military powers” at Germany’s borders (hence, France, Poland, Russia, Italy, and so on).

In his political testament of 1945, Hitler used less high-flown phrases. All that counted in 1945 was the incredible chaos he had provoked by his politics. Naturally, he was not about to admit any guilt in this respect. On the contrary, he kept serving up the old sentimental phrases about how he had “used up” his health in the fight for Germany.¹⁹⁸ He spoke of his unsurpassed love for peace, his countless offers of friendship to England. Not surprisingly, he blamed the Jews for the outbreak of the war and its “murderous” consequences for the German people. Not only the Jews were at fault, so were the officers of the German army who, contrary to those in the navy, had no “sense of honor.” He also blamed the “former” Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring and the “former” Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler.

Even now, he saw himself at the center of the universe. Just as he had announced at the beginning of the war, on September 1, 1939, that he wished not to “live to see the day” if things went badly,¹⁹⁹ he now said that he did “not wish to fall into the hands of the enemy who, for the amusement of their incited masses, need a new spectacle directed by the Jews.”

After his death, the fight should “under no circumstance be given up” and should be continued “no matter where.” For this reason, Hitler appointed Grand Admiral Dönitz as his successor in the office of head of state and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. This appointment came as a surprise to many, including Dönitz. However, considering Hitler’s mentality, it was not really all that surprising. The reason was quite obvious. He even said it explicitly in this last will: “May it one day form part of the sense of honor of the German officer—it is already the case with our navy—that the surrender of a region or city is impossible and that, above all, the leaders should set a shining example of loyal fulfillment of duty unto death.”

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Hitler made Dönitz's mission perfectly clear in the above sentence: he should continue to wage the fight mercilessly until the glorious end, even if the entire German Volk would go down with him, like the crew of a ship. Dönitz should follow the example that fleet commander Admiral Lütjens had set on May 26, 1941, when, confronted with a hopeless situation, he scuttled the no longer maneuverable *Bismarck* with its flag flying, a crew of two thousand men and himself on board. That was the "sense of honor" Hitler was referring to and he believed that the grand admiral was the only officer in his entourage whom he could trust to carry out this mission. But Hitler was mistaken in this, as in so many other regards!

Hitler's political last will and testament read as follows:²⁰⁰

[National Emblem]

ADOLF HITLER

My Political Testament

More than thirty years have passed since I deployed my modest forces as a volunteer in the First World War, a war forced on the Reich.

In these three decades, all my thoughts, actions, and life have been guided by my love for and loyalty to the Volk. They gave me the power to make many more difficult decisions than any mortal man before me. I have used up my time, my working power, and my health in these three decades.

It is untrue that I or any other person in Germany wanted war in the year 1939. It was desired and instigated exclusively by those international statesmen who are either of Jewish origin or work for Jewish interests. I made too many proposals for the limitation and control of armament, which posterity will not be able to deny eternally, for the responsibility for this war to be placed on me. Further, I never wanted, after the first accursed World War, a second one against England or even America to come about. Centuries will go by, but from the ruins of our cities and monuments of art, hatred for the people who are ultimately responsible will always renew itself; against those whom we have to thank for all this: international Jewry and its helpers!

Only three days before the outbreak of the German-Polish war, I proposed a solution for the German-Polish problems to the British ambassador in Berlin—similar to the one for the Saarland under international control. That proposal cannot be disavowed. It was only rejected because the influential circles in English politics wanted war, partially for business reasons, partially driven by propaganda directed by international Jewry.

I never left any doubt about it: should the nations of Europe again be regarded only as the portfolio of stocks of these international monetary and financial conspirators, then the race would be held responsible that actually is guilty in this murderous struggle: Jewry! Further, I made it perfectly clear that this time that millions of grown men would not die and hundreds of thousands of women and children would not burn in the cities or die

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under the rain of bombs without a punishment's being inflicted on the guilty, although by more humane means.

After a six-year-long fight which, in spite of all the setbacks, will one day go down in history as the most glorious and brave avowal of a Volk's will to live, I cannot leave this city, the capital of the Reich. Since there are not enough forces to withstand the enemy attack at this point and our resistance is slowly being weakened by blinded and spineless characters, I wish to join my fate to that which millions of others have taken upon themselves and remain in this city. In addition, I do not wish to fall into the hands of an enemy who, for the amusement of its incited masses, needs a new spectacle directed by the Jews.

I have, therefore, decided to remain in Berlin and to choose death there voluntarily at the moment when I believe that the seat of the Führer and Chancellor²⁰¹ cannot be held any longer. I die with a joyous heart in view of the immeasurable deeds and accomplishments of our soldiers at the front, which I am well aware of; of our women at home, of our peasants and workers, and the unparalleled deployment, unique in history, of our youth, which bears my name.

That I express to all of them my profound heartfelt gratitude is as natural as my wish that they may under no circumstance abandon the fight. Instead they will continue to wage it no matter where against the enemies of the fatherland, loyal to the creed of the great Clausewitz. From the sacrifice of our soldiers and my own solidarity with them unto death, a seed will one day germinate in German history, in one way or another, and bring about the shining rebirth of the National Socialist movement and the realization of a true Volksgemeinschaft.

Many of the bravest men and women decided to bind their lives to mine unto death. I asked them and finally ordered them not to do this but to participate in the continued fight of the nation. I ask the commanders of the armies, the navy, and the Luftwaffe to reinforce—with the utmost efforts in the National Socialist spirit—the power of resistance of our soldiers. I especially point to the fact that I myself, as the founder and creator of this movement, preferred death to a cowardly resignation much less a surrender.

May it one day form part of the sense of honor of the German officer—as is the case with our navy already—that the surrender of a region or city is impossible and that, above all, the leaders should set a shining example of loyal fulfillment of duty unto death.

Second Part of the Political Testament

Before my death, I expel the former Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring from the party and strip him of all his rights that might be derived from the decree of June 29, 1941, and my Reichstag declaration of September 1, 1939. In his place, I appoint Grand Admiral Dönitz as Reich President and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht.²⁰²

Before my death, I expel the former Reichsführer SS and Reich Minister of the Interior Heinrich Himmler from the party and all state offices. In his place,

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I appoint Gauleiter Karl Hanke as Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, and Gauleiter Paul Giesler as Reich minister of the interior.

Göring and Himmler, by their secret negotiations with the enemy, which took place without my knowledge and contrary to my will, as well as by attempting to usurp power in the state in violation of the law, have done immeasurable damage to the country and the entire Volk, not to mention their disloyalty to my person.

In order to give the German Volk a government made up of men of honor, who fulfill their duty to continue the war by all means, I appoint, as the Führer of the nation, the following members of the new cabinet: Reich President, Dönitz; Reich chancellor,²⁰³ Goebbels; party minister,²⁰⁴ Bormann, foreign minister, Seyss-Inquart; minister of the interior, Gauleiter Giesler; minister of war,²⁰⁵ Dönitz; commander in chief of the army, Schörner, commander in chief of the navy, Dönitz; commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, Greim; Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, Gauleiter Hanke; economy, Funk; agriculture, Backe; justice, Thierack; culture, Dr. Scheel;²⁰⁶ propaganda, Dr. Naumann; finance, Schwerin-Krosigk; labor, Dr. Hupfauer;²⁰⁷ armament, Saur;²⁰⁸ head of the German labor front and member of the Reich cabinet, Reich Minister Dr. Ley.²⁰⁹

Although a number of these men, like Martin Bormann, Dr. Goebbels, and others, including their wives, joined me out of their own free will and wished to leave the capital of the Reich under no circumstances, but instead were willing to go down with me, I have to ask them to comply with my request and to place the interest of the nation above their own feelings in this case. Through their work and loyalty, they will be as close to me as companions after death, as I hope to be among them in spirit and will always accompany them. May they be hard, but never unjust, may they never allow fear to become the guide of their actions, and may they place the honor of the nation above all else there is on earth. May they finally realize that our mission in expanding the National Socialist state will be a work for coming centuries, which obliges every individual always to serve the common interest and to put aside his own advantage in its favor. I demand of all Germans, all National Socialists, men and women, and soldiers of the Wehrmacht that they will be loyal and obedient to the new government and its president unto death.

Above all, I oblige the leadership of the nation and its followers to a meticulous observance of the racial laws and to a merciless resistance to those world-wide poisoners of all Völker, international Jewry.

Given at Berlin, April 29, 1945, four o'clock

Adolf Hitler

As witnesses:

Dr. Joseph Goebbels

Wilhelm Burgdorf

Martin Bormann

Hans Krebs

Hitler still persevered in the role of the god-man in this "political testament" whose various versions were addressed to Fleet Commander Dönitz, Field Marshal Schörner, and "the public." He did not mention

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his marriage with Eva Braun. Such a human touch would have been out of place in this last grandiose proclamation. The German public was truly astonished when, following the complete collapse of the Third Reich, it heard about the “last-minute marriage” of Eva Braun and Hitler.

The only place Hitler mentioned this marriage was in his “private testament.” It is not entirely clear whether or not he wished this document to be published. He could not resist using the same proclamation style in this last private piece of paper, although it was less heroic in tone than his political testament. He admitted that it was possible that the party “no longer existed,” and spoke once again of the “disgrace of a withdrawal” (*Absetzen*) which he wanted to avoid. He probably meant to say “make off” (*sich absetzen*), “escape” in plain English, not “being deposed” (*abgesetzt werden*) by a legal resolution of the Reichstag, as Napoleon had experienced in a similar form.²¹⁰ Hitler had always feared such a resolution’s removing him from office, especially since 1942.²¹¹

Hitler’s private last will and testament read as follows:²¹²

[National Emblem]
ADOLF HITLER
My Private Testament

Although I believed in the years of fighting that I could not take the responsibility of entering into a marriage, now, before the end of my life, I decided to take as my wife the lady who, after many years of true friendship, came into this all but besieged city of her own free will in order to share my fate. At her own wish, she will go into death with me as my wife. This will compensate us both for what my work in the service of my Volk took from us.

Insofar as they are of any value, my possessions are the property of the party and, should it no longer exist, of the state. Should the state be destroyed, then any further directives by me would be superfluous.

The paintings in the collections that I bought over the years I never intended for private purposes, but for the establishment of a gallery in my home town of Linz on the Danube.

It is my most heartfelt wish that this bequest be executed.

As the executor of my testament, I appoint my dearest party comrade Martin Bormann.²¹³ He will be entitled to make all decisions final and legal. He will be allowed to give everything of personal value as a remembrance or necessary to maintain a modest bourgeois living standard for my siblings, likewise especially to my wife’s mother,²¹⁴ and my secretaries, whom he knows well, Mrs. Winter,²¹⁵ and others who supported me for many years in my work.

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My wife and I choose to die in order to escape the disgrace of a deposition or surrender. It is our wish to be cremated immediately at the site where I did the larger part of my daily work in the course of a twelve-year-long service to my Volk.

Given at Berlin, April 29, 1945, four o'clock

Adolf Hitler

As witnesses:

Martin Bormann, Dr. Goebbels,

Nicolaus von Below

Both last wills were signed at 4:00 a.m. It was remarkable that the witnesses who countersigned the documents were not exactly the same in both cases.

Following the signature, Hitler went to rest, while Goebbels wrote an "addendum" to Hitler's private testament. He signed it at 5:30 a.m.²¹⁶ The "addendum" read as follows:

The Führer has ordered me to leave Berlin in the event of a failure of the defense of the capital, and to take part in a leading capacity in the formation of a new government, which he will appoint.

For the first time in my life, I must categorically refuse to comply with an order by the Führer. My wife and my children join me in this refusal. First, because of humanitarian considerations it would break our hearts to abandon the Führer in his hour of greatest need.

Second, for the rest of my life I would feel myself to be a worthless subject devoid of honor. I would lose all self-respect along with the respect of my Volk. I believe I will hereby render the greatest service to the German Volk in the future, for it will need inspiring examples more than actual men in the difficult times to come.

It is for these reasons that, along with my wife, I wish to express the unshakable determination not to leave the Reich capital, and rather to end my life alongside my Führer than to lead a life that will have lost all its meaning unless it can be spent in his service or at his side.

For "the first time in his life," Goebbels said, he refused to comply with an order by the Führer. He preferred to die rather than to go on without him.

Bormann added the following postscript to the letter:

Dear Grand Admiral!

As none of the divisions have broken through and our situation appears hopeless, the Führer dictated the enclosed political testament last night.

Heil Hitler!

Yours,

Bormann

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The three official versions of the testament were handed to the following couriers: Bormann's adjutant, SS Standartenführer Wilhelm Zander, took the copy for Dönitz;²¹⁷ Hitler's army adjutant, Major Willi Johannmeier the one for Schörner;²¹⁸ and press chief Heinz Lorenz the one for "the public."²¹⁹

At the noon discussion of the situation, Krebs suggested sending out three officers in order to try to establish contact with Wenck: Major Freiherr Freytag von Loringhoven, cavalry captain Boldt, and Lieutenant Colonel Weiss.²²⁰ Hitler had him find an escape route and then gave his approval. He shook hands with each of the officers and said: "My regards to Wenck. He should hurry up or it will be too late!"

In the afternoon, Hitler had had his dog Blondi poisoned by his former surgeon, Professor Haase, head of a military hospital in the big air-raid shelter under the Reich Chancellery, which was open to the public. News of this event, which made it clear that the end was near, caused a number of nurses, wounded men, and other patients of the hospital to ask to see the Führer one last time before he died.²²¹ Hitler granted this request and, his hands in his coat pockets, walked through the room in silence.

Hitler handed his secretaries poison capsules and said that he regretted not being able to give them a nicer parting gift.

In spite of all this, he had not yet given up completely. Colonel Nicolaus von Below, inspired by the departure of the three army officers, had come to the conclusion that he could try something similar in order to escape a macabre end in the bunker of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler agreed and gave him a dispatch for Keitel at 10:00 p.m.

Below reported the following on the content of this message:²²²

In it, Hitler declared that the battle for Berlin was nearing its end, that he preferred suicide to surrender, that he had named Dönitz as his successor, and that two of his earliest followers, Göring and Himmler, had betrayed him in the end.

Then he talked about the accomplishments of the Wehrmacht. He praised the navy: its great courage had redeemed the disgrace of 1918,²²³ it could not be blamed for the defeat. He excused the Luftwaffe, since it had fought bravely.

The Volk and the Wehrmacht had given their all and everything in this long and hard fight. It had been a great sacrifice. However, his trust had been abused by many people. Disloyalty and treason had undermined the power of resistance throughout the war. He was therefore unable to lead his Volk to

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victory. The general staff of the armed forces could not be compared with the general staff of the First World War.²²⁴ Its achievements were far behind those of the fighting front.

"The efforts and sacrifices of the German Volk in this war were so great that I cannot believe that they were in vain. It must continue to be its objective to gain space [Lebensraum] for the German Volk in the east."

So even in the last hours of his life, Hitler was still preoccupied with the question of Lebensraum in the east. He was his old self. No hard facts could move him to abandon his theories of 1919.

Before he died, Hitler heard about the fate of Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, on the radio. The station of the Italian "National Liberation Committee" broadcast news on April 29, according to which they had been sentenced by a "special court" and executed.²²⁵

On September 28, 1937, Mussolini had declared in Berlin: "Fascism has an ethic to which it intends to remain true, and this ethic corresponds to my personal morals: to speak clearly and openly, and if you have a friend, to march with him to the end." In spite of his indecisiveness, Mussolini had remained true to his fateful "ethic" for exactly seven-and-a-half years. However, on April 28, 1945, his march had come to an end.

Though they lived in different areas, both dictators met death at nearly the same time, both in the company of their mistresses of many years.

One hour before midnight, Hitler attempted one last time to find out whether a "miracle" had not somehow come about in the meantime. He did not want to disappoint the Almighty by giving up prematurely in case this was just a "trial" and he would be saved at the last moment.

At 11:00 p.m., Jodl received this radio message at Dobbin from Hitler:²²⁶

I demand immediate reports on the following:

1. Where are the spearheads of "Wenck" [Twelfth Army]?
2. When will they continue the attack?
3. Where is the Ninth Army [Busse]?
4. In what direction is the Ninth Army breaking through?
5. Where are the spearheads of "Holste" [Attack Group Oranienburg]?

Hitler had only sixteen-and-a-half hours to live, but the tone of his orders was no different from those of twenty-five years ago!

At 1:00 a.m. on April 30, Keitel replied to Hitler's radio message as follows:²²⁷

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1. Spearhead of Wenck is stuck south of the Schwielow Lake.
2. Twelfth Army can therefore not continue attack on Berlin.
3. Ninth Army massively surrounded.
4. Corps Holste driven onto the defensive.

That was a clear, unpretentious reply—the final blow to Hitler’s delusions. Now the end had irrevocably come. His God had forsaken him. The “Almighty,” the “Providence,” had failed him and taken no steps to save Adolf Hitler who had remained “steadfast in the impossible.” It was finished.

Hitler had those to whom he wished to say goodbye assemble in the hall. Accompanied by Bormann, he appeared early at 2:30 for the final scene. He walked past the twenty or so persons,²²⁸ shook hands with the ladies, and mumbled a few inaudible words.

When he had left, those who had gathered stood together for a while. Somehow they all breathed a sigh of relief. Since Hitler’s death was now imminent, they felt that no more unpleasant surprise or final drama awaited them. After all, it had not been entirely clear what the end would be like. It would have been possible that, in “the frenzy of a cornered maniac,”²²⁹ Hitler would have ordered some act of desperation, perhaps a mass suicide by poison, the shooting of all residents of the Reich Chancellery bunker, or driving everybody out onto the Wilhelmsplatz for a joint heroic death in a hail of Russian bullets.

The majority of the residents of the bunker, whose number amounted to a few hundred, did not share Goebbels’s opinion that life after Hitler was not worth living. Therefore, they were greatly relieved when they heard that Hitler had decided that only he and Eva Braun would commit suicide and the rest could do as they pleased. Soon the general tension gave way to dancing and drinking. The affair ended up being so loud that the residents of the Führerbunker had to request some peace and quiet, although in vain.

However, Hitler was not yet ready to put an end to everything. On the morning of April 30, he summoned his chief pilot and told him:²³⁰ “Baur, I would like to say goodbye to you.” Greatly upset, Baur asked: “Does this mean you want to end it all?” Hitler replied: “Regrettably, the time has come. My generals betrayed me, my soldiers do not want to go on, and I cannot go on!”

Baur tried to change his mind, suggesting an escape by plane to Argentina, Japan, or an Arab state. But Hitler declined:

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I still have two choices: I could go into the mountains or to Dönitz in Flensburg.²³¹ Fourteen days later, I would be just where I am today, I would face the same alternatives. The war ends in Berlin. I stand and fall with Berlin. You have to have the courage to draw the ultimate conclusions—I put an end to it! I know that already tomorrow millions of people will curse me. Fate wanted it this way. The Russians know that I am still here in the bunker, and I fear that they will use gas. In the course of the war, we developed a gas that can make people unconscious for twenty-four hours. We know from our intelligence service that the Russians have that gas, too. It would be disastrous if I fell into their hands alive. There are gas sluices installed here, but who would want to rely on that? Not I, in any event—and so I will put an end to everything today.

Hitler left his painting of Frederick the Great by Lenbach to Baur.²³² Through the years, he had always believed in its magical powers.

I do not want this picture to get lost. I would like it to be preserved for posterity. It has great historic value. It is for you. It suffices that it is in your hands.

After some reminiscences about the travels during which the painting had accompanied him, Hitler continued:

I have two more orders for you, Baur. I hold you responsible²³³ for the burning of my wife's and my bodies. In addition, I made Dönitz my successor. Bormann has a number of orders from me that need to be transmitted to Dönitz. See to it that you get out of here. It is very important that Bormann reaches Dönitz.

The men shook hands, and Hitler turned to go. But then he came back again. He could not resist, he simply had to put an idea into the head of this upright air-force captain who was an excellent pilot but had no clue about politics and strategy: "Baur, they should write on my tombstone: 'He was the victim of his generals.'" When Baur looked at him in utter amazement, Hitler added in a secretive tone the following words: "Baur, there are many things you do not know. You will find out many things that will surprise you."

One last time, Hitler managed to confuse a man and rob him of his sense of judgment. When Baur later met with the generals of the "National Committee [named] Free Germany" in Russia, he remembered Hitler's words and sincerely believed that these generals were responsible for Hitler's and Germany's downfall. In reality, however, Hitler's undoing was his politics, which had led them to "abandon" him, just as the marshals of Napoleon I had turned away

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from him once they realized that his plans would fail because of the resistance of the entire world.

After the talk with Baur, the Führer attended a discussion of the situation as though it was a completely ordinary day.²³⁴ He was informed that the Russians had already reached the Potsdamer Platz and the Weidendammer Bridge.

Hitler had lunch with his secretaries and the dietary cook. His wife remained in her room. Shortly after 3:00 p.m., a new farewell scene took place in the hall where Goebbels and the Generals Krebs and Burgdorf had gathered. Eva and Adolf Hitler showed themselves, arm in arm, and then went into the map room.

The door closed. The time for Hitler's suicide had come. He had thought about it for so long. In December 1932, he had said:²³⁵

If the party ever falls apart, I will take a gun and end it all in a minute.

Following the debacle with Paulus at Stalingrad, he had said on February 1, 1943:²³⁶

What is life? Life is people. Some of them die, but those who survive are the people. But how can one fear that second which may free him from the sorrows of life, if only he is not kept back by his sense of duty in this trouble?

And he had tried to console himself on August 31, 1944:²³⁷

It takes only a fraction of a second, and you are relieved of all that and you can have some quiet and eternal peace.

On April 30, 1945, in the bunker of the Reich Chancellory, he finally ended his life, something he could have done as early as September 3, 1939. It was already clear on that day that Hitler's foreign policy had suffered a complete collapse with the declaration of war by the English, and that his downfall was inevitably sealed. At the time, he had just stared in front of him for several minutes and then asked: "What now?" However, he had been too cowardly and too proud to draw the conclusions at that time. Now, he was after all forced to pick up his pistol. At the time, he had still sat in his magnificent study at the Reich Chancellery, now he sat in the musty concrete cellar of the same building. Five years, eight months, and twenty-seven days had passed in the meantime. Not for one hour had he stood a chance of winning the war. All these years and months had been just a delay—a desperate attempt to postpone the certain end, which drew inevitably nearer with terrible consequences. Meanwhile, tremendous destruction had taken

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place in Europe, many millions had died under the most terrible circumstances. But Hitler was no more moved by these considerations than Napoleon had once been. On June 26, 1813, Napoleon challenged Metternich: "It is war you want, isn't it? Well, you shall have it. I don't give a damn about one million lives more or less!"²³⁸

Now Hitler had reached the end of his days and, as he claimed in his political testament, he now pulled the trigger with a "joyous heart."

At one time, he had solemnly announced:²³⁹

No matter when Providence will end my life, not even at the last moment will I regret to have led this fight. On the contrary, I will be able to tell myself: It was a life worth living! It was not a life of cowardice, indolence, and restraint. Instead, it was a life that will one day hold its own before German history!

Had it really been worthwhile for him—this life with its comet-like rise to political stardom and its catastrophic end? From Hitler's point of view, the answer to this question would certainly have been an unconditional yes. After all, in the years 1932 to 1945, he had had the opportunity to satisfy his lust for power to a degree which no man on earth had ever been able to in the past. Up to the last minute, he had relished this feeling of power, indulged himself in demagogic speeches, fantastic prophesies for the future, grandiose proclamations, military orders, and the brutal or malicious use of force. Even though his sphere of influence had constantly shrunk, until it finally extended only to the Reich Chancellery, he had still continued to indulge his passion.

The fate of the German Volk, whose name he had had always in his mouth, had made as little difference to him as the judgment of history to which he had referred from the very beginning. Whether or not "millions would curse him," or the nations would remember his name with disgust, did not touch him, as long as he was able to quench his thirst for power time and again. He had lived only for the present, for the ecstasy of the moment—he was a gambler of tremendous proportions.

If he did not wish to be captured and face an Allied war tribunal, then he truly had only one way out: a bullet through his head. He could not make use of the opportunity to go into exile as the Kaiser had done after the lost World War; not only because he was not born as a member of an imperial house with important relationships abroad, but also because his politics had made it impossible. He realized that. No neutral country would have granted him asylum, and had he gone there

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clandestinely, it would have immediately granted an extradition request by the Allies.

Nor could Hitler claim religious motives in refusing to commit suicide, as the Kaiser had done, referring to his alleged "Christian convictions."²⁴⁰ Regardless of whether this step required courage or was a sign of cowardice or mental illness, Hitler had decided to do so of his own free "will," much as when he forced himself to ever new "tests of courage" in the First World War, which had earned him the Iron Cross 2nd and 1st class.

From the point of view of the public, one ought to be grateful to Hitler for putting an end to himself and not continuing to torment the public with the spectacle, lasting months or perhaps even years, of his attempts to rationalize his behavior, accuse others of his own misdeeds, and so on. There is little doubt that, had Hitler been captured, he would have talked endlessly about his miraculous life story, his struggle at home and abroad, his unsurpassed love for peace, his countless offers of friendship to England, the failure of his allies, the "betrayal" of his generals and other coworkers. Like Napoleon, he would have repeated time and again what he had achieved, and would have been capable of achieving, if others had only let him.

After the Hitler couple had retired, his loyal followers, Goebbels, Bormann, Linge, and others, remained in the hallway. They did not have to wait long. A few minutes later, they heard a shot. After a short silence, they opened the door and saw Hitler sitting dead on the couch. His head had fallen back, blood streamed down his temple. He had shot himself with a 7.65 mm pistol,²⁴¹ which then had fallen from his hand. Next to him was slumped the body of Eva Hitler. She had taken poison, and her outward appearance was unchanged. She had not used her little 6.35 mm revolver. It was 3:30 p.m.²⁴²

Goebbels took the Reich youth leader Axmann, who had arrived in the meantime, into the room. In silence, they stood there for about a quarter of an hour before the corpses. Then, Linge came in and put a blanket over Hitler's head, which was covered with blood. He carried the body outside into the garden of the Reich Chancellery, where he laid it down at a distance of about three meters from the emergency exit of the bunker. Hitler's chauffeur Erich Kempka carried Eva's body outside and placed it next to the dead Hitler.²⁴³ Then, gasoline was poured over the bodies from canisters which Kempka had procured earlier.²⁴⁴ Because of the wind and the Russian artillery fire, Linge did not manage

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to light a match. The small group had to take cover at the entrance of the bunker. There Linge set fire to a piece of cloth, or rather a piece of paper, and threw it over to the dead bodies which immediately went up in flames. Goebbels, Bormann, Günsche, Linge, Kempka, and Burgdorf stood at attention, arms outstretched in the Hitler salute.

The bodies burned for several hours but, as is natural with gasoline, they did not burn completely. In the late evening, a commando force under SS Brigadeführer Rattenhuber took the remains and buried them in a bomb crater, a few meters from the site of the burning, covering them with earth.²⁴⁵

In the meantime, things had considerably relaxed at the bunker. The demon who had constantly kept his entourage under pressure was dead. And almost everyone felt a sense of relief. The whole atmosphere had changed. The bunker even smelled different, because people could now smoke if they pleased—something that would have been unthinkable while Hitler was still alive. Even high-ranking SS commanders were happy that they could greet each other by saying “good evening” without having to fear being regarded as an enemy of the state. The eternal “*Heil Hitler!*” greeting, the repetition of a pledge of allegiance all day long, was a thing of the past. Few were unhappy about that.²⁴⁶

Undoubtedly, the chief mourner at the bunker was Goebbels, who had truly loved Hitler. Still, it was difficult for him to depart from this life. He admitted to Linge: “I wanted to die at the same moment he did. But, at the last minute, I suddenly could not do it.”

At 6:35 p.m., Dönitz received this radio message:²⁴⁷

Grand Admiral Dönitz

In the place of the former Reichsmarschal Göring, the Führer has named you, Grand Admiral, as his successor. Written grants of power are on the way. As of this minute, you will decree all measures that the present situation may require.

Bormann

Since Bormann had neglected to mention that Hitler was dead, Dönitz immediately sent a telegram expressing his loyalty to the Führer whom he thought to be still alive.²⁴⁸

My Führer!

I shall not waiver in my loyalty to you. I shall persist in undertaking everything possible and imaginable within my powers to relieve you in Berlin. Should destiny force me to assume the responsibilities of leadership, which you

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imparted to me as the successor whom you yourself appointed, I vow to bring this war to the end required by the singularly heroic fight of the German Volk.

Grand Admiral Dönitz.

In the meantime, there was some debate on what was to be done at the Führerbunker. Finally, the decision was made to establish contact with the Russian headquarters by radio and initiate negotiations. Chuikov²⁴⁹ agreed. At midnight, General Krebs, who spoke Russian, went to see Chuikov in order to attempt to surrender the Reich Chancellery in return for the permission for all its occupants to leave for the unoccupied zone in the north, where Dönitz was.

Before Krebs returned, Bormann sent another telegram to Dönitz, who received it at 10:35 a.m. on May 1:²⁵⁰

Grand Admiral Dönitz

Last will and testament in force. I will join you as quickly as possible. I believe you should wait with the publication until then.

Bormann

At noon, Krebs returned to the Reich Chancellery. Zhukov had not agreed to any deal and demanded unconditional capitulation and the surrender of all the occupants of the Reich Chancellery.

Since a safe retreat had become impossible, it was high time for a decision. A new radio message was sent to Dönitz at 3:18 p.m.:²⁵¹

Grand Admiral Dönitz

Führer passed away at 3:30 p.m. yesterday. Testament dated April 29 confers the office of Reich president on you, the office of Reich chancellor on Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels, the office of party minister on Reichsleiter Bormann. On the Führer's orders, the testament was taken out of Berlin to you and to Field Marshal Schörner, and to guarantee the security of the public. Reichsleiter Bormann will try to join you today in order to inform you of the situation. Form and time of the announcement to the public and the troops are up to you. Confirm receipt.

Goebbels—Bormann

Even this radio message did not communicate how Hitler had "passed away." In any event, it was clear that he had not died in combat. Goebbels also did not mention that he intended to follow suit and commit suicide as well. It was not until that evening that he told his adjutant Schwägermann that he and his family would depart from this life. He ordered him to burn their bodies. Schwägermann did, but the bodies did not burn completely.²⁵²

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Bormann, Axmann, state secretary Naumann, Baur, Kempka, and the other residents of the bunker, about 300 to 500 persons in all, attempted the next night to get through the Russian lines in small groups.²⁵³ Some of them succeeded, others got killed, and the remainder ended up in Russian captivity.

Even after Hitler's death, his orders were carried out unquestioningly in Germany. The appointment of Dönitz as Reich president and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, a clear violation of the constitution, was accepted without question by the Unterführers. Neither Göring nor Himmler, nor Bormann, von Ribbentrop, Keitel, nor Jodl dared in the least to doubt the legality of Hitler's order.

According to law, the president of the Reichsgericht would have been the deputy of the head of state and, therefore, the commander in chief or rather supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. On his behalf, the senior field marshal, that is, Keitel as the chief of the Wehrmacht high command, should have been serving in this capacity. Up to now, Keitel had always passed on directives to the entire Wehrmacht in Hitler's name. Moreover, he had been field marshal for a much longer time than Dönitz had been grand admiral, and stood in rank above him in this respect too.

However, Keitel willingly complied with Hitler's order, as always, although it represented a violation of the law. An old principle, in force in Germany since 1934, was apparently destined to apply in Germany even after Hitler's death, no matter whether it was legal or not: "We will all always approve of everything our Führer does."²⁵⁴ Only the Allies completely disregarded it and demanded that Keitel sign the surrender papers.

It was astonishing how quickly Dönitz adapted himself to his new role, even though he had been surprised by his appointment. He complied with Hitler's order and immediately began to "govern." During his time in office, he made bombastic proclamations and issued untruthful official announcements entirely in Hitler's style.

Even though Dönitz was not aware of the concrete circumstances of Hitler's death, he realized that Hitler had not "fallen" on the battlefield but instead had simply "passed away" as Goebbels put it. In spite of this, he had the following announcement broadcast on the air at 10:26 p.m. on May 1, accompanied by the mighty sounds of "Siegfried's Funeral Music" from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*.²⁵⁵

May 2, 1945

There is a report from the Führer headquarters that, this afternoon, our Führer Adolf Hitler, fighting to the last breath against Bolshevism, fell for Germany at his command post in the Reich Chancellery. On April 30, the Führer appointed Grand Admiral Dönitz as his successor.

Following this announcement, Dönitz read a proclamation to the German Volk. He repeated the tall story about Hitler's "heroic death" and said that the war would continue.²⁵⁶

In addition, Dönitz issued a proclamation to the German Wehrmacht in which he called Hitler "one of the greatest heroes in German history" and demanded the continuing "unconditional risk of life."²⁵⁷

German Wehrmacht, my Comrades!

The Führer has fallen. True to his great idea to guard the people of Europe against Bolshevism, he risked his life and died a hero's death. One of the greatest heroes in German history has passed away with him. In proud reverence and mourning, we lower our flags before him.

The Führer has chosen me as his successor, as the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht and head of state. I take over the command over all branches of the German Wehrmacht with the will to continue the fight against Bolshevism for as long as it takes to save the fighting troops and hundreds of thousands of families in the German eastern areas from enslavement and destruction. I must continue the fight against the English and the Americans insofar and for as long as they prevent me from the fight against Bolshevism.

The situation demands of you, who have already accomplished such great historic deeds and who now yearn for an end to the war, your continued unconditional risk of life. Only by implementing my orders without reservation can chaos and ruin be avoided. A coward and a traitor is the man who fails to fulfill his duty at this hour and, thereby, abandons German women and children to death or enslavement. The oath of loyalty by which you once pledged yourselves to the Führer binds every single one of you to me, as the successor he appointed.

German soldiers—do your duty! The life of the Volk is at stake.

The OKW report of May 2, 1945, also failed to reveal the truth about Hitler's death; namely, the fact that he had committed suicide:²⁵⁸

At the head of those daring men who defend the capital of the Reich, the Führer fell. He sacrificed his life, inspired by the will to preserve his Volk and Europe from destruction by the Bolsheviks. His example—loyalty until death—obliges all soldiers.

SS Obergruppenführer and General of the Waffen SS Karl Wolff and General Vietinghoff,²⁵⁹ the German commanders at the southern front, proved less "resolute" than Dönitz. Without Hitler's knowledge, they

May 4, 1945

had already agreed to an armistice with the Allies and an “unconditional surrender” on April 29. On May 2, this armistice came into force in northern Italy and the neighboring Austrian areas.

On May 2, the commander of Berlin, General Weidling, capitulated and gave himself up to the Russians. He immediately absolved his soldiers of their oath of allegiance when he heard that “the Führer committed hara-kiri at the Reich Chancellery.”²⁶⁰ This had truly disgusted him. He had fallen for Hitler and his assurances that he would “bear the entire responsibility.”²⁶¹ When push came to shove, however, the Führer had proved himself a coward and disappeared. What remained were memories of his grandiose claims, like the following:²⁶²

It is one of the most uplifting tasks of a leader to allow one’s followers to participate in victory but to take upon oneself the entire responsibility at critical moments and then step in front of one’s followers to shield them against this responsibility.

While Dönitz had sworn to Hitler that he would “bring this war to the end as the unique heroic fight of the German Volk would require it,”²⁶³ the Allied strikes quickly forced him to become disloyal to Hitler and offer to capitulate, although this was something the Führer had strictly forbidden!

On May 4, he sent Admiral General von Friedeburg to Montgomery’s headquarters south of Lüneburg.²⁶⁴ He offered the capitulation of the armed forces in the northwestern area of Germany, Holland, and Denmark. Montgomery gladly accepted, because this spared the lives of many British soldiers. Of course, Dönitz mistakenly believed that the Anglo-American troops would now march straight through Germany in order to confront the Russians.

He would soon be awakened from these Hitlerian daydreams. Montgomery sent Friedeburg on to Eisenhower at Reims. Eisenhower told the German negotiator that only the unconditional surrender of all German troops to England, America, and naturally also to Russia, was acceptable. Colonel General Jodl arrived in Reims in order to support Friedeburg. He wanted to gain four days until the unconditional surrender came into force, but two days were all he got.

Supposedly the German rulers had once again the “rescue of the German Volk from Bolshevism” in mind. In truth, the German generals did not want to think at all of keeping up their resistance against the Red Army for as long as possible. On the contrary, they wanted to give their

May 9, 1945

officers and men time to disengage in the east and retreat as quickly as possible to the west, where the conditions of their captivity would be far more agreeable. The expected harsh treatment by the Russians was not surprising, considering for how many years the Russian prisoners of war had been treated like outlaws and denied the terms of the Geneva Convention on Hitler's orders!

At 2:41 a.m. (Western European Standard Time) on May 7, the instrument of unconditional surrender for all German armed forces was signed by Colonel General Jodl and Admiral General von Friedeburg in front of General Eisenhower in Reims.

On May 8 or rather 9,²⁶⁵ this state act was repeated at the Military Academy in Berlin-Karlhorst in front of Marshal Zhukov²⁶⁶ and the British marshal of the Royal Air Force Tedder.²⁶⁷ On the German side, the document was signed by Keitel on behalf of the Wehrmacht high command, by Friedeburg for the navy, and by Colonel General Stumpff for the Luftwaffe. The instrument opened with these words:²⁶⁸

Only this text in English is authoritative

ACT OF MILITARY SURRENDER

1. We the undersigned, acting by authority of the German High Command, hereby surrender unconditionally to the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command all forces on land, sea, and in the air who are at this date under German control.

2. The German High Command will at once issue orders to all German military, naval and air authorities and to all forces under German control to cease active operations at 2301 hours Central European time on 8 May and to remain in the positions occupied at that time. No ship, vessel, or aircraft is to be scuttled, or any damage done to their hull, machinery or equipment.

3. The German High Command will at once issue to the appropriate commanders, and ensure the carrying out of any further orders issued by the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and by the Soviet High Command.

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4. This act of military surrender is without prejudice to, and will be superseded by any general instrument of surrender, imposed by, or on behalf of the United Nations and applicable to GERMANY and the German armed forces as a whole.

5. In the event of the German High Command or any of the forces under their control failing to act in accordance with this Act of Surrender, the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force and the Soviet High Command will take such punitive or other action as they deem appropriate.

Signed at Rheims at 0241 on the 7th day of May, 1945.
France

On behalf of the German High Command.
Jodl

IN THE PRESENCE OF

On behalf of the Supreme Commander,
Allied Expeditionary Force.
W. B. Smith

On behalf of the Soviet
High Command.
Ivan Susloparov

F. Sevez
Major General, French Army
(Witness)

[typography adjusted to resemble original document]

May 23, 1945

Things were different this time from what they had been at the capitulation in 1918. At that time, the German military had left the signing of the document up to civilians, who had in no way been responsible for the conduct of the bankrupt German politics and strategy. In the following years, they had been branded as the “November criminals” by right-wing extremists in Germany, and even blamed for the German defeat in the First World War.²⁶⁹

On May 9, the guns finally fell silent on nearly all German fronts. Fighting continued only in Czechoslovakia, where Schörner was in command and refused to accept the unconditional surrender.²⁷⁰ The only thing that was achieved by this refusal was the more severe treatment of the German troops, who were in the end overwhelmed by the enemy.

In northernmost Germany, in the area around Flensburg, the remnants of the Third Reich managed to hold out for a few more days. Dönitz, who owed his appointment to an arbitrary action by Hitler,²⁷¹ headed the so-called “government.” On May 23, British troops occupied the Naval Academy at Flensburg-Mürwick and took the “cabinet” members prisoner.

Although he was a naval officer, Dönitz proved by surrendering that he lacked what Hitler had called a “sense of honor.” In spite of orders to the contrary, he was not willing to “set a shining example of loyal fulfillment of duty unto death.”²⁷² He preferred instead to surrender and save himself. Even Dönitz was a disappointment, a “traitor” to Hitler’s ideas.

And so even the last of Hitler’s theories had broken down. The war was over and it had not ended as Hitler had foretold.²⁷³

I am firmly convinced that this battle will end not a whit differently from the battle I once waged inside Germany.

It was not Hitler’s prophesies that had been fulfilled but those of Chamberlain and Churchill:

It was for Hitler to say when the war would begin; but it is not for him or for his successors to say when it will end. It began when he wanted it, and it will end only when we are convinced that he has had enough.^{274, 275, 276}

On May 23, 1945, the time had finally come: Hitler was dead, and there was nothing left of his Reich.

For the second time within one generation, the Anglo-American powers put a bloody end to the attempt to expand Germany’s borders

May 23, 1945

by brute force. Neither the example of the First World War, which he had witnessed firsthand, nor the incessant warnings of British statesmen had kept Hitler from following down the path that Franz Joseph I, Wilhelm II, Graf Berchthold, and Bethmann Hollweg had taken.

In 1914, it had been the attack on Serbia and Belgium that had resulted in the English declaration of war. In 1939, the attack on Poland and Danzig had led to the same result. In both instances, the confrontation ended in the political and military collapse of Germany. However, the consequences of the debacle of 1918, because of the early capitulation, proved to be not as devastating as those of the catastrophe in 1945.

From the beginning, Hitler's use of terror in warfare had at best postponed the end of the Second World War, but it had not changed its outcome. Everything he had tried to do in this respect had been in vain: the cruel ordeal and massacre of millions of Jews, Gypsies, Russians, Poles, Serbs, and members of other European nations in the concentration and extermination camps, as well as in the prisoner-of-war camps; the unscrupulous killing of thousands of his opponents at home; the subjugation of foreign nations and states; the indiscriminate bombardment of London, Belgrade, and Antwerp; the unscrupulous sacrifice of millions of German soldiers along all fronts of Europe and North Africa, on the high seas and in the air; the merciless sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of German civilians in the cities—nothing had prevented the end from coming.

Hitler was obsessed by the same delusion to which Napoleon also succumbed: the fixed idea that it was possible to establish a continental European empire at the expense of the smaller states and Russia, and to win the friendship or at least benevolent neutrality of England at the same time. As with Napoleon, rivers of blood had to flow before Hitler was ready to give up his fixed idea and disappear from the stage. Like Napoleon, Hitler refused to the end to admit any responsibility for the unprecedented catastrophe into which he had plunged his own people and the world.

Epilogue

Final Remarks

Hitler undoubtedly is the most extraordinary figure in German history. This is not only true because of his rise from unskilled laborer and resident of a homeless shelter in Vienna to become the German head of state and government and supreme commander of the German Wehrmacht. It is above all true of the extent of the power which he amassed in the course of only a few years, which he incessantly expanded, and which he jealously defended until he died.

No German king or emperor, no German statesman—head of state or government—no German general ever held and exercised as much power as Hitler did.

Hitler was unwilling to allow any person to exercise power that did not devolve from his person. He wanted to be in complete control, no matter whether it was a question of national or local government functions, judicial or military issues, economic, cultural, or social spheres of influence. Everything was all right as long as prominent persons in influential positions submitted to Hitler and were willing to comply with his orders. Then, he let them have their way. However, he moved mercilessly against any person who tried to expand a position that could be significant in terms of political power and threatened him, even though only theoretically. Hitler did not shrink from any intrigues or even murder in order to eliminate such a person.

Hitler was power incarnate, a true demon, obsessed with power, the like of whom the world has rarely seen. In this respect, Hitler was a supranational phenomenon. Since Napoleon, there had been no tyrant on this scale. Of course, the special circumstances of the times played a great role in both cases. Without them, the rise of such men as Napoleon and Hitler would have been inconceivable.

Marshal Foch, who was a great admirer of Napoleon, acknowledged that the circumstances of the times—the chaos of the French

Revolution—opened up a range of possibilities for the Corsican: “Assume that Bonaparte had been born under Louis XIV or, as was I, had been sent to the garrison in Tarbes or Montpellier when he was twenty-four years old, then even his most extraordinary talents would not have allowed him to reach the goal that he did.”¹

Foch was honest enough to concede that Napoleon’s downfall was caused by his intoxication with power: “Among the reasons which decided his overthrow, the problem was mainly that Napoleon confused the greatness of his country with his own, that he wanted to found the fate of the nation exclusively on the force of arms, as if a nation could live on glory instead of work, and as if, in a civilized world, there was no room for morals next to a power based on force, no matter how clevers this power might be.”²

Just as Napoleon benefited from the chaotic times during the French Revolution, so Hitler was able to use to his advantage the chaos in Germany which followed on the revolution of 1918, defeat in the First World War, and the international economic crisis of 1931.

To let Hitler’s case rest at that, not to go beyond such terse statements and historic parallels, would be a considerable mistake. After all, Hitler’s rule was made possible not just by the chaos in Germany after 1918. It should not be overlooked that his demagogic ideas fell on fertile ground because many mischevious falsehoods were in circulation at the time. They represented the fateful legacy of imperial Germany and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and formed the basis for Hitler’s rhetorical creations.

All of the following theses were used by Hitler in his speeches from 1919 to 1945: that the “November criminals” had robbed the German army of the victor’s laurels in 1918; that Wilson’s Fourteen Points had led to ruin because they had lured the Germans into laying down their arms prematurely; that there existed something like an international solidarity among all socialists, which had worked to the disadvantage of Germany’s interests; and that the Germans would be invincible if only they were united. All these ideas can be found almost verbatim in the works of Wilhelm II³ and other nationalist authors. The idea that “the Jews are to be blamed for everything,” especially for Germany’s misfortune, was an established slogan, current at least since 1918, and popular with nationalist parties and groups in Germany.

Another essential role in Hitler's rule was played by the supposedly constant threats to Germany, which allowed him to operate permanently with martial law and special laws.

Even the most exemplary democracy will immediately be transformed into an authoritarian state⁴ if it is threatened by war or if war is declared on it. Any violation of the laws of the state will then automatically become "high treason." The legal regulations and moral rules of conduct which normally apply will be suspended for the most part. Even the ten commandments will largely lose their force.

The so-called "people" (Volk) has no say in such developments. Which ordinary man on the street can assess whether the war that is being waged is offensive or defensive in character, especially given the fact that the government in question will always claim only to be defending itself? And even if he is in a position to assess the situation, he really has no choice: either he submits to the decisions of the government or he commits high treason at the risk of severe punishment.

When a government claims to be acting in the national interest, it will always be difficult or impossible, even for the influential circles made up of politicians, parliamentarians, military men, leaders of the economy, bishops, and so on, to resist governmental measures.

Of course, such a situation was ideal for Hitler's purposes. For this reason, he declared one state of emergency after another. Germany was always in danger: Communists supposedly threatened a revolt in Germany in 1933, the SA was allegedly planning a putsch in 1934, the Bolsheviks and their "101 Soviet divisions" and the introduction of a two-year compulsory conscription in France were reputed to threaten the country in 1935.⁵ By 1936, there was supposed to be the threat of a "Bolshevization" of Europe, based on a French-Russian mutual-assistance pact. The danger reappeared in 1937 because of the Spanish Civil War. By 1938, Czechoslovakia, "the aircraft carrier in the heart of Europe," was supposedly planning an attack on Germany. Poland meant to attack in 1939. Even though all of these "threats" did not really exist, Hitler's claims were effective.

Who in Germany would have dared to oppose a measure which served the rescue of the German Volk and Europe from Bolshevism? Who in Germany would have risked being regarded as a Communist or Bolshevik?

Epilogue

Hitler's use of nationalist arguments was no less successful. Everything he did, planned, and ordered done supposedly served the welfare of the German people and was therefore necessary in the interest of the German Volk!

In Germany, the workers made up the class which was the most susceptible to this nationalist rhetoric. This had already been evident in the First World War.⁶ Hitler was least afraid of speaking before uncritical groups of workers. Moreover, he could still impress them with his nationalist slogans and fantastic descriptions of the future, even when hard facts already provided unequivocal evidence of the failure of his politics. The German intellectuals were more or less immune to wild nationalist proclamations. It was not surprising that Hitler poured scorn on them and vented his anger in tirades full of hatred.

Yet, who could tell whether or not a certain move was truly in the best interest of the German Volk? Had there been only Germans on earth, this question would never have arisen. Nor would the Third Reich ever have collapsed and Hitler might still be in power today (1973).

However, Germany is not alone in the world. To a decisive degree, it is dependent on other powers in the world. While at home the Germans are free to live as they wish, there are limits to their foreign policy. As soon as measures in Germany begin to affect or threaten other countries, they cease to be in "the interest of the German Volk." Other states are not willing to tolerate Germany's highhanded measures, either in the east nor in the west. They strike back. Naturally, this is not to the advantage but to the disadvantage of the German people. Their historical experience in this context is clear.

This work proves Hitler's statements incorrect in many crucial aspects, particularly regarding his military and foreign policies. No matter how masterly his speeches were composed, they could not change the hard facts. Declarations like those below could not stand up against reality:

"A place taken by a German soldier will never be taken by any other soldier!

"Germany shall not be overrun, neither from within nor from without!

"Today's Reich is different from that of yesterday. It is not just a passing fancy."

In addition, it has been the intention of the author to demonstrate that, while Hitler's rhetoric had a certain influence on the masses, they

were by no means decisive for his seizure of power and the fashioning of his rule. After Hitler had taken over the government, it was no longer a question of whether the people approved of him or not, since he was determined to see his ideas through—one way or another.

What was important and decisive was Hitler's rhetorical success as a convincing personality speaking with influential figures. Their circles in Germany had theoretically been in a position to keep him from power or to remove him from office once he had seized power. However, he managed to instill the belief in them that only he was capable of saving Germany and that all his actions served this goal.

It is remarkable that in Germany Hitler's foreign policy was the least criticized of all his ideas, even though it was foreseeable that it was exactly his foreign policy theory that was to prove the most fateful for Germany and that was responsible for the declaration of war by the English and their allies.

After 1945, Hitler was praised for eliminating unemployment, sponsoring the Volkswagen, generously funding the Autobahn, and so on. He was condemned for his harassment of the Jews, the limitation of the Church's rights, the outlawing of all parties save his own, the dissolution of the unions, the muzzling of the press, the regimentation of cultural life, and the elimination of most of the rights of the individual.

While the above negative aspects of Hitler's rule at home were the characteristic symptoms of a despicable dictatorship, they did not cause his downfall. Had they been practiced within the borders of the Reich, they would never have led to the armed intervention of the western powers. The English and their allies moved against Hitler only after he attacked Poland in 1939. They had made up their minds to intervene, no matter what country Hitler attacked.

Of course, Hitler was also criticized in postwar Germany for his decision to attack Poland. However, it was often overlooked in this context that this decision was only the logical consequence of his ideas on foreign policy.

They were based on a number of claims. For one, the German Volk had been denied its rightful "place in the sun." Second, a trick (i.e., Wilson's Fourteen Points) had led Germany to lay down its arms in 1918, when it was on the brink of gaining the victory. Moreover, the Treaty of Versailles was a great injustice to the German people. The elimination of its provisions—that is, the restoration of the

borders to their status in 1914 and the return of the German colonies—was a matter of course. He maintained that Germany was “threatened” by all sorts of enemies in the east and west. As long as the German Volk was united, he claimed, it would be invincible. It had a right to a Lebensraum, which corresponded to its population.

Hitler believed that domestic and foreign policy were identical. Therefore, his enemies abroad would behave just as those at home had. The Anglo-Americans were “nothing other than a branch of our German Volk.” It was Germany which had “colonized England.”

Therefore, the English would sooner or later become Germany’s friends. The English resembled the German nationalists: they were just as “senile” and would under no circumstances be able to resist a German policy of expansion. On the contrary, they would welcome the German campaign against Russia in order to prevent a Bolshevik invasion of western Europe.

The English had done their best to reinforce Hitler in this belief, which had to prove fatal for Hitler’s warfare and for Germany. A similar strategy had already proved successful for England in the case of Napoleon, to keep him from invading the British Isles and to bring about his downfall. English experts already knew from detailed studies of Hitler’s ideas after the publication of *Mein Kampf* in the mid 1920s that Hitler strikingly resembled Napoleon in his boundless ambition, megalomania, and lust for power, but that he likewise lacked the intellectual background and the historical-political knowledge to recognize the real power structures of the world or to think through superior world-historical contexts and refined strategic considerations.

Hitler likened the Bolsheviks to the Communists in Germany. He felt that “communism is not a higher evolutionary stage, but the most primitive basic form of shaping people and nations.” The Soviets were best dealt with by brute force.

These were the guiding principles of Hitler’s foreign policy. They did not at all correspond to the actual power structures in the world which had developed during the last centuries. Hitler’s attempt to apply his foreign-policy concepts in the real world inevitably ended in the greatest political and military catastrophe which Germany ever suffered.

Since Hitler’s foreign policy was intertwined with his dictatorial domestic and racial policies, the danger existed and exists today that the actual cause of the great German catastrophe of 1945—Hitler’s foreign

policy—is overlooked and ignored. Therefore, this work has also tried to elucidate this foreign policy.

The Second World War and the destruction of Hitler and his Reich undoubtedly taught Germany a lesson. Apparently, the lesson of the First World War did not bear any fruits. Only the future will tell whether the lesson of the Second World War has been of any use.

In any event, it is necessary to draw the proper consequences from Hitler's rise and fall. In summary, they are the following.

1. The world has no desire to be healed by the "German essence."⁷ And surely it does not want to be healed by force!

2. Any attempt to use force in changing the borders of the German state will result in the declaration of war by the western powers. This was true both in 1914 and in 1939. This principle also applies to areas such as Danzig which are inhabited by Germans or which belonged to the German Reich at one time.

3. There was no such thing as a "secret Jewish world government." All claims that Jews as an international corporation influence the governments of the great powers, or exercise political or military influence in non-Jewish states, are mere fantasy. Perhaps, in certain ages, the Jews may have had the opposability of exercising influence internationally in matters of economics or culture, but never have they achieved political influence on the international stage. Hitler's fight against the Jews was nothing other than a tilt at windmills.

Regardless of how abominable and horrible Hitler's slaughter of the Jews was, it was not the cause of his fall. It would be a grave mistake to assume that he could have reached his power-political goals had he treated the Jews differently. Like Napoleon I and William II, in whose undertakings the Jewish question did not play a role, he would still have failed. His fate was sealed at 11 o'clock on September 3, 1939. And the reason for it was the same as for the collapse of the Kaiser's empire in World War I, namely, the attempt to expand Germany's borders by the use of force. This is a clear, historic fact, and it would be dangerous to try to diminish it by pointing to the Holocaust.

4. Hitler's claim that the Germans had the best soldiers, scientists, leaders of the economy, workers, peasants, and so on,⁸ represents a subjective judgment. Nobody can tell the Germans not to believe this, whether or not it corresponds to reality. Even should it be objectively correct, no universally valid conclusions can be drawn from it. Above

all, it is not possible to derive from such statements of quality a German right to hegemony in Europe or in the world.

Hitler repeatedly claimed that the German Volk was not only the best, but also the numerically strongest in the whole world, with the exception of China.⁹ The figures which he presented were all too transparently false to merit further consideration. Both world wars amply prove that Germany was never in a position, either in terms of power or strength, to force its beliefs on the rest of the world.¹⁰

5. Neither the betrayal of military secrets nor the invention of new weapons decisively influence the outcome of a war. While they could temporarily obstruct individual measures or operations, and perhaps postpone the end of the war, they do not result in a different outcome of the war.¹¹

6. Propaganda (so-called psychological warfare) is effective only with the aggressor's own people or with inferior nations, whose inevitable collapse may be hastened by them. The weapon of propaganda is ineffective when used against an opponent of equal or superior strength. By no means does it out-perform military weapons. Words cannot change hard facts.¹²

7. Bravery, perseverance, unity, self-sacrifice, and other such national virtues may at best delay an unfortunate end to a war for some time, but they cannot prevent it. The outcome of a war is determined by the military resources of a country. Neither the Leonidas myth nor the legend of Frederick the Great can erase the hard facts presented by the military superiority of a strong country over a weaker one.

In all likelihood, the entrusting of absolute power to one man will lead to disastrous consequences in most countries. The temptations of power are so great that even individuals who only want "the best" for their country can be induced to pursue over-ambitious plans and thus end up the victim of their lust for power. This must spell ruin not only for these individuals, but also for their supporters and their nation. History affords us countless examples of it. Nevertheless, history also proves that men will make the same mistakes time and again, and that the warnings of the past go unheeded.

It would be wrong, however, to hold the "people," that is, all those who have no say in the state, responsible for such development. The appeal should be directed instead to the responsible statesmen and influential circles, the parliamentarians, the leaders of the economy, the

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military men, the bishops, and so on. It is their responsibility to be aware of the lessons of history and act accordingly.

In extraordinary times, when war, misery, and chaos prevail, there is a great danger that extraordinary men will attempt to seize power—all power. The fact that Hitler managed to win power and to remain in power for twelve years without being challenged proves that such a development could come about time and again, given the same conditions. Laws and constitutional provisions provide only slight protection against such a development. After all, the born dictator will soon eliminate such limitations, either legally or illegally.

History teaches us that all the extraordinary figures who made their way to become dictators and conquerors—Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler among them—did so with the help of the demon of rhetoric, which they used in a manner that befitted their extraordinary times.

The series of great demagogues in world history, who rose to triumph and pulled their nations down in their fall, reached its barbaric climax in Adolf Hitler. That this was once again possible in a highly civilized country and in the twentieth century should be a warning to us all.

Hitler and History

Hitler used the word “history” nearly as frequently as he did “Providence.” In most instances, he referred to “history” in an attempt to justify his measures and to silence potential critics. After all, who could debate the “verdict of history”? It was a judgment to be passed by future generations and, as such, it was immune to opposition in the present. Only Adolf Hitler felt competent to say what “future generations” and “coming centuries” would think of his era.

In reality, however, he did not care much more for the verdict of history than he did for the fate of the German people. Like everything else, “history” was a means to an end for him in the quest to satisfy his tremendous lust for power.

Napoleon had once compared his life with a novel, In many aspects, Hitler’s career from the First World War on was even more incredible. From beginning to end, he loved to take extreme and dangerous risks. He became veritably the most hazardous gambler of all time. If he won, all right. If he did not, then at least he would have tried to win and he would have led a life to his taste, a life which would “one day hold its own before history.”

No matter when Providence will end my life, not even at the last moment will I regret having led this fight. On the contrary, I will be able to tell myself: It was a life worth living! It was not a life of cowardice, indolence, and restraint. Instead, it was a life that one day will hold its own before history!¹

The question remained, however, in what light history would see this life now and in future centuries. It is not worthwhile contrasting Hitler’s countless references to history with the hard facts. A selection of Hitler’s statements in this context serves by itself to illustrate Hitler’s megalomania and arrogance:

If historiography in coming centuries one day critically reviews the years of the National Socialist rebirth, uninfluenced by the pros and cons of an age of war, then it will not be able to avoid the conclusion that it was a question of the most wonderful victory of faith over the supposed elements of the materially possible.²

I can do this because these miserable little scribblers will not be the ones to write history, thank God; instead my life's work will speak for itself. And I am able to do this also because I am indifferent to the judgment passed upon me by these folk at this moment.³

This great responsibility forces us to lead this movement in such a way that we will be able to hold our own before history at all times, and that later generations will look back on this time with pride.⁴

I would like only for posterity to bear out one day that I decently and honestly endeavored to translate my program into reality.⁵

One day we will all be weighed together and judged together; either we will pass this test together or the future will condemn us all.⁶

Posterity will one day say of us: Never was the German nation stronger and never was its future more secure than at the time when the ancient Germanic people's old mystical symbol of salvation (*Heilszeichen*) was rejuvenated in Germany to become the symbol of the Third Reich.⁷

We, my party comrades, co-leaders of the Volk and the army, have been chosen by Fate to make history in the loftiest sense of the word. What millions of people are deprived of has been given to us by Providence. Even most distant posterity will be reminded of us by our work.⁸

One day I will be able to demand from history confirmation of the fact that at no time in the course of my struggle on behalf of the German Volk did I forget the duties I myself and all of us are obliged to assume toward maintaining European culture and civilization.⁹

No doubt, posterity will see that it was morally more decent and appropriate to eliminate the cause of these insupportable tensions in order to arrive finally at a reasonable approach in that opening of doors we all desired. It was far better to proceed in this manner than to try to maintain such a position, a position which ran contrary to any considerations of common sense and reason.¹⁰

The history of my Volk would never acquit me were I to omit—for any reason whatsoever—doing something which is imperative for the preservation of this Volk.¹¹

I believe that one day posterity and German history will affirm that in the time in which I conducted the affairs of the German state, I rendered the greatest service to the German Volk.¹²

The party, the state, the Wehrmacht, and the economy are all institutions and functions which are valuable only as a means to an end. In the eyes of history, they will be judged on the basis of the services they performed toward this goal. Yet their goal is always the Volk.¹³

Just as the hero has renounced his life to live on in the pantheon of history, so must a truly great movement perceive—in the rightness of its concept, in the

sincerity of its actions—the talisman which will safely lead it from a transient present to an immortal future.¹⁴

Those who saw to their division [the division of Central Europe by the Treaty of Versailles and the Polish Corridor] committed a crime against humanity. To have expunged this crime does not constitute a promise broken by me; rather it is a great honor for me in which I take pride, an accomplishment of truly historic proportions.¹⁵

And, before German history, I may be faulted on many a thing, but on one topic assuredly not: that I had not done my utmost, what was humanly possible, to prepare the German Volk better for this struggle than, regrettably, it had been prepared in the year 1914.¹⁶

Fortunately, historians do not have to pass the verdict of history on Hitler. After all, he himself took care that this verdict would not be written by “little scribblers” and that his life’s work would speak for itself.¹⁷

Hitler and the Question of War Guilt

The main body of this work has already shown that Hitler refused to admit any responsibility for the outbreak and the outcome of the Second World War, which was most unfortunate for Germany.

Who was at fault, according to Hitler? He repeatedly discussed this question and offered a variety of answers. It is therefore necessary to put his thoughts on this subject in order and to divide the guilty parties into two camps:

- 1) those who were responsible for the outbreak of the war and
- 2) those whom he blamed for its unfortunate outcome.

The following belong to the first group:

A) The German Volk

In Hitler's eyes, the German Volk brought about the Second World War through its capitulation in 1918. He declared the following:

Had the German Volk continued to wage the struggle with iron determination, instead of believing Wilson's untruthful, hypocritical phrases in the year 1918, then the hostile environment would already have collapsed at the time. That this did not happen, not only brought nameless economic misery over our Volk and tore millions of Germans from the homeland, but it also was the cause of this present war.¹

B) The Italians

Hitler also felt that the Italians bore some of the blame, because they had remained neutral in 1939. He said the following:

After all, had Italy made a declaration at the time [1939], in which it declared its solidarity with Germany, as it was obliged by treaty to do, then war would not have broken out; then the English would not have started it, and the French would not have started it²

C) The Jews

It is not surprising that Hitler felt that the Jews were responsible for everything, including the outbreak of the Second World War. After all, General von Ludendorff and Hitler's other nationalist precursors had already blamed them for the outbreak of the First World War. On the topic of the Jews, Hitler stated the following:

Eternal Jewry forced on us a pitiless and merciless war.³

It was wanted and incited exclusively by those international statesmen who are either of Jewish origin or work for Jewish interests.⁴

D) The Poles

Hitler felt that the Poles were responsible for the outbreak of the war, because they had not accepted his generous "peace offers" and had not agreed voluntarily to surrender Danzig, the Corridor, and their entire state territory—as had Czechoslovakia. He declared the following:

Truly I know not what strange state of mind inspired the Polish government to reject my proposal. But I do know this was a great relief to millions of Germans who held that I had already ventured too far with this offer. Poland's only reply was an immediate mobilization of its troops, accompanied by a wild campaign of terror. My request to speak with the Polish foreign minister in Berlin, to discuss these questions once more, was declined. Instead of going to Berlin, he went to London!

Did the Poles truly believe that, in the long run, the German nation would stand for all this from so ludicrous a state?⁵

E) The English

The English were responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War, because they had supposedly given Poland a "carte blanche" and had rejected Hitler's peace offers. He stated the following:

There they declared that Germany need not be considered a power, There they convinced the Poles that they could, at any point, mount a sufficiently strong resistance to Germany without great difficulty, There they went yet a step further, reassuring the Poles that, should their own resistance falter, others would instantly come to their rescue, that is, relieve them of this burden. It was there that they received this infamous guarantee, effectively placing the decision whether or not to go to war in the hands of an insignificant, megalomaniacal state.⁶

You know of my proposals to England, All my ambitions were to enter into a sincere and friendly relationship with England. Now that all of them have been rejected and that the English today believe they must wage war against Germany, I must say the following: Never again will the Poland of the

Versailles Treaty arise! Not only Germany guarantees this, the Russians do so as well!⁷

Further, I never wanted that, after the first accursed World War, a second one against England or even America should come about.

Only three days before the outbreak of the German-Polish war, I proposed a solution of the German-Polish problems to the British ambassador in Berlin—as with the Saarland under international control. This proposal, too, cannot be denied. It was rejected only because the influential circles in English politics wanted war....⁸

Most of the persons and nations named above also are to be found in the second category (those responsible for the unfortunate outcome of the Second World War). However, Hitler felt that others were responsible, too. The following belonged to this second group:

A) The German Volk

From Hitler's point of view, the German people had failed to seize the opportunity to assert its "right to life," which the Second World War had offered it, and it would therefore have to "sink back." He said the following:

It is a question of whether these eighty-five million people, in their national unity, can assert their right to life or not. If yes, then the future of Europe belongs to this Volk. If no, then this Volk will perish and sink back, and it will no longer be worthwhile to live among this Volk.⁹

B) The Italians

According to Hitler, the Italians were responsible not only for the outbreak of the war, but also for the unfortunate course the war took. Had the Italians not invaded Greece, then Germany would have beaten Russia, and the whole war would have ended quite differently. Hitler explained as follows:

The alliance with Italy has quite obviously helped our enemies more than it benefited us. While I was on my way to Montoire, Mussolini took advantage of my absence to start his ill-starred Greek campaign. [—] Against our will, we were forced to take up arms and intervene in the events in the Balkans, which inevitably resulted in the fateful delay in the concentration against Russia. Had we started the attack on Russia from May 15 on, things would have developed differently.¹⁰

C) Germany's Allies in Europe

Whereas the Italians were responsible for both the outbreak and the outcome of the Second World War, Germany's other European allies

(Romania, Finland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Croatia) were “only” responsible for its military defeat, Hitler said the following:

After a five-year-long and most difficult struggle, as a result of the failure of all our European allies, the enemy stands at a few fronts close to or on the German borders.¹¹

If we have not been spared great setbacks in this mighty struggle, which is being fought not only for Germany but also for the future of all of Europe, then the reason for that does not lie with the German Volk and its Wehrmacht but with our European allies. Starting with the collapse of the Romanian-Italian-Hungarian front on the Don River and their later complete dissolution, to the sabotage of the joint conduct of the war by the Italian royal house and the Putsch against the Duce’s Fascist Italy, which was on our side, there is a straight line of treason. It has found its prolongation in the pitiful capitulation of the Finnish state leadership, the breach of faith of the Romanian king and his entourage, the giving up of Bulgaria, as well as in the disgraceful behavior of the former Hungarian regent. The results for the political and military conduct of the war were grave.¹²

D) The Jews

According to Hitler, the Jews had caused not only the outbreak of the two world wars, but they were also responsible for the military and political catastrophe which the German people faced at the end of the Second World War. Hitler declared the following:

What this Jewish plague does to our women, children, and men there [in the east] represents the cruelest fate which a human brain is capable of concocting.¹³

The life which remains for us must be dedicated to the commandment to make up for what the international Jewish criminals and their helpers have done to our Volk.¹⁴

E) The English

Hitler felt that the English were responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War, because they had rejected his “peace offers.” He likewise blamed them for its unhappy end, because they had dared continually to reject his offers of friendship even during the war and had instead summoned the help of the Bolsheviki “from the steppes of Asia.” As a punishment, they would one day be ruined by Bolshevism themselves. Hitler explained as follows:

Not only will England not be in a position to tame Bolshevism, but its own development will follow the inevitable course of this degenerative disease. The democracies can no longer get rid of the spirits which they have summoned up from the steppes of Asia. All the small European nations which capitulated,

trusting in the Allied assurances, are heading for their complete extermination.¹⁵

That this struggle is so endlessly difficult is the result of the essence of the abovementioned objectives of our enemies. After all, since they intend to exterminate our Volk, they are already applying this method in the war by means that civilized mankind has not known hitherto. By wrecking our cities, they hope not only to kill German women and children but also and above all to eliminate the documents of our thousand-year-old culture, which they are not in a position to oppose with anything of equal quality.¹⁶

F) The German Officers

According to Hitler, the officers of the German army, but not those of the navy, were responsible for the unfortunate outcome of the Second World War, because they had no “sense of honor” and had capitulated instead of fighting to the bitter end. Hitler said the following:

May it one day form part of the sense of honor of the German officer—as this is already the case with our navy—that the surrender of a region or city is impossible and that, above all, the leaders should set a shining example of loyal fulfillment of duty unto death.¹⁷

G) Göring and Himmler

Hitler blamed even two of his closest coworkers for the unfortunate end of the war, because, in late April 1945, they tried to put an end to the senseless slaughter. He declared as follows:

Before my death, I expel the former Reichsmarschall, Hermann Göring, from the party and strip him of all his rights

Before my death, I expel the former Reichsführer SS and Reich minister of the interior, Heinrich Himmler, from the party and from all state offices. In his place, I appoint Gauleiter Karl Hanke as Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, and Gauleiter Paul Giesler as Reich minister of the interior.

Göring and Himmler, by their secret negotiations with the enemy, which took place without my knowledge and contrary to my will, as well as by attempting to usurp power in the state in violation of the law, have done inestimable damage to the country and the entire Volk, not to mention their disloyalty to my person.¹⁸

H) The Almighty

The “Lord Almighty” (“Providence”, “Fate”) had failed to save Hitler and Germany by a last-minute miracle. Hitler felt this would have been His duty, as he had observed many times:

Hitler and the Question of War Guilt

If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give his blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible.¹⁹

Work such as ours which has received the blessings of the Omnipotent can never again be undone by mere mortals.²⁰

It is not the point of the actions of Providence which has accompanied and blessed our miraculous path that, perhaps now in the final act, the fruits of this struggle should be lost.²¹

I do not doubt for one second that we will win. It was not in vain that Providence has had me stride forth along the long path from the unknown soldier of the World War to the Führer of the German nation, to the Führer of the German Wehrmacht. It has not done this only in order suddenly to take away again all we had to struggle so hard for, as if it were only for the fun of it.²²

Yes, the “Almighty” had had His “fun” with Hitler! First, He had “miraculously” spared his life on July 20, 1944, then He had removed Roosevelt, “this greatest war criminal of all time from this earth.”²³ He had made Hitler “pass” trial after trial and, then, practically at the last minute, He had abandoned Germany! Truly, even the “Almighty” had betrayed Hitler and the German Volk. He had joined the “senile” English, the “uncultured” Americans, and the “primitive” Russians.

That was how Hitler saw the question of war guilt. However, who was truly responsible for the war?

It cannot be denied that Hitler delivered countless “peace speeches.” In the years 1932 to 1939, he was literally overflowing with his “love for peace.” He made the motivation behind this “love for peace” perfectly clear in an address before German editors and other members of the press on November 10, 1938:

For decades, circumstances caused me to speak almost exclusively of peace. Only by constantly emphasizing the German Volk’s desire for peace and its peaceful intentions was I able to gain the German Volk’s freedom step by step and thus to give it the armament necessary as a prerequisite for accomplishing the next step. It is self-evident that this peace propaganda throughout the decades may well have had quite questionable effects. It might well leave the mistaken impression in the minds of many that the present regime stands for the resolution and the willingness to preserve peace under any circumstances.

This would not only lead to a wrong assessment of the ambitions of this system. It would also, and above all, lead the German nation, instead of being prepared for what is to come, to fall prey to a spirit of defeatism. In the long run, this could, and most certainly would, obliterate the successes scored by the present regime.

For years, I spoke only of peace because of this forced situation. Now it has become necessary slowly to prepare the German Volk psychologically for the fact that there are things that cannot be achieved by peaceful means. Some goals can only be achieved through the use of force.²⁴

Naturally, Hitler did not want war with England. All he wanted was a small expedition into Poland, followed by one into Russia. He was thunderstruck when England declared war in the year 1939 because he had used force in the attack on Poland and Danzig. He simply could not understand the British.

In reality, the question in 1939 was the same as in 1914, namely: Would the western powers, especially England, tolerate or not tolerate the conquest by force of new areas for Germany or for the Austro-Hungarian Empire?

In 1914, Austria began the war against Serbia in order to conquer its territory in part or in its entirety. The assassination in Sarajevo served as a pretext for the military intervention. An ultimatum was delivered to Serbia, but its acceptance was neither expected nor waited for, and the war started. For Germany [in 1914], there was the attack on Belgium. This provoked an immediate declaration of war by Great Britain.

In 1939, Germany began the war against Poland in order to conquer its entire territory. Numerous incidents in the border area, especially the *coup de main* at the Gleiwitz radio station (which German commandos in Polish uniforms attacked), served as a pretext for military intervention. An ultimatum was delivered to Poland, the acceptance of which was not waited for, and the war started. This provoked an immediate declaration of war by Great Britain.

Those were the facts, both in 1914 and in 1939.

This brings up the question: Were the English responsible for the outbreak of both world wars, because they opposed the armed conquest of neighboring states by Germany and Austria? Or, on the contrary, are Germany and Austria responsible for the outbreak of the two world wars, because they launched both expeditions according to plan, in spite of repeated, unequivocal warnings that this would lead to a declaration of war by England?

While it was still possible in 1914 to disregard the English warnings as a bluff, the course of the First World War made it abundantly clear to anyone who cared to listen that the world was not willing to tolerate the armed policy of expansion either of Germany or of Austria, even if this concerned only the Balkans. It further made it clear that Germany's

military strength did not suffice to overcome the united forces of the Anglo-American powers.

By way of objection, some people have claimed that, in the years 1933 to 1938, the western powers always “yielded” to Hitler’s demands and accepted his *faits accomplis*. As a result, he might have assumed that the western powers would also “yield” in the case of Poland. He might have thought that they would let the matter rest with their protest on record.

In reality, however, the western powers had only “yielded” to Hitler in those instances where he insisted on equal treatment, Germany’s sovereign rights, and the right to self-determination of people, and, most importantly, where he abstained from the use of force. On the other hand, the western powers made it quite clear from the start that they would declare war once Hitler fired the first shot, no matter at what country.

In the summer of 1938, for example, the ambassadors and ministers representing the western powers, even Chamberlain himself, assured Hitler time and again that they would declare war on Germany if he used force against Czechoslovakia, as planned on October 1.

At the conference in Munich, the western powers succeeded in securing Hitler’s signature beneath an international agreement which prohibited the use of force and mandated mutual consultation in the event of problems in the future. After all, Hitler had declared over and over in the past that he would never sign a treaty which he would not be in a position to abide by. What he signed, he would “blindly and loyally” fulfill.²⁵

Not even half a year later, Hitler marched into Prague in spite of all his solemn promises and the international agreement. He could not claim any justification for this in international law. For the first time, he had revealed himself as a man who broke his word.

On March 17, 1939, Chamberlain declared the following in a speech at Birmingham:

Germany, under her present regime, has sprung a series of unpleasant surprises upon the world. The Rhineland, the Austrian Anschluss, the severance of Sudetenland—all these things shocked and affronted public opinion throughout the world. Yet, however much we might take exception to the methods which were adopted in each of those cases, there was something to be said, whether on account of racial affinity or of just claims too long

resisted—there was something to be said for the necessity of a change in the existing situation.

But the events which have taken place this week in complete disregard of the principles laid down by the German government itself seem to fall into a different category, and they must cause us all to be asking ourselves: “Is this the end of an old adventure, or is it the beginning of a new?”

“Is this the last attack upon a small state, or is it to be followed by others? Is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?”

It is an undeniable fact that, from mid-March 1939, until September 1, 1939, the English unequivocally stated their resolve to declare war on Germany in the event that Hitler attacked Poland, even if the issue at stake was Danzig.

Already on March 17, 1939, Chamberlain said the following:

I feel bound to repeat that, while I am not prepared to engage this country by new unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot be foreseen, yet no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that, because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge if it ever were made.

Churchill also stressed this in a radio broadcast on August 8, 1939:

If Herr Hitler does not make war, there will be no war. No one else is going to make war. Britain and France are determined to shed no blood except in self-defence or in defence of their Allies. No one has ever dreamed of attacking Germany. If Germany desires to be reassured against attack by her neighbors, she has only to say the word and we will give her the fullest guarantees in accordance with the principles of the Covenant of the League.

The numerous English declarations to this effect were followed by a letter from Chamberlain on August 22, 1939. It contained this warning:

It has been alleged that, if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914, the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding. If the case should arise, they are resolved, and prepared, to employ without delay all the forces at their command, and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.²⁶

It would have been difficult for Chamberlain to state his case more clearly. However, Hitler naturally paid no heed to such warnings. He disregarded them as empty phrases, void of any significance in reality. He thought of the English as “senile” bourgeois who acted like the German Nationalists. They would not have the strength for military action. He called the English “my Hugenbergers.”

As discussed in the main part of this work, Hitler had a rude awakening on September 3, 1939. After he had received the British declaration of war, all he had been able to do was stare straight ahead and then helplessly ask: “What now?” He had not cut a better figure than Reich Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, when he had been handed the British declaration of war on August 4, 1914. The day before, he had still solemnly assured the crown prince that the British would remain neutral in the war.

That the same event repeated itself twice in Germany within twenty-five years could be termed *the* German tragedy. However, this does not lessen the guilt of the responsible heads of state and statesmen, all of whom—from William II, Franz Joseph I, Bethmann-Hollweg, Berchthold to Hitler—could and must have known what was coming!

For Germany and for Austria, there were only two alternatives: either they renounced military expansion and submitted to international arbitration in order to achieve desired goals, or they resorted to force and immediately received a British declaration of war. This was true even of those instances, as the case of Danzig proves, when the area at stake was inhabited by Germans or had earlier belonged to the German Reich.

There is no doubt that, had England so desired, it could have prevented the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, and pressured Poland to cede Danzig and the Corridor. But why should they have done this? After all, Hitler had just amply proved with Czechoslovakia that any concessions to acceptable demands only induced him to see through his unacceptable demands by force half a year later.

Hitler had maneuvered himself into a position where he faced this alternative: either surrender to the English and bow to their will or to use force. He chose the latter option, because this corresponded with his conceptions of 1919, according to which England and Germany would become friends, once Germany “joined the march on the road of the Teutonic Knights of old.”²⁷

Hitler and the Question of War Guilt

If one's goal were more land in Europe, this could only be accomplished, broadly speaking, at Russia's expense, meaning that the new Reich [of 1871] would once again join the march on the road of the Teutonic Knights of old, to gain by the German sword sod for the German plow and daily bread for the nation. For this kind of policy there could be but one ally in Europe: England.

However, he did not receive England's friendship for his efforts, but an English declaration of war, as any sane man could have told him! Hitler could not claim that he had not realized this or had not believed it. For months, he was incessantly told exactly what would happen. There was no excuse for him. He had passed judgment on himself:

There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance, in the sense that one explains afterwards: I didn't notice that or I didn't take it seriously. Standing at the head of the German Reich, I feel responsible for the German Volk, its existence, its present, and, insofar as this is possible, for its future.²⁸

A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung as such because he has recognized it to be false then acts decently only if, upon realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final consequence.



LXVII Prisoners in the dock at International War Crime Trials

Photo: Publisher's archives

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

The widespread belief that Hitler gained only victories in the first years of the war and did not meet with defeats before Stalingrad in 1943 is incorrect. In truth, Hitler not only experienced important diplomatic defeats from September 1939 on, but also suffered military defeats. Furthermore, his numerous victories over—with the exception of France—small states and nations in the years 1939 through 1942 were deceptive, since they used up his strength and hastened his downfall.

VICTORIES: 1939

September 1, 1939:

Attack on Danzig and Poland without declaration of war.

Conquest of the entire Polish territory, with the exception of those areas ceded to Russia for the time being.

September 28, 1939:

Conclusion of the so-called "Boundary and Friendship Treaty" with the Soviet Union.

DEFEATS: 1939

September 3, 1939:

Great Britain's declaration of war.

September 3, 1939:

Complete collapse of Hitler's foreign policy concepts based on friendship with England.

September 3, 1939:

Further declarations of war by France, Australia, New Zealand, Jordan, Italy remains neutral. [India and Burma were British colonies, and Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam were French colonies (and had no legal right to make peace or war), and Pakistan did not exist until 1947.]

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1939

DEFEATS: 1939

September 6, 1939:
Declaration of war by the Union of South Africa.

September 10, 1939:
Declaration of war by Canada.

October 12, 1939:
Renewed diplomatic defeat.
England rejects German "peace proposal" of October 6.

VICTORIES: 1940

DEFEATS: 1940

April 9, 1940:
Attack on Denmark and Norway without declaration of war.
Afterwards, conquest of the territories.

July 19, 1940:
England again rejects German "peace proposal" of July 19.

May 5, 1940:
Attack on Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg without declaration of war.
Afterwards, conquest of the territories. Beginning of the attack on France.

September 1940:
Military defeat in the Battle of Britain. As recently as September 4, Hitler had insisted that his air raids would "erase" English cities.

June 10, 1940:
Italy enters the war.

September 17, 1940:
Announced landing on the British mainland (Operation Sea Lion) has to be abandoned because of technical difficulties.
Severe loss of political and military prestige.

June 17, 1940:
France capitulates.

October 23, 1940:
Diplomatic defeat at the Hendaye meeting with Franco, who refuses to enter into the war on the side of Germany.

June 22, 1940:
Cease-fire agreement signed by France at Compiègne.
Afterwards, occupation of two thirds of its sovereign territory.

October 24, 1940:
Diplomatic defeat. Meeting with Pétain at Montoire brings about no results.

August 30, 1940:
Viennese sentence. The Axis powers dictate cession of the Transylvania area by Romania to Hungary.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1940

- September 27, 1940:
Conclusion of political alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan (Tripartite Pact) in an effort to prevent the entry of the United States into the war.
- October 18, 1940:
German troops, disguised as training units, move to occupy Romania.
- November 14–15, 1940
German air raids destroy Coventry.
- November 20, 23, and 24, 1940:
Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia join the Tripartite Pact.

VICTORIES: 1941

- March 1, 1941:
Bulgaria joins the Tripartite Pact, German occupation of Bulgaria.
- March 25, 1941:
Under Zvetkovich's regime, Yugoslavia joins the Tripartite Pact.
- April 1941:
German counteroffensive in North Africa
- April 6, 1941:
Attack on Yugoslavia and Greece without declaration of war. Germany and its allies occupy the territories of both states, including the island of Crete.
- May 24, 1941:
The *Bismarck* sinks the British cruiser *Hood*.
- June 18, 1941:
Friendship pact with Turkey.

DEFEATS: 1940

- October 28, 1940:
Loss of prestige. Mussolini attacks Greece without consulting Hitler. The war spills over into the Balkans.
- November 12 to 14, 1940:
Diplomatic defeat. Molotov refuses to engage the Soviet Union in the war on the side of Germany.
- December 7, 1940:
Renewed loss of military prestige. Orders for Operation Felix (occupation of Gibraltar) have to be rescinded.

DEFEATS: 1941

- January–February 1941:
Italian units in North Africa take severe beatings. Hitler is forced to deploy German troops in the area.
- March 27, 1941:
Severe diplomatic defeat. Zvetkovich's regime is overthrown because he joined the Tripartite Pact. Putsch in Belgrade. Peter II ascends the throne.
- May 27, 1941:
Battleship *Bismarck* sunk in the Atlantic. End of German active naval warfare by surface craft; restriction to submarine warfare.
- June 1, 1941:
Collapse of an uprising supported by Germany in Iraq. British take German advisers and auxiliary troops prisoner.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1941

June 22, 1941:

Attack on the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) without declaration of war. Afterwards, occupation of the Baltic states, Belorussia, and the Ukraine by German troops. Italy, Finland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia join in the war against the Soviet Union. One Spanish division participates in the fighting. Volunteer groups, recruited in the occupied territories in western Europe, make insignificant contributions to the war effort.

October 2, 1941:

Renewed attack on Moscow.

December 7, 1941:

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor without official declaration of war.

December 11, 1941:

Germany declares war on the United States of America.

December 11, 1941:

Conclusion of a military alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan.

DEFEATS: 1941

July–September 1941:

Campaign against Russia proves a failure. German troops fail to take Murmansk, Leningrad, and Moscow. Despite territorial gains and heavy losses by the Red Army, no substantial damage is done to its fighting capacity. German advances along the central sector of the front halted by Zhukov. Bulgaria remains neutral.

August 14, 1941:

The Atlantic Charter, drawn up by Churchill and Roosevelt aboard the battleship *Prince of Wales*, was made public.

October–November 1941:

German offensive against Moscow fails because of resistance mounted by Soviet troops despite Hitler's announcement.

December 1941:

Severe military defeat at Moscow. Surprise large-scale offensive mounted by Red Army. German troops retreat up to one hundred kilometers. Further defeats at Rostov and on the Crimean Peninsula.

December 7, 1941:

Japan maintains its neutrality regarding the Soviet Union.

December 11, 1941:

Nationalist China declares war.

December 12, 1941:

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador declare war.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1941

VICTORIES: 1942

- January 28, 1942:
Italian-German forces recapture Benghazi [a port city in Libya].
- May–June 1942:
Rommel launches an offensive against Egypt in North Africa; early success at Tobruk.
- June 1942:
German troops capture the entire Crimean Peninsula.
- June 28, 1942:
Renewed German offensive in the direction of Stalingrad and the Caucasus region. German troops reach the Volga River, raise the swastika flag on the Elbrus, the highest peak of the Caucasus. Failed attempt to secure the vital oil fields in the Caucasus, Stalingrad, and Voronezh.
- November 10, 1942:
German troops land at Tunis.
- November 11, 1942:
German troops occupy southern France.

DEFEATS: 1941

- December 13, 1941:
Nicaragua declares war.
- December 16, 1941:
Czechoslovak government-in-exile declares war.
- December 18, 1941:
Panama declares war.
- December 1941:
Defeats in North Africa. British take Cyrenaica.

DEFEATS: 1942

- March 29, 1942:
Large-scale bombing raid on Lübeck. Start of the Royal Air Force's strategic air offensive on German population centers with more than a hundred thousand inhabitants. These are leveled in the following three years. The Luftwaffe proves unable to defend them.
- May 22, 1942:
Mexico declares war.
- August 22, 1942:
Brazil declares war.
- November 4, 1942:
Severe military defeat in North Africa. The British Eighth Army takes the "invincible" German outposts at El Alamein. German Africa Corps forced to retreat.
- November 8, 1942:
Severe political defeat. Anglo-American forces move to occupy Morocco and Algeria.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1942

November 27, 1942:
German troops occupy Toulon.

VICTORIES: 1943

September 12, 1943:
German elite units rescue
Mussolini from the Gran Sasso
(highest range of the Abruzzi
Apennines) and bring him to
Germany.

September 28, 1943:
Formation of a Fascist-
Republican exile government
under Mussolini.

December 6, 1943:
German drive against Zhitomir;
offensive serves propaganda
purposes.

DEFEATS: 1942

November 19, 1942:
Large-scale Russian offensive
along the Don and Volga Rivers.
Four days later, the German
Sixth Army at Stalingrad is
encircled.

December 14, 1942:
Ethiopia declares war.

DEFEATS: 1943

January 16, 1943:
Iraq declares war.

January 1–February 2, 1943:
German Sixth Army surrenders
at Stalingrad. Soviets capture one
German field marshal, twenty-
four German generals, and two
Romanian generals.

May 1943:
Collapse of German U-boat
offensive.

May 13, 1943:
German Africa Corps beaten at
Tunis. Anglo-Americans capture
eleven German generals.

July 5, 1943:
German offensive against Kursk
fails because of strong resistance
by the Russians; abandoned after
a week.

July 10, 1943:
Allied landings on Sicily.

July 19, 1943:
Diplomatic defeat. Mussolini
refuses German demands at
Feltre.

July 25, 1943:
Mussolini deposed and
imprisoned in Italy.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1943

DEFEATS: 1943

- August 29, 1943:
Danish government-in-exile declares war.
- September 3–8, 1943:
Severe military and political defeats. Allied landings in southern Italy. Italy capitulates.
- September 9, 1943:
Iran declares war.
- October 13, 1943:
Italy declares war.
- November 29, 1943:
Colombia declares war.
- December 9, 1943:
Bolivia declares war.
- December 24, 1943:
Russian counteroffensive in the direction of Zhitomir. German troops lose remaining territorial gains.

VICTORIES: 1944

DEFEATS: 1944

- March 19, 1944:
German troops occupy Hungary.
- June 15–16, 1944:
Beginning of German bombardment to terrorize British population centers.
- July 20, 1944:
Hitler celebrates his survival of an assassination attempt, which he thinks means that Providence has blessed his mission.
- September 6, 1944:
Beginning of deployment of V-2 rockets in the bombardment of England and Belgium.
- January 18, 1944:
Military defeat at Leningrad. German troops retreat behind Lake Chudskoe.
- January 26, 1944:
Liberia declares war.
- May 13, 1944:
Crimean Peninsula is lost.
- May 15–16, 1944:
Allied breakthrough at the "Gustav Line" in central Italy.
- June 4, 1944:
Evacuation of Rome in light of Allied advances.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1944

October 15, 1944:

German-backed *coup de main* in Budapest. Arrest of Regent von Horthy (in favor of peace) and his abduction to Germany.

December 16, 1944:

German offensive in the Ardennes for propaganda purposes, as with the drive against Zhitomir in 1943.

DEFEATS: 1944

June 6, 1944:

D-Day. Allied landings along the northern coast of France remain there longer than the famous "nine hours" which Hitler had forecast.

June 22, 1944:

New Russian offensive along the central sector of the front. Twenty-five German divisions are eliminated in two weeks.

July 20, 1944:

Assassination attempt in the Führer headquarters reveals opposition to Hitler even among his inner circle.

August 2, 1944:

Turkey withdraws its staff of diplomats. Hitler's Turkey policy collapses.

August 15, 1944:

Anglo-Americans land in southern France.

August 23, 1944:

Coup in Romania; Antonescu imprisoned; new government declares war on Germany on August 25.

August 25, 1944:

German troops retreat from Paris; continued Allied advances.

September 4, 1944:

Russian advances into Finland. They force the Finns to declare war on Germany on September 25.

September 8, 1944:

Bulgaria collapses and declares war on Germany.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES: 1944

DEFEATS: 1944

September 11, 1944:

Allied forces reach the German border at Trier after the conquest of Belgium.

October 21, 1944:

Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) becomes first German city to be taken by the American troops.

December 24, 1944:

Allied counteroffensive in the Ardennes.

December 30, 1944:

Hungarian opposition government declares war.

VICTORIES:1945

January 1–20, 1945:

Propaganda inspired small-scale offensive in the Vosges launched, soon abandoned.

February 19–March 5, 1945:

German advances in Hungary are initially successful.

April 12, 1945:

Death of Roosevelt encourages Hitler, who celebrates this as a victory and help from Providence.

DEFEATS: 1945

January 12, 1945:

Large-scale Russian offensive along the central sector of the front. Territorial losses in Poland. Isolation of East Prussia. Russian troops reach the Oder River.

February 4–11, 1945:

Yalta Conference between Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin.

February 13, 1945:

Budapest surrenders after many months of siege. Declarations of war: 2/8, Paraguay; 2/11, Peru; 2/16, Venezuela; 2/22, Uruguay; 2/26, Egypt; 2/26, Syria; 2/27, Lebanon; 3/1, Saudi Arabia; 3/1, Turkey; 3/27, Argentina.

February 23–March 8, 1945:

Allied forces break through the West Wall; take all areas left of the Rhine; obtain bridgehead at Remagen.

Hitler's Victories and Defeats in World War II

VICTORIES:1945

DEFEATS: 1945

March 23–25, 1945:

Allied forces cross the Rhine and penetrate into Germany.

April 13, 1945:

Red Army takes Vienna.

April 16, 1945:

Large-scale Soviet offensive toward Berlin; reaches the outskirts by April 22.

April 25, 1945:

American and Russian troops meet at Torgau. Germany divided into two parts.

April 28, 1945:

Collapse of the German front in north Italy. Special cease-fire agreement arrived at with the German commanding generals on this sector.

April 30, 1945:

All hope of a relief of Berlin vanishes. Hitler commits suicide in Berlin.

May 2, 1945:

Red Army takes remaining districts of Berlin.

May 3, 1945:

German surrender accepted by Montgomery in northwest Germany.

May 7–9, 1945:

Unconditional surrender of Germany accepted by Eisenhower at Reims on May 7, and by Zhukov and Tedder in Berlin-Karlshorst on May 8–9.

May 23, 1945:

Arrest of Hitler's appointed successor, Admiral Dönitz, in Flensburg.

Hitler's Stays Abroad

1932

April 5:	Danzig
September 18:	Vienna

1934

June 14–16:	Venice
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1938

March 12:	Braunau-Linz
March 13:	Linz-Leonding
March 14:	Linz-Melk-Vienna
March 15:	Vienna
April 3:	Graz
April 4:	Klagenfurt
April 5:	Innsbruck
April 6:	Salzburg
April 7:	Linz
April 9:	Vienna
May 3:	Brenner Pass–Rome
May 4:	Rome
May 5:	Rome–Naples–Rome
May 6–7:	Rome
May 8:	Rome–Civitavecchia–Santa Marinella–Rome
May 9:	Rome–Florence
May 10:	Northern Italy–Brenner Pass
October 3:	Eger (Cheb)
October 4:	Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary)
October 6:	Schleckenau-Rumburk

Hitler's Stays Abroad

October 7:	Schönwies-Kohlbach-Jägersdorf-Neubersdorf
October 20:	Linz-Krumau
October 25:	Enger-Vienna
October 26:	Southern Moravia-Znaim (Znajmo)
October 27:	Laa-Nikolsburg
December 2:	Reichenberg (Liberec)

1939

February 18:	Klagenfurt
March 15:	Leipa (Bohemia)–Prague
March 16:	Prague–Sudeten Silesia
March 17:	Olmütz (Olomouc)–Brünn (Brno)–Vienna
March 18:	Vienna–Linz
March 23:	Memel territory
April 17:	St. Pölten–Krems–Strockerau–Strebersdorf
June 10–11:	Vienna
June 12:	Vienna–Linz
August 9:	Salzburg
August 14:	Salzburg
September 4:	Kulm–Polish Corridor
September 6:	Tuchel Moor
September 7–10:	Polish Corridor
September 11:	Lodz area–Rava
September 12–13:	Polish Corridor
September 13:	City of Lodz and surrounding areas
September 14:	Polish Corridor
September 15:	Galicia (Jarosław, Ubieszyn)
September 16–18:	Galicia–Polish Corridor
September 19:	Oliva–Sopot (Zopot)–Danzig
September 20:	Sopot
September 21:	Westerplatte–Gdingen (Gdynia)–Oxhöft
September 22:	Praga (near Warsaw)–Sopot
September 23–24:	Sopot
September 25:	Sopot–Bzura area
October 5:	Warsaw
December 24:	Spicheren area

Hitler's Stays Abroad

1940

March 18:	Brenner Pass–Innsbruck
May 24:	Charleville
June 2:	Langemarck–Vimy Heights–Loretto
June 3–25:	Bruly-le-Pêche
June 21:	Compiègne
June 26–27:	northern France (tour of World War I battlefields)
June 28:	Paris
June 29:	Strasbourg–Schlettstadt (Selestat)
June 30:	Mulhouse–Upper Alsace
October 4:	Brenner Pass
October 22:	Montoire-sur-le-Loir
October 23:	Hendaye
October 24:	Montoire-sur-le-Loir
October 25:	Yvoir (Belgium)
October 28:	Florence
November 20:	Vienna
December 23:	Calais–Boulogne area
December 24:	Abbeville area
December 25:	area north of Paris
December 26:	northern France

1941

January 19:	Puch (near Salzburg)
March 1:	Vienna
March 25:	Vienna
April 11–25:	Mönchskirchen
April 26:	Graz–Marburg on the Drau (Maribor)
April 27:	Klagenfurt
June 2:	Brenner Pass
August 26:	Brest-Litovsk
August 27:	Gorsk
August 28:	Uman-Gorsk
September 24:	Borisov
December 2:	Kiev–Mariupol–Mius front section
December 3:	Mariupol–Poltava
December 4:	Poltava

Hitler's Stays Abroad

1942

April 29–30:	Klessheim (near Salzburg)
June 4:	Micheli (Finland)
July 17–October 31:	Werewolf headquarters (with the exception of the period between September 28 and October 2)

1943

February 17–19:	Zaporozh'ye
February 19–March 13:	Werewolf headquarters
March 10:	Zaporozh'ye
March 13:	Smolensk
April 7–10:	Klessheim
April 12:	Klessheim
April 16–17:	Klessheim
April 23:	Klessheim
April 27:	Klessheim
April 29:	Klessheim
July 19:	Feltre (Belluno area)
August 27:	Werewolf headquarters
September 8:	Zaporozh'ye

1944

March 18:	Klessheim
April 22–23:	Klessheim
May 12:	Klessheim
June 17:	Metz-Margival

Führer Headquarters

1939

September 4–19: Special train in Poland.
September 19–25: Hotel Casino in Sopot (Zoppot)

1940

May 10–(about) June 3: Felsenest near Münstereifel
June 3–25
(approximately): Bruly-le-peche (Belgium)
June 28–July 5: Tannenberg near Freudenstadt (Black Forest)

1941

April 10–25: Special train near Mönchskirchen (Styria)
June 28–November 7: Wolfsschanze near Rastenburg (East Prussia)
November 29–
April 25, 1942: Wolfsschanze

1942

Until April 25: Wolfsschanze
May 3–21: Wolfsschanze
May 31–June 8: Wolfsschanze
July 1–15: Wolfsschanze
July 16–October 31: Werewolf near Vinnitsa (Ukraine)
November 1–7: Wolfsschanze
November 23–
February 17, 1943: Wolfsschanze.

Führer Headquarters

1943

Until February 17:	Wolfsschanze
February 19–March 13:	Werewolf
March 13–20:	Wolfsschanze
July 1–November 7:	Wolfsschanze
November 19–	
March 16, 1944:	Wolfsschanze

1944

Until March 16:	Wolfsschanze
July 15–November 20:	Wolfsschanze
December 10–	
January 15, 1945:	Ziegenberg near Bad Nauheim (Hesse)

1945

Until January 15:	Ziegenberg
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For the periods not indicated above, the Führer headquarters was either located at the Reich Chancellery (Berlin) or at the Berghof (Berchtesgaden).

Ships Mentioned in the Text

Admiral Graf Spee (Pocket Battleship) Panzerschiffle/Armored Ships commonly known as Pocket Battleships. Later reclassified as Heavy Cruisers.

Displacement: 12,100 tons. Speed 26 knots. Armament: 6 - 11in (2 x 3), 8 - 5.9in (8 x 1), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (3 x 2), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2) 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Scuttled outside Montevideo December 17, 1939.

Admiral Scheer (Pocket Battleship) Displacement: 12,100 tons. Speed 26 knots.

Armament: 6 - 11in (2 x 3), 8 - 5.9in (8 x 1), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (3 x 2), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Capsized at Keil after RAF bombing raid April 9, 1945.

Bismarck (Battleship) Displacement: 41,700 tons. Speed: 30 knots. Armament: 8 - 15in (4 x 2), 12 - 5.9in (6 x 2), 16 - 4.1in A.A. (8 x 2), 16 - 37mm A.A. (8 x 2), 6 aircraft. Sister ship to *Tirpitz*. Sank *HMS Hood* on May 24, 1941 and subsequently sunk by units of the Royal Navy May 27, 1941.

Blucher (Heavy Cruiser) Displacement: 13,900 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 8 - 8in (4 x 2), 12 - 4.1in A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 37mm A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 3 aircraft. Sunk in Oslo Fjord by gunfire and torpedoes from shore tubes April 9, 1940.

Conte Di Cavour (Battleship) Displacement: 29,100 tons. Speed: 27 knots.

Armament: 10 - 12.6in (2 x 3 & 2 x 2), 12 - 4.7in A.A. (6 x 2), 8 - 3.9in A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 37mm A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 3 aircraft. Italian, *Cavour* Class Battleship. Sunk by F.A.A. aircraft at Taranto November 12, 1940. Refloated but not rebuilt when captured by German forces. Sunk by aerial bombs February 15, 1945.

HMS Cossack (Destroyer) Displacement: 1,960 tons. Speed: 36 knots. Armament: 8 - 4.7in (4 x 2), 4 - 2pdr A.A., 4 - 21in (1 x 4) Torpedo Tubes. *Tribal* Class Destroyer. Torpedoed and sunk by U.563 North Atlantic October 23, 1941.

Deutschland (Pocket Battleship) Displacement: 11,700 tons. Speed 26 knots.

Armament: 6 - 11in (2 x 3), 8 - 5.9in (8 x 1), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (3 x 2), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Renamed *Lutzow*

Ships Mentioned in the Text

February, 1940. Bombed at Swimemund April 16, 1945. Blown up and scuttled May 4, 1945.

Europa (Passenger Liner) Displacement: 49,750 tons. Speed: 27 knots. German Luxury Liner launched in 1930. Held the Blue Riband. Survived the war and handed over to France. Eventually scrapped in Italy in 1962.

Gneisenau (Battlecruiser) Displacement: 32,000 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 11in (3 x 3), 12 - 5.9in (4 x 2 4 x 1), 14 - 4.1in A.A. (7 x 2), 16 - 37mm A.A. (8 x 2), 6 - 21in (2 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 4 aircraft. Classified as Fast Battleship by Germans. Damaged by RAF air raids at Keil and Gdynia. Decommissioned. Later sunk as block ship at Gdynia March 28, 1945.

Graf Zeppelin (Aircraft Carrier) Displacement: 23,300 tons. Speed: 33 knots. Armament: 16 - 5.9in (8 x 2), 12 - 4.1in A.A. (6 x 2), 22 - 37mm A.A. (11 x 2). Originally planned to carry 12 Ju 87D dive bombers and 30 Me 109F fighters. Never completed. Scuttled Stettin April 24, 1945. Raised 1946/47 but capsized in the Gulf of Finland in 1947 whilst on tow to Russia.

Grosserkurfurt (Battleship) Displacement: 25,390 tons. Speed: 22 knots. Armament: 10 - 12in (5 x 2), 14 - 5.9in (14 x 1), 6 - 3.4in (6 x 1), 4 - 3.4in A.A. (4 x 1), 5 - 20in (5 x 1) Torpedo Tubes. *König* Class Battleship. Launched May 5, 1913 and scuttled at Scapa Flow June 21, 1919.

Grille (Hitler's Yacht) Displacement: 2,560 tons. Speed: 26 knots. Armament: 3 - 5in (3 x 1), 4 - 37mm (2 x 2), 4 - 20mm (4 x 1). Served in peacetime as an Admiralty yacht during fleet reviews and visits by VIPs. During war used as a minelayer, then as a staff ship. Transferred to Great Britain, then to USA in 1947. Broken up in 1951.

Hamburg (Hitler's Yacht) No information available.

HMS Hood (Battlecruiser) Displacement: 42,750 tons. Speed: 30 knots. Armament: 8 - 15in (4 x 2), 12 - 5in (12 x 1), 8 - 4in (8 x 12), 24 - 2pdr A.A., 4 - 21in Torpedo Tubes. Lost to *Bismarck* in Demark Strait May 24, 1941.

Karlsruhe (Light Cruiser) Displacement: 6,650 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 5.9in (3 x 3), 2 - 3.5in A.A. (2 x 1), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes (4 x 3), 2 aircraft. Badly damaged by torpedos from H.M. Submarine *Truant* April 10, 1940. Later sunk by torpedos from German Torpedo Boat *Grief*.

Köln (Light Cruiser) Displacement: 6,650 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 5.9in (3 x 3), 4 - 3.5in A.A. (4 x 1), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes (4 x 3), 2 aircraft. Bombed and sunk at Wilhelmshaven April 30, 1945.

Ships Mentioned in the Text

Konigsberg (Light Cruiser) Displacement: 6,650 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 5.9in (3 x 3), 2 - 3.5in A.A. (2 x 1), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes (4 x 3), 2 aircraft. First major warship sunk by dive bombers when sunk by F.A.A. *Skuas* at Bergen April 10, 1940. Wreck refloated and dry docked but September 22, 1944 capsized, abandoned and later broken up.

Leopard (Torpedo Boat) Displacement: 933 tons. Speed: 33 knots. Armament: 3 - 5in (3 x 1), 4 - 20mm A.A. (4 x 1), 6 - 21in (2 x 3) Torpedo Tubes. *Wolf* Class torpedo boat. Sunk in collision with minelayer *Preussen*, Skaggerak April 30, 1940.

Lutzow (Pocket Battleship). *Panzerschiffle*/Armoured Ships commonly known as Pocket Battleships. Later reclassified as Heavy Cruisers. Displacement: 11,700 tons. Speed 26 knots. Armament: 6 - 11in (2 x 3), 8 - 5.9in (8 x 1), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (3 x 2) 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2) 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Refer to *Deutschland* above.

HMS *Nelson* (Battleship) Displacement: 33,300 tons. Speed: 23 knots. Armament: 9 - 16in (3 x 3), 12 - 6in (6 x 2), 6 - 4.7in A.A. (6 x 1), 2 - 24.5in (1 x 1) Torpedo Tubes. *Nelson* class Battleship. Sistership to HMS *Rodney*. Launched in 1927 and scrapped in 1948.

New York (Steamer)

Nixe (Cutter) Norwegian passenger ship seized by the Germans for the duration of the War.

Nürnberg (Light Cruiser) Displacement: 6,980 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 5.9in (3 x 3), 8 - 3.5in A.A. (4 x 2), 8 - 37mm A.A. (4 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 2 aircraft. Surrendered at Copenhagen May 9, 1945. Transferred to Russian Navy as *Admiral Makarow* in 1946. Broken up 1959.

Patria (Steamer)

Prince Eugen (Heavy Cruiser) Displacement: 13,900 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 8 - 8in (4 x 2), 12 - 4.1in A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 37mm A.A. (6 x 2), 12 - 21in (4 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 3 aircraft. Sister ship to *Seydlitz*, *Blucher* and *Admiral Hipper*. Taken over by U.S.A. at Copenhagen in May 1945. Used as target ship at Bikini Atoll atom bomb tests. Sank Kwajalein 15/11/47.

Rio de Janeiro (Steamer)

Robert Ley (KdF Ship) Displacement: 27,300 tons. Speed: 15 knots. Strength Through Joy Ship commissioned 24/3/39. Used mainly as an accommodation ship during the war. Scrapped in UK in June 1947.

Ships Mentioned in the Text

HMS *Rodney* (Battleship) Displacement: 33,300 tons. Speed: 23 knots. Armament: 9 - 16in (3 x 3), 12 - 6in (6 x 2), 6 - 4.7in A.A. (6 x 1), 2 - 24.5in (1 x 1) Torpedo Tubes. *Nelson* Class Battleship. Sister ship to HMS *Nelson*, took part in action against *Bismarck*. Completed November 10, 1927 and Scrapped March 1948.

HMS *Royal Oak* (Battleship) Displacement: 29,150 tons. Speed: 23 knots. Armament: 8 - 15in (4 x 2), 14 - 6in (14 x 1), 2 - 3in A.A. (2 x 1), 4 - 21in Torpedo Tubes. *Royal Sovereign* Class Battleship. Sunk October 14, 1939 by U.47 in Scapa Flow.

Scharnhorst (Battlecruiser) Displacement: 32,000 tons. Speed: 32 knots. Armament: 9 - 11in (3 x 3), 12 - 5.9in (6 x 2), 14 - 4.1in A.A. (7 x 2), 16 - 37mm A.A. (8 x 2), 6 - 21in (2 x 3) Torpedo Tubes, 4 aircraft. Sister ship to *Gneisenau*. Classified as Fast Battleship by Germans. Sunk in battle of North Cape by gunfire from HMS *Duke of York* and finally torpedoed by destroyers, December 26, 1943.

Scharnhorst (Passenger Liner) German luxury liner plying the Oriental service prior to Pacific War. Converted by Japan into Aircraft carrier *Shinyo*. Lost to US Submarine *Spadefish* November 17, 1944.

Schleswig-Holstein (Obsolete Battleship) Displacement: 13,050 tons. Speed: 16 knots. Armament: (1944): 4 - 11in (2 x 2), 6 - 4.1in A.A. (6 x 1), 10 - 40mm A.A. Served in High Seas Fleet in World War One. Then used as Training Ship. In action against Polish shore installations in 1939. Bombed and sunk Gdynia in shallow water, then scuttled March 21, 1945.

Tirpitz (Battleship) Displacement: 42,900 tons. Speed 30 knots. Armament: 8 - 15in (4 x 2), 12 - 5.9in (6 x 2), 16 - 4.1in A.A. (8 x 2) 16 - 37mm A.A. (8 x 2) 8 - 21in (2 x 4) Torpedo Tubes, 6 aircraft. Sister ship to *Bismarck*. Bombed by RAF Lancaster bombers and capsized off Tromsø November 12, 1944.

U-Boats German submarines of various classes.

Courtesy of: Paul. A. Richardson

Afterword

The work completed here does not claim to be a “definitive treatment” of the Third Reich or of Hitler. This was an investigation made only to prove that what Hitler said was, in its essential points, false. In particular, this applies to his foreign policy and his military policy. Even the most beautiful speeches cannot change the facts. And when Hitler so often declared: “Where the German soldier stands, nobody else will step,”¹ “Germany will not be conquered, either from inside or from outside!”² “The Third Reich will not turn into a butterfly that lives but a day”³—the hard reality differed from his boastful statements.

It should also be mentioned that Hitler’s rhetorical influence over the masses played a role, but by no means the decisive role, either in his rise to power or in the nature of his rule. As soon as Hitler took the reins of government into his hands, it became unessential whether the so-called people rejected him or not; he was determined to implement his ideas in either case.

Hitler’s oratorical success with certain leading persons, however, was important and decisive. The leading circles in Germany had the power either to prevent Hitler from coming to power or, after he had risen to power, to dismiss him. And he realized that he had to convince them that it was only he who would save Germany, and that all his measures served only that purpose.

It is a most remarkable fact that all Hitler’s ideas and plans concerning foreign policy were hardly ever criticized in Germany, although they could affect, and did affect, Germany herself most fatefully.

Hitler was praised for having dealt with unemployment, extending patronage to the Volkswagen, and having the Autobahns built in grand style.

Hitler was condemned for oppressing the Jews, restricting the rights of the churches, banning all parties except his own, dissolving the trade unions, controlling the press, regulating the cultural life, and infringing individual freedom.

These negative aspects of Hitler's domestic policy were signs of a loathsome dictatorship, but they were, by no means, causes of his downfall. They would have never provoked military interference by the western forces if they had been applied only within the Reich's boundaries. These forces joined in the war against Hitler only after he had started war against Poland and Danzig in 1939. He might have started war against any other country—the decision of the western forces would have been the same.

Of course, Hitler was blamed in Germany for this reason too, namely, the war against Poland, but as was easily observable, it was just a logical consequence of Hitler's foreign-policy concept.

Hitler's foreign policy theses were based on the following statements: The world has denied to the German people its lawful rights for a "place in the sun." In 1918, Germany was forced to lay down her arms because of a trick (Wilson's Fourteen Points), and it was at that very moment when she was about to achieve a complete victory over her enemy. The Versailles Treaty was a gross injustice toward the German people; therefore it is self-evident that the world should have canceled the terms of that treaty, thus ensuring restoration of the frontier line of at least 1914, and restitution of colonies.

Germany is being threatened by all kinds of enemies from the west and from the east. Nevertheless, the German people is unconquerable while it is united. It must receive a "Lebensraum" (living space) according to the number of its population.⁴

Foreign policy was identical to domestic policy. Subsequently, the foreign enemies were the same as the domestic enemies. The English were as rigid (*verkalkt*) as the German nationalists and absolutely unable to resist the German policy of expansion. On the contrary, they would have even welcomed Germany's campaign of conquest against Poland and Russia. In other respects, the English were of "German origin"^{5, 6} and that reason alone was enough to make them Germany's friends.

Russian Bolsheviks are the same as German Communists. Bolshhevism is a doctrine of "primitivism and cowardly concession,"⁷ and the best way to exterminate it is to apply cruel force.

Afterword

Those were the main points of Hitler's foreign policy. They did not, in the least, correspond to the truth or to the real power structure in the world. Hitler's effort to put his foreign-policy ideas into reality ended in Germany's greatest political and military disaster.

Since Hitler's foreign policy was connected with his dictatorial domestic and racial policy, there was, and still is, a danger that the primary reason of the greatest German disaster of 1945, that is, Hitler's foreign policy, still remains obscure and unrecognized. It was the purpose of this publication to disclose that very foreign policy.



LXVIII Göring, Hess, Ribbentrop, and Keitel in the prisoners' dock

Photo: Publisher's archives

The Year 1941

Notes

1. See below, speech of January 1, 1941.
2. Ibid.
3. See above, June 24, 1940.
4. In view of Russia's benevolent behavior, Göring had declared in a speech in September 1939: "And yet, we do not have a war to fight on three, four, or five fronts as we did back then [1914]. Then we had to defend thirty-eight hundred kilometers, today we have only two hundred fifty to defend." See above, p. 1795, September 9, 1939.
5. See above, January 27, 1940.
6. See above, p. 2173, Raeder's statement of December 27, 1940.
7. Testimony by Field Marshal Milch before the Nuremberg tribunal on March 8, 1946: "From what Göring said on May 22, 1941, at Veldenstein it was clear that he did not like this idea of going to war at all. But even for him, in his position, it was impossible to dissuade Hitler. He stated that he had brought the two-front war dilemma to Hitler's attention. He told me, however, that there was no hope." Cf. IMT, Blue Series. Translated from the original German wording in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. IX, pp. 59 f. For his part, Göring made the following statement on March 15, 1946, in his own defense at Nuremberg: "What I told him [Hitler] was: It was a masterpiece of great ingenuity on your part to limit this war to be fought on only one front from its very beginning. This is a crucial element of success that you yourself always pointed out in your *Mein Kampf*. To clash with Russia would, the way things are now, pit a third world power against Germany in this struggle. Then we will once again stand alone to fight a two-front war against practically the entire world—the other countries on our side will not count." Ibid., p. 386.
8. Cf. Franz von Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse* (Munich, 1952), p. 529.
9. Ibid., p. 544.
10. See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
11. In February 1941 Hitler proclaimed: "When Barbarossa takes off, the world will hold its breath and keep still." See below, February 3, 1941.
12. See below, October 3, 1941.
13. See below, proclamation of October 2, 1941.
14. See above, May 24, 1940.
15. See below, speech of November 8, 1941.
16. DNB text, January 1, 1941.
17. Ibid.
18. See above, 1940, note 487.
19. DNB text, January 2, 1941.
20. DNB note, January 2, 1941.
21. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 331.

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22. Report in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1941. Fritz Wächtler, born 1891; teacher by profession; appointed successor to Hans Schemm, who had died, as head (Reichswalter) of the National Socialist Teachers' Association; Bavarian state minister; Gauleiter of the Gau Bayerische Ostmark centered in Bayreuth.
23. *The Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs* (London, 1947), reprinted in *Brassey's Naval Annual* (London, 1948), pp. 169 ff. Reports of these talks are also printed in IMT, 170-8 f. and in the war diary of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, published in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 184 f.
24. For the British strategy of inducing Napoleon and Hitler to turn against Russia instead of Britain, see above, pp. 1907 f., 2064 ff., 2092 ff. and below, June 22, 1941.
25. *Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945*, edited by Hugh R[edwald] Trevor-Roper (2nd ed., London, 1966), pp. 98 ff. Editor's note: The text of these directives was originally published in German under the title of *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung 1939-1945, Dokumente des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, edited by Walther Hubatsch (Frankfurt am Main, 1962).
26. Count Ugo Cavallero, commander of Italian troops in Albania (21st Division); from December 1940, chief of the Italian supreme command.
27. *Hitler's War Directives*, op. cit., p. 96.
28. In VB, No. 13, January 13, 1941.
29. Ibid.
30. Illustrated report in VB, No. 18, January 18, 1941.
31. Cf. Helmuth Greiner, *Die Oberste Wehrmachtsführung* (Wiesbaden 1951), p. 252.
32. DNE report, January 16, 1941.
33. Report on preparations and on the talks themselves in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 333 ff.
34. Ibid., p. 338.
35. Pietro Badoglio, born 1871; duke of Addis-Ababa from 1936 to 1943; he took over the Italian government as marshal after Mussolini's overthrow; Italian prime minister until the invasion of France on June 6, 1944.
36. Reference to the events surrounding the person of Freiherr von Fritsch. He served as head of armed forces high command and commander in chief of the army. See above, August 3, 1937. See also above, February 8, 1938. See further 1938, notes 29-31.
37. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 338.
38. Cf. protocol of the meeting in IMT, 134-C.
39. DNB text, January 20, 1941.
40. Report in VB, No. 23, January 23, 1941.
41. DNB texts, January 28, 1941.
42. See above, p. 546. Hitler had effected Brückner's dismissal through a decree dated December 4, 1934.

43. Announcement of the Reich Press Bureau on January 28, 1941. Karl Hanke, born 1903 in Lauban; miller and trade teacher; worked as personal assistant to Goebbels in 1932; ministerial counselor in the Reich propaganda ministry in 1933; he played an ominous role in the defense of the town of Breslau (Wrocław) in 1945.
Fritz Bracht, born 1899; previously assistant Gauleiter of Breslau. The previous Gauleiter, Josef Wagner, filed a complaint with the party high court which upheld his suit. Hitler was furious with the party lawyers who refused to give formal approval to his arbitrary rule. See below, March 21, 1942.
44. DNB report, January 29, 1941.
45. On July 3, 1934, in the wake of the Röhm Purge, the then Reich Minister of Justice Gürtner had declared that "the shooting of defenseless prisoners without trial had not only been justified, but moreover constituted a 'statesmanlike duty'." See above, p. 481.
46. As late as August 24, 1942, Hitler appointed a new Reich minister of justice: Dr. Georg Otto Thierack; he was born 1889 in Wurzen (Saxony) and committed suicide in the prisoner-of-war camp of Eselheider (Sennelager).
47. Roland Freisler, born 1893; died 1945 in Berlin in an air raid; state secretary and president of the Volksgerichtshof.
48. Franz Schlegelberger, born 1876 in Königsberg; state secretary; repeatedly placed in charge of the Reich ministry of justice in the years 1941 to 1942.
49. DNB report, January 29, 1941.
50. DNB report, January 30, 1941.
51. DNB texts, January 30, 1941.
52. In VB, No. 31, January 31, 1941.
53. "Party-narrative": Author's expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
54. Allusion to the British concentration camps during the Boer War of 1899–1902 in South Africa. Such camps were customarily used to accommodate civilian populations of the enemy in wartime. They bore no resemblance to the concentration camps which Hitler contrived for the genocide of millions of foreign people and the swift elimination of political adversaries.
55. More accurately Hider's reply should have been "Russia and America." In order not to offend the Russians, he restricted himself to expounding the topic of America. In all Hitler's public statements up to June 22, 1941, mention of the Soviet Union was conspicuously absent.
56. In other words, this meant "Wherever we cannot beat England (that is, on the British mainland and in its colonies), we shall not beat England!"
57. In August 1939, Hitler had not been particularly troubled by this "handshake of two men of honor" when he had offered Great Britain military assistance against his friend Mussolini. See above, August 27 and 28, 1939.
58. Quotation from the Martin Luther hymn *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*.

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59. Hitler had made no such threat in his speech on September 1, 1939. On the contrary, he had painstakingly avoided any anti-Semitic remarks in order not to complicate the situation any further as regards the war in Poland. On January 30, 1939, he had stated the following on the subject of the Jews: “. . . should the international Jewry of finance (*Finanzjudentum*) succeed, both within and beyond Europe, in plunging mankind into yet another world war, then the result will not be a Bolshevization of the earth and the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.” See above, p. 1449, speech of January 30, 1939.
60. Illustrated report in VB, No. 33, February 2, 1941.
61. Ibid.
62. DNB report, February 1, 1941.
63. Report in VB, No. 35, February 4, 1941.
64. DGFP, D, XII, pp. 11 f.
65. Cf. protocol of the conference in IMT, 872-PS.
66. Code name for the planned offensive against Greece. See above, December 13, 1940.
67. Code name for the planned occupation of southeastern France. See above, December 10, 1940.
68. Code name for the planned (though not carried out) landing of ground forces on the English mainland. See above, July 16, 1940.
69. Report in VB, No. 36, February 5, 1941. Heinrich Schnee, born 1871 in Neuhaldersleben; died 1949 in Berlin; last governor of German East Africa.
70. RGBI, 1941, I, p. 73.
71. Report in VB, No. 38, February 7, 1941.
72. DGFP, D, XII, no. 23, pp. 42 ff. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 102 ff.
73. DGFP, D, XII, no. 22, pp. 37 ff. Also published in *The Spanish Government and the Axis* (Washington, 1946), pp. 28 ff.
74. Announcement by the NSDAP Reich Press Office of February 7, 1941. The renaming of the Gau was to veil the fact that this Gau had appropriated Luxembourg.
75. DNB report, February 12, 1941.
76. DNB text, February 14, 1941.
77. In Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 199.
78. Hermann Kriebel, born 1876; retired lieutenant colonel. He had participated in the 1923 march on the Feldherrnhalle, but later distanced himself from Hitler. However, subsequent to Hitler's seizure of power, Kriebel was again to be seen at official state functions. He was named SA Obergruppenführer and later promoted to the rank of colonel. Assigned by Hitler to the foreign ministry, he served as German consul in Shanghai for some time.
79. Report in VB, No. 56, February 25, 1941.
80. Excerpts from this speech were published in VB, No. 56, February 25, 1941.

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81. The Röhm Purge constituted a textbook example of what Hitler's assurances of friendship meant. See above, pp. 456 ff., and June 30 to July 1, 1934.
82. By "March and April, 1941," German U-boats were only able to report the sinking of ever fewer enemy ships. The Royal Air Force and the British navy stepped up their surveillance of the seas, greatly reducing the opportunities for the German U-boats to strike.
83. The winter 1941–1942 would prove that after all the "German Volk," and more specifically the German army in Russia, were not in the least prepared for the winter.
84. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1941. Ferdinand von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, born 1861 in Vienna; died 1948 in Coburg; became king of Bulgaria in 1908; renounced the throne in 1918 in favor of his son Boris.
85. Report in VB, No. 60, March 1, 1941.
86. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1941. Bogdan Filov, born 1883; executed on February 1, 1945; Bulgarian prime minister from 1940 to 1942.
87. DNB text, March 2, 1941.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. March 2, 1941, was a Sunday. Hitler preferred to start his undertakings on weekends, both at home and abroad, as he believed that setting out on either a Saturday or a Sunday secured him a certain element of surprise. In addition, reactions to his measures were not to be expected until the following Monday. See above, p. 458, and 1934, note 92.
91. DNB text, March 5, 1941.
92. Report on this meeting in von Papen, p. 535.
93. There was no mention of this visit in the German news media.
94. See below, speech of May 4, 1941.
95. Hitler made the following statement in May of that year: "Beyond this, in response to a substantiated claim by its government, Yugoslavia received the assurance that, in the event of territorial readjustments in the Balkans, it would be granted sovereign access to the Aegean Sea, which, among other things, would include the city of Salonika." See below, speech of May 4, 1941.
96. In August 1939, Hitler had proposed to Great Britain: German "protection" for its empire against any potential aggressor, including Italy, Japan, and Russia. See above, August 27 and 28, 1939.
97. DGFP, D, XII, no. 125, pp. 219 f.
98. Bullock, *Hitler*, p. 349. See above, 1940, note 36.
99. Report in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1941.
100. Report in VB, No. 69, March 10, 1941.
101. Excerpts of the speech were published in VB, No. 73, March 14, 1941.
102. Report in VB, No. 74, March 15, 1941.
103. Ibid.
104. DNB report, March 15, 1941.

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105. Reports on the ceremonies and speech in VB, No. 76, March 17, 1941.
106. Eduard Freiherr von Bohm-Ermolli, born 1856 in Ancona; conquered Lemberg in 1915; commander in chief of the Austro-Hungarian army in the Ukraine in 1918.
107. See below, May 4, 1941.
108. In VB, No. 76, March 17, 1941. Professor W. Kreis was appointed to this post. See below, March 17, 1943.
109. DNB report, March 19, 1941.
110. Report in VB, No. 81, March 23, 1941.
111. Ibid.
112. Report in VB, No. 82, March 23, 1941.
113. Illustrated reports in VB, No. 81, March 22, 1941. The Africa corps sported khaki uniforms with sun helmets. The design of the uniform was a replica of that worn by the German Asian corps during its ill-fated campaign in the First World War. Then, too, under the guidance of General Erick von Falkenhayn, this corps was unable to score any victories of significance against the onslaught of the English.
114. Report in VB, No. 80, March 21, 1941.
115. DNB text, March 21, 1941. Ladislaus von Bardossy, born 1890 in Steinamanger; executed 1946 in Budapest; prime minister in the years 1941 and 1942.
116. Report in VB, No. 82, March 23, 1941.
117. Report on the festivities in Vienna in VB, No. 85, March 26, 1941.
118. DNB text, March 26, 1941.
119. Report in VB, No. 85, March 26, 1941.
120. Report in VB, No. 88, March 29, 1941.
121. Report in VB, No. 86, March 27, 1941.
122. See above, November 20, 1940, and Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 313, 317.
123. DGFP, D, XII, no. 217, pp. 372 ff. Cf. also: Wehrmachtsführungsstab (Supreme Military Council of the Wehrmacht), Top Secret Commando Affair, published in IMT, 1746-PS.
124. There have been speculations that the campaign against Russia was originally to have been launched on May 15, 1941. Directive No. 21 detailing the implementation of Operation Barbarossa merely provided that "preparations are to be concluded by May 15, 1941." May 15 would have been a Thursday in 1941. Since Hitler customarily launched undertakings of a similar nature on a weekend, preferably a Sunday, to take advantage of an element of surprise in the attack, May 15 most certainly would not have been his choice for Operation Barbarossa. By the same token, the earliest date he might have chosen was Sunday, May 18, or the following Sunday, May 25. This would also agree with the actual date of the attack, Sunday, June 22, given the possibility of a "postponement up to four weeks" for the assault as provided for.
125. DGFP, D, XII, no. 249, pp. 395 f. Cf. also *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 107 ff.
126. DGFP, D, XII, no. 222, pp. 386 ff. Report on the meeting of Hitler and Matsuoka on March 27, 1941, in Schmidt, pp. 539 ff.

127. On his way to Berlin, Matsuoka stopped over in Moscow to discuss normalization of relations between Russia and Japan, according to a wish the German government had expressed in December 1939. By now, however, Hitler no longer desired to explore this possibility.
128. According to Schmidt, p. 548, Matsuoka repeatedly warned at his visits in Berlin that the Anglo-Americans had to be considered as a single block in the conflict, forming a single power grouping. This assessment was a matter of course for anyone acquainted with world history and politics, but not for the German leadership.
129. DNB report, March 27, 1941.
130. DNB report, March 28, 1941.
131. In the course of a dinner reception in honor of the Japanese foreign minister at Göring's estate, Karinhall, Matsuoka leaned over in his chair, indicated his host sitting across the table from him, and remarked in English to the interpreter Schmidt: "Did you know that abroad people say he is crazy?" He was alluding to Göring's stay at the Swedish insane asylum of Langbro in 1925. Schmidt, p. 546.
132. Cf. Weizsäcker, p. 309.
133. DGFP, D, XII, no. 224, pp. 397 f. Cf. IMT, 1835-PS.
134. Report in VB, No. 89, March 30, 1941.
135. Cf. Halder's diary, entry of March 30, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
136. In the course of his testimony before the Nuremberg Court, Halder stated the following about Hitler's speech that day: "Before the attack on Russia, the Führer summoned all commanders in chief and all persons connected to the high command to a conference on the pending attack on Russia. In this conference, he said that weapons different from those used against the west were to be employed against the Russians. He said that the war between Russia and Germany was a war between races. He said that the Russians were not a party to the Geneva Convention and hence Russian prisoners of war need not be treated in accordance with the stipulations of the Geneva Convention." Cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. VII, pp. 396 f.
137. RGBI, 1910, pp. 375 f.
138. See above, speech of July 13, 1934.
139. See above, p. 481.
140. On December 11, 1961, a trial of two former members of the SS took place. They were accused of killing seventy Russian commissars. In his testimony, General Walter Warlimont replied in a revealing manner to the prosecution's question why—of the two hundred fifty generals and admirals Hitler had called together that March 30, 1941—had not one protested against the order, which was obviously criminal in nature. Warlimont had served as chief of the Wehrmachtsführungsstab (Supreme Military Council of the Wehrmacht) with the OKW and was the author of Hitler's infamous so-called "Commissar Order." Before the court in Trier, Warlimont explained that a number of the high-ranking officers had been convinced by Hitler's argument that the

Soviet commissars were not soldiers, but instead “convicted criminals.” The remainder, including Warlimont himself, had not objected since they sincerely believed that “the man who held the highest position in the state, who was highly revered by all officers, Adolf Hitler, supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, was simply not capable of doing anything unjust.” Warlimont’s belief was founded on the “convictions an officer was born with and which he internalized in the course of his education.” DPA report, December 11, 1961.

141. Cf. IMT, 884-PS.
142. “Dulag” was the abbreviation for *Durchgangslager* (transit camp).
143. On April 20, 1941, Hitler appointed Rosenberg as the commissar for the central administration of the territories in eastern Europe. On September 17, 1941, Hitler promoted him to Reich minister in charge of the occupied territories.
144. On June 21, 1941, just before launching the Russian campaign, Hitler once more lectured Mussolini that Italy had under any circumstances to postpone its projected attack on Egypt for the time being. Cf. Epstein and Carroll, *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland und die Sowjetunion 1939–1941* (Washington, 1948), pp. 392 f.
145. The Italian governor was Amadeus, duke of Aosta, born 1898; died March 3, 1942, while in British captivity. The duke’s forces held out for some time until he finally capitulated at Amba Alagi on May 17, 1941.
146. Report in VB, No. 96, April 6, 1941.
147. Report in VB, No. 95, April 5, 1941.
148. Report in VB, No. 98, April 8, 1941.
149. DGFP, D, XII, no. 256, pp. 440 ff.
150. Report in VB, No. 95, April 5, 1941.
151. Report on the talk in Schmidt, p. 548.
152. See above, March 27, 1941.
153. This nonaggression pact, which was signed on April 13, 1941, technically remained in force until Germany’s capitulation in 1945. The inconsistent nature of Hitler’s demands on Japan was largely to blame for this development. The Japanese were not willing to antagonize the Russians for the sake of pleasing Hitler. A popular notion at the time was that the famed Russo-German master-spy Richard Sorge, operating for the Comintern from 1925 to 1929 in China and from 1933 out of Tokyo, had informed the Russians that Japan intended to remain neutral in a conflict between Germany and Russia, and that this “treason” had ultimately resulted in Germany’s defeat. Of course, this was utter nonsense.
154. Cf. the April 28, 1941 talk between Hitler and Schulenburg in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 209.
155. In his proclamation of June 22, 1941, Hitler maintained: “The German Volk can be told today: the Serbian *coup de main* against Germany took place not only under the English, but also and essentially under the Soviet flag.” See below, June 22, 1941.
156. DGFP, D, XII, no. 333, p. 537.

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157. Hitler instructed his generals in the following manner prior to the attack on Poland: "Close your hearts to pity. Act brutally. The greatest harshness." See above, August 22, 1939.
158. See above, December 13, 1940.
159. See below, speech of May 4, 1941.
160. DNB text, April 6, 1941.
161. Ibid.
162. DNB text, April 12, 1941.
163. DGFP, D, XII, no. 335, pp. 538 ff.
164. Croatian nationalist movement, founded in 1929 against the Serbian hegemony; underground movement abroad after 1945. Dr. Ante Pavelich, born 1889 in Bradina/Herzegovina, died 1959 in Madrid; leader of the Ustasha movement; took over the government as "state leader" (Croat: *Poglavnik*; German: *Staatsführer*) with the help of the Axis powers on April 14, 1941; Croatian "head of state" from 1941 to 1943; emigrated to Argentina after the war; sentenced to death in his absence, the "king of Croatia" was the former duke of Spoleto, who reigned in Croatia under the name of Tomislav II from May 18, 1941, to September 12, 1943.
165. DNB text, April 15, 1941.
166. DNB text, April 18, 1941. This appeal reflected the immediacy of the campaign against Russia and the sacrifices which would then be asked of the German citizen.
167. DNB report, April 20, 1941.
168. Report in VB, No. 111, April 21, 1941.
169. DNB texts, April 20, 1941.
170. DNB text, April 22, 1941.
171. Report in VB, No. 114, April 24, 1941.
172. See above, September 6, 1938.
173. IMT, 865-PS.
174. Report in VB, No. 115, April 25, 1941.
175. DNB report, April 24, 1941.
176. DGFP, D, XII, no. 403, pp. 636 f. The code name Merkur referred to the Roman god of trade, Mercury, and, probably, to the island's importance as a trading center in antiquity.
177. Report in VB, No. 117, April 27, 1941. Illustrated report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1941.
178. Report in VB, No. 118, April 28, 1941. Illustrated report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1941.
179. DGFP, D, XII, no. 423, pp. 666 ff.
180. See above, April 5, 1941.
181. Hitler belittled members of Germany's diplomatic staff as "miserable," "unworldly," and "starry-eyed." Cf. Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*; pp. 60 f., 86, 97 f., 106 f.
182. Cf. Halder's diary, entry of April 30, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz; see below, April 30, 1941.
183. DNB report, April 29, 1941.

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184. Report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1941. The speech has been preserved on phonographic records on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (Le 5 EW 66 319–66 341).
185. Author's expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
186. Reference to the campaign in the Balkans from April 6 to 29, 1941.
187. Report in VB, No. 121, May 1, 1941.
188. Cf. letter to Mussolini; see above, March 28, 1941.
189. See below, February 28, 1945.
190. Editor's note: It was more than a "coincidence" that Hitler chose exactly the same day of the year, June 22, as Napoleon had chosen for his attack on Russia in 1812. The striking series of parallels in the rise of the dictators, their internal achievements, successes, expansions, and the like, continued in a fateful way. Although both warlords reached nearly the same area (Moscow or its surroundings), the campaigns against Russia proved equally disastrous for them. The war in the east brought about a turn of the tide in their series of conquests and marked the beginning of their decline. See above, pp. 1907 f., 2092 ff. and below, June 22, 1941. See below, Appendix, Index "Napoleon."
191. See below, February 28, 1945.
192. See below, third secret directive of May 9, 1941. The code name Isabella was chosen in reference to the Spanish queen, Isabella of Castile (1451–1504).
193. Verbatim reproduction of these three top-secret *Chefsachen* (affairs of the chief) in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp 212 ff. Cf. also IMT, 877-PS.
194. Report in VB, No. 122, May 2, 1941.
195. DNB text, May 4, 1941.
196. See above, speech of July 19, 1940.
197. Reference to Mustafa Kemal Pasha Atatürk, who was, however, not as great a friend of Germany as Hitler assumed. See below, August 2, 1944.
198. Edward Wood, Lord Halifax, born 1881; British foreign minister from 1938 to 1940. From December 1940 on, Halifax was his Majesty's ambassador to Washington, in succession to Lord Lothian.
199. Reference to Churchill.
200. Further development proved clearly that "force of arms" and "time" could bend and break Germany very well.
201. Reports in VB, Nos. 128 and 131, May 8 and 11, 1941.
202. Hess's first attempted escape to Great Britain in December, 1940, had failed. After another try on January 10, 1941, Hess had returned so late to his quarters that his adjutant, Karl-Heinz Pintsch, had prematurely opened an envelope containing instructions by Hess on how to proceed in the event that he should be absent for an extended period. So Pintsch knew of Hess's intentions well before the final escape.
203. The Messerschmidt Works produced this two-engined fighter plane.
204. A number of the men had joined the military. Fritz Thyssen had fled to Switzerland on September 2, 1939. The Gestapo later arrested him, when France fell into German hands in 1940. See above, p. 59.

205. The head of the Berlin municipal police force, SA Obergeruppenführer Graf von Helldorff, became involved with the resistance movement inside Germany. Arrested in connection with the events of July 20, 1944, the Volksgerichtshof passed a death sentence after a mock trial. A most unusual, albeit revealing, verbal exchange took place during the trial between the court's infamous president and the alleged conspirator. Well-known for his lack of refinement, the notorious Roland Freisler hurled accusation upon accusation, and insult upon insult, at von Helldorff. Animated, the judge finally cried out that the count had become a traitor to the beloved Führer of the German Volk. In a courageously candid manner, von Helldorff retorted: "Why the theatrics? Every single one of us [old party comrades] must try to jump from the sinking ship somehow. And you yourself, you know this only too well!" (*Was soll das Theater? Jeder von uns muss irgendwie abzuspringen versuchen. Und du selbst, Du weißt es ganz genau!*). Stunned, Freisler was at a loss for words and refrained from further cross-examination.
206. Hess began preparing his escape in August 1940, shortly after Hitler had revealed his plans to attack Russia.
207. Wolf Rudiger Hess, called "Buz"; born on November 18, 1937. The family's home was located at Hardhauser Strasse No. 48 in the Munich suburb of Harlaching. The house was destroyed during the war, and the family later sold the property to three separate buyers.
208. Expression coined by Churchill. See above, broadcast of November 12, 1939.
209. Once Hess's escape had become public, his wife categorically denied any knowledge of her husband's plans. Having heard that he departed by plane, she initially assumed that he was going to France to confer with Pétain. Despite the ignorance she professed, this statement revealed that the couple had discussed a possible escape. Since the southern part of France was not occupied, it may have played a role in their considerations. Cf. Ilse Hess, *England-Nürnberg-Spandau: Ein Schicksal in Briefen* (Leoni am Starnberger See, 1957), p. 9.
210. Later, Hess commented on this possibility: "I might as well have taken myself into protective custody." Ilse Hess, p. 42.
211. See above, p. 458. See also above, 1934, note 92.
212. A report on the flight by Hess himself is published in Ilse Hess, pp. 31 ff. His route led him from Augsburg first to Mainz, then to Koblenz, from there to Cologne, on to Amsterdam, and finally brought him to the Channel.
213. British fighter plane.
214. The duke of Hamilton was a regular officer serving with the Royal Air Force. He had attended the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin and had become acquainted with Hess on the occasion.
215. Hess landed in the vicinity of Eaglesham at a distance of approximately twelve miles from Dungavel.
216. The surname Horn was the maiden name of Hess's wife.

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217. For the original report by the duke of Hamilton on the talk with Hess on May 11, 1941. Cf. IMT, 117-M, 118-M, 119-M. For Lord Simon's report on his interview with Hess on June 9, 1941, see Ilse Hess, pp. 9 f.
218. The English were naturally cautious in their approach to Hess, wary that his escape was staged by German intelligence to gain information on Britain's air defense. In Germany, however, a deserter from the enemy's armed forces could normally expect a warm welcome, all the more so if the person was a prominent, well-known public figure. One example of this was the arrival of the son of the British secretary of state for India and Burma, Leopold Stennet Amery, who crossed the Channel allegedly wishing to fight for Germany against Britain (!). German officials totally believed this claim, enthusiastically welcomed Amery as a hero and immediately appointed him to a post in the propaganda ministry's broadcasting department.
219. In 1946, the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg found Hess guilty of the charges brought against him (counts 1 and 6): conspiracy to lead a war of aggression and crimes against peace. The court sentenced Hess to life imprisonment, a sentence which was relatively severe in comparison with the gravity of the crimes of other defendants and the sentencing in their cases. But had his third attempt to flee Germany not succeeded, Hess would undoubtedly have received a death sentence. He would have shared the fate of several of his codefendants, who were executed after the trial. More fortunate than they, however, Hess was transferred to the maximum-security military prison at Spandau, where he committed a somewhat mysterious suicide in 1987.
220. Cf. James Leasor, "Das Geheimnis des Rudolf-Hess-Fluges," in *Revue*, No. 41 (1961), p. 67.
221. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 350.
222. Report by Heinz Linge in "Kronzeuge Linge," in *Revue*, Series XII (1955-56). A number of versions exist of the sequence of events at the Berghof that day, in particular of the presentation of Hess's letter to Hitler. For a recapitulation by Hitler himself, cf. Halder's diary entry, see below, 1941, note 240. For reports by other prominent persons, see the deputy Reich press chief Lorenz's summation in Picker, p. 137. For Pintsch's recollections, see *Revue*, Nos. 39 and 40 (1961). These sources were not quoted in this context, however, since they contain numerous discrepancies concerning the sequence of events and other obviously mistaken notions. To the author, Linge's description of the events appears to be the most accurate and reliable one.
223. During a speech before Kreisleiters at the Ordensburg Vogelsang on April 29, 1937, Hitler stated: "Life teaches you: anything you can talk about, you should not write down. I always get anxious when one of these gentlemen comes up to me and says: 'I have a complaint to make, I have received this letter.' When two men meet face to face something of the sort would never happen, but how easily is it done in writing! He paces the room, dictates to his stenographer, and then he

- flares up! It's great for appearance' sake, too!" Record of the speech on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (F 2a/EW 67 207-67 245).
224. "In the name of the Luftwaffe, " Udet reassured Hitler that it was absolutely impossible for Hess to reach his destination. He had only minimal experience flying such a complicated plane, he had no assistance in navigation, and he was certain to crash into the sea sooner or later, having lost his orientation completely. Even if by some miracle he should make it to the British Isles and into British airspace, he would no doubt be shot down by Great Britain's antiaircraft defense. Cf. Ilse Hess, p. 130.
225. Cf. Schmidt, p. 549.
226. The script of the broadcast was subsequently published and the *Völkischer Beobachter* carried the sensationalist headline "Rudolf Hess—victim of accident." Report in VB, No. 133, May 13, 1941.
227. Cf. also Hitler's statements in the case of Strasser and after the Röhm Purge. For Strasser, see above, December 7 ff., 1932. For Röhm, see above, speech of July 13, 1934.
228. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 358.
229. See above, Vol. I, Introduction, note 101.
230. Albrecht Haushofer was initially imprisoned, then released after some time. After the events of July 20, 1944, he was again arrested. Shortly before Russian troops took Berlin in late April 1945, Haushofer was shot in prison.
231. Aside from the claim that her husband had left to see Pétain, the arguments of Hess's wife were clever. In any event, she was not arrested, although she was placed under supervision and suffered financially. With the assistance of the Swiss ambassador in London, she was able to exchange letters with her husband from January 1942 on. On the topic of Pétain, see above, note 209.
232. Report on von Ribbentrop's stay in Rome in Schmidt, p. 549. Cf. also Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 351
233. Göring had coined this phrase because of the monotony of von Ribbentrop's reiteration of Hitler's arguments. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 351.
234. Ibid.
235. Following the Röhm Purge, Hitler had proceeded in a similar manner. He himself contrived and published the most varied eyewitness accounts, proclamations, and official statements, including a NSDAP press release in order to rationalize the slayings. See above, June 30 ff., 1934.
236. In VB, No. 134, May 14, 1941.
237. The assumption, however, was that Hess had entered into relations with the English at a prior date and that he had done so without Hitler's knowledge. This is highly unlikely. As early as 1934, Hitler had explicitly forbidden his men to establish contacts with foreign statesmen, unless he was informed about it. Regardless of the contents of the talks with foreign diplomats, he threatened to shoot any man

- observed acting in defiance of this rule, even if this man merely discussed collecting old coins or a similarly innocent subject with the foreign guest. See above, p. 472, and 1934, note 134.
238. Hitler had soon regretted having named Hess his deputy in a decree dated April 27, 1933. See above, p. 309. In an aside to his photographer, Hoffmann, Hitler summed up his feelings on the topic: "There can be no deputy for a man like me." See above, 1933, note 179.
239. NSK text, May 12, 1941. Hitler rationalized Bormann's appointment in a conversation with his photographer: "Don't misunderstand me, Hoffmann. I need Bormann to win this war. All others have failed to carry out my orders to their full extent—Bormann never!" See "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 9, in *Münchener Illustrierte*.
240. Cf. Halder's diary, entry of May 15, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. In several crucial points, Hitler's explanation did not correspond to the truth. For one, he had not received a "package with documents" and then "put it aside" on May 10, 1941. Hess's letter reached Hitler only the next day (May 11) and Hitler had immediately opened and read it. Secondly, Göring and Udet had not maintained that Hess's "arrival at destination [was] likely." Instead, they had attempted to allay Hitler's fears by insisting that it was absolutely impossible for Hess to get as far as Scotland. Only upon these reassurances, Hitler had risked disseminating the information that Hess had become the "victim of an accident" in which he had sustained fatal injuries.
241. In VB, No. 134, May 14, 1941.
242. Returning to his estate from a stay in Rome, Schmidt was greeted by his gardener with the following words: "Were you aware that we are being governed by madmen?" Cf. Schmidt, pp. 594 f. Göring scolded Professor Messerschmidt for allowing Hess to fly a Me 110: "Did you not realize that the man was obviously insane?" Messerschmidt retorted: "How was I to know that a madman could occupy such a high position in the Third Reich? It was you who should have persuaded him to step down, Herr Reichsmarschall!" Cf. Dena/Reuters interview, May 11, 1947, reproduced in Ilse Hess, pp. 14 f. Humorists in the streets had their own interpretation of the incident: "For years they have been singing: 'For we are going to England' [chorus of the popular tune *Denn wir fahren gegen Engelland*]. Now one of them has finally gone, and they declare him a madman!" See above, 1940, note 154. Others jokingly folded their thumbs inward when extending their arms in the "German salute." If someone asked them the significance of this odd behavior, the reply was invariably: "One's gone already!"
243. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 477.
244. Cf. Picker, pp. 142 f.
245. DNB note, May 13, 1941.
246. This measure was made public on May 19, 1941. Hitler's gesture was connected to the anticipated participation of a small French contingent,

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- dressed in German uniforms, in the campaign against Russia. See below, August 29, 1941.
247. DNB report, May 14, 1941.
248. In VB, No. 136, May 16, 1941.
249. DGFP, D, XII, no. 536, pp. 845 ff.
250. This dilemma became apparent in the course of the British airborne operation at the city of Arnhem in 1944. See below, September 17, 1944.
251. A casual conversation on May 8, 1942, revealed that Hitler himself realized, although only in retrospect, how senseless the entire undertaking (Crete) had been in the context of his plan for territorial conquest in the east. At a dinner that day, Hitler reflected that a German military base on the island would necessitate forming a special German fleet to patrol the Mediterranean. In all likelihood, this would provoke constant tensions with Turkey, not to mention Britain, and he thus wisely refrained from doing so. All the needless bloodshed and senseless suffering of German soldiers in taking Crete led to no more than the following sarcastic remark by Hitler: "The only means of benefiting from this foray would have been to establish a *Kraft durch Freude* resort on the island." Cf. Picker, p. 79.
252. Report in VB, No. 143, May 23, 1941.
253. DGFP, D, XII, no. 543, pp. 862 ff.
254. See above, February 1, 1939.
255. For the revolt in Iraq and its suppression, see Herbert von Moos, *Das grosse Weltgeschehen*, Vol. II (Bern, 1941), pp 193–200. According to von Moos, German and Italian planes had arrived in Iraq as early as May 15.
256. While Turkish and German forces succeeded in reaching the Suez Canal, British troops repelled their attack in late 1916.
257. Henri Dentz, born 1872 in Reims; died December 13, 1945, while imprisoned at Fresnes in the vicinity of Paris; French high commissioner in the years 1940 and 1941. The French resistance's activities in Syria were apparently carried out more for appearance's sake and in order to prevent Hitler from claiming the unoccupied remainder of France. See below, December 10, 1940, directive on Operation Attila.
258. The ship had been launched on April 1, 1939, and it began service in 1941. Officially it had a tonnage of 35, 000 tons, but in reality it displaced over 41, 700 tons.
259. See above, January 27, 1940.
260. The British battle cruiser *Hood* had a tonnage of 42, 100 tons and, when it was launched in 1918, it was the world's biggest ship. It carried eight guns of 38.1 cm (15 inch) caliber, twelve of 14 cm, and eight of 10.2 cm.
261. Hitler was greatly enamored of the stringent honor code of the naval officers. On April 29, 1945, he even appointed a member of the navy, Grand Admiral Dönitz, as his successor. Hitler hoped that Dönitz, like Admiral Lütjens aboard the *Bismarck*, would have all of Germany shot to pieces rather than capitulate. It is interesting to note that Lütjens was no Nazi fanatic, as he has sometimes been portrayed, as in the movie *Sink the Bismarck*, and in fact had a Jewish grandmother.

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- 262. The battle of the Skagerrak took place on May 31, 1916. For further “coincidental” parallels with World War I, see also below.
- 263. See below, 1942, note 77.
- 264. Report in VB, No. 149, May 29, 1941.
- 265. RGBI, 1941, I, p. 296.
- 266. Ibid., p. 295.
- 267. VB, No. 151, May 31, 1941.
- 268. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 359 f.
- 269. VB, No. 154, June 3, 1941. Report on the talk in Schmidt, p. 550. See also Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 360 f.
- 270. Talks between Hitler and Antonescu took place on June 12, 1941, in Munich. See below, June 12, 1941.
- 271. William II, born January 27, 1859 in Potsdam; German emperor and king of Prussia from 1888 until 1918; grandson of Queen Victoria of Great Britain through her eldest child, the Empress Victoria.
- 272. Report in VB, No. 156, June 5, 1941.
- 273. Report in VB, No. 161, June 10, 1941.
- 274. DNB text, June 6, 1941.
- 275. Report in VB, No. 159, June 8, 1941.
- 276. VB, No. 164, June 13, 1941. Report on the conversation in Schmidt, p. 550.
- 277. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 366 f.
- 278. DNB note, June 17, 1941.
- 279. Report in VB, No. 169, June 18, 1941.
- 280. Verbatim content in RGBI, 1941, II, p. 261.
- 281. DNB text, June 19, 1941.
- 282. DNB note, June 20, 1941.
- 283. Report in VB, No. 171, June 23, 1941.
- 284. VB, No. 174, June 23, 1941.
- 285. See above, 1941, Major Events in Summary.
- 286. See above, speech of April 29, 1941.
- 287. Speaking before the General Council of the German Economy in the autumn of 1933, Hitler gave his own interpretation of Bolshevism: “This code of regression to the primitive state leads to a cowardly, anxious acquiescence and thus presents a tremendous threat to mankind.” See above, p. 359.
- 288. On this subject, Hitler had stated the following:
“Hence we have determined to enter into a pact which will preclude the use of force between us for all time.” See above, speech of September 1, 1939.
“Once before already, these two peoples engaged each other in war and near-fatal bloodletting. Neither of us profited from this, and now we have resolved not to do the gentlemen in London and Paris this favor a second time.” See above, speech of November 8, 1939.
“Any attempt on the part of the British and French plutocracies to raise renewed controversy between us will inevitably fail as we realize their true intentions.” See above, January 30, 1940.

- “The hope of sparking a great war between Russia and Germany as in 1914, this hope has pitifully failed its authors. Once I set out on a path, I follow this path to the end. The hope that this might change tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, this hope is in vain!” See above, speech of February 24, 1940.
289. DNB text, June 22, 1941.
290. See above, 1939, note 1014.
291. Reference to the secret additional protocol. See above, August 23, 1939.
292. Hitler failed to reveal that, in the autumn of 1939, Lithuania had already been bartered for lands stretching from eastern Poland to the Bug. See above, September 27 and 28, 1939. Even after the annexation of Lithuania, as late as July 19, 1940, Hitler had declared: “Germany has not stepped outside its sphere of interest, and neither has Russia.” See above, July 19, 1940.
293. This rationale was a figment of Hitler’s imagination. Ever since September 3, 1939, Britain had resolved to destroy Hitler under any circumstances and not to accept any of his “proposals.”
294. Apparently, Hitler was so bold as to insist that it had been his choice not to “radically” destroy England in September 1940. He actually claimed that his sense of responsibility and his desire to save Europe from the claws of Bolshevism had inspired this decision on his part.
295. Hitler had not issued this guarantee “with a heavy heart,” but had done so with an eye to the occupation of Romania’s oil fields for which he needed a fairly plausible pretext.
296. Cf. talks between Hitler and Molotov. See above, November 12 and 13, 1940. Of course, Hitler failed to point out here that, on this occasion, he himself had proposed that Molotov take part in the redistribution of the spoils from the “dissolution of the British Empire.”
297. Apparently, Hitler once more enjoyed portraying himself as the protector and savior of European civilization and its culture.
298. Reference to an insignificant attempted putsch against Antonescu by members of the “Iron Guard” (later called the “Romanian Legion”). Antonescu himself had come from the ranks of the Romanian army.
299. Hitler did not reveal, however, the contents of these documents nor their whereabouts.
300. Actually, Hitler had advised Matsuoka to promote tensions, not detente, with Russia. See above, March 21, 1941.
301. No documentary evidence of such a “border incident” exists. It is highly probable that Hitler invented it for rhetorical purposes.
302. Reference to General Dietl.
303. DNB text, June 22, 1941.
304. Cf. Aretz, pp. 383 f.
305. The 1807 Peace of Tilsit concluded the first Napoleonic war between Russia and France, a war Napoleon called the “Polish War.”
306. See below, Index, Napoleon.
307. The Hungarians had also told Hitler that the offensive could start a week earlier, on June 15. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 352.

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308. Hitler had a penchant for launching his campaigns on either a Saturday or a Sunday. See above, p.458, and 1934, note 92.
309. See above, pp. 1907 f. and 2092 ff.
310. When Napoleon addressed Tsar Alexander in a letter dated July 1, 1812, in an effort to rationalize his behavior, he obviously felt that he was in the wrong although this did not prevent him from contriving a thinly disguised excuse: "Before crossing the Neman (Niemen) River, I would assuredly have sent Your Majesty word of my undertaking through my adjutant, as I always do prior to engaging in battle, had not those whom you commissioned to fight on your behalf professed such eagerness for battle, despite their past experiences. Moreover, they avowed such displeasure at the notion of sending the count of Narbonne as envoy to you that, in light of the influence they exercise, I had to fear his nonaccreditation and therefore I refrained from so doing." Aretz, pp. 387 f. For other parallels, see also above, pp. 1907 f., 2092 ff., and below, Index, "Napoleon."
311. Russian border patrols recorded nearly eighty violations of their airspace by German aircraft in the months of March and April 1941. A German reconnaissance plane had to make an emergency landing on April 15, 1941, at Rovno. It carried film equipment. Cf. note of protest by the Soviet government of April 22, 1941, in Epstein and Carroll, p. 367.
312. Report in Schmidt, p. 550.
313. According to Molotov, this occurred at 5:30 a.m. Moscow time, that is, 4:30 Central European Time.
314. See above, p. 958.
315. Description of the events in Moscow on June 21 and 22, 1941, in Epstein and Carroll, pp. 389 ff.
316. DGFP, D, XII, no. 662, pp. 1063 ff.
317. Upon his return, Schulenburg joined the resistance movement in Germany. He was apprehended in connection with the events of July 20, 1944. The Gestapo killed him on November 10, 1944.
318. In von Moos, Vol. II, p. 301.
319. DGFP, D, XII, no. 660, pp. 1066 ff.
320. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 369
321. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
322. In the course of the preceding months, Hitler had ridiculed the British for asking third powers for military support, a quest he had labeled "going begging door to door worldwide." Now he was forced to accept assistance from states he had previously scorned: the Finns, the Romanians, the Slovaks, the despised Hungarians, the Italians, the Spanish, the Danes, the Dutch, the Norwegians, and even the French.
323. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 372 f.
324. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 705. "In Europe there will be only two allies for Germany in the foreseeable future: England and Italy." See above, pp. 51 and 53.

325. Hitler's knowledge of history was obviously not thorough enough for him to realize that comparing his ventures to the crusades of the Middle Ages was not necessarily advantageous to his cause. Most of these offensives in the east had miserably failed.
326. Hitler's rhetoric had made a great impression on the aging von Papen. On June 22, 1941, he called on the Turkish foreign minister and eagerly attempted to convince Saracoglu that the time had come to approach the British ambassador in Ankara. Von Papen sincerely believed that all disputes to this date could still be settled and that it was high time the world stood together to oppose Bolshevism. Cf. von Papen, p. 544.
327. Nearly two years earlier, Hitler had triumphantly proclaimed: "For the first time in sixty-seven years, it must be made clear that we do not have a two-front war to wage. That which has been desired since 1870, and considered as impossible of achievement, has come to pass. For the first time in history, we have to fight on only one front." See above, p. 1886, speech of November 23, 1939; see also 1939, note 1246.
328. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, Vol. VI, pp. 6428–6431.
329. Hitler had chosen not to inform the German ambassador of his intentions to attack Russia. Graf von der Schulenburg awoke to a great surprise on the morning of June 22, 1941.
330. Cf. Hitler's plans for a campaign through Afghanistan into India. See above, February 17, 1941.
331. It appears as though Churchill was familiar with Hitler's phrase: "When Barbarossa takes off, the world will hold its breath and keep still." See above, February 3, 1941. See also above, note 11.
332. Reference to the First World War.
333. On the British strategy in this context, see above, pp. 1907 f.
334. Within the embassy, von Ribbentrop and others spoke against Hitler's theory and Mrs. Mollier, the wife of the German press attaché, said that Hitler was a *Dummkopf* (blockhead). Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 379.
335. DNB text, June 22, 1941.
336. Report in VB, No. 175, June 22, 1941.
337. VB, No. 177, June 26, 1941
338. Hungary declared war officially on June 27, 1941.
339. In 1812, Britain had demanded that the Russian fleet be handed over as a guarantee that Russia would not enter into a separate peace with Napoleon once more, as it had done in the Peace of Tilsit in 1807. As a result, eighteen ships of the line and twelve frigates were moved from Kronstadt and Arkhangelsk to British harbors in 1812. Cf. Heinrich Beitzke, *Geschichte des russischen Krieges im Jahre 1812* (Leipzig, 1856–1862), p. 125.
Only after the British demand had been satisfied, did the British grant Russia three million pounds sterling in subsidies. Russia and Britain entered into a defensive alliance. There is no official record of similar British security demands in 1941. Nevertheless, Article II of the military pact entered into by Russia and Britain on July 12, 1941, stipulates:

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- “Each of the parties agrees neither to enter into direct negotiations with Germany, nor to conclude cease-fire agreements nor peace treaties without the explicit consent of the other party to this agreement.” Cf. von Moos, Vol. II, pp. 302 f.
- On August 25, 1941, Britain and Russia proceeded to occupy Iran in an effort to establish a land link between their spheres of influence.
340. Report in VB, No. 178, June 27, 1941.
341. See above, June 22, 1941.
342. On this occasion, the notorious *Russia Fanfare* was played for the first time, a tune that was actually part of a Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody*. In the course of the following years, this melody preceded radio broadcasts on actual or contrived military successes. Usually these special reports were aired on a Sunday in an effort to boost morale. The related *England Fanfare* was always played immediately before public announcements of achievements connected with the war at sea. The constant repetition of the same tune slowly but surely got on the nerves of even the most attentive listener. Soon no one took them seriously, and a popular alliteration changed the annoying *Sondermeldungen* (“special reports”) to *Sonntagsmeldungen* (“Sunday reports”).
343. Report in VB, No. 182, July 1, 1941. Illustrated report in VB, No. 184, July 3, 1941.
344. “Assessment of development of Barbarossa by Ob. d. H. [commander in chief of the army]: expected severe frontier battles, duration up to four weeks. In the further course, only weak resistance to be expected.” See above, April 30, 1941.
345. For a summary of Hitler’s statements on this topic during the months February to April, see above, February 28, 1941.
346. For Hitler’s instructions on preparing for a military campaign against India, see above, February 17, 1941.
347. Conferring with General Paulus in 1942, Hitler predicted: “If I do not get the oil fields of Maikop and Grozny, then I will have to liquidate this war.” (Cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. VII, p. 290.) Although Hitler failed to secure the territory, he could no longer move himself to “liquidate this war.”
348. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
349. See above, speech of April 29, 1941.
350. Cf. Beitzke, pp. 257, 341, and 372.
351. The Russians’ extraordinary gift for the study of ballistics is also the underlying cause for the Soviet Union’s remarkable and internationally acclaimed success in launching rockets into space as evidenced in the 1957 Sputnik project and the various Lunik experiments.
352. The Führer headquarters Wolfsschanze (Wolf’s Lair) was situated in a dense pine forest at a distance of fourteen kilometers from Rastenburg. The Garlitz train station provided convenient access to the area. Numerous guard-towers and barracks, a few of them sturdy stone structures, constituted the headquarters. A cluster of eight fortified bunkers built of concrete, and with walls several meters thick, formed a

focal point in the camp's center. Most of the offices located inside profited from daylight while the bedrooms usually were dreary and narrow with moist walls. Hitler's spacious office doubled as a conference room. The dining room had light-colored wood paneling, and in its center stood a table seating the twenty members of Hitler's entourage, who served as a captive audience for what became known as "Hitler's table talk." Occasionally this room doubled as a mess for the officers. For a detailed description of the sinister atmosphere at the site, see Picker, pp. 33 ff. See also Schmidt, pp 555 ff.

Before the Nuremberg court, Colonel General Jodl referred to the Wolfsschanze headquarters as "a cross between a cloister and a concentration camp." (Cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XV, p. 283).

The Wolfsschanze and Hitler's conditions of life there reminded Goebbels too of a concentration camp. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 130. In the early days of his political activities, Hitler had chosen the code name "Wolf," a boyhood nickname derived from his Christian name Adolf signifying "big wolf," a symbol of great strength. The name *Wolfsschanze* means "wolf's lair"; the name of the Führer headquarters *Werwolf*—in Vinnitsa (the Ukraine)—means "werewolf."

353. See above, May 9, 1940.

354. In the period from July 17, 1941, to March 11, 1942, Ministerial Counselor Heim summarized these discussions in the form of a protocol written in direct speech. The civil servant Henry Picker recorded Hitler's statements in indirect speech from March 21 until August 2, 1942; cf. Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942* (Bonn, 1951); rev. ed. by Percy Ernst Schramm (Stuttgart, 1953).

355. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 85.

356. Cf. Picker, p. 80.

357. On July 22, 1942, Hitler stated in a dinner conversation: "The driving force today is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as the Communist Party of Germany was in the times of struggle; the capitalist states are playing only a peripheral role as the burgher parties did back then." Cf. Picker, pp. 187 and 300.

358. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 142, and 165.

359. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

360. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

361. *Ibid.*, pp 123–126.

362. *Ibid.*, pp. 118 f.

363. *Ibid.*, pp. 397 f.

364. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

365. For example, Picker recorded how Hitler recalled von Hindenburg's attitude during the military reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936. However, von Hindenburg was already dead by then. *Ibid.*, p. 432.

366. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

367. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

368. *Ibid.*, pp. 182 and 147.

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369. Report on the scene by Heinz Linge in "Kronzeuge Linge," in *Revue*, Series IV (1955–1956).
370. DNB report, July 12, 1941.
371. In a proclamation in June 1940, Hitler had pronounced the battle in the Artois region (that is, the Second Battle of Sedan) in Belgium to be "the greatest battle of all time." See above, June 5, 1940.
372. Reproduction of Directive No. 32b in Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 136 ff.
373. VB, No. 198, July 17, 1941.
374. Report in VB, No. 199, July 18, 1941.
375. Report in VB, No. 200, July 19, 1941.
376. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 128, pp. 181 ff.
377. Report in VB, No. 203, July 22, 1941.
378. Report in VB, No. 208, July 27, 1941.
379. VB, No. 215, August 3, 1941.
380. Report in VB, No. 211, July 30, 1941.
381. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 164, pp. 235 ff.
382. Illustrated report in VB, No. 213, August 1, 1941.
383. Religion played a role of great importance in Russia's defense against the onslaught of both Napoleon's and Hitler's troops. In 1812, military chaplains had celebrated the Orthodox liturgy prior to military engagements and had greatly boosted morale among the fighting men (cf. Beitzke, pp. 123 and 364). In the years 1942 to 1945, military chaplains served in the Red Army also, providing bibles and crosses to the troops, and on occasion celebrating the liturgy prior to battle. Cf. series of articles on the "Suvorov Pause" in *Neue Zeitung, Amerikanische Zeitung für Deutschland* (1946). In 1812, the Moscow Metropolitan Platoon proclaimed: "If this odious Goliath approaches, then the Russian David's sling—faith—shall shatter his overbearing, blood-drenched visage."
The Metropolitan Anany used a similar wording in his sermons a hundred thirty years later.
384. DNB text and illustrated reports, August 6, 1941.
385. DNB text, August 6, 1941.
386. Cf. Schmidt, p. 557.
387. DNB note, August 10, 1941.
388. Report in VB, No. 225, August 13, 1941.
389. Supplement to Directive No. 34, *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 148 ff.
390. The text of the Atlantic Charter read:
The President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.
First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;
Second, they desire to seek no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity; *Fifth*, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic adjustment and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving people the crushing burden of armaments.

391. Cf. Führer Directive of August 21, 1941, in Halder's diary, entry of August 22, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
392. Report on this meeting in Schmidt, pp 557 ff. Also published in VB, No. 243, August 31, 1941. Cf. further Baur, pp. 207 ff.
393. Shah Reza Khan Pahlavi, born 1877; died 1944 on Saint Helena; as an army officer, he seized power in 1921 and was proclaimed Shah of Iran in 1925; during World War II, Britain and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were nervous about his German sympathies and occupied Iran from 1941 to 1946; this compelled him to abdicate the throne on September 15, 1941, in favor of his son. Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (born 1919 in Teheran, died 1980 in Cairo); he took power in 1956 with United States support and was deposed in the Islamic revolution of 1979.
394. Cf. DNB wording, August 30, 1941.
395. DNB text, August 29, 1941.
396. Ciano was afflicted with a throat disorder during the months of July to September 1941.
397. VB, No. 243, August 31, 1941.
398. Report in VB, No. 245, September 1, 1941.
399. Report in VB, No. 247, September 2, 1941.

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- 400. Report in VB, No. 247, September 4, 1941.
- 401. Ibid.
- 402. Report in VB, No. 248, September 5, 1941.
- 403. Report in VB, No. 250, September 7, 1941.
- 404. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 238, pp. 456 ff.
- 405. DNB text, September 11, 1941.
- 406. DNB note, September 11, 1941. Count Mayalde had served as Franco's chief of police in 1940.
- 407. VB, No. 256, September 13, 1941.
- 408. Ibid.
- 409. Report in VB, No. 259, September 16, 1941.
- 410. See above, speech of June 22, 1941.
- 411. Hitler repeatedly used this expression. See below, speech of October 3, 1941. See also below, speech of November 8, 1941.
- 412. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 349, pp. 549 ff. Cf. also article "Die Kämpfe im hohen Norden" in von Moos, Vol. II, pp 350 ff.
- 413. Report in VB, No. 267, September 24, 1941. Colonel General Ritter von Schobert, born 1881 in Würzburg; commander in chief of the forces stationed in southern Bavaria from 1938 to 1939. A headquarters' report, dated September 14, 1941, claimed he had been killed in action, "fighting on the eastern front." However, the war-correspondent A. Hass rendered a different account of his death (cf. DNB text, September 23, 1941). According to the information he obtained, Ritter von Schobert was the victim of a "plane crash" in which his pilot, Corporal Suwalek, also died. Propaganda claimed that Soviet parachutists had murdered Ritter von Schobert along with several members of his staff. Cf. von Moos, Vol. II, p. 315.
- 414. VB, No. 267, September 24, 1941. In a proclamation, dated June 5, 1940, and addressed "to the German Volk," Hitler had called the battle in Artois "the greatest battle of all time." In a subsequent proclamation issued to the soldiers serving along the western front, he referred to the clash of forces there as "the greatest battle in world history." See above, proclamations of June 5, 1940.
A July 10, 1941, report by headquarters termed the battle surrounding Belostok (Bialystok) and Minsk "the greatest battle in world history as far as material investment and scope are concerned." See above, July 10, 1941.
- 415. See above, Directive No. 35 of September 6, 1941.
- 416. Report on this conference in Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Offiziere gegen Hitler* (Zurich, 1946), pp. 60 f.
- 417. See below, proclamation of October 2, 1941.
- 418. In 1938, it had been Hitler's original intention to launch the offensive against Czechoslovakia on October 2, that is, on the same date. See above, October 3, 1938.
Remarkably, Napoleon's generals had also opposed opening a campaign against Moscow just before the onset of winter. Quietly, they had hoped that the conquest of Smolensk would appease the emperor

sufficiently and that he would become reasonable, postpone further operations until the spring, and allow the troops to set up winter quarters. Frustrated by the immense losses suffered in a battle along the Stragan creek east of Smolensk, Napoleon became ever more insistent upon pushing onward to Moscow. General Rapp allowed himself to point out that troop movements on this scale represented a most dangerous undertaking in the eyes of the army's leadership. Napoleon retorted: "The wine has been poured out; now it must be drunk!" Cf. Beitzke, p. 189.

Over a century later, Hitler would follow Napoleon's path to disaster. Like the German dictator, Napoleon believed his forces at Smolensk strong enough to take Moscow. Both thought that the conquest of Moscow would be easy and that it would allow them to maintain large standing armies in the north along the Dvina River, and in the south around Volhynia. Hitler's speech at the temporary German headquarters at Borisov allowed for many historical parallels to his predecessor. Borisov had played a role in Napoleon's ignominious retreat when a few kilometers to the north, around Studienka, Napoleon's campaign had ended in disaster. With a timely escape across the Brezina River, Napoleon saved his own life and those of his entourage while leaving behind large contingents of his army to face chaos, confusion, and death. For the other parallels between Hitler and Napoleon, see also below, Appendix, Indices "Napoleon" and "coincidences."

- 419. VB, No. 271, September 28, 1941.
- 420. RGBl, 1941, I, p. 591.
- 421. Born 1883 in Würzburg, Gottfried Feder had published a "Manifest zur Brechung der Zinsknechtschaft" (Manifesto on Liberation from Interest-Payment Slavery). Later, he had edited the NSDAP party program. While he had been a close friend of Gregor Strasser, he always remained loyal to Hitler. In return, he had been assigned a post as state secretary in the Reich ministry of economics in 1933, where he maintained a low profile. He was given a professional chair in 1936 and from this time on taught at the Technical University in Charlottenburg.
- 422. On the topic of Hitler's penchant for pin-on medals, see above, 1939, notes 411 f. This German Cross consisted of an eight-spoke cross of a dark gray color with silver lining. It had a diameter of 65 mm and bore either a silver or gold laurel wreath, depending on the award class. A black swastika with a silver frame was set against a light gray background. The medal was to be worn on the right side of the chest. Ordinance dated September 28, 1941, in RGBl, 1941, I, p. 593. The establishment of this award was connected with the imminent "final offensive" against Moscow. At the same time, Hitler founded the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross with Swords and Diamonds, while he prohibited the simultaneous award of the War Service Medal of both classes, that is, with or without swords. RGBl, 1941, I, p. 613.

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423. Despite the repeated claims of headquarters that Leningrad was surrounded, the German army never entirely succeeded in isolating the city or cutting its rail connections to the east for any significant length of time. In the winter months of late 1941 and early 1942, Red Army engineers constructed a railroad track across the frozen Ladoga Lake. Moreover, the vastly superior Soviet fleet prevented German reinforcements from landing at the Kronstadt harbor. Cf. chapter entitled "Die Kämpfe im Leningrader Sektor" in von Moos, Vol. II, pp. 330 ff.
- The wife of a physician in Leningrad, Vera Inber gave a compelling eyewitness account of the suffering and heroism of the civil population in the besieged city prior to its liberation in January 1944. Cf. Vera Inber, *Fast drei Jahre*, (Berlin, 1947).
424. War diary of the fleet.
425. See below, speech of November 8, 1941.
426. In September 1942, Hitler stated publicly:
". . . when we rush on Stalingrad and will take it—you can be assured of that!—then this amounts to nothing in their [the Englishmen's] eyes."
See below, September 30, 1942.
- As significant advances of the military had still not materialized over two months later, Hitler publicly contradicted himself: "There are only a few small pockets left. Now the others say: "then, why do they not fight more quickly?"—Because I do not want a second Verdun. I prefer to do it with very small assault parties. Time makes no difference here."
See below, November 8, 1942.
427. VB, No. 283, October 10, 1941. Napoleon issued a strikingly similar proclamation to be read to his soldiers on September 1, 1812, on the eve of what was to become one of the bloodiest combats in history, the Battle at Borodino. The French emperor realized the critical nature of this battle in his quest to free a passage to Moscow: "Soldiers! Before you lies the battle for which you have yearned so long! Victory depends on you alone. You yourselves need this victory. It will grant you abundance, good winter quarters, and a speedy return to the Fatherland. Act as you did at Austerlitz, Friedland, Vitebsk, and Smolensk, and posterity shall remember this day. They will speak of you as the one who took part in the great battle before the walls of Moscow!" (Beitzke, p. 228.) Incidentally, the cadence of the Nazi *Heil Hitler!* greeting bears striking resemblance to the Napoleonic cry *Vive l'Empereur!*
428. Up to now, Hitler had claimed that the Wehrmacht was the "most gigantic instrument of war of all time." See above, speech of April 29, 1941.
429. Here Hitler for once made allowances that, up to this point, not everything had gone according to plan and preparations had been insufficient in some instances. By October 3, his vanity had recovered and he proclaimed: "On the morning of June 22, this greatest struggle in the history of the world began. Since then, three and a half months

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- have passed. Today, I can state: everything since has gone according to plan." See below, speech of October 3, 1941.
430. Posters with a reprint of the proclamation were put up along the entire eastern front. A few weeks later, special commandos had to take down the posters, since it had become all too evident how mistaken Hitler's prophesies had been.
431. VB, No. 278, October 5, 1941. On the topic of *Nullen* ("zeroes"), see above, preface, note 19. See also below, January 30 and September 30, 1942.
432. Operations had begun thirty-six hours before and not forty-eight hours, as Hitler claimed.
433. "Sympathy" on the part of the Hungarians was a strange affair; see above, January 16, 1939. Also, as far as the Scandinavian or "Nordic" countries were concerned, Hitler had repeatedly complained about their lack of friendly feelings for the Third Reich. See above, October 16, 1939.
434. Hitler had not been serious about these so-called proposals. They served as a pretext. See above, August 30, 1939.
435. Usually Hitler was not this modest and he generally claimed that the decision in question would determine the future for "the next one thousand years." See above, proclamation of May 10, 1940. See also below, speech of November 8, 1941.
436. Hitler had not in the least remained silent "as the small Finnish people were strangled." On the contrary, he had spoken out on the occasion, displaying great appreciation of their plight which served them well, in his eyes, after Finland had maintained its distance from National Socialist Germany in the past years. See above, September 16 and December 8, 1939. See also above, March 4, 1940.
437. On two occasions in 1939, Hitler himself had referred to the Baltic states as situated within the Soviet Union's sphere of interest. See above, August 24 and September 28, 1939.
438. This entire passage was omitted in the pamphlet version of the speech published by Eher-Verlag, although the speech in its entirety had already been published in the German press earlier (on October 4, 1941). By the time the Eher pamphlet was published, these premature and obviously false prophesies had become an embarrassment to the supposedly omniscient Führer.
439. This claim was obviously dishonest, as any man involved in the military and political preparations for Barbarossa could ascertain for himself.
440. Minutes earlier, Hitler had proclaimed: "There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance, to the effect that one explains afterwards: I didn't notice that or I didn't take it seriously." Now, Hitler admitted by himself that he had "no idea," despite his later claim (see below, speech of October 3, 1941) that "everything has gone according to plan."
441. Apparently this was a reference to two reports of headquarters, dated September 19 and 22, 1941, respectively. The earlier one had claimed

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- the loss of seven hundred twenty-five Luftwaffe planes in the campaign against Russia. This figure did not correspond to the number of casualties published simultaneously by the air force, so that Hitler was forced to publish a special “explanation” of this fact three days later.
442. The remainder of this sentence was unintelligible.
443. This addition was apparently meant to recompense Germany’s farmers for missing out on the usual Thanksgiving celebrations at this time of year because of the war. Strangely enough, Hitler forgot to include “the best soldiers” in his list of Germany’s most deserving citizens.
444. DNB note, October 4, 1941.
445. VB, No. 281, October 8, 1941.
446. Report in VB, No. 285, October 12, 1941.
447. DNB note, October 9, 1941. Marshal Semën K. Timoshenko; born in 1895 as the son of a farmer in Fumanovka in Bessarabia [in Russia]; people’s commissar for defense in 1940; marshal and commander in chief of the Army Group, Center (Moscow) in 1941; he was transferred to the southern sector (the Ukraine and Sea of Azov) in October 1941; Timoshenko had originally distinguished himself in battles at Tsaritsyn (later Stalingrad) in 1918, and in Poland in 1920.
448. The double battle for Belostok (Bialystok) and Minsk constituted, according to Hitler, “the greatest battle of matériel and encirclement (*Material- und Umfassungsschlacht*) in world history.” See above, July 10, 1941. The fighting at Kiev he called “the greatest battle of annihilation (*Vernichtungsschlacht*) of all time.” See above, September 24, 1941.
449. See above, proclamation of June 24, 1940.
450. Exchange of telegrams in VB, No. 286, October 13, 1941.
451. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 395, pp. 634 ff.
452. In VB, No. 287, October 14, 1941.
453. In September of 1812, Kazan was selected as a refuge from the threatened city of Moscow. Government archives, the University, and foreigners were evacuated to Kazan.
454. DNB text, October 21, 1941.
455. In VB, No. 298, October 25, 1941.
456. DNB text, October 25, 1941.
457. Cf. Ciano’s letter dated October 26, 1941, in *Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers*, pp. 455 ff.
458. DNB texts, October 26, 1941.
459. Report in VB, No. 303, October 30, 1941.
460. Hitler thought of horses as “primeval dinosaurs.” Cf. Baur, p. 161. In 1938 and 1939, Hungarian soldiers became the unwitting butt of Hitler’s ridicule when they appeared ready for the occupation of southern Slovakia and the Carpatho-Ukraine, with horses and oxen drawing their carts and with soldiers mounted on horseback. Now the German military had to fall back upon the horse as a means of transportation, albeit a primitive one. However, this did not resolve its transportation difficulties in the winter of 1941–1942. In his diary entry of March 8, 1942, Goebbels plaintively pointed out that one corps had

reported “eighteen thousand horse casualties in February” and of these seven hundred ninety-five had simply starved. When a similar complaint was brought to the attention of Napoleon in 1812, he explained the problem as follows: “This is because horses lack patriotism. Our soldiers continue to fight well even if they do not have bread, but our horses do not perform without oats!” For further parallels with Napoleon, see below, Appendix, Indices “Napoleon” and “coincidences.”

461. According to experts, the winter of 1941 did not set in any earlier than normal, but came rather late (cf. von Moos, Vol. III, p. 165). This particular winter was no harsher than the previous one. The worst winter had been that of 1939. In December of 1939, temperatures of minus 25 degrees Celsius and below were measured for days on end in the usually mild climate of the Hunsrück and the Eifel Mountains and the temperate regions of western Germany.

While snow first fell as early as October 6 and October 7, 1941, and hampered the advance on Moscow, according to the recollections of Colonel General Guderian, the month of October two years earlier had witnessed intense snowfall on the heights of the Palatinate Forest, which at the time had been the western front. Cf. Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten* (Heidelberg, 1951), p. 223.

462. Marshal Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov (1896–1974); born in Strelkovka, served in the cavalry in the Civil War of 1918–1920; in 1941, Zhukov was promoted to the rank of general and became deputy people’s commissar for defense; stopped German advances along the middle sector of the front after the German attack on Russia; in October of 1941, he succeeded Timoshenko as commander in chief of the central sector of the front, where he decisively defeated the German Army Group von Bock in December in front of the gates of Moscow; successfully defended Moscow in 1941–1942; counterattacked at Stalingrad in 1942; in 1943, he organized the relief of Leningrad and took over the southern sector of the front along the Don River; Zhukov was placed in command of the Ukrainian front in the spring of 1944; in July of the same year, he assumed command of the first Belorussian front and succeeded in breaking through the German lines along the Don; he led his troops in a slow but steady advance to Berlin, subsequently occupying Berlin in 1945; commander of the Soviet occupation forces in Germany; from 1945 to 1946, Zhukov served as the people’s high commissar in Germany; in 1953, he became minister of defense [of the Soviet Union]; member of the Politburo in 1956.
463. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 402.
464. Anna Maria Bismarck was the wife of Count Otto von Bismarck, who was then serving as embassy counselor with the German embassy in Rome.
465. The envoy Filippo Anfuso also functioned as Ciano’s deputy.
466. General Rintelen was the German military attaché in Rome.
467. Napoleon used this phrase in August 1812. See above, 1941, note 418.

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- 468. The Bürgerbräukeller damaged by the bomb explosion of 1939 was still awaiting repairs.
- 469. Hitler stated: “ would not like to forget the point. . . that if the Jews should succeed in plunging the rest of the world into a world war, then the entire Jewish race will have played out its role in Europe.” See above, January 30, 1941.
- 470. DNB text, November 8, 1941.
- 471. See above, speech of September 19, 1939.
- 472. Reference to a coalition of parties in the Weimar Republic. Black was the color of the Center Party, red the color of the Social Democrats, and gold stood for the financial interests of the Democratic Party. Once more Hitler expounded his theory on the identical nature of politics at home and abroad.
- 473. Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich, born 1893 in Gomel; of Jewish descent; one of Stalin’s closest collaborators; deputy prime minister and member of the Politburo in 1953.
- 474. Hitler was the only one who had failed to comprehend Churchill’s motives. He had continued to hope that England would resign itself to collaboration with the Third Reich after France had fallen. Ever since September 3, 1939, however, Great Britain had resolved to accept nothing less than the unconditional surrender of Germany.
- 475. These famed “twenty-four hours earlier” were to have played a role, according to Hitler, in the case of Norway and in the offensive to the west. See above, speech of July 19, 1940.
- 476. These deliveries would soon be stopped.
- 477. The further course of the war proved that the Red Army was capable of “recovering.”
- 478. Hitler had frequently employed this phrase. In one speech, he expounded as follows:
“Politically, it is especially important that the blow against Yugoslavia be carried out with inexorable severity and that the military destruction be carried out in a lightning operation (*Blitzunternehmen*).” See above, speech of March 26, 1941.
- 479. Once before, Hitler had made similar predictions. In a December 5, 1932, remark, he argued: “The only thing that matters in this fight is who leads the last battalion on the battlefield.” See above, p. 196. This applied no more to foreign affairs than it did to domestic politics. After all, as the Wehrmacht’s last forces were being used up in the closing days of the war, the enemy still commanded several intact armies. The German people were not in the least pleased with such announcements; fighting the war down to the Wehrmacht’s “last battalion” signified a long struggle and implied the death of many family members.
- 480. On September 11, 1941, President Roosevelt cautioned Italy and Germany not to attack United States ships and threatened “active resistance” should this occur.

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481. The official version of the text contained an insertion "in certain areas" in order to preserve the ludicrous nature of Hitler's claim to omniscience.
482. Wendell Lewis Willkie, born in Elwood, Indiana, in 1892; died in New York in 1944; Republican candidate for the presidency in 1940.
483. This "last gigantic blow, " which had succeeded "beyond all measure, " would trouble Hitler for some time.
484. On May 10, 1940, Hitler announced "The battle beginning on this day [in the west] will determine the fate of the German nation for the next one thousand years." See above, proclamation of May 10, 1940. A year later, he claimed the same importance for the front in the east, albeit for a shorter period: "I came to the conviction that we must fight for a clear decision here [in the east], a decision with an impact on world history for the next one hundred years." See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
485. In VB, No. 317, November 13, 1941.
486. Report in VB, No. 319, November 15, 1941.
487. Reproduced verbatim in RGBI, 1941, I, pp. 717 f. There were numerous candidates for the chairmanship of this "German Academy, " amongst them Reichsleiter Bouhler and the head of the United Steel Workers of Düsseldorf, Privy Counselor Vögler. In 1943, Seyss-Inquart was entrusted with the post.
488. See above, decree of April 20, 1941.
489. DNB text, November 17, 1941.
490. Alfred Meyer, born in 1891; Gauleiter of Westphalia (Münster); Reich governor in Lippe (Detmold) and Schaumburg-Lippe.
491. Hinrich Lohse, born in 1896; Gauleiter and Oberpräsident of Schleswig-Holstein (Kiel).
492. Erich Koch, born in 1896; Gauleiter and Oberpräsident of East Prussia.
493. Hitler assigned Gauleiter Bürckel from the Palatinate to a post in Austria; Dr. Frank from Munich was sent to Poland; Gauleiter Terboven from Essen was placed in Norway; and the Austrian Seyss-Inquart assumed a post in the Netherlands.
494. There were plans to create a "Reichskommissariat Kaukasus" and a "Reichskommissariat Moskau."
495. Report in VB, No. 323, November 19, 1941.
496. Cf. Halder's diary, entry of November 19, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
497. In VB, No. 325, November 21, 1941.
498. Report in VB, No. 326, November 22, 1941.
499. DNB wording, November 22, 1941. Mölders had been a practicing Catholic. Among Catholic clerics in Germany, a letter allegedly authored by Mölders was circulated after his death. It contained strong language directed against the National Socialist regime. In this context, the Gestapo conducted a series of investigations and interrogations. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp 110 ff. Goebbels noted that the existence of this

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- letter was also the subject of much debate in officers' clubs, largely due to General von Mackensen's intervention.
500. Report in VB, No. 328, November 24, 1941. Born in 1861, Professor August Bier was a well-known surgeon and scholar.
501. In VB, No. 330, November 26, 1941.
502. Ibid. Professor Schmidt was the University's president.
503. Hitler ordered the German press to publish the letters under this awkward title.
504. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 411: "The Danish representative was like a fish out of water—a little old man in a morning coat who wondered why he was there but who, on the whole, was glad that he was there because things might have gone worse." Indeed, civil unrest soon erupted in Copenhagen and protest demonstrations made plain how uncomfortable the Danes were with the Anti-Comintern Pact.
505. DNB report, November 11, 1941.
506. Report in VB, No. 332, November 28, 1941.
507. DNB text, November 27, 1941.
508. Mihai Antonescu was not a relative of Marshal Ion Antonescu.
509. Report in VB, No. 332, November 28, 1941. Born in 1907, Gustav Adolf Scheel had been Reichsstudentenführer since 1932. This appointment was the third in a series aiming to introduce younger Gauleiters. The appointments of Schirach and Lauterbacher had preceded Scheel's (see above, August 7, 1940). Born in 1903, Friedrich Rainer succeeded Gauleiter Hubert Klausner, who had died.
510. Report in VB, No. 333, November 29, 1941.
511. Ibid.
512. Relevant entries in Halder's diary (on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz) for the period November 18 to December 1, 1941.
513. Cf. von Rundstedt's testimony before the court at Nuremberg in Milton Shulman, *Defeat in the West* (London, 1947, and New York, 1948), p. 68.
514. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
515. See above, p. 2150, speech of December 10, 1940.
516. See above, p. 1072, speech of March 25, 1938.
517. See above, p. 1077, speech of March 29, 1938.
518. The majority of the atrocities took place in the areas from which the army was withdrawing without Hitler's knowledge. The regions around Rostock and the Sea of Azov are textbook examples of this. In Napoleon's day also, the abandoned territories were the site of equally horrible excesses, although the deeds of the Grande Armée never reached the scale of those which Hitler's men perpetrated. In the course of its retreat from Russia in 1812, for example, those prisoners of war who had become a liability to the transport units were simply shot, in all likelihood on direct orders from Napoleon himself. Cf. Beitzke, p. 355.
519. See above, speech of November 8, 1941: "The war can last as long as it wants—but the last battalion on the battlefield will be a German one!"

520. Halder's diary, entry of November 30, 1941, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
521. Cf. Shulman, pp. 68 f. In an entry dated December 1, 1941, Halder noted the following:
"Receipt of three telegrams from Führer at 4:00 a.m.:
1. Rundstedt dismissed as commander of the army group.
2. Reichenau appointed to command army group with the mission of halting the retreat of the First Panzer Army, implementing measures necessary in support of the Panzer Army, and moving to attack Voroshilovgrad as soon as possible from positions of XLIX Ger. Corps and IV. AK.
3. Immediately forward to B.d.E. [commander of the reserve units] to the 13th, 14th and 16th Pz.Div [Panzer Divisions] up to 40 Panzers [type] III and 12 Panzers [type] IV, move up [to the Front] as far as possible." Halder's diary, on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
522. Ibid., entry of December 1, 1941.
523. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 535, pp. 938 f.
524. Report on this flight in Baur, pp. 212 f. Report by Heinz Linge in "Kronzeuge Linge," series III, in *Revue* (1956).
525. Peter the Great (1672–1725), Tsar of Russia from 1682, attempted to reorganize the country on western lines; on the Baltic coast, where he had conquered territory from Sweden, he built his new capital, Saint Petersburg.
526. *Mein Kampf*, p. 73. "A Führer who is forced to depart from the platform of his general Weltanschauung because he has recognized it to be false acts decently only if, upon realizing the error of his prior view, he is willing to draw the final conclusion. In such a case, he must, at the very least, forego the public exercise of further political activities. Because he was once mistaken in his basic beliefs, it is possible that this could happen a second time." See above, p. 28.
527. Cf. Heinz Linge in "Kronzeuge Linge," series III, in *Revue* (1956). There was no foundation for Hitler's paranoid fear of Obergruppenführers. With the exception of Hess as SS Obergruppenführer and Todt as SA Obergruppenführer, Count von Helldorff was the only Obergruppenführer who posed a real threat to Hitler. As SA Obergruppenführer, von Helldorff challenged Hitler's rule though his involvement in the July 20, 1944 assassination attempt. He was apprehended, tried, and executed as a result.
528. Ibid.
529. See above, 1941, note 461. Soldiers participating in Napoleon's ill-fated campaign faced heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures at a much earlier date. On October 27, 1812, it was already minus five degrees Celsius. The thermometer dropped even lower to minus ten degrees by the last day of that month. Heavy snowfall encumbered the movements of troops from November 4 to 6. Within two days after November 10, temperatures went from minus nineteen to minus twenty-three. Thaw and some rain brought temporary relief in the period November 18 to

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23. However, November 25 again witnessed a thermometer reading of minus ten. The winter became much harsher in the month of December 1812. It was minus twenty degrees on December 3, and minus twenty-five was registered the following day. By December 6, temperatures fell to minus thirty for the first time and were to remain in this range for some time. For December 8, 1812, an incredible reading of minus thirty-eight degrees Celsius was recorded. Cf. Beitzke, pp 351–419.
530. See above, proclamation of October 2, 1941.
531. See above, October 3, 1941.
532. DNB report, December 4, 1941.
533. DNB report, December 5, 1941. Hangö was a peninsula protruding into the Gulf of Finland. The 1940 peace accords had awarded it to Russia as a naval base.
534. In VB, No. 341, December 7, 1941.
535. DNB note, December 6, 1941.
536. Perpetrators of these crimes were to be shipped to Germany “between dusk and dawn.” Cf. IMT, 090-1. Keitel made the decree public on December 12, 1941.
537. For details on Zhukov’s army, see von Moos, Vol. III, pp 165 ff.
538. Cf. Walter Grölitze, *Der deutsche Generalstab* (Frankfurt am Main, 1950), p. 574.
539. See above, November 23, 1939.
540. For Hitler’s reaction to the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor, see Picker, p. 75.
541. See above, September 27, 1940.
542. Correspondence between von Ribbentrop and Ott, the then German ambassador to Tokyo, in IMT, 2896/2897-PS.
543. Von Ribbentrop’s testimony before the Nuremberg court in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. X, p. 337.
544. Cf. Picker, p. 88. See also above, proclamation of December 19, 1941.
545. The envoy Schmidt, p. 554, described his own perception of the issue in the following words: “Ribbentrop’s remarks back then gave me the impression that, driven by an egotistical concern for prestige, Hitler wanted to beat Roosevelt by declaring war first, as the Führer was certain Roosevelt would declare war in any event.” Hitler was troubling himself in vain, however, since Roosevelt had the luxury of waiting until Hitler became bold and foolish enough to declare war on the United States first.
546. DGFP, D, XIII, no. 564, pp. 984 ff.
547. Winter 1941 had by no means “come early.” See above, 1941, note 461.
548. Reports in VB, No. 344, December 10, 1941.
549. DNB text, December 9, 1941. At this time, the German public was also informed that yet another dubious character was making his way to Germany: the deposed former Iraqi prime minister Rashid Ali al Kailani, who was already living in exile. He called on Hitler on July 1, 1942. See below, July 15, 1942.

550. With great ardor, Napoleon also attempted to transform the disastrous 1812 campaign against Russia into a great victory in many lengthy speeches and proclamations. Like Hitler, the French dictator juggled all sorts of figures. He declared that the Grande Armée had maintained the upper hand in every encounter with the Russians, who had been beaten badly by the French forces: "Not one ill man had to be picked up off the ground in this campaign, not a single man, not one courier, not one delivery. We marched out of Moscow with three hundred fifty pounds for each of the cannons." Like Hitler, Napoleon insisted that everything had gone according to plan: "We had plenty of everything in Vilna; four million [kilograms of] flour; three million six hundred thousand rations of meat; nine hundred thousand liters of wine and brandy. Nevertheless, they allowed themselves to be frightened by a couple of cossacks!" Had he, Napoleon, not been unexpectedly forced to return to Paris in a hurry, had he been with the troops, all would have been well. Cf. Aretz, pp. 394–401.
- Hitler and Napoleon shared many traits of character: their arithmomania, their inability to admit mistakes, and their dishonesty when accounting for their deeds. Both would abandon their troops when in need and let others suffer the bloody consequences of their own ineptitude. They were garrulous to an extreme; in several instances, Napoleon spent from ten to fourteen hours dictating to his secretaries until they literally broke down. For other parallels, see below, Appendix, Indices "Napoleon" and "coincidences."
551. DNB text, December 11, 1941.
552. Hitler himself had been indifferent to the fate of the Baltic states and Finland. See above, October 16 and December 8, 1939. See also above, March 4, 1940.
553. Hitler earlier had declared: "I have never used the word Blitzkrieg because it is a really stupid word." See above, speech of November 8, 1941.
554. Plain near Troyes, France; scene of the defeat of Attila the Hun (called the "Scourge of God") by the Romans and Goths in 451.
555. Hitler did not specify the type of "material" he was referring to.
556. With the exception of the First Crusade, all the crusades had failed.
557. These figures cannot be correct. A report of the Wehrmacht headquarters, dated September 19, 1941, listed a total of 106, 195 men killed or missing in action for the period between June 22 and August 31, 1941.
558. Hitler's obsessive desire to minimize Germany's losses in the east led him to the strangest excesses. On October 2, 1941, he maintained that these losses were less than 5 percent of those Germany had suffered in the First World War (see above, October 2, 1941). He then proceeded to juggle figures for the Battle at the Somme.
559. Hitler also preferred to give speeches or state-of-the-war addresses indoors where it was warm, while Germany's soldiers fought both snow and ice, and a war.

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560. This remark was also intended to play down casualty figures along the eastern front.
561. Once more Hitler proved that he was unaware of the natural solidarity of the Anglo-American powers. Once England had entered the war against Germany, it was merely a question of time until the United States did likewise.
562. Purim: Jewish festival on the 14th of Adar (in the months of February and March) in celebration of Esther's and Mordechai's rescue of the Jews of Persia.
563. Reference to the recall of the American ambassador in protest at "Crystal Night" [Kristallnacht, the "Night of Broken Glass," when the National Socialists smashed windows of Jewish synagogues, stores, and homes]. See above, November 9, 1938.
564. See above, April 15, 1939.
565. Reference to Eleanor Roosevelt, born 1884, died 1962.
566. Frank Knox, born in 1874; died in Washington in 1944. Hitler chose the phrase "order to fire" because this particular term had been central to the declaration of war [against Germany] by the United States in 1917, in response to the unrestricted nature of German submarine warfare.
567. Reference to an American radio broadcast of September 11, 1941. Roosevelt had issued warnings to Italy and Germany and declared that the hour of "active resistance" had come.
568. The actual note presented to the American chargé d'affaires read:

Mr. Chargé d'Affaires:

The government of the United States of America, having violated in the most flagrant manner and in ever increasing measure all rules of neutrality in favor of the adversaries of Germany and having continually been guilty of the most severe provocations toward Germany ever since the outbreak of the European War, provoked by the British declaration of September 3, 1939, has finally resorted to open military acts of aggression.

On September 11, 1941, the president of the United States of America publicly declared that he had ordered the American navy and air force to fire on sight at any German warship. In his speech of October 27, 1941, he once more expressly affirmed that this order was in force. Acting on this order, vessels of the American navy, since early September 1941, have systematically attacked German naval forces. Thus, American destroyers, for instance the *Greer*, the *Kearney*, and the *Reuben James*, have opened fire on German submarines according to plan. The secretary of the American navy, Mr. Knox, himself confirmed that American destroyers have attacked German submarines. Furthermore, the naval forces of the United States of America on the orders of their government and contrary to international law have treated and seized German merchant vessels on the high seas as enemy ships.

The German government therefore declares the following: Although Germany on her part has strictly adhered to the rules of international

law in her relations with the United States of America during every period of the present war, the government of the United States of America from initial violations of neutrality has finally proceeded to open acts of war against Germany. It has thereby virtually created a state of war.

The government of the Reich consequently discontinues diplomatic relations with the United States of America and declares that, in these circumstances brought about by President Roosevelt, Germany, too, as from today, considers herself as being in a state of war with the United States of America.

DGFP, D, XIII, no. 572, pp. 999 f.

- 569. For reactions by the deputies in August and September 1939, see above, speech of August 27, 1939, and speech of September 1, 1939.
- 570. DNB texts, December 11, 1941.
- 571. DNB note, December 13, 1941. Mussert had founded a branch of the National Socialist movement in the Netherlands.
- 572. *The Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs*, pp. 244 ff.
- 573. DNB report, December 13, 1941.
- 574. DNB report, December 15, 1941.
- 575. DNB report, December 14, 1941.
- 576. Report in VB, No. 350, December 16, 1941. Per Evind von Svinhufvud, born in 1861; died in 1944.
- 577. Report in VB, No. 351, December 17, 1941.
- 578. Those generals who ordered retreats without Hitler's explicit approval were either stripped of their rank, as in the case of General Erich Hoepfner, or sentenced to death, as, for example, was the fate of General Hans Graf von Sponeck. Hoepfner was also executed at a later date, in connection with the events of July 20, 1944.
- 579. Cf. Halder, p. 45.
- 580. For Hitler, education "in the spirit of National Socialism" meant blind obedience to his orders.
- 581. DNB text, December 20, 1941.
- 582. Von Blomberg's refusal to support Hitler's aggression was the actual reason for this transfer of power. See above, February 4, 1938.
- 583. In reference to the supposed "logically correct nature" of his actions, Hitler ought to have mentioned the events of August 1, 1934, in addition to those of February 4, 1938. In 1934, he had appropriated the position of commander in chief of the Reichswehr, in violation of the constitution, the day before von Hindenburg's death. See above, p. 507.
- 584. In reality, the winter battles of the Second World War were far bloodier than those of the First World War.
- 585. Since Hitler had not been in Russia during the First World War, he could not rightly claim "not to be a stranger" to these sufferings.
- 586. DNB text, December 20, 1941. There is great irony in the fact that Brauchitsch owed his post to the Führer's dismissal of Fritsch, and that he himself was relieved of his post by the Führer, who appropriated command of the army. Despite this inconsiderate treatment,

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Brauchitsch remained loyal to his Führer and hence, unlike Fritsch, was not subject to any persecution.

- 587. DNB report, December 21, 1941. The appeal was broadcast by Goebbels on December 20, 1941.
- 588. Even in a like pitiful appeal, Hitler could not resist employing the superlative.
- 589. See above, October 2, 1941.
- 590. DNB text, December 23, 1941.
- 591. This order was published in a circular handed to the troops. Text taken from the author's archives.
- 592. For Hitler's derisive comments on Brauchitsch, see below, March 20, 1942.
- 593. See above, September 1, 1939.

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1. See above, January 1, 1940.
2. See above, January 1, 1941.
3. See below, January 1, 1942.
4. For example, General Kurt von Tippelskirch, *Geschichte des 2. Weltkrieges* (Bonn, 1951).
5. In April 1942, Hitler proclaimed somewhat prematurely: "We have mastered a fate that brought another man [Napoleon] to his knees a hundred thirty years ago." See below, speech of April 26, 1942.
6. Goebbels recorded the following casualty figures in his diary under March 6, 1942: "Our losses in the east for the period of June 22, 1941, to February 20, 1942, were 199, 448 dead (including 7, 879 officers), 708, 351 wounded (including 20, 992 officers), 44, 342 missing (including 710 officers)—a total of 952, 141 (including 29, 572 officers)." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 112.
7. Napoleon sought refuge with the Grande Armée for as long as he needed its protection in face of the Russian advances. During the retreat, he was clad in a pea-green fur coat with a fur hood along with felt-lined boots. Enjoying the luxury of bearskin hats, Napoleon himself and his guards received triple the rations that ordinary soldiers did. At the Berezina River, Napoleon sent a small advance guard ahead to secure the bridges, which the great warlord then crossed with his entourage. The remainder of the French Grand Armée was left behind. It faced chaos and confusion. Reaching safe ground near Smorgon on December 6, Napoleon disappeared from amongst his troops. In the company of Caulaincourt and two generals (in Vilnius, a third general joined them), he rushed to a much warmer and more pleasant place, namely, the French capital! Late at night on December 19, 1812, their comfortable sleighs carried the four men through the gates of Paris, and they celebrated Christmas at home.
8. Carl Gustaf Emil Baron of Mannerheim, born 1867 at Louhisaari estate, died 1951 in Lausanne; Finnish general and statesman; Russian cavalry general in World War I; leader of the Finnish conservative forces in the civil war 1917–1918; regent 1918–1919; field marshal from 1933; commander in chief of the Finnish army 1939–1944; state president 1944–1946.
9. "... if the Jews should succeed in plunging the rest of the world into a world war, then the entire Jewish race will have played out its role in Europe." See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
10. "... this war will not end the way the Jews would have it, namely with the extermination of all European and Aryan people, but the result of this war will be the annihilation of the Jewish race." See below, speech of January 30, 1942.

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11. "My prophecy will be fulfilled that this war will not destroy the Aryan, but instead, it will exterminate the Jew." See below, "message" of February 24, 1942.
12. Churchill's speech of June 22, 1941, in *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, Vol. 6, p. 2430.
13. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.
14. Bernard Law Montgomery, born 1887 in Kennington; the most influential British general; commander in chief of the British Eighth Army in North Africa and Italy; led the British Twenty-First Army in its advance from northern France to Germany in 1944-1945; British High Commissioner for Germany in 1945; created Viscount Montgomery of Alamein and Hindhead in 1946.
15. Dwight David Eisenhower, born 1890 in Denison, Texas; from 1942 to 1943 commander in chief of the United States armed forces in North Africa and Italy; from 1943 on, supreme commander of the Allied expeditionary force; appointed American high commissioner for Germany in 1945; president of the United States of America from 1953 to 1961.
16. VB, No. 1, January 1, 1942.
17. This is another example of the rhetoric of Hitler recalling that of Napoleon, who also liked to claim that others "forced" him to go to war, while he himself would "much rather" have been doing something else.
18. VB, No. 1, January 1, 1942. The order of the day was dated December 31, 1941.
19. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 431.
20. Report in VB, No. 3, January 3, 1942. Report on Hitler's January 3 meeting with Ambassador Oshima in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, pp. 253 ff.
21. VB, No. 1, January 1, 1942.
22. DNB report, January 8, 1942.
23. Report in VB, No. 11, January 11, 1942.
24. VB, No. 24, January 24, 1942.
25. DNB report, January 17, 1942. The funeral in Berlin did not take place until January 23, 1942.
26. DNB text, January 18, 1942.
27. DNB note, January 18, 1942.
28. Field Marshal von Kluge had already replaced Bock on December 18, 1941.
29. DNB text, January 20, 1942.
30. DNB report, January 22, 1942.
31. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1942.
32. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 59 f.
33. DNB text, January 30, 1942.
34. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 60 f. Hitler further mentioned this particular delegation when speaking at the Sportpalast. See below, speech of January 30, 1942.

35. DNB text, January 30, 1942.
36. In a speech before the Reichstag on July 13, 1934, for example, Hitler had said the following: "Acting on behalf of the Reich government, the president of the Reichstag, Hermann Göring, has called you together today in order to give me an opportunity to enlighten the Volk before this body, the highest appointed forum of the nation, concerning events. . . ." See above, p. 486.
37. Author's expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
38. Parody of a Nietzsche quotation.
39. By calling Churchill a "Herostratus character," Hitler referred to Herostratus, who, in 356 B.C., set fire to the temple of the goddess Artemis at Ephesus in order to become famous.
40. Cf. earlier complaints by Hitler that he was faced with opponents not worthy of him whom he frequently belittled as *Nullen* ("zeroes"). See above, October 3, 1941, and below, speeches of January 30, 1942, and September 30, 1942.
41. Neither is there any mention of a possible alliance with Japan in *Mein Kampf*, nor did Hitler ever refer to Japan as a potential ally in any of his public statements. Indeed, at the time, Hitler evidently regarded only England and Italy as potential partners.
42. Archibald Percival Wavell (1883–1950), 1st Earl Wavell of Cyrenaica and of Winchester; British field marshal; commander in chief Middle East 1939–1941, in command of the first British Cyrenaica offensive launched in 1941–1942; commander in chief India July 1941–1943, viceroy of India 1943–1947.
43. Hitler had not made this statement on September 1, 1939, but instead on January 30, 1939. See above, 1939, note 119.
44. Reference is to the Italian delegation consisting of leaders of the Fascist movement. See above, January 30, 1942.
45. Hitler never accounted for his conduct of state affairs nor did he assume any responsibility for the outcome of this conduct, despite all the glorious proclamations to the contrary. See above, p. 33.
46. Up to this point, Hitler had been maintaining that he had dealt this blow to his adversaries "twenty-four hours earlier" than planned. See above, speech of November 8, 1941.
47. This statement was in truly bad taste, as the disastrously ill-equipped soldiers did not even possess proper clothing to battle winter in the east.
48. Reference is to the fall of Benghazi. See above, January 29, 1942.
49. These citations were not based upon historical facts. They were apparently the product of their author's vivid imagination. Moreover, his claim that so-called "warmongers" caused Germany's defeat cannot be substantiated.
50. This greatest of all "front-line soldiers" usually sat in a heated room and contemplated the historic importance of his person, his speeches, and his monologues.
51. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 62.

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52. From January 7 to January 9, 1942, von Ribbentrop stayed in Budapest, while Keitel visited the city on January 20, 1942.
53. Antonescu accepted the invitation. See below, February 11, 1942.
54. Report in VB, No. 33, February 2, 1942.
55. Report in VB, No. 36, February 5, 1942.
56. Report in VB, No. 38, February 7, 1942.
57. DNB text, February 8, 1942. German papers carried the news on February 9.
58. As a specialist in investigating crashes, Hitler's chief pilot, Baur, speculated in his 1956 memoirs that Todt's plane had been ripped apart by an explosion. In his opinion, Todt had perhaps accidentally activated a "self-destruction" device built in beneath the pilot's seat in a number of aircraft. Once activated, the device causes the airplane to explode within three minutes. However, this seems unlikely in the circumstances. Cf. Hans Baur, *Ich flog Mächtige der Erde*, (Kempten, 1956), pp. 214 ff.
59. After the war, a special committee handling Todt's estate investigated the crash. Some evidence surfaced concerning the existence of a mysterious suitcase, possibly containing the explosive device that had allegedly been introduced into the aircraft before takeoff.
60. Todt had been SA Obergruppenführer and one of the men whom Hitler regarded with an irrational fear. On this topic, see above, December 3, 1941. See also above, 1941, note 527.
61. See below, speech of February 12, 1942.
62. DNB text, February 9, 1942. Speer assumed Todt's responsibilities in the party (main technical office) and for the Four Year Plan (plenipotentiary for construction business).
63. NSK note, February 12, 1942.
64. "I have no experts at all. For me, my head is always good enough! I do not need a brain trust to assist me." See above, speech of November 8, 1941.
65. See above, December 2, 1941.
66. Cf. report on this visit in Schmidt, pp. 560 ff.
67. Baur, pp. 220 f. Baur is mistaken in his belief that the plane was heading for Berchtesgaden.
68. Schmidt, p. 561. Cf. also Heiber, *Hitler's Lagebesprechungen*, p. 13.
69. Antonescu did not receive the award in gold, however—a privilege granted to Ciano and to Oshima.
70. DNB text, February 16, 1942.
71. DNB report, February 13, 1942. The acclaim was a bit premature, as the British on Singapore did not capitulate until March 15, 1942. The Japanese emperor was more careful and waited with his response to Hitler's telegram until March 16, 1942.
72. See above, speech of March 6, 1934.
73. DNB report, February 13, 1942. See also the notes in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 79 f., erroneously under the date of February 11, 1942 (the speech took place the day after).

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74. DNB text, February 12, 1942.
75. All this emphatic acclaim for Todt appears out of place. For details on the new award and Hitler's comments on it, cf. Picker, pp. 152 f.
76. Cf. DNB report, February 14, 1942, and Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 83.
77. The battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, along with the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, withdrew from the French harbor Brest on February 12. Not having encountering any interference by the British, they took refuge in German ports along the English Channel and the Baltic Sea, and hence achieved this highly questionable "breakthrough." German papers were instructed to celebrate the speedy retreat as the "most daring feat in naval history," although this actually signaled the defeat of Germany's naval forces by the British fleet and an admission of Britain's superiority at sea. The *Scharnhorst*, a vessel with an official tonnage of 25, 000 tons but which actually displaced around 31, 800 tons, was to venture on to Norway. From there, it set sail for the North, where it encountered vastly superior British naval contingents and was sunk on December 26, 1943. The similarly equipped *Gneisenau* sustained serious damage in the course of an air raid on Kiel, where it had anchored. The ship was decommissioned on July 1, 1942, and towed to the Gdynia dock. There an attempt to blow up the ship took place on March 28, 1945. In the years 1947–1951, the vessel was finally scrapped. The 14, 800 ton *Prinz Eugen* was surrendered to American forces in 1945. It was used in an atomic-bomb experiment close to Bikini Island. The ship sank on November 15, 1947, near Kwajalein. Cf. Erich Gröner, *Die Schiffe der deutschen Kriegsmarine und Luftwaffe 1939/1945 und ihr Verbleib* (Munich, 1954).
78. Report in VB, No. 47, February 16, 1942.
79. Cf. the remarks of Goebbels on the Führer's high hopes in Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 83.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
81. Cf. report on the February 14, 1942, conversation, *ibid.* pp. 87 f.
82. Report in VB, No. 47, February 16, 1942. A phonographic record of the entire speech is on file at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz (Le 6 EW 68 553–68 575). Hitler spoke before a number of officers. This is the speech which Louis P. Lochner could not locate before publishing the Goebbels *Diaries*. Cf. Joseph Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1942–43*, ed. by Louis P. Lochner (Zurich, 1948), p. 88. For the typical content of Hitler's addresses to officer candidates, see above, speeches of May 5 and December 18, 1940, which are quoted in full.
83. Author's expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
84. These sentimental reminiscences once more prove how Hitler perceived events only in relation to himself, how they affected his well-being. Another example of this is found in his plaintive remarks lamenting the "deprived" nature of his youth when all he could do was to dream of a "great time" to come. See above, p. 15.
85. Speech of September 12, 1936.
86. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 88 and 95.

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87. Ibid., p. 102.
88. Examples of his various excursions: speech at Todt's funeral on February 12, 1942; speech before officer candidates at the Sportpalast in Berlin on February 15, 1942; speech on Heroes' Memorial Day on March 15, 1942; and the Reichstag speech of April 26, 1942.
89. See above, 1941, note 527.
90. Report in VB, No. 56, February 25, 1942.
91. In this regard, Napoleon exaggerated a bit less than Hitler. The Frenchman claimed that the winter of 1812 had been the coldest witnessed in over "twenty years." Cf. Aretz, p. 399.
In 1942, Hitler maintained on April 26 that the preceding winter had been the worst in over "140 years," even though almost everyone in the audience vividly recalled the winter of 1939–1940, when temperatures had fallen considerably lower than in 1942. See below, speech of April 26, 1942. In May, Hitler again attributed the shortcomings of the campaign to the unexpectedly harsh winter. Temperatures seemed to have fallen lower in retrospect, as he pronounced the winter to have been the coldest in "150 years." See below, speech of May 29, 1942.
92. Hermann Esser read another "message" from the Führer to those assembled in the cellar on February 24, 1943. This was repeated one last time on February 24, 1944. The festivities were canceled in 1945.
93. Report in VB, No. 56, February 25, 1942.
94. VB, No. 58, February 27, 1942.
95. DNB report, February 28, 1942. While Drexler had been one of the founding members of the NSDAP, he played a role of little importance from 1925. Nevertheless, he was awarded the *Blutorden* (Blood Order) in 1934.
96. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1942.
97. IMT, 149-PS.
98. See above, speeches of January 30, 1941, and of January 30, 1942, as well as "message" of February 24, 1942.
99. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 115 f.
100. Ibid., p. 138.
101. Ibid., pp. 147 f.
102. This meant German-occupied Poland.
103. The former Gauleiter of Vienna to whom Goebbels referred was Odilo Globotschnigg.
104. See above, pp. 1448 f., Reichstag speech of January 30, 1939.
105. See above, August 2, 1934.
106. Cf. Linge, Series II.
107. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 147 ff.
108. In a public address on October 3, 1941, Hitler had proclaimed: "... [our soldiers on the eastern front are facing] an opponent, who, I must say this here, consists not of human beings, but of animals—beasts." See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
109. At the Berghof on April 17, 1943, the following was revealed to the Hungarian regent, von Horthy, according to a protocol drawn up by

- the envoy Schmidt: "Should the Jews not want to work there, they will be shot. Should they not be able to work, they will rot. They should be treated like a tuberculosis bacillus, which might infect a healthy organism. This was not cruel in fact, if one considered that even such innocent natural creatures as rabbits and deer had to be shot in order to prevent harm. Why should beasts, which want to bring us Bolshevism, be spared?" IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. X, pp. 463 f.
110. Hitler was exceptionally fond of dogs. During his last years, one bitch by the name of "Blondi" had particularly endeared herself to him. Moreover, he was always quick to defend "innocent rabbits and deer" and, on occasion, he would verbally assault passionate hunters such as Göring. Hitler also refused to eat meat.
 111. Cf. Himmler's speech of October 4, 1943 in Posen. IMT, 1919-PS.
 112. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 86.
 113. Saint John's Gospel, Chapter 16, verses 1-2.
 114. *Mein Kampf*, p. 70. See also above, Introduction, pp. 39 f., and below, September 30, 1942.
 115. Decree of March 13, 1942. Cf. VB, No. 91, April 1, 1942.
 116. VB, No. 62, March 3, 1942.
 117. Report, *ibid*.
 118. Report in VB, No. 64, March 5, 1942. The duke of Aosta, the former viceroy of Italian East Africa and son of Victor Emmanuel III, had been taken prisoner by the British in 1941, following the conquest of Abyssinia. He died of tuberculosis.
 119. Report in VB, No. 64, March 5, 1942.
 120. Report in VB, No. 68, March 9, 1942. Fritz Erich von Manstein (full name: von Lewinsky genannt von Manstein), born 1887 in Berlin; promoted to field marshal on July 1, 1942.
 121. Illustrated report, *ibid*.
 122. Report in VB, No. 75, March 16, 1942.
 123. DNB text, March 15, 1942.
 124. Reference is to the show trial of Daladier, General Gamelin, and Léon Blum, which was opened by the Pétain government under pressure from the Germans. The trial was supposed to determine war guilt. It dragged on for a few weeks before it was abandoned.
 125. Napoleon also liked to recall the Grande Armée's "unique glorious deeds" when reminiscing about his ill-fated venture to the east:
"The Russian campaign was the most difficult, the most famous, and the most honorable ever undertaken by the Gauls in ancient or modern history. You fearless heroes—Murat, Ney, Poniatowsky— yours is the glory! Of what glorious deeds will the books of history speak! They will have to tell of how these unshakable cuirassiers overcame the redoubts and stabbed the cannoneers still at the cannons. They will have to tell of how our artillery achieved the impossible, how without cover the men of the artillery battled numerous well-protected enemy batteries. And of how in times of great danger, instead of turning to the generals for encouragement, the fearless men of the infantry shouted

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- encouragement to the officers: 'Be calm! All your soldiers have pledged themselves today either to win or to die!' Will fragments of this great a glory ever reach posterity, or will lies, defamation, and apathy keep an upper hand instead?" Cf. Aretz, p. 393.
126. Reports in VB, Nos. 75 and 76, March 16 and 17, 1942.
127. Report in VB, No. 75, March 16, 1942.
128. Report in VB, No. 76, March 17, 1942.
129. Reports in VB, Nos. 80 and 81, March 21 and 22, 1942.
130. DNB report, March 18, 1942.
131. Report in VB, No. 78, March 19, 1942. Ever since Hitler assumed the title of "warlord," he seemed to avoid Hoffmann's company. Perhaps he feared the photographer's blunt criticisms. Bormann, who could not stand Hoffmann, derided him as a "producer of typhoid-infected excrement," which sufficed to instill in Hitler a repugnance and an irrational fear of contamination. Cf. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 13.
132. Goebbels refers to the talks in his diary and dates them March 20, 1942. Sometimes the events took place either a day earlier or a day later. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 130 ff.
133. Ibid., p. 137.
134. Joseph Goebbels, *Michael: Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern* (Munich, 1929), quoted from the 6th edition (Munich, 1936), pp. 101 ff.
135. Goebbels wrote: "It is truly touching to hear him complain about the winter that has caused him such terrible worries and difficulties. I noted that he has already become quite gray." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 135.—Ciano also noted in his diary under April 29, 1942: "Hitler looks tired. [—] The winter months in Russia have borne heavily upon him. I see for the first time that he has many gray hairs." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 477. On the other hand, Hitler was fifty-three years old at the time. Having a few white hairs at that age is truly nothing exceptional. For those who saw in him a type of god, however, such observations could indeed have been troubling.
136. Brauchitsch had proposed implementing his own strategy in directing certain formations of his troops. Hitler had immediately intervened and prohibited him from taking any steps on his own. See above, May 24, 1940.
137. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 179.
138. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 165.
139. Gürtner served as Reich minister of justice from 1932 until 1941. See above, p. 481. Bumke was president of the Reichsgericht (Reich Court of Justice) from 1932 to 1945. Although Gürtner had truly done everything in his power to please Hitler, the Führer accorded him little respect. At one point, Hitler remarked that Gürtner had had a very hard time divorcing himself from legal considerations and had only hesitantly become "reasonable," a term which meant that he unquestioningly submitted himself to the Führer's whims. Cf. Picker, p. 211.

140. Ibid., p. 240.
141. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 264.
142. RGBI, 1942, I, pp. 139 f.
143. For details on the significance of the term "supreme commander," see below, April 26, 1942.
144. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 173 f. As one of his last deeds, Hitler ordered Josef Wagner's execution in April 1945.
145. See also *ibid.*, pp. 133 f., and above, March 20, 1942.
146. Cf. Picker, pp. 202 f.
147. Ibid., pp. 211 ff.
148. Cf. conversation of March 29, 1942, *ibid.*, p. 211.
149. For documentation of the case and a detailed investigation, see the article by Gerhard Hermann Mostar, *Stern*, 30 (1954).
150. Cf. § 246 STGB (Strafgesetzbuch, Criminal Code).
151. For example, by the president of the Oldenburg Oberlandesgericht (high court of a land); see below, May 2, 1942. The Oldenburg Reich governor was of the same opinion. For the consequences, see below, *ibid.*, and May 15, 1942.
152. Freisler was appointed president of the Volksgerichtshof a few months later. In this capacity, he was responsible for the conduct of the infamous "trials" of the activists in the attempted coup of July 20, 1944.
153. Although Freisler strove to satisfy every whim of the Führer and even though he was an old party comrade, Hitler nonetheless pretended that Freisler was a Bolshevik. Cf. Picker, p. 212.
154. Ibid., p. 206, entry of March 22, 1943.
155. DNB report, March 22, 1942. Hitler had appointed von Rundstedt as commander in chief of the armies in the west, but he wished this to remain a secret.
156. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 171 ff.
157. See above, January 30, 1941.
158. Special British elite troops whose mission was to land their armored flatboats along certain sections of the French and Norwegian coasts. They were to carry out sporadic attacks on German radio stations, advance units, or strategic installations. The main purpose of these undertakings was to disquiet the German troops. Until late 1941, Rear Admiral Sir Roger Keyes was in charge of the British commandos. He was succeeded by a cousin of the king of Great Britain, the forty-one-year-old Lord Louis Mountbatten, who became one of the leading figures of the Second World War. Cf. details on the forays in von Moos, Vol. III, pp. 215 ff.
159. See below, October 18, 1942.
160. DNB text, March 26, 1942.
161. Cf. remarks made on March 31, 1942, in Picker, p. 59.
162. After his stay at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, King Boris also called on Göring and Goebbels. The latter in particular was quite smitten with his royal guest, who praised German propaganda: "Boris is an impassioned devotee of Hitler's genius as a leader; he really looks upon

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- him as a sort of emissary of God.” Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 151. This reflected a complete reversal of the attitude of Goebbels toward King Boris. Only two months earlier, he had called him a “sly, crafty fellow.” *Ibid.*, p. 47.
163. Report in VB, No. 89, March 30, 1942.
164. See above, speech of September 4, 1940.
165. For details on Allied air raids against German population centers with more than a hundred thousand inhabitants, see Max Domarus, *Der Untergang des alten Würzburg und seine Vorgeschichte* (7th edition Gerolzhofen, 1995).
166. On the night of November 14 to 15, 1942, the Luftwaffe carried out a damaging air raid on the city of Coventry, home to two hundred fifty-eight thousand citizens and an ancient bishopric.
167. Popular humor had it that Hitler had lost the “eraser” and the British had obviously picked it up.
168. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 186 ff.
169. Report in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1942.
170. See above, March 19, 1942.
171. See above, 1932, note 306.
172. The following official announcement notified the public of Schlitt’s demise: “The twenty-nine-year-old Ewald Schlitt, resident of Wilhelmshaven, was executed on April 2, 1942. On March 31, 1942, the special criminal division (*Besonderer Strafsenat*) at the Reichsgericht had sentenced him to death as a dangerous criminal. Schlitt was guilty of cruelly abusing his wife for many years, until she became mentally ill and died. The senior public prosecutor at the Reichsgericht.”
173. *Speeches*, April 26, 1942, cf. p. 1874 f.
174. DNB report, April 1, 1942.
175. The author’s notes. The circular to the troops was headed “Berlin, ” although it should have read “Führer Headquarters.”
176. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 178 ff.
177. Report in VB, No. 87, April 7, 1942.
178. DNB note, April 6, 1942.
179. DNB text, April 10, 1942.
180. Report in VB, No. 103, April 13, 1942.
181. DNB report, April 15, 1942.
182. DNB report, April 16, 1942.
183. Twelve aircraft were involved in the attack. Four of the Lancaster bombers were downed during their approach over French territory, three over the city of Augsburg, and one crashed on the return flight. Only four of the planes returned safely to base. It is possible that they followed the same route which Rudolf Hess had chosen for his own escape a year earlier.
184. Report in VB, No. 110, April 20, 1942. Johann Wilhelm Rangell, born 1894; prime minister from 1941 to 1943.
185. DNB text, April 20, 1942.
186. Report in VB, No. 112, April 22, 1942.

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187. DNB text, April 21 and 22, 1942.
188. DNB text, April 22, 1942.
189. Ibid.
190. Formerly the seat of the prince-archbishops of Salzburg, the baroque palace had been renovated and converted into a comfortable residence, where the Reich government put up its guests.
191. Report in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 475 f.
192. Goebbels entered the following into his diary on April 24, 1942: "The Führer phoned me from general headquarters. He has now at last decided to deliver a speech, already planned for some time, before the Reichstag concerning the situation and all the conclusions which he must draw from it. We deliberated as to which day would be most suitable for this session of the Reichstag and agreed that it is to be called for 3.00 p.m. next Sunday." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 183.
193. Ibid., April 26, pp. 186 ff. See also entries for April 25, 1942, in Picker, pp. 78 and 331 f.
194. Henri Honoré Giraud was born in 1879; it is curious to note that he had already escaped from German custody twice before in the course of the First World War. In late May 1940, as a general with the French armed forces, he was taken captive once again and brought to the Königstein fortress in Saxony. His wife was allowed to furnish him with gift packages, in which she concealed civilian clothing for her husband and rope for mountain climbing. On April 17, 1942, he fled down the mountain and escaped his captors. This initiated a large-scale manhunt throughout southern Germany. For days, all major transportation routes were closely patrolled—to little avail, however, since Giraud managed to reach the Alsace region aboard an ordinary passenger train. Before continuing on to Switzerland, he even met up with several German officers and conversed with them. After American forces had landed in North Africa, Giraud crossed the Mediterranean to take command of the Free French volunteer units there, which he led from 1942 to 1944.
195. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 189 f.
196. DNB text, April 26, 1942.
197. Parody of a quotation from Nietzsche.
198. Benjamin Disraeli, born 1804 in London; died 1881; in 1876 was created [1st] earl of Beaconsfield; served as British prime minister in 1868 and again from 1874 to 1880.
199. This statement by Hitler proved the accuracy of Churchill's sarcastic version of history subsequent to the First World War as seen through the eyes of a National Socialist: "After four years of war by land and sea, when Germany was about to win an overwhelming victory, the Jews got at them again, this time from the rear. Armed With President Wilson's Fourteen Points they stabbed, we are told, the German armies in the back, and induced them to ask for an armistice, and even persuaded them, in an unguarded moment, to sign a paper saying that it was they and not the Belgians who had been the ones to begin the War.

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- Such is history as it is taught in topsy-turvydom.” See above, 1939 Major Events in Summary.
200. Hitler always desired to “remain steadfast in face of the impossible,” and he stubbornly did so, until he finally realized in April 1945 that it made no sense.
201. Allusion to the British special commandos. See above, March 23, 1942. See also below, October 18, 1942.
202. This was an obvious lie, as in the winter of 1939–1940 temperatures had dropped considerably lower. Neither was there any truth to his statement in March that the past winter had been the worst in “over a hundred years.” See above, March 15, 1942. By May of that year, the winter had apparently gotten even colder in retrospect, as Hitler claimed that in the past “hundred fifty years,” no winter had been as severe. See below, May 29, 1942.
203. Just as Hitler relished comparing himself favorably with Napoleon, the French emperor had greatly enjoyed comparing himself with Charles XII. Napoleon would always end by praising his own performance: “It was Charles XII who traveled two hundred miles deep into enemy territory only to lose his line of operation one day after setting out from Smolensk. He remained without a word from Stockholm for an entire year. Nor did he have any reserve units to relieve him. It was Napoleon who penetrated five hundred and fifty miles deep into enemy territory without ever losing his line of operation. He always maintained close contact with France. And it was Napoleon who received steady reinforcements from there and who positioned three quarters of his army along the Vistula River as reserves. And, finally, Charles XII commanded only forty thousand men, and Napoleon commanded a force of four hundred thousand men. Both operations stand in striking contrast to each other. While the one [Napoleon’s campaign] was well thought out and complied with the exigencies of the art of war, subordinating means to ends, the other [Charles’s campaign] defied any such consideration and was neither well-thought out nor the product of any particular strategy.” Cf. Aretz, p. 396. See also below, Appendix, Indices “Napoleon” and “coincidences.”
204. The source for these figures was Hitler’s imagination. The lowest temperature registered in December 1812 was minus 38 degrees Celsius. See above, 1941, note 507. Referring to the preceding winter in a speech in January 1942, Hitler had claimed that temperatures had fallen to “minus 38, minus 40, minus 41, and, in some instances, to minus 45 degrees [Celsius].” See above, speech of January 30, 1942.
205. Reference is to Napoleon.
206. This remark indicated that Hitler was indeed contemplating another winter campaign.
207. Hitler had enjoyed his, supposedly only, infamous “three-day holiday” aboard the *Robert Ley*, cruising the North Sea from April 2 to April 4, 1939. See above, April 2, 1939. A stay in Wiesbaden from March 20 to March 23 four years earlier had, however, also been explicitly referred

- to as a “vacation” at the time. See above, March 20, 1935. As he praised his own modest means and diligent work by repeatedly referring to this “three-day holiday,” Hitler consistently failed to mention his numerous visits to the Berghof retreat with his mistress Eva Braun. Hitler was one of those few blessed individuals who can afford to do as they please, engage exclusively in work they greatly enjoy, and are always on vacation for all practical purposes.
208. Reference is to the case of Ewald Schlitt. See above, March 19, 1942, and below, May 2, 1942.
209. This was a considerable step back from Hitler’s assurances in May 1941 that any strike against Germany would elicit a retaliation a hundred times more severe than the original strike: “My promise to pay him back for every bomb one hundred times from a certain point on, if necessary, has not even once moved this man to think about the criminal nature of his actions.” See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
210. Reference is to Churchill and Roosevelt.
211. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 247.
212. On Hitler’s paranoid fear of Obergruppenführers, see above, 1941, note 527.
213. See above, p. 498.
214. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 191 f.
215. See *ibid.*, p. 194, and below, April 29, 1942.
216. See above, speech of April 26, 1942, and 1942, note 207.
217. Entry of April 27, 1942; Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 192.
218. Report on the evening in Picker, pp. 392 ff.
219. *Ibid.*, p. 147. Hitler had been a regular at the Osteria Restaurant for decades (the restaurant “Osteria Bavaria” at 62 Schellingstraße is now called “Osteria Italiana”).
220. See above, June 28, 1940.
221. On the impression the speech had created in Italy, Ciano observed the following: “The tone [of the speech] is not very optimistic. More than anything else, he looks to the past, how and why the Russian winter was so severe and how they were yet able to overcome it. But there is not a hint of what all are waiting for—the ending of the war. On the contrary, he declared that he is making every preparation to face the eventuality of another winter on the Russian front with more adequate forces. Then he asked for full power over the German people. He already exercises complete power, but by appealing for it in this way he arouses the feeling that the internal situation in Germany needs a still more rigid control. In general, the speech has had a depressing effect in Italy, while Mussolini has judged it to be ‘an excellent and strong speech’.” Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 476.
222. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 195 f.
223. Report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1942.
224. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 477.
225. DNB report, April 30, 1942. See also DNB rendition of the communiqué’s text.

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- 226. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 477 ff. Cf. also the report in Schmidt, pp. 562 f.
- 227. Ibid., p. 477, noted: "But the ice of Russia has been conquered by the genius of Hitler. This is the strong dish that is served up to me."
- 228. Ibid.
- 229. Count Ugo Cavallero, chief of the Italian general staff, committed suicide in September 1943.
- 230. Cf. Picker, pp. 394 ff.
- 231. Ibid., p. 397.
- 232. The holiday had been postponed for a day, because May 1 was a Friday, which led Mussolini to the assumption that the delay was due to superstition on Hitler's part. This was not the case. May 2 was chosen because there would be no loss of production on a Saturday.
- 233. DNB text, May 2, 1942.
- 234. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 202.
- 235. DNB text, May 2, 1942.
- 236. Account by Gerhart Hermann Mostar in his article "Der Fall Schlitt, " in *Der Stern* (Hamburg, 1954.)
- 237. Whenever Freisler was not present, Hitler referred to him as "the Bolshevik, " because Freisler had once been a member of the Communist Party. See above, March 21, 1942.
- 238. See below, May 15, 1942. Like heart attack, stroke, accident, and plane crash, "pneumonia" was among the favorite illnesses which the Reich government cited as the cause of death in many highly suspicious instances. Even in the case of Bürckel's suicide, the official cause of death was given as pneumonia." See below, September 29, 1944.
- 239. Report in VB, No. 126, May 6, 1942. Thøewald Stauning, born 1873; Danish head of government in 1924 and again from 1929 to 1942.
- 240. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 198.
- 241. RGBL, 1942, I, pp. 293 f.
- 242. Ibid., p. 329.
- 243. Report in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1942.
- 244. DNB report, May 12, 1942.
- 245. Illustrated report in VB, No. 136/137, May 16/17, 1942. Italo Gariboldi had previously served as governor general and commander in chief of the forces in Libya.
- 246. Report in VB, *ibid.*
- 247. Report in VB, No. 138, May 18, 1942. The state funeral took place on May 21, 1942, in Lübeck.
- 248. Ibid. See above, 1942, note 238.
- 249. Cf. Picker, pp. 154 f.
- 250. Ibid., p. 149.
- 251. Report in VB, No. 142, May 22, 1942.
- 252. Illustrated report in VB, No. 146, May 26 1942.
- 253. Cf. Picker, pp. 244 f.
- 254. DNB report, May 22, 1942.
- 255. In both world wars, German propaganda alleged that Allied politicians and military men had originated the popular quip "a good German is a

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- dead German.” It was in fact an adaptation of the American General Philip Sheridan’s sardonic observation that “the only good Indian is a dead one.”
256. DNB texts, May 22, 1942.
257. DNB text, May 25, 1942. Herbert Backe, born 1896 in Tiflis (Tbilisi, Georgia, Russian Empire); committed suicide 1947 in Nuremberg; charged with the conduct of affairs until 1944; appointed minister on April 6, 1944.
258. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 228 f.
259. Cf. Picker, p. 156. Reference is to Sunday, May 24, 1942.
260. Illustrated report in VB, No. 148, May 28, 1942.
261. RGBI, 1942, I, pp. 375 f. The man in the street referred to this award as the “frozen-meat medal.”
262. Report in VB, No. 148, May 28, 1942.
263. The successful attempt on Heydrich’s life took place in Holeshovits, one of Prague’s suburbs. As Heydrich passed by in an open car, his assassins fired on him with machine guns and detonated an explosive device. The two exiled Czechs who carried out the assassination had been trained in England before parachuting from British aircraft into their native land. Cf. Alan Burgess, *Seven Men at Daybreak* (London, 1960).
264. DNB note, May 31, 1942.
265. DNB report, May 28, 1942. Eva Chamberlain, born 1867; daughter of Richard Wagner; wife of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the so-called “Prophet of the Third Reich” (*Seher des Dritten Reiches*).
266. Cf. Picker, pp. 157, 311, 399, and 434.
267. Goebbels made use of Bose in the propaganda department “Center for a Free India” and insisted that Bose’s whereabouts be kept secret. Cf. frequent references to Bose in Goebbels’s *Diaries* (Index). Information on Bose’s visit to Italy on May 4, 1942, in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 481 f. See also above, Preface.
268. *Mein Kampf*, p. 746.
269. DNB text, May 29, 1942. According to the DNB, the conversation had taken place at the Führer headquarters, since Bose’s continued presence in Berlin was to remain confidential.
270. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 184 ff.
271. Report in VB, No. 152, June 1, 1942. A near complete phonographic record is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Le 7 EW 68 953–68 976 (Record No. 68 969 is missing). See also above, pp. 1879 f.
272. See above, Vol III, speeches of May 3 and December 18, 1940, which are quoted in full, for the typical content of those addresses.
273. Author’s expression, cf. Vol I, p. 49.
274. Reference is to Clausewitz, although the statement was made by Heraclitus of Ephesus.
275. The general whom Hitler abused here was the future field marshal, Sir Harold Alexander, who was an Englishman and not an American as Hitler insisted. Facing a desolate situation in Burma, Sir Harold

- Alexander had his seven thousand men head for India. Hitler also spoke derisively of General MacArthur, who had initially mounted a brave defense of the Philippines at Corregidor. Realizing the hopeless nature of the enterprise, and on orders from President Roosevelt, he set out for Australia in a submarine and led the struggle against the Japanese from there. The future showed that there was much more to General MacArthur than empty phrases, as Hitler would have it.
276. The Russians encircled and cut off the city of Kholm from January to May 1942, while Major General Theodor Scherer and his men tried to hold out.
277. Unwittingly, Hitler was quoting himself and not any ancient wisdom. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 755. The phrase he used was a parody of Christ's words to his Apostles as quoted by Matthew: "And he [Christ] took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" Saint Matthew's Gospel, chapter 26, verses 27–28.
278. Cf. Picker, p. 435.
279. Report in VB, No. 162, June 11, 1942.
280. Carl Gustaf Emil Freiherr von Mannerheim, born 1867; died 1951 in Lausanne; president of Finland from 1944 to 1946.
281. Cf. Baur, pp. 235 f.
282. Reports on the events at Micheli in DNB report, June 4, 1942. Heinz Hüniger reported on the events in *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, June 6/7, 1942. Cf. Baur, pp. 240 ff., and Picker, p. 91. While Baur specifies the location as the airfield of Micheli, there is no mention of it in any of the official publications.
283. Hitler had by contrast derided Finland in 1939. He had been particularly irked by the Finnish refusal to enter into a nonaggression pact with Germany. See above, October 16, 1939. Had the Olympic Games taken place in Helsinki two years earlier, Hitler most certainly would not have graced them with his presence.
284. On December 5, 1941, Great Britain had declared war on Finland. The United States had maintained its reserve up to this point because of its close, historic ties to Finland.
285. Cf. Picker, p. 246.
286. Reports in VB, No. 159, June 8, 1942.
287. Report in VB, No. 160, June 9, 1942. Nikolaus Kállay von Nagy-Kállo, born 1887; Hungarian prime minister from 1942 to 1944.
288. Report in VB, No. 162, June 11, 1942.
289. Cf. Picker, pp. 93 f.
290. Reports in VB, No. 160, June 9, 1942.
291. Picker, p. 163.
292. Ibid.
293. DNB text, June 9, 1942.
294. See above, February 12, 1942.

295. Report in VB, No. 163, June 12, 1942. After a dinner on the evening of July 4, Hitler recalled how he had made it clear to Hácha that, in no circumstances, could he tolerate "further serious infringements upon the interests of the Reich in the protectorate" and that, if necessary, a forced repatriation of the Czech people was within the realm of the possible. Dr. Meissner expanded upon these ideas at a later point. In any event, the threat produced the desired result, and the administration in the protectorate now displayed obviously pro-German leanings. Cf. Picker, pp. 176 f.
296. See above, May 3, 1942.
297. Picker, p. 369.
298. VB, No. 167, June 16, 1942.
299. Report, *ibid.* After Hitler proclaimed both Austria and Russia the new German "Ostmark," a change of name was certainly appropriate.
300. VB, No. 170, June 19, 1942.
301. DNB text, June 16, 1942. See also above, 1939, note 270.
302. Hitler made these statements on June 22, 1942. Cf. Picker, p. 166.
303. DNB report, June 21, 1942.
304. Report in *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, June 22, 1942. See also DNB report, June 21, 1942.
305. *Ibid.* Wagner had suffered a stroke on June 14, 1942.
306. Announcement by the NSDAP's Reich press office in VB, No. 178/179, June 27/28, 1942. Paul Giesler, born 1895 in Siegen; committed suicide in early May 1945 in Berchtesgaden; appointed Gauleiter of Southern Westphalia in 1941.
307. Picker, p. 166.
308. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 475, 477, 484 f., 499 f. Raeder also approved of the operation with the code name *Herkules*.
309. DNB text, June 22, 1942. While the telegram was headed the "Führer Headquarters," it was sent from Berlin, where Hitler was at the time.
310. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 500. Earlier, Rommel's ambitions were more limited. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 486 f.
311. General Kress von Kressenstein had been in charge of the venture, which had ended with his ignominious defeat by the British General Allenby, who had led the offensive out of Egypt in 1916.
312. A headquarters report dated July 2, 1942, prematurely announced a "breakthrough" at El Alamein, coupled with a British retreat "back into the Nile delta." As late as July 9, 1942, Hitler also assessed the situation optimistically. Cf. Picker, pp. 109 f.
313. NSKK note, June 23, 1942. Erwin Kraus, born 1894 in Karlsruhe; expert on motorized vehicles by profession; up to this point, inspector with the NSKK technical training and maintenance department.
314. Picker, pp. 167 ff.
315. VB, No. 176, June 25, 1942.
316. Picker, p. 312.
317. Baur, p. 233.
318. DNB report, July 27, 1942.

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- 319. In a conspicuous move shortly thereafter, von Mannerheim commissioned the Finnish general Talvela to present Brauchitsch with the Grand Cross of the Finnish Liberty Cross. Cf. report in VB, No. 201, July 20, 1942.
- 320. See above, June 22, 1941.
- 321. According to the testimony of Paulus before the International Military Tribunal. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, VII, p. 290.
- 322. The decree was circulated among all troop contingents: the author's notes.
- 323. Report in VB, No. 182, July 1, 1942.
- 324. In 1784, as a favorite of Catherine the Great, Potemkin had planned the fortress of Sevastopol to serve primarily as a naval installation. It was not until the Crimean War of 1854–1855 that the brilliant Russian engineer general Totleben accorded the fortress its strategic importance in land warfare. The allied British-French-Turkish army had come ashore at Eupatoria in an attempt to take the fortress by land. The ensuing siege cut off the fortress for eleven consecutive months and took a heavy toll among the troops: 70, 000 of the allied forces and 128, 000 Russians supposedly died as a result. It was not until the fortifications were leveled that the siege proved successful. In the Second World War, too, it took eight months to take the fortress. This was only possible because of a deployment of ground forces consisting mostly of infantry, supported by heavy artillery fire and aerial bombardment.
- 325. DNB text, July 1, 1942.
- 326. Ordinance signed by Hitler on July 1, 1942. Cf. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 455. The award was to be accorded to all soldiers who had served under General Scherer in the defense of Kholm. See above, 1942, note 276. The Order of the Crimean Shield was not established until later that month. See below, July 25, 1942.
- 327. Backe issued a corresponding ordinance on July 5, 1942 (RGBL, 1942, I, p. 443). Cf. also Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 435
- 328. Report in VB, No. 187, July 6, 1942.
- 329. Report in VB, Nos. 192/193, July 11/12, 1942.
- 330. Report in VB, No. 191, July 10, 1942.
- 331. Report in VB, Nos. 192/193, July 11/12, 1942.
- 332. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 187 ff. As Hitler intended to cross the highway leading to Kerch in the same manner as Blücher had crossed the Rhine, he chose the code name Blücher for the operation.
- 333. See above, speech of May 30, 1942.
- 334. Report in VB, No. 194, July 13, 1942.
- 335. Report in VB, No. 195, July 14, 1942. Gerede's recall was in all likelihood due to the formation of a new government by Sukru Sartacoglu on July 10, 1942. Gerede's abilities had always greatly impressed Hitler. Cf. Picker, pp. 104 f.
- 336. Report in VB, No. 196, July 15, 1942.
- 337. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 463

338. See above, December 9, 1941. See also above, May 29, 1942.
339. DNB text, July 16, 1942. The communiqué referred to Gailani as the “Iraqi prime minister” as though he were still in office.
340. The Werewolf headquarters was situated in a small forest about fifteen kilometers to the north of Vinnitsa on the Bug River. The German name “Werwolf” (English: werewolf) once more recalled Hitler’s nickname and code name “Wolf” assumed in the early days of the movement. The Werewolf complex comprised a number of log cabins and two bunkers, the only fortifications at the site. Furnishings resembled those at the Wolfsschanze headquarters in East Prussia but, by contrast, the Werewolf headquarters made a much more favorable impression on the onlooker, according to contemporary reports. Cf. Picker, pp. 37 f. Also cf. Schmidt, p. 564.
341. Cf. report on this reception in Ferdinand Sauerbruch, *Das war mein Leben* (Bad Wörishofen, 1951), pp. 545 f. Born in 1892, Numan Menemencioglu served as Turkish foreign minister from August 13, 1942, until June 15, 1944. Hitler had made his acquaintance in Munich before the war. While the Führer had high hopes that Menemencioglu’s appointment would benefit Germany, he was, however, to be disappointed. Sauerbruch operated on the Turkish statesman twice in September 1942. In the course of this stay in Turkey, Sauerbruch also spoke before the Turkish Physicians’ Association. DNB report, October 10, 1942.
342. Cf. Picker, p. 181.
343. Actually, this particular system was not so very different from the German one, as Hitler apparently assumed. In the days of the German empire, township signs also revealed which defense district and headquarters a village belonged to.
344. Report in VB, No. 201, July 20, 1942.
345. Report in VB, No. 202, July 21, 1942.
346. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 191 ff.
347. Report in VB, No. 204, July 23, 1942.
348. Report in VB, No. 206, July 25, 1942.
349. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 193 ff. Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony (1142–1180) and of Bavaria (1156–1180); House of Braunschweig (English: Brunswick)–Lüneburg.
350. Hitler was probably referring to the conquest of Rostov on the Don River. Another objective had been city of Voronezh. However, this attempt had failed, and so Hitler preferred not to mention this similarly “essential” issue.
351. On July 31, 1942, the code name Feuerzauber (Fire Magic) was changed to Nordlicht (Northern Lights).
352. Critics such as Halder and Toppelskirch objected to the linkage of the two targets. Hitler’s dual move toward the Caucasus and the city of Stalingrad was a serious strategic mistake. By no means, however, did these two particular enterprises represent Hitler’s only shortcomings as a warlord. Practically all his military ventures from September 3, 1939,

- on were based on faulty strategies. The “victorious” campaigns against Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, and Greece could not change anything. The outcome of the war had long been determined before Hitler undertook these moves. The foray of September 3, 1939, allowed for only one outcome, cost the lives of millions of Germans, and laid waste all of Germany.
353. Cf. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 487. This particular pin was similar to the Shield of Kholm and the Narvik Shield. Like these, it was worn on the left sleeve. Hitler either designed these awards himself or gave detailed instructions for their production. On July 1, 1942, Hitler had already announced the issuing of an award connected to the Crimean campaign. See above, July 1, 1941. A relief of the Crimean Peninsula adorned the center of the medal topped by the sovereign symbol and the date 1941–1942.
354. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 481.
355. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 488.
356. RGBL, 1942, I, pp. 515 ff. Cf. also DNB announcement, August 26, 1942.
357. DNB texts, July 29 and 30, 1942.
358. DNB report, August 2, 1942.
359. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 512.
360. Report in VB, No. 221, August 9, 1942. It was Colonel General Wiese who placed the “Führer’s wreath” at the state ceremony in the Reich ministry for aviation on August 10, 1942.
361. Reports in VB, No. 228, August 16, 1942. Cf. also Schmidt, p. 566. Saffet Arikan, born 1888 in Anatolia; died in 1947; minister of education from 1937 to 1938; minister of defense from 1940 to 1941.
362. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 197 ff.
363. See above, May 4, 1942.
364. Report in VB, No. 226, August 14, 1942. The *Völkischer Beobachter* first mentioned this development in its August 14, 1942, issue, claiming that the American soldiers felt “lonely and isolated” in England.
365. See above, 1942, note 158.
366. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 566 ff.
367. Final OKW report of August 29, 1942, on the situation at Dieppe. Report in VB, No. 242, August 30, 1942.
368. Cf. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 535.
369. In accordance with the resolution adopted by the Greater German Reichstag on April 26, 1942. See above, April 26, 1942.
370. DNB texts, August 24, 1942. Otto Georg Thierack, born 1889 in Wurzen, (Saxony); suicide in 1946 at the Eselheide camp (Sennelager); Reich minister of justice from 1942 to 1945. Franz Schlegelberger, born 1876 in Königsberg. Senator Rothenberger, born 1896 in Cuxhaven.
371. RGBL, 1942, I, p. 535.
372. Report in VB, No. 244, September 1 1942.
373. Frank had angered Hitler by declaring at a lawyers’ convention in Munich that mercy also constituted a legal remedy.

374. After the dissolution of various smaller institutions, six concentration camps were already in operation before the war: Dachau (Bavaria), Sachsenhausen (Hesse), Ravensbrück (Mecklenburg), Buchenwald (near Weimar), Mauthausen (near Linz), and Flossenbürg (Upper Palatinate). It was at these locations that Hitler herded together his domestic opponents—Jews, Freemasons, Marxists, Catholic and Lutheran clergymen, and biblical scholars—in order to imprison, torture, and kill them. Additional sites (like Bergen-Belsen, Maidanek, and Narzweiler) were constructed during the war. Now Jews and patriots from the occupied countries were brought there, forced to do hard labor, abused in medical experiments, starved, and literally worked to death. For Thierack and the September 18, 1942, decree, cf. IMT, 654-PS.
375. DNB text, August 20, 1942.
376. Report in VB, No. 234, August 22, 1942. Stephan von Horthy, born 1904 in Poland; died 1942; engineer by profession; worked with the Ford Company; highly unpopular with the Axis powers because of his pro-Jewish stance. In February 1942, Goebbels had noted: “Horthy’s son is a pronounced Jew-lover, an Anglophile to the bones. . . in short, a personality with whom, if he were regent of Hungary, we would have some difficulties to iron out.” Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 95.
377. Cf. Baur, p. 224.
378. See above, April 12, 1938.
379. Report in VB, No. 238, August 26, 1942.
380. Report in VB, No. 240, August 28, 1942.
381. Report in VB, No. 244, September 1, 1942.
382. DNB text, September 1, 1942.
383. Report in VB, No. 249, September 6, 1942. Count Julius Karolyi had been married to Paulette von Horthy who had died in 1940.
384. Stalingrad was first mentioned in an OKW report dated August 28, 1942. In the weeks and months to come, Stalingrad made daily appearances in the reports. The words used to describe the situation became ever more grotesque.
385. Cf. Helmuth Greiner, *Die Oberste Wehrmachtsführung 1939–1943* (Wiesbaden, 1951), p. 407.
386. See above, August 20, 1942.
387. Cf. account on the situation in Heinz Linge, Sequence No. IV.
388. Henry Picker had already left the Werewolf headquarters in August. The last account he gives of Hitler’s table talk is dated July 31, 1942.
389. Helmut Heiber’s research convincingly argues that Hitler had already been contemplating the installation of a stenographer’s office at the Werewolf headquarters in early July 1942. Cf. Heiber, *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen*, p. 14.
390. *Ibid.*, p. 18. In the years 1942 to 1945, these earlier papers were referred to about a dozen times in the daily briefings, according to Heiber. The object of these referrals is not known, however. Nevertheless, it appears beyond reasonable doubt that none of the participants would question Hitler’s word outright and demand consultation of the protocols of

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- earlier meetings. Hitler himself looked at them only once in order to check some insignificant matter.
391. See above, speech of September 4, 1940.
392. See above, speech of December 10, 1940.
393. See above, order of the day, January 1, 1941.
394. See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
395. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 52.
396. DNB text, September 11, 1942.
397. Reports in VB, No. 259, September 16, 1942.
398. VB, No. 260, September 17, 1942.
399. Report in VB, No. 262, September 19, 1942. Juan Antonio Rios Morales, born 1888; died 1946; state president from 1942 to 1946.
400. DNB note, September 26, 1942. Rama VIII Mahidol, born 1925; king of Thailand from 1935 to 1946.
401. Report in VB, No. 264, September 21, 1942.
402. Report in VB, No. 268, September 25, 1942.
403. DNB text, September 25, 1942.
404. Ibid.
405. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 265. Hitler was so outraged by Jodl's behavior on September 7, 1942, that for many months he refused to shake the general's hand. Secretly he was scheming to replace the unruly military man with General Paulus. This proved impossible because Paulus was taken prisoner at Stalingrad. Moreover, Hitler always felt ill at ease when new faces appeared in his entourage. Apparently, he felt that Jodl's continued presence was the lesser of two evils.
406. Cf. Halder, p. 14. See also above, August 26, 1938.
407. Cf. Halder's war diary on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. The Wehrmacht issued Halder a dishonorable discharge on January 28, 1945. He was imprisoned at a number of concentration camps, such as Dachau. On April 28, 1945, American troops liberated him.
408. In Hitler's eyes, "the zealous belief in an idea" meant unquestioning obedience to him.
409. Kurt Zeitzler, born 1895; chief of staff of the First Panzer Division in the winter months of 1941–1942; promoted by Hitler to the rank of major general in February 1942; chief of the general staff to von Rundstedt in France from April 1942 on.
410. Reports in VB, No. 269, September 26, 1942.
411. DNB texts, September 27, 1942.
412. DNB text, September 29, 1942. Elly Ney, born September 27, 1882, in Düsseldorf; famous pianist.
413. DNB text, September 28, 1942.
414. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
415. DNB text, September 30, 1942.
416. Allusion to Churchill. He had visited Washington in June, journeyed first to Cairo, and then to Moscow in August. Hitler was greatly annoyed that he was not in a position to undertake similar voyages and

- that circumstances allowed him no more than flying around the Ukraine.
417. Allusion to a slogan contained in the Atlantic Charter.
 418. Allusion to the Commando raid at Dieppe. See above, August 19, 1942.
 419. Reference is to a retaliatory foray, which was launched in an attempt to hinder the Russian breakthrough in the area around Leningrad.
 420. This marked emphasis (see also below, speech of November 8, 1942) reveals that Hitler was apparently not as indifferent to this fact as he pretended. It is one of the often mentioned strange "coincidences" that the lost battle for Stalingrad was to mark the turning point of the war and the beginning of Hitler's downfall. See also below, note 460; October 29, 1942.
 421. Every time Hitler declared that time would tell if something was a mistake, time proved it so. See above, 1939, note 452.
 422. GPU or OGPU = abbreviation of Obedinyonnoye Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye (Unified State Political Administration) former (1922–1923) name for KGB, Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti, the Committee of State Security, that is, the Soviet Security Police.
 423. Hitler was referring to the experiences which he claimed to have had with the Russians in 1939. At the time, he had only too willingly entered into an alliance with the Soviet Union.
 424. Allied radar equipment managed to overcome the danger posed by German U-boats, despite German countermeasures, like the Metox instrument *Schnorchel* (snorkel).
 425. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
 426. See above, speech of April 26, 1942.
 427. In his speech of September 1, 1939, Hitler had avoided making any derogatory statements about the Jews. The threat, which he claimed to have made then, actually dated from an earlier speech on January 30, 1939. See above, speech of September 1, 1939; Vol. III, p. 1449. See also above, 1939, note 119.
 428. In a statement after the war, Rudolf Höss, the commander of Auschwitz, admitted killing more than two-and-a-half million people there. IMT, 3668-PS. Cf. also Martin Broszat, *Kommandant in Auschwitz, Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen von Rudolf Höss* (Stuttgart, 1958).
 429. Applause drowned out Hitler's subsequent remarks.
 430. In 1938, Hitler had repeatedly proclaimed that, either by a plebiscite or by the election of a Greater German Reichstag, the German Volk would undoubtedly bestow its blessings on what he called the "birth certificate of the Greater German Reich." See above, March 12, 1938. See also above, December 2, 1938.
 431. Illustrated report in VB, No. 277, October 4, 1942.
 432. DNB text, October 3, 1942.
 433. Living in Würzburg at the time, Fritz Bayerlein had initially served as chief of staff with the German Africa Corps. From June 1942 on, he had

- occupied a similar position with the German-Italian joint tank forces and was later promoted to the rank of lieutenant general. In cooperation with Rommel's widow, Bayerlein published a book written by her late husband. *Erwin Rommel, Krieg ohne Haß*, Fritz Bayerlein and Lucie-Maria Rommel, editors. (Bad Wörishofen, 1951). *English Translation Rommel Papers*, ed. Liddell-Hart.
434. DNB text, October 2, 1942.
435. Report in VB, No. 276, October 3, 1942.
436. Report in VB, No. 277, October 4, 1942.
437. DNB text, October 4, 1942.
438. DNB report, October 6, 1942.
439. A small commando attack on the Island of Sark in the English Channel had taken place on October 4, 1942.
440. Hitler could not maintain this challenge, because German prisoners of war in British hands greatly outnumbered the British troops whom the Wehrmacht had succeeded in capturing. This was particularly the case after Montgomery's offensive at El Alamein where he took a considerable number of new captives. Thus Hitler was forced to rescind this measure by May and labored to do so in the least conspicuous manner possible, as noted by Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 382. See below, May 13, 1943. See also below, 1943, note 213.
441. The so-called *Kommandobefehl* to implement this provision was issued later that month. See below, October 18, 1942.
442. VB, No. 281, October 8, 1942. A former member of a university militia unit, Aldo Vidussoni had risen to this post through connections. Old Fascists greatly disliked him, as is evident in Ciano's diary.
443. Report in VB, No. 280, October 7, 1942. Von Stauss had entered the Reichstag in the early 1930s and remained a member.
444. Report in VB, No. 283, October 10, 1942.
445. Report in VB, No. 287, October 14, 1942.
446. Report in VB, No. 289, October 16, 1942.
447. DNB text, October 25, 1942.
448. Army Report (A. 919), November 7, 1942.
449. *Ibid.*, No. 932.
450. The only convention this might have applied to was the Hague Convention on land warfare. Hitler could afford to make such an obviously incorrect claim only because the majority of Germany's military men were not familiar with the international conventions on the conduct of war and the laws covering these. For Hitler's claim that the Soviet Union was not a party to the Geneva Convention, see above, March 30, 1941.
451. IMT, 498-PS.
452. See above, 1941, note 136.
453. Cf. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 631. The insignia worn on the left forearm. consisted of a metal wheel with spikes surrounded by a laurel wreath set on a background which was made from a piece of cloth.
454. Cf. Rommel, p. 482.

455. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 536.
456. DNB texts, October 28, 1942.
457. DNB text, October 29, 1942.
458. See above, speech of September 30, 1942.
459. Born in 1895 in Fumanovka (Bessarabia), Marshal Semën Konstantinovich Timoshenko was one example of this. He had led a successful cavalry charge against the city. Another well-known military man, whose fame was closely connected to the site was the then chief of the Tsaritsyn garrison, Marshal Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov (born in 1881 in the Don region).
460. A similar strange "coincidence" was the circumstance that Hitler chose June 22 for his attack on Russia, unaware of the fact that his predecessor Napoleon had chosen exactly this date for the beginning of his disastrous campaign against Russia. See above, June 22, 1942. Another conspicuous example was the halfhearted plans of both dictators for an invasion of England, including their choice of the same ports for the crossing of the Channel and of nearly the same number of flat barges, which were completely unsuitable for such an undertaking. See above, pp. 2093 f., September 15, 1940, and below, Appendix, Index "Napoleon" (for example, 1941, note 550; 1942, notes 125, 203).
461. For Halder's recollections on this topic, see above, September 8, 1942.
462. Reports in VB, Nos. 308 and 309, November 4 and 5, 1942. The state funeral took place on November 7, 1942. Hitler did not attend, even though he was free at the time. He preferred to send Epp in his stead to lay the "Führer's wreath."
463. See above, speech of December 10, 1940.
464. The telegram reached Rommel at 1:30 p.m. on November 3, 1942. The German public was not informed of this telegram. Its text was not published until much later. Cf. Rommel, p. 268.
465. High command of the Italian armed forces.
466. Three special reports, which detailed German submarine advances in the waters between the North Pole and Madagascar, were aired on Sunday, November 1, 1942. These supposed victories were only propaganda to encourage the German people. In the period between November 8, 1942, and January 8, 1943, nine hundred seventy-one Allied vessels docked in North Africa with a total tonnage of 7.6 million tons. Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 80.
467. November 7, 1942, entry into the *War Diary of the Wehrmachtsführungsstab* (Supreme Council of the Wehrmacht).
468. See above, May 29, 1942.
469. See above, December 10, 1940.
470. Official title of all participants at the meeting; cf. DNB text, November 8, 1942.
471. See above, 1942, note 207.
472. November 8, 1942, entry into the *War Diary of the Wehrmachtsführungsstab*.

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- 473. The Bürgerbräukeller had not yet reopened because of the damage caused by the explosion three years earlier.
- 474. See above, speech of November 8, 1941.
- 475. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
- 476. VB, No. 314, November 10, 1942.
- 477. In 1932, the movement had at least eleven and a half million members, possibly even thirteen million. Hitler was evidently confusing the time ten years before with the years 1919 and 1920.
- 478. Hitler failed, however, to detail precisely what “lost wars” he had in mind.
- 479. According to Hitler, the Greater German Reich in 1939 did not yet constitute a “real state” in accordance with National Socialist doctrine.
- 480. Hitler was slowly beginning to admit more realistic casualty figures. This time, he claimed that a total of “not even three hundred fifty thousand men” had died up to this point.
- 481. See above, notes 420 and 460.
- 482. Every time Hitler asserted that time would tell if something was a mistake, time proved it so. See above, 1939, note 452.
- 483. These figures were once again based on Hitler’s vivid imagination and nothing else.
- 484. Before releasing the speech, Hitler inserted “in Europe” into the published version. After all, recent developments in Africa had undermined his claim. This insert proved that Hitler himself was beginning to realize the gravity of the situation. Soon thereafter, he would have also had to strike “in Europe” from the text.
- 485. See above, note 43.
- 486. See above, 1941, note 44. See also above, 1941, note 529. Further see above, 1942, note 202.
- 487. Roosevelt had indeed opened his Statement Concerning American Military Operations in French North Africa of November 7, 1942, with the following words:

“In order to forestall an invasion of Africa by Germany and Italy, which, if successful, would constitute a direct threat to America across the comparatively narrow sea from western Africa, a powerful American force equipped with adequate weapons of modern warfare and under American command is today landing on the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of the French colonies in Africa.

“The landing of this American army is being assisted by the British navy and air forces and it will, in the immediate future, be reinforced by a considerable number of divisions of the British army.

“This combined allied force, under American command, in conjunction with the British campaign in Egypt, is designed to prevent an occupation by the Axis armies of any part of northern or western Africa and to deny the aggressor nations a starting point from which to launch an attack against the Atlantic coast of the Americas.” AFR, Vol. V, pp. 547 ff.

488. This remark clearly shows that Hitler indeed suffered from a guilty conscience for having once more permitted himself to indulge in a vacation at the Berghof.
489. Hitler was referring to the rockets, the so-called V weapons. In the end, they proved incapable of influencing the course of history, just like all other “secret weapons,” like magnetic mines, automatic machine guns and thousand-ton panzers, to name only a few.
490. Report on this conference in Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 541 ff., and Schmidt, pp. 576 f.
491. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 541 f.
492. Although German troops were still there, the Allies successfully landed in 1944. See below, August 15, 1944.
493. DNB text, November 11, 1942.
494. Ibid.
495. As Toulon was quite far from the line of demarcation, the French fleet could easily have fled on word of the Italo-German invasion. This was the reason that Hitler used a trick; cf. OKW report of November 13, 1942.
496. During and after the First World War, Giraud had served for many years under Marshal Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey (1854–1934) in Africa and had become an expert on the area. As early as November 3, he was taken aboard an American submarine and later flown to General Eisenhower’s headquarters. Admiral Darlan was still in Africa on November 8, 1942, but ordered his troops to cease resisting the advances of the Allies.
497. DNB text, November 11, 1942.
498. DNB note, November 16, 1942.
499. Ibid. For the V weapons see below, 1944, May 16 and June 16 ff.
500. Illustrated report in VB, No. 323, November 19, 1942.
501. Cf. chapter “Stalingrad” in Kurt Zeitzler, *The Fatal Decisions* (New York, 1956). Cf. also chapter “Die Schlacht um Stalingrad” in Walter Görlitz, *Entscheidungsschlachten des 2. Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt, 1959). See further “Das Drama von Stalingrad” in von Moos, Vol. IV, pp. 128 ff., and H. Doerr, *Der Feldzug nach Stalingrad* (Darmstadt, 1955).
502. At the time, kings always addressed other kings and emperors as “brother.” Charles XII defeated the Russians in the Battle of Narva on November 20, 1700.
503. Cf. Doerr, p. 74.
504. In the winter of 1941–1942, Major General Scherer had been encircled in the city of Kholm, where he had faced off the enemy for over three months. He had been supplied by airlifts until other German troops came to his rescue. See above, May 30, 1942. However, the men surrounded in Kholm had numbered only two thousand in contrast to the three hundred thousand soldiers isolated in Stalingrad (!).
505. See above, 1939, note 771.
506. Report in VB, No. 329, November 25, 1942.

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- 507. See above, speech of April 29, 1937. The speech before a Kreisleiter gathering at the Vogelsang Ordensburg is on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
- 508. Cf. chapter "Die Selbstversenkung der französischen Flotte in Toulon" in von Moos, Vol. IV, pp. 105 ff.
- 509. *Mein Kampf*, p. 754.
- 510. DNB text, November 27, 1942.
- 511. These numbers once more were figments of Hitler's imagination and had no basis in reality. Although some captured enemy soldiers were released, as in the case of the loyalty displayed by the inhabitants of the Dieppe region in face of a British commando assault, there was no release of prisoners of war on the scale indicated by Hitler.
- 512. Report in VB, No. 333, November 29, 1942.
- 513. Cf. Rommel, pp. 314 f.
- 514. Report in VB, No. 337, December 3, 1942.
- 515. Cf. Heiber, pp. 50 ff.
- 516. VB, No. 338, December 4, 1942.
- 517. Report in VB, No. 339, December 5, 1942.
- 518. Reports in VB, Nos. 341 and 343, December 7 and 9, 1942.
- 519. Report in VB, No. 342, December 8, 1942.
- 520. Report in VB, No. 344, December 10, 1942.
- 521. Report in VB, No. 347, December 13, 1942.
- 522. Report in VB, No. 345, December 11, 1942.
- 523. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 705.
- 524. RGBI, 1942, I, p. 725.
- 525. See above, April 26, 1942.
- 526. RGBI, 1942, I, pp. 733 ff.
- 527. This provision made the party a "corporation under public law," whose statutes would be laid down by the Führer. See above, January 30, 1934. Hitler had attempted to block this move out of fear that he would have to give up part of his absolute control over the party.
- 528. Cf. Heiber, pp. 84 ff.
- 529. See above, speech of March 25, 1938.
- 530. Hitler made it sound as though the summer offensive had been stopped at Voronezh for such a long time because of negligence. This was not true, since the reason for the delay had been the strength of the defense mounted by the Russian troops and the resulting inability of the German units to take and hold this strategic location. This delay was one of the reasons for the Stalingrad tragedy. See above, July 23, 1942.
- 531. In the years from 1939 to 1943, Hitler's speeches before officer candidates were characterized by an unjustified exuberance. See above, January 24, 1940. For the typical content of these appeals, see above, speeches of May 3 and December 18, 1940.
- 532. Göring spoke instead of Hitler on December 10, 1942. DNB report, December 18, 1942. Goebbels remarked that, according to Colonel Martin, "the speech was not a very happy one. Delivery was poor, and

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- some remarks about death on the battlefield were in rather poor taste.”
Goebbels *Diaries*, p. 250.
533. Cf. Heiber, pp. 85 f.
534. Mussolini was suffering from a stomach ulcer at the time.
535. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 556. Reports on the talks also in Schmidt, pp. 577 f.
536. Ibid. 557.
537. DNB text, December 20, 1942.
538. Cf. Erich von Manstein, *Verlorene Siege* (Bonn, 1955).
539. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 204 ff.
540. This appendix is not printed: *ibid.* The plenipotentiary for Greece, appointed on April 28, 1941, represented the political, economic, and cultural interests of Germany in Greece.
541. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
542. Cf. Greiner, p. 431.

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Notes

1. See above, January 1, 1940.
2. See above, January 1, 1941.
3. See above, January 1, 1942.
4. See below, January 1, 1943.
5. According to the testimony of Paulus before the International Military Tribunal (IMT, *Blaue Serie*, VII, p. 290), Hitler had declared before the summer offensive of 1942: "If I don't get the oil from Maikop and Grozny, then I'll just have to liquidate this war." See above, July 1, 1942.
6. See above, speech of November 8, 1941: "The last battalion on the field will be a German one!"
7. See above, January 30, 1939.
8. See above, January 30, 1939
9. On the law concerning the term of the Reichstag, see below, law of January 25, 1943. On the decree concerning governmental legislation, see below, decree of May 10, 1943.
10. See above, April 26, 1943.
11. See below, July 25, 1943.
12. Goebbels noted: "For example, Manstein, as Göring told me, on one occasion was even prevailed upon to suggest to the Führer that he lay down the supreme command. This didn't actually happen, as he was told off before he could carry out this intention, but the Führer got to know of it anyway and has drawn the necessary conclusion about Manstein." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 265
13. In the course of 1943, Hitler's constant defamation of Göring and Schirach increasingly influenced Goebbels, as is evident in his diary entries from this period. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 295, 297, 307 f., 337, 364, 478 regarding Göring and pp. 309, 319, 342, and 362 f. regarding Schirach.
14. See above, August 7, 1940.
15. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 362 f.
16. Before the Nuremberg Court on April 1, 1946, von Ribbentrop testified regarding a related conversation between Hitler and Himmler in 1943: "I am not aware of any details in this case. I just know that, in my presence, Himmler suggested that Hitler should haul Schirach before the Volksgericht for one reason or another and put him on trial." IMT, *Blaue Serie*, X, p. 365.
17. Hitler always insisted that the British praised Rommel in an attempt to explain their defeat at Cyrenaica in 1942. Only reluctantly did Hitler admit to the extraordinary gifts of his general. Nevertheless, he insisted that Rommel's success stemmed from Hitler's earlier realization of the potential of motorized vehicles and, therefore, the Führer actually deserved the credit for these advances. Cf. Picker, p. 164.

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18. See above, speech of April 26, 1942. "If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give his blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible."
19. Cf. A. Vagts, "Unconditional surrender—vor und nach 1943," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 7 (Munich, 1959), pp. 280 ff.; Hermann Mau and Helmut Krausnick, *Deutsche Geschichte der jüngsten Vergangenheit 1933–1945* (Tübingen, 1956), p. 157.; Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1955), pp. 323 ff.; Bernd Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende* (Zurich, 1948), Vol. II, p. 258.; Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat* (Munich, 1969); Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (New York, 1948–1953), Vol. IV; Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, 1948), Vol. II, pp. 1570 ff.
20. See above, p. 1136.
21. See above, 1939 Major Events in Summary.
22. See above, October 3, 1939.
23. Ibid.
24. See above, June 22, 1941.
25. Von Moos, Vol. III, p. 69; *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Vol. 10, p. 532.
26. *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Vol. 10, p. 515.
27. R. E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt und Hopkins* (Hamburg, 1950), pp. 565 ff. The British ministry of information published an official communiqué on the Casablanca Conference on January 27, 1943. Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 94; Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York, 1948, revised edition, 1950, pp. 696–697.
28. See above, May 28, 1940.
29. See above, June 22, 1940.
30. Christoph Probst, Hans Scholl, and his sister Sophia were students at the University of Munich and together they published the "*Blätter der weissen Rose*." These fliers strongly criticized Hitler's regime and its abuses of power. They received support from many other students. The philosophy professor Hans Huber encouraged them greatly. On February 18, 1943, they distributed fliers by secretly dropping them from above into the Lichthof court of the University of Munich. The following quotation perhaps best illustrates their determined stand against those in power at the time: "Profoundly shaken, our Volk faces the tragic end of our men at Stalingrad. The 'ingenious strategy' of an irresponsible World War private first class has senselessly driven three hundred thousand Germans to death and ruin. Are we willing to sacrifice what remains of Germany's youth to the base lust for power of this party clique? The day of judgment has come, Germany's youth passes judgment on the most despicable tyranny ever to befall the German Volk." Tragically, the three students were seen dropping the fliers and arrested. Freisler sentenced them to death on February 21, 1943, after they fearlessly acknowledged their actions and bluntly told

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him their opinion of him. Sophia Scholl told him: "You know just as well as we do that this war is lost. Why do you behave in such a cowardly way and why can you not simply face it?" Further readings on the subject: Inge Scholl, *Die weisse Rose* (Frankfurt, 1952); Ricarda Huch, "Die Aktion Münchner Studenten gegen Hitler" in *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, September/October issue (Zurich, 1948); John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *The Nemesis of Power* (New York, 1953).

31. DNB text, January 1, 1943.
32. Author's expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
33. What Hitler alleged that the Allies had done was simply what he had done to the nations which he had subjugated.
34. Reference is to Roosevelt.
35. DNB text, January 1, 1943.
36. Hitler usually claimed these decisions would determine the fate of the German people for the next one thousand years. See above, May 9, 1940. See above, November 8, 1941.
37. Here Hitler acted as though he would have been willing to "make compromises" with the enemy after September 9, 1939.
38. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 565.
39. Report in VB, No. 2, January 2, 1943.
40. Report in VB, No. 3, January 3, 1943.
41. Thomsen served as attaché at the Washington embassy until 1941.
42. DNB text, January 1, 1943.
43. Cf. Sauckel's notes on Speer's call from the Führer headquarters on January 4, 1943. IMT, 556 (13)-PS.
44. Report in VB, No. 8, January 8, 1943.
45. DNB text, January 7, 1943. Hitler feared a Turkish intervention, along with a move by the Allies. This concern was not unfounded, as a meeting at Adana between Churchill and Ismet İnönü showed on January 31, 1943.
46. Von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 132.
47. As mentioned earlier, the excellence of the Russian artillery forces played a decisive role in Russia's struggle both against Napoleon and against Hitler. See above, June 30, 1941.
48. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 568.
49. Cf. Schmidt, p. 561.
50. DNB text, January 13, 1943.
51. Up to this point, the title had always been "head of state."
52. Report in VB, No. 14, January 14, 1943.
53. DNB note, January 12, 1943. Franz Hueber, born 1894 in Gründberg (Upper Austria); served as Austrian minister of justice in 1930 and in 1938.
54. Propaganda and the German media made ample use of this occasion: big headlines were placed above retouched photographs of Paulus with the Oak Leaf Knight's Cross.
55. The units in question were the Army Corps IV, VIII, XI, and LI. The following contingents from the XIV Panzer Corps and XLVIII Panzer

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- Corps also participated: Infantry Divisions 44, 71, 76, 113, 295, 297, 350, 371, 376, 384, and 389; the 100th Light Division; Motorized Divisions 3, 29, and 60; Panzer Divisions 14, 16, and 24; one antiaircraft division; the 1st Romanian Cavalry Division; the 20th Romanian Infantry Division; and one Croatian regiment.
56. Report in VB, No. 20, January 20, 1943.
 57. DNB text, January 21, 1943.
 58. DNB notes, January 21, 1943.
 59. Cf. Heinz Schröter, *Stalingrad—bis zur letzten Patrone* (Lengerich, 1953). See also the testimony of Paulus at Nuremberg; IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. VII, p. 320.
 60. Text published in von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 133.
 61. See above, speech of February 15, 1942.
 62. Hitler accorded little importance to the title “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” which would have been more appropriate in the context of passing laws and issuing decrees. He was partial to the simplicity of “Der Führer, ” although in official statements addressed to foreign countries he was also referred to as “Der Deutsche Reichskanzler.” Hitler signed as “Der Führer und Reichskanzler” for the last time when he placed his signature beneath a relatively unimportant law on aviation. RGBl, 1943, I, p. 69. In view of his powers, he apparently felt that the title of “Reichskanzler” was unimportant and, therefore, he did without afterwards.
 63. RGBl, 1943, I, p. 65.
 64. RGBl, 1943, I, pp. 67 f.
 65. Cf. Bullock, p. 690. The Battle of Thermopylae took place in central Greece in 480 BC.
 66. See above, Göring’s speech of September 9, 1939.
 67. VB, No. 30, January 30, 1943.
 68. VB, No. 34, February 2, 1943.
 69. In the German original, Göring used the verb *kämpfen* (to fight) instead of the more appropriate term *liegen* (to lie) in the context of this parody. He feared that this might not produce the desired propagandist effect. The original quotation ran as follows: “*Wanderer, kommst du nach Sparta, so berichte, du habest uns liegen gesehen, wie das Gesetz es befahl.*” (If you come to Sparta, wanderer, then tell of us, tell that you saw us lying [dead], as the law commanded.) Leonidas, king of Sparta, defended the Pass of Thermopylae to the death against a much greater force of Persians.
 70. See above, speech of May 30; 1942.
 71. DNB text, January 30, 1943.
 72. Author’s expression, cf. Vol. I, p. 49.
 73. This statement was a blatant lie, as the reason for this development had been the German attack on Danzig and Poland. Hitler had repeatedly been warned about the possible consequences of this move.

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74. DNB report, January 30, 1943. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, born 1903 in Ried (Upper Austria); hanged in Nuremberg in 1946; state secretary for security from 1938 on.
75. DNB text, January 30, 1943. While, in one order of the day, Raeder maintained that he had requested retirement “in consideration of his [poor] state of health,” it was obvious that the previous differences of opinion between Hitler and himself had played a decisive role in this development.
76. Report in VB, No. 32, February 2, 1943. Ernst von Kleist, born in 1881 in Braunfels; died in 1945 in Russia. Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs, born in 1881 in Dessau; died in 1954 at the Roesberg fortress outside Cologne. Ernst Busch, born in 1885 in Essen-Steele; died in 1945 in England.
77. DNB report, January 30, 1943.
78. VB, No. 32, February 1, 1943. This issue also features the telegrams sent to Victor Emmanuel III and Mussolini.
79. Report, *ibid*.
80. DNB text, January 31, 1943. The first mention of the Sixth Army as the unit which had been encircled was in an OKW report dated January 25, 1943.
81. Walter Heitz, born in 1878 in Berlin; died in February 1944 in Russia.
82. Hitler gave Rommel the choice either of judgment by the notorious Volksgerichtshof and a dishonorable discharge from the Wehrmacht or of committing suicide, thereby preserving his pension in favor of his family. Rommel chose suicide.
83. Among those taken prisoner by the Soviet forces were the following military leaders: Colonel General Walter Heitz (VIII Army Corps); Infantry General Strecker (XI Army Corps); Lieutenant General Arthur Schmidt (chief of staff); Lieutenant General Helmut Schloemer (XIV Panzer Corps); Lieutenant General Walter von Seydlitz-Kurtzbach (LI Army Corps); Major General Pfeffer (297th Infantry Division); Lieutenant General Edler von Daniels (376th Infantry Division); Major General Arno von Lenski (24th Panzer Division); Major General Martin Lattmann (14th Panzer Division); Major General Roske (71st Infantry Division); Major General Wolf (head of the artillery); Major General Moritz von Drebber; Major General Dr. Korfes; Major General (Medical) Dr. Renoldi; and the Romanian Brigadier General Homilu Dimitriu.
84. On May 26, 1941, Admiral Lütjens sent the following radio message on the situation of the *Bismarck*: “Ship unmaneuverable. We will fight to the last shell. Long live the Führer! Fleet Commander.” In view of the hopelessness of the situation, Lütjens ordered the ship sunk with the crew of two thousand men aboard. See above, May 26, 1941.
85. The commander of the 371st Infantry Division, Major General Stempel, shot himself on January 26, 1943. Major General Alexander von Hartmann, commander of the 71st Infantry Division, died that same

day. Without cover, he stood on a railway dam and shot at the advancing Russian troops himself.

86. General Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma was a perfect example of this. The commander of the German Africa Corps gave himself up on November 4, 1942, following the British breakthrough at EI Alamein. He then went on to dine with Montgomery.
87. Along with the generals, about ninety-one thousand German soldiers were taken prisoner in Stalingrad, the majority of whom were half-starved, frostbitten, and at the end of their strength. According to official statistics compiled in the Federal Republic of Germany, only five thousand of these men returned to Germany after the war. Following the ordeal in Stalingrad, most of them were too weak to survive the rigors of Russian prisoner-of-war camps. Large numbers of them are said to have died already in the winter of 1943, victims of a typhoid epidemic. Although it is hard to believe, these men were far luckier than those millions of German soldiers who were captured later and many of whom remained in captivity until 1955. However, any army fighting the Red Army had to realize that its prisoners of war would not be treated any better than the Red Army treats its own men. International conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war simply demand that they be treated like the captor's own troops. In the case of Russia, the conditions of war captivity are naturally difficult for the foreigner, who is not used to the harsh climate and the persistent malnutrition.

In the Second World War, the situation was further complicated by the fact that, in the years 1941 and 1942, Russian prisoners of war were kept by the German side in conditions that constituted an obvious breach of all international conventions on war captivity. Hundreds of thousands of Russians were either liquidated or died as a result of starvation and cold, without any documentation of their fate.

In this connection, the presidential council of the German Red Cross published statistics on February 1, 1963, concerning the fate of captives both in Germany and in Russia. The German Red Cross reported that of the hundred twenty-four thousand three hundred fifty searches requested from 1957 on by German relatives of soldiers on the eastern front, the Moscow Red Cross had processed a hundred seven thousand two hundred thirty-eight replies. Some 32.4% of these inquiries were successful in determining the fate of the missing soldiers. This amounts to thirty-five thousand cases documented by a country which in return was furnished with a mere eight thousand five hundred accounts for hundreds of thousands of its citizens who vanished in the German sphere of influence at the time. Cf. publication "Suchdienstzeitung" of February 1, 1963, printed in *Fränkisches Volksblatt*, February 2, 1963.

88. Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, *Tagebuch der Versuchung* (Stuttgart, 1950), p. 42. Cf. also report by an American journalist allowed to interview the surviving generals of Stalingrad on February 4, 1943 in Edgar Snow, *People on Our Side* (1944).

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89. Only after his court photographer Heinrich Hoffmann had asserted the veracity of the pictures in question did Hitler finally realize that the news was not merely a fabrication. Cf. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 12.
90. Picker, pp. 124 ff.
91. This was not true, as Hitler promoted Freiherr von Richthofen field marshal only three weeks later, on February 16, 1943. Model was promoted to this rank in 1944, and the nominations of Schörner and Greim followed in 1945.
92. Reference is apparently to the Lubyanka KGB prison in Moscow.
93. In August 1949, the author [Max Domarus] visited a certain Gustav Zimmermann in Frankfurt am Main, who claimed to have transmitted, as a German secret agent, detailed instructions from Hitler to Paulus in February 1943, concerning the future behavior expected of Paulus by the Führer. Fluent in Russian, Zimmermann claimed to have served repeatedly as a secret agent of the OKW and to have operated largely behind enemy lines. He presented the author with numerous documents and photographs that appeared to substantiate his claim of the following events:

After receiving the instructions from Hitler, Zimmermann was dressed up as a regular first lieutenant of the Red Army and provided with the necessary papers. Having penetrated Soviet airspace, he parachuted from a German plane in the vicinity of Moscow. In the city, he requisitioned a vehicle and a chauffeur at a local military compound. From there, Zimmermann had himself driven to the villa at which Paulus was being held in a suburb of Moscow. He reached it in the early morning hours, during which there was little likelihood of Russian officers being at the site or other incidents occurring. By insisting on seeing Paulus, Zimmermann managed to have the guards on duty let him pass through the villa's gates. Paulus was brought to him. While Zimmermann identified himself, Paulus remained highly suspicious of him, since he did not recall having met the secret agent previously. However, once Zimmermann related facts known only to Paulus, he was convinced that Zimmermann came on behalf of the Führer and listened to the following message:

The Führer ordered that under no circumstances was Paulus to make any public statements directed against Germany and its present regime. Should he dare to give in to Russian pressure to denounce the Reich in any form, he would have to face a court-martial after the war.

After Zimmermann had ended, Paulus signified without further comment that he had taken note of the Führer's order.

Zimmermann recalled to the author that he had encountered no adversities in leaving the villa where Paulus was imprisoned and returning to the center of the city where he dismissed both chauffeur and car. He then joined a troop transport to the front. This was relatively easy to do, as the military police routinely searched only homecoming contingents for foreign agents. Once at the border,

Zimmermann searched for gaps in the frontline with the help of a shortwave transmitting radio and escaped.

Zimmermann's story offers an explanation of why Paulus was so reluctant to commit himself on the issue during his captivity in Russia. It was not until August 22, 1944, that is, after the invasion of France by the Allies, that Paulus signed an anti-Fascist appeal propagated by the "National Committee for a Free Germany" and thereby joined this association of German emigrés and officers who were prisoners of war. Taken from the author's notes, Domarus archives.

94. DNB special report, February 3, 1943.
95. Hitler had invented these figures, possibly by analogy with "the Sixth Army fighting off six armies of the enemy." A citation in *Das grosse Weltgeschehen* indicates the involvement of a total of fifteen Soviet armies; cf. von Moos, p. 135.
96. See above, speeches of September 30, 1942, and November 8, 1942.
97. See below, Appendix, Hitler's Victories and Defeats in the Second World War.
98. Report in VB, No. 35, February 4, 1943.
99. Report in VB, No. 36, February 5, 1943.
100. Report in VB, No. 37, February 6, 1943.
101. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 265.
102. For example, Field Marshal von Kluge received two hundred fifty thousand Reichsmarks on his sixtieth birthday. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 71. On various other occasions, generals such as Keitel received two hundred fifty thousand Reichsmarks, while Milch got double that amount. See above, 1935, note 232a.
103. For a report on this discussion, see Erich von Manstein, *Verlorene Siege* (Bonn, 1955), pp. 395 and 437.
104. See above, p. 35.
105. The following speakers participated in the conference: Bormann, Goebbels, Speer, Sauckel, Funk, Backe, Ley, and state secretary Ganzenmüller. General von Unruh—in the framework of "total war"—was responsible for searching the rear areas of the front and the heartland for able men, a mission that earned him the nickname "Heldenklau" ("thief of heroes"). For General von Unruh's earlier involvement with the *Soldatenbund*, see above, 1937, note 1.
106. DNB text, February 8, 1943.
107. It was common belief among the Allies that German pressure had led to Ciano's removal from the office of foreign minister because of his frequent, at times outspoken, anti-German stand. In Germany, politicians suspected that Italy was attempting to enter into peace negotiations through the Vatican and that Ciano's new mission, as chief of the Italian delegation there, reflected a change in Mussolini's loyalties. For his own part, Ciano speculated that this reassignment was intended to punish him for his consultations with Farinacci and other Fascists, who were plotting against the Duce for a number of reasons. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 570.

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108. Report in VB, No. 41, February 10, 1943.
109. DNB text, February 8, 1943.
110. DNB text, February 16, 1943.
111. See above, statement of February 1, 1943. Report on von Richthofen's appointment in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1943. For a biographical sketch of von Richthofen see above, 1939, note 565.
112. Reports on Hitler's stay at the headquarters are given in Manstein, pp. 454 ff. Cf. also Baur, pp. 231 ff. Cf. further illustrated reports in VB, Nos. 79–83, March 20–24, 1943.
113. The retired director of the domain Major Erhard Krause of Würzburg was so kind as to provide the author with the text of this proclamation.
114. The "reasons" were actually not well known, unless you considered Hitler to have been responsible. These various allusions were meant to create the impression with the soldiers that the allied troops had been responsible for the disaster at Stalingrad.
115. Ever since the days of General von Ludendorff and his popular book *Der totale Krieg*, the term had been much bandied about. It became the central slogan once war had begun. Compared with the general currency which the catchword had acquired since then, Goebbels's speech was far from the most notorious proclamation. For instance, at a rally in Dortmund on March 18, 1943, Sauckel had declared: "Total war [means] a short war!" Report in VB, No. 49, March 20, 1943. Total war was theatrically proclaimed one last time on July 20, 1944, but aside from the closing of several theaters and cinemas nothing much came of it.
116. In the 18th century, the "Kasper" was derived from the character of "Hanswurst." The Kasper, a key figure like the Harlequin in the *commedia dell'arte*, became the protagonist of the German "Kasperletheater," a puppet theater for children. At the beginning of the play, he rhetorically asks: "*Seid ihr alle da?*" ("Are you all here?") The children reply by shouting: "*Jaaah!*" This questioning resembles the rituals often celebrated at the Punch and Judy shows or at gospel services. It had been Hitler, however, who had first used this puppet-show approach: see above, p. 792, speech of March 16, 1936, and 1936, note 87.
117. DNB pronouncement from the Führer headquarters, February 21, 1943. Colonel General Heinz Guderian had led a panzer army to the gates of Moscow before Hitler had relieved him of his command.
118. DNB text, February 24, 1943.
119. See above, 1943, note 114.
120. Reference is to all territories occupied by German troops.
121. Order directed to AOK 16 and AOK 18. Original on file at the state archives, Göttingen.
122. This was the same tactic Hitler had earlier used to protect the party's leadership from any "legal consequences" which their actions might have entailed.

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123. *Les Lettres secrètes échangées par Hitler et Mussoline* (Paris, 1946), pp. 143 ff.
124. On Hitler's conception of the workings of *Vorsehung*, see above, p. 40.
125. Report in VB, No. 61, March 2, 1943.
126. VB, No. 62, March 3, 1943.
127. *Allgemeine Heeres-Mitteilungen* (342), April 21, 1943, p. 233.
128. DNB text, March 4, 1943.
129. Cf. Heiber, pp. 143 ff.
130. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 279 ff.
131. Program to release laborers for deployment along the eastern front.
132. Reports on these talks in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 280 ff.
133. *Ibid.*
134. General Karl Bodenschatz served as Göring's adjutant and as his contact with the Führer headquarters. At the time, Field Marshal Sperrle was the Luftwaffe fleet commander in France.
135. Reference is made to the speech of Goebbels on total war; see above, February 18, 1943.
136. For details on this air raid, see OKW report of March 9, 1943.
137. Reports on Hitler's visit are found in Manstein, pp. 467 and 482.
138. This statement is along the lines of an earlier claim: "If I don't get the oil from Maikop and Grozny, then I'll just have to liquidate this war." See above, July 1, 1942, and 1943, note 5. The city of Nikopol was lost in the early days of February 1944. Despite the defeat, Hitler was no more willing to end the war effort than he had been after the loss of the Caucasus.
139. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 294.
140. Allusion to Manstein's intention to advise Hitler to lay down command of the armed forces. See above, February 6, 1943.
141. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 294.
142. Report on the meetings between Rommel and Hitler on March 10 and 11, 1943, in Rommel, p. 372.
143. See above, 1943, Major Events in Summary.
144. A connected communiqué was not published until two months later; see below, May 11, 1943.
145. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 295. Cf. also Rommel, pp. 373 ff.
146. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 137.
147. For related remarks, see below, speech of March 21, 1943.
148. Cf. Schlabendorff, pp. 93 ff. This headquarters was located in a forest west of Smolensk.
149. See above, Introduction, note 29.
150. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 300.
151. Report in VB, No. 73 [74 ?], March 15, 1943.
152. DNB text, March 16, 1943.
153. Report in VB, No. 77, March 18, 1943.
154. Report on the talk in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 313 ff.
155. Illustrated report in VB, No. 93, April 4, 1943.

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156. This was the heading of a six-column reproduction of the speech. Report in VB, No. 81, March 22, 1943. This quotation is in accordance with the text published by the DNB; see above, 1943, note 152.
157. Reference is to two headquarters: Wolfsschanze in East Prussia and Werewolf in the Ukraine.
158. This generosity of Hitler was apparently to placate his guilty conscience as he set out for yet another vacation with Eva Braun at the Berghof.
159. Hitler seemed to have long forgotten a solemn avowal which he had made in 1935. Should war break out, he would never send "even a single woman to the front." Such a hideous deed would besmirch his honor as a German man, as he had still maintained back then. See above, speech of September 9, 1935.
160. Although these figures fail to convey an accurate picture of the enormous numbers of casualties suffered, Hitler no longer felt he had to step back from admitting to over a half million men dead.
161. Cf. Rudolf Pechel, *Deutscher Widerstand* (Zurich, 1947), p. 162. Cf. also Sclabrendorff, p. 99.
162. The claim that Hitler ordered a last-minute change in the schedule cannot be substantiated. Hitler could not remain at the exhibition any longer, as his presence was required at the laying of the wreath at Unter den Linden and the following parade. Hitler's tour of the annual exhibition reflected more a requirement of protocol than any actual interest on his part, as it bridged the time between the crowd leaving the Zeughaus of the Lichthof and proceeding to the Unter den Linden memorial to continue the festivities. In earlier years, the exhibition had been dedicated to a variety of subjects. In 1940, trophies from the campaign against Poland were on display there. Souvenirs and objects of art confiscated in the move against France constituted the 1941 collection. Material gathered during the advances in the Soviet Union was exhibited in 1942.
163. A protocol of the discussion of the situation that day has the heading: "Report on the situation at noon on March 21, 1943, at the Berghof. Start: 12:16." Cf. Heiber, p. 198. As Heiber himself observed, this citation has to be a mistake, since Hitler was attending the *Heldengedenktage* (Heroes' Memorial Day) festivities in Berlin.
164. Reports in VB, No. 90, March 31, 1943. In accordance with Hitler's specifications, the urn of the cremated Reichssportführer was placed in the Langenmarkthalle on the Berlin Reichssportfeld. Cf. VB, No. 124, May 4, 1943.
165. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 563 ff.
166. DNB text, April 2, 1943. It is noteworthy that the term "quarters," (that is, the Berghof) and not "headquarters" was used.
167. Report in VB, No. 94, April 4, 1943.
168. DNB text, April 7, 1943.
169. Report on the conversation in Schmidt, p. 563.
170. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 352, entry of May 7, 1943.
171. DNB text, April 11, 1943.

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172. DNB report, April 10, 1943.
173. DNB text, April 14, 1943.
174. For many years, a fierce verbal battle raged whether the German or the Russian military was responsible for the massacre of Katyn. The exiled Polish government in London became very outspoken on the topic, and the bickering continued even before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. [There is now more evidence that Katyn was a Soviet atrocity.]
175. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 332.
176. Ibid., p. 348.
177. Ibid., p. 354.
178. For the envoy Schmidt's protocol of the April 17, 1943, discussion, cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. X, pp. 463 f.
179. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 352.
180. Ibid., p. 357.
181. DNB text, April 18, 1943.
182. Allusion to the reign of Béla Kun in 1919.
183. DNB report, April 18, 1943.
184. DNB text, April 20, 1943.
185. Ibid.
186. VB, No. 112/113, April 22/23, 1943.
187. DNB text, April 22, 1943.
188. Cf. Speer's report in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 341 ff.
189. DNB text, April 23, 1943.
190. Report in VB, No. 115/116, April 25/26, 1943.
191. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 369. From January 8, 1942, until April 21, 1942, an army corps under the command of Infantry General Graf Brockdorff-Ahlefeld was encircled in the Demyansk area and isolated. An airlift kept them supplied much as with General Scherer's troops at Kholm. Despite this valiant effort, the area had to be evacuated on February 26, 1943, and left to the advancing Russian troops. General Graf Brockdorff-Ahlefeld suddenly died on May 9, 1943. Hitler ordered a "state funeral" in honor of the general. Field Marshal Busch placed the Führer's wreath during the commemorative service at the Berlin Zeughaus on May 13, 1943.
192. Report in VB, No. 119, April 29, 1943.
193. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 348.
194. VB, Nos. 121/122, May 1/2, 1943.
195. Report in VB, No. 120, April 30, 1943.
196. DNB text, April 30, 1943.
197. VB, No. 123, May 3, 1943.
198. DNB report, May 1, 1943.
199. Report on this discussion is found in Manstein, pp. 488 ff.
200. Report in VB, No. 125, May 5, 1943.
201. Information published regarding Lutze's death stated that he had been the victim of a car accident while traveling on official business. From Hitler's eulogy, however, it is evident that Lutze's crash took place

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- while he was on a family trip, as one of his children was also killed, and two of his surviving sons sustained injuries.
202. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 351 ff.
203. VB, No. 128, May 8, 1943.
204. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 355. See above, October 15, 1942.
205. Report of Hitler's words in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 354 ff.
206. Mikhail Nikolayevich Tukhachevsky (1893–1937), commander in the Russian Civil War and leader of the Russian offensive in the Russo-Polish War (1919–1920); on contrived evidence smuggled into the country by German agents, Marshal Tukhachevsky was put on trial with numerous other generals in Russia in 1936; the following year, he was sentenced to death for treason and executed.
207. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 354 f.
208. *Mein Kampf*, p. 745. "At the time, a few semblances of states grown old and impotent were drummed together and the attempt was made, using this junk (*Gerümpel*) destined for destruction, to show a bold front to an enterprising world coalition." See above, p. 57.
209. Hitler slipped up here, admitting that the German government bore responsibility for the Stalingrad disaster, although, only a few minutes earlier, he had put all the blame on Germany's allies.
210. Reports on these talks in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 353 ff.
211. RGBL, 1943, I, p. 295.
212. DNB text, May 10, 1943.
213. Report in VB, No. 131, May 11, 1943.
214. See above, November 3, 1942. See also above, January 24, 1943.
215. DNB text, May 13, 1943.
216. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 352.
217. DNB text, May 11, 1943.
218. DNB text, May 13/14, 1943.
219. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 379.
220. Cf. Heiber, p. 207.
221. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 382.
222. *Ibid.*, p. 383.
223. *Ibid.*, p. 386. According to Hitler's ambitious designs, Burgundy was to be annexed to the Reich as an ancient historic "Reichsland."
224. *Ibid.*
225. DNB report, May 19, 1943.
226. Cf. Heiber, pp. 205 ff. The result of this conversation was a drafted directive dated May 19, 1943, which excluded Italian troops from the defense of the Balkans: "The development of the situation has made it necessary to conduct the defense of the Balkans solely with German and Bulgarian troops." Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 217 f. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, p. 210.
227. See above, May 7, 1943.
228. Verbatim reproduction in Heiber, pp. 220 ff. The Sonderführer in question was Constantin Alexander Freiherr von Neurath, the only son of the former Reich foreign minister.

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229. Cf. statement made by Hitler at a conference on May 19, 1943, as recorded in Heiber, p. 207.
230. The Oberpräsident of Hesse-Nassau, SS Obergruppenführer Prince Philip of Hesse (see also above, Vol. I, 1938, note 128), was married to Princess Mafalda, a daughter of Victor Emmanuel III.
231. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 392.
232. While there is no date indicated on the only surviving report, a shorthand transcript of the meeting, it can be deduced from the contents of the conversation that it took place either on May 20 or on May 21, 1943. Cf. Heiber, pp. 238 ff.
233. VB, No. 143, May 23, 1943.
234. Report in VB, No. 146, May 26, 1943.
235. DNB text, May 27, 1943. Following the American victory at Guadalcanal, Admiral Yamamoto, who had been commander in chief of the Japanese Fleet in the Pacific, allegedly committed ritual suicide in the old seppuku [hara-kiri] tradition in April 1943. News of this was not made public until May 21, when he was declared to have died a "heroic death." According to other Japanese sources, however, Yamamoto had been killed in a plane crash. Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 190. (Allegedly, Admiral Yamamoto was killed when his plane was shot down at the direction of the American Chiefs of Staff using decrypted information. Martin Gilbert *Second World War*, New York, 1989, p. 419-420.)
236. Report in VB, No. 149, May 29, 1943.
237. Report in VB, No. 154, June 3, 1943. The original Infantry Regiment No. 134 had belonged to the Forty-Fourth Infantry Division, which had been destroyed at Stalingrad. The regiment had been the reformation of the former Austro-Hungarian Infantry Regiment *K. u. K. Infanterieregiment Hoch-und Deutschmeister No. 4*.
238. Report, *ibid*.
239. Verbatim reproduction in Heiber, pp. 252 ff.
240. DNB report, June 10, 1943.
241. Cf. Weizsäcker, pp. 354 and 366.
242. Report in VB, Nos. 168 and 170, June 17 and 19, 1943.
243. DNB text, June 20, 1943.
244. See above, March 4, 1943.
245. Copy of the decree on file at the Domarus archives.
246. Report in VB, No. 175, June 24, 1943. Rahn had been embassy counselor in Italy and had served as ambassador to Mussolini's "republican" government.
247. NSK note, June 23, 1943.
248. Report in VB, No. 178, June 29, 1943.
249. DNB note, June 29, 1943.
250. DNB text, June 30, 1943.
251. Cf. Manstein, pp. 495 f.
252. Manstein probably would not have made this remark had he known that Hitler had told Goebbels to wait and see "if the Bolsheviks will not try to beat us to it." See above, May 6, 1943.

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- 253. Report in VB, No. 186, July 5, 1943. Cf. also Manstein, p. 497.
- 254. von Moos, Vol. V, p. 80.
- 255. Report in VB, No. 191, July 18, 1943.
- 256. DNB report, July 14, 1943.
- 257. DNB report, July 18, 1943.
- 258. Hitler traveled to the meeting by plane; cf. Baur, pp. 245 f. Cf. reports on the talks in Schmidt, p. 580. Cf. also von Moos, Vol. IV, pp. 283 ff. Cf. further Bullock, pp. 708 f., and *Hitler e Mussolini—Lettere e documenti* (Milan, 1946), pp. 165 ff.
- 259. DNB text, July 20, 1943.
- 260. For details on the convention, cf. report of the *Schweizerische Depeschenagentur*, dated September 7, 1943; reproduced in von Moos, Vol. IV, pp. 287 ff. See further report by Willy Sperco, originally published in the *Revue de Paris*, reproduced in *Neue Zeitung (Amerikanische Zeitung für Deutschland)*, October 11, 1946.
- 261. Among those who voted against Mussolini were many highly respected Fascists, such as Grandi and the two surviving members of the 1922 *Quadrumvirate*, Marshal de Bono and Count de Vecchi. The others who voted against Mussolini were the following: Ciano; his successor in the foreign ministry, Bastianini; and Ambassador Alfieri; also, Federzoni, de Marsico, Acerbo, Pareschi, Bottai, Marinelli, Cianetti, Balella, Gottardi, Bignardi, de Stefani, Rossoni, and Albin. Only eight voted in favor of Mussolini: Scorza, Farinacci, Biggini, Polverelli, Tringali-Casanova, Frattari, Buffarini-Guldi, and Galbiati. Suardo abstained.
- 262. Pietro Badoglio, born 1871 in Grazzano; created marshal and “duke of Addis Ababa” in 1936; prime minister from 1943 until June 6, 1944.
- 263. Mussolini’s letter was published in *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* (89), 1944. In March 1944, Mussolini acknowledged the authenticity of this correspondence in a statement. This is evidence that he had no qualms about the legality of his removal from office.
- 264. Heiber, pp. 269 ff.
- 265. Surviving records of the briefing of July 25/26, 1943, are in Heiber, pp. 304 ff. Cf. also reports in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 403 ff.
- 266. *Ibid.*, p. 411.
- 267. DNB text, July 30, 1943.
- 268. Report on the meeting is in Schmidt, pp. 580 f. Raffaele Guariglia, born 1889 in Naples.
- 269. Illustrated report on Rommel’s visit to Salonika in VB, No. 212, July 31, 1943.
- 270. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 218 ff.
- 271. Supplemental decrees issued on August 3 and 7, 1943, on the German assumption of previously Italian administrative powers in Greece expanded upon these provisions. Cf. details on operation code name Achse (axis), *ibid.*, pp. 223 ff.
- 272. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 210 ff. Hubatsch’s publication also contains specifications of Directive No. 49. Code names for the numerous

- ventures were the following: Eiche (Oak Tree) for the attempt to free Mussolini; Student for a swift occupation of Rome; Schwarz (Black) or Achse (axis) for an occupation of Italy and either the appropriation of the Italian fleet or its destruction.
273. DNB report, August 2, 1943.
 274. DNB text, August 3, 1943. Hamburg had become the target of recurring severe air raids, first on July 24, 1943, and in the following days.
 275. Manstein, p. 513. Cf. also Heiber, pp. 373 ff.
 276. Report in Baur, pp. 246 f.
 277. Princess Giovanna, born 1907 in Rome. She was a sister of Princess Mafalda and the sister-in-law of Prince Philip of Hesse.
 278. DNB reports, August 21 and 22, 1943.
 279. See above, November 17, 1941.
 280. Report in VB, No. 232, August 20, 1943. Schepmann finally secured his appointment as chief of staff in November. Report in VB, No. 313, November 9, 1943.
 281. The DNB announced these changes in personnel only after August 24, 1943. Cf. also VB, No. 237, August 25, 1943.
 282. Goebbels; *Diaries*, p. 472. Cf. also Hitler's derogatory remarks regarding Frick at various dinners; cf. Picker, pp. 212 f. For further derisive comments on Frick, see Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 361, 365, 367, and 376.
 283. A decree of August 20, 1943, determined the following: "Henceforth, the state secretary with the Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia shall bear the official title of 'German minister of state for Bohemia and Moravia.' " RGBl, 1943, I, p. 527. Karl Hermann Frank, born 1898 in Karlsbad; publicly executed 1946 in Prague.
 284. RGBl, 1943, I, p. 495.
 285. Report in VB, No. 233, August 24, 1943.
 286. Illustrated report in VB, No. 236, August 25, 1943.
 287. DNB text, August 25, 1943.
 288. Manstein, pp. 522 f.
 289. Ibid, p. 523.
 290. This report of the last days of King Boris is based on the death certificate from the Bulgarian ministry of justice and the official report by the Bulgarian prime minister Filov, as published in the newspaper *Bote vom Steigerwald* (206), September 3, 1943.
 291. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 433, 442. On the events in Sofia, cf. also Heiber, "Der Tod des Zaren Boris" in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 9 (Munich, 1961), pp. 384 ff.
 292. DNB texts, August 28 and 29, 1943.
 293. Report in VB, No. 242, August 30, 1943.
 294. Ibid.
 295. Report in VB, No. 243, August 31, 1943.
 296. Ibid.
 297. Cf. Manstein, pp. 523 f.
 298. RGBl, 1943, I, pp. 529 f.

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- 299. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 530.
- 300. Report on this talk is in Manstein, p. 525.
- 301. VB, No. 248, September 5, 1943.
- 302. IMT, USSR-115. The code name for Operation Krimhildbewegung (Krimhild movement) had been chosen because of its resemblance to Krim, the German name for the Crimean Peninsula. Retreating troops were to assemble there. Evacuation procedures from the Kuban bridgehead were concluded by October 7, 1943.
- 303. See above, speech of March 25, 1938.
- 304. See above, speech of December 10, 1940.
- 305. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 533. Hitler's decree of September 5, 1943, expanded the scope of an earlier decree dated July 28, 1942. One of its provisions determined that "this will apply also to the sphere of all medical science and research, and organizational facilities." See above, decree of July 28, 1942.
- 306. Report on talk is found in Manstein, pp. 526 f.
- 307. Von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 310.
- 308. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 427.
- 309. DNB text, September 9, 1943. Cf. also Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 431.
- 310. Hitler's emphatic insistence on such mystical allusions never failed to impress Goebbels. Actually, neither had Hitler cut short his stay in Zaporozh'ye nor was his visit distinguished in any manner. The mystic presentiment, which he later claimed to have been troubled by, in all likelihood never occurred to him except in retrospect. After the narrow escape at Poltava in 1941, Hitler never again stayed overnight at any location but the Berghof, the Chancellery, or one of the military headquarters. For further details on the discussions on September 9 and 10, 1943, at the Wolfsschanze headquarters, cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 427 ff.
- 311. The attitude which Hitler displayed explains much of the odd lack of resistance by the German troops to the Allied advances on Corsica and Sardinia.
- 312. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 438.
- 313. Ibid. p. 440.
- 314. Ibid. p. 441. The Mother's Cross was awarded in the Third Reich to mothers with more than three children; its three categories were Bronze, Silver, and Gold.
- 315. Ibid., p. 445. Prince Philip of Hesse was carted off to a concentration camp despite his credentials as an SA Obergruppenführer and Oberpräsident of Hesse-Kassel. His wife, Princess Mafalda, a daughter of the Italian king, was incarcerated at the Buchenwald concentration camp, where she died on August 27, 1944, from the injuries she had sustained.
- 316. DNB text, September 10, 1943.
- 317. In August 1939, Hitler had even entertained thoughts of sacrificing Italy and Mussolini to a possible alliance with Great Britain. See above, August 27 and 28, 1939.

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318. Even in retrospect, Hitler simply ignored Badoglio's official note of September 8 on the new Italian government's foreign-policy stance. See above, September 8, 1943.
319. These steps had concerned police surveillance of all Reichstag deputies and the Wehrmacht's dismissal of German aristocrats. See above, July 25, 1943, and September 10, 1943.
320. The events of July 20, 1944, clearly demonstrated that the persons named were not as loyal to their Führer as Hitler would have liked to believe.
321. Allusion to the coup in Belgrade. See above, March 27, 1941.
322. DNB text, September 10, 1943.
323. *Mein Kampf*, p. 754.
324. DNB text, September 15, 1943. On the mission itself, cf. Otto Skorzeny, *Geheimkommando Skorzeny* (Hamburg, 1950), pp. 135 ff.
325. Cf. Linge, No. 3.
326. Speaking before the House of Commons, Churchill also made several inconclusive remarks on the precise nature of the role Badoglio had played in these events: "As far as Mussolini's dismissal is concerned, I do not believe it resulted from either a breach of loyalty or some other reprehensible conduct on the part of either Badoglio or his Government. The guards had orders to fire upon Mussolini should he attempt to flee or anyone who should attempt to assist him therein. The guards failed to carry out their orders in face of the numeric superiority of the German troops landing." Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 316.
327. DNB text, September 12, 1943.
328. DNB text, September 15, 1943.
329. Most of these defunct orders were no longer than one or two sentences regarding a restoration of a "Republican-Fascist" party and militia.
330. DNB text, September 15, 1943.
331. Report in Manstein, pp. 529 f.
332. DNB text, September 20, 1943. General Milutin Nedic, born 1882; suicide in 1946; Yugoslav minister of war at the time of Hitler's invasion; agreed to collaborate and became Serbian prime minister during the German occupation.
333. For a report on the subject of these talks, see Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 468 ff.
334. *Ibid.*, p. 466.
335. Having given up his post as ambassador to the Vatican on July 31, 1943, Ciano's decision to have German troops "liberate" him along with other members of Mussolini's immediate family proved not to have been too wise. Mussolini finally gave in to Hitler's pressures and had Ciano executed in Verona on January 11, 1944.
336. Clara Petacci, a physician's daughter from Rome, was shot alongside Mussolini on April 28, 1945. See above, 1945, note 225.
337. DNB report from Tokyo, September 24, 1943.
338. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 661.
339. DNB report, September 20, 1943.

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340. Report on this conversation in Goebbels, *Diaries*, pp. 464 ff.
341. According to conflicting reports, German diplomats had sought reconciliation with Russia through the good offices of the Soviet embassy in Stockholm in 1943 and had attempted to determine the Soviet stance on a peace agreement. Similar claims were made before the Nuremberg War Criminal Trials. Following the war, Dr. Paul Schwarz, who was a civil servant of the German foreign ministry, published information to this effect in the June 1947 issue of *Liberty*, an American journal in occupied Germany. The former Soviet ambassador to Stockholm, Aleksandra Kollontay, denied any such approaches during her service in Sweden. Moreover, the experiences of the Russians with Hitler from 1939 until 1941 make it seem highly unlikely that they would have entered into negotiations with him in 1943.
342. DNB text, September 27, 1943.
343. DNB report, September 27, 1943. Wilhelm Kube, born 1887; Gauleiter of Brandenburg until 1939; well-known as head of the NSDAP faction in the Prussian Landtag before the seizure of power.
344. DNB text, September 28, 1943. Mussolini had chosen Gargnano on the Garda Lake as the new seat of his government and personal residence. SS commandos kept him under constant surveillance.
345. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 216 f.
346. In the course of the German offensive in the Ardennes in December 1944, Montgomery was called on to take over command of the endangered sector of the Allied front.
347. Report in VB, No. 275, October 2, 1943.
348. DNB report, October 3, 1943.
349. Shorthand transcripts published in Heiber, pp. 385 ff.
350. DNB report, October 8, 1943.
351. DNB report, October 10, 1943.
352. RGBI, 1943, I, pp. 575 f. Hitler was alluding to this particular ordinance in a speech the following month: "The Americans and the English are right now planning the rebuilding of the world. I am right now planning the rebuilding of Germany!" See above, speech of November 8, 1943.
353. DNB report, October 12, 1943.
354. DNB report, October 14, 1943. Cf. also Heiber, p. 385.
355. Ibid. Illustrated report in VB, No. 289, October 16, 1943. Born in 1882, Rodolfo Graziani had made a name for himself in the Abyssinian War, as had Badoglio.
356. DNB reports, October 13 and 15, 1943.
357. Reports in VB, No. 290, October 17, 1943.
358. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 583 ff.
359. DNB text, October 22, 1943.
360. DNB text, October 19, 1943.
361. Report in VB, No. 299, October 26, 1943.
362. Excerpt from the shorthand transcript published in Heiber, pp. 396 ff.
363. DNB text, October 30, 1943.

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- 364. Von Moos, Vol. V, pp. 21 ff.
- 365. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 218 ff.
- 366. On December 12, 1943, Hitler ordered Keitel to issue a list of general conclusions drawn from previous experience gained from fighting against the Anglo-American powers. Two additional ordinances, dated December 27 and 28, 1943, supplemented Directive No. 51. See below, December 27, 1943, and note 416. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, p. 231.
- 367. DNB text, November 8, 1943.
- 368. Cf. Manstein, pp. 554 f.
- 369. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 500.
- 370. In the last year of his life, Hitler only managed to spend his annual spring break at the Berghof, but he extended this vacation until July 1944. In view of the circumstances that year, Hitler only wrote a brief statement in commemoration of the events at Munich.
- 371. DNB text, November 8, 1943.
- 372. Clemenceau never made the statement which Hitler attributed to him; see above, 1939, note 1014. There was a severe famine raging in India in 1943. Hitler manipulated this fact to allege that unidentified British statesmen had implied that a reduction of overpopulation might be beneficial to the subcontinent. At the time, Leopold Stennet Amery, born 1873 in Gorachpur, India, was serving as British minister for India.
- 373. Reference is to Japan and Japanese-occupied China at the same time.
- 374. Reference is to a statement of Churchill in July 1943.
- 375. Reference is to Roosevelt and Churchill.
- 376. Reference is to General State Commissar von Kahr. Hitler had him murdered on June 30, 1934.
- 377. Only a few months later, the German army was not "at such a great distance from the homeland" anymore, as the Allies had reached Aix-la-Chapelle and the Russians had reached East Prussia.
- 378. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 505.
- 379. DNB text, November 9, 1943.
- 380. Ibid.
- 381. RGBI, 1943, I, pp. 659 f.
- 382. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 660.
- 383. RGBI, 1943, I, pp. 665 f.
- 384. Report in VB, No. 323, November 19, 1943.
- 385. Cf. von Papen, pp. 576 f., and Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 518.
- 386. Ibid., p. 518.
- 387. Heiber, pp. 408 ff.
- 388. This figure published by the DNB appears to be greatly exaggerated. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 519, noted for instance that around ten thousand officer cadets were present. In previous years, between five thousand and twelve thousand cadets had attended the annual addresses. Even given the fact that the last appeal had been issued in December 1942, the claim that a crowd numbering twenty thousand was present at the 1943 rally cannot be substantiated.

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389. DNB text, November 29, 1943. This particular official communiqué was not published until one week later, and neither the date of the appeal nor where it was issued was indicated in the report. It is highly likely that this was not a coincidence, and that the location was to be kept secret, since Hitler did not want to reveal the fact that arrangements for the meeting could no longer be made in Berlin. The location of Breslau and the date of November 20 are based on information contained in Goebbels's *Diaries*. Cf. Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 519.
A phonographic record of Hitler's speech before the officer cadets is on file at the archives of the Munich magazine *Quick*.
390. Report in VB, No. 330, November 26, 1943. Born in 1869, Ernst Graf zu Reventlow had already made a name for himself as a radical right-wing author in the days of the empire. Until shortly before his death, he wrote commentaries for the newspaper *Reichswart*.
391. Report in VB, No. 335, December 1, 1943.
392. Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VII, p. 6879.
393. Cf. Churchill, *Second World War*; Vol. IV, p. 364, and von Moos, Vol. V, p. 30.
394. Reports in VB, Nos. 338 and 341, December 4 and 7, 1943.
395. It was for similar reasons that Hitler launched the offensive in the Ardennes along the western front. See below, December 6, 1944.
396. Report in VB, No. 342, December 8, 1943.
397. RGBI, 1943, I, p. 673.
398. DNB text, December 9, 1943.
399. Report in VB, No. 347, December 13, 1943.
400. VB, No. 353, December 19, 1943.
401. Heiber, pp. 435 ff.
402. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
403. During the war, Hitler made similar claims regarding many other sites without ever drawing the proper conclusions. On July 1, 1942, he declared: "If I don't get the oil from Maikop and Grozny, then I'll just have to liquidate this war." See above, July 1, 1942, and 1943, note 5. In March 1943, he had pretended that the loss of Nikopol would signal "the end of the war." See above, March 10, 1943.
404. Karl Otto Saur, born 1902; served as head of the technical department under Speer.
405. Following the D-Day landings by the Allies in Normandy, Hitler behaved as though he felt relieved that a great danger had passed him by. See above, June 6, 1944.
406. DNB report, December 21, 1943.
407. Reference is to the case of SS Führer Hans Ritz and two conscripts by the names of Wilhelm Langheld and Reinhard Retzlaw. These three alleged members of the secret Feldpolizei had fallen into the hands of the Russians in the course of the recapture of Kharkov. A military court found them guilty of war crimes perpetrated at this location and executed the three men on the spot. Cf. Heiber, p. 460.

- 408. Ibid, pp. 456 ff.
- 409. DNB report, December 23, 1943. According to Jodl's testimony in Nuremberg, however, Hitler envisioned a different approach to this issue in reality. Jodl stated that he had attended a December 30, 1943, conference between Hitler and Keitel in the course of which Hitler instructed his men "to strike down without mercy these British terrorists and their accomplices." Hitler refused to accord English and American military personnel court-martial proceedings and a fair trial. He declared: "This would only [unnecessarily] create martyrs."
- 410. Although the Hague Convention in 1907 had established standards for the conduct of war on land and at sea, there were no provisions for aerial combat in force at the outbreak of the Second World War. Legally speaking, the aerial bombardment of cities did not constitute a violation of international law.
- 411. DNB text, December 26, 1943. It was a well-known fact that Hitler had served in the First World War as a member of the Bavarian Infantry Regiment 16 "List."
- 412. Heiber, p. 469.
- 413. Reference is to Antaeus; mythological Libyan giant, son of Poseidon and Gaia [the goddess Earth], who gained ever new strength from contact with the earth [his mother]; he was an invincible wrestler until Heracles vanquished him by lifting him up off the ground.
- 414. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 1.
- 415. See below, December 28, 1944.
- 416. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 238 ff. For details on Directive No. 51, see above, November 3, 1943. On December 28, Hitler issued another supplementary order forbidding the withdrawal of personnel or material from the areas commanded by the commander in chief, west (that is, the whole area of France, Belgium, and Holland), and the commander of the armed forces in Denmark. On January 17, 1944, he empowered the commander in chief, west, to declare any area he chose a "battle area," in which civilian authorities were under his orders. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, p. 231.
- 417. The Cotentin Peninsula is situated in Normandy.
- 418. Heiber, pp. 486 ff.

The Year 1944

Notes

1. See below, order of the day, January 1, 1944.
2. See below, New Year's appeal of January 1, 1944.
3. See below, order of the day, January 1, 1944.
4. Cf. Rommel, pp. 314 f.
5. See above, speech of December 20, 1943.
6. See above, speech of September 30, 1942: "No matter which place [for an invasion] he [Churchill] chooses next, he can consider himself fortunate if he stays on land for nine hours!"
7. See below, June 18, 1944, and note 148.
8. See above, statement of December 20, 1943.
9. See above, speech of April 26, 1942: "If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give His blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible."
10. See above, speech of November 8, 1941: "The war can last as long as it wants—but the last battalion on the field will be a German one!"
11. *Levée en masse* = mass levy; induction of all men liable for military service in France; first carried out in 1793 during the French Revolution; then in 1814 by Napoleon; and in 1870 during the Franco-German War.
12. Speech of April 29, 1937; records on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
13. DNB text, January 1, 1944.
14. Ibid.
15. As recently as September 1943, Hitler had still maintained: "The loss of Italy means little militarily."
16. DNB text, January 2, 1944.
17. Report on the talk in von Manstein, pp. 571 ff.
18. Report in Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten* (Heidelberg, 1951), pp. 295 f.
19. The reason behind this stubborn refusal to put in place a type of "Ostwall," a fortification line along Germany's eastern borders, was Hitler's gamble that the British would come to his aid the minute Bolshevik troops forced their way into central Europe. The main shortcoming of this theory was Hitler's conception of the British as new German Nationalists, whom the Bolshevik menace would frighten and who would submit themselves to his leadership as the German Nationalists had in the early 1930s.
20. The decree was not published until May 8, 1944. Its contents were forwarded to all contingents with the instruction that every officer should receive the order by July 1, 1944, and a copy of the pamphlet "*Wofür kämpfen wir?*" ("What are we Fighting for?"). The author's notes.

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21. DNB text, January 9, 1944. Karl Freiherr Czapp von Birkenstetten, born 1863.
22. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 241; not printed in *Hitler's War Directives*.
23. Cf. von Moos, p. 105 and Inber, p. 75. A partial offensive around Volkhov dated from January 14, 1944. The Soviet generals Govorov and Meretskov simultaneously led two offensives in the direction of Leningrad.
24. See above, September 28, 1941. Quotations from Hitler's letter concerning Leningrad, dated September 29, 1941.
25. Report in VB, No. 22, January 22, 1944.
26. Report in VB, No. 24, January 24, 1944.
27. DNB text, January 24, 1944.
28. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 59.
29. See above, February 6, 1943. See also above, 1943, note 102.
30. Quoted according to Linge, No. 2; von Manstein, pp. 579 f., cited this passage in a similar manner.
31. See above, p. 67.
32. Shorthand transcripts of the discussions at noon and the telephone conversation between Hitler and Zeitzler on January 28, 1944, have been partially preserved. Cf. Heiber, pp. 527 f.
33. Hitler was outraged by the news. On January 29, 1944, he dismissed Field Marshal von Küchler, whom he blamed for what he thought had been too hasty a retreat. Colonel General Model took command of Army Group North. He was in particularly good standing with Hitler, because as the commander of Army Group Center, he had persevered in the battles surrounding Moscow in the winter of 1941–1942. Hitler repeatedly assigned Model—his *Löwe der Abwehr* (lion of defense)—to critical spots in the course of 1944, first with Army Groups North, South, Center, and finally with Army Group West.
34. Commander of the Fifth United States Army.
35. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 241 f. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 232 f.
36. Hitler's order of February 14, 1944, demanded an assault upon the bridgehead at Anzio-Nettuno. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 242.
37. DNB text, January 30, 1944.
38. Hitler had been hospitalized for several weeks, in a city named Pasewalk (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), with severe mustard-gas poisoning at the end of World War I. This experience caused his dislike of chemical and bacteriological warfare.
39. Report in VB, No. 32, February 1, 1944.
40. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 127. A condition for this appointment was possession of the Iron Cross First Class. On the emblem, a dagger with the swastika and snakes appears inside an oval oak wreath.
41. DNB text, January 31, 1944.
42. Report in VB, No. 38, February 7, 1944.
43. DNB text, February 8, 1944: In the course of an address before leading figures of the armament industry on February 6, 1943, Hitler had distinguished Speer by bestowing the Fritz Todt Ring on him. See

above, speech of February 6, 1943. This peculiar award was never heard of again. The pin now issued consisted of the DAF gear wheel with the swastika and an eagle holding a banner with the inscription “Dr. Fritz Todt” between the outstretched claws.

44. Report in VB, No. 42, February 11, 1944.
45. DNB report, February 10, 1944. Illustrated report in VB, No. 49, February 18, 1944. The leaders of the SA, the NSKK, and the Arbeitsdienst were now required to wear shoulder patches on both sides. This was to underline the military nature of their mission. Up to this point, uniforms had only one patch, to be worn on the right shoulder where the shoulder straps went. This custom had originally served to distinguish members of these organizations from the Wehrmacht. Now that only the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS played a crucial role for Hitler, he had evidently determined that the other formations had to submit to the military peculiarities.
46. Cf. Kaltenbrunner’s testimony at Nuremberg in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XI, pp. 268 and 351. Cf. also *ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 173.
47. DNB text, February 21, 1944. Illustrated report in VB, No. 57, February 26, 1944. Lieutenant General Lieb was commander of the XI Corps. General Stemmermann, commander of the XXXXII Corps, had been killed in combat. Herbert Gille, commander of the Fifth Panzer Division “Viking,” was awarded the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross with Swords and Diamonds in April 1944. The head of the Fascist “Rexist” movement in Belgium, Léon Degrelle, also received the Oak Leaf Knight’s Cross that month and became SS Sturmabführer.
48. Report in VB, No. 58, February 27, 1944.
49. DNB text, February 28, 1944.
50. DNB text, March 2, 1944.
51. *Hitler’s War Directives*, pp. 234 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 243 ff. Hubatsch also lists supplements to these instructions. One of the fortified cities in the east was Vinnitsa in the Ukraine, the location of Hitler’s Werewolf headquarters.
52. See below, Appendix, Final Remarks, point 7.
53. DNB report, March 12, 1944.
54. DNB report, March 14, 1944.
55. DNB text, March 15, 1944.
56. DNB report, March 15, 1944.
57. On the meeting between Schuschnigg and Hitler, see above, February 12, 1938.
58. Reports on this encounter in Schmidt, pp. 587 f., and in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 13, 1944; see also von Moos, Vol. V, pp. 139 f., and statements by Horthy, who took the stand as witness in the so-called “Wilhelmstrasse Trial” before the Nuremberg Court in March 1948 (Dena Report).
59. After the death of his eldest son in 1943, Horthy was contemplating naming his grandson as successor.

60. Hitler launched the majority of his ventures on weekends, since he believed he could catch his opponent off guard by so doing. See above, 1934, note 92.
61. Upon the arrival of the German troops in Budapest, chaotic scenes took place. Prime Minister Kallay fled to the Turkish legation. Members of the Italian (Badoglio) legation were arrested and carried off. In the central building of the Polish refugees, the Polish officers offered desperate resistance and were butchered one by one. Their corpses lay there for three days.
62. DNB announcement, March 23, 1944. Printed also in von Moos, Vol. V, p. 138.
63. Following the First World War, a *cordon sanitaire*, consisting of a belt of several small states strategically situated, served as a buffer between Russia and central Europe.
64. The "conditions" are published in von Moos, Vol. V, p. 145.
65. DNB text, March 19, 1944.
66. Report on the reception in von Manstein, pp. 602 f.
67. See above, speech of January 27, 1944.
68. Cf. von Moos, Vol. V, p. 140. Adalbert von Imrédy, born 1891 in Budapest; executed in 1946; served as prime minister from 1938 to 1939; pro-German; appointed minister of the interior in 1944.
69. DNB texts, March 22, 1944. Döme Sztójay served as prime minister until August 30, 1944, and was executed in 1946 in Budapest.
70. DNB report, March 23, 1944.
71. Report in VB, No. 92 April 1, 1944.
72. DNB report, March 23, 1944. Lieutenant General Seyffardt had headed the Dutch legion of volunteers and had been assassinated on February 5, 1943.
73. Report on the discussion in von Manstein, pp. 610 ff.
74. Ibid., p. 614.
75. Cf. von Manstein, pp. 615 f.
76. Reference is to Blomberg and Brauchitsch; see above, February 6, 1944.
77. Berlin had secured legal status as a Prussian province on December 1, 1936. Hence, the head mayor, as president of the city, was simultaneously the chief executive overseeing the state's administrative apparatus. Hitler did not deem the then head mayor of the city, Lippert, reliable enough, in particular since Lippert bore the title *Obergruppenführer* and thus belonged to a grouping Hitler intensely distrusted. Hitler therefore separated the state and municipal offices and entrusted Goebbels with the executive branch.
78. RGBl, 1944, I, p. 87.
79. The decrees in question concerned the formation of the provinces of Hesse and Nassau, and the administrative divisions of the province of Saxony. Regarding the governmental districts of Aurich and Osnabrück, the bone of contention was the authority granted the position of the *Oberpräsident* and the performance of tasks by such a plenipotentiary. RGBl, 1944, I, pp. 109 ff.

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80. See above, speech of March 25, 1944.
81. See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
82. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 237 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 250 ff. See also below, April 2, 1944.
83. DNB report, April 7, 1944.
84. Heiber, pp. 549 ff.
85. Under the leadership of archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt, the German Orient Association had recovered the bust of the Egyptian queen Nefertiti in 1912 and it had become part of the Berlin collection. Nefertiti was the wife of Pharaoh Akhenaton, who reigned from about 1375 until 1357 BC.
86. Reports in VB, No. 102, 11, 1944.
87. Reports in VB, No. 109, February 18, 1944. A stroke on June 14, 1942, had left Wagner partially paralyzed. A further deterioration in his condition led to his death on April 12, 1944, at Bad Reichenhall.
88. Every year on November 9, Wagner had stood in front of the Pantheon, called out the names of the sixteen dead, and thereby, so to speak, had sworn in this "Eternal Guard."
89. Illustrated report in VB, No. 109, April 18, 1944.
90. Report in VB, No. 114, April 23, 1944.
91. DNB reports, April 21, 1944. Illustrated reports in VB, Nos. 116 and 117, April 25 and 26, 1944.
92. DNB text, April 21, 1944.
93. Report in Baur, p. 232. Born in 1890, Hans Hube had been among those cut off in Stalingrad, but had been flown out in time.
94. DNB text, April 22, 1944.
95. See below, order of the day, April 26, 1944.
96. VB, No. 117, April 26, 1944.
97. RGBl, 1944, I, p. 113.
98. DNB text, April 26, 1944.
99. DNB text, April 27, 1944.
100. Report in VB, No. 120, April 29, 1944.
101. Report in VB, No. 121/122, April 30/May 1, 1944.
102. Ibid.
103. According to his May 1948 testimony as a witness in the so-called Wilhelmstrasse Trial, Veessenmeyer and General Winkelmann of the Waffen SS had appeared one day and explained that the Jews were being transported back to the Reich for deployment as laborers. At the time, Horthy already had conclusive evidence in hand documenting the actual purpose of the Auschwitz concentration camp. While he protested the deportation, he no longer had the power necessary to intervene (Dena Report).
104. Report in VB, No. 126, May 5, 1944.
105. Ibid.
106. DNB report, May 9, 1944.
107. Ibid.

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108. DNB text, May 12, 1944. Admiral Mineichi Koga was on a plane which was lost in a storm on March 31, 1944. Paul S. Dull, (*Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy (1941-1945)* Annapolis, Md. 1978, p. 298. Koga had commanded the Japanese fleet in the Pacific. He fell in spring during heavy bombardment by the Anglo-American powers. Hitler's telegram was less a sincere expression of compassion than an admonishment to German generals to follow Kogo's heroic example rather than to capitulate. A year earlier, Hitler had sent Emperor Hirohito a similar note with precisely the same intention on Admiral Yamamoto's "heroic death" in the seppuku [hara-kiri] tradition. See above, May 27, 1943, and 1943, note 235.
109. DNB text, May 13, 1944.
110. See above, August 14, 1941.
111. DNB report, May 15, 1944.
112. See above, speech of January 1, 1944.
113. See above, speech of April 2, 1944.
114. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 239 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 252 f.
115. Fzg. 76 was the original name given to the long-range missiles (pilotless planes) built by the research department of the Fieseler aircraft factory in Kassel; the rocket bomb was later to become famous as V-1 (*Vergeltungswaffe Nr. 1*—No. 1 Reprisal Weapon). For further information on the V weapons, see below, June 16 ff., 1944.
116. The He111 was an oblong, two-engined fighter, produced by the Heinkel aircraft factory, which had built the first jet aircraft in 1939 (He 176 and He 178).
117. DNB report, May 17, 1944.
118. Surviving excerpts from the speech in Heiber, pp. 567 f.
119. DNB text, May 22, 1944.
120. Report in VB, No. 149/150, May 28/29, 1944.
121. DNB report, May 29, 1944.
122. Report in VB, No. 155, April 3, 1944. Ivan Bagrianov; born 1892; executed February 1, 1945.
123. DNB text, June 4, 1944.
124. Report in VB, No. 159, June 7, 1944.
125. Standing before the House of Commons on June 6, 1944, Churchill enumerated the following:
An immense armada of upwards of 4, 000 ships, together with several thousand smaller craft, crossed the Channel. Massed airborne landings have been successfully effected behind the enemy lines, and landings on the beaches are proceeding at various points at the present time. The fire of the shore batteries has been largely quelled. The obstacles that were constructed in the sea have not proved so difficult as was apprehended. The Anglo-American Allies are sustained by about 11, 000 first-line aircraft, which can be drawn upon as may be needed for the purposes of the battle. In *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, Vol. 7, p. 6947. Cf. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, June 6, 1944 (evening edition).

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126. Report on the events at the Berghof on June 6, 1944, in Linge, Sequence VII.
127. See above, December 27, 1944.
128. Cf. impression conveyed in William L. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p. 947.
129. See above, speech of December 10, 1940.
130. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
131. See above, speech of May 4, 1941.
132. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
133. See above, speech of September 30, 1942.
134. See above, order of the day, January 1, 1944.
135. War diary of the Seventh Army, entry of June 6, 1944.
136. See above, declaration of December 20, 1943.
137. DNB text, June 8, 1944.
138. Cf. Linge, No. 7.
139. DNB reports, June 11, 15, and 16, 1944.
140. See above, May 16, 1944.
141. Facilities for headquarters at this site had been under construction in 1940.
142. Report on these talks in Hans Speidel, *Invasion 1944* (Tübingen, 1949), pp. 113 f. Cf. also Heiber, p. 573, and Linge, No. 7.
143. See above, 1944, Major Events in Summary.
144. This claim was highly propagandist, as the production of turbo jets had barely begun.
145. In his book *Invasion 1944*, Speidel maintains that Hitler left the area because of a V-1 hit near Margival. However, several surviving military men who were traveling with the Führer at the time deny this. Cf. Heiber, p. 573.
146. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 573 ff., reproduction of the discussion according to a preserved shorthand transcript.
147. DNB report, June 18, 1944.
148. After the war, the Commissariat Général à la Protection Aérienne Passive en Belgique compiled minute statistics on every V missile that had penetrated Belgian airspace in the course of the German air raids. Bearing the title *La Belgique sous les bombes*, the commissariat's official report features six maps, twelve spreadsheets, and twenty-one photographs on a total of 311 pages.
For the period from October 1944 to March 1945, the research report enumerates 2, 448 V-1 hits and 1, 265 V-2 strikes in the vicinity of Antwerp alone. These raids were particularly costly in terms of civilian casualties, as there was no way of warning the population before a blast. One especially gruesome instance of this was a direct hit on the downtown Antwerp cinema "Rex" on December 16, 1944, which resulted in 271 dead and 97 seriously injured. A similar explosion at noon on November 27, 1944, had already left 128 dead and 196 wounded, after a V-2 missile had come down over the Avenue de France, one of the busiest crossings in the city. These attacks

- notwithstanding, the unloading of supply shipments in the harbor continued without interruption in the period investigated. On this topic, cf. Theo Franssen, *The Battle of Antwerp, City of Sudden Death* (Antwerp, 1945).
149. DNB reports, June 21 and 25, 1944. Dr. Toni Winkelkemper, born 1905; Reichstag deputy.
 150. DNB report, June 21, 1944. Johann Heinrich Böhmcker also headed the SA Group North Sea.
 151. DNB report, June 25, 1944. Claus Selzner, born 1899; head of the DAF's organizational bureau; Reichstag deputy.
 152. While Bürckel had obviously committed suicide, the official version of his cause of death read "pneumonia." See below, 1944, note 333.
 153. DNB report, July 7 (!), 1944. Karl Eglseer, born 1890 in Ischl; general of mountain infantry; commander of a mountain infantry corps.
 154. Ibid.
 155. DNB report, July 1 (!), 1944. Cf. Baur, pp. 242 f.
 156. See below, speech of July 1, 1944.
 157. Given this new development, Hitler immediately sent von Ribbentrop to Helsinki, where he was to tell State President Ryti that the Reich was willing to furnish him any weaponry desired. Von Ribbentrop obediently relayed this offer to Ryti on June 16, 1944.
 158. In Baur's book *Ich flog Mächtige der Erde*, Hitler's veteran aviator and expert investigator of airplane accidents blames Dietl's sudden and inexplicable crash in the area of the Semmering on the Ju52 pilot's inexperience and on adverse weather conditions that day. This claim is highly questionable, however. Cf. Baur, pp. 242 f. 159. DNB report, June 30, 1944.
 159. The official report noted Dollmann's unexpected death by relating that, while at his battle station, the colonel general had suffered a heart attack and died as a result. Cf. Heiber, p. 334. Friedrich Dollmann, born 1882; commanding general of the Fourth Army Corps in 1934; from 1939 on, commander in chief of the Seventh Army.
 160. DNB report, June 29, 1944.
 161. Reports on the discussion in Speidel, p. 127. Cf. also Guderian, pp. 302 f.
 162. See below, April 12 and 19, 1945.
 163. DNB text, June 30, 1944.
 164. DNB report, July 1, 1944.
 165. DNB text, July 1, 1944.
 166. Ibid.
 167. DNB report, July 3, 1944.
 168. Ibid.
 169. DNB report, July 6, 1944.
 170. DNB report, July 5, 1944. Report also in VB, No. 188, July 6, 1944. Complete phonographic record of the speech on file at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (O1-EW 72846-72867). According to the recollections of one of the participants, the congress had already taken

- place on June 26, 1944. Cf. Heiber, p. 608. This is unlikely, however, as Hitler mentions the loss of the city of Cherbourg in his address, a defeat that took place on the next day. Had the conference been conducted earlier, then the speech's publication would have been unduly delayed, a postponement for which there was no reason.
171. See above, speech of January 27, 1932.
172. In a speech on November 10, 1938, Hitler related a similar anecdote: "One day, a man came up to me and said: 'Listen, if you do this, then Germany will be ruined within six weeks' time.' So I said: The German Volk once survived wars with the Romans. The German Volk survived the *Völkerwanderung*. The German Volk later survived the great battles of the early and late Middle Ages. The German Volk survived the religious wars of more recent times. The German Volk then survived the Napoleonic Wars, the Wars of Liberation, even a World War, even the Revolution [of 1918]—it will survive me, too!" See above, p. 1251.
173. See above, Vol. II, Prologue, p. 1387, and note 26.
174. Word difficult to make out.
175. Reference is to the Upper Rhine region, where the Allied advance had been contained prior to the western offensive.
176. As mentioned before, Hitler was unfortunate in that every time he proclaimed that his audience should just wait and see whether a particular move was a mistake or not, the move inevitably turned out to have been a big mistake. See above, 1939, note 469.
177. Several words here were incomprehensible.
178. Hitler emphasized these words by rapping the knuckles of his right hand on the speaker's desk.
179. This controversy was also a subject debated in the Stieff case, which was brought before the Volksgerichtshof on August 7 and 8, 1944. Cf. IMT, 3881-PS. On August 15, 1944, the German media carried pictures of the July 7, 1944, presentation of new uniforms and equipment at the Berghof. The published text of Stieff's interrogation contained no mention of the date of July 7 and only general statements on an assassination plot to be carried out in connection with such a fashion show. In this context, while Schlabrendorff also recalled Stieff's intention to strike at such an inconspicuous occasion, he cited entirely different dates (even November 1943) for the attempt on Hitler's life. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 132. Helmut Stieff, born 1901 in Deutsch-Eylau; hanged August 8, 1944; major general as of 1944; chief of the organizational department of the general staff of the army.
180. Surprisingly, Schlabrendorff questions the possibility of shooting someone fatally with a pistol drawn casually.
181. One of Hitler's household servants, Schneider, discussed this possibility: "In my opinion, any man determined enough and with direct access to Hitler could have killed him at any point in time. Usually, once dinner had been served, two servants at the most remained behind in the dinning hall. In theory, we servants could carry a small pistol, which was issued to us as a part of the servants'

equipment and which was easily hidden in a pocket. In my time as a servant with Hitler, I often asked myself what I would do if one of the guests drew a gun on Hitler during dinner. Well—there was really no other choice than to throw yourself in front of Hitler so that the shot would hit one of us and not him. But—let's be honest here—that was mere speculation, all theory. Perhaps one could have hit the assassin over the head with something—maybe with one of those heavy silver fruit trays. That's also just theory, because by this time the assassin's pistol would have long gone off. Basically, no one can make excuses claiming that an assassination had not been possible because of gigantic (baumlang) SS men hanging around. There were no SS giants to be seen anywhere." Linge, No. 8.

182. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 146.
183. Ibid. Cf. also Major General Stieff's August 7, 1944, testimony before the Volksgerichtshof, IMT, 3881-PS. Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg, born 1907 in Jettingen; shot July 20, 1944, in Berlin; colonel with the general staff. For further information on the German resistance movement and the events of July 20, 1944, see, for example, Rudolf Pechel, *Deutscher Widerstand* (Zurich, 1947); Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1955); Fabian von Schlabrendorff, *Deutsche Offiziere gegen Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main, 2nd. ed. 1960); Peter Hoffmann, "Zu dem Attentat im Führerhauptquartier am 20. Juli 1944" in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (Munich, 1964); Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat* (Munich, 1969).
184. Sauerbruch, pp. 550 ff.
185. Cf. July 20, 1944, list of cabinet members in Berthold Spuler, *Regenten und Regierungen der Welt. Sovereigns and governments of the world (Minister-Ploetz)* Bielefeld, 1953, p. 134.
186. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 146, and IMT, 3881-PS.
187. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 241 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 255.
188. Operational orders issued on July 22, 1944.
189. RGBI, 1944, I, pp. 159 f.
190. Ibid., p. 155.
191. DNB note, July 18, 1944.
192. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 256 ff. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 243 ff.
193. This intention was never realized, because soon all Gaus became "Theaters of Operations."
194. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 247 ff.
195. See above, March 23, 1942.
196. DNB report, July 13, 1944.
197. Cf. Schlabrendorff, p. 146.
198. Cf. Speidel, pp. 137 f.
199. See above, 1939, Major Events in Summary.
200. DNB report, July 18, 1944.
201. DNB report, July 19, 1944.
202. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 592 f.

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203. Report on Hitler's telling Mussolini about the assassination attempt is found in Schmidt, pp. 593 ff.
204. In an address later that evening, Hitler corrected himself by stating that the bomb had gone off two meters to his right. See above, July 20, 1944.
205. Standing at the open window when the bomb went off, Major General Scherff and SS Hauptsturmführer Günsche were catapulted out of the room by the pressure of the explosion.
206. See above, statements of July 4, 1944.
207. DNB text, July 23, 1944. Serafino Mazzolini, born 1890 in Arcovia; died 1945.
208. Reference is to Italian soldiers captured by the Germans.
209. A parallel with Napoleon: On October 23 of 1812, a certain General Hugues-Bernard Malet (1754–1812) spread rumors that the emperor, who was then engaged in Russia, had been killed. Great confusion ensued, and the Paris garrison was paralyzed at the news. The general took advantage of the situation by arresting both the city's president of the police and the prefect. The commander of the Paris garrison, General Hulin, was seriously injured in the scuffle. When the adjutant Laborde and other officers recovered from the initial shock after a few hours, they freed the imprisoned ministers and arrested Malet and his accomplices. They put a total of twenty-five persons on trial. Including Malet, twelve of them received death sentences and were summarily executed on October 28, 1812. Napoleon was greatly disconcerted when reports on the attempted coup reached him. Cf. Armand-Augustin-Louis de Caulaincourt, *With Napoleon in Russia: The Memoirs of General de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza* (Westport, Connecticut, 1976 reprint of 1935 New York publication), pp. 207 ff. For further parallels with Napoleon, see above, June 22, 1941; 1941, note 550; 1942, notes 125, 205, and 460; see also below, August 31, 1944, and Appendix, Indices "Napoleon."
210. Cf. Linge, No. 18. Cf. also the address of Goebbels in DNB text, July 27, 1944.
211. Cf. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (7th. ed. London, 1995), pp. 27 ff.
212. Hitler always feared that a member of Germany's high nobility, in remembrance of the monarchy, might appropriate to himself a leading role in the political and military life of the nation and challenge the Führer's arbitrary reign. He sought to eliminate all vestiges of a monarchical form of government, as he feared the emergence of any person who might be considered a successor or, worse yet, a replacement for the Führer. When he learned that a German prince was serving as commander of a regiment at the outbreak of the war, he was beside himself with rage. See above, March 9, 1940. Once Italy had collapsed, he ordered the removal of all princes from the ranks of the armed forces. See above, September 10, 1943. In private company, Hitler's phobia was such that he said to his entourage on July 20, 1944:

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- “You can believe me—soon we will find out that all along the *Kronprinz* (crown prince) was behind it all.” Cf. Zoller, p. 186.
213. DNB text, July 20, 1944.
214. Graf Helldorf was president of the Berlin police.
215. DNB text, July 21, 1944. A few corrections were made in accordance with the phonographic record.
216. DNB text, July 23, 1944.
217. Fromm arranged to give Colonel General Beck the opportunity to end his own life by shooting himself. The remaining four officers—von Stauffenberg, Olbricht, Colonel Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, and First Lieutenant Werner von Haeften—faced a court-martial and a firing squad in the courtyard of the war ministry. Since Hitler was growing increasingly suspicious of Fromm as well, he had the bodies exhumed so that their identity could be verified.
218. Fromm was arrested on Hitler’s orders on July 21, 1944, and put on trial by the Volksgerichtshof in February 1945. He was sentenced to death for “cowardice.” In the Brandenburg prison, he faced a firing squad on March 19, 1945, and died with the cry “Heil Hitler!” on his lips.
219. Cf. Ciano, *Diaries*, pp. 470 f.
220. Cf. Josef Kessel, *Medizinalrat Kersten—Der Mann mit den magischen Händen* (Munich, 1961).
221. Characteristically contemptuous was the attitude expressed after the war by the retired Air Force General Karl Bodenschatz, who had been seriously injured in the blast: “Stauffenberg was a very good friend of mine. I thought him a man of character—a good guy—right up to the day he put a bomb at my feet. It is unworthy of a German officer to sacrifice so many of his comrades to kill only one man. Above all, he was a coward. He made a run for it after he had placed the briefcase at the Führer’s feet. One thing should not be forgotten: in connection with some important affairs, Stauffenberg had to visit the Führer repeatedly for several hours in May and June [more correctly: in early July, the author’s note]. He was eye to eye with Hitler then. It was then that he should have carried through his plan. Admittedly, he might have sacrificed his own life by so doing. And it was this that Stauffenberg wished to avoid!” Cf. interview with Bodenschatz in *Der Hausfreund für Stadt und Land* (Nuremberg), No. 26, June 26, 1954.
222. DNB reports, July 22, 1944.
223. Cf. Guderian, p. 308.
224. Up to this point, the “German salute” (lifting of outstretched right arm to the height of one’s eyes) had to be extended only when officers and soldiers greeted someone bareheaded. From 1938 on, this greeting had become mandatory for all encounters with the Führer. In all other cases, which dominated in the life of a soldier, the customary military salute (hand to hat) had remained the proper form of greeting.
225. DNB text, July 26, 1944.
226. DNB text, July 24, 1944.

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- 227. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 253 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 264 f.
- 228. Cf. Heiber, p. 596, note 1.
- 229. Report in VB, No. 207, July 25, 1944.
- 230. For the radio address of Goebbels, cf. DNB text, July 26, 1944.
- 231. RGBL, 1944, I, pp. 161 f.
- 232. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- 233. DNB text, July 26, 1944. Wilhelm Grimm, born 1889 in Hof; president of the second chamber of the supreme party court; SS Gruppenführer and lieutenant general of the police.
- 234. DNB text, July 29, 1944.
- 235. Report in VB, No 214, August 1, 1944.
- 236. Cf. Heiber, p. 599, note 1.
- 237. Heiber, pp. 584 ff.
- 238. See above, March 20, 1942.
- 239. The so-called "Huppenkothien Trial," which investigated the murder of Admiral Canaris, took place in the city of Augsburg in 1955. During an interrogation of Colonel General Halder on September 23, 1955, the senior public prosecutor Hölper demanded to know the following of the former chief of the general staff: "Had military treason, that is, the providing of information to the enemy on a pending attack, any influence on the outcome of the war?" Halder denied this by answering "No." He added correctly: the betrayal of such military secrets might have slightly influenced the initial stages of a military operation. However, military treason did not affect the outcome of the war, which was decided by other factors, such as the actual distribution of power. Report in *Fränkisches Volksblatt* (Würzburg), No. 216, September 24, 1955, p. 1.
- 240. Nearly two years before, Hitler had still insisted: "Therefore, it is better to hold a front at a distance of one thousand or, if necessary, two thousand kilometers from the homeland, than to have a front at the Reich's border and to be obliged to hold it." See above, speech of November 8, 1942.
- 241. Reference is to Generals Fellgiebel and Wagner. Although the two men had joined the resistance movement, they had not established any contact with the enemy. General Erich Fellgiebel, born 1886; executed September 5, 1944. General Eduard Wagner, born 1894; committed suicide on the night of July 22, 1944.
- 242. In a public proclamation dated March 1, 1815, Napoleon had belittled his marshals as follows:
"Frenchmen! It was the duke of Castiglione [Marshal Augereau] who abandoned Lyon and us to our enemies without even putting up a fight. The army I had entrusted to him had been perfectly capable of defeating the Austrian army corps it faced, given the valor and patriotism of its troops and strength of its battalions. It was well capable of circumventing and attacking the left flank of the enemy troops threatening Paris.

- “The French commanded heights as never before; they were mighty as never before. The elite of the enemy’s forces was destined to perish on the wide plateau they so mercilessly ravaged once the duke of Ragusa’s [Marshal Mamont’s] betrayal abandoned the capital city to the enemy and dissolved the army.”
Aretz, pp. 428 f. See also below, August 31, 1944; 1944, note 300; and Appendix, Indices “Napoleon.”
243. Dietrich and Hausser were the first to be appointed “colonel general of the Waffen SS,” a rank which had not existed before. Paul Hausser, born in 1880; general with the Reichswehr until his resignation in 1932; joined the SS in 1934 and became head of the SS Junker training school at Brunswick.
244. DNB text, August 2, 1944.
245. Turkey declared war on Germany on March 1, 1945.
346. A phrase attributed to Kemal Pasha Atatürk after World War I read: “Never again war! And if war, then never again on the side of Germany!”
247. Report in VB, No. 217, August 4, 1944.
248. DNB report, August 2, 1944. Ba Maw served as state president of Burma from August 1, 1943, to May 1945.
249. See above, March 4, 1943.
250. See above, June 21, 1943.
251. See above, p. 131.
252. See above, p. 468.
253. Cf. DNB illustrated reports, August 3, 1944. Hitler had recovered extraordinarily quickly from the injuries he had sustained, like the slight damage to one of his eardrums. He prided himself on this fact and, according to his manservant Linge, maintained to Keitel and several staff members of his headquarters: “There you go—I recovered more quickly because I am a vegetarian.” Cf. Linge, No. 18. Nevertheless, for a long time, Hitler as a hypochondriac feared contracting a middle-ear infection as a complication of the earlier injuries. He also made use of his supposedly “imperiled health” as an excuse to avoid having to fly to the west to inspect the frontline there. Cf. discussion of the situation on August 31, 1944, in Heiber, pp. 607 f.
254. Cf. interview with Bodenschatz in *Der Hausfreund für Stadt und Land* (Nuremberg), No. 26, June 26, 1954. In *Mein Kampf*, p. 105, Hitler himself had maintained that human rights prevailed over constitutional law (“*Menschenrecht bricht Staatsrecht*”).
255. Indeed, the conspirators had made many plans, the usefulness of which was highly questionable, however.
256. Hitler had earlier insisted that the conspirators had maintained close contacts with the enemy. See above, July 31, 1944.
257. Hitler once again grossly exaggerated the figures.
258. DNB illustrated report, August 5, 1944.
259. DNB text, August 5, 1944.

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260. General Fritz Lindemann, born 1894 in Berlin; arrested on September 13, 1944, in Berlin; hanged on September 22, 1944.
261. DNB illustrated report, August 6, 1944.
262. DNB text, August 5, 1944.
263. Cf. Speer's testimony at Nuremberg on June 20, 1946, in IMT, *Blauer Serie*, Vol. XVI, p. 541.
264. DNB report, September 4, 1944.
265. Report on discussions between Hitler and Antonescu is found in Guderian, p. 328, and Baur, p. 249.
266. In January 1944, Hitler had still argued that the loss of the Crimea would lead to "the fall of Turkey and, as a consequence, to that of Bulgaria and Romania." See above, speech of January 1, 1944.
267. Report in VB, No. 213, August 10, 1944.
268. Freisler behaved in a similarly inappropriate manner during the interrogation of the civilian conspirators in September 1944. He more than met his match in Graf Helldorff, however. The former Reichstag deputy, SA Obergruppenführer, and chief of the Berlin police shouted back at him disrespectfully: "Why all the theatrics? Every single one of us must try to abandon ship right now. And *Du* [in proper German, one addresses an official with the formal pronoun *Sie* meaning "you"; Helldorff instead used the familiar pronoun *Du*, also meaning "you" but rude in these circumstances], you know that only too well!" Freisler was left speechless for once.
269. DNB report, August 10, 1944. Illustrated report in VB, No. 230, August 17, 1944.
270. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 199.
271. DNB report, August 15, 1944. Cf. also von Papen, pp. 604 ff.
272. In broad daylight, an attempt had been made on von Papen's life in the streets of Ankara on February 24, 1942. Von Papen and his wife had escaped injury, whereas the bomb tore the would-be assassin, a Macedonian student, to pieces. Cf. von Papen, pp. 550 ff.
273. Cf. Heiber, p. 415.
274. Cf. Guderian, p. 334, and Heiber, p. 612.
275. Cf. Speidel, pp. 159 f. See also Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (New York, 1952); German translation, Frankfurt, 1954, pp. 679 ff.
276. Cf. Baur, p. 224. Hitler had meant this as a compliment, since Kluge's first names were Günther Hans.
277. DNB text, August 17, 1944. Saint-Malo was a fortified seaport [in northwest France] on the island of Avon at the mouth of the Rance River along the Channel coast. The city is connected to the mainland only by a mole.
278. DNB texts, August 18, 1944.
279. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 272 ff.
280. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 267 ff.
281. Report in VB, No. 234, August 21, 1944.
282. DNB text, August 20, 1944.

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283. A phonographic record of the talks survived. The Bucharest correspondent of the American journal *Time* published its contents in 1947, and the German newspaper *Badische Zeitung* (Karlsruhe) reproduced them in its September 30, 1947, issue.
284. OKW order dated August 23, 1944. Cf. Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Bildern und Dokumenten*, pp. 420 f.
285. See above, June 4, 1944. Also see below, August 28, 1944.
286. Speidel, p. 266, argues that Hitler had initially contemplated a bombardment of Paris; in any case, there was never made a practical attempt to realize such an intention.
287. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 207.
288. RGBI, 1944, I, p. 185.
289. See above, decree of August 26, 1942. Cf. also above, September 5, 1943.
290. DNB report, August 29, 1944. Hitler had established the Close Combat Clasp on November 25, 1942. It was awarded to servicemen with fifty days of close combat.
291. DNB note, August 28, 1944.
292. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 276 ff. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 265 ff.
293. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 268 ff., Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 279 ff.
294. Part of the transcripts of the talks have been preserved and are reproduced in Heiber, pp. 610 ff.
295. As Hitler observed, this was truly a "completely idiotic idea," but he himself had advocated it many times before, as he insisted on courting the British either in order to turn against Russia with their help or to gain their help after having turned against Russia. The British had done their best to inspire Hitler with these "idiotic ideas," as they had successfully done before in the case of Napoleon. See above, pp. 1907 f., 2064 ff., 2092 ff., and June 22, 1941.
296. If the situation was less than favorable, then all one had to do was to wait for better times to come. This approach is based on the idea that in times of victory, Germany could dictate the peace, an assumption that had already proved false for imperial Germany in World War I.
297. It was beyond Hitler why the British consistently declined his "magnanimous offers." On the contrary, these offers were actually perceived as grave affronts by the British. Hitler was undaunted by this and certain that he would ultimately reach a deal with the British.
298. The money in question was a gift of two hundred fifty thousand Reichsmarks on the occasion of Kluge's sixtieth birthday on October 30, 1943, ostensibly meant for the restoration of his estate. Hitler passed out similar, even higher, remuneration to a number of field marshals. Obviously Hitler did not count on their loyalty without giving them concrete financial advantages.
299. The base salary for a field marshal was approximately three thousand Reichsmarks per month, which Hitler supplemented with various bonuses, running up to several thousand Reichsmarks per month in cases of special loyalty. See above, February 6, 1943.
300. See above, July 31, 1944, and note 242.

301. Frederick the Great avoided the most severe consequences of the Seven Years' War by allying himself with the ultimately victorious British and not by proclaiming inspiring slogans. This historic truth stands in marked contrast to Hitler "Fredericus complex"; see below, April 12, 1945. [Editor's Note: It was in fact the British who allied themselves with Frederick the Great in the expectation that he would protect George II's electorate of Hanover and tie down the bulk of France's armies while they themselves appropriated the French colonial possessions in Canada and India with minimal opposition. Britain abandoned the alliance as soon as its colonial ambitions had been achieved and left Frederick to his own devices.]
302. Hitler had considerably scaled down his predictions for the future. As early as May 10, 1940, he had maintained that the outcome of the campaign against France would "determine the fate of the German nation for the next one thousand years." See above, p. 1992, proclamation of May 10, 1940.
303. Cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XI, p.343
304. Surviving excerpts from the speech in Heiber, pp. 261 ff.
305. DNB text, September 16, 1944. Finland ceased hostilities on September 4, 1944. Representatives of both countries signed a cease-fire agreement in Moscow on September 19, 1944.
306. Directive No. 64, dated September 3, 1944. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 272 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 286 ff.
307. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 288 f. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 276 f. These instructions concerned von Rundstedt's juridical powers in his capacity as commander in chief west.
308. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 289 f. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 277 f. This information was disseminated in the form of a telex message on September 9, 1944, to the troops affected by the new regulations.
309. DNB text, September 5, 1944.
310. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, p. 533.
311. DNB report, September 5, 1944.
312. DNB text, September 11, 1944. A year earlier, an exchange of wounded soldiers had taken place via Sweden from October 17 to 20, 1943. Cf. Heiber, pp. 404 f. Hitler did not officially acknowledge these proceedings. Another such humanitarian effort took place in January 1945. See below, January 24, 1945.
313. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 290 ff. Cf. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 278 ff.
314. DNB text, September 19, 1944.
315. Despite reinforcement by Polish parachutists, the British First Airborne Division under Major General Urquhart was virtually wiped out. After days of fighting, it retreated across the Rhine. Cf. R. E. Urquhart, *Arnhem* (London, 1958).
316. Cf. Heiber, pp. 661 f.
317. There is little doubt that Hitler would have risked it. The Allies pursued no such fantastic plans, but took a systematic step-by-step approach.
318. DNB text, September 19, 1944.

319. See above, July 13, 1944. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 256 ff., and *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 243 ff.
320. Decree of September 19, *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 282 ff.
321. Decree of September 20, *ibid.*, pp. 284 ff.
322. Report in VB, No. 265, September 21, 1944. Born in 1925, Rama VIII Mahidol was king of Thailand at this point.
323. Decree of September 20, 1944, in RGBI, 1944, I, p. 211.
324. RGBI, 1944, I, pp. 225 f.
325. See above, January 30, 1937.
326. RGBI, 1944, I, pp. 317 f.
327. See above, p. 501, July 13, 1934, quotation of a speech before Kreisleiters at the Ordensburg Vogelsang on April 29, 1937.
328. See above, speech of January 30, 1941.
329. See above, speech of October 3, 1941.
330. RGBI, 1944, I, pp. 253 f. Although Guderian had advised entrusting the SA with the organization of the *Volkesturm*, Hitler instructed the Gauleiters to carry through this attempt at rallying the remnants of Germany's strength. Hitler's dislike of the SA was well-known. Guderian, p. 327.
331. DNB texts, September 27, 1944.
332. Kunaiki Koiso, born 1879; died 1950; prime minister from 1944 to 1945.
333. DNB reports, September 29, 1944. Actually, the Gauleiter's suicide had been prompted by Hitler's anger, which Bürckel had elicited by withdrawing from Metz. See above, speech of January 30, 1939. In Hitler's eyes, a good party comrade was a dead party comrade. Therefore, at Bürckel's funeral, Hitler had Rosenberg present the deceased with the "highest class of the German Order with Swords." Since Todt's death, numerous other dead had received this macabre distinction.
334. According to the memoirs of former generals such as von Manstein, Kesselring, Speidel, and Guderian, the heads of the Allied military made one mistake after the other in World War II! During the campaign against Poland in 1939, for instance, the Allies had missed their chance to invade Germany from the west; allegedly, they could have advanced as far as Berlin then. In 1940, the Allied forces failed to rescue Finland and occupy Norway. When they took Morocco and Algiers in the year 1942, they failed to take Tunis. One year later, the Russians failed to cut off the German Caucasus army at the same time as the German army in Stalingrad. In 1944, by stopping at the borders of the Reich, the Allies made another mistake and thereby prolonged the war for half a year; and so forth.
335. On July 29, 1943, after the overthrow of Mussolini, Churchill had stated in a speech before the House of Commons: "We should let the Italians, to use a homely phrase, stew in their own juice for a bit." Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VII, p. 6811.
336. DNB report, October 7, 1944.
337. DNB text, November 10, 1944.

338. By late September, Allied forces had reached the fortified line built in 1938–1939, the West Wall, which stretched from Aix-la-Chapelle to Saarbrücken. The Allies referred to the fortifications as the “Siegfried Line,” although this expression was never used in Germany. In the First World War, a fortified rear line of defense, which was called “Siegfried Line” by the German army command, ran from Arras via St. Quentin to the Chemin des Dames, the southern part of the “Hindenburg Line.” The western powers had penetrated this line in 1918. To commemorate this victory, the western Allies had called the West Wall the “Siegfried Line,” too. Exuberant British soldiers had composed a new song on the occasion: “We’re going to hang out our washing on the Siegfried Line.” Although the heads of the German military ridiculed the confidence of the Allied forces in the early stages of the war, they felt less inclined to laugh in 1944–1945, when enemy tanks simply charged through the supposedly impenetrable line of fortifications.
339. From the beginning, the Allied commanders realized the military insignificance of the eagerly erected West Wall. Although it would have been relatively easy for Allied pilots to bomb the construction site and disrupt the work, they made no such effort. Once the western powers reached the “Siegfried Line” in the spring of 1945, their tanks failed to fulfill the German propaganda’s promise that they would “plunge into the depths” of the supposedly impassable abyss. They crossed them by simply laying railroad tracks across the ditches and letting their tanks roll over them.
340. Hitler had established this award in 1939. It consisted of an oval pendant to be worn on a brown band. See above, August 2, 1939.
341. RGBL, 1944, I, p. 247.
342. DNB note, October 10 and 13, 1944.
343. See above, November 3, 1942.
344. See above, 1944, Major Events in Summary.
345. See above, July 15, 1944.
346. Cf. reactions to Rommel’s death in Speidel, pp. 178 ff. Cf. also testimony by Lieutenant General Maisel before the Berchtesgaden Spruchkammer (denazification court) in 1948 (dena report). Cf. further the Nuremberg court’s interrogation of Keitel in 1945, IMT, Supplement, p. 1256. Cf. also Desmond Young, *Rommel—the Desert Fox* (New York, 1950). Wilhelm Burgdorf, born 1895; missing in action on May 2, 1945; appointed new chief adjutant of the Wehrmacht on October 12, 1944; promoted to the rank of infantry general on November 1, 1944.
347. See above, p. 479.
348. DNB text, October 15, 1944.
349. DNB report, April 16, 1944.
350. Cf. Schmidt, p. 589. Cf. also Skorzeny, pp. 238 ff.
351. Verbatim reproduction of the speech in von Moos, Vol. VI.
352. Horthy’s testimony in the so-called “Wilhelmstrasse Trial” in dena report, March 1948.

- 353. DNB report, October 17, 1944.
- 354. Franz Szalasi, born 1897 in Kaschau; shot in 1946.
- 355. *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, October 22, 1944.
- 356. See below, speech of January 1, 1945.
- 357. DNB text, October 19, 1944.
- 358. DNB report, October 19, 1944.
- 359. During the Battle of the Nations in the vicinity of Leipzig, Napoleon's troops suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of Russian, Austrian, and Prussian armies on October 18, 1813. Therefore, Hitler's choice of this date for the launching of the *Volkssturm* was fateful in the sense that it would soon become another slaughter for the troops of the twentieth-century Napoleon, Adolf Hitler. Had Hitler searched more extensively for a historical parallel, he would have discovered a more appropriate date, namely, the anniversary of the foundation of the Prussian *Landsturm* on April 21, 1813.
- 360. DNB text, October 29, 1944.
- 361. About thirty years later, it would come to light—from sources found in the city archives of Augsburg and Sigmaringen—that very prominent French politicians, at the top of the Communist Party (for example, Georges Marchais) and of the Socialist Party, had collaborated with the Nazis; a fact that—allegedly—had not been known before to the western intelligence services. In the nineties, even the president of the republic, François Maurice Marie Mitterrand (1916–1996), was incriminated in collaboration by photographs discovered in German archives. See also above, 1936, p. 743.
- 362. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 595 f.
- 363. DNB text, November 2, 1944.
- 364. Report in VB, No. 307, November 2, 1944.
- 365. DNB report, November 6, 1944.
- 366. DNB reports, November 2 and December 1, 1944.
- 367. Partial transcript in Heiber, pp. 672 ff.
- 368. Launched on April 1, 1939, the battleship *Tirpitz* was not completed until 1942. Officially classified as a vessel of 35,000 tons, the 42,900-ton battleship was a sister-ship of the *Bismarck*. It had escaped the enemy and hidden in a succession of Norwegian fjords. Despite these efforts, it had increasingly become the target of British air raids and attacks by small British submarines, the so-called "pocket-V-boats." While it lay at anchor in the Sandesund Fjord off Tromsø, British six-ton bombs hit and sank the ship on November 12, 1944, with a crew of twelve hundred men aboard. Cf. Jochen Brennecke, *Schlachtschiff Tirpitz* (3rd ed. Munich, 1961).
- 369. Hitler had used this expression in a situation report on November 6, 1944.
- 370. A partial publication of a United Press interview with the Spanish dictator in the *Völkischer Beobachter* informed the German public about Franco's curious behavior. The article in German stressed Franco's

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- desire to “cooperate with the Anglo-Americans and Russians” in an effort “to organize peace.” Report in VB, No. 314, November 9, 1944.
371. See below, December 4, 1944.
372. DNB report, November 19, 1944.
373. See above, speech of January 30, 1941: “What is it they are hoping for? Somebody else’s help? America’s? I can only say one thing: we had provided for every eventuality from the start.”
374. See above, speech of October 3, 1941: “There is no excuse before history for an error; no excuse, for instance in the sense that one explains afterwards: I didn’t notice that or I didn’t take it seriously.”
375. DNB text, November 12, 1944.
376. See above, 1939, note 1014.
377. It was a question of a few hundred National Socialists, and not thousands. See above, p. 157.
378. Gürtner had already served as Reich minister of justice in the von Papen and Schleicher governments, before Hitler came to power in 1933. Hitler left the judge in office, as he did many administrative specialists whose expertise was crucial to the running of an effective government (examples: Neurath, Schwerin-Krosigk, and Eltz-Rübenach).
379. Hitler by no means treated his enemies “magnanimously.” On the contrary, he persecuted and killed them, if he considered them a danger. He courteously treated, for tactical reasons and not in every case, only those who submitted themselves to his will without any reservations, such as von Papen and Severing.
380. Catiline (Lucius Sergius Catilina), about 108–62 B.C.; Roman politician, planned a military coup; after Cicero had exposed the conspiracy, Catiline died at the head of the insurgents.
381. No such “revolt” had been in the making in 1934. For circumstances of the Röhm Purge, see above, pp. 465–482.
382. Report in VB, No. 321, November 16, 1944.
383. Cf. Schramm, p. 1754. Cf. also Bullock, p. 767. For details on the 1935 operation on Hitler’s vocal cords, see above, May 23, 1935.
384. Report in VB, No. 330/331, November 25/26, 1944.
385. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 299. Cf. *Hitler’s War Directives*, p. 288.
386. *Ibid.*, dated November 28, 1944. This order did not reach some of the troops until December 14, 1944, [when it finally reached them] by telex. For example, this happened to the *Luftgaukommando* Reich.
387. VB, No. 335, November 30, 1944.
388. Report in VB, No. 337/338, December 2/3, 1944.
389. DNB report, December 3, 1944.
390. Report in VB, No. 341, December 6, 1944.
391. DNB text, December 5, 1944. Cf. also Schmidt, p. 585.
392. DNB report, December 5, 1944.
393. VB, No. 342, December 7, 1944.
394. Along with two other appeals to the troops, von Rundstedt and Guderian read Hitler’s instructions at one military academy’s rally to the officer cadets senior grade. Cf. *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*,

December 6, 1944. Similar calls persisted in the remaining months of the war—for example, an appeal issued by Dr. Jutta Rüdinger, the Reich official responsible for the *Bund deutscher Mädel*, BdM (Union of German Girls), and an appeal issued by Gertrud Scholz-Klink, the head of the *Reichsfrauenführung* (Reich women's movement). They envisioned the formation of a *Wehrmachthelferinnenkorps* (Corps of female assistants to the Wehrmacht), in which every "German woman willing to defend her country (*wehrwillige deutsche Frau*) and over eighteen years of age can take the place of a soldier and do every task assigned to her by this Corps in accordance with her abilities." Cf. VB, No. 340, December 5, 1944.

- 395. Report in VB, No. 343, December 8, 1944.
- 396. RGBI, 1945, I, p. 1. This particular medal was to be worn on the left upper sleeve of the uniform, like similar earlier distinctions such as the Shields of Narvik, Kholm, Demyansk, and the Crimea.
- 397. DNB text, December 10, 1944. This *Sturmbootflottille* (storm boat flotilla) consisted of several boats each seating one man. Missions included penetration behind enemy lines to blow up bridgeheads. While these "daredevil" ventures made for many heroics, they were also extremely dangerous for those involved.
- 398. The purely propagandist offensive to reclaim Zhitomir began on December 6, 1943, and ended that same month in a complete disaster. See above, December 6, 1943.
- 399. See above, September 1, 1944.
- 400. See above, 1935, note 50.
- 401. Ziegenberg was located eleven kilometers west of Bad Nauheim along the highway to Usingen. Officially part of the township Langehain-Ziegenberg in the district of Friedberg, the headquarters was situated at a crossroads near Wiesenthal on a rise on which stood the Castle Ziegenberg (also known as the Kranzberg Castle). This had earlier belonged to a branch of the von Bismarck family and later passed into the hands of the von Passavant family of Frankfurt. The Reich government had bought the estate in 1939. In the course of the following year, several fortified bunkers were added to the structures surrounding the castle and disguised as cut-stone walls. While American occupation forces supervised the destruction of most other bunkers immediately after the war, one bunker was inexplicably spared. Today its ruins can be viewed in front of a residential home (address: Schlossberg 7).
- 402. Cf. Liddell Hart, p. 541.
- 403. Cf. Guderian, p. 342.
- 404. Heiber, pp. 713 ff.
- 405. Author's expression, Vol. I, p. 65.
- 406. Hitler interpreted the term "capitulation" to mean only one thing: "submission to the will of another." He made this clear in a speech before nearly nine thousand officer candidates three years before:

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- “As a National Socialist, there was one word I refused to acknowledge in the struggle for power: Capitulation! I never knew this word and I shall never know this word as the Führer of the German Volk and as your supreme commander. Once more, this one word is “capitulation” and all it means is submission to the will of another—never, never! And you have to think exactly the same way.” See above, speech of April 29, 1941.
407. On other previous occasions, Hitler had insisted on the identical nature of Bolshevik Jewish states and plutocratic Jewish states.
408. This figure had no basis in reality. The United States lost approximately 174, 000 men in the field, both in Europe and in North Africa, due to operations from 1942 to 1945. Cf. Heiber, p. 724.
409. Report in VB, Nos. 351/352, December 16/17, 1944.
410. VB, No. 350, December 15, 1944.
411. DNB text, December 15, 1944.
412. Cf. Skorzeny, pp. 268 ff.
413. Cf. Guderian, pp. 346 f.
414. See above, December 24, 1943.
415. Approximately half of the shorthand transcript of this speech survived and is reproduced in Heiber, pp. 738 ff.
416. Competition between England and France for hegemony of the continent had been the cause of the Seven Years’ War. While Austria allied itself to the French, who were later defeated, Prussia joined the British, who won the war. The conflict between Prussia and Austria played only a peripheral role in the dispute, and their fate depended directly on that of their respective ally. The Führer’s often repeated claim that Frederick the Great had pitted an army of “three and a half million Prussians against fifty-two million Europeans” did not reflect historic reality and served only as a propagandist thesis. [Hitler indeed had his history wrong, but Domarus also has a highly questionable interpretation of the Seven Years’ War here. It was in fact Frederick the Great and Prussia that bore the brunt of the fighting (against Austria, France, Russia, and Sweden), while Britain, at war only with France, limited itself to naval and colonial adventures in Canada, the West Indies, and India, and paid Frederick and a number of minor German princes to provide for the defense of George II’s German possession, the Electorate of Hanover.—Ed.]
417. A civil war between republican and monarchist factions was raging in Greece at the time. Churchill’s offices as mediator did not, as Hitler maintained, aggravate the situation, but rather helped to bring about the cease-fire agreement both parties signed on January 11, 1945.
418. What particular “third blow” Hitler had in mind here is open to speculation. It is possible that he contemplated launching a renewed offensive along the northern sector of the front in the west, conceivably advancing in the direction of Antwerp from bases in the vicinity of Arnhem.

419. The United States secretary of the treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., conceived this highly controversial plan. He envisioned converting Germany into a purely agrarian country after the war. The plan was initiated in the course of the second summit meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill in Quebec during September 1944, but never implemented. Cf. Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs* (New York, 1948), chapter 113. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., born 1891; United States secretary of the treasury in the Roosevelt administration.
420. For the ordinance on the revision of the statutes affecting the *Verdienstorden vom Deutschen Adler* (Service Medal of the German Eagle), see above, December 27, 1943.
421. Ordinance of December 29, 1944, in RGBI, 1945, I, pp. 11 f. According to information provided by Oberarchivrat Major Treske (senior archivist at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz), the special edition mentioned above fell into the hands of an American officer.
422. RGBI, 1945, I, p. 11.
423. Heiber, pp. 758 ff. Wolfgang Thomale, born 1900; major general; chief of staff to the inspector of Panzer troops; lieutenant general in 1945.
424. Cf. Guderian, p. 349.
425. Cf., in addition to Russia, all the signatory powers to the Versailles Treaty, listed in RGBI, 1919, pp. 701 ff. The former German Kaiser, however, cited only twenty-eight enemy states. Cf. William [Wilhelm] II, *Ereignisse und Gestalten aus den Jahren 1878–1918* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1922), p. 289.

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Notes

1. "If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give His blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible." See above, speech of April 26, 1942.
2. See below, proclamation of April 15, 1945.
3. "I wish to bear the entire responsibility." See above, speech of January 30, 1942.
4. "... and I am now responsible for the entire German Volk. And no action will take place for which I will not vouch with my life, as this Volk be my witness." See above, p. 522, speech of August 17, 1934.
5. "I promise the entire German Volk: if ever I were to err here, or should the Volk ever be of the opinion that it cannot agree with my actions, then it may have me executed. I will calmly stand firm!" See above, p. 386, speech of October 24, 1933. For a series of similar statements, see above, p. 35.
6. See above, statement of August 31, 1944.
7. Even Goebbels appeared in civilian dress in late November 1944 to speak before one hundred regimental commanders who had left the front to attend a seminar in Berlin. Cf. DNB illustrated report, November 25, 1944. Numerous leading figures of the party took advantage of their olive-green or field-gray Volkssturm paramilitary uniforms to escape capture and recognition following the collapse in 1945. Many managed to go underground and disappear as common prisoners of war in Allied camps.
8. See above, speech of April 26, 1942.
9. DNB text, January 1, 1945.
10. The Austrian state chancellor and contemporary of Napoleon, Prince Klemens Wenzel Nepomuk Lothar von Metternich (1773–1859), had presided over the Congress of Vienna in 1815. It reflected a reassertion of reactionary ideals in Europe and had made many enemies in the nationalist circles in the various German principalities.
11. DNB text, January 1, 1945.
12. Ilya Grigorovich Ehrenburg, born 1891; Soviet author and journalist; died 1967.
13. See above, 1944, note 419.
14. As recently as the preceding October, Hitler had given a completely different assessment of the developments in Hungary and Horthy's role in them. See above, October 16, 1944.
15. A few minutes earlier, Hitler had blamed Germany's allies in Europe for its repeated losses. Now he expressed good faith in their assistance!
16. Report in VB, No. 1, January 2, 1945. Cf. also Guderian, p. 349.
17. DNB report, January 3, 1945. Hans-Ulrich Rudel, born 1916 in Konradswaldau (Sudeten Mountains); commander of the Fighter

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- Squadron Immelmann; emigrated 1948 to Argentina; took refuge in Paraguay after Peron's fall.
18. Guderian, p. 355.
 19. Report on the talk is found in Guderian, pp. 350 f.
 20. Parts of the shorthand transcripts have survived of the discussions of the situation at noon and in the evening, which took place on January 9, 1941. The noon discussion of the situation on the following day has also been partly preserved. Cf. reproductions in Heiber, pp. 781 ff.
 21. See above, appeal of December 20, 1941.
 22. RGBI, 1945, I, p. 5.
 23. Ibid., p. 23.
 24. A second signature by a Reich minister, normally Lammers, is missing in this instance. The verification was standard procedure.
 25. DNB report, January 12, 1945.
 26. Cf. Guderian, p. 355.
 27. Report *ibid.*, p. 356.
 28. Ibid., pp. 359 f.
 29. Ibid., p. 360.
 30. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 289 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 300.
 31. Cf. Guderian, pp. 362 f. Walter von Seydlitz-Kurzbach, born 1888; one of the generals captured in Stalingrad; president of the antifascist *Bund deutscher Offiziere* (German Officers' League); member of the Moscow *Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland* (National Committee for a Free Germany); released from captivity in 1955.
 32. DNB text, January 23, 1945.
 33. The coffins of von Hindenburg and his wife found a new resting place at Saint Elizabeth's Church in Marburg, where the remains of the Prussian kings Frederick William I and Frederick II the Great were also brought from Potsdam. After the war, the kings' coffins were transferred once more to the Hohenzollern fortress outside Sigmaringen.
 34. Report in VB, No. 22, January 25, 1945. The exchange of wounded military personnel with the western powers constituted the third such humanitarian effort conducted through the good offices of Sweden.
 35. DNB note, January 26, 1945.
 36. Cf. Guderian, pp. 367 f.
 37. Heiber, pp. 820 ff.
 38. American military statistics recorded 65, 000 dead in the First World War. Losses in the Second World War amounted to a total of 174, 000 dead. Cf. Heiber, p. 852, note 2.
 39. In addition to the *Volksempfänger* (radio) and the *Volkswagen* (car), now there would be a *Volksgewehr* (gun)! However, this project was never realized.
 40. DNB text, January 28, 1945.
 41. Hitler had no intention of restoring Norway's independence, as the secondary clause proved.
 42. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 290 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 301.

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43. Emergency units (*Alarmeinheiten*) were units on the alert, made up of vacationers as well as slightly injured and recovering personnel.
44. Cf. Rudolf Semmler, *Goebbels: The Man Next to Hitler* (London, 1947), pp. 174 f.
45. RGBI, 1945, I, p. 20.
46. DNB text, January 30, 1945.
47. Reference is to the 1920 Battle of Warsaw during the Russian-Polish War.
48. This would have been Reich President von Hindenburg, who had died in 1934, but Hitler is obviously referring to God as the one who had commissioned him.
49. Hitler is alluding to the slogan on a laurel-wreath banner placed in the Feldherrnhalle on March 12, 1933, in memory of the movement's dead. See above, March 12, 1933, p. 267.
50. DNB report, February 2, 1945.
51. DNB text, February 8, 1945.
52. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 301.
53. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 290 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 302.
54. Cf. Gerhardt Boldt, *Die letzten Tage der Reichskanzlei* (Hamburg/Stuttgart, 1947), pp. 11 ff.
55. At one time, Guderian pointed out to Hitler what he felt was in Germany's best interests. This provoked the following outburst from Hitler: "What do you think I am doing—am I not struggling for Germany? My entire life has been one great struggle for Germany!" Cf. Guderian, p. 374.
56. Evidently, Hitler was convinced that he needed these troops to exert military pressure on Sweden and to prevent the Swedes from declaring war on him. Nevertheless, even had Sweden joined the fifty-eight other states which had already declared war on Germany, this would not have made any difference.
57. See above, discussions on January 1, 1945.
58. Schmidt, p. 587. Cf. also von Ribbentrop's testimony in Nuremberg in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. X, pp. 342 f.
59. Linge left the conference room stunned by the outburst, the like of which he had never witnessed before. Alfred Bormann admonished him later for not having stepped out in a more timely manner: "Listen, Linge, you should have left the room when I started to speak. It is because you were there that he made such a scene." Cf. Linge, Series II. Alfred Bormann, a brother of Reichsleiter Martin Bormann, served with Hitler's adjutancy.
60. Guderian, pp. 375 f.
61. In looking back, Guderian asserted that none of the other men present recalled ever having witnessed an outburst of such force. Many of the men, whose names Guderian fails to reveal, had served at the Führer headquarters for years. Had he asked men like Göring, Brauchitsch, Halder, Jodl, and Linge, they could surely have told him about far more hair-raising scenes and fits of rage.

62. Like so many other large cities, Dresden was nearly half destroyed in the course of an air raid, this one on February 13, 1945. The attack on Würzburg on March 16, 1945, was far more ferocious—ninety percent of the city lay in ashes on the next morning. Würzburg was destroyed to a disproportionate extent, far greater than any other city in Germany. The outcome was all the more horrendous, as neither of the cities was prepared for such an attack at this late stage in the war. There is no substance to rumors then in circulation relating that the raids had been prompted by the extraordinary concentration of refugees at these sites. Neither do the facts support any of the other speculations current at the time, for instance the claim that the Soviet Union had a particular, though mysterious, interest in the destruction of these two sites and had pressured the Allies to make a last determined offensive there. For details of the aerial bombardment during the war, specifically the history of their effects on Würzburg and Dresden, cf. Max Domarus, *Der Untergang des alten Würzburg und seine Vorgeschichte* (7th enlarged ed. Gerolzhofen, 1995); see further Arthur Travers Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (London, 1947) and Anthony Verrier, *Bomberoffensive gegen Deutschland 1939–1945* (Frankfurt, 1970).
63. Cf. testimony by Göring and von Ribbentrop before the Nuremberg Court in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. IX, p. 434. On the topic of Hitler's instructing Dönitz, in the course of a February 19, 1945, briefing, to investigate the possible consequences of a withdrawal from the Geneva Convention, cf. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XIII, pp. 517 ff. See also Jodl's notes in preparation for an encounter with Hitler to discuss advantages and disadvantages of an unilateral abrogation of the international conventions on the conduct of war; IMT, 606-D.
64. Goebbels remarked the following in his diary under May 10, 1943: "The Führer has no intention of following the Japanese procedure of court-martialing aviators shot down over German soil and having them executed. He fears the English have too many possibilities for reprisals and that we may stumble into a situation where we know where it begins but not where it is likely to end." Goebbels, *Diaries*, p. 367. Roosevelt had sharply condemned the Japanese treatment of prisoners of war in a statement on April, 22, 1943. Cf. von Moos, Vol. IV, p. 192; see also above, 1943, December 21–22 and 1943, note 410.
65. See above, 1941, note 136.
66. Cf. briefing of March 2, 1945, in Heiber, p. 905.
67. Guderian, pp. 387 f.
68. On February 20, 1945, Dönitz advised against withdrawing from the Geneva Convention and argued that it was preferable "to take the measures necessary without any prior announcements and to save face abroad." Cf. IMT, 158-C.
69. DNB report, February 19, 1945.
70. Report in VB, No. 42, February 20, 1945.
71. The commemoration had been canceled the previous year. See above, February 20, 1944.

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72. DNB text, February 25, 1945.
73. Ibid. Cf. report in VB, No. 49, February 27, 1945.
74. Cf. illustrations in DNB text, February 25, 1945. Up to this point, there had been only a Golden Cross of the German Order. The addition “with Oak Leaves and Swords” was unprecedented.
75. Heiber, pp. 884 ff.
76. In cold blood, Hanke had ordered that Spielhagen, the second mayor of Breslau, be shot by a unit of the local *Volkssturm* in front of Frederick the Great’s statue at Breslau’s city hall in late January 1944. DNB note, January 31, 1945. Hanke fled Breslau aboard a Fieseler-Storch airplane on May 5, 1945, one day before the city capitulated. Reportedly, Czech border guards beat him to death, as he was trying to make his escape.
77. Lieutenant General Niehoff served as combat commander (*Kampfkommandant*) from March 6, 1945, on. For details on the siege of Breslau, cf. Hugo Hartung, *Der Himmel war unten* (Berlin-Grünewald, 1951).
78. Report in VB, No. 49, February 27, 1945.
79. Report, *ibid.*
80. DNB text, February 26, 1945.
81. Report in VB, No. 54, March 5, 1945.
82. In 1959, Arthème Fayard published François Genoud’s French translation of the recovered transcripts which Bormann had commissioned. André François-Poncet took advantage of his familiarity with the situation in Germany and authored a commentary included in a volume for which Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper (Baron Dacre of Glanton) wrote a preface. In a private letter dated December 3, 1959, Trevor-Roper assured the author of the veracity of the French translation in consideration of the fact that the German original was not a verbatim reproduction of Hitler’s statements, but rather consisted of notes outlining the general nature of his utterances. Cf. Arthème Fayard, ed., *Le Testament Politique de Hitler—Notes recueillies par Martin Bormann* (Paris, 1959).
83. Wilhelm II, p. 234. For other parallels, see below, Appendix, Indices “William II.”
84. Cf. decree on the formation of the *Volkssturm*, see above, September 25, 1944.
85. See above, speech of May 4, 1944.
86. See above, November 8, 1941.
87. Heiber, pp. 893 f.
88. In a speech on October 9, 1938, Hitler said: “However, let me voice one conviction: no power on earth will ever be able to break through this wall!” See above, p. 1222, speech of October 9, 1938.
89. Guderian, p. 380.
90. See above, March 30, 1944.
91. Schramm, pp. 1387 f. Kesselring assumed his new post on March 10/11, 1945.
92. Fragment in Heiber, p. 917.

93. On February 22 and 23, 1945, in commemoration of George Washington's birthday, more than nine thousand British and American bombers had flown an Allied large-scale mission with the code name "Clarion." The planes had systematically targeted strategic points in the railroad network in central and southern Germany. This had paralyzed a multitude of small and medium-sized railroad stations, the overwhelming number of which greatly hindered repair efforts. Cf. Domarus, *Untergang*, pp. 92 f.
94. See above, March 12, 1944.
95. There were rumors that Hitler was suffering from Parkinson's disease. The Führer's private physician Morell described the numerous ailments from which Hitler believed himself to be suffering as hysterical symptoms. Apparently, these psychosomatic illnesses, such as a tremor, his left leg dragging, and so on, were part of Hitler's ever increasing identification with Frederick the Great. A portrait of the Prussian king had already accompanied Hitler in his headquarters, since he believed in the magical powers of this Lenbach painting. During the last months of his life, the Führer was imitating the *Alte Fritz* in an effort to gain sympathy and to underline what he believed to be the historic parallels between the Prussian king's fate and his own destiny. Superstitiously, Hitler was hoping to be relieved at the very last minute, as Frederick II had been.
96. The *Wochenschau* produced a short film on Hitler's visit with the troops stationed along the Oder front, and the German media carried numerous illustrated, propagandistic reports on the concern displayed. Cf. *Wochenschau* (9/1945). The *Völkischer Beobachter* gave a detailed account of Hitler's tour of one particular battle station. Cf. illustrated report in VB, No. 61, March 13, 1945. The *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* published an illustrated article on Hitler's visit to the staff of an army corps on location. Cf. DNB report, March 15, 1945.
97. DNB report, March 11, 1945.
98. DNB text, March 11, 1945.
99. DNB report, March 15, 1945.
100. Report in VB, No. 65, March 17, 1945.
101. Guderian, p. 381; Linge, series 2.
102. After Hitler's order to remove their stripes, members of the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler placed all their orders and decorations into a tin chamber pot and sent them back to Hitler. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 80.
103. Titles of other such awards: Kreta, Feldherrnhalle, Infantrieregiment List, Grossdeutschland. On December 6, 1944, Hitler granted the last of these sleeve stripes to the Fifth Cavalry Regiment Feldmarschall von Mackensen on the occasion of Mackensen's ninety-fifth birthday.
104. Memorandum dated March 15, 1945. Cf. IMT, item Speer, No. 23, submitted as evidence in Speer's trial.
105. IMT, *Blau Serie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 547 f. Cf. also IMT, item Speer, No. 24.

106. Speer's remarks were naturally tainted by his interest in not incriminating himself. In his own defense, he had a vested interest in making Hitler's role appear all the more sinister and in minimizing the role he himself had played in the developments. The wording of this letter, especially the unusual interjection "if I did not misunderstand you" puts into question the authenticity of the correspondence. Although Guderian reported that he had heard similar destructive statements about the German Volk by Hitler in 1945, he also had an interest in making his involvement in the matter appear peripheral. Cf. Guderian, p. 375.
107. In a speech on January 25, 1936, Hitler said: "We perceive in this historical evidence for Teutonism the unconscious mandate vested by Fate: to unite this stubborn German Volk, if necessary by force. That was, in terms of history, just as necessary then as it is necessary today." See above, p. 744.
In another speech of December 18, 1940, Hitler stated: "It is a question of whether these eighty-five million people, in their national unity, can assert their right to life or not. If yes, then the future of Europe belongs to this Volk. If no, then this Volk will perish, and sink back, and it will no longer be worthwhile to live in this Volk."
See above, p. 2168.
108. See below, April 29, 1945.
109. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 293 f. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 303. See also evidence submitted at Speer's war-crimes trial (Items Nos. 25, 26, 28, and 29). It is not clear to the author why Shirer was so outraged by this order (cf. Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 1003 ff.). Legally speaking, the German government was empowered to proceed as it pleased within the borders of the German Reich of 1937. And among the many "despicable" orders which Hitler signed into law, this one was certainly not the worst, in comparison with the notorious *Kommandobefehl* or the *Kommissarbefehl*, which undeniably harmed foreign people contrary to international law, not to speak of other cases of genocide. It is indeed remarkable that the order issued March 19, 1945, complied with international law, constitutional law, and military jurisdiction.
110. DNB text, March 20, 1945. Report in VB, No. 68, March 21, 1945. Illustrated report in VB, No. 74, March 28, 1945.
111. *Wochenschau* (10/1945). Copy on file with the Bundesarchiv Koblenz.
112. *Ibid.* (9/1945).
113. Cf. Guderian, p. 387.
114. The briefing that night (March 23, 1944) began at 2:26 a.m. and lasted until 3:34 a.m. The shorthand transcript of the discussion of the situation survived in its entirety; cf. Heiber, pp. 922 ff.
115. See above, February 24, 1945.
116. Cf. Zoller, pp. 29 f.
117. Hofer, *Der Nationalsozialismus, Dokumente 1933-1945* (Frankfurt, 1957), p. 257.

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118. Verbatim reproduction of Rokossovski's demand for surrender is found in Hofer, p. 256. General Konstantin Rokossovski, commander of the Soviet forces on the Don front.
119. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 543 f.
120. The Chancellery also housed numerous people who could not be held responsible for Hitler's politics, such as shorthand typists, secretaries, guards, and so on.
121. There were no searches conducted on persons entering the bunker. Only briefcases and weapons carried visibly had to be turned over. Therefore, it would have been easy for Speer to introduce a small pistol or dagger into the building, had he indeed desired to do so. Cf. Boldt, p. 11.
122. At the trial in Nuremberg, Speer related: "When I was finally ready, I, together with this Hänschel [head mechanic at the Chancellery], inspected the induction pipes in the garden of the Chancellery. We realized that shortly before, on personal orders by the Führer, a four-meter-high chimney had been built to surround the openings. Hence, it had become impossible to carry out our project." It is likely that Hitler ordered this chimney to be built as a precautionary measure because he greatly feared that the Russians might introduce nerve gas into the ventilation system to capture him numbed but alive. See below, April 30, 1945.
123. Guderian, p. 389. Theodor Busse, born 1897; infantry general; commander in chief of the Ninth Army.
124. Ibid., p. 390. Hans Krebs, born 1898; infantry general; reported missing in May 1945 in Berlin.
125. See above, February 1, 1943. Despite this solemn pledge, Hitler had continued to make the following men field marshals in the meantime: Busch, Kleist, and Weichs (February 1, 1943); von Richthofen (February 16, 1943); Model (April 1, 1944). In addition to Schörner, Ritter von Greim was named field marshal in late April 1945. See below, April 26, 1945.
126. DNB text, April 6, 1945.
127. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 295 ff. Cf. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, p. 306.
128. DNB report, April 12, 1945.
129. See above, February 24, 1945.
130. VB, No. 87, April 13, 1945.
131. Cf. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 13.
132. Ward Price, p. 16. For Hitler's attitude and relations to women, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 34 ff.
133. Hitler spoke at great length about syphilis in his book *Mein Kampf*. Even as Chancellor, he could talk about it for hours on end. Cf. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 269 ff.
134. One curious incident of this compulsive desire to dominate in every situation was recorded by his servant Linge. On New Year's Day 1939, Hitler had been invited to a party and decided he was going to try his

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- luck at bowling. He scored only a three and, much taken aback, left the company. Cf. Linge, No. 5.
135. Goebbels, *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei*, p. 167.
136. Eva Braun was the daughter of a vocational-school teacher named Friedrich Braun and his wife Franziska (maiden name: Kranburger). She received her education at a boarding school in Simbach am Inn.
137. On this topic, see the commentary of Eugen Kogon in Günter Peis, "Die unbekannte Geliebte," in *Der Stern*, No. 24 (Hamburg, 1959).
138. George Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators* [Hitler and Mussolini], German translation: *Führer und Duce, wie ich sie kenne*.
139. Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 85.
140. The correct name of the young lady was Sigrid von Laffert, born on December 28, 1916, in Damaretz (Mecklenburg); daughter of Oskar von Laffert auf Damaretz and his wife Erika von Pressentin.
141. Hoffmann recalled that this affair had taken place in 1921 and had ended in the girl's attempting to hang herself in a hotel room. However, she had been discovered in time. Attempted or successful suicides seemed to be an ingredient in Hitler's amorous escapades. Cf. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen," Series No. 5.
142. Before her marriage, Inga Ley had been an actress at the Görlitz city theater.
143. See above, p. 31.
144. In a speech delivered to Kreisleiters at the Vogelsang Ordensburg on April 29, 1937, Hitler said: "Never in my life, nor in my political life, have I allowed a woman to persuade me of anything! But in other spheres, we'll grant women their rights." Speech on file at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz.
145. Statements made on January 25, 1942, found in Picker, p. 413.
146. According to a diary entry by Reich Minister Graf Schwerin von Krosigk cited by Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 186 ff., Goebbels had made the attempt to calm Hitler's fears by reading to him excerpts from Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* in early April. Supposedly, Hitler had tears in his eyes when Goebbels read of the "hand of fate" intervening on the Prussian King's behalf.
147. *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 297 ff.
148. The Red Army launched its offensive on April 16. Hitler's proclamation was prematurely published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* and other daily papers. This was evidently far earlier than intended, as a postscript affixed to the proclamation read: "Following Order of the Day to be made known down to the company level. Publication in army papers permitted. Publication in daily papers prohibited." Cf. VB, No. 90, April 17, 1945. *Ibid.*, pp. 310 f.
149. Brimming with self-confidence, Napoleon had assured his men in the face of the enemy's advance on the French capital: "The allies do not realize that I am closer to Munich and Vienna than they are to Paris." When this estimate had proved incorrect, and Marshal Marmont had been forced to surrender the city to the enemy, Napoleon attempted to

- brand the marshal a traitor: "The French commanded heights as never before; they were strong as never before. The elite of the enemy's forces was destined to perish on the wide plateau they so mercilessly ravaged once the Duke of Ragusa's [Marshal Marmont's] betrayal abandoned the capital city to the enemy and disbanded the army." Aretz, pp. 428 f.
150. DNB text, April 16, 1945. Hubatsch cited the text in accordance with a telegram circulated among the troops which contained many errors. Hubatsch, *Weisungen*, pp. 310 f. Cf. also *Hitler's War Directives*, pp. 300 f.
 151. Reference is to Franklin Delano Roosevelt.
 152. DNB text, April 2, 1945.
 153. VB, No. 90, April 20, 1945. Karl Holz, born 1895; killed in action on April 16, 1945, in Nuremberg.
 154. DNB text, April 19, 1945. Joachim Albrecht Eggeling, born 1884. Georg Tesche, born 1901.
 155. Ibid.
 156. Report in Karl Koller, *Der letzte Monat* (Mannheim, 1949), p. 16. In the following citations of Koller, reference is always to his diary. Cf. also the report in Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 98 ff.
 157. Ibid., p. 95.
 158. Cf. Koller, pp. 19 ff.
 159. Later, it became apparent that the battery was located near Marzahn, at a distance of approximately twelve kilometers from downtown Berlin. It was a 10 to 12 cm battery.
 160. In 1918, German rockets hit Paris from a distance of a hundred twenty kilometers. Fritz Rausenberger had constructed the cannons. They were forty meters long with diameters of 38 cm and 21 cm.
 161. The telegram of April 21, 1945, was made public in the *Frankfurter Presse, Alliiertes Nachrichtenblatt der 12. Armeegruppe*, No. 3 (1945).
 162. Morell's testimony following his arrest; it was aired in a BBC broadcast of May 22, 1945. Morell had left the bunker on April 22, 1945.
 163. The shorthand typist Gerhard Herrgesell reported on this briefing in *Time* magazine, May 21, 1945. Report published in Schramm, pp. 1696 ff. In a personal letter to the author, Trevor-Roper expressed doubts as to some of Herrgesell's assertions. Cf. also Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 105.
 164. Cf. Schramm, p. 1454.
 165. DNB text, April 22, 1945. Reimann commanded a corps stationed in Potsdam. He was replaced later by General Weidling, who was the commander of the Fifty-Eighth Panzer Corps which had just returned from the Oder front. Cf. Boldt, p. 87.
 166. DNB text, April 23, 1945.
 167. See above, Prologue, note 28.
 168. The decree Göring referred to had been drafted by Hitler on June 29, 1941, following Hess's escape. At the time it had not been published in the *Reichsgesetzblatt*. Speaking before the Reichstag on September 1, 1939, Hitler had named Göring as his successor. This was in obvious

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- violation of the constitution, as was the provision that, should Göring prove unable to exercise this function for some reason, Hess was to take over the position. The decree of June 29, 1941, restricted a possible succession to Göring.
169. IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 582 f.
170. At 7:00 p.m. on the evening of April 14, 1945, the SS apprehended Göring at his home on the Obersalzberg. As the mountain became the target of Allied bombardment the following day, Göring and his staff retreated to Upper Austria, to the Mauterndorf Castle, which he owned. In a scheme involving the implicit consent of the SS, Luftwaffe units "liberated" Göring. On May 9, 1945, Göring surrendered to the American military and was imprisoned. He pretended that he had been "liberated" by American troops and that he intended to build a new Europe in cooperation with them. Sentenced to death by the Nuremberg Court, Göring did not have the courage to face the impending execution and took poison shortly before he was to be hanged with his former comrades. Given the unpleasant experiences with him of numerous other veterans of the First World War, this uncomradely behavior on his part came as no surprise to the public. During the Second World War, he had nevertheless been the most popular among the leaders of the Third Reich because, as Ciano aptly phrased it, Göring was thought to possess "a dash of humanity." Ciano, *Diaries*, p. 443.
171. It had been Ritter vom Greim who had flown him to Berlin in the course of the Kapp Putsch.
172. VB, No. 100, April 28, 1945. The German broadcasting company had already aired the announcement on April 26, 1945.
173. VB, No. 98, April 26, 1945.
174. Cf. Boldt, pp. 77 ff. Boldt gives a detailed account of the measures which Hitler envisioned. For instance, he ordered all underground facilities in the city to be flooded in order to prevent the Russians from using them to their advantage. Hitler accorded little consideration to the thousands of wounded German soldiers who had taken refuge in these channels.
175. Cf. Linge, No. 1.
176. Schramm, p. 1457.
177. Napoleon had shouted this desperate exclamation at Marshal Macdonald before retreating across the Rhine River in the vicinity of Mainz.
178. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 134, according to Koller, quoting Greim.
179. Cf. Koller, p. 61.
180. Schramm, p. 1460.
181. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 142.
182. Schramm, pp. 1461 f.
183. Rudolf Holste; lieutenant general; commanding general of the Forty-First Army Corps.
184. Schramm, p. 1462.

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185. The Twelfth Army under General Wenck had come within fifteen kilometers of Potsdam, but then was bogged down.
186. The western powers naturally rejected Himmler's cease-fire proposals. They insisted on the unconditional surrender by Germany to Russia. Himmler had become acquainted with Count Folke Bernadotte af Wisborg (born 1895, murdered 1948), who served as the representative of the Swedish Red Cross. In his capacity as Reich minister of the interior, Himmler was responsible for dealing with the Red Cross, which sought the repatriation of Danish nationals who had been brought to Germany against their will. There was some irony of Fate to the fact that Hitler's satrap should approach a descendant of the Napoleonic Marshal Bernadotte with the request to mediate peace.
187. The claim by Himmler and his companion, SS Brigadeführer Schellenberg, that Hitler was ill and had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage was untrue. It served as an excuse for the negotiations before their own "conscience" and the German people.
188. The battle of Berlin lasted only ten days, a remarkably short time, considering the fact that Hitler was holding out at this location. In Würzburg, for example, fighting began on April 1, 1945, and lasted until April 6, 1945. This was not much shorter than in Berlin, although Würzburg was forty times smaller as a city. While the British and Americans could have reached Berlin before the Russians did, had they wanted to, they apparently felt that the Russians had a right to take the city. Therefore, the Red Army was given the honor of conquering Berlin.
189. "If the gods love only those who demand the impossible of them, then the Lord will correspondingly give His blessing only to him who remains steadfast in face of the impossible." See above, speech of April 26, 1942.
"It is my great pride that Providence has chosen me and allows me to lead the German Volk in such a great age. I will unconditionally tie my name and my life to its fate, I address no other request to the Almighty than to bless us in the future as in the past and to preserve my life for as long as it is necessary in His eyes for the fateful struggle of the German Volk. For there is no greater glory than the honor to be the Führer of a Volk in difficult times and, therefore, the bearer of the responsibility! And I know no greater happiness than the awareness that this Volk is my German one." See above, *ibid.*
"I do not doubt for one second that we will win. It was not in vain that Providence has had me stride forth along the long path from the unknown soldier of the World War to the Führer of the German nation, to the Führer of the German Wehrmacht. It has not done this only in order to suddenly take away again all we had to struggle so hard for, as if it were just for the fun of it." See above, speech of May 30, 1942.
"The gods love those who demand the impossible. If we accomplish the impossible, then we will surely receive the approval of Providence.

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- Perhaps I am not a so-called shining light—a pietist. I am not that. But deep in my heart, I am a religious man, that is, I believe that the man who, in accordance with the natural laws created by a god, fights bravely and never capitulates in this world—that this man will not be abandoned by the lawgiver. Instead, he will in the end receive the blessings of Providence.” See above, speech of July 5, 1944.
190. “. . . what is decisive in this war is who lands the final blow. And you can be assured that we will do that!” See above, speech of November 8, 1942.
191. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 152.
192. Once in Rechlin, Greim and Reitsch made their way to Plön where they joined Dönitz. They reached Zell am See on May 8, 1945. Taken prisoner of war by the American forces, Greim committed suicide on May 24, 1945. Cf. Koller, p. 128.
193. Schramm, p. 1664. Reference is to the German occupation forces besieged in the cities of La Rochelle, Saint-Nazaire, and Gironde.
194. Cf. Schmidt, pp. 589 f. Cf. also Boldt, p. 76. Cf. further Linge, No. 5. Cf. “Hoffmanns Erzählungen,” Series No. 5. Hoffmann describes Eva Braun as very naive.
195. In a BBC broadcast on June 21, 1945, an English radio commentator described Eva Braun’s character in great detail and called her the only sane person in Hitler’s entourage. While serving as the *Daily Telegraph*’s correspondent in prewar Berlin, he had the occasion to observe and speak with Eva Braun whenever they encountered each other shopping or out on a walk. On one such occasion, she sighed: “It is too bad that Hitler became Reich chancellor—otherwise he might have married me.”
196. DANA text, December 30, 1945. The report also features a facsimile reproduction of the marriage license. Printing errors in the text corrected by the author.
197. *Mein Kampf*, pp. 754 f.
198. In 1938, Hitler had lamented: “I have wasted my best years in this struggle!” See above, p. 1087, speech of April 9, 1938.
199. See above, speech of September 1, 1939.
200. Cf. IMT, 3569-PS (Part II).
201. Obviously, Hitler had finally remembered his long-forgotten title as Chancellor from the old days when it had been particularly dear to him. In more recent times, he had scarcely employed the term.
202. Hitler was not empowered to appoint a Reich president. Already the law of August 1, 1934, concerning von Hindenburg’s succession had been unconstitutional. See above, pp. 507 f.
- Other measurers such as the naming of Göring and Hess as Hitler’s successors in the Chancellery also demonstrated a pronounced disregard for the constitution by Hitler (see above, speech of September 1, 1939). Neither the Enabling Act of March 23/24, 1933 (see above, p. 275), nor the formal “Resolution of the Greater German Reichstag,” of April 26, 1942 (see above, April 26, 1942), had conferred such powers on him. In accordance with Article 41 of the Reich constitution, a new Reich

president could be elected only in a plebiscite. For the interim period, the president of the Reich court exercised the functions of Reich president in accordance with a law of 1932 (RGBl, 1, p. 547). See above, December 17, 1932

In a letter to Frick on August 2, 1934, following von Hindenburg's death, Hitler maintained that the title Reich president was "unique" and "indivisibly bound up" with von Hindenburg. "The greatness of the deceased bestowed a unique significance upon the title Reichspräsident. All of us feel that this title, in view of what it meant to us, is indivisibly bound up with the great man who has passed away." See above, p. 510. Differentiating between such offices as that of Reich president and Reich chancellor would decidedly have been out of character for Hitler. Had he agreed to such a separation, somebody else would also have had to take over as Führer of the party. And who was to succeed him in such a demanding office—assuredly not Dönitz? On this topic, Hitler remarked the following in a speech of September 16, 1935: "For when the new Führer is appointed, he shall be head of the party, Head of the Reich, and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht." See above, p. 711.

203. On the one hand, Hitler as head of state was at complete liberty to appoint a new Reich chancellor at any time. However, he was not empowered to name new ministers before naming a chancellor to succeed him. In all likelihood, Hitler and Goebbels discussed this topic.
204. The title party minister was new. From December 1, 1933, on, Hess had served in the capacity of Reich minister and as the Führer's deputy in the framework of the NSDAP. After Hess's mysterious escape on May 10, 1941, Hitler had assumed these responsibilities himself. Although he accorded Bormann cabinet rank in connection with the latter's appointment as head of the party chancellery, he did not name him Reich minister.
205. After Hitler rid himself of Blomberg by the measures of February 4, 1938, the Reich war ministry as such became defunct and no one was ever named to replace Blomberg as Reich minister of war. Hitler himself assumed Blomberg's earlier post and took it upon himself to fulfill the duties related to such an office.
206. Reference is to the Gauleiter of Salzburg, Dr. Gustav Adolf Scheel, who also served as head of the Reich students and lecturers' association.
207. Dr. Theo Hupfauer; Oberdienstleiter; head of the DAF office for *Soziale Selbstverwaltung* (social self-administration).
208. Karl Otto Saur, born 1902; Hauptdienstleiter; head of the technical office in the Reich ministry for armament and the military-industrial complex. Hitler no longer called on Speer in this connection.
209. Ley had never made any claim to the title of Reich minister.
210. With Napoleon, too, the forces allied against him demanded his unconditional surrender. They rejected the emperor's abdication in favor of his son, the "King of Rome." The French Senate resolved thereupon to bring about Napoleon's abdication by the powers bestowed on it. Nevertheless, Napoleon persisted in rejecting the

legality of the Senate's measure. Headed by Ney, Napoleon's marshals finally resorted to the use of force in getting him to sign the following letter of abdication on April 11, 1814:

"As the allied powers have pronounced the Emperor Napoleon the only obstacle in the way of the restoration of peace in Europe, the Emperor Napoleon solemnly declares that he and his descendants relinquish all claims to the thrones of France and Italy. He deems no personal sacrifice too great, not even that of his own life, in the interests of France. Given at the Fontainebleau Castle this 11th of April, 1814.

Napoleon"

Napoleon retired on the night of April 12, 1814, with the intention of ending his life by swallowing poison. He had carried a flask on his person ever since the Russian campaign. However, the potion had aged considerably. Therefore, he lived, no doubt relieved that his valiant attempt had failed.

For further parallels see below, Appendix, Indices "Napoleon."

211. See above, April 26, 1942. Article 43 of the Reich constitution had explicitly provided for procedures to be initiated by the Reichstag for the dismissal of the head of state, that is, the Reich president.
212. IMT, 3569-PS (Part I).
213. This statement reveals that Hitler preferred the obedient Bormann to Goebbels, although as the following events would show Goebbels was far more loyal than Bormann, who chose to make a run for it while Goebbels followed Hitler to the grave.
214. Hitler evidently did not get on too well with Eva Braun's father. When proceedings against him were initiated in Munich after the war, it was revealed that he had received no more than a gold watch and a one-time, two-week vacation on the Obersalzberg from his "son-in-law"—at least technically speaking.
215. Reference is to Hitler's housekeeper of long standing, Anni Winter. Together with her husband (who was still alive at that time), she had seen to the Hitler household at Prinzregentenplatz 16 in Munich. Later she followed Hitler to the Berghof, where she was granted a small apartment on the fourth floor. As the result of a lawsuit filed with the civil chamber of the Munich Court of Justice in 1953, she was accorded numerous "personal remembrances" from Hitler's belongings. She secured various items such as five different editions of *Mein Kampf*, a few watercolor paintings from the First World War, as well as several sketches Hitler had "drawn while speaking on the telephone." Cf. dpa (Deutsche Presse-Agentur: West German Press Agency) court report in *Der Volkswille*, November 11, 1953.
216. Cf. postscript in IMT, 3569-PS.
217. IMT, item no. 9, submitted as evidence in the Streicher case.
218. Johannmeier never reached Schörner to hand him the communication and, therefore, buried it in his garden in Iserlohn.
219. Lorenz took the note of Goebbels with him, as well as the original letter. On the fate of these documents and their final discovery, cf.

- Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 194 ff. The document intended for Dönitz which was recovered in Tegernsee, a village outside Bad Tölz, is published in IMT, 3569-PS. Cf. also DANA report, December 30, 1945, in *Neue Zeitung*, January 1, 1946, and January 10, 1946.
220. Cf. Boldt, pp. 83 f. Major Bernd Freiherr Freytag von Loringhoven (general staff) was specialist adviser under Krebs. The group managed to flee Berlin, but failed to reach Wenck's army. Soviet troops captured Weiss, while Freytag escaped to Leipzig. Boldt succeeded in returning to his family in Lübeck.
221. Cf. Baur, p. 274.
222. In front of the British officers interrogating him, Below maintained that he had destroyed the original message immediately after hearing of Germany's official capitulation. The version reproduced above is based on his testimony from which the report was reconstructed, cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 171 f.
223. Reference is to the alleged "sailors's mutiny" of 1918. See above, January 27, 1940. Also see above, 1940, note 60.
224. As he had little actual knowledge of the conduct of the general staff in World War I, Hitler would have done better simply to state that the general staff he faced in World War II did not correspond to his conception of "bloodhounds." See above, September 24, 1941. The only substantial difference between those serving with the general staff in the First and Second World Wars was that the latter were even more zealous in fulfilling all orders issued to them, even if they judged these to be counterproductive or downright stupid.
225. Italian partisans had captured Benito Mussolini and Clara Petacci outside Dongo on Lake Como on April 27, 1944. They allowed the former Duce and his mistress to spend one last night together before shooting them the next day at the Villa Belmonte on the road between Bonzanigo and Azzano after having released them to forces at Giulino di Mezzagora. Their corpses were brought to Milan, where they were hung upside down in the center of the Piazza Loreto. A raging crowd pelted them with rocks, and some women fired pistols at the bodies. These outraged women were rumored to have been mothers of soldiers killed in the senseless war. Reports in von Moos, Vol. VI, pp. 299 ff. Cf. also Lada-Macarski, "Die drei letzten Tage Mussolinis" in *Neue Auslese* 6 (1946); the Allied Information Service published this article in Munich.
226. Schramm, p. 1466.
227. *Ibid.*, p. 1467.
228. Among the women present at this curious farewell scene was a Baroness von Varo, an occasional visitor at the bunker. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. 178 and 221.
229. See above, p. 1879; Churchill's radio broadcast of November 12, 1940, in Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6174.
230. Cf. Baur, pp. 275 ff.
231. Hitler was mistaken on this account, as Dönitz was still in Plön at the time and did not go to Flensburg until well after Hitler's death.

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232. See above, September 12, 1937, and 1945, note 95. Baur rolled up the portrait and carried it with him in his knapsack as he left the bunker on the night of May 1, 1945. His escape was cut short, since he was wounded the next day and fell into the hands of Russian soldiers. Since he was incapable of providing any other information on the fate of the painting, it is highly likely that it was lost while Baur was fleeing from the Chancellery and was destroyed in the general confusion.
233. Baur was not the only man whom Hitler entrusted with the task of cremating the bodies of his wife and himself; almost everyone who had remained behind up to this point was instructed to see to this: Linge, Bormann, Goebbels, and Günsche, to name only four. Evidently, Hitler wanted to make certain that his last wish was indeed fulfilled.
234. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 177.
235. See above, p. 198.
236. See above, February 1, 1943.
237. See above, August 31, 1944.
238. On June 26, 1813, Napoleon challenged Metternich: "It is war you want, isn't it? Well, you shall have it. I don't give a damn about one million lives more or less!" Cf. Friedrich Sieburg, *Im Licht and Schatten der Freiheit* (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 282.
239. See above, speech of February 15, 1942.
240. William II expounded the dilemma he faced: "And others said: the Kaiser should have killed himself back then [in 1918]. My unyielding Christian convictions prevented me from doing so. And would they not have turned around and said: What cowardice! Now he seeks to escape all responsibility by committing suicide. Another consideration that ruled out such course of action was that I had to consider how to assist and how to be of the greatest service to my people and my country in the undoubtedly difficult times ahead." Cf. Wilhelm II, p. 246.
241. There is no clear evidence to determine whether Hitler shot himself through the temple or whether he placed the gun in his mouth, from where the bullet could have penetrated and exited the body in the area surrounding the temple.
242. Linge is mistaken in his assertion that the event took place at 3:50 p.m.; cf. Linge, No. 1. The official judicial declaration of death, issued by the Amtsgericht (district court) Berchtesgaden in 1956, indicates that Hitler committed suicide at 3:30 p.m., and this is the generally accepted time of his death. Amtsgerichtsrat Dr. Stephanus, who countersigned the forensic certificate of death, stated the following in the document: "This is to assert the death of Adolf Hitler, born on April 20, 1889, in Braunau am Inn. This is to establish 3:30 p.m. on April 30, 1945, as the time of death." Amtsgericht Berchtesgaden, Archives.
243. Cf. Kempka's testimony in Nuremberg, IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVI, pp. 494 f.

244. Kempka had received instructions to procure two hundred liters of gasoline, but had been able to secure only a hundred eighty liters in various containers.
245. Soviet military personnel searched the Reich Chancellery garden after capturing the city. It appears beyond reasonable doubt that they came across the remains of Hitler and his wife. Their dental records were the main criteria for a positive identification. As an assistant to Hitler's dentist (Professor Blaschke), the local dentist Fritz Echtmann had carried out repair work on the Führer's dentures. He also lent a hand in fitting Eva Braun with a new plastic denture in the fall of 1944. On May 11, 1945, Soviet experts questioned both him and Professor Blaschke's secretary in connection with an investigation to determine the identity of two sets of dentures recovered from the ashes of the Reich Chancellery's garden. Both Echtmann and Blaschke's medical assistant, Catharina Häusermann, recognized them as those they had made for Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun. Especially important to the identification was the repair work performed on Hitler's upper dentures the year before, which reduced the number of elements in the gold bridge from eleven to nine because of a gum infection. Shortly after the interrogation on May 29, 1945, the dentist Echtmann (born 1915) was shipped to the Soviet Union as a prisoner of war. He was released from captivity only in 1953. The above information is based on statements he made at his civil court hearing before the Amtsgericht Berchtesgaden on October 16, 1953.
246. One of the members of the security personnel at the bunker by the name of Hermann Karnau turned to one of his comrades to lament: "It is sad that not one of the [SS] officers seems to worry about the Führer's body. I am proud that I alone know where he is." Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 182.
247. Cf. Schramm, p. 1468.
248. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 185.
249. General Vasili Chuikov, not to be confused with Marshal Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov. According to the official account of this meeting, published by Lieutenant Colonel Troyanovsky in the Red Army Paper *Red Star*, Krebs negotiated with Chuikov and not with Zhukov as stated in most accounts. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, pp. XXXIX f., and Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 1135.
250. Schramm, p. 1469.
251. Ibid.
252. Cf. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 190. It was easy for the Red Army to identify these bodies because of the premature end of the cremation process. On photographs of the corpse of Goebbels, his facial features are still clearly discernible.
253. Cf. Kempka's recollections in IMT, *Blaue Serie*, Vol. XVII, pp. 488 f. Cf. also Baur, p. 282.
254. Official declaration on July 13, 1934, by the then Reichstag president Göring; see above, p. 502.

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- 255. DNB text of May 1, 1945.
- 256. Von Moos, Vol. VI, pp. 313 f.
- 257. Ibid., p. 313.
- 258. OKW report of May 2, 1945.
- 259. Karl Wolff, SS Obergruppenführer; general of the Waffen SS; originally a career officer; joined the SS in 1931; served as Himmler's adjutant for many years. Heinrich von Vietinghoff genannt von Scheel; colonel general; succeeded Kesselring as commander in chief of Army Group Southwest.
- 260. Trevor-Roper, *Last Days*, p. 189.
- 261. See above, p. 35.
- 262. See above, speech of May 3, 1940.
- 263. See above, oath of loyalty of April 30, 1945.
- 264. A stone was erected at the site in commemoration of the signing of the capitulation. The signature took place at Montgomery's former headquarters in a forest south of Lüneburg. The memorial remained there until it was transferred to the British War Museum in London in 1958.
- 265. The signing took place at 11:16 p.m. (Greenwich Mean Time) on the evening of May 8, 1945. This corresponded to 12:16 a.m. Central European Time on May 9, 1945. Therefore, the capitulation became effective at 11:01 p.m. on May 8, that is, 12:01 a.m. on May 9 (Central European Time).
- 266. Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov, born 1896 in Strelkovka, fought during the Civil War 1918–1920 in the cavalry of the Red Army. He had stopped the German advance on the central front already in August 1941, successfully defended Moscow in the winter of 1941–1942, and then led his troops in a slow but steady advance all the way to Berlin.
- 267. Arthur William Tedder, 1st Baron Tedder of Glenguin, marshal of the Royal Air Force (= field marshal); deputy commander in chief of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe from 1943 to 1945.
- 268. German translation of the document in Jacobsen, *Der zweite Weltkrieg in Chronik und Dokumenten*, p. 383. Cf. also Schramm, pp. 1679 ff. Photocopy of the definitive English-language document with signatures available in *A Treasury of America's Most Famous Historical Documents*, New York: Drake Publishers, no date, pages not numbered.
- 269. State Secretary Matthias Erzberger, born 1875 in Bittenhausen; murdered 1921 by German nationalists; head of the German Cease-fire Delegation in 1918, as Reichstag deputy for the Center Party. Other members of this delegation: Graf Oberndorff, General von Winterfeld (former military attaché at the Paris embassy), and Captain Vanselow. By referring to the impending dangers of Bolshevism, the members of this delegation attempted to gain more favorable terms for Germany, but failed to obtain them.
- 270. Schörner escaped by plane behind the American lines. On a request by the Soviets, the American military handed him over to the Russians, who sent him to prison. He was released from captivity in Russia in

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1955. On returning to Germany, he was sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison for the shooting of a soldier without trial but was paroled.
271. See above, 1945, note 202.
272. See above, Hitler's political testament of April 29, 1945.
273. See above, p. 2114, speech of November 8, 1940.
274. See above, October 1, 1939, p. 1829; broadcast speech in Churchill, *Speeches*, Vol. VI, p. 6163.
275. See above, June 22, 1941; statement in Churchill's broadcast speech; *ibid.*, pp. 6428 ff.
276. See above, November 1, 1943; statement in Churchill's BBC broadcast speech; *ibid.*, p. 6897.

Epilogue Notes

1. Cf. Foch, p. 262.
2. Cf. Foch, p. 111.
3. William II: "The overthrow [of 1918] destroyed enormously great values. It occurred at the very moment when the struggle for existence of the German people was to come to an end and all efforts were to be applied to reconstruction. It was a crime against the people." (Cf. Wilhelm II *Ereignisse und Gestalten 1878-1918*, Leipzig and Berlin, 1922, p. 288.)
"With Wilson's guarantee, Germany left the enemy territories she had conquered and laid down her arms, thus making herself defenseless. The key to the solution of our present situation lies in Wilson's excessive trustfulness and non-observance of his Fourteen Points, on the one hand, and in the outbreak of the German revolution, on the other." (ibid., p. 272.)
"The international part of the program of socialist doctrine turned out to be a horrible error. The workers of the Entente were set against the German people, with the aim of annihilating it. There was not even a trace of international solidarity of the masses. This error is also one of the causes of Germany's failure in the war." (ibid., p. 290.)
"Never yet has Germany been overwhelmed when she was united." (Proclamation to the German people of August 6, 1914.)
4. "From tomorrow on, Switzerland will be an authoritarian state," declared the ambassador of Switzerland to State Secretary Weizsäcker after the decree of the martial laws of 1939. (Author's record.)
5. Cf. Proclamation of March 16, 1935, Vol. I, p. 494.
6. The national frenzy of August 1914 seized especially the masses of German workers, including the Social Democrats and their leaders. William II was also full of praise for the German workers. He declared: "Under me, the German workers fought brilliantly on the battlefields, and at home, too, for many years, they took care of the munitions and war equipment!" (Cf. Wilhelm II, ibid., p. 289.)
7. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 29-30.
8. "The German soldier is the best!" (Speech on July 4, 1944.) "The German people can be proud today: it has the best political leader, the best field commanders, the best engineers, economists, and organizers. But it also has the best workers and the best farmers." (Speech of October 3, 1941.)
9. "We, Germans, number eighty-two million people in today's Reich. We are the only state, not counting China, with such a great number of people of one nationality." (Speech of January 24, 1940.)
"Eighty-two million German Teutons! At the present time, we are the most numerous political entity of one race on the earth, not counting China." (Speech of May 3, 1940.)

Epilogue—Notes

10. The fact that all Hitler's efforts against the united Allied forces failed to result in anything follows best from his own words: "I may some day stand before German history accused in every respect but certainly not in one, namely, that I hadn't given my last, in general all that was humanly possible to prepare the German people for this struggle better than it had been unhappily prepared in 1914." (Speech of November 18, 1940.) Yes, definitely, speaking of "all that was humanly possible," he meant Germany's military power; but to what purpose?
11. Cf. here p. 2930.
12. Churchill replied to Hitler's threats with a lapidary statement: "If words could kill, we would have all been dead long ago. But we will not be frightened by these bloodthirsty threats. Yes, we take them as a sign of weakness in our enemy." (Radio address on November 12, 1939.)

Hitler and History

Notes

1. Speech of February 15, 1942.
2. Speech of November 8, 1943.
3. Speech of October 6, 1939.
4. Speech of July 9, 1933.
5. Speech of November 10, 1933.
6. Speech of December 11, 1933.
7. Speech of September 5, 1934.
8. Speech of September 16, 1936.
9. Speech of March 7, 1936.
10. Interview, March 9, 1936.
11. Speech of January 30, 1937.
12. Speech of April 6, 1938.
13. Speech of February 20, 1938.
14. Speech of September 1, 1933.
15. Speech of October 6, 1939.
16. Speech of December 18, 1940.
17. Speech of October 6, 1939.

Hitler and the Question of War Guilt

Notes

1. New Year's Proclamation, January 1, 1943.
2. Clarification, May 20, 1943.
3. Speech of March 21, 1943.
4. Political Testament, April 29, 1945.
5. Speech of September 19, 1939.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Political Testament, April 29, 1945.
9. Speech of December 18, 1940.
10. Clarification, February 1945.
11. Proclamation of September 25, 1944.
12. Order of the Day to the Wehrmacht of January 1, 1945.
13. Proclamation of February 24, 1945.
14. Ibid.
15. Speech of January 30, 1945.
16. New Year's Appeal, January 1, 1945.
17. Political Testament of April 29, 1945.
18. Ibid.
19. Speech of April 26, 1942.
20. Speech of June 6, 1937.
21. Speech of September 10, 1937.
22. Speech of May 30, 1942.
23. Clarification in Hitler's Proclamation, April 15, 1945.
24. Cf. Vol. II, p. 1245.
25. Cf. Vol. III, p. 1393.
26. Cf. Vol. III, p. 1672.
27. *Mein Kampf*, p. 154.
28. Speech of October 3, 1941.

Afterword

Notes

1. Speech of December 10, 1940.
2. Speech of September 10, 1938.
3. Speech of December 2, 1938.
4. *Mein Kampf*, p. 735: "The main point of consideration in every foreign policy is to bring the land area into correspondence with the number of the people."
5. Speech of December 18, 1940: "Anglo-Americans are nothing but offspring of our German people."
6. Speech of February 15, 1942: "Actually, we were the ones who colonized England, and not the other way around: the English didn't colonize us."
7. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 357 and 359.

Bibliography

Note from the American Editor of Volume Four

It is certainly not my intention to compile a thorough bibliography on Adolf Hitler. Such a work would require at least an additional volume. Paul Madden needed 754 pages for his 1998 bibliography of Hitler and the Nazi epoch, and he covered only English-language works. The primary sources, however, are largely in German, French, Italian, Russian, Polish, Japanese, and in the languages of various other countries, especially ones attacked by Hitler.

However, even a quick glance at the bibliography in the German original of Domarus (Volume Four, 4th edition, 1988, pages 2317 to 2322) will show that the following bibliography to this present English translation (1989–2004) takes more space and lists more items. There are several reasons for the new material.

- Domarus typically listed only one edition of a book he cites. Often there are several editions with varying pagination (usually the later the edition, the more the pages). In the endnotes, Domarus will refer to page numbers in this one edition. For the convenience of readers who have (or whose libraries have) a different edition, whenever I can find the publication facts, I list the various editions and the number of pages in each. If a book had editions of 100, 200, and 300 pages, and Domarus cited from the 200-page edition, it would be likely that the same passage would appear later in the 300-page edition and might not be present at all in the 100-page edition. At the very least, the reader has a clue that there may be a problem about the page number of a cited passage.

Bibliography

- Domarus does not list publishers. Sometimes publisher information can give a valuable hint about possible bias in the book. A work published by the Nazi party can be expected to have a different slant from that of a book published by the British government on the same subject.
- If Domarus cites an author and I discover that this author has other books relating to Hitler and the Nazi period, I will list the other books by that author. Domarus cites mainly works from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s with only a slight sprinkling of titles from 1960 to 1965. In many cases, it is a fair assumption that he would have been interested in later books by the same authors but did not get to see them.
- When I know of a book whose subject is one of the authors whom Domarus cites, I usually list it. Exceptions (because they would each need huge bibliographies) include Bismarck, Churchill, Clausewitz, Eisenhower, Napoleon, William II, and, of course, Hitler himself, although if a book's main subject were, for example, "Churchill Fights Hitler," I would list it.
- Domarus tends to cite only German editions. Even Eisenhower is credited with *Kreuzzug in Europa* without any mention of the English-language original. I try to list the original works in addition to the German translation which Domarus cites. Likewise, I try to list English translations of works originally published in German.
- Ladislaus Bolchazy, the publisher of this translation, and a few other friends, especially Professor Lilita Zalkans of the University of Stockholm, have called to my attention several books which I list because of their importance or interest. I have added some others to the bibliography on my own. This category includes mostly such reference works as atlases, bibliographies, companions arranged alphabetically, dictionaries, encyclopedias, fact books, guides, handbooks, and lexicons, that is, works designed not for continuous reading but for finding specific pieces of information.
- I have worked on the general assumption that the reader might wish to know not only about the exact edition which Domarus

Bibliography

has cited, but also about other editions and about other works related to the same subject. For a similar reason, I on a few occasions give a not strictly bibliographical fact about the author or the subject of the book (such as Rommel's nickname "The Desert Fox").

There is an occasional mistake in the German bibliography, or an entry is alphabetized in an unexpected way (for example, Napoleon under his German-language editor). I make note of such instances because the reader may find the reference as Domarus cites it but may need to find the book in question as, for example, Library of Congress would catalogue it.

In the following lists, different editions and translations of the same book are combined into one entry. However, different books by the same author form separate entries. For ease of cross-reference, these books are distinguished by their date, printed as a superscript after the author's last name. This system puts the titles of an author's works in at least roughly chronological order. Sometimes, the first edition for which we have a date is not the earliest edition; sometimes a book is published after its author's death, but often the dated entries reveal the development of that author's work and interests. If Domarus lists a book where it might not be expected (for example, Napoleon's autobiographical writings under the name of their German editor Aretz), I give the bibliographical information under both editor and author (under Napoleon and under Aretz, in our example).

I would like to thank especially Professor Dr. David J. Marshall, Jr., who teaches philosophy to doctoral students at the University of Munich, for many hours, indeed days, of slaving in German reference libraries, obtaining information not readily available to me in the United States, and for much other help with all of Volume Four.

James T. McDonough, Jr., Ph.D.

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